

THE PROPHET AND POETRY: Theoretical Problems of Islamic Prophetic Texts

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Abstract: In a semiotic framework, hadith literature can be read as a prophetic text. With this perspective, hadith literature is no longer functional solely in the structure of Islamic legal sources, but more broadly as a language and discourse for the prophetic teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, which in its nature is intended “for all creatures” (*li-^l-‘alamīn*). This research then tries to reveal how Islamic prophetic language unit is formed in a whole prophetic text discourse. To take Halliday’s approach, a language unit can create its own language environment. Thus, hadith literature, as a medium for the functioning of a particular language unit, can create its own language environment, which is the prophetic language environment. A prophetic language, of course, will only be meaningful in its own ecosocial environment and can also become what is called “antilanguage” for different contexts. Yet, in fact, some hadith literatures show the presence of poetic texts in them. These poetic texts take the form of classical Arabic poetry from the pre-Islamic tradition which, if we refer to Quran 36:69, would be considered incompatible with prophethood. By unraveling the intertwining of these texts, this study seeks to show how the situation of intertextuality can pave the way for a new reading of Islamic prophetic texts. Poetic texts, in this case, may constitute a functional element that makes an important contribution in establishing Islamic prophetic discourse.

Keywords: Hadith; Islamic prophetic text; classical Arabic poetry; intertextuality; semiotics; semiogenetics.

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Introduction

Once upon a time, Prophet Muhammad was fixing his footwear. While Aisha was weaving and gazing at him in amazement: a bead of sweat glistened on the forehead of the great man. A delighted Aisha giggled a little. The Prophet turned his head and asked her why she was laughing. Aisha replied: "O Messenger of Allah. I see your forehead sweating. And your sweat sparkled with light. If Abu Kabir al-Hudzli were to see you now, he would immediately know that his earlier verses must have been about you."

The Prophet asked curiously: "What did Abu Kabir Al-Hudzli ever hum, O Aisha?" Then, Aisha recited a fragment of the verse:

وَمُبْرَأً مِنْ كُلِّ عُتْبٍ حِيضَةٍ # وَفَسَادِ مُرْضِعَةٍ وَدَاءِ مُغَيْلٍ
وَإِذَا نَظَرْتَ إِلَى أُسْرَةٍ وَجْهِهِ # بَرَقَتْ كَبْرَقِ الْعَارِضِ الْمُتَهَلِّلِ

*Has been cleared the menstruating woman from the remains of her blood
and the breastfeeding mother from the blemish of her disgrace.*

When you look at his bright face; Splashing lightning on smiling cheeks

The Prophet was stunned. He put down the equipment he was holding, stood up, and approached Aisha. He kissed his wife on the forehead and said: "May Allah reward you with good, Aisha. You don't feel as much happiness from me as I do from you."¹

The text above is a snippet of a model of hadith literature in which there is a quotation of a classical Arabic poetry that received the Prophet's appreciation. From a simple pragmatics perspective, we can frame the question of meaning as follows: what is the implicature of the presence of the poetry in the hadith literature? Does it show that the Prophet did not reject poetry as an Arab tradition and even appreciated it? Or does it simply hint at how a harmonious family atmosphere should be built even through the medium of poetry which in other cases was considered "inappropriate" for the Prophet, as for example in Qur'an 36:69: "And We have not taught him (Muhammad) poetry, nor is it appropriate for him." Or is it precisely to describe the situation of the prophetic home that is not only

¹ Abu Nu'aim al-Isfahani, *Hilyah al-Anbiya'* (Cairo: Maktabah Al-Khanji, 1996), 221.

romantic but also close to the noble culture of the Arab nation, namely the high-quality poetry that is memorized quite well by the Prophet's wife? Furthermore, doesn't the presence of the verse also show how the role of poetry in shaping prophetic practice, or in more technical language, how poetics participates in building prophetic discourse?

We can trace how "poetic texts are present in prophetic texts." Take for example another instance in a hadith literature, when the Prophet Muhammad was walking and stumbled over a stone, causing his fingers to bleed. Spontaneously, the Prophet uttered:

هل أنت إلا إصبع دميت # وفي سبيل الله ما لقيت

*You're fine, finger, except for being wounded
in the way of Allah when you're afflicted.*

In this second model, scholars of hadith literature have debated whether the Prophet deliberately quoted the poetic phrase. This debate is revealed in *Fath al-Bārī* where a group of scholars deny the words as poetry. For them, the Prophet had no intention of quoting or reciting the poetry. While the other group thinks there is no problem with the Prophet's involvement in reciting or humming poetry. The Prophet's words in the text in fact fulfill the metrical criteria of Arabic poetics with a module known as *rajaz*, one of the oldest Arabic poetic metre.

This problem arises mostly due to the interpretation of hadith literature. The medium of script has created a distance from the oral tradition as the authentic setting of hadith narratives. The most common method offered by classical scholars is to try to uncover the intentionality behind the hadith-utterances that have been transliterated into hadith literature.

However, there are many other records that emphasize the active relationship between the Prophet and the poetic tradition. One interesting example is certainly the moment when the Prophet participated in digging the trench ahead of the Battle of Khandaq. While working, the Prophet hummed a *rajaz* recognizable in its arrangement as identical to the verses of Ibn Rawahah's *kasida*²:

اللهم لولا أنت ما هتدينا * ولا تصدقنا ولا صلينا
فأنزلن سكينه علينا * وثبت الأقدام إن لاقينا

² Narrated by al-Bukhari in his *Shahih* with various versions.

