

**THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S NARRATIVE IN LAWRENCE OF
ARABIA (1962)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for Gaining Bachelor's

Degree in English Department



By:

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Kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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MOTTO

*Di antara pusaran nirfungsi
Petakan semua lagi, titik tuju yang t'lah terpatri
Melamban bukanlah hal yang tabu
Kadang itu yang kau butuh, bersandar hibahkan bebanmu
Tak perlu kau berhenti kurasi
Ini hanya sementara, bukan ujung dari rencana*

Perunggu 33x

*Menghajar dunia, dari suasana duka
Taringku buktikan
Tahun-tahun berlalu, aku sempurnakan*

Seringai-Taring

“Our life is what our thoughts make it.”

Marcus Aurelius

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DEDICATION

In the spirit of academic integrity and profound gratitude, the present thesis is dedicated to the following individuals and entities: first, my parents, for their boundless love and unwavering support; second, my friends, for their consistent encouragement and joyful demeanor; third, my thesis advisors, for the commitment and guidance; fourth and finally, my partner, who has steadfastly accompanied me throughout this journey, and myself, for my unwavering perseverance. This work stands as a testament to the sacrifices, moral support, guidance, and determination that have guided me to this juncture. It is my hope that this work will serve as an authentic testament to our collective journey and endeavours, and that it will make a meaningful contribution to both science and society. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for all the love, support and inspiration that have contributed to the completion of this thesis.

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VALIDATION



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FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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**THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S NARRATIVE IN *LAWRENCE OF
ARABIA* (1962)**

By: Muhammad Aulia Rahman

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the representation of Prophet Muhammad in the film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) through Stuart Hall's constructionist representation theory approach. This theory emphasises that meaning is not inherently produced by objects or characters, but rather constructed through language, culture, and prevailing social practices. *Lawrence of Arabia*, while not focusing directly on the figure of Prophet Muhammad, presents an image of Arab and Islamic culture influenced by the Western colonial context and Oriental stereotypes. In this case, representations of Arabia and Islam, including symbols related to Prophet Muhammad, are constructed through colonial perspectives that are often inaccurate and biased. As such, the film creates a narrative that represents the Arab world and its important figures, including Prophet Muhammad, through a Western lens. Through constructionist representational analysis, this research shows how the film asserts the dominance of colonial discourse while borrowing Arab religious and cultural symbols to support Western narratives. In addition, the representation of Arabia and Islam in this film shows how the depiction of religious symbols, including those related to the Prophet Muhammad, can be part of a broader social and political practice, namely cultural imperialism and the influence of colonialism in Western media.

Keywords: Film, Constructionist Representation, Prophet Muhammad, *Lawrence of Arabia*, Stuart Hall.

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S NARRATIVE IN *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA* (1962)

Oleh: Muhammad Aulia Rahman

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis representasi Nabi Muhammad dalam film Lawrence of Arabia (1962) melalui pendekatan teori representasi konstruksionis Stuart Hall. Teori ini menekankan bahwa makna tidak dihasilkan secara inheren oleh objek atau tokoh, melainkan dikonstruksi melalui bahasa, budaya, dan praktik sosial yang berlaku. Lawrence of Arabia, meskipun tidak berfokus langsung pada sosok Nabi Muhammad, menghadirkan gambaran tentang budaya Arab dan Islam yang dipengaruhi oleh konteks kolonial Barat serta stereotip Oriental. Dalam hal ini, representasi Arab dan Islam, termasuk simbol-simbol yang berkaitan dengan Nabi Muhammad, dikonstruksi melalui sudut pandang kolonial yang sering kali tidak akurat dan bias. Dengan demikian, film ini menciptakan narasi yang merepresentasikan dunia Arab dan tokoh-tokoh pentingnya, termasuk Nabi Muhammad, melalui lensa Barat. Melalui analisis representasi konstruksionis, penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana film ini menegaskan dominasi wacana kolonial sekaligus meminjam simbol-simbol agama dan budaya Arab untuk mendukung narasi Barat. Selain itu, representasi Arab dan Islam dalam film ini memperlihatkan bagaimana penggambaran simbol-simbol keagamaan, termasuk yang terkait dengan Nabi Muhammad, dapat menjadi bagian dari praktik sosial dan politik yang lebih luas, yaitu imperialisme budaya dan pengaruh kolonialisme dalam media Barat.

