



The Essence of Shalat as an Islamic Spiritual Ritual in Semiotics Study

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Abstract. This article discusses one of the ritual actions among Muslims, namely Shalat or Prayer. The meaning of Shalat based on Islamic law is some words and deeds that begin with takbir and end with greetings, Muslims worship Allah SWT or God of the Universe according to predetermined conditions. The meaning of movement and speech in Shalat needs to be researched to socialize the benefits of prayer so that the faith of Muslims is getting stronger and stronger. The method used in this research is semiotics, a scientific study that is oriented towards signs, signifier, and signified. The discussion on the object of study is carried out through the representation of the sign or representation in terms of the object (denotatum), namely the analysis of the performance of the prayer ritual by using the concepts of icons, indexes, and symbols in it. This study found the fact that spiritual rituals, Shalat is a kind of ritual where various types of worship activities are gathered both outwardly and inwardly. The combination of physical movements with *tuam' ninah* (slowly), poetic utterances that are sung softly and whispered in the heart with full *tawajjuh* (heartfelt supplication facing) to God has an impact on physical health, mental health, and spiritual health.

Keywords: Islam · Shalat · Semiotics

1 Introduction

Prayer is one of the pillars of Islam that must be performed by Muslims. Ash-Shiddiqi [1] explains that the word '*Shalat*' or prayer in the Arabic sense, is a prayer for virtue, and praise. In pre-Islamic times, the Arabs interpreted the word 'prayer' like that. The meaning of '*Shalat*' based on Islamic sharia law is a number of sayings and actions that begin with *takbir* and end with greetings with which we worship Allah SWT (God of the Universe), according to predetermined conditions. According to *Makrifah* experts (wise people) said that prayer is to turn oneself towards Allah SWT. Whole heartedly, with all humility before Him and sincere for The God, and the presence of the heart in remembrance, prayer, and praise to The God. Therefore, prayer is a ritual action whose essence is to turn the heart (soul) towards Allah SWT with full fear and love that can instill in the heart a sense of the greatness and power of Allah. Such circumstances make a servant always feel The God presence in every place and situation.

Ath-Thabarrah [2] said that the obligation of prayer for the Muslim community is to convey praise to Allah SWT because indeed Allah SWT has the right to receive praise

and humans should express gratitude for all the countless gifts of Allah SWT to all His creatures. Allah SWT has made it obligatory for people to obey His commandments and so that they too can ask for help through prayer in carrying out their worldly life. Prayer can be a vessel to relieve the burden of difficulties and trials that humans experience. Prayer is a kind of ritual where various types of worship activities gather, both physically and spiritually. The combination of physical movements in *tuam'ninah* (slowly), poetic utterances that are sung softly and whispered in the heart with full *tawajjuh* (whole-hearted supplications facing) to God. Therefore, prayer is a ritual performance that has its own charm to be studied using various approaches, including semiology (sign science).

2 Methodology

Charles Sander Peirce is a linguist who is famous for his theory of signs (semiotics). Within the scope of semiotics, Pierce often repeats that in general a sign is something that represents something to someone. The sign itself is an example of firstness, its object is duality, and its interpreter (intermediary element), there is an example of thirdness. The triadic that exists in the context of sign formation also evokes unlimited semiotics, as long as one interpreter of an idea that reads a sign as a sign for another (as a representative of a meaning or signifier) can be captured by other interpreters. The interpreter is an element that must exist to associate the sign with the object. In order to exist as a sign, the sign must be interpreted and means that it must have an interpreter.

For Pierce in Justus [3], a sign or representament is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. The sign or representament is always in a triadic relationship, namely ground, object, and interpretant. Signs connected with the ground give birth to qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. Qualisign is the quality that is in the sign, for example the words are harsh, hard, weak, soft and melodious. Singsign is the actual existence of the object or event in the sign; for example the words blurry, murky, dirty, clean, like murky river water which indicates that there is rain upstream of the river. Legisign is the norm contained by the sign, for example traffic signs indicating things that humans may or may not do.

Based on the object (denotatum), Pierce in Justus [3] divides signs into icons (icons), indexes (indices), and symbols (symbols). An icon is a sign in which the relationship between the signifier and the sign is the same as the natural form, or the relationship between the sign and the object is similar, for example, a portrait and a map. An index is a sign that indicates a natural relationship between a sign and a signified that is causal or causal, or a sign that directly refers to reality. Example of smoke is a sign of fire. Signs can also refer to objects through conventions, arbitrary or cement relationships, which are commonly referred to as symbols.