إن الألى قد بعوا علينا * وإن أرادو فتنة أينا

*O Allah, if not because of You, we would not have been guided
Nor will we give alms and offer prayers.
So send down upon us tranquility
And give strength to our feet when facing the enemy.
Indeed, they are despotic to us
We will get rid of them if they want to commit chaos*

This last narrative is very convincing and will complement the intertextual reading that serves to understand the full discourse brought by a prophetic text.

We need to see how hadith literature has so far been the mainstay of Islamic creeds alongside the Qur'an since the era of codification. The intentionality of poetry - for scholars who lived long after the prophetic period - would clearly affect this structure. Every word, deed, and approval of the Prophet, which is the object of prophetic literature, is in some dimensions considered equal to divine revelation. They reinforce this assumption with quotations from the Qur'an 53:4, that the verses of the Qur'an and every utterance of the Prophet is nothing but a revelation from his God. The Qur'an and hadith, in the sense of the Prophet's words, are always aligned because the Prophet's message is nothing but a manifestation of revelation itself. The Qur'an and the hadith are on the same level: they share the quality of revelation except that they differ in their mode of expression. It is a common understanding among Islamic scholars that the hadith is nothing but revelation though in its *ghair mathu`* characteristics, it is not recited during prayer as the Qur'anic verses are.³

From the perspective of religious studies, the discovery of poetic quotations in some hadith literature has been debated by scholars because of their understanding of Qur'anic verses. Several times the Qur'an seems to confront the poetic with the prophetic. As in Sura 36:69, the Quran confirms that poetry is not part of the prophetic nature and is therefore inappropriate for him. Then in Surah 69:41, this is reinforced again that the Qur'an is not the words of a poet at all, but rather the duty of a messenger of God upon the revelation he receives.

In a section of the Qur'an, al-Shu'arā', or the Surah of the Poets, there is a verse that again implies a confrontational

³ Ram Swarup, *Understanding the Hadith* (New York: Prometheus Book, 2002).

interpretation of the world of poetry by stating that poets are followed by those who go astray (Surah 26:224). Meanwhile, the Prophet himself is assigned as the bearer of guidance (*budá*) for humans. Although in the case of the verse, there is an exception for righteous poets, it still does not nullify the critical implication of revelation that contrasts poetry and prophethood, “the poetics” and “the prophetics”. In fact, it is well known that the Prophet himself declared that he was not a poet and that poetry was not appropriate for him.⁴

If these scholars dispute the intention of the Prophet’s speech as the basis for determining the content and direction of that speech, in other words, looking for the type of text and its potential meaning, then the theoretical perspective of literary science can more clearly pay attention to the critical point of the relationship between prophetic texts and poetic texts. On the one hand, the two are opposed, but in fact they may emphasize the intertextuality that composes a prophetic language.

We can find records where the Prophet himself asked his companions to compose poetry. In fact, in a narration from Jabir bin Samurah in Sunan At-Tirmidhi, he witnessed the Prophet gathering with his companions hundreds of times where they recited poetry or exchanged stories of the pre-Islamic period or known as the *jābiliyyah*.⁵ One of the hadith records the Prophet’s famous saying: “Verily there is wisdom in poetry.”⁶

The above narrations confirm the Prophet’s appreciative attitude towards the poetic tradition. As stated in another repertoire published in At-Tirmidhi’s compilation, it is mentioned that the Prophet “forbade the recitation of poetry in mosques.” This implies a non-referential meaning of how the Prophet was accustomed to the activity of reciting poetry so that there was a need to restrict it from being done in such specific ways. If the meaning of this hadith is expanded, it could imply that beyond these limits, reciting poetry does not violate any prophetic conditions. If this text is compared with other texts, for example with the hadith texts that researchers have

⁴ Muhammad Abdurrahman al-Dhahir, *Al-Adab fī Shadr al-Islām* (Cairo: Al-Husain Al-Islamiyah, 1996), 74.

⁵ Check hadith number 2777 in *Sunan Tirmidzi* with a narration from Jabir ibn Samurah.

⁶ As-Sayyid Ibrahim Muhammad, *Muhāddlarāt fī al-Adab al-‘Arabi ‘Ashr Shadr al-Islām* (Cairo: Jeraisy, 2004), 52.

previously mentioned where the prophet was so appreciative of the poetic tradition, it becomes clearer that the prophetic tradition of the Prophet was partly composed by the poetic tradition.

