

Nature Symbols and Symbolism in Sufic Poems of Ibn Arabi

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Abstract

Ibn Arabi is regarded as a pioneer of *wahdat al-wujud* concept seeing that all creatures unite with the essence of God. Ibn Arabi frequently depicts his concepts and thoughts on Sufism through poetries that contain nature symbols. It raises questions in this study: what symbols are in Ibn Arabi's poetries? What do these symbols mean? Is there a correlation between nature symbols in his poetries with his concept of *wahdat al-wujud*? To answer those three questions, the author uses qualitative methodology by using a number of both primary and secondary resources for library research. To analyze the symbols, Arabic rhetoric science-based approach is used, especially *bayan*. The study finds that certain symbols have been used by Ibn Arabi as such sun, moon, star, earth and sky. Ibn Arabi uses the symbols of sun to represent God as the main source of universe, of moon to represent God's tajalli in His creatures, of sky for the highest attribute of God, of earth for human's contemptible nature, and of stars bridging the sky and earth representing spirit blown by God onto human. Hence, nature symbols themselves disprove the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* that has been proposed by scholars so far.

[Ibnu Arabi dianggap sebagai pencetus konsep *wahdat al-wujûd*. Sebuah pemahaman yang beranggapan bahwa semua makhluk pada hakikatnya adalah satu karena wujud sesungguhnya berasal dari zat Allah. Ibnu Arabi banyak menuangkan konsep dan pemikiran tasawufnya melalui syair-syair yang di dalamnya banyak mengandung simbol-simbol alam. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, muncul pertanyaan dalam kajian ini yaitu: simbol-simbol alam apa sajakah yang terdapat dalam syair-syair Ibnu Arabi? Apakah makna

dari simbolisme alam tersebut? Apakah simbolisme alam dalam syair Ibnu Arabi memiliki korelasi dengan konsep *wahdat al-wujud*? Untuk menjawab ketiga pertanyaan tersebut, penulis menggunakan penelitian kualitatif terhadap sejumlah data primer dan sekunder melalui kajian pustaka. Di samping itu, untuk menganalisis simbol-simbol alam penulis juga menggunakan pendekatan *balaghah* terutama teori-teori ilmu bayan. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ditemukan beberapa simbol alam pada syair Ibnu Arabi, namun demikian yang paling menonjol yaitu matahari, bulan, bintang, bumi dan langit. Makna simbolisme matahari (*syams*) pada umumnya dijadikan sebagai simbolisme Tuhan yang menjadi sumber kehidupan alam raya, sedangkan bulan (*hilal*, *qamar*, dan *badr*) merupakan simbolisme *tajalli* Tuhan pada makhluknya. Di sisi lain, langit juga dijadikan sebagai simbolisme sifat-sifat ketuhanan yang tinggi (*lahût*), dan bumi menjadi simbol dari sifat-sifat kemanusiaan yang hina (*nasût*). Langit dan bumi dijembatani oleh bintang (*kaukab*, *najm*) sebagai simbol dari ruh yang ditiupkan Tuhan pada manusia. Secara umum, simbolisme alam yang digunakan oleh Ibnu Arabi sesungguhnya menafikan konsep *wahdatul wujud* yang selama ini disimpulkan oleh para pemerhati tasawuf.

Keywords: Ibn Arabi; symbol; nature; *wahdat al-wujud*

Introduction

In the world of Sufism, Ibn Arabi's name is not a strange one. Study on his works and thoughts is not something new as conveyed by Fuadi in his work titled "Understanding Sufism of Ibn Arabi and Ibn al-Farid: Concepts of Divine Love, *Wahdat al-Wujud*, *Wahdah al-Syuhud* and *Wahdah al-Adyan*"¹. Ibn Arabi himself never declared *wahdat al-wujud* in his works. This term in fact appeared initially in Ibn Taimiyah's works as he criticized teachings of philosophical Sufism². Therefore, to say that Ibn Arabi does not prove *wahdat al-wujud* needs scientific proof.

