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# The Concept of Idols in Qur'an: A Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes

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***Abstract***

*This research aims to uncover the changing meanings of the concept of idols and to symbolically approach the meanings behind verses using terms such as الأصنام, الأوثان, and الأنصاب in the Quran. The background of this writing stems from the human tendency to believe in God but falter in expressing servitude to Allah SWT. Humans constantly seek the essence of God, yet errors persist from the prophetic era to the present day. There is a tendency to adhere blindly to the teachings of ancestors who inherited these mistakes. To understand this issue further, this research will utilize Roland Barthes' semiotics. The methodology involves literature review supported by descriptive analysis. The results of semiotic research on verses and interpretations regarding the concept and meaning of idols in the Quran, reviewed using the concepts of Jahiliyyah and Islam, will reveal a change in meaning due to the transition of certain practices from the pre-Islamic era into Islam. الأصنام means idols, الأوثان means statues planted in the ground, الأنصاب means stones. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning of idols and their equivalents in the verses of the Qur'an are الأصنام refers to statues made of metal, الأوثان refers to statues made resembling humans and animals, الأنصاب refers to tall stones surrounding the Ka'bah. All these terms refer to the correlation between the depiction of God. The concept of idols in these three terms refers to something worshiped as a manifestation, resemblance, and offering as a method of worship.*

***Keywords: Changing meanings, Idols, Roland Barthes***

**مستخلص البحث**

يهدف هذا البحث إلى كشف التغيرات في معنى مفهوم الأصنام، والاقتراب من المعاني الرمزية وراء الآيات التي تستخدم مصطلحات مثل الأصنام والأوثان والأنصاب في القرآن الكريم.ينطلق البحث من الميل البشري نحو الإيمان بالله، لكنه يترنح في التعبير عن العبودية لله سبحانه وتعالى .يسعى الإنسان باستمرار إلى جوهر الله، ومع ذلك تستمر الأخطاء منذ العصر النبوي إلى يومنا هذا .هناك ميل للتمسك الأعمى بتعاليم الأجداد الذين ورثوا هذه الأخطاء.لفهم هذه القضية بشكل أكبر، سيستخدم هذا البحث علم الرموز (السيميائية) عند رولان بارتس .تعتمد منهجية البحث على مراجعة المصادر بالإضافة إلى التحليل الوصفي .ستكشف نتائج البحث السيميائي في الآيات والتأويلات المتعلقة بمفهوم ومعنى الأصنام في القرآن الكريم، عند مراجعتها باستخدام مفهومي الجاهلية والإسلام، عن تغير في المعنى بسبب انتقال بعض الممارسات من العصر الجاهلي إلى الإسلام.تعني الأصنام الأصنام، والأوثان تعني التماثيل المزروعة في الأرض، والأنصاب تعني الأحجار .أما المعنى السياقي للأصنام وما يقابلها في آيات القرآن الكريم، فالأصنام تشير إلى التماثيل المصنوعة من المعدن، والأوثان تشير إلى التماثيل المصنوعة على شكل حيوانات وبشر، والأنصاب تشير إلى الأحجار الطويلة التي تحيط بالكعبة .تشير كل هذه المصطلحات إلى الصلة بين تصوير الله تعالى .يشير مفهوم الأصنام في هذه المصطلحات الثلاثة إلى شيء يُعبد على أنه تجسيد أو شبه أو وسيلة لعبادة الله.

**الكلمات المفتاحية: التغييرات في معاني، الاصنام، السيميائية**

## Introduction

The Qur'an is the greatest miracle revealed, using a linguistic structure with very high literary value. The language used in the Qur'an surpasses all other forms of literary expression. The Qur'an is not merely a collection of poems, prose, or verses, but a work that possesses unmatched artistic value and literary quality, surpassing the literature of the Arabs and other nations of that time, especially those who were still underdeveloped in terms of literature (Charisma, 1991).

Qur'an with its great miracle, faced a significant challenge when it was revealed during the era of ignorance (Jahiliyyah) (Sari, 2015). This era is depicted as a time of darkness because the people indulged in cruelty and idol worship. The practice of idol worship had started since the time of their ancestors, creating fanaticism and becoming a misguided and erroneous tradition passed down through generations. The belief in the existence of God has always been inherent in human hearts, but the way they expressed their devotion was flawed. They depicted God in tangible forms using stones, wood, metals, and other materials.

