

## *Man Jadda Wajada:*

# Religious Aspects in *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi: A Semiotic Analysis

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### Abstract

This study aimed at describing the religious aspects in *Negeri 5 Menara*, a novel by Ahmad Fuadi. To analyze the novel, the structural method was implemented to operationally describe the intrinsic elements of the novel. To reveal the meanings of the novel as a semiotic phenomenon, heuristic and hermeneutic methods were also implemented. The religious aspect found in the novel was a shared mission that brought the characters to Pondok Pesantren Madani (*pondok pesantren* means Islamic boarding house, which is also briefly referred to as *pondok* or *pesantren*) as *santris* (*santri* means a student of Islamic boarding house) and united them in an environment full of religious values. A proverb from hadith saying *Man Jadda Wajada* (whoever strives shall succeed) was clearly manifested by all characters, including the teachers and the *santris*. The moral messages depicted by the author through the narratives of intellectuality and spirituality clearly indicated religious values of this novel.

**Keywords:** *Negeri 5 Menara*, religious aspect, semiotics

### INTRODUCTION

Literary works can simply be described as an author's creation that often provides enlightenment for readers. It can also be considered as an author's reflection on surrounding phenomena, and thus there is no doubt that literary works can provide readers with enjoyment or the feeling of sympathy. For instance, novel readers are unconsciously appealed to enjoy, feel, appreciate, and discover the life problems written by the author. That is the reason of why most literary works can influence readers' perspectives. Such influence may be manifested as culture, habits, and religious aspects. Religious aspects conveyed by an author through literary works are usually not tendentious, but it tends to invite readers through author personal experiences without being patronizing. Semiotics as part of linguistics can explain how it works that way without readers being aware of it. Semiotics is a

study of signs (Hoed in Nurgiyanto, 2007:40). In the semiotic perspective, language is a sign system that represents meaning. In literary works, language as a sign system refers to the second meaning, particularly referred to as second-order semiotic system (Culler in Nurgiyantoro, 2007:39). In literary studies, analyzing signs can help readers better understand meanings of stories because appreciating literary works is giving meanings to the literary works itself. According to Pradopo (1987:121), literary works like novels, short stories, poetry, or drama are sign systems with meanings manifested through the medium of language. Literary works at the sign level are seen as a medium of communication between an author and readers. Such communication is conveyed indirectly to readers. It means that literary works can be seen as a semiotic phenomenon (Teeuw, 1984:43). Another theory states that semiotics is a discipline that views all forms of communication as long as it is carried out using signs based on sign

systems or codes (Segers in Sangidu, 2004:173). Because semiotics is seen as the study of systems, rules, and conventions that allow signs to have meaning, in this sense there are two principles that need to be considered; "signifier" and "signified" (Chamamah-Soeratno, 1991:18).

A sign consists of a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the material form of the sign, while the signified is the concept represented by the sign itself. Referring to Charles Sanders Peirce, Zoest states that there are three ways of how a sign shows its denotatum: (1) through similarity, (2) through convention, and (3) through its contiguous relationship.

A sign that portrays a similarity is called an icon. An icon is a basic and simplest form of sign. It shows something in the easiest way to understand, for instance through a clear plan of directions using arrows. An icon within a text can be simple sentences indicating a sequence of an event. A sign that refers to its denotatum through a convention or particular agreed-upon rules is called a symbol. A symbol is an advanced sign system because it requires a learning process to understand it. The Morse sign system is a clear example because people need to learn it first to understand a series of Morse letters. Language is also a symbolic conventional sign system. For instance, a formal letter always begins with the word "respectfully" in a general correspondence.

Other than the two signs briefly described above, there is a sign system that refers to its denotatum through its contiguous relationship. Such system is called an index, and it can attract our attention, hurt our feelings, and manipulate us, such as the arrow direction of the "Bus Stop" located near the bus stop. The exclamation "Hey!" is also an index.

According to Subur Wardoyo, there are 3 steps to do in a semiotic study: (1) creating a basic narrative scheme of a literary work being studied, (2) finding the main signifier contained in the literary work, and (3) conducting a syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis of the literary work.

Furthermore, the role of language must not be ignored in the semiotic approach. A meaning is produced from concepts in the mind of a meaning giver (reader) through language. Representation is a relationship between conceptual signs that allows readers to point to the real world of an object or reality or to the imaginary world of a fictitious object, people, or event. The center of attention in semiotic study of novels is to explore what is hidden behind the practice of sign (Piliang: 2003:256).

