

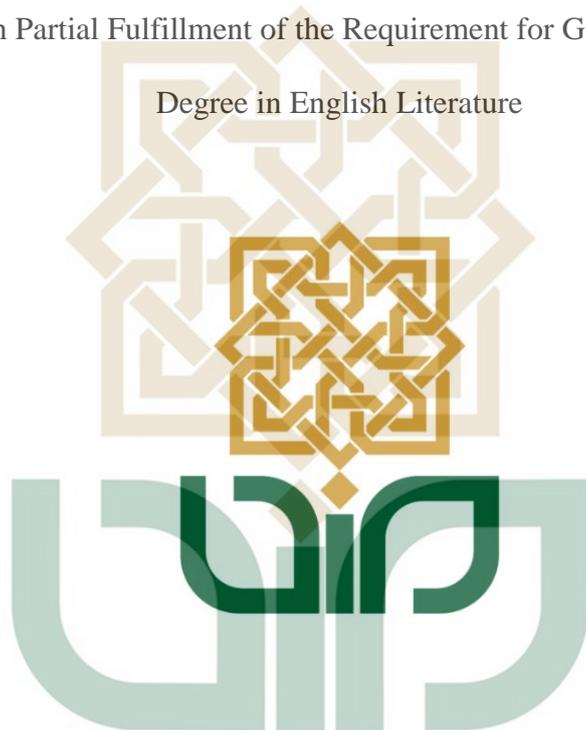
THE TEACHINGS OF SALAFI IN *LIFE WITH THE AHMAD FAMILY*

COMIC: PEIRCE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the Bachelor

Degree in English Literature



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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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PEIRCE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

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Atas perhatiannya, saya ucapkan terima kasih

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MOTTO

By the signs, we learn

By the signs, we understand

By the signs, we fall in affection.



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DEDICATION

The researcher dedicates this graduating paper to:

My beloved parents, Ibnu Krisworo and Masitoh

My dear younger brothers, Yudi and Ridwan

All of my kindest friends in English Department, especially chapter 2016



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**THE TEACHINGS OF SALAFI IN *LIFE WITH THE AHMAD FAMILY*
COMIC: PEIRCE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

ABSTRACT

The emergence of religious comics in this cyber era is steadily increasing. These comics often share and spread the teachings of particular Islamic movements through the signs inside them for the purpose of their *dawah* (missionary endeavor). One of the comics containing such religious teachings is *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic, which indicatively contains Salafi teachings. This paper is objected to find out the Salafi teachings contained in the signs manifested in the comic. The type of research in this paper is qualitative research. This paper applies observation method to collect the data. As for analyzing the data this paper applies referential equivalent method. The researcher takes Magnussen's point of view in understanding comics. Comics contain drawings, words and panels which, according to her, refers to iconic, symbolic and indexical signs. Following this point of view, the researcher uses the semiotic theory of C.S. Peirce as the theoretical framework for the understanding of comics in this research. As Peirce suggested, this paper applies the triadic analysis of representamen, object and interpretant holistically. The researcher also uses the fatwa of Salafi ulamas to strengthen the research findings in this paper. After analyzing the comic, a number of Salafi teachings are found. They are the prohibition on *tashwir* (drawing) living creatures, the recommendation to let the beard grow and to trim the moustache, the prohibition on wishing Merry Christmas, the prohibition on imitating or joining non-Muslim festivals and the teaching for not celebrating the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*).