According to Abdul Hameed Siddiqi, citing the opinion of Ibn al-Kalbi, the reason the Arabs eventually worshipped idols was due to the habit of bringing home stones from around the Ka'bah for anyone leaving the city of Mecca, as a form of respect for the sacred place and the city itself. When they reached their destination, these stones were placed and made the center of circumambulation. Although they continued to honor the Ka'bah and the city of Mecca through Hajj and Umrah, gradually these stones became objects of worship (Ali Nurdin, 2006).

Paganism was one of the prevalent beliefs in pre-Islamic Arabia and was strongly condemned and opposed by Islam. Muslims generally know that the majority of pre-Islamic Arab society were pagans who worshipped idols. The Qur'an mentions several names of gods worshipped by the Arabs, including al-Latta, al-'Uzza, and Manah. An example of this is found in the following Qur'anic verse:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰ

"*Now, have you considered ˹the idols of˺ Lât and 'Uzza, and the third one, Manât, as well?*" (Q.S An-Najm: 19-20)

The term idol in the Qur'an, besides direct mention as in the above verse, can be expressed in various versions. These versions are articulated implicitly and explicitly depending on the situation and context. This research elucidates several uses of the term idol as determined in the Qur'an. There are at least three lexical choices to represent the word idol, namely: ashnaam (الأصنام), anshaab (الأنصاب), and authaan (الأوثان). These three words indirectly undergo a shift in meaning when used in various contexts within several verses in the Qur'an.

To distinguish between the three terms commonly used in the Qur'an, which are often translated literally with the same meaning, the author employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. This analysis involves examining the lexical meanings, contextual understanding of verses, and views from commentators. The collaboration of all these aspects yields a comprehensive research outcome to understand the concept of idols in the Qur'an.

Studies on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory applied to the analysis of the Qur'an can be found in various academic works. These works discuss concepts such as adultery in the Qur'an, which undergoes a shift in meaning from general to specific contexts (Subaidah, 2023). There are also discussions on the changing meanings of phenomena like lightning according to Islamic views, reviews of the pre-Islamic era, and studies on science (Al Fikri & Taufiq, 2023). Additionally, there are discussions on the Story of the People of the Elephant, which narrates alternative meanings of the story (Fatah, 2019). This research focuses on the discussion of the concept of idols in the Qur'an through the analysis of Roland Barthes' semiotics.

This research is an updated study from previous research because the concept of idols, as explained in the verses of the Qur'an and the Muffasir view's , serves as a subject that collaborates with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to understand the change in the original meaning of the language of these idols. It then shifts to meanings influenced by mythological aspects such as social factors, community culture, and religion. This semiotic theory is an enhancement of Saussure's theory designed to be more dynamic in its application (Sunardi, 2004). The semiological system in the first stage consists of the signifier-signified relationship known as the

linguistic system. In the second stage, it is referred to as the mythological system, defined by how culture explains or understands various aspects of reality or natural phenomena (Afitah, 2023).

**Methods**

This research is based on library research, which involves examining and referring to literature such as books available in both digital and physical formats, as well as relevant writings related to the theme of discussion. The research method used in this article is descriptive analysis (Moleong, 2005). This method is useful for accumulating information gathered from various sources to discover new findings that are conceptualized and structured (Sulipan, 2017). In the exposition of the article's material, the author utilizes Roland Barthes' semiotic theory because it greatly aids in analyzing changes in meaning. In this study, the author focuses on exploring the changes in meaning of the word "idol" and applying Roland Barthes' semiotic theory in the Qur'an.

**Result and Discussion**

Before discussing the definition of the word idol linguistically and in the Qur'an, as well as analyzing the concept and changes in meaning of the word idol from a semiotic perspective, reference is made to the semiotic knife introduced by Roland Barthes.

**Roland Barthes's Biography**

Roland Barthes was born in Charbourg on November 12, 1915. He was born to Louis Barthes, a naval officer, and Henriette Barthes, who was Protestant (Culler, 2003). Roland Barthes was raised in Bayonne with his mother, aunt, and grandmother. Throughout his life, he never knew his father, as he died in battle in the North Sea. After his father's death, they moved to Paris where he received his education and was exposed to culture (Mukhoyim, 2013).