Based on the background above, a novel entitled *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi is assumed to have a semiotic phenomenon worth being analyzed as signs that may refer to things inside or outside the novel. Meanwhile, the language used in novels or other literary works is a signifier that marks the signified as described above. On the other hand, readers will always be associated with every attempt to capture the meanings of a literary work. Therefore, such meanings are not only determined by readers but are also determined and directed by the literary work itself (Chamamah Soeratno, 1991:18). The purpose of this study is to identify the religious aspects that emerge through the description of the linguistic meanings from the semiotic perspective.

### Novel as a Literary Work

According to Teeuw who stands on Felix Vodicka's opinion, literary work is an artifact or inanimate objects that will only have meaning if they are interpreted by the reader. Those readers have a full freedom to fill in the blank spaces in a text. In every literary work, there is a blank space that can be filled by the reader according to their abilities and tastes. That process of giving a meaning is called concretization (2003:157). According to Pradopo, in that attempt to give a meaning, a semiotics and structural analysis is required considering that literary work is sign structure (system) that is meaningful. In the process of giving meaning, the historical process should not be ruled out because the creation of a literary work by the author is

closely related to the society and cultural conditions that surround the author. The reader (including critics and literary experts) is the most critical element for the concretization process (2003:106).

As one of the literary works that has a complex structure, novel usually created from several elements that can be discussed, including (a) setting, (b) character, (c) story, (d) story technique, (e) language, and (f) theme (Rahmanto, 2004:70). Each of these elements is an experience that contains structure, which also means that there are elements that are mutually coherent and form a set of intrinsic rules that determine the nature of the elements themselves. Thus, structural theories is a discipline that sees literary works as a structure consisting of several elements. Those elements are interrelated with each other and form a whole and complete meaning. Those intrinsic elements will be used as the foundation in the analysis of *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi. The signs that appear in sentences are analyzed using the understanding of signifiers and signified.

A literary work is a systematic structure. In the definition of this structure, there are three basic definitions, namely the idea of roundness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-sufficiency (Hawkes, dalam Sangidu, 2004:172). As a structure, it means that there are elements that are mutually coherent and form a set of intrinsic rules that determine the nature of the elements themselves. In other words, those elements do not stand alone in determining a meaning. Transformation means that the structure is not static but dynamic. A structure is not only being arranged but also arranging. The idea of self-sufficiency means that a structure does not require anything from the outside of itself to maintain the transformation. Thus, structural theory is a discipline that views literary works as a structure consisting of several elements. Those elements are interrelated with each other and form a whole and complete meaning.

### Structural Approach

Structural analysis is a way to find a full meaning from a literary work that is being studied through defining and describing the elements of literary works that form the relationship and integrity of it. Structural analysis can be done by identifying, examining, and describing the function and relationship between intrinsic elements which includes theme, plot, character and characterization, setting, viewpoint, etc (Nurgiyantoro, 2010:37). Pradopo argues that one basic concept that characterizes structural theory is the assumption that in a literary work there is a structure that can be understood as a unified whole and interrelated. Structural analysis is the beginning stage in the research of literary works. The stages of structural analysis is the gate to elements that build them. Apparently, structural analysis aims to dismantle the interrelationship of all analyzes and aspects to produce a comprehensive meaning. Therefore, it can be concluded that structural approach is an attempt to understand literary works based on the internal elements that create literary works which produce a comprehensive meaning including plot, characterization, setting and theme. The following analysis that can be conducted by the researcher is to describe how each building element has an overall meaning that is one and completes each other.

The meaning of literary works will be reduced if one of the building elements does not appear. To analyze a work of fiction, the analytical method of reading fiction and good book references is used to support the research objectives. Plot, characters and setting including themes, literary tools (title, point of view, irony, tone, and style and symbolism).

### METHODOLOGY

The structural method is used to analyze the *Negeri 5 Menara* novel by Ahmad Fuadi which is carried out by describing the intrinsic elements of

the novel structurally. After that, those elements are linked to one another to become a unified whole structure. Heuristic and hermeneutic reading is conducted to reveal the meaning of the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* as a semiotic phenomenon. The heuristic reading method is interpreting literary texts referentially through linguistic signs. Heuristic reading can also be conducted structurally to find signifier or meanings. With repeated reading, it is hoped that the events in the novel can be recorded properly, making it easier for writers to find the meaning of literary works in the highest literary system, namely the overall meaning of literary texts as a sign system.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

### Structural Analysis of the Novel *Negeri 5 Menara*

The intrinsic elements are the elements that directly participate and build the story in a novel. The congruence of the intrinsic elements helps to build a tangible literary work, including the events, story, plot, character, theme, setting, point of view, language styles, and others.

The theme of novel *Negeri 5 Menara* refers to education seen from the setting where the story takes place namely *pondok pesantren*. The main activities of the characters are their journey of studying in that *pondok pesantren*.