Kata kunci: *Film, Representasi Konstruksi, Nabi Muhammad, Lawrence of Arabia, Stuart Hall.*

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Popular culture is a mass culture (Strinati, 2004). Film is one of the products of popular culture. Adi (2011), said that popular culture products in literature are known as popular literature, which is welcomed and favoured by the public and becomes popular. Films are a way for us to express ourselves and share ideas. They communicate messages and help us understand different cultures. Unlike writing, which is a separate system, film combines technology and storytelling. These elements, like camera work, lighting, editing, set design, and sound. All work together to create the meaning of the film (Turner, 2001). The purpose of popular literature is to fulfil the needs of modern society which always needs entertainment, knowledge, and commercial business.

Film is a form of mass communication that certainly conveys a message that will be conveyed either through speech or dialog in it. Pixar films, for example, express its message with simple, easy to digest, stories with colourful images, cute, and sometimes anthropomorphic characters, simple dialogues, and light comedy that is appealing to children. As opposed to a film such as Schindler's List, which does not shy away from depicting gruesome imagery, harsh dialogue, and disturbing characters to express its message. The characters in children's films will of course be different from the characters in films intended for adults, including how the filmmakers represent the characters in them. By itself, film has the ability to deliver messages in a unique way, it can also be used

in cultural sources that are closely related to books, cartoons, television stars, film series, and songs (McQuail, 2010).

The main objects of study in this paper are *Lawrence of Arabia* and the story of Prophet Muhammad from various sources (*Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings, *Sirah Nabawiyah* by Shaykh Shafiyurrahman al-Mubarakfuri, Hadith, and verses from the Qur'an). Additionally, This paper aims to compare two literary works on the implementation of prophethood in both narratives and how the implementation in each narrative impacts the meaning or message represented. Comparative literature is an academic and interdisciplinary field of study that involves the systematic comparison and analysis of the similarities, differences and patterns found among literary works.

Comparative literature is the academic study of the relationships between disparate literary systems and traditions, irrespective of cultural, linguistic, temporal, or genre differences. The objective of this discipline is to facilitate the understanding of literary works by offering a holistic perspective, thereby fostering intercultural competence. A fundamental tenet of comparative literature is the examination of literary works from diverse cultural, linguistic, and temporal contexts, with the aim of understanding how these works reflect realities. (Auerbach & Said, 2003). By comparing the two narratives, this research is able to open new ways of reading discourse through the messages represented in both narratives.

Lawrence of Arabia and the story of the Prophet Muhammad have something in common, namely that both narratives contain elements of prophethood narratives. Macit (2020) in his journal entitled *Prophethood as the Founding Element of Civilization: Different Historical Considerations* on the Foundation of Society, explains the role of *nubuwwah* (prophethood) as a central element in the formation and development of human civilisation, and how prophetic teachings derived from divine revelation were instrumental in building society, establishing principles of governance, and fostering scientific and social development.

Prophethood can be seen in *Lawrence of Arabia*. In the scene when the Arab army led by Lawrence headed to the city of Aqaba to attack the Turkish defences. The Arab troops consisted of various hostile tribes including two large tribes, namely the Harith tribe and the Howeitat tribe, but under Lawrence's leadership all tribes could unite. This shows the existence of prophethood which is in line with the concept of prophethood said by Macit (2020), which is the axis of the formation of civilization.

Prophethood is also seen in the story of the prophet Muhammad. In the book *Muhammad* by Martin Lings in chapter XLII: March to Badr, it is shown that the Prophet Muhammad formed a Muslim army consisting of various tribes from the city of Medina to fight the Quraish who came from Mecca. The Muslim army led by Prophet Muhammad consisted of various tribes that were initially hostile then united in the name of Islam. This is also in line with the concept of prophethood

mentioned by Macit (2020). The existence of prophethood may have an impact on the messages represented by each narrative.