Based on the sign interpretant divided into *rheme*, *dicent sign* or *design* and *arguments*. Rheme is a sign that allows people to interpret based on choice. For example, a person whose eyes are red can indicate that the person has been crying recently, or has an eye disease, or insects have entered their eyes, or just woke up or maybe they are sleepy about going to sleep. Decisign is a sign according to reality. For example, if there are frequent accidents on a road, traffic signs will be installed on the side of the

road indicating where accidents usually occur. An argument is a sign that directly gives a reason about something.

3 Result and Discussion

In the following discussion we only look at signs or representations in terms of their object (denotatum), namely the analysis of the performance of prayer rituals by using the concepts of icons, indexes and symbols contained therein. The main reference for this discussion is the views of Aart van Zoest [4] on semiotics, especially those related to icons, indexes and symbols.

3.1 Symbolic

A symbol (emblem) is a sign that is related to the sign and its denotatum determined by generally accepted regulations. According to van Zoest [4], the most important symbolic sign is text or language sign. Language signs are those that are connected with the denotatum by agreement. Symbolic signs include language structures (words or parts thereof (morphemes) as well as groups of words (phrases, clauses, sequences and so on) and their content in the form of figurative language such as metaphors, metonymy or moral messages, ethics, advice, rhetoric, arguments, and so on which are general in nature. Therefore, according to van Zoest to be able to find out how the signs and symbols function, we first need advice from linguists, literary theorists, structural analysts, and rhetoricians.

The symbolic signs of prayer rituals through the thematic structure and meaning analysis approach can be classified into four states, namely standing, bowing, prostration, and sitting.

3.1.1 Standing

When standing to start the prayer ritual, a Muslim has various essences of actions and words, namely intending, reading *Iftitah* prayers, reading Surah Al Fatihah, reading the surah after Al Fatihah.

a. *intending*

When intending to pray how language begins to function intrapersonal, the mind is involved in offering an activity only to Allah SWT, God Almighty. Then recite the *Takbirul Ihram: Allahu Akbar* (God is Greatest). The word *Akbar* behind the word 'Allahu' is *isim tafdil* (superlative degree). This speech means the greatness, the majesty, the glory of all beings and is determined wholeheartedly about the greatness, the majesty and the glory of Allah SWT as the Creator in absolute terms.

b. *reading Iftitah prayers*

Reading the Iftitah prayer as an opening prayer with four symbolic levels, namely (1) exaltation when reading: *Allahu Akbar kabiran, walhamdu lillahi katsiran, wasubhanal-lahi bukratan wa ashila*; (2) affirmation when reading: *Innii wajjahtu wajhiya lillazzii*

fataras samaawati walardi, hanifan musliman, wamaa ana minal polytheists; (3) surrender when reading: Inna shalaatii, wa nusukii, wa mahyaaya wamamaatii, lillaahi rabbil alamin; and (4) confirmation of identity when reading: Laa syarika lahu, Wabizaalika umirtu, Wa anaa minal muslimiin.

c. reading Surah Al Fatihah

Reading Al-Fatihah is recited in a melodious voice at the Maghrib, Isha, and Fajr prayers, then recited silently at the Dhuhur and Ashar prayers which have three symbolic levels, namely; (1) belongs to God completely when reading: *Bismillahir rahmaanir uterus, Al-hamdullahi Rabbil 'Alamien, Ar-rahmanir-rahim, Maaliki yaumiddin;* (2) belongs to God with the Servant when reading: *Iyyaka na'budu, wa iyyaka nasta'in;* (3) completely belongs to the Servant when reading: *Ihdinash Shiratal mustaqiim, Siratalladziina an'amta alaihim, Ghaairil Maghduubi 'Alaihim, Waladdaalliin.*

d. reading the surah after Al Fatihah

Reciting the surah after Al-Fatihah or elected Surah is completely a servant part because the reading of the verse or surah is determined by the person praying, so this matter cannot be discussed at this opportunity.

3.1.2 Bowing

Reading *Tasbih* and reading *Tahmid* after *I'tidal* is a symbol of exaltation, obedience and submission to Allah SWT.

3.1.3 Prostration

Reading *Tasbih* is a symbol of exaltation and total submission to Allah SWT with recognition of His height.

3.1.4 Sitting

While sitting *Tasyahud* 1 and 2 have five symbolic levels, namely exaltation to God, greetings to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and to all pious people, self-commitment, salutations, and greetings.