Roland Barthes pursued his formal education at Lycee Montaigne from 1924 to 1930 and Lycee Louis-LeGrand from 1930 to 1934. He then continued his undergraduate studies at Sorbonne. Roland Barthes obtained a bachelor's degree in classical literature in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree, he taught classical literature at Lycee in Biarritz for a year and served as an assistant teacher at Lycee

Voltaire and Lycee Carnot. Concurrently with his teaching, he earned a second bachelor's degree in Greek Tragedy in October 1941. He then completed his studies in grammar and philology at the age of 28. Roland Barthes also worked as a lecturer at the University of Alexandria, Egypt, from 1949 to 1950 (Husni, 2007).

Roland Barthes' journey in the field of semiotics truly began when he started writing essays and books that were published. In 1964, he published a book titled "Elements of Semiology". This work solidified his reputation as a linguist. The book discussed language theories in a clear writing style, combining them with the theories of his predecessors. With numerous works, Roland Barthes dared to apply for a position as a professor at the College de France, and he was accepted as a professor of semiotics. This was the greatest and most memorable achievement in his life (Sunardi, 2004).

A few years later, Roland Barthes' fame soared, making him a prominent structuralist figure in France. Through his thoughts, Roland Barthes was able to introduce a new perspective that influenced the dynamics of French academic and political life. Additionally, there was sad news of his mother's passing when Barthes was at the peak of his career. A few years later, precisely after his mother's death, at the age of 64, Roland Barthes was involved in a tragic accident that resulted in his passing on the spot. This incident occurred on March 20, 1980. Just a month before his death, Barthes was noted as a linguist who produced numerous works, publishing books annually (Wijaya, 2021).

**Roland Barthes and his System of Application of Semiological Theory**

The semiotic tradition is a blend of thoughts from several semiotic experts such as Saussure, Roland Barthes, Derrida, and others (Prasetya, 2018) This has led to new understandings in interpreting the meaning of signs, such as Barthes' concept of signification. Each philosopher has their own perspective on understanding a sign: Saussure emphasizes the structure within a sign, Barthes focuses on the mythological understanding of a sign, Derrida emphasizes textual analysis, and Foucault examines discourse within language (Suhardi, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that understanding the meaning of a sign is influenced by the realm of thought (academic background) of a reader (user), because interpreting signs is subjective, relative, and

influenced by the construction of reality. Roland Barthes was a semiotics figure who developed Ferdinand de Saussure's modern semiotic theory. Barthes was both a student and a follower of Saussure. As a brilliant thinker, Barthes was very active in advocating Saussure's linguistic and semiological model. He assumed that language is a system of signs that represents the perceptions of a particular society at a specific time.

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory suggests that there are two levels of signification: denotation and connotation. The first level, known as the first order of signification, refers to denotative meaning. The second level, or the second order of signification, pertains to connotative meaning (Barthes, 1968). Semiotics is a field intrinsically linked to the importance of meaning. To reveal the meanings embedded in a text, Barthes introduced the concepts of denotation and connotation as the keys to his analysis. To produce meaning in a sign, Barthes employed a system consisting of (E) an expression or signifier in relation (R) to (content/signified) (C): ERC (Imron, 2019).

Barthes' semiotic theory is arguably the most widely used in research. This is because Barthes' semiotics represents a wide range of study fields, including text semiotics (myth, literature, narrative, theology), visual communication semiotics (architecture, imagery, painting, film, and advertising), and even the semiotics of medicine (Saputra & Saifuddin, 2022). According to Barthes, semiotics is essentially a discipline used to understand how one studies humanity and interprets everything (Thalib, 2018).

Roland Barthes analyzed the meaning within a sign using the terms denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach serves to reveal the different levels of meaning for each sign. What is particularly interesting about his semiotics is the term "myth," which refers to cultural references (derived from existing culture) used to explain culture or reality through symbols that convey connotative meanings and historical context (alongside culture). This conceptual framework is known as the order of signification (Afitah, 2023).