Keywords: *Comic, Islamic movements, Salafi, Missionary endeavor, Signs*

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**THE TEACHINGS OF SALAFI IN *LIFE WITH THE AHMAD FAMILY*
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ABSTRAK

Kemunculan komik bernuansa agama pada era siber ini semakin marak. Komik semacam ini seringkali menyebarkan ajaran-ajaran dari gerakan Islam tertentu lewat tanda-tanda di dalamnya untuk tujuan dakwah mereka. Salah satu komik islami yang mengandung ajaran-ajaran religius semacam ini adalah komik *Life with the Ahmad Family*. Komik tersebut diduga mengandung ajaran-ajaran Salafi di dalamnya. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menemukan ajaran-ajaran Salafi yang terkandung dalam tanda-tanda yang dimunculkan di dalam komik tersebut. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan dalam tulisan ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Tulisan ini menggunakan metode observasi dalam teknik pengumpulan data. Kemudian dalam teknik menganalisis data tulisan ini menggunakan metode padan referensial. Peneliti menggunakan sudut pandang Magnussen dalam memahami komik. Komik mengandung gambar, kata dan panel yang menurutnya mengacu pada tanda-tanda ikonik, simbolik dan indeksikal. Dengan mengikuti sudut pandang ini, peneliti menggunakan teori semiotika C.S Peirce sebagai kerangka teori dalam memahami komik di dalam penelitian ini. Peneliti juga menggunakan fatwa-fatwa ulama Salafi untuk memperkuat temuan penelitian di dalam tulisan ini. Setelah dilakukan analisis, ditemukan beberapa ajaran salafi yang terkandung dalam tanda-tanda di komik ini diantaranya ialah larangan menggambar makhluk hidup secara utuh, anjuran untuk memanjangkan janggut dan memotong kumis, larangan mengucapkan selamat natal, larangan untuk tidak meniru atau ikut merayakan festival-festival non muslim, dan ajaran untuk tidak merayakan maulid nabi.

Kata kunci: *Komik, Gerakan Islam, Salafi, Dakwah, Tanda*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The increasing issue about Islamic movements in this cyber era often causes different perspectives in understanding Islam among Muslim society. The movements sometimes carry the variety of responses to the Islamic issue. Each group shares and spreads their religious ideas in various ways such as speeches, debates, academic discussions, TV shows, videos, articles, magazines, and social media. Another interesting way to share their religious teachings is through comics, which also participate in this matter with no exception. These kinds of comics often share religious messages and serve religious ideas related to Islam in their stories.

Nowadays, comics are steadily increasing. One significant factor why comics become popular in this cyber era is due to the easiness of its accessibility. In this world of technological advances, comics could appear in the forms of both printing and digital. Their existence is not only in physical world but also in virtual world. Thereby, it is widely easy for people to share and access them whether physically or virtually. Considering their novelty and current popularity, the researcher suggests that the study of comics is highly interesting and fresh to discuss.

The researcher takes *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic to be examined in this study. The researcher views that this comic is unique, authentic and distinctive from any other comics. *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic shows a lot of Islamic signs, which indicatively contain the teachings of Salafi (a tradition of Islamic

understanding). The Salafi teachings can be noticed from the signs realized in the comic through the drawings (visual), the words (verbal), and the stories (a sequence of panels). Furthermore, the particular religious codes are represented through the appearance, the costumes, the religious terms, the ideas, and the deeds of the characters in the story. From the particular signs, *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic shows the religious messages for the purpose of their *dawah* (missionary endeavor), which indicate the religious teachings in Salafi's point of view. Therefore, it is reasonable for the researcher to investigate this comic thoroughly.

Salafi is one of the Transnational Islamic Movements in the world, as well as Ikhwanul Muslimin and Hizb at Tahrir. Salafi movement initially emerged in Saudi Arabia and was pioneered by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. This movement expanded broadly to the Greater Middle East, a term referring to a set of countries lining from Morocco to Pakistan. Salafi, recently also named Wahhabi, called for war towards *bid'ah* (heresy), *shirk* (paganism or polytheism) and religious deviation. Also, this movement called for the invitation to return to the Holy texts of Islam, Al-Quran and Sunnah. However, Salafi is not always accompanied with violence. According to the record of BIN (Badan Intelijen Negara), Salafi is divided into two primary movements, namely Salafi Jihadi and Salafi Dawah (BIN, 2011: 22-23, 30-32).

