Islamic Symbols at Indonesia's Islamic University Libraries: A Semiotic Study

Nurul Hayati

Library and Information Science Department
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
Jakarta, Indonesia
nurul.hayati@uinjkt.ac.id

Lolytasari

Library and Information Science Department
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
Jakarta, Indonesia
lolytasari@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract— **This paper discussed the meaning of Islamic symbols at the library of Islamic universities in Indonesia. The purposes of this study were to identify the Islamic symbols in the libraries, to find the meaning of the Islamic symbols, and to reveal the representation of Islamic values through those symbols. This research was a descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The data were collected by observation and interview. The data were analyzed by conducting semiotic study of Ferdinand De Saussure and Stuart Hall's representation theory on the meaning of Islamic symbols in the libraries. The results showed that the Islamic symbols in the Islamic university library are physical symbols and value symbols. These Islamic symbols had meaning as an implementation of Islamic values contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. It can be concluded that the Islamic symbols have been used in the library of Islamic universities in Indonesia. The symbols were interpreted as the implementation of Islamic values required in Islamic universities. The impacts of this research are the identification of Islamic symbols that have been used in the library of Islamic universities in Indonesia and the interpretation of the Islamic values contained in the symbols used.**

Keywords—Representation, Islamic symbols, symbolic meaning, Islamic values, library of Islamic university

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia there are many Islamic universities, each of which has a library, both the Main Library and the faculty library. Lately some of the Islamic Universities in Indonesia financed by The Ministry of Religious Affair build new buildings, including the library of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta (hereafter called UIN Jakarta), Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin State Islamic University of Banten (hereafter called UIN Banten), and State Institute for Islamic Studies of Palangkaraya (hereafter called IAIN Palangkaraya),

Islamic University Library is the library of the college where the parent institution is an Islamic college. In the design of the building and library space in Islamic University Library there are messages communicated to the community. Those messages are communicated through Islamic symbols in the library buildings design and decoration. In terminology, symbol means media to create and convey a message, compose system epistemology and concerns a matter of a belief embraced [1, p. 187].

A sign or symbol is a stimulus which indicates the presence of something else. Thus, it is a mark closely associated with the actual act of intention [2, p. 89]. The meaning we give to a symbol is a product of social interactions and illustrate our agreement to implement the specific meaning of a particular symbol.

Symbolic meanings have been examined by some earlier researchers, including Baker, Kleine, and Bowen in 2006 in his paper *On the Symbolic Meanings of Souvenirs for Children*. The paper demonstrates the many layers of meaning associated with souvenirs in both acquisition and consumption processes and provides evidence that the meanings between children, places, and objects are inextricably linked [3, pp. 209–248]. In 2015, Kemp, Angell, and McLoughlin write a paper *The symbolic meaning of artefacts for the workplace identity of women in academia*. The aim of this paper is to investigate the symbolic meaning attributed by women in academia to workplace artefacts. The finding reveals three themes emerged on the symbolic meaning of from artifacts for women in academia [4, pp. 379–396].

Islamic symbol is the symbol that contains Islamic messages conveyed by the symbols maker to the reader. Research on Islamic symbols is not new. Akbari in 2018 did research on *Islamic symbols in food packaging and purchase intention of Muslim consumers*. The findings show that religious symbol in packaging increases perceived religious symbolic-the value of the product among the customers with high religiosity [5, pp. 117–131].

Meaning of symbols can be found through the study of semiotics. According to Scholes in Budiman [6, p. 3] that semiotics, which is usually defined as the study of signs, is primarily a study over the codes, i.e. any system that lets us look at certain entities as signs or as something that is meaningful. We can see signs of how the different meanings of certain people in various aspects such as geographic, tribal and cultural.

Leipamaa-Leskinen, Syrjala, and Jaskari in 2018 in their article *A semiotic analysis on cultural meanings of eating horsemeat* state that this study explores how the meanings related to a living horse may be transferred to those of horsemeat. The semiotic square shows that the meanings of horsemeat arise between the binary oppositions of human-like and animal-like. In this structure, the category of human-like makes eating horsemeat impossible while the category of animal-like make horsemeat good to be consumed [7, pp. 337–352].