- a. Exaltation to God when a Muslim in prayer reads: *Attahyatu lillahi wa shshalawatu wat tayyibatu.*
- b. Greetings to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and to all pious people both living and dead when reading: *Assalamu Alaika Ayyuhan Nabiyyu warhmatullah wabarakatuhu, Assalamu 'alainaa wa 'alaa ibaadillahi shshalihiin.*
- c. Commit yourself when reading: *Asyhadu Anlaailaaha ilallah wa asyhadu anna muhammadan abduhu wa Rasuuluhuu.*
- d. Salutations to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his family and to Nabiullah Ibrahim AS as the leader of the monotheism of mankind when reading: *Allahumma shallii alaa muhammadin wa 'alii muhammadin kamaa sallaeta alaa Ibrahiim wa alaa alii Ibraahiim. Wa baarik alaa Muhammad wa alaa alii Muhammad kamaa barakta alaa Ibraahiim wa alaa aalii Ibraahiim, fil aalamiina innaka hamiidun majiid.*

- e. Greetings to the left and right as a symbol of the safety of creatures throughout nature when reading: *Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh*. The word '*alaikum*' is plural or plural so that it means safety for you and receiving God's grace and blessings. It denotes the plurality (whole) of nature.

3.2 Indexical

An index is a sign which in terms of its sign depends on the existence of a denotatum. According to van Zeust [4], all texts as a whole are indexical signs. Thus the world created by the text can be categorized as an index into three relations, namely: (1) with the real world (say historical reality) which can raise questions concerning the possibilities of its truth – psychological, historical and so on, (2) with the author's world, questions that arise regarding the author's authenticity and honesty, and so on, then (3) with the reader's world regarding recognition, understanding, and being touched by the contents of the reading.

In the prayer ritual, a number of indexical meanings can be traced through: (1) the historical background of the prayer ritual; (2) who and how are the carriers of the teachings of Islam (Islam); and (3) does the one who performs the prayer understand the essence and meaning contained in it and what effect does it have for those who carry out the prayer ritual. All of these things will be explained in essence.

3.2.1 Historical Background of the Prayer

Prayer orders are stated in the Qur'an repeatedly in (QS. 2: 43, 45, 153). The goal is the way for a human servant to communicate with the Creator named Allah SWT (QS. 20:14) and the benefits for a servant (QS. 29:45) to keep humans away from cruel and evil traits. Then the historical authenticity of the Qur'an has also been proven by several manuscript researchers, such as the book *The History of The Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* by a manuscript expert named Muhammad Fu'ad Abdu Al-Baqi [5]. He presented various examples of ancient manuscript texts of the Koran, which had absolutely no difference from the texts that exist today. Then the line (shekal) to make it easier for non-Arabs to read.

Besides that, since the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an there has been a tradition of memorizing it until now. He explained that by understanding the need for documentation of each verse, Muslim communities who have attained the order of huffaz have created a system of memorization as an antidote to influences that damage the composition of the contents of the Holy Qur'an. In the Meccan period, with the oppression that was so strong, carried out by the disbelievers against the Muslims, they were unable to destroy the Qur'an. In the era of progress of Muslims in Medina, Muslims were even able to memorize the Al-Qur'an. In the midst of them, lived the last apostle Nabiullah Muhammad SAW who dictated, explained, composed verses through divine inspiration with his privileged status so that all the verses of the Al-Qur'an became perfect as many as 30 Juz or 114 Surahs.

Likewise Maurice Bacaille [6], a French orientalist, for about 20 years traced, studied, analysed, and researched the authenticity of the Qur'an. He stated that unquestionable authenticity had given the Qur'an a special status. From the evidence of this authenticity,

it strengthens the soul of faith for Muslims to worship wholeheartedly. The Islamic Followers really only depends on the authenticity of the source of its teachings. If these two authenticities are lost, then Islam will collapse and become meaningless. That is why, so that the scholars really seriously protect and maintain the authenticity of both of them wholeheartedly.

3.2.2 The Personality of the Messenger of Prayer ‘Shalat’

Nabiullah Muhammad SAW is the Prophet of Islam who is known as a trustworthy prophet. He really hates deceitful behavior and lies so that in the story when he was 35 years old he was given the title Al-Amin (the trusted one) by the Quraysh tribe because he managed to save them from bloodshed. Even the people of Mecca kept a lot of money and wealth with him as a system of association, when he was still trading with his wife Khadijah as stated by Muhammad Nasiruddin Al-Bani [7].