*"Marhaban. Welcome to our students, the seekers of knowledge. Selamat datang. Bienvenue. I'm Rais Ma'had, the head of pesantren and the teachers here. I'm delighted to welcome all of the new students to study here... (2013:49)*

The snippet of the story above described how the teachers welcomed new students who came to the *pesantren* for the first time. The future *santri* are analogized to those who are in search of knowledge by studying in *pondok pesantren*. *Pondok pesantren* is surely built to provide students with a place to study a wide range of religious knowledge. The excerpt of the novel above also portrayed how the *santri* passes his day by

learning numerous languages. The things they encountered daily are knowledge from various countries, mentioned BBC broadcasts from the UK, VOA from the Americas and news from the Middle East.

One of the main characters of *Negeri 5 Menara* is Said. Said is described as a *santri* who has the character of being responsible, socially caring, loving the homeland, and loving peace. Take a look at the quotation below,

*...Don't be sad, angry, disappointed, and afraid by the virtue of external factors. Only you who hold the power over yourself, and never leave that power to others. Somebody may point you a gun, but you have a choice in your innermost self, and that has nothing to do with external influence... (2013:107)*

In accordance with the quotation above, Said shows a responsible and courageous character to his friends. Said encourages his friends to not be easily fooled by fear and believe in their own self capabilities.

The other main character is Raja. He is such a bookworm, democrat, and an English orator. Another *santri* character in this novel is Alif, who holds a high level of curiosity, religious, smart, and hard work. Farther main character is Atang with his honest, disciplined, creative, and religious characteristics. Dulmajid is a disciplined, independent, and socially caring *santri*. The last *santri* character is Baso who is communicative, religious, and kindly treats his friends with a great deal of respect.

The novel *Negeri 5 Menara* exposes the stories related to the daily life of *santri* in *Pondok Madani*. The life system in this novel contains the rules of *pondok* where Alif and his friends deepen their knowledge of religion. The timeline shows their daily activities from early morning until late at night, on and on.

...Our daily activities start at 4 and it's a bit difficult to wake up this early to perform Fajr prayer together. Santri alternates the role as imam and always recites Al-Quran after fajr prayer. From 6 to 7 in the morning is our free time that we can use to do the things we are interested in such as, sport, art, language, and so on. At 7 to 12 is when the learning activities take place. From that moment on, we do the dzuhur prayer and have lunch within 1 to 2 afternoon. Hereafter, we have the additional classes at 3 PM and move to the next activities including exercising, taking a bath, washing, and doing the most amusing thing in life which is relaxing under the tower near the mosque with some close friends. When the night comes, our next activities are performing maghrib prayer together in the mosque, dinner, and then night study. Finally, 10 PM at night is our time to go to bed.

The passage above shows the regular and scheduled activities of the *santri*, day and night. As if it never stops, the daily activities at *pondok pesantren* are real. *Pondok pesantren* offers an education that can give students a space to train their self-discipline in carrying out the rules at the *pesantren*. The day and night setting becomes the time structure in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara*.

After being formally considered as the students of Pondok Madani, Alif was impressed by the first sentence he heard when he entered the classroom. A very sacred sentence that is capable of making all of the students inside the classroom reiterate that sentence aloud.

*Man jadda wajada, this long foreign word was like a magic spell that worked perfectly. In a short time, we were like being stung by thousands of wasps, thirty children screaming back, shouting from the top of their lungs.*

*"Man jadda wajada! (2013:40)*

The first lesson that the students received from Pondok Madani is the hadiths *man jadda wajada*, which has extraordinary meaning and tremendous power. Just like a mantra, it gives

positive energy of well being to anyone who hears it. *Man Jadda Wajada*. The slogan marks the main theme of religious education and the world in the *pesantren* that is relevant to today's conditions. *Man Jadda Wajada* became the motto of Alif and his friends throughout the time they were studying at the Pondok Madani.

*"Man Jadda Wajada!"*

*Over and over again, until my throat is hot and my voice is hoarse. This frenzy situation has high decibels. My ears were hot and ringing while our faces were flushed red with energy. The window pane was so thin it rattled next to me... (2013:40)*

The passage above shows how a scrap of Arabic words can raise the students' enthusiasm. Every day the teachers of *pondok* encourage their students with this hadiths. Alif and his friends seemed to be burning with enthusiasm, they became more enthusiastic about studying religion at Pondok Madani even though they have to pass many tests.

## Discussion

The semiotic analysis model is applied by Subur Wardoyo in this study. In contrary with the pioneer of semiotic called Pierce, Subur Wardoyo asserted that conducting a study using a semiotic approach required 3 main methods, such as (1) determine the basic narrative scheme contained in the literary work being studied, (2) determine which the form of sign (icon, symbol, index) is the main signifier in the literary work being studied, (3) make a syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis of the literary work.

