
The Representation of the Islamic Religious Leader in Film “Makmum” by Riza Pahlevi

Jordy Satria Widodo

Universitas Pakuan, Bogor, Indonesia

Email correspondence: jordysatriawidodo@unpak.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The film is known as the audio-visual means of communication. Moreover, it encompasses so many genres, especially horse horror films film has been well-known in the context of Indonesia’s film production. Horror films have a tight bond with the Indonesian audience since most people believe in mystical and supernatural occurrences. The existence of the religious leader becomes important to drive out the ghosts from hauntings. *Maximum* by Riza Pahlevi is one horror film that portrays the coming of the Islamic religious leader as the problem solver over the haunting problems in the movie. The purpose of this research is to analyze the representation of the Islamic religious leader in the film *Makmum* by Riza Pahlevi. The research made use of a qualitative approach and took the denotative and connotative semiotics concept by Roland Barthes. The data collection technique was conducted through document analysis. The research result presented that the images of the Islamic religious leader comprise having a deep Islamic religious knowledge, becoming loyal to the teachings, and becoming righteous according to religious beliefs shown through varied scenes in the movie.

Keywords: Horror Films; Representation; Semiotics; The Islamic Religious Leader.

I. BACKGROUND

The film is categorized as moving images which are dominant forms of mass media (Ardianto, 2007). Also, it is a means of audio-visual communication which conveys messages to a group of people gathering in a certain place (Effendy, 1986). What is more, film functions as the representation of people from a particular place which usually takes the stereotypes to portray them in the scenes? Furthermore, there are many genres of films comprising comedy, drama, romance, thriller, horror, and so on. In particular, horror is one of the movie genres that shows thrilling impressions that include the scenes of demonic possessions, zombies, ghosts, rituals, cannibalism, murder, and so forth in the area of

fantasy (Pinel, 2006).

In most horror films, the religious leaders become central since they play a role in solving problems. They are usually positioned as the protagonist to bring a happy ending to the movies (Abdulsalam, 2017). They are the ones that can drive out ghosts by reciting spellings or verses taken from the sacred books. It depicts a power that the religious figure has when it comes to controlling something demonic and chaos caused by the demons or Satan. Also, they are usually portrayed to have in-depth knowledge of religious teaching and wearing the religious attributes which signify their loyalty to the religious teaching (Aljufri, 2018).

In addition to horror movies, *Maximum* is one of the titles which presents the coming of the religious leader to solve the haunting problems of the demonic spirit named Makmum or Ningsih. This film also tells about three female teenagers living in a dormitory in a village. They are punished to stay in the dorm during school holidays on purpose by the head of the dormitory, namely Ibu Rossa because they have achieved bad scores in their study reports (Maharani, 2022). Additionally, Ibu Rossa is known to be very strict while punishing students.

However, the former head of the dorm, Ibu Kinanti, always reminds her to not act very strictly toward the students. Meanwhile, the dorm is haunted by a female ghost, called Ningsih, who is a fire victim. Ningsih is Rini's best friend, who is a school alumnus. In short, Rini is asked by Pak Slamet to come back to the dorm, and the whole character has experienced the haunting (Maharani, 2022). Ustadz Ganda is the only one that can solve the problem. In the end, the ghost is driven away, and Rini and Ustadz Ganda are asked to continue taking care of the dormitory (Maharani, 2022). From the aforementioned background, the research question is; How is the Islamic religious leader in the film "*Maximum*" by Riza Pahlevi represented?

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used the concept of Semiotics by Roland Barthes. The theory is about denotative and connotative meanings. The study examined four scenes on the representation of an

Islamic religious leader. First, denotative meaning is the first-layer meaning which describes the actual signs. Second, connotative meaning is the second level of meaning which is about people's emotional emotions and gestural backgrounds (Rusmana, 2014).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The previous research question is explained following the representation of religious leaders in Indonesia's horror films. The discussion is explicated as follows,

1. Scene 1 (Rini's asking for Ustadz Ganda's help)

Denotative Meanings

The denotative meaning of this scene is that Rini and Ustadz Ganda talk with each other about the coming of the evil spirit, Ningsih. She haunts three female teenagers at the school's dormitory. Rini is wearing a black blouse and is carrying a light brown handbag. She has straight eyesight while telling about the haunting spirit that is popularly known as *Maximum*. Moreover, she has got long black straight hair. Meanwhile, Ustadz Ganda looks like an Arabian person. He is wearing a dark blue Muslim shirt and a black Muslim skullcap. Further, he appears attentive to Rini's telling the story. The setting is in front of a yellow-painted small mosque.