The division above is based on how they propagate their ideology (BIN, 2011: 22-23, 30-32). Salafi Jihadi is not hesitant to use violence in spreading its ideology. Meanwhile, Salafi Dawah, also called Salafi Sururi, focuses on purifying *akidah* (faith), eradicating *bid'ah* (innovation) and correcting religious deviation

without physical violence. Salafi Dawah grew internationally by a teacher-student's network of the Salafi ulamas. This movement propagates its ideas by virtue of learning and teaching which is spread through boarding schools, lectures, books and other ways on the basis of missionary endeavor. The research of BIN is taken to specify which kind of Salafi meant in this study. Hereby, the researcher suggests that the kind of Salafi studied in this paper is Salafi Dawah or Salafi Sururi.

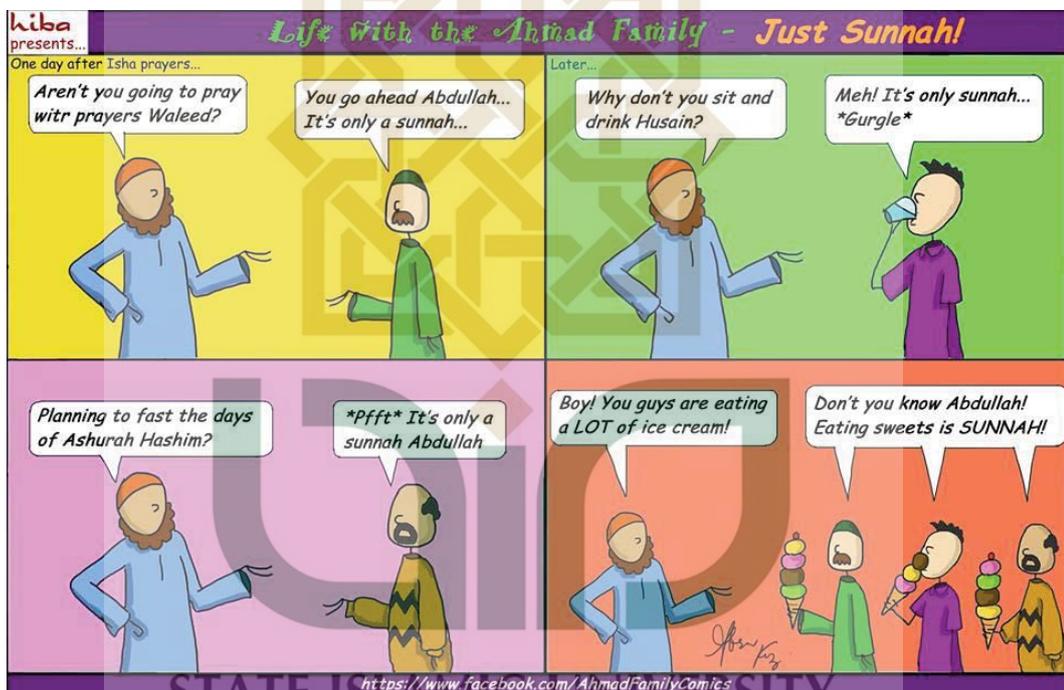


Figure 1. *Just Sunnah!*

As previously mentioned, the researcher is interested in investigating *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic because it contains Salafi teachings that are realized in the drawings, the words, and the stories. At the first glance the style of drawings in *Life with the Ahmad Family* is likely quite simple (see Figure 1). Even so, if examined thoroughly, it can be noticed that every character in the comics does not have complete face. Noticeably, the human drawings in this comics does not have some qualities of the head. They are not attached with eyes, ears and mouth whereas

they are the essential parts of the head. Ideally, the human head should have eyes, ears and mouth as the main parts of the head, yet they are evidently not drawn in the comics. Besides, some qualities of the body are also not attached completely. The hand fingers of all characters are also drawn in an imperfect condition or not in full five fingers. Only one, two or three of them are drawn in the comics. In other words, some parts of the head and the body are definitely missing. The researcher emphasizes that the same condition is applied identically at all human drawings in the comics as seen in Figure 1.