From Mimetic to Semiotic Reading; Developing Theoretical Problems

The above problem arises simply because hadith literature is merely a “scriptural” record of actual prophetic activity, so the intention must be explored by involving other texts intertextually. Starting from the above findings, we can begin to develop theoretical problems. In the first step, as the target of this research, we need to start reading hadith literature as prophetic texts. The consequence of this reading is that hadith literature is no longer a source of religious teachings alone, but more accurately as a source of “prophetics” or prophetic teachings that are far more universal.⁷

In the context of Muhammad’s prophethood, we can compare this reading to the prophetic orientation from an Islamic perspective. The Qur’an provides several directives in this regard, for example, among the popular ones is Surah al-Anbiya`: 107: “We sent thee not (Muhammad), but as a mercy for all creatures,” – which is interpreted by Islamic-exegesis scholars as his presence as a bearer of compassion for all human beings. This issue can also be confirmed by paying attention to Quran 34:28, that the mission of the Prophet Muhammad was nothing but *kāffah*, that is, universally for all human beings indiscriminately. These two examples are reinforced by a well-known hadith literature, narrated from Abdullah bin Umar, from his father, Umar bin al-Khatthab R.A., when the Prophet was visited by a man who was later known through the Prophet’s words as “the Angel Gabriel who came to you to teach (the essence of) religion.” From that hadith, we recognize Muhammad’s prophetic trichotomy which is so popular as the basis of religion: *islām*, *imān*, and *ihsān*.

This argumentative issue will not be extended here. However, the universality of the prophetic message can be tested through contemporary reading tools. The author will depart while borrowing the approach outlined by Faruk by placing the text in its basic condition as a semiotic fact: as a system of signs that builds meaning according to its scales (Faruk, 2012: 77). We can see that every hadith literature is a text, which is a prophetic one, that carries a message and

⁷ QS. Al-Anbiya’: 107.

operates within the context of its grammatical environment.⁸ Text, as Thibault (2004) notes, is nothing but an integral part of every activity in a particular ecosocial context. However, it is important to note that through this perspective, the text is secondary. It is merely a derivative of the activity in which it is produced. What is primary is the activity itself, which in this case: prophetic activity.

Prophetic activity is inevitably the main “resource” of the framework of signification in the sense of semiosis of the prophetic texts.⁹ The prophetic text, through the example of some hadith literature above, shows a variety of signification - or in other words, a semiotic model only. We need to explore the more fundamental part, which is usually more invariable.

When confronted with prophetic texts, it is common that a reader will initially view them mimetically. Here, he or she simply connects textual signs with external references in a rather linear pattern. The hadith literature at that stage was considered as a stable and sufficient grammatical system. It was nothing but a closed-representative copy of prophetic matters. So when such texts were found to be “deviant”, the reading of them became vulnerable. If the reading method is not developed and stopped at the mimetic level, one will easily negate the validity of the prophetic message of the text. He will consider the text less or not valid at all as a prophetic text. This is where semiotic reading finds its momentum.

Grammatical disobedience or what semioticians call the “ungrammaticality” of a text is a potential that can be found in almost all texts due to the indeterminative nature of language itself. This is also evident in the case of prophetic texts through the reading of hadith literature. Ungrammaticality is a contradictory aspect of the referential reading that demands further examination of the non-referential structure. Therefore, the next stage of reading the prophetic text is needed, from the mimetic level to the semiotic level.

⁸ Grammar is one of the keywords in semiotic circles. Halliday considers grammar as the semiotic resource of meaning production. Leeuwen develops this notion of grammar, that its symptoms are present in other semiotic models, not only in language. Meanwhile, Riffaterre anticipates what he calls ungrammaticality to describe the “uncertainty” of a text’s signification.

⁹ “Semiotic resources” is a term introduced by Leeuwen as an adaptation of Halliday’s idea that grammar is more than just an arrangement of rules, but “resources for meaning-making”. Read Theo Van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

In the Islamic sciences, the potential for semiotic reading is actually nothing new. *Ushūl fiqh*, or the method of determining the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, has long developed a systematic interpretation through referential-prophetic tagging to draw a legal conclusion based on prophetic texts both hadith and Qur'anic literature. In simple language, *ushūl fiqh* is a method for producing the arguments known as *dalīl* on which fiqh or Islamic law depends (*adillah al-shar'iyyah*). *Dalīl*, in this context, is nothing but a referential-prophetic signifier. Eventhough the argument -which is the *dalīl*- put forward by a *mujtahid* is mere a *qiyās* or analogical reasoning, because - for example - there is no definitive-absolute text sourced from the Qur'an or sunnah (*an-nash al-qath'i*), it is still an intertextual-prophetic argument. There is not a single reliable mujtahid who does not use the consideration of various referential-prophetic modes in deciding a law. The entire legal production must be referential to prophetic conditions in varying degrees.

A semiotic understanding will be a rejuvenating exercise in reading the logic and systematic principles of Islamic jurisprudence. We can examine this by comparing the linguistic approach that has been commonly used by scholars in the field of *ushūl fiqh*. A popular expert like Abdul Wahhab Khallaf, for example, pays special attention to this linguistic issue. The scholars of *ushūl fiqh* have formulated the characteristics of prophetic texts based on the rules of Arabic semantics in order to obtain a valid understanding in making legal conclusions.¹⁰ These texts are in Arabic, so their meaning can only be achieved by understanding the rules that apply among experts. For example, among the tasks of *ushūl fiqh* scholars is to formulate *dalālah al-alfādẓ 'alā al-ma'ānī*, which in this sense means the method of referential signification of a discourse to obtain meaning. At the initial stage, this task can be explained by exploring the semantic characteristics of the prophetic text, for example, the generality and specificity of its internal discourse (*al-'ām wa al-khāsh*) as well as the unrestricted and the restricted (*al-muthlaq wa al-muqayyad*). However, in its application, the mujtahids must interpret a prophetic text by involving other prophetic texts, even with positive legal texts or with

¹⁰ It refers to the special chapter on the ushul rules based on linguistic problems in his popular teaching work. Read Abdul Wahhab Khallaf, *Ilm Ushūl al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Maktabah Syabāb al-Azhar, 1956).

the customs of a community group (*'urf*)¹¹. In doing so, they have applied the principles of intertextuality in producing the text while demonstrating that the semantic approach alone is difficult to meet the complex needs of prophetic textual interpretation in the ever-dynamic law-making.

