SUFISM AS REFLECTED IN PAULO COELHO'S *THE ALCHEMIST*

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the connotative meaning of signs which reflect Sufism in novel The Alchemist. The data source of this research is Paulo Coelho's novel The Alchemist which was published in 1992. The data source is gathered through library research technique, while the research method for this thesis is using Semiotics.

In this research, the theory used is semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. This study focuses to analyze the signs contained in the novel and identifies the connotative meaning of the signs that reflects Sufism. The process of connotative signification is done by applying the systematic method which is called as second order of signification.

As the results, found that there are 11 signs which reflect Sufism. The signs are classified into three subjects. First, salik is symbolized by Santiago. Second, murshid is symbolized by the old Gypy woman, Melchizedek, the crystal merchant, and the alchemist. Third, tariqah is symbolized by Santiago's journey. There are also found stations (maqamat) of tariqah, in six connotations: tawbah, wara' zuhd, sabr, tawakkul, and ridha'. Last, levels of knowledge, found two connotations: ilm' al-yaqin and ayn' al-yaqin.

Key words: *Semiotics, Sufism, Roland Barthes.*

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of senses given by experts both east and west of *Sufism*. Many theories define differently towards the etymology of *sufi*. The term Sufism is used by western orientalists, while eastern experts prefer to use the term *tasawwuf*. However, most of the theory of experts has the same essence towards Sufism. According to (Luckett & Shay, 2020), Sufism (tasawwuf) is the name given to mysticism in Islam. The term Sufism embraces the philosophy and practices which aim at direct communion between God and man, and those who practice Sufism are called Sufis. adds, the word sufi is used as a generic term to describe individuals adopting a particular religious attitude based on austerity and spirituality, and came into usage only at the beginning of the 9th century. Sufism in the beginning is the ascetic movement (away from worldly things) in Islam, and in its development make produces the tradition of Islamic mysticism. (Adiyanto & Febrianto, 2020),(Schrape, 2018).

Although Sufism is conventionally known as mysticism in Islam, Sufism also has its own culture in the literary world. Many literary works contain Sufi values. This is because many Sufi poets who composed the poem that contains messages or expressions of Sufism. According to (van Eijck, Michiel; Hsu, Pei-Ling; Roth, 2009) in (Hutauruk & Puspita, 2020), *sufistic literature* is a kind of literature that a strong influence of sufi literature or

literary mysticism, including imaging systems, the use of symbols, and metaphors. Quotation previously shows that Sufism might be found in literary works.(Sasalia & Sari, 2020),(Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020),(Liu et al., 2020) This becomes a consideration of the writer to conduct a research toward a novel entitled *The Alchemist. The Alchemist* is a novel written by Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian author. This novel is the work of Paulo Coelho's most famous among his other works and sold in large numbers. *The alchemist* has translated into 67 languages and sold in 150 million copies around the world.

First published in 1988, this novel tells the journey of a shepherd boy to the Egyptian pyramids to find the treasure. The shepherd boy name is Santiago. In the beginning narrated that Santiago lives in a village in Andalusia. Santiago is a boy who has a desire to travel the world. Because of that, he leaves his parent's home and becomes a shepherd that allows him to move from one area to another (Aldino et al., 2021),(Manurung & Sembiring, 2019),(Kaid, 2004). After a year of wandering as a shepherd, in the city of Tarifa, one day, he has a dream about a hidden treasure in the Egyptian pyramids. The dream always happens repeatedly. Then Santiago decides to see a gypsy woman to interpret his dream. The woman believes that the dream is the language of God. For a moment Santiago forgets the dream and back to concentrates on his desire before, to see the cloth merchant's daughter who is only 3 days away from Tarifa.(Nurkholis et al., 2017)

The story of a shepherd boy who looks for hidden treasure as described in the novel *The Alchemist* is interesting to be analyzed. It is interesting to be analyzed since the writer found the traces of Sufism inside this novel. This novel contains parts of story, terminologies, concepts, that are unique and might represent wider meaning, especially related to the issue. The writer assumes behind the story of *The Alchemist* contains the subjects that represent certain issue, especially, Sufism. Besides, this novel is interesting to be analyzed since its author, Paulo Coelho, was not born in the background of Muslim family (Fitri & Qodriani, 2016).