In visual language studies, the physical manifestation of drawings involves graphic comprehension and is used to form drawn representation (Cohn, 2010: 7). Cohn further explains that the graphic patterns can be explored within individual drawers and within broader cultures. The drawings of the characters in Japanese manga, for example, have consistent patterns with some particular qualities such as big eyes, pointy chins, and big hair. As stated by Cohn (Cohn, 2010: 8), “consistent patterns are recognizable between the authors of most Japanese manga such that it can be called ‘Japanese style’ (big eyes, pointy chins, big hair)”. In Ahmad Family comics, the author of the comics draws the characters in such a particular style as previously mentioned (no eyes, no ears ...). The researcher assumes that the style of drawings in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic indicates an influence of Salafi teachings about the ruling on drawing living creatures for Muslim. That is why all the characters are not drawn in complete body under the foundation of this teaching.

In addition, *Life with the Ahmad Family* surprisingly shows a few particular signs such as beard, mustache, head cap, and *gamis* (traditional Arab dress) in

details. These signs are realized more clearly than the essential parts of the human already explained above. These particular signs are highly related to religious codes and have such an Arabic nuance. However, what the researcher wants to point out is that this comics shows the appearance of one and another character differently by some particular signs. Consequently, this leads to the thought that such particular signs may produce particular meanings. There lies an implicit comparison between one character and other characters because of the different qualities of their drawings. To the researcher, the relation of these visual signs is very interesting because the signs can be used to differ the quality of one Muslim character from that of the others. Based on the findings above, the researcher is firstly interested in finding out what Salafi teachings are contained in the visual signs of the comics.



Figure 2. Respect or Accept

Beside the visual signs, there are also verbal (symbolic) signs which contain Salafi teachings. Figure 2, for example, recounts Abdullah and Waleed arguing

about wishing 'Merry Christmas' for Muslim. In the first panel, Henry as a non-Muslim character greets Abdullah with "Hey! Merry Christmas Abdullah". In response, instead of replying Henry by wishing 'Merry Christmas' back, Abdullah as a protagonist prefers saying "Have a great holiday, Henry. Best to the family!". On the other side, Waleed as another Muslim character judges Abdullah as intolerant for his deed. Both Abdullah and Waleed represent particular Muslims in the real world that have a different perspective about the issue. Based on the verbal signs, Abdullah as a protagonist of the story seems to hold a ruling in Salafi teachings for not wishing a non-Muslim in their celebration.

Furthermore, comics is composed of rectangular frames called panels (Saraceni, 2003: 7). For examples, Figure 1 consists of four panels and Figure 2 consists of seven panels. The panels interact in parallel, having indexical relation (the relation of cause and effect) to create a message of the story as a whole. Magnussen suggests that the panels are parallel to propositions, which holistically create inferences of the story through the action of the characters (Magnussen, 2000: 198). In Figure 2, Abdullah and Waleed argues about wishing Merry Christmas to Christians. The comics illustrates a religious teaching whether should do it or should not, represented by their actions in panels. As stated above, the panels produce propositions by the action of the characters inside them. From the indexical relation between panels, Abdullah seems to be in the upper position of the debates by his arguments. It can be inferred that the panels holistically direct the reader not to wish Merry Christmas as Abdullah does. By this reason, the researcher is also urged to find out the messages of the story through the panels' interaction

which, as explained above, creates 'inferences'. The interaction between panels holistically produces the inferences of the story which represents the Salafi teachings contained in the comics. Considering that comics contain drawings, words and panels, the most suitable theory for the understanding of comics is the semiotic theory by Charles Sanders Peirce.

It is fundamental in Peirce's semiotic that the system of the signs is triadic. As Peirce suggests in (Innis, 1986: 5-6),

"A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object".