Prophetic texts that contain poetic texts are no different from prophetic texts that contain Islamic legal principles. They all come from the same source and have intertextual meaning in building Muhammad's prophetic discourse as well as the teachings of Islam.

From the prophetic texts that we collect, further understanding can be generated if we continue to trace the trajectories of prophetic activity signifiers to give a more complete meaning to the prophetic operations that take place. If we succeed in reaching that level, we will find the form of the text, which is a whole prophetic discourse, not just a collection of prophetic texts. For a further step, finding the structure of prophetic discourse is the reading achievement to be developed in this research. However, in a more limited way, in this article, the author will focus his research by first looking fundamentally at a semiotic-semiogenetic scale of prophetic texts.

This research aims to understand the structure of the prophetic text and its relationship with its constructive elements. In its formal form, the researcher intends to explain the intertextual relationship between the poetic text and the prophetic text where the first text is present in the second text to form a complete text as a complete discourse. Starting from this step, we can analyze the semiotic structure of the prophetic text in its pragmatic context through a semiogenetic approach.

This perspective has the consequence of opening up several theoretical problems that can continue to be developed. One of them is the problem of the literalness of prophetic texts. Cook (1997), for example, critically scrutinizes the loss of the status of orality in the study of hadith literature. Hadith, derived from the Arabic root *hadatsa*, means "to speak". Today, hadith literature is no different from "ordinary writing" like any other product of authorship. Oral studies need to be strengthened to find meanings that cannot be accommodated by writing. According to Olson (2006), writing is nothing but a limited representation of speech. Finding the character of the Islamic prophetic tradition can be described as starting from

¹¹ Ibid., 141.

finding what Olson calls “oral discourse in a world of literacy.” Thus, studies of literacy, such as Parry-Lord (1971) and Ong (1984) must be reviewed to find their intersection with the distinctive literacy of the Islamic prophetic tradition.

The study of literacy, then, has some meanings in relation to the semiotic approach offered by the author in at least three ways. First, the illiterate status of the Prophet Muhammad, who was *ummī*, hints at the potential theoretical problems offered by Halliday through his social semiotics as antilanguage. To place hadith literature as a text in semiotic studies, it is first necessary to place prophetic texts as a more basic system unit, namely language. The hadith literature is a specific language unit in a pragmatic situation which according to Halliday can create its own environment.¹² Prophetic language will only be meaningful in its own social environment, at the same time, what needs to be anticipated is that this language can also be anti-language for other environments.¹³ Furthermore, perhaps we need to ask whether the current status of literacy in today’s hadith literature is rather antiprophetics.

Secondly, in this study, the author highlights Arabic poetry as a poetic text that is present in some prophetic texts. Arabic poetry has a similar character to Islamic prophetic texts. Schoeler’s article (1997), for example, sharply reveals the relationship between Islamic prophetic texts and Arabic poetic texts that both come from “the same power of tradition”, which is none other than the power of oral tradition as a characteristic of the Arab nation.

Finally, the view of Paul Thibault (2004) through his semiogenetics which will be explained further in the next section. This view sees human activity as a primary part of the signification-semiotic system described as a long trajectory of meaning. Thus, one can imagine the importance of the speech activity of the Prophet as well as his narrators in conveying the prophetic message from one generation to the next.

¹² Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3.

¹³ In Halliday’s concept of social semiotics, this phenomenon is referred to as interlanguage. Michael Halliday, “Anti-language,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 78, No. 3, (1976): 570.

Semiogenetics for the Study of Prophetic Texts

Semiotics today is moving from its structural form towards the social. The process of semiosis can be read as a pragmatic language phenomenon that serves the communication of its society. Through this understanding, Paul Thibault's preposition finds its context: the main source of production of the sign system comes from the individual body and its activities that form an ecosocial. Language is part of the signification that is actively produced continuously by the interweaving of generative processes that he calls the body-brain system. This system is the basis of meaning-making activities and is actually responsible for the formation of the ecosocial environment of a signification-semiosis process.¹⁴

Thibault's semiotic reading is also a critique of some people who understand semiosis narrowly by defining the scope of semiotics as limited to building an understanding of language-based texts. Such an understanding fails to see not only the continuity that connects human semiosis with the semiosis of other species, but also the continuity that always exists internally between perception, non-linguistic conceptual thinking, mental imagery, consciousness and semiosis that is generative for each individual.¹⁵

The limitations of this understanding make linguistic models of texts the true model of the activity of meaning production, an activity that is pre-embedded in its ecosocial environment. The text is indeed an integral part of any activity in that ecosocial context, but it has a secondary and derivative status in relation to the activity in which it is created and participates. In Thibault's conception, it is the activity that is primary in this semiotic framework.

Thibault's semiotic approach is recognized as an adaptation of Salthe's notion of ontogenetic trajectories, which illustrates that systems of meaning must pay attention to a kind of large-scale

¹⁴ P.J. Thibault, *Brain, Mind and The Signifying Body* (London: Continuum, 2004).