Representation is the ability to visualise or imagine (Hall et al., 2003). Representation is of significance in the context of cultural analysis due to the role it plays in shaping cultural phenomena through the medium of meaning and language. In this particular instance, language functions as a form of symbol or representation. The interpretation of culture is inherently mediated by language, facilitating the dissemination of its significance to all members of the cultural group. In this regard, Hall puts forward the notion of representation as a pivotal medium for communication and social interaction. Hall even advances the argument that representation constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for communication, without which human interaction would be rendered unfeasible.

Specifically for constructionist representation, Hall (2002) Hall proposed two approaches to the study of this concept: the semiotic approach and the discourse approach. This concept is analogous to the notion of encoding and decoding in media studies, as Hall previously defined. Encoding can be understood as the manner in which information is packaged by the speaker, that is, the information producer. Decoding, in turn, can be defined as the process by which the information consumer reconstructs the information. (Storey & Rahmawati, 2008). In this research, the author uses Hall (2002) constructionist representation that uses a discourse approach and a semiotic approach.

Interestingly, the narrative of *Lawrence of Arabia* exhibits striking similarities with the life story of Prophet Muhammad as depicted in Islamic

sources. The film appears to borrow key elements from the Prophet's story, such as the unification of tribes, leadership in a transformative journey, and the establishment of societal principles, albeit through a Western lens and with significant distortions. This resemblance raises questions about whether the film could be considered a form of cultural plagiarism, appropriating the foundational narrative of Prophet Muhammad and repackaging it within a colonial framework. This aspect underscores the need for critical analysis to uncover how *Lawrence of Arabia* adapts and reinterprets elements of the prophetic narrative for its own purposes.

1.2. Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher found a problem:

1. What are the characteristics of prophethood in *Lawrence of Arabia* and the story of the Prophet Muhammad?
2. How is the prophethood narrative represented in *Lawrence of Arabia* and the story of Prophet Muhammad?

1.3. Research Objective

Based on the background of study and the research question, This paper aims to compare two literary works on the implementation of prophethood in both narratives and how the implementation in each narrative impacts the meaning or message represented.

1.4. Research Significance

This research is significant in both theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically, the paper aims to realise the representation of prophethood by applying Stuart Hall's theory, thus contributing to the current discourse on the media representation of prophets. Moreover, it can function as a foundational reference point for future studies investigating the depiction of prophets in western films. Moreover, the findings of this study can be utilised to establish an alternative approach to reading and interpreting the themes of British power that are present in the film.

1.5. Literature Review

The researcher has yet to find any researcher who analyses the prophet in *Lawrence of Arabia* has been studied, but The researcher will attach some research on prophethood and *Lawrence of Arabia*.

First research entitled *British Hegemony of Power Over Saudi Arabia* by Naelis Tifada Ni'mah (2018), The research shows that Britain through its organic intellectual figures exercised hegemony of power by offering modern weaponry and military training to the Saudi Arabian army to liberate the Saudi Arabian region which was under the control of the Ottoman Turks. Britain has carried out various forms of hegemony of power, namely in the form of weapons assistance provided by Britain to the Saudi Arabian army as part of the mission of hegemony of power in the Middle East region. In order for the Saudi Arabian army and its leaders to be willing to accept British assistance, of course the way the British did was colonial politics which was hegemonic and persuasive rather than coercive

methods. In addition, the form of hegemony carried out by the British was to provide military training. Agents used in the process of hegemony through mass media and organic intellectuals. These two agents spread the discourse that what the British are doing is in the Arab interest, the ruling group, namely the British, stated that they had no mission in Saudi Arabia. Their mission was only to assist Saudi Arabia in gaining independence from the grip of Ottoman Turkish power. The power relations that occurred after British hegemony over Saudi Arabia were that Britain became the political ruler in the area, while the ruler of Saudi Arabia at that time, Prince Faisal, was made King. This was done by the British to perpetuate their power in the region of the countries surrounding Saudi Arabia.