The development of Saussure's semiotics by Roland Barthes, one of the structuralist thinkers, is a continuation of Saussure's theoretical ideas. While Saussure's semiotic theory only extends to denotative meaning or the first-order

semiotics, Barthes extends it to connotative meaning or the second-order semiotics. In Barthes' terminology, denotative meaning or first-order semiotics is referred to as the Linguistic system, which consists of (Signifier I), (Signified I), and (Sign I). Connotative meaning or second-order semiotics is referred to as the Mythological system, which consists of (Sign I) or (Signifier II), (Signified II), and (Sign II). From connotative meaning, the myth can be derived. In Barthes' terminology, myth is a type of speech, a system of communication, and a message (Subaidah, 2023).

To clarify the above perspective, Barthes created a model diagram illustrating the subjugation of the myth sign system over the language sign system as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Linguistic system | 1. Signifier | 2. Signified | |
| Myth system | 3. Sign<br>I. Signifier | | II. Signified |
| | III. Sign | | |

Based on the scheme above, it can be seen that within a myth, there are two semiotic systems. First, there is language as a linguistic system. Second, there is the myth itself. The linguistic sign or linguistic system (first-order sign system) in the form of a signifier and a signified will transform into mere signifiers within the myth (second-order sign system). The signifier in the myth system will occupy two positions, namely full and empty. When the signifier occupies a full position, it is called meaning. Meanwhile, when the signifier occupies an empty position, it is called form. As for the signified, it remains called a concept because it does not generate ambiguity (Fatah, 2019).

The placement of myth signifiers in these two positions is crucial in myth analysis. This is because myth signifiers are derived from the language system which previously had full meaning, but then undergoes a process of meaning evaporation. Thus, emptiness occurs, leaving only a series of letters ready to be filled by the concept of the myth system. The myths that persist historically (repeated and serve as references in the process of interpretation) are the ones that fill the cultural codes within their society. In such conditions, ideologies are formed and ingrained in

specific communities. Meanwhile, the signified in the myth system becomes part of the fragments of ideology, where its signifiers are things that carry connotative meanings.

The essence of Barthes' theory is that a sign is the relationship between the signifier and the signified, which is Saussure's view referred to as the "first-order system." For example, the word or image of a "scale" is a signifier of "denotation," and the concept of measurement is its signified "connotation"; a sign is the relationship between denotation and connotation. Based on the signs of this first-order system, Barthes applies myth to build a "second-order system" where the sign from the first-order system becomes the signifier of another sign, such as the example of "scale" producing another sign, "justice." This process of "signification" is the focus when analyzing text and visual text (Jadou & Ghabra, 2021).

**The Definition of Idol in Linguistic Theory and the Quran**

In the Quran, the word idol is mentioned using three different words: ashnaam, authaan, and anshaab (Itsnaini, 2021). All three refer to idols before the advent of Islam. During the era of ignorance (jahiliyah), they referred to meanings such as statues, stones, or idols. For example, Latta and Uzza were objects that led people astray from the true deity. According to interpretation, several factors influence idol worship and polytheism: First, humans' dependence on the existence of a deity who is always near when needed. The need for this deity varies, based on various background factors such as predicting the future, seeking consultation, and others. Second, there is a tendency to glorify ancestors or deceased individuals as a sign of high honor. This commonly occurs with tribal leaders, kings, and even prophets who are sometimes regarded as divine offspring. Idols are then made as replicas dedicated to them as a form of tribute. Third, the lack of belief in transcendence, although a few individuals try to maintain the purity of the teachings of past prophets. Due to their small numbers, they are marginalized by time and the majority of idol worshippers. This situation is exacerbated when the beliefs of the people of Mecca, who have undergone changes such as Judaism and Christianity, are considered (Al-faruqi & Louis, n.d.).