¹⁵ 'Generative' is not the word Thibault uses, but a term popularized by Chomsky (in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 1965) which the author borrows to strengthen the understanding of Thibault's ideas. Chomsky put forward the idea of how a mentally formed grammar becomes a marker of a person's language competence. It is this mental-individual grammar that then produces aliases that generalize the arrangement of phrases to sentences in speech. Chomsky's concept is opposite to the concept of structural linguistics which considers grammar as a systematization of speech. Meanwhile, according to Thibault, a person's activity becomes the primary source in the production of text as well as its meaning.

trajectory that is historical-biographical in nature. Activity must be seen in its movement that extends beyond the individual and reaches into the ecosocial environment. Thibault agrees with Shalte that meaning-making activity is a trajectory in time. According to him, the locus of meaning is not the organism, not the physical-material semiotic form, nor the text-object of the activity that produces it. The locus of meaning is that trajectory. With this, we can consider the activity of meaning-making as a semiogenetic trajectory that Thibault calls reaching out in various directions of “time travel”, backward, into the past, and also forward, toward the future.

Thibault explains that semiogenetic trajectories can be seen embedded in larger-scale trajectories, namely historical-biographical (ontogenetic) and ecosocial-cultural trajectories. At the same time, these large-scale trajectories integrate much smaller-scale trajectories, in the form of neural and sensor-motor body-brain dynamics, into their own larger-scale dynamics and time scales (Thibault, 2004: 4).

The perception of trajectories in semiotic meaning-making is actually not too strange when looking back at the tradition of Islamic prophetic studies. Sunnah, as a prophetic practice, is a text that represents a long activity of meaning formation in a semiogenetic-prophetic trajectory that is passed down as a tradition from one generation to the next. In this sense, inheritance (*warātsah*) is a lifelong struggle: someone who believes in the way, should maintain the tradition along the moving trajectory of space and time. For this reason, tradition must be understood in the prophetic trajectory simplified in the term *al-‘ulamā’ waratsat al-anbiyā’*, the ulamas, or the expert scholars of the sciences and practices of the *sharia*, are prophetic heirs. Interpretation of what is prophetic can only be achieved through a full understanding of the prophetic tradition gathered from this trajectory of experience.

Even the structure of understanding religious praxis in Islam all uses a trajectory perspective. Sharia, which comes from the Arabic *yari’ab* or the representation of what is commonly called religion formally, has the etymological meaning of *path*. It is this path that is introduced as the prophetic teaching of a prophet for his people. Sharia was brought by pioneering scholars who gave birth to religious school known as *mazhab*. The word *mazhab* refers to the “path” of a believer’s choice. Then in its subsystem, religious adherents can specifically follow certain *tariqah* strengthening the spiritual side

through Sufistic practice, where a person strictly follows the steps of his teacher that are passed down prophetically for generations to achieve truth and true knowledge. *Tariqah* comes from the word *thariqah* which also means “path”. Thus, it can be said, the religion of Islam is nothing but a value system with the condition that its formal practices must be based on a known and consecutive (*mutawātir*) trajectory in this religious pathway.

It will be easier to understand Thibault’s view by recalling the discipline of hadith literature which has a rigorous method of determining the credibility of narrators by applying narration criticism (*al-jarh wa al-ta’dil*). Scholars collected the names of the narrators along with biographical evaluations of their historical and religious aspects. In other words, scholars can be said to apply both ontogenetic and ecosocial-cultural trajectory analysis to determine reliable narrators.

The achievements of this research may not be able to offer a consistent method of how a semiogenetic perspective can present a framework for analyzing Islamic prophetic texts and other prophetic text models. The approach used here is more seen as an affirmative support for the scholarly efforts of the scholars of hadith literature who have contributed this treasure with unparalleled preservation. The abundance of Islamic prophetic texts has moved through the ages until most of its excellences have arrived in our hands. The process layer itself is an activity that takes place trajectoryally and becomes an extraordinary semiotic source of potential. More than that, the author’s hope through this semiogenetic approach is to shed new light on the phenomenon of signification that has so far given birth to various models of reading and interpretation before finally forming interpretative and applicative schools that are influential in socio-religious structures.

We can do a simple experiment on how to understand a narration of a time when the Prophet entered Mecca with a group of Companions. Ibn Rawahah walked in front of the Prophet while reciting a poem which was protested by the other Companions. The *shīr* reads as follows:

خَلُّوا بَنِي الْكُفَّارِ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ * الْيَوْمَ نَصْرِيكُمْ عَلَى تَنْزِيلِهِ
صَرْبًا يُزِيلُ الْهَامَ عَنْ مَقْبِلِهِ * وَيُدْهَلُ الْخَلِيلَ عَنْ حَلِيلِهِ

We can understand the piece by translating it literally. Line 1 can be translated as follows: “Get you disbelievers out of his (the Prophet’s) way; Today we will slash you for his coming” and in line 2

“With a slash that removes the head from its nap; and (a slash) that leads a lover astray from his beloved.”