The basic narrative scheme is a series of significant events in a literary work's story that is compiled by focusing on minimal narrative units and plot rules. Determining a basic narrative scheme is the same as tracing the signs in a literary work's narrative. After obtaining a basic narrative scheme, the next step that must be done in a study using a semiotic approach is to determine a sign

that becomes the main signifier. The main signifier is a sign that can represent all the signs found in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara*. Furthermore, arrange the signs into codes in two ways: in a syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure. The syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures are presented in a laxative axis, with the syntagmatic structure as the horizontal axis and the paradigmatic structure as the vertical axis. The laxative axis can be arranged by specifying the binary opposition. A paradigm is a series of signs from a certain category. Syntagma is a collection of signs that interact and are arranged to form a meaningful unity.

The semiotic study in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi consists of three factors connecting signs with objects: icons, indexes and symbols. (1) icon is a connection sign with its marker that has a similar relationship; (2) index, i.e. the sign and its marker have a causal relationship; (3) while the symbol is a conventional sign and signifier relationship. These three elements are associated with pluralism as a system of cultural signs in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* and the dialectical relationship between public schools and *pesantren* in the novel.

The signs of the religiosity of the characters in *Negeri 5 Menara* are the beginning of applying the science of semiotics. Arising from the similarity of life goals, Alif, Raja, Said, Baso, Dulmajid and other friends took them to a place to study theology and form morals to pursue their dreams for the future. The relationship between one and other elements strengthens semiotic analysis. These elements include the relationship between *pesantren* and the conflict around them, showing how the religious aspect is prioritized in the life dimensions of the santri character from the novel *Negeri 5 Menara*.

Every circumstance experienced by the santri including Alif, Raja, and his friends is the reality of life which combined by Ahmad Fuadi with his wild imagination he gained from observations, appreciation and his involvement in socio-cultural reality. The novel *Negeri 5 Menara* contains a reflection that the signs occurring in human existence are semiotic which can be interpreted in

several ways. It is intended that the readers of literary work gain the experience and moral messages that have been conveyed by the author from real life situations through reportage and the results of imagination. The messages carried by the author of *Negeri 5 Menara* are mostly about moral teachings. The stories contain both intellectuality and spirituality which clearly show the religious aspect of this novel.

### Religious Aspects Novel *Negeri 5 Menara*

*Man Jadda Wajada* has three syllables. *Man* means who, *jadda* means strive, and *wajada* means achieve/succeed. That way, *Man Jadda Wajada* means whoever strives shall succeed. *Man Jadda Wajada* is usually used for individual encouragement to do something further. This Arabic proverb also align with what is promised by Allah SWT who will grant every desire of his servant. There are 4 dimensions that make this proverb a philosophy of life such as, belief, hard work, totality, and *istiqomah*.

The first dimension means that we must fully believe in the good things in life through the prayers we sent to the God almighty. The second dimension has a message of hard work. It takes two to tango, which is the right balance between efforts and God's grace. The third dimension guides us to be total in order to achieve goals. The fourth dimension is not losing faith in process/*istiqomah*, disciplined, dedicated, as well as carrying out the positive affirmations.

In accordance with the novel *Negeri 5 Menara*, the emergence sign of these 4 dimensions as the interpretations of *Man Jadda Wajada* are shown by the santri including, Alif, Raja, Said, Atang, Baso, Dulmajid, as well as the teacher of *Pondok Madani*. Kiyai Rais uses this Arabic proverb saying *Man Jadda Wajada* to arouse the student's excitement every day.

"MAN JADDA WAJADA!!!"

*The thin young man shouted loudly. His forefinger was pointed high in the air, his voice booming, his eyes flashing stabbed us one by one. Serious face,*

*his eyebrows almost caught one another and his graham muscles protruded, as if exerting all his inner strength to conquer our souls... (2013:40)*

## CONCLUSION

Based on the semiotic analysis results from the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* by Anwar Fuadi, it can be concluded that after reading and valuing the novel, the semiotic study in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* consists of three factors that connect signs with objects, namely icons, indexes and symbols. (1) icon is a sign relationship with its marker that has a similar relationship; (2) index, i.e. the sign and its marker have a causal relationship; (3) while the symbol is a conventional sign and signifier relationship. These three elements are associated with pluralism as a system of cultural signs in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* and the dialectical relationship between public schools and *pesantren* in the novel.

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several ways. It is intended that the readers of literary work gain the experience and moral messages that have been conveyed by the author from real life situations through reportage and the results of imagination. The messages carried by the author of *Negeri 5 Menara* are mostly about moral teachings. The stories contain both intellectuality and spirituality which clearly show the religious aspect of this novel.

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