The following is an explanation of the three terms for idols in the Quran, examined based on their lexical meanings and contextual meanings in the verses:

1. Ashnaam (الأصنام)

The word ashnaam in the Lisanul Arab dictionary indicates the plural form of the word shanaam, which means a statue made of wood, stone, or other materials used as an intermediary to approach Allah (Manzur, 2003). And it is explained in the Maqayyis al-Lughah Dictionary:

(صَنَمٌ) الصَّادُ وَالنُّوْنُ وَالْمِيْمُ كَلِمَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ لَا فَرْعَ لَهَا, وَهِي الصَّلَمُ. وَكَانَ شَيْئًا يَتَّخِذُ مِن خَشَبٍ أَوْفِضَةٍ أَوْ نُحَاسٍ فَيُعْبَدُ.

Shanaam (صنم) is a word composed of the letters ص, ن, م has no equivalent and refers to something made of wood, silver, and iron, which is then worshipped (Ahmad bin Faris, n.d.).

Meanwhile, according to al-Raghib, who cites the opinion of some wise scholars, shanaam refers to anything that diverts one from Allah. He further explains that shanaam is a figure or part of a body made of gold, wood, or copper (Al-Isfahani, n.d.).

In the Quran, the word ashnaam appears with variations five times in three different sentence structures (Al-Baqi, 1998). Here is an example of a verse that uses the word ashnaam:

قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ اَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عٰكِفِيْنَ

"*They replied, We worship idols and are always devoted in our worship of them.*" (Q.S As-Syura:71)

The above verse serves as a warning to the polytheists about the foolishness of rejecting the beliefs brought by Prophet Ibrahim. He challenged his people by questioning the benefits of idol worship. However, their response was merely to follow what their ancestors did without any clear reason. Prophet Ibrahim firmly explained that what they were doing was a form of deviation, misguidance, and disgrace (Zuhaili, 2016).

And in another verse that uses the word ashnaam its:

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْاَصْنَامَ

"*And (remember) when Ibrahim prayed, "O my Lord, make this city (Mecca)place of security, and keep me and my descendants away from worshiping idols.*" (Q.S Ibrahim: 35)

The verse above correlates with another verse, which is:

اِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ اٰزَرَ اَتَتَّخِذُ اَصْنَامًا اٰلِهَةً ۚاِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

"*And (mention, O Muhammad), when Ibrahim said to his father Azar, 'Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error.*" (Q.S Al-An'am: 74)

In this verse, Allah commands the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to narrate the call of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), when he invited mankind to embrace monotheism and abandon idols, which only lead people astray and into deviation. The idols worshipped by the polytheists during the time of Prophet Ibrahim were manifestations of the celestial bodies worshipped previously, namely the stars and the sun. When these celestial bodies were not visible, they crafted idols from gold, silver, and gems to maintain their proximity. However, the universe with all its contents is sufficient evidence of the oneness of Allah and their misguidedness (Anggia, 2019).

Al-Maragi and Wahbah al-Zuhaili interpret the term ashnaam as idols made from materials such as wood, stone, metal, and copper. These materials are shaped according to specific sizes and patterns, then turned into idols and worshipped (Zuhaili, 2016).

2. Authaan (الأوثان)

The word Authaan is also the plural form of Wathaan. In the Lisanul Arab dictionary, Wathaan means an idol carved to resemble humans and animals for worship (Manzur, 2003). In Umdat al-Huffaz, وثن refers to a three-dimensional object made of wood, gold, silver, or carved stone that is worshipped. And it is explained in the Maqayyis al-Lughah Dictionary:

(وثن) الواوُ وَالثَّاءُ وَ النُّوْنُ : كَلِمَةٌ وَاحِدَةً هِيَ الْوَثَنُ وَاحِدٌ الأَوْثَانَ : حِجَارَةً كانت تُعْبَدُ

Wathaan (وثن) is a word composed of the letters و ,ث ,ن. Its plural form is الأوثان, which means stones that are worshipped (Ahmad bin Faris, n.d.).

In the Quran, the word authaan appears with variations three times in two different sentence structures (Al-Baqi, 1998). Here is an example of a verse that uses the word authaan:

وَقَالَ اِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْثَانًاۙ مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَاۚ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ وَّيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًاۖ وَّمَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ

"*And he (Ibrahim) said, "Indeed, the idols that you worship besides Allah are only (a means) to create affection among you in worldly life. Then on the Day of Resurrection, some of you will deny others and curse others; and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will have no helpers at all*." (QS. Al-Ankabut: 25)

Authaan is the plural form of وثن, which means idols made of pebbles or stones and shaped like humans or animals to be worshipped. This form is more specific than اصنام, because اصنام refers to stone idols even if they are not shaped (Shihab, 2005). By worshiping idols, they are said to وَتَخْلُقُوْنَ اِفْكًا, which means they have created falsehood and vanity because they believe the idols to be gods. However, these are merely objects made of stone and pebbles that can neither provide benefit nor harm, nor can they provide sustenance to them.