In the literature, Umar bin Khaththab, one of the most prominent successors to the Prophet’s leadership, rebuked Ibn Rawahah for daring to recite poetry in front of the Prophet by saying: “O Ibn Rawahah, in the presence of the Messenger and in the *haram* you dare to recite poetry?” The Prophet intervened and asked Umar to leave him alone saying: “Let him. His poetry is faster than the throwing of a spear.”¹⁶

We can interpret the conversation between Umar and the Prophet in due course. But first, it would be interesting to look at the possible interpretations of Ibn Rawahah’s poem above. We will only discuss the first line, because it will show how the dynamics of interpretation might be built.

We can notice how Ibn Rawahah’s choice of words in the poem is so provocative. The word *bani al-kuffār* denotatively can be interpreted as the children of the infidels. Then the word *sabil*, can be interpreted as the path that the Prophet traveled at that time. And the third, *tanzīl*, whose in its simple meaning is the condition of the descent or arrival of someone, in this case the descent of the Prophet in the midst of the people of Mecca. However, as a great poet, we can anticipate more than just denotative meanings from his poetry. He deliberately uses the word *kuffār*, the disbelievers, who block the *sabil*. Two word choices that have strong associative emotions, that in fact he was not driving away those who obstructed the Prophet who was walking at that time, but on those who disobeyed the path of Allah (*sabilillāh*) or His provisions. The word *tanzīl* also cannot simply be interpreted as the place where the Prophet descended when passing by, because this word is also associative with *tanzīl* which means holy verses as the Qur’an is referred to as al-Tanzīl.

We can see another trajectory, when the Prophet referred to Ibn Rawahah’s poetry. As narrated by Aisha, the Prophet was known to be fond of Ibn Rawahah’s verses. It is even proven in the narration of Al-Barra`, he sang Ibn Rawahah’s poem while transporting the sand dug trenches at the battle of Khandaq.

¹⁶ Please refer to Tirmidhi’s hadith no. 2774, narrated by Ishaq ibn Manshur up to Anas.

In his narration¹⁷, while transporting the soil, the Prophet hummed as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ لَوْلَا أَنْتَ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا / وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا / فَأَنْزِلْ سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا / وَثَبِّتِ الْأَقْدَامَ إِنَّ لَاقِينَا /
إِنَّ الْأَعْدَاءَ¹⁸ قَدْ بَعَوْا عَلَيْنَا / إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أَبِينَا

The poem is recognized as part of Ibn Rawahah's poem. There, however, the Prophet chose the word *al-a'dā'*, the opponents, enemies, or disobedient people instead of the word *al-kāfirīn* as in Ibn Rawahah's verse. The context of the word *kāfir* makes it clear that they will not be called *kāfir* unless they are disobedient. Because if it is interpreted as infidels, or those who do not believe, then in fact the Prophet has become the leader of the pluralistic society of Medina, even the unbelievers far exceed the number of Muslims who followed the Prophet at that time (please refer to various literature on the history of Medina, especially the events of the Aqabah Agreement).

While *sabīl* and *tanzīl* are words that underwent a semantic change to a meaning specialization after the fall of Islam. The connotative meaning of *sabīl* is *sabīlillah*, "the pathway of God", where every aspect of life that Muslims strive for is on that path. It can also be interpreted that the word *sabīl* means the path in the sense of *sharia* as well as the prophetic path. This understanding is reinforced by the choice of the word *tanzīl* which in the sense of the time no longer merely means the process of someone's arrival because *tanzīl* can also mean the book revealed to the Prophet, namely the Qur'an, which is the source of his message. With this understanding, we can try to understand the first line through the following adaptive translation:

*Get out of his way O children of disobedience
Today I will cut you down with his treatise.*

The disobedient means anyone who has betrayed and obstructed the path of peace offered by the Prophet through his treatise. This mode of reading can be achieved by viewing the speech as a poetic text, not merely the speech of a common people. Ibn Rawahah was a renowned poet whose choice of words must be assessed in that context.

¹⁷ This narration is quoted many times by Bukhari from various narrations referring to al-Bara', for example in hadith literature number 2624, 2625, 2808, then 3797. A similar narration is also quoted by al-Darimi in hadith number 2347.

¹⁸ In al-Darimi's narration, the word *al-ulā'* is used instead of *al-a'dā'* with approximately the same meaning.

Through semiogenetic understanding, hadith literature has a sense of meaning that can be completely different from the general reading that only sees the surface meaning of a text. Imagine reading hundreds of thousands of prophetic texts and other hadith literature. Without a semiogenetic understanding, the consequence of the interpretation may be to turn the teaching of peace into a teaching of hostility.

Poetic Texts within Prophetic Texts: An Intertextual Experiment

In this section, we will try to reread the poem that the Prophet sang while digging the trench at the battle of Khandaq that we discussed earlier. The poem in question is the fragment whose beginning reads:

لَوْلَا أَنتَ مَا اهْتَدَيْتَنَا...