Ibn Arabi's thoughts on Sufism and philosophy are mostly written in Arabic poetry which is much closed to symbolic meaning. Among symbols

¹ Muhammad Robith Fuadi, "Memahami Tasawuf Ibnu Arabi Dan Ibnu Al-Farid: Konsep Al-Hubb Illahi, *Wahdat Al-Wujud*, *Wahdah Al-Syuhud* Dan *Wahdat Al-Adyan*," *Ulul Ablal Islamic Studies Journal* 14, no. 2 (2013).

² Nilyati, "Konsep Dasar Pemikiran Filosofis Ibnu Arabi," *Tajdid* 11, no. 2 (2012).

he usually deploy are nature symbols. What symbols are they? And what are the meanings behind them? Is also a connection between these symbols with wahdat al-wujud concept?

Methods

To answer the questions, an appropriate methodology is necessary. This study, then, employs qualitative methodology. According to Pupu, there are four basics in qualitative research; one of those is symbolic interaction considering that object, circumstance and event do not have independent meaning, but dependent on variety of interpretations³. So that, to reveal the symbolic meanings of nature as Ibn Arabi used in his works, the author specifically uses Arabic rhetoric approach.

Discussion

First of all, four theories need to be discussed. These theories are symbols in Arabic rhetoric, definition of nature, definition of sufic literature, and Ibn Arabi as a sufic poet.

Symbols or in Arabic known as *al-ramz* is a sign which is considered to reflect something else and indicates that there is other meaning behind *that* something, and *that* other meaning replaces its meaning.⁴ Briefly, Endraswara says that the symbol is a meaningful sign.⁵ The symbolism or *al-ramziyyah* in Arabic is one of the methods used by literati to express feeling and mind through signs or symbols.⁶ Stylistic symbolism used by Ibn Arabi is believed to able to mediate the things that are material to those that are immaterial, as well as those that are concrete (*hissi*) and abstract (*ma'nawi*).

³ Pupu Saeful Rahmat, "Penelitian Kualitatif," *Equilibrium* 5, no. 9 (2009): 1–9, 2.

⁴ Muhammad Al-Tunji, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufasssal Fi Al-Adab* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1993), 488.

⁵ Suwardi Endraswara, *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Widyatama, 2004), 65.

⁶ Muhammad Futuh Ahmad, *Al-Ramz Wa Al-Ramziyyah Fi Al-Syi'r Al-Mu'ashir* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1978), 3.

According to Aart van Zoest, as a whole, literary text is a sign with all its characteristics.⁷ In the science of Arabic rhetoric, there is an approach that specifically examines the symbolic meaning commonly called as figure of speech.⁸ Figure of speech turns the true meaning of a word into its symbolic meaning because in the science of Arabic rhetoric, there is something called *qarinah* (context), which can be seen from the context of the sentence.⁹

Another science that specifically examines the symbols is semiotics, the science that specifically and systematically studies sign and systemic sign.¹⁰ However, if the figure of speech in Arabic rhetoric science specifically focuses on the meaning contained in words and sentences in a work of literature, then semiotics is essentially more general because it can be used as a tool of analysis on various phenomena, whether it is a literary work and non-literary, physical and non-physical.¹¹

According to Riffaterre, semiotic studies need to consider three things, which are displacing of meaning, distorting of meaning, and creating of meaning.¹² The kind of process is basically the same as the existing concept in science of Arabic rhetoric called *isti'arah* (metaphor). In *isti'arah*, desired meaning cannot be separated away from *qarinah* (context), something that indicates displacing of meaning, distorting of meaning, and creating of meaning.¹³ In other words, the meaning must be read within the context of the sentence. Then, this process produces figurative meaning.¹⁴

Based on the explanation, it is obvious that in essence, both semiotic and Arabic rhetoric science have similarities in giving the meaning of the symbols contained in the literature. The only thing that differentiates them is

⁷ Aart Van Zoest, *Semiotika: Tentang Tanda, Cara Kerjanya Dan Apa Yang Kita Lakukan Dengannya* (Jakarta: Yayasan Sumber Agung, 1993), 67.