Another verse that represents the word authaan is:

ذٰلِكَ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖۗ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ

"*That [is so]. And whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah, it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you [in this Quran]. So avoid the unclean idols and avoid false statement*." (Q.S Hajj: 30)

According to the interpretation of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, the word "idols" is interpreted as objects of worship and is also considered impure. This impurity is in a figurative sense, as it is highly recommended to avoid them. Those who worship idols are likened to covering themselves with filth or impurity (Anggia, 2019). Quraish Shihab and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs interpret idols as figures resembling humans or animals, chosen for worship and made from stone or wood (Shihab, 2005).

3. Anshaab (الأنصاب)

The word anshaab is also the plural form of nasb, which means a raised stone (Manzur, 2003). This is very much reflected in the culture of the Jahiliyyah people who often made idols from stone, then slaughtered animals around the stone, and subsequently smeared the blood of the animals on the stone idol. And it is explained in the Maqayyis al-Lughah Dictionary:

(نصب) النُّونُ وَالصَّادُ وَالْبَاءُ أَصَلٌ صَحِيحَ يَدُلُّ على إقامةِ شَيْ وَأَهْدَافٍ فِي اسْتِوَاءِ

Nasab (نصب) is a word consisting of ن، ص، ب means something that is elevated or erected and creates a target in a straight line (Ahmad bin Faris, n.d.).

The word anshaab and its derivatives are mentioned 32 times in 13 different sentence structures in the Quran (Al-Baqi, 1998). This makes the word "anshaab" appear more frequently and in a variety of versions. This is because "anshaab" is closely associated with events during the Jahiliyyah era, such as the slaughtering of animals and the smearing of their blood on the "anshaab." An example of a verse that uses the word anshaab is as follows:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوْذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيْحَةُ وَمَآ اَكَلَ السَّبُعُ اِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْۗ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَاَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوْا بِالْاَزْلَامِۗ ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌۗ اَلْيَوْمَ يَىِٕسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِۗ اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًاۗ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِيْ مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّاِثْمٍۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

"*Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and those animals killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a headlong fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is] that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.*" (Q.S. Al-Maidah: 3)

According to Al-Maragi in his exegesis, the word nasb refers to a stone (idol) placed beside the place where they slaughter their sacrifices, which they then worship. Wahbah al-Zuḥaili mentions that nasb refers to anything that is erected, such as a flag, and in Surah Al-Maidah verse 3, it is something that is erected for worship. However, Wahbah also interprets it as an idol, specifically the stones around the Ka'bah. Similarly, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi mentions that anshaab is the plural form of nasb and refers to stones erected around the Ka'bah. (Zuhaili, 2016)

M. Quraish Shihab interprets nasb as stones planted in the ground and as idols. He explains that when they slaughter animals, they would sprinkle the blood on the idols as well as on the Ka'bah. This practice was intended to distinguish between what was slaughtered for consumption and what was offered to their gods or jinn (Shihab, 2005).

Another verse that explains this is:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

"*O you who have believed! Indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing for) idols, and divining with arrows are abominations and the works of Satan. So avoid these (actions) that you may be successful.*" (Q.S Al-Maidah:90)

According to tafsir experts view, the word idols is always paired with vocabulary that has a negative connotation and also indicates prohibition. In

this verse, what has a negative connotation are الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ (intoxicants and gambling) and وَالْأَزْلَامُ (divining with arrows), which in modern times can take the form of dart games. These are associated with the word anshaab depicted as something very impure.