Al-Jazairy [8] explains that there are four prominent characteristics in the Prophet Muhammad SAW as these characteristics were also possessed by previous prophets from Nuh Alaihi Salam to Isa Al-Masih Nuh Alaihi Salam, namely (1) Ash-Shidqu (true), always tell the truth and never lie under any circumstances. Because lying will cause disbelief in the message he brought. False. (2) Al-Amanah (trusted). A treatise carrier always maintains and fulfills the trust that is carried on his shoulders. Far from treason. (3) At-Tabligh (conveying) a carrier of the treatise will convey whatever is commanded by God to be conveyed, regardless of threats or getting carried away with persuasion from people who do not like the contents of his message. (4) Al-Fathanah (intelligent) a treatise bearer has a high level of intelligence, a clear mind, full of wisdom and wisdom.

3.2.3 Benefits of Prayer ‘Shalat’

There are a number of benefits of prayer rituals for Muslims, namely physical health, mental health, and spiritual health.

a. physical health

An Egyptian sports expert named Prof. Marzuk in Al-Khuly [9] said that the prayer movements are a sport that suits the muscles and joints of the body. If we pay attention to the prayer movements, it turns out that the movements resemble the movement system of a Swedish sport called "Swedish Long" which adjusts the movements to the muscles and joints of humans. Although this sport is only 100 years old, the prayer movement has been going on for approximately 1400 years. Likewise, Prof. Dr. Kohlrausch and Prof. Dr. Leube in Sabo'e [10] says that prayer movements can prevent a person from various diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and others. That is the view of some medical experts who have conducted research on the proper movements in prayer according to the guidance taught by Nabiullah Muhammad SAW.

b. mental health

Someone who performs prayers with the *tuma'ninah* movement, according to the recommendations and regulations of the prayer movement recommended by the Prophet Muhammad SAW and absorbs the readings in the prayer, he/she will reach the point of

ecstasy or calm of the brain and achieve relaxation of the nerves which can increase the body's immunology admirably. It was stated based on dissertation research by Muhammad Shaleh [11].

c. spiritual health

Prayer is a means of communication between the servant and his/her God. Alexis Carrel, winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Surgery, said that praying is the most sublime religious activity because the state of the human soul at that time flies towards its Lord as stated by Khan [12].

The problem that arises is that Muslims who perform prayers, but do not understand the meaning of the symbols in prayer, even though they read them over and over again regularly, they still do not benefit from their prayers. In addition, if they deviate from the guidance in the perfection of the movements in their prayers, they will certainly get very little benefit from the ritual activities of their prayers. This of course requires measurement research for that.

3.3 Iconization

According to van Zoest [4], an iconic sign is a sign that exists in such a way as is possible, without depending on the presence of a denotatum, but it can be related to it on the basis of an equation that potentially has it. In the text one can find several types of iconicity, namely structural icons of relations in the sign area identical to the relationships assumed to exist in the denotatum region, topological icons based on spatial equations, diagrammatic icons based on relational structural equations), metaphorical icons based on similarities between two realities which are denoted literally. Together at once, directly and indirectly. Then van Zoest [4] concludes that phonetic, lexical, phrasal, syntactic, narratological, thematic verification symptoms, and so on, can all be iconic signs.

One of the most important iconic signs in prayer is "*Allahu Akbar*" (God the Greatest) which represents inwardly the existence of Allah SWT in every situation. These words make the soul of a Muslim vibrate and get excited. This causes many Muslims to usually shout '*Allahu Akbar*' when excited, scared, lacking in enthusiasm, or under any circumstances to highlight their identity. *Wallahu A'lam bish Shawab*.

4 Conclusion

Prayer is one of the ritual actions among Muslims in worshipping Allah SWT or God of the Universe according to predetermined conditions. The meaning of prayer based on Islamic sharia law is a number of utterances and actions that begin with *takbir* and end with greetings. The meaning of movements and utterances in prayer promotes the benefits of prayer so that the faith of Muslims becomes stronger and stronger. The method used in this research is semiotics, a scientific study that is oriented towards signs, signifiers, and signified. The discussion on the object of study is carried out through the representation of signs or representations in terms of the object (denotatum), namely the analysis of the performance of prayer rituals using the concepts of icons, indexes and symbols

contained therein. This study found the fact of spiritual rituals, namely prayer is a kind of ritual where various types of religious activities gather externally and spiritually. The combination of physical movements in *tuam'ninah* (slowly), poetic utterances that are sung softly and whispered in the heart with full *tawajjuh* (whole-hearted supplications facing) to God has an impact on physical health, mental health, and spiritual health.

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