The signs, according to Peirce, participate into three categories; representamen, object and interpretant. A representamen is a perceptible object or the form that the sign takes – 'the sign vehicle'. An object is something which the sign refers to – 'a referent'. An interpretant is the effect that the sign produces in mind – 'significance' or 'thought'. By using this theory, it is expected to answer the background of the study comprehensively and holistically.

To reach the findings of the research, the researcher focuses on three concerns to analyze which is based on the three ontological categories of C.S. Peirce, namely firstness, secondness and thirdness (Noth, 1990: 41). Firstness is the category that concerns with the sign in itself without relating it to the second and third category. This category refers to the qualities of the signs. Secondness is the category that is in relation to the objects. This category refers to the actual existence of the signs. Thirdness is the process of mediation as the effects created in mind. It

is the conceptual realm of inference, significance or representation. This triadic relation of representamen, object and interpretant in Peirce's terminology is called semiosis (Noth, 1990: 42).

By the triadic analysis above, the researcher expects that this research can be reached. Firstly, analyzing the representamens is objected to find out the signs in themselves. Secondly, analyzing the signs in relation to the object is intended to find out a connection of the signs to the fact or reality. Thirdly, analyzing the relation to the interpretant is intended to find out the effect of mediation in mind which infers the Salafi teachings contained in the signs. All of them are realized in iconic (drawings), symbolic (words) and indexical signs (panels) in the comics.

The researcher illustrates a brief sample of the analysis in the table below.

Table 1
Sample of triadic analysis result

Representamen	Object	Interpretant
Figure 1  -human drawings with no eyes, no mouth and no ears	A convention not to draw humans precisely	Prohibition on drawing living creatures in Salafi teaching for imitating God's creatures
Figure 2 panel 1 "Have a great holiday Henry! Best to the Family!"	A convention not to wish Merry Christmas	Prohibition on wishing Merry Christmas to non-Muslim in Salafi teaching because it breaks the Islamic faith

Based on the background above, the researcher emphasizes that there is influence of Salafi teachings in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic. Therefore, it is

fascinating to investigate the Salafi teachings contained in the signs that are manifested in the comics. Finally, the researcher can suggest that this research is interesting and worth to be examined.

1.2 Research Question

From the explanation of the background above, the researcher formulates a research question. What are the Salafi teachings contained in the signs that are manifested in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic?

1.3 Objective of Study

To find out the Salafi teachings that are contained in the signs manifested in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic.

1.4 Significance of Study

The significance of this research is generally to contribute for the development of science, especially in the field of linguistics and semiotics. This research is also expected to be one of information sources for the next researchers who are interested in the same field, considering that the study of comics is still rare. Furthermore, the findings of this research are supposed to enrich the researcher's knowledge about the signs, their meaning and their use. The researcher believes that the study related to particular religious signs in comics need to be developed for academic development. This is a call for scholars particularly who study linguistics and literature to do more research in this area.

1.5 Literature Review

As far as the researcher investigated, *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic has never been studied by any researcher before. However, the researcher finds several

journals related to the study of comics or visual images by using the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. The first is a journal by Sean A. Guyness “Four-Color Sound: A Peircean Semiotics of Comic Book Onomatopoeia” in 2014. This journal utilizes the concept of an American Visual Language (Cohn, 2013) within a Peircean framework to offer theories of the individual (onomatopoeia) and structural uses of word/image onomatopoeic expressions in mainstream American comic books.

The second is a journal by Ubaidillah, “Nilai-nilai Ajaran Salafi Dalam Buku Ajar Bahasa Arab Al-Arabiyyah Bayna Yadaik (Analisis Semiotik Roland Barthes)” in 2014. This paper focuses on finding the values of Salafi in Arabic Textbook Al-Arabiyyah Bayna Yadaik. These values are analyzed by using Barthesian Semiotics to get a clear ideological perspective. In Barthesian perspective, verbal and non-verbal signs have both connotative and denotative meanings. This paper finds that several Islamic teachings are covertly applied in Salafi’s groups while others do not. In conclusion, this paper concludes that the values are all based on the Quran and Hadith.