The verse is thought to be part of a famous composition by Ibn Rawahah, a poet who also received special attention from the Prophet. Ibn Rawahah's poems were often appreciated by him. Ibn Rawahah was the flag bearer in several battles in which the Prophet participated. This placed Ibn Rawahah as one of the special companions in the Prophet's circle who was aligned with the battle flag bearers, such as Zaid bin Harithah, a companion whose name is even honored in the Qur'an. For the record, at a later time, the Prophet recalled the departure of Ibn Rawahah along with other flag bearers with tears in his eyes, as narrated in al-Bukhari's compilation.¹⁹

We can do this by inviting other texts to measure their intertextuality. Through this reading step, we can hope to find an interpretation that places the prophetic text as a more complete medium for a discourse. What is interesting to engage here is a report during the Prophet's journey to Khaibar. This narration is agreed upon by Bukhari-Muslim from the narration of Quthaibah bin Sa'id. At that time, a member of the Prophet's army asked a friend named Amir bin al-Akwa' to sing poetry. Amir was famous for his expertise in poetry. So, Amir, who was driving the camels, chanted *buda*²⁰ in the metre of *rajaʿ*:

¹⁹ As in Bukhari: 2835, a narration with the beginning of the text that reads:

أَخَذَ الرَّأْيَةَ زَيْدٌ فَأَصِيبَ نَمٌّ أَخَذَهَا جَعْفَرٌ فَأَصِيبَ نَمٌّ أَخَذَهَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ رَوَاحَةَ فَأَصِيبَ...

²⁰ Hudāʿ: camel shepherd's song verse.

اللَّهُمَّ لَوْلَا أَنْتَ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا / وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا / فَأَغْفِرْ فِدَاءَ لَكَ مَا اقْتَمَيْنَا / وَتَبَّتْ الْأَقْدَامُ إِنْ
لَاقَيْنَا / وَالْقَيْنَ سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا / إِنَّا إِذَا صَبَّحْنَا بِمَا آتَيْنَا / وَبِالصَّبَاحِ عَوَّلُوا عَلَيْنَا

After listening to the poem, the Prophet asked the Companions what was the name of the Companion who hummed it. When it was answered that it was Amir bin al-Akwa', the Prophet immediately prayed for blessings upon him.²¹

We have not been able to figure out in what context the Prophet traveled to Khaibar, so the approximate time cannot be determined. However, considering the above narration which mentions that the Prophet traveled with his war army, it can be assumed that the event took place during the Khaibar war, which was about two years after the Khandaq war. Interestingly, as mentioned earlier, during the war of Khandaq, the Prophet had sung a similar *rajaʿ*.

The *rajaʿ* hummed by companion Amir and the Prophet can be compared to the famous *kasida* composed by Ibn Rawahah which is usually quoted in 5 full stanzas:²²

تَاللَّهِ لَوْلَا اللَّهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا / وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا / الْكَافِرُونَ قَدْ بَعَّوْا عَلَيْنَا / إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أَيْنَا / إِنَّا
إِذَا صَبَّحْنَا بِمَا آتَيْنَا / وَبِالصَّبَاحِ عَوَّلُوا عَلَيْنَا / فَأَغْفِرْ فِدَاءَ لَكَ مَا اقْتَمَيْنَا / وَتَبَّتْ الْأَقْدَامُ إِنْ لَاقَيْنَا /
وَأَنْزَلْنَا سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا / وَنَحْنُ عَنْ فَضْلِكَ مَا اسْتَعَيْنَا

We can observe the intertextual pattern of these poems by first comparing the three versions that appear. If the three are tabulated, we can see how the hemistichs compare and the arrangement of the verses. There are also differences in the choice of some words between the three.

Here, we can operationalize Genette's view of intertextuality understood as the presence of a text within another text. Ibn Rawahah's text is present in the texts of the hadith literature involving the speech of Amir bin Al-Akwa' and the Prophet Muhammad. We can make this assumption by considering at least four reports in the hadith literature. The first, in Bukhari's account, hadith number 2624 from Abul Walid who relates the narration of al-Bara':

*It was the Prophet transporting (excavated soil) and saying:
"Had it not been for You, we would not have been guided."*

²¹ Bukhari: 5682; Muslim: 3363.

²² This narration is quoted many times by Bukhari from various narrations referring to al-Bara', for example in hadith literature number 2624, 2625, 2808, then 3797. A similar narration is also quoted by al-Darimi in hadith number 2347.

Secondly, also in Bukhari's transcript, hadith number 2625, from Hafsh ibn 'Amr who recounted the narration of al-Bara`:

I saw the Messenger of Allah on the days of Al-Ahzab, he was carrying soil, and some of the soil was covering his white belly, while he was saying: "O Allah, if it were not for You, we would not have been guided; we would not have prayed and given alms. Give us peace; steady our feet when they are before us. Indeed, they have been arbitrary; they want destruction and we are fighting them."

The third, from Musaddad, in Bukhari's report number 2808, also from the same narration of al-Bara`:

I saw the Messenger of Allah (SAW) on the days (of the battle) of Al-Khandaq, he was carrying soil, and some of the soil covered his chest hair, he was then a shaggy man, while he was humming *rajaḥ* with the *rajaḥ* (compositions) of Abdullah: "O Allah, if it were not for You, we would not have been guided; we would not have prayed and given alms. Give us tranquility; steady our feet when they are before us. Indeed, the enemies have been abusive; they want destruction and we fight them," he recited with his voice raised.

Then finally, from the report of Ahmad ibn 'Uthman in the account of Bukhari number 3797, still based on the narration of al-Bara`:

At the time of the battle of al-Ahzab or Khandaq, I saw the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*) hauling earth from the trench, so that the dust of his belly was out of my sight, and he had thick hair at that time, while he was humming *rajaḥ* in the verse of Ibn Rawahah while hauling earth: "O Allah, if it were not for You, we would not have been guided; we would not have prayed and given alms. Give us peace; steady our feet when they are before us. Indeed they have been abusive; they want destruction and we fight them," then he raised his voice to the end of his verse.