Second, a research entitled *Representation of Prophetic Messages in Tegal Regency Folklore* by U'um Qomariyah (2018), The results of this research are 1) the reproduction of stories with the titles 'Raibnya yang Terkasih', 'Rezeki', and 'Anak yang Berbakti' in 'Hantu Berburu: A Folktale of Lingga Regency' which is objective; 2) the readability of the folktales 'Raibnya yang Terkasih', 'Rezeki', and 'Anak yang Berbakti' in 'Hantu Berburu: A Folktale of Lingga Regency' has the readability level of elementary/middle school students; meaning that it is easy to read for all levels of education.

Third, a research entitled *Representations of Lawrence of Arabia From Said's Orientalism (1978) to David Lean's film (1962)* by Alexander Lyon Macfie (2007). This article provides a more detailed examination of Said's argument. It is suggested that Said's introduction of a "new dialectic" in his discussion of Lawrence and the Arab Revolt, which acknowledges the contemporary

orientalist's responsibility not only to comprehend the Orient but also to engage in the process of change, and his introduction of the concept of narrative as an alternative to the concept of vision, partially undermines his own position regarding orientalism. The article also examines Lowell Thomas's role in the creation of the Lawrence myth, and contrasts interpretations of the primary film version, David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962).

1.6. Theoretical Framework

1.6.1. Representation Theory

In this study, the researcher employs Stuart Hall's representation theory as the primary theoretical framework to elucidate the depiction of prophethood in the selected film. Moreover, the researcher also employs the principles of film theory as a subsidiary theoretical framework. According to Stuart Hall, representation is defined as the production of the concept of meaning in the mind through language. This ability to visualise or imagine is central to the concept of representation (Hall et al., 2003). It's important to have representation because culture is shaped by meaning and language. In this case, language is a way of representing things. The meaning of culture is shared with every member of the culture through language. Hall says that representation is important for communication and social interaction. He even says that representation is a basic need for communication, without which humans cannot interact. Furthermore, Hall (2002) also explained that representation is divided into three forms; (1) Reflective representation, (2) Intentional representation, and (3) Constructionist representation. Reflective representation is language or various symbols that

reflect meaning. Intentional representation is how language or symbols embody the speaker's personal intentions. Meanwhile, constructionist representation is how meaning is reconstructed 'in' and 'through' language.

Specifically for constructionist representation, Hall (2002) came up with two approaches to study it, namely the semiotic approach and the discourse approach. This idea is similar to the concept of encoding and decoding that Hall coined in media studies. Encoding is how information is packaged by the speaker (information producer), while decoding is how the information consumer reconstructs the information (Storey & Rahmawati, 2008). In this research, the author uses Hall (2002) constructive representation that uses a discourse approach and a semiotic approach.

1.6.2. Prophethood

Macit (2020) in his journal entitled *Prophethood as the Founding Element of Civilization: Different Historical Considerations on the Foundation of Society* explains that the knowledge brought by the Prophet allows for a civilisation to be maintained and exist. Furthermore, Macit (2020) also explained that prophethood has five concepts, namely: (1) being a vertical axis in the formation of societies and civilizations, (2) setting principles in the formation of states, (3) Leading the formation of the sciences, (4) ensuring the human development of societies and emphasising goodness, and (5) reclaiming societies (from invaders).

1.6.3. Film Theory

The researcher employs film theory to facilitate the analysis of elements that extend beyond the conventional parameters of character and storytelling. Moreover, the *mise en scène* theory serves as a valuable instrument in the analysis of filmic elements, offering a comprehensive framework for examining the intricacies of cinematic composition.

In the domain of film studies, the concept of *mise-en-scène* holds particular significance in the analysis of how a film produces and reflects meaning. *Mise-en-scène* refers to the expressive totality of what is depicted in a film image, encompassing all the elements positioned in front of the camera during the filming process. These elements include setting, property, lighting, costumes, make-up, character behavior, dialogues, as well as action and camera angles. In the context of film studies, the *mise-en-scène* concept is pivotal in analyzing how a film generates and conveys meaning. This term refers to the comprehensive visual elements of a film, encompassing the setting, props, lighting, costumes, makeup, character behavior, dialogue, and action angles. Notably, *mise-en-scène* also incorporates cinematography, which involves the application of photographic techniques such as the selection of camera angles and the use of visual effects (Sikov, 2010).