In doing this research, the writer uses Semiotic Approach. According to (Adam et al., 2020) *sign* is the union of the signifier and a signified. Signifier is a material aspect of sign, which is sensory, which is in verbal language as sound image or acoustic image that connect with a concept (signified)(Febrian & Fadly, 2021). The substantial of signifier is always material i.e. sounds, images, objects, texts, etc. Meanwhile, signified is mental aspect from signifier, which is also called as concept. It means that a signified is a concept that represented by a signifier. Based on the background of study, it is interesting to analyze *The Alchemist* in the perspective of semiotics. The writer chooses semiotic approach since the writer assumes that the novel contains symbols that have broader meaning and, in this case, represent the concept of Sufism. However, when analyzing the data the writer prefers to use the term 'sign' instead of 'symbol' since Roland Barthes uses the term 'sign', not 'symbol'. Barthes believes that a symbol is a solid meaning which already conventionally agreed by society, while sign can more independently interpreted by the interpreter. In order to analyze these signs, it needs a systematic way of theory that special to analyze sign. The systematic way which is proper to examine sign is semiotics. However, not all of semiotic theories are proper to examine a particular literary work. Based on this background of study, the writer tries to examine the issue of *Sufism* that reflected in the novel *The Alchemist* by using semiotic approach of Roland Barthes(Sedyastuti et al., 2021),(Febrian & Fadly, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Approach

(Kuswoyo, 2013) in (Kuswoyo, 2016) says that the purpose and role of literary research is to understand the meaning of a literary work as comprehensive as possible. It means that the literary research can be useful to the interest of the outside fields of literature and the progress of literature itself. The interest of the outside fields of literature means that if the research will deals with the outside aspects of literature such as religion, philosophy, morality, and so on. Meanwhile the interest for literature is to increase the quality of the creation of literature itself(Pustika, 2018),(Meliasari et al., 2018),. There are lot of approaches of research, depends on the point of view of the researcher. Each of approach also has a different direction and target. In this proposal the writer uses semiotic approach.

Sufism

There are a lot of senses given by experts both east and west of *Sufism*. Many theories define differently towards the etymology of sufi. According to (Adiyanto & Febrianto, 2020), Sufism is the name given to mysticism in Islam. The term Sufism embraces the philosophy and practices which aim at direct communion between God and man, and those who practice Sufism are called Sufis. (Muhaqiqin & Budi, 2019)explains the terminology of 'sufi', one of many theories, is derived from the Arabic word *saf*, which means line or row, referring to those early Muslim contemporaries of the Prophet who stood in the first row during prayer.

However, (Ameraldo et al., 2019),(Oktaviani, 2012) states Sufism is the generally accepted name for Islamic mysticism. Mysticism contains something mysterious, not to be reached by ordinary means or by intellectual effort. It is understood from the root common to the words mystic and mystery, the Greek myein, "to close the eyes." Mysticism has been called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions." In its widest sense it may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality –be it called Wisdom, Light, Love or Nothing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Salik As Symbolized In Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

In Sufism, salik is someone who undergoes a spiritual discipline on the path of Islamic mysticism to cleanse and purify the soul. In other words, a salik is a doer of path islamic mysticism. To become a salik, a Muslim during his lifetime shall have discipline in implementing the Shari'a (religious orders) as well as inner Tariqah (spiritual practice) of Islam. A person is not mentioned as a salik if only undergoes one of these disciplines. A salik also referred to as a pupil when he underwent the spiritual discipline under the guidance of certain Sufi teacher, or in a particular congregation.

> *After all, what he had always wanted was just that: to know new places. Even if he never got to the Pyramids, he had already traveled farther than any shepherd he knew. Oh, if they only knew how different things are just two hours by ship from where they are, he thought. Although his*

new world at the moment was just an empty marketplace, he had already seen it when it was teeming with life, and he would never forget it. (Coelho, 1992:23-24).

Based on the elaboration above, the writer takes 'the traveller' as a signifier. Signifier 'the traveller' signifies 'a person who is travelling' in denotative meaning. Then, the signified 'a person who is travelling' connote a broader meaning in the second order of semiotic signification as 'salik'. At the end, the signifier and signified in the second order, form a sign 'salik' as the final result of all system of signification. So, the sign 'salik' is a connotation of 'the traveller'. In this context, 'the traveller' refers to 'salik' in the concept of Sufism.