However, research on the semitoc study of the meaning of Islamic symbol at the library of Islamic univerisity in Indonesia has never been found. On that basis, the researchers conduct the study of Islamic symbols found at library of Islamic universities in Indonesia, the interpretation of meanings embodied in the symbols, and the Islamic values represented through the symbols.

II. METHOD

This is a descriptive qualitative research. It is conducted at four Islamic Universities in Indonesia: UIN Jakarta, UIN Banten, Wali Songo State Islamic University of Semarang (hereafter called UIN Semarang), and IAIN Palangkaraya. Data are collected by observation and interview. Data analysis are done by examining Islamic symbols found in the library of the Islamic universities in Indonesia based on Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic study, and then the representation of Islamic values based on Stuart Hall's representation approach.

III. RESULT AND FINDING

This study focuses on three issues: the Islamic symbols, the meaning of the symbols, and representations of Islamic values in the symbol used in the library of Islamic universities in Indonesia.

A. Islamic Symbols

Many Islamic symbols are used at Library of IAIN Palangkaraya, either in physical or value symbols form. Islamic symbol is physically visible in the interior of the building which contains a lot of calligraphy, frame building which adopts the mosque model, and more collection of Islamic subjects compared to other subjects. As for Islamic values reflected in everyday life of library staff and users that can be seen especially by saying the salam whenever meet someone, and through Islamic dress [8].

In Library of UIN Semarang there are not many Islamic symbols, because according to the staff Islamic symbols are not much needed as the library is already in Islamic university which has clearly shown shades of Islam. However, based on the results of observation, Islamic symbol in Library of UIN Semarang is visible from the identity of female librarian and library users who wear hijab, the collections are mostly about Islam, and there is a mosque in the library [9].

In the Library of UIN Banten, Islamic symbols are only visible from the hijab used by female librarians and users, and the number of collections dominated by Islamic subjects [10]. While, the library of UIN Jakarta has the extensive use of Islamic symbols. Physical Islamic symbols can be seen from the Dome at the top of the building's Main Library, mosques which are located on each floor and are separated for male and female, calligraphy which is located in some of the rooms, the presence of the quote the verse of the Qur'an (QS. Al-Isra: 36) tacked on the presence of CCTV related markers, female librarian and users who wear hijab, Islamic subject collection reaches 70% of the total collection, as well as the green and white colors that dominate the building of the library. In addition, Islamic symbols in the form of values are also seen in the library of UIN Jakarta, such as saying "*Assalamualaikum*" among librarians and users whenever they meet [11].

B. Meaning of the Islamic Symbol

Semioticians who are expert on Saussure semiotics approach use flow that simply pays attention to the signs that accompanied the intent (signal) that is used by those who knowingly transmit (the sender) and those who receive it (the recipient). These experts do not hold on to the primary meaning (denoted) sign was delivered, but rather trying to get secondary meaning (connotation). According to Saussure, the sign has two entities, namely the signifier (symbol) and the signified (the meaning). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary; there is no logical relationship between them, which makes the text or mark to be attractive and also problematic at the same time [12, p. 6]

The following are some Islamic symbol in the library of the Islamic University in Indonesia with its meaning based on the analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure semiotics:

1) Dome

Dome on the top of the Main Library building of UIN Jakarta becomes a symbol that this library is a reflection of Islamic civilization. As the tallest building in campus, everyone who visits UIN Jakarta would recognize the library. With the semiotic technical analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure, the meaning denoted or the true meaning (signifier) of the dome is a dome of the mosque, while the connotative meaning or existing ideas and concepts in head (signified) is a lighthouse which makes the library as a bridge to the Islamic civilization. So, it could be said that the dome represents the Main Library of UIN Jakarta as the bridge towards Islamic civilization. With the centre of the library as the heart of civilization, it promotes the availability of a collection of Islamic subjects which are more dominant compared to other subjects.

2) Building Construction Adopting the mosque model

The truss construction of the Library building of IAIN Palangkaraya adopts the model of the mosque. Based on semiotic analysis of Saussure, the signifier of the construction of the truss is the construction of the building, while the signified is a supporter/cantilever roof construction that provides graceful and beauty of Islamic artistic. Thus, it can be said that the order represents the library building of IAIN Palangkaraya is an Islamic artworks that acts as a sustainer of the existence of IAIN Palangkaraya in the running of the three pillars of higher education.