The third is a journal by Ubaidillah, Ening Herniti, and Aning Ayu Kusumawati, “Pencitraan Perempuan Islami dalam Iklan Komersial: Analisis Semiotika” in 2017. This research focuses on the image of Islamic women (Muslimah) in commercial advertisement. In analyzing the signs, the research uses the semiotic theory of C.S. Peirce. In conclusion, the research found that the images of Islamic women is important to strengthen the market of the product.

The fourth is a thesis by Muhammad Agus Mushodiq, “Kisah Nabi Musa dan 'Abd di dalam Al-quran (Study Analisis Semiotika, Patologi Sosial, dan Epistemologi A>bid al-Ja>bri)” in 2016. This research is objected to find out the meaning of the signs in the story of Musa and ‘Abd in Al-Qur’an. The research uses the semiotic of C.S Peirce in analyzing the verses of Al-Quran in order to get the values of the story. In findings, the research finds two basic purposes of the story, as a reminder and as a guidance.

After investigating the related researches, the researcher suggests that the study of comics by using semiotic approach of Charles Sanders Peirce in holistic (all triadic) analysis has never been done. This research is different from previous studies because it applies all triadic categories in analysis. Therefore, the researcher suggests that this research is worth to do.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

The primary theory used in this study is the theory of semiotics. Considering the semiotic theory, it will lead the researcher into two semiotic paradigms, European Semiology and American Semiotics. As the starting point, the researcher takes Cohn’s point of view. Cohn, following behavioral perspective, suggests “comics are a social object resulting from two human behaviors: writing and drawing” (Cohn, 2012: 92). In other words, comics primarily contain visual language (pictures) which is produced by the activity of drawing and verbal language (words) which is produced by the activity of writing. Figure 1, for example, is told in a combination of drawings and words. According to the

European semiology, this forms a mixture of heterogenous signs, namely iconic and symbolic signs (Magnussen, 2000: 193).

However, comics is not merely interpreted as comics just because it has pictures and words in it. Figure 1 is recognized as comics because the reader notices 'a sequence of panels' arranged in a parallel position (Magnussen, 2000: 195). Each panel is not interpreted independently or autonomously, but each one interacts together with other panels. The interaction between the panels is a causal relation which then creates a holistic interpretation. This relation of 'causality' in Peirce's terminology is called 'indexical' relation (the relation of cause and effect). The indexical relation is essential from a theoretical point of view when considering the semiotics of comics.

Based on the reason, the researcher agrees with Magnussen for her point of view that treating comics as a dichotomy of iconic and symbolic signs is not adequate (Magnussen, 2000: 193). Indexical relation is necessary to understand the interaction between the different types of the signs in the panels themselves and between the panels (panel to panel). She further suggests the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce be used as the theoretical framework for the understanding of comics. Following Magnussen's theoretical point of view, the researcher applies the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce as the theoretical framework for the understanding of comics in this research.

According to Peirce, sign is constituted by a holistic triad of representamen, object and interpretant (Nöth, 1990: 42). A representamen is a perceptible object or the form that the sign takes – 'the sign vehicle'. An object is something which the

sign refers to – ‘a referent’. An interpretant is the effect that the sign produces in mind – ‘significance’ or ‘thought’. By Peirce, the triadic process of representamen, object and interpretant is called ‘semiosis’ or the action of the sign. Based on the firstness, secondness and thirdness previously mentioned in the background, he further broadened each element into trichotomy. In representamen itself, a sign can be interpreted as qualisign (firstness), sinsign (secondness) and legisign (thirdness). In relation to its object, a sign can be interpreted as icon, index and symbol. In relation to its interpretant, a sign can be interpreted as rheme, dicent and argument. The further explanation about these will be discussed in the next chapter.