Cinematography, defined as the branch of photography concerned with the capture of moving images for the purpose of their exhibition in motion picture theaters, encompasses all the elements of photography that result in the images seen on screen (Sikov, 2010). The implementation is divided into two components: camera movement and shot type.

1.7. Research Method

1.7.1. Type of Research

The research method uses a qualitative method that focuses on comparative literature. Qualitative methods are used to understand how individuals and groups understand and interpret their own world and use techniques such as interviews, close reading, and document analysis to collect data. The qualitative method was applied by reading and collecting data from each literary work.

1.7.2. Data Sources

The primary data used in this research are mainly the research objects: *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *The Story of the Prophet Muhammad (Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings and *Sirah Nabawiyah* by Shaykh Shafiyurrahman al-Mubarakfuri). The object of study is then adapted to the theory used in this research, namely the prophethood of Abdulkadir Macit. The theory used in this research is used as a tool to identify the prophetic value of the object of research. Secondly, secondary data sources are taken from Hadith Abu Dawud number 2837 book 9 (Al-Dahaya) and Al-Baqarah verse 218.

1.7.3. Data Collection Technique

The researcher collects comprehensive information and analyses relevant data using several methods with close reading of the two literary works. The researcher began by reading both literary works to identify relevant data. Next, an in-depth review was conducted of the prophetic concepts that appear in both literary works.

After collecting relevant data, the researcher applied Stuart Hall's theory of representation, categorising and relating the data using symbolic, image, discursive and mythic functions to align the data with the research objectives.

1.7.4. Data Analysing Technique

The data analysis stage involves comparing the collected data from *Lawrence of Arabia* and the Islamic sources, focusing on the depiction and representation of prophethood. The data is organized and analyzed using Stuart Hall's constructionist representation theory, which examines symbolic, image, discursive, and myth functions to uncover the underlying meanings and ideologies in the narratives. The analysis includes detailed descriptions and interpretations of the phenomena found in both narratives, particularly how the concept of prophethood is represented and constructed through characters, dialogues, and cultural contexts. This study also integrates insights from previous research on representation theory and literary studies to enrich the analysis and provide a comprehensive understanding of the narratives.

1.8. Paper Presentation

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, which includes background of study, research question, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organisation. The second chapter explains the intrinsic elements of the movie including theme, plot, character and characterization, and setting. The third chapter consists of research findings and discusses the analysis

of the data that has been collected. The final chapter includes the researcher's conclusion and suggestions.



CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

4.1. Conclusion

Lawrence of Arabia and the story of Prophet Muhammad have elements of prophethood represented by two different characters. Both have elements of prophethood in various forms, but the essence is relatively the same. In *Lawrence of Arabia*, prophethood emerges through the characterisation of Lawrence as a visionary leader who almost has the qualities of a prophet. Although the film does not directly present prophethood in the religious sense, the narrative seems to place Lawrence in the position of a charismatic figure who has a great mission for the Arab nation, portraying him as a leader with the role of "redeemer" or "messenger" who brings significant change.

The idea of prophethood affects how a narrative conveys its message, especially when the constructed character has the qualities of a leader who guides or inspires. In the context of *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence is presented as a figure with a greater vision than those around him, as if he has a divine purpose or destiny to fulfil. This influences the way audiences receive narratives about the Arab uprising and the war against Ottoman rule, linking prophetic themes with the mission of liberation. In *Lawrence of Arabia*, the representation of Lawrence as a semi-prophet figure is used to support British political and imperial agendas. The figure of Lawrence, who is portrayed as a "unifier" of the Arabs and a person who understands Eastern culture, functions as a propaganda tool that justifies Western, mainly British, intervention in the Arab region. The film indirectly utilises prophetic ideas to reinforce the narrative that British intervention in the Middle

East is a necessary and justified mission rooted in Lawrence's moral mission or "destiny".

4.2. Sugestion

It is important to emphasize that this research is limited to the discussion of prophethood within two texts. Therefore, the findings presented in this research are limited to these two texts. Future research can conduct a less limited study by including multiple texts and analyze how prophethood is portrayed in Western media..

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