Connotative Meanings

In regards to the connotative meaning, the existence of a religious figure is the character that is central to solving the problems

of the evil spirit, Ningsih, at the dormitory. Nurul, Nisa, and Putri force Pak Slamet and Rini to look for Ustadz Ganda who is the religion teacher at their school. It is in line with the assumption that the coming of the religious leader is illustrated as the protagonist or the problem-solver in a mystical occurrence (Abdulsalam, 2017). Moreover, Ustadz Ganda, who looks Arabian and who is wearing a Muslim shirt and a Muslim skullcap, connotes that an Arabian person is related to the Islamic religion. Indeed, religion comes from the Middle East. Meanwhile, the Muslim shirt and skullcap show a form of someone's loyalty and faithfulness toward Islamic teaching (Aljufri, 2018).

2. Scene 2 (Ustadz Ganda's saving Rini from fire)

Denotative Meanings

The scene denotes that Ustadz Ganda is standing in front of the breaking window. It is depicted that there is a fire in the room. Furthermore, Ustadz Ganda is wearing a light blue Muslim shirt and a black Muslim skullcap. He is calling Rini's name who passed out in the room. He intends to save Rini's life from the fire.

Connotative Meanings

The connotative meaning of the scene is that the religious figure represented by the existence of Ustadz Ganda acts in the concept of *Deus Ex Machina*. In addition, the role is extremely central to saving someone's life in the film (Yakti, 2019). Besides, Yakti (2019)

states that the position of a hero is essential for Ustadz Ganda in respect of creating a safe and comfortable place for the people surrounding him. Additionally, the fire happening in the room where Rini passed out can be saved due to the alacrity of Ustadz Ganda who acts as the savior.

3. Scene 3 (Ustadz Ganda's praying)

Denotative Meanings

This scene portrays Ustadz Ganda who is performing the prayer. He is wearing a light grey Muslim shirt and a black Muslim skullcap. He is also praying while narrating about the disturbance when people perform the prayer as *Kanzam*. It appears to be a demon or a satan.

Connotative Meanings

The scene connotes the alert stated by a religious figure. Yakti (2019) explains that a religious figure needs to have the depth of knowledge and spread the teaching. Then, reminding humans to be on the straight way to God is one of the missions carried out by the religious leader. Ustadz Ganda is warning about people's solemnity while taking a prayer. The disturbance always happens due to the act of the demon or the devil, *Kanzam*. What is more, the portrayal of a Muslim skullcap and a Muslim shirt in the praying act indicates the faithfulness of the religious figure in carrying out the *Sharia*, Islamic law (Aljufri, 2018).

4. Scene 4 (Ustadz Ganda's driving away from the ghost)

Denotative Meanings

This scene indicates that Ustadz Ganda is standing in front of Rini, Nurul, and Nisa who are scared of Ningsih's spirit which possesses Ibu Rossa's body. He is shown to recite the verses in *Al Qur'an* and point out his palm to Ibu Rossa. All of a sudden, the spirit is coming out of the body because of the *Al Qur'an* recital.

Connotative Meanings

The scene connotatively depicts that the religious leader or Ustadz is the person who can solve the problem and who can bring the story to a happy ending (Abdulsalam, 2017). Moreover, Ustadz Ganda is assumed influential in the film since he appears to be a form of holiness and piety (Haryanto, 2016). In actual practice, the way to God is where holiness and forgiveness go. Nonetheless, the people with weak faith are easily tendentious to the bad deeds which are illustrated by the coming of Ningsih's spirit in the dormitory. Ustadz Ganda makes use of the *Al Qur'an* verses to repel the spirit. It presents the religious figure's in-depth knowledge which is sacred and can be made a model to obey (Haryanto, 2016).

IV. CONCLUSION

There are four scenes chosen to be explicated through semiotics theory which depict the representation of the Islamic religious leader in the movie. The film portrays the image of the Islamic religious leader very clearly as the protagonist or the problem-solver when it comes to the haunting acts done by the ghost. Additionally, the character is central to showing

the power of the religious leader over something that is not the righteous way of performing the Islamic religious teachings. He is portrayed to have a deep Islamic religious knowledge, be loyal to the teachings, and be righteous in his religious belief.

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