The word رِجْسٌ carries a second negative connotation. Ibn Abbas, in his tafsir, explains that all of these actions are deeds performed by Satan (Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari, n.d.). This comparison is made because humans are often tempted to commit actions carried out by Satan due to the temporary pleasures they offer. The term فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ has a stronger implication than the word حرم, as seen in Surah Al-Maidah, verse 3. Besides indicating prohibition, it also conveys a sense of threat and commands a complete avoidance of such actions. Therefore, Allah instructs us to reject them, distance ourselves from them, and not even consider engaging in them. This is because these actions are not good deeds; rather, they are detested by Allah.

**Analysis of Idol in Roland Barthes' Semiotics Theory**

After discussing the linguistic aspects of the words ashnaam, authaan, and anshaab, as well as their perspectives from exegetes, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory enters the realm of mythology. This system represents the second stage, which signifies connotation (Kurniawan, 2001). This can be observed from the diagram of semantic changes below:

1. Ashnaam (الأصنام)

<table>
<tr><td>Ashnaam</td><td>Statues made of heated iron or metal</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">I</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Statues made of heated iron or metal</td><td>symbolic of the sun/stars</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">II</td></tr>
</table>

| | |
|---|---|
| Ashnaam as a symbol of the sun/stars | Something that is worshipped (an idol) |
| **III** | |

The term ashnaam serves as a signifier, and the statue made of heated iron or metal becomes the signified in the realm of linguistics. For mythological analysis, there is a shift in meaning due to the influence of pre-Islamic (jahiliyyah) and Islamic concepts. In the pre-Islamic concept, the word ashnaam originally meaning a statue made of heated iron or metal, transforms into a symbol representing the Sun or a Star. In the Islamic concept, the meaning shifts from the pre-Islamic concept of something to be worshipped (idol).

2. Authaan (الأوثان)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authaan | Buried statues | |
| I | | |
| Buried statues | Statues made of stone resembling humans and animals | |
| II | | |
| Statues made of stone resembling humans and animals | | Something that is worshipped (an idol), followed by the word rijsun (disgusting) |
| III | | |

The term authaan functions as a signifier, while the buried statue becomes the signified in the realm of linguistics. For mythological analysis, there is a change in meaning due to the influence of pre-Islamic (jahiliyyah) and

Islamic concepts. In the pre-Islamic concept, the word authaan, originally meaning a buried statue, evolves into a statue resembling the form of humans or animals. In the Islamic concept, the meaning shifts from the pre-Islamic concept of something worshipped (idol) to something abominable, accompanied by the term rijsun meaning disgusting.

3. Anshaab (الأنصاب)

| Anshaab | Stone | |
|---|---|---|
| I | | |
| Stone | A collection of tall stones surrounding the Ka'bah | |
| II | | |
| A collection of tall stones surrounding the Ka'bah | | A place to smear the blood of slaughtered animals as an offering, to the stone being worshipped. |
| III | | |

The term anshaab serves as a signifier, while the stone becomes the signified in the realm of linguistics. For mythological analysis, there is a change in meaning due to the influence of pre-Islamic (jahiliyyah) and Islamic concepts. In the pre-Islamic concept, the word "anshaab," originally meaning a stone, transforms into a collection of tall stones around the Kaaba. In the Islamic concept, the meaning shifts from the pre-Islamic concept of being a place to smear the blood of slaughtered animals as an offering, to the stone being worshipped.

**Conclusion**

The results of this research indicate that the concept of idols was more dominant during the pre-Islamic era, especially in the story of Prophet Ibrahim, which extended over a long period to the era of ignorance (Jahiliyyah) during the revelation of the Qur'an itself. The main purpose of this research is to understand the concept of idols in the Qur'an. Below are the research findings on the concept of idols in the Qur'an using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Firstly, the lexical meanings of the three terms used are: (a) ashnaam means idols, (b) authaan means statues planted in the ground, (c) anshaab means stones. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning of idols and their equivalents in the verses of the Qur'an are: (a) ashnaam refers to statues made of metal, (b) authaan refers to statues made resembling humans and animals, (c) Anshaab refers to tall stones surrounding the Ka'bah. Secondly, all these terms refer to the correlation between the depiction of God. Ashnaam is a symbolic of the sun or stars. Authaan is an analogy of God with creatures. Anshaab is a place to smear the blood of slaughtered animals or offerings and the stone was then worshipped.

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