3) Library collection of Islamic subjects is dominant

Its heart lies in the availability of library collections. Library collections of the Islamic universites in Indonesia are more dominated by a collection of Islamic subjects as compared to other subjects. Based on Saussure's semiotic analysis, subjects' collection of Islamic domination as the signifier is the amount of the collection of more Islamic subjects, while as signified is the heart of the library. Thus, it can be said that the dominance of Islamic subjects at the library of Islamic universities in

Indonesia represents the core of the Islamic university in Indonesia, which become the benchmark the university.

4) Hijab

Female librarians and users in the Library of Islamic universities in Indonesia wear hijab. Based on the analysis of Saussure's semiotic, the signifier of hijab is clothing that covers the body or a woman's private parts, whereas as signified hijab means clothing that is commanded by the Qur'an for women. Thus, the hijab represents female librarians and users at library of Islamic universities in Indonesia as muslim women.

Hijab is a symbol of Islam. Clifford Geertz defined religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" [13, p. 5]. Geertz concludes that religion causes a person to feel or do something. In this instance, someone behaves toward the religious symbols resulting from a certain motivation that arises in him.

5) Mosque

All libraries of Islamic universities in Indonesia provide mosque. Even interestingly, the Main Library of UIN Jakarta provides two mosques on each floor: female mosque and male mosque. A mosque is a holy place that is free from profanen and a place for library visitors to prostrate. With the availability of mosque, library users can still perform prayer on time in the middle of a hectic activity in the library.

Based on Saussure's semiotic analysis, the signifier of mosque is a room, while the signified of mosque is a holy place to prostrate to Allah. So, the existence of the mosque represents the library of Islamic University in Indonesia that gives special space for library visitors to remain prostrating to Allah in the middle of a hectic activity.

6) Calligraphy

Calligraphy as a work of art can be an accessory that can attach importance to library spaces. The sentence written is usually parts of the Qur'an verses. Some libraries of Islamic universities in Indonesia place calligraphy in the halls, such as in the Main Library of UIN Jakarta and Library of IAIN Palangkaraya. With the technique of Saussure's semiotic analysis, the signifier of calligraphy is a display (as accessories), while what is signified by calligraphy is artwork with Arabic script that contains messages of the Qur'an. It represents that library of Islamic universities in Indonesia is very fond of the beauty of the Qur'an.

7) Using green and white colour

Green and white that dominate the Main Library building at UIN Jakarta show the Islamic colors. White symbolizes purity; it is seen from the colour of the clothes of pilgrims which are all white. Imam Al-Ghazali in Ihya ' Ulumiddin said: "the color that Prophet likes is green but most clothing is white" [14, p. 379]. Thus, it can be said that white and green is the favourite colour of the Prophet.

Based on Saussure's semiotic analysis, then signifier of the colours green and white is the colour of the light, while green and white colour signifies Islamic colors because the colours are also the favourite colours of the Prophet. It can be said that the colours of green and white that dominates the Main Library building at the UIN Jakarta represents that the Main Library of UIN Jakarta is an Islamic library.

8) The inclusion of excerpts from the Qur'an in CCTV mark

At CCTV mark at Main Library of UIN Jakarta include a translation of a verse in the Qur'an which reads " And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned" (QS. Al Isra ': 36). Based on Saussure's semiotic analysis, hence the signifier of the inclusion of the quote from the Qur'an is a paper sticker that contains quote Qur'an verses, while the signified is a form of awareness to the user library to be careful in uttering the words and their acts, because all will certainly be subject to accountability by Allah in the afterlife. Thus, it can be said that the quote Qur'an verses on CCTV represents the Main Library UIN Jakarta in conducting surveillance to the users of the library as a form of accountability.

9) Greeting among Librarians and Users

The staff in library of Islamic univerisities in Indonesia has the habit of saying salam. Referring to Saussure's semiotic analysis techniques, the signifier of the greeting is a greeting *Assalamu alaikum*, while the signified is greeting containing prayers. So, it can represent the religiosity of librarians and users of the Library of Islamic univeristies in Indonesia. Salam has a substantial significance, essential and profound for Muslims. The phrase is used not only as a tradition in greeting, but contains the philosophy that Muslims must pray for each other and not despise each other.