In addition to the semiotic theory, the theory of Salafi is also used in this research. In analysis, the researcher relates the signs found in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic to the statements or fatwa issued by the Salafi ulamas such as Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz, Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi’i, and Saleh Ibn Fawzan al-Fawzan. The statements or fatwa used by the ulamas are applied to strengthen the findings in this research.

1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

According to Creswell, the type of research used in this research is qualitative research. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is reflexivity (Creswell, 2014: 183-186). It means the researcher plays the role to determine the

interpretations of the data. The researcher is demanded to interpret by considering factual data related to the object of the research.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The primary data in this research is taken from the author's Facebook account <http://www.facebook.com/AhmadFamilyComics>. The data analyzed are the signs found in the comics which indicate Salafi teachings. To limit the data, the researcher takes the comics based on the time they are posted on the author's Facebook account, from 2014 to 2019.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

According to Creswell, the method used in this research is a qualitative observation method (Creswell, 2014: 189-193). In collecting the data, the observation method can be interpretation, explanation, comparison and referential. To collect the data, the researcher executes several steps. Firstly, the researcher repeatedly reads all the episodes of *Life with the Ahmad Family* according to the limitation above. Secondly, the researcher observes the signs in order to obtain the data. Thirdly, the researcher identifies the signs which contain Salafi teachings in the episodes. Fourthly, the researcher sorts the data that is going to be used in this research. Lastly, the researcher classifies the signs based on the Salafi teachings found in the comics.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

According to Einar Haugen (Sudaryanto, 2015: 33-35), the method used in this research is categorized as equivalent method. In analyzing the data, the sub-method used in this research is referential equivalent method. In referential

equivalent, what determines the result (determinant) is the reality which the language refers to. In analyzing the data, the researcher executes several steps. The first is analyzing the triadic elements (representamen, object and interpretant). The second is interpreting the signs in the thricotomy of each element. The third is drawing propositions and arguments based on the findings. The fourth is relating the signs to the statements or fatwa issued by Salafi ulamas. The last is drawing general conclusions.

1.8 Paper Organization

This paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is Introduction. It consists of eight sections; background of study, research questions, objectives of study, significances of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research and paper organization. The second chapter contains the theories that are needed to understand the scheme of the analysis and discussion. The third chapter presents the research findings and discussion. The fourth chapter consists of conclusion and suggestion.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussions, the researcher summarizes a number of Salafi teachings contained in the signs manifested in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic. The first teaching is the prohibition on *tashwir* (drawing) living creatures. The second is the recommendation to let the beard grow and to trim the moustache. The third is the prohibition on wishing Merry Christmas. The fourth is the prohibition on imitating non-Muslim and joining their festivals (Halloween and Valentine). The fifth is the teaching for not celebrating the prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*). These Salafi teachings are contained in the signs that are manifested in the comics. From the data findings, the researcher can state that there is influence of Salafi teachings in *Life with the Ahmad Family* comic. As mentioned in the background of study, these teachings are realized in the comics for the purpose of missionary endeavor (*dawah*) in order to share or spread the Salafi teachings for the people who read the comics.

4.2 Suggestion

After accomplishing this research, the researcher realizes that many things can be examined in comics both in the theory and in the object of the research. This research only focuses on finding what Salafi teachings are contained in the signs realized in the comics. The researcher also admits that this research has lacks in the results of the analysis. Hopefully, the next researchers can use the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce in studying comics more thoroughly and maximally.

Next, the next researchers can also explore other semiotic theories in understanding comics. Also, the next researchers can combine the semiotic theory with other theories such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to get more detail results holistically and comprehensively. As for the comics themselves, there are a great numbers of comics in the world as the social and cultural products. The next researchers can start with the mainstream comics such as Marvel and DC comics or other fascinating comics to discuss. All in all, it is widely open for the next researchers to do more researches in this area.



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