⁸ Ahmad Al-Hasyimi, *Jawahir Al-Balaghah Fi Al-Ma'ani Wa Al-Bayan Wa Al-Badi'* (Maktabah Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, 1960), 290.

⁹ Ali Al-Jarim, *Al-Balaghah Al-Wadhihah* (Jakarta: Raudhah Faris, 2007), 71.

¹⁰ Atmazaki, *Ilmu Sastra: Teori Dan Terapan* (Padang: Angkasa Raya, 1990), 77.

¹¹ Zoest, *Semiotika: Tentang Tanda, Cara Kerjanya dan Apa Yang Kita Lakukan Dengannya*, 4-5.

¹² Endraswara, *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*, 66.

¹³ Al-Hasyimi, *Jawahir Al-Balaghah Fi Al-Ma'ani Wa Al-Bayan Wa Al-Badi'*, 291.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 244-343.

term. Hence, both theories will be integrated in the process of analysis of this study.

Indonesian dictionary says that nature is all that is in the sky and on earth, such as stars, strength, and etc,¹⁵ while in the dictionary of *Lisan al-'Arab*, it is mentioned that the whole universe is God's creation. *Lisan al-'Arab* also gives other meaning that nature is everything that is in orbit.¹⁶ In the teachings of Islam, nature is everything other than Allah, either it can be sensed or not.¹⁷

The very broad meaning of nature does not allow the author to make all the elements of nature as an object in this study. Therefore, the author takes the second definition given by Ibn Manzur in the dictionary of *Lisan al-'Arab* which states that the nature is anything contained in orbit. Orbit or *falak* in Arabic is the path passed through by celestial objects to orbit other celestial objects that have large gravitational force.¹⁸ Thus, the orbit is closely associated with the celestial bodies. The sky is a vast space where sun, moon, stars, and planets are.¹⁹ Based on this, this study focuses on the poems of Ibn Arabi containing celestial objects, such as the Earth, sun, moon, and stars, or any other planet found in orbit.

Mun'im Khafaji in his book *al-Adab fi Turâst al-Sufi* divides Sufic literature into two parts, namely prose of Sufism (al-nastr al-Sufi) and poetry of Sufism (al-syi'r al-Sufi).²⁰ Braginsky prefers to call it as Sufic book and Sufic poem.²¹ However, it can be concluded that the definition of prose of Sufism is ideas, thoughts, and feelings of someone about Sufism expressed in prose, while the definition of Sufic poetry is ideas, thoughts, and feelings about Sufism expressed in the form of poetry.²²

¹⁵ Tim Penyusun, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Balai Pustaka, 2007).

¹⁶ Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 420.

¹⁷ Ismail R. Al-Faruqi, *Atlas Budaya: Menjelajah Khazanah Peradaban Gemilang* (Bandung: Mizan, n.d.), 348-349.

¹⁸ Peter Salim, *Kamus Bahasa Indonesia Kontemporer*, n.d, 968.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Muhammad Abd al-Mun'im Khafaji, *Al-Adab Fi Turats Al-Shufi* (Maktabah Gharib, n.d.).

²¹ Braginsky, *Yang Indah, Berfaedah dan Kamal: Sejarah Sastra Melayu Dalam Abad 7-19* (Jakarta: INIS, 1998), 435.

²² Al-Tunji, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufassal Fi Al-Adab*, 550-551.

Based on these explanations, it can be concluded that the Sufic literature is literature both poetry and prose telling about inner experiences and thoughts of a Sufi.