Murshid As Symbolized In Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

Murshid is a term for a teacher in tariqah which provides guidance and teachings to a salik. To be in the attainment of a higher spiritual level in the Sufi path, the salik should be by way of guidance from the murshid. Murshid has an important role to guide and give spiritual values against salik. In this case, murshid has an important role toward the spiritual development of the salik. The figures of murshid appear in this story as the persons encountered by Santiago. In his journey, Santiago encounters many persons. However, the writer argues that the persons who have the characteristic of the teacher are an old Gypsy woman, Melchizedek, the crystal merchant and the alchemist. The first teacher is Gypsy woman as described in following quotation: "And dreams are the language of God. When he speaks in our language, I can interpret what he has said. But if he speaks in the language of the soul, it is only you who can understand."

Sufi Path (Tariqah) As Symbolized In Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

Tariqah means the path. According to (Abudhahir et al., 2015) as quoted from Chapter II, "mystics in every religious tradition have tended to describe the different steps on the way that leads towards God by the image of path". It consists in adopting certain measures of discipline and reformation of the character and conduct thus leading to the development of the soul. Seven different stages are generally identified (with variations from school to school) that a Sufi Tariqah should lead to. These seven could also be called principles of the way: *tawbah, wara', zuhd, faqr, sabr, tawakkul, and ridha'.*

In the novel described that Santiago does a journey to Egypt in order to pursue his dream. During the journey, Santiago learns many teachings from the persons he meets. He meets an old Gypsy woman who introduces him about *Language of the World*. At first, Santiago is disappointed to the explanation of woman Gypsy's interpretation when she interprets Santiago's dream. Somehow, indirectly, the Gypsy woman influences Santiago to go to Egypt by saying that dream is the way of God speaks. Santiago knows about *Language of the World* at the first time from the gypsy woman. Santiago then intends to go to Egypt. However, the writer argues that the one who has significant role towards Santiago's journey is Melchizedek. Melchizedek introduces Santiago that to fulfill *Personal Legend* is everybody's mission on earth. The way that is taught by Melchizedek is *Language of the World.* It can be seen from the quotation: "In order to find the treasure, you will have to follow the omens. God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You just have to read the omens that He left for you.

CONCLUSION

By implementing semiotic theory of Roland Barthes, the writer aims to find the connotative meaning of the signs inside the novel(Mandasari, 2017)(Oktaviani et al., 2020). In analyzing the connotative meaning, the writer has to find the denotative meaning for each signifier by analyzing the data from the novel and data sources as the systematically step of semiotic signification. The signs founded in the first order signification reflect a broader meaning which called as connotation(Putra & Qodriani, 2017). The writer founds the signs that reflect connotation inside the novel which have relation towards Sufism.(Wahyudin, 2018) After analyzing the data by using Barthes's theory in novel *The Alchemist* and referring to the finding which have been elaborated in chapter four, the writer finds that there are some signs which reflect Sufism in novel *The Alchemist*. The writer discovers that there are three main subjects of Sufism are symbolized in this novel, namely: salik, murshid, and tariqah.(Mulyanto et al., 2018)

Salik is symbolized by 'the traveler' who in the novel is represented by Santiago. Murshid is symbolized by 'the teacher' who represented by people who teach Santiago during the journey, they are: old Gypsy woman, Melchizedek, the crystal merchant, and the alchemist. Meanwhile, tariqah is symbolized by Santiago's journey in pursuit of the hidden treasure in Egyptian pyramids. The stations or maqamat in tariqah are symbolized by the events or details in the way of Santiago's journey which represent each station, namely: tawbah, wara', zuhd, sabr, tawakkul, and ridha (Ayu & Pratiwi, 2021). The concepts of levels of knowledge in Sufism are ilm' al-yaqin and ayn al-yaqin, each is symbolized by Santiago's dream about the pyramids and Santiago's witness directly on the Egyptian pyramids. Therefore, the writer concludes that Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* symbolizes the concepts of Sufism as mentioned above.

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