C. Representation of Islamic Values

The definition of the system that helps interpret the world or reality as well as research thet world is ideology. It is this ideology that affects the presence of a symbol, the symbol of Islam. It is this ideology that would later give birth to a process of representation of Islamic values. This representation refers to the process of understanding by Stuart Hall; a production of meaning in the mind through language that describes the object, person, or event is fiction. As said above that this representation process precedes ideology because the production process is not neutral and ideology influences its formation. Objects in representation in this research are the Islamic values.

Representation itself is one of the main practices that produce a culture which has an important position in a circuit of culture or cultural circle composed of elements of the representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation [15, p. 1]. Representation theory of Stuart Hall shows a process in which the meaning is produced with the use of languages and exchanged by members of the group in a certain culture. The relationship between elements in the circuit of culture is the dialogical relationship and do not have a definite pattern, the absolute and essential. The production is just one element in the circuit of culture which cannot be

separated from issues of representation, identity, consumption, and regulation. Representation link between concept in our mind and language that allows us to identify things, people, events that are real, and the world of the imagination of the objects, people, things, and events that are not real (fictional) [15, p. 17].

IV. CONCLUSION

Islamic symbols used by the library of the Islamic University in Indonesia include physical symbols and the symbols which consist of values, which are visible on the interior and exterior design of the library. The physical Islamic symbol are a Dome, calligraphy, mosque, the use of hijab, colour selection, the dominance of Islamic subjects collection, and the inclusion of a quote from the Qur'an on the markings. While the Islamic symbol in the form of values can be seen in the utterance of salam as a greeting habit among librarians and users when they meet.

Based on the technique of Saussure's semiotic analysis, Islamic symbols found in the library of Islamic univerisities in Indonesia have the denotated meaning (signifier) and the connotative meaning (signified). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary; there is no logical relationship between them.

Islamic values are represented by the library of Islamic universities in Indonesia through Islamic symbols which are used as a form of religious relations (Islamic values), the relation of power and dominant norms in force in the community.

REFERENCES

[1] S. Soekanto, *Sosiologi: suatu pengantar*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2001.

[2] Morissan, *Teori Komunikasi*. Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia, 2013.

[3] S. M. Baker, S. S. Kleine, and H. E. Bowen, "On the Symbolic Meanings of Souvenirs for Children," in *Research in Consumer Behavior*, vol. 10, R. W. Belk, Ed. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2006, pp. 209–248.

[4] L. J. Kemp, L. Angell, and L. McLoughlin, "The symbolic meaning of artifacts for the workplace identity of women in academia," *Gend. Manag. Int. J.*, vol. 30, no. 5, pp. 379–396, 2015.

[5] M. Akbar, M. H. Gholizadeh, and M. Zomorrodi, "Islamic symbols in food packaging and purchase intention of Muslim consumers," *J. Islam. Mark.*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 117–131, 2018.

[6] K. Budiman, *Semiotika Visual*, 1st ed. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2011.

[7] H. Leipämaa-Leskinen, H. Syrjälä, and M.-M. Jaskari, "A semiotic analysis on cultural meanings of eating horsemeat," *Qual. Mark. Res. Int. J.*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 337–352, 2018.

[8] Siti Narani, "Wawancara dengan Koordinator Perpustakaan IAIN Palangkaraya," 25-Jul-2018.

[9] A. Afida, "Wawancara dengan Koordinator Perpustakaan UIN Walisongo Semarang," 31-Jul-2018.

[10] I. M. Natsir, "Wawancara dengan pustakawan Perpustakaan UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten," 24-Jul-2018.

[11] A. Hasbana, "Wawancara dengan Kepala Pusat Perpustakaan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta," 03-Aug- 2018.

[12] A. A. Berger, *Media analysis techniques*, 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications, 2005.

[13] C. Geertz, *Kebudayaan dan agama*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992.

[14] A.-I. Al-Ghazali and I. I. Ba'adillah, *Ihya 'Ulumiddin: Menghidupkan kembali ilmu-ilmu agama*, vol. 3. Jakarta: Republika, 2009.

[15] S. Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representation and signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 2003.