We can conclude that the four texts complement each other's referential understanding. The structure of the verse hummed by the Prophet is consistently quoted by the four narrations, with the exception of one-word choice, where the Musaddad narration clearly mentions "the enemies" (*al-a'dā*), while the other three narrations use the pronoun "them" (*al-ulā*). The poem is recognized as the first stanza of *rajaḥ* composed by Abdullah Ibn Rawahah. Even in Abul Walid's narration, no context is given, implying that Ibn Rawahah's verse was already well-known among the people at that time.

We can compare the text of the poetry as recited by Ibn Rawahah, Amir bin Al-Akwa` and the Prophet Muhammad in the following table:

M		M		
وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلِّينَا		ثَا لِه لَوْلَا اللّٰهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا		
إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أُنِينَا		الْكَافِرُونَ قَدْ بَعَّوْا عَلَيْنَا		
وَبِالصَّبَاحِ عَزَّوَلَا عَلَيْنَا		إِنَّا إِذَا صَبَحْنَا بِنَا أُنِينَا		
وَتَبَّتْ أَلْقَدَامُ إِن لَّاقِينَا		فَاعْظُرْ فِدَاءَ لَكَ مَا اقْتَبِينَا		
وَنَحْنُ عَنْ فَضْلِكَ مَا اسْتَعْتَبِينَا	.	وَأَنْزَلْنَ سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا		
-	٢/	اللهم/تالله	١/	I
-	٨/	-	٧/	
-	٥/	وَالْقَيْنِ/وَأَنْزَلْنَ	٩/	
		-	٦/	
-	٢/	اللهم/تالله	١/	II
-	٨/	فَأَنْزَلْنَ/وَأَنْزَلْنَ	٩/	
-	٤/	إِن الْأَعْدَاءِ/الْكَافِرُونَ	٣/	

The table above shows how the verses recited by Amir and Nabi are largely consistent with Ibn Rawahah's verses except for some differences in hemistich order and slight differences in word choice. P is the poet, in this case code I means Ibn Rawahah, code II means Amir, and code III means the Prophet. While H means hemistich, and M means the material of the poem. In each of the hemistichs PII and PIII, a comparison with the verse structure of PI is written. The first chant of the three versions are all exactly the same, with no difference at all, so both PII and PIII have the consistency of hemistich 1/1 and 2/2, except for the difference in word choice in hemistich I, where PII and PIII use the same word choice but different from that of PI. As for the rest of the arrays, there are differences in the arrangement of the arrays and hemistichs in PII and PIII when compared to PI.

Line 2 in PII shows that hemistich 3 in PII is similar to hemistich 7 in PI. And so on. Meanwhile, PI's array 2 does not appear in the PII arrangement at all. The same goes for PI's hemistich 10.

An intertextual approach can add to the understanding of the meaning of the *rajaʿ* poems that appear in these texts. We can notice differences in word choice, for example, if we look at the second line of Ibn Rawahah's version. This will reveal interesting findings on how one text and another text consistently interweave discourses on certain themes. In his composition, Ibn Rawahah - for example - uses the word *al-kaʿfirūn* which means the disbelievers. The emphasis of the meaning of *kaʿfir* here is not in general those who do not believe in Ibn Rawahah's faith, but those who "want division and destruction" (*arādū fitnah*) among them. *Kaʿfir* can be interpreted as one who opposes or disobeys the collaborative and peace process that was being built among the fierce inter-tribal conflicts at the time. This perspective is corroborated by a reading of the intertext when the Prophet specifically chooses the word *al-ulā* as the pronominal "them" who are abusive and want *fitnah*. In another version, the Prophet is reported to have chosen *al-a'dā'* instead of *al-kaʿfirūn*, meaning 'the enemies' with their abusive character and desire for the destruction of the peaceful community that the Prophet was building. *Kaʿfir* is no longer intertextual with "infidelity" alone, but rather a form of disobedience to peace demonstrated by abusive attitudes and motives of social destruction. In Amir bin al-Akwa' version, neither the word *kaʿfir* nor *enemy* even appears. This emphasizes the contextual-intertextual understanding of the poetry, where words that lead to defiance and hostility did not appeal to Amir.

Conclusion

Semiotic studies with an updated approach are able to reveal the peculiarities of the prophetic language system while supporting the universality orientation of the prophetic treatise. Through the application of semiogenetics, for example, the prophetic text shows its complex character as a whole discourse. The presence of poetic text in the prophetic text does not cancel any status of the prophetic text as a discourse. The poetic text is a functional element that contributes to the prophetic discourse.

Furthermore, the prophetic text and the poetic text contained therein are integral in the whole unity of prophetic discourse.

Breaking them apart has the potential to weaken the prophetic language system and eliminate its pragmatic and ecosocial functions. In addition, the semiogenetic approach also proves its relevance with the method of preserving of hadith literature applied by scholars of Islamic studies so far, in which ontogenetic studies, one of whose dimensions manifests itself through the historical-biographical evaluation of a narrator, have on the one hand been an important part of the study of hadith narration throughout its academic tradition.

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