Ibn Arabi is Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Arabi al-Hatimi al-Tha'i.²³ He was born on Sunday night of 17th of Ramadan in 560 H, coincides with July 27, 1165 A.D in Mursia, the Southeast area of Andalusia. He was born during the reign of Sultan Muhammad ibn Sa'id ibn Mardanisy. His father, Ali ibn Arabi, was a descendant of an ancient Arab tribe *Thayy* located in Yemen. It is shown by his full name of Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad Ibn Arabi al- Tha'I al-Hatimi.²⁴ His father was a soldier of ibn Mardanisy (Muhammad Ibn Sa'id ibn Mardanisy), a Mursia ruler who established a kingdom for himself with the help of the christian army.²⁵ His mother came from a family of Berber North Africa.²⁶ Ibn Arabi died on Thursday night of 28th of *Rabi'ul akhir* in 638 H / C.E. October 16, 1240 and was buried in the hills of Qasion Damascus.²⁷

²³ Besides known as Ibn Arabi (560-638 H/ 1165-1240 M) without alif-lam (ل), he was also known as Ibn al-Arabi, with the use of alif-lam in his name. The aim is to distinguish with another prominent figure from Andalusia, who was also named Ibnu Arabi, an expert in the science of Hadith and also a judge, who almost lived in the same generation, which was 543-568 H/1076-1148 M. Besides knowns with the name Ibnu Arabi, he was also name as *Muhyiddin* (the vivifier of religion), and *al-syaekh al-Akbar* (the great teacher). *Muhyiddin* is a name showing a living power that have played roles in forming Islamic thought, while *al-Syaekh al-Akbar* is a name bringing Ibn Arabi as a spiritual leader in the muslim world. Al-Jarrah, *Al-Futuhah Al-Makkiyah Li Al-Syaikh Al-Akbar Muhyidin Ibnu 'Arabi* (Beirut: Dar al-Shadir, 2004), 5; Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf* (Bandung: Angkasa, 2008), 515; 'Ashim Ibrahim Al-Kiyyali, *Fusus Al-Hikam* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2003).

²⁴ The last name of Ibn Arabi reminds us to a prominent poet in the time of *Jahiliyah* (Ignorance) Hatim al-Tha'I, who also came from Yemen. According to the lineage, his talent in changing and compose poetry was a natural talent he owned from his ancestors.

²⁵ Ibn Mardanisy is a royal leader of Mursia who defended the kingdom that weaker due to attack *al-Muwahhidun* that has mastered Andalus since 540/1645, and makes Seville as a local capital.

²⁶ Nawaf Al-Jarrah, *Al-Futuhah Al-Makkiyah Li Al-Syaikh Al-Akbar Muhyidin Ibnu 'Arabi*, 5; Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, 515.

²⁷ Nawaf Al-Jarrah, *Al-Futuhah Al-Makkiyah Li Al-Syaikh Al-Akbar Muhyidin Ibnu 'Arabi*, 7.

During his life, Ibn Arabi had some fundamental Sufic works such as *al Futuhat al-Makiyah*, *Fusus al-Hikam*, *Tarjuman al-Syawaq*, *Dzakha'ir al-A'laq*, and *Ruh al-Quds fi al-Munasahat an-nafs* which is often abbreviated *Ruh al-Quds*.²⁸ These works of Ibn Arabi deliver a variety of mystical teachings. According to Nicolson, Ibn Arabi is the greatest Arab-Islamic Sufi. He showed up with a new method resembling the philosophy of Sufism. That is why Sheikh Abu Madyan called him as a *Sulthan al-'Arifin* (the wise leader of Sufis). Ibn Arabi gave much effect to the style of Persian Sufism. His creative imagination style becomes one of the elements underlying the divine comedy of Dante.²⁹

Among the terms of Sufism of Ibn Arabi, the very famous ones are *al-syawq* (longing), *al-hubb* (love), *al-'isyq* (lust), *al-wajd* (ecstasy), *al-fana* (annihilation), and *al-baqa* (immortality). Ibn 'Arabi, a pioneer of doctrine of *Wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of existences) is inseparable from those terms in his mystical language. Ibn Arabi's most famous concept of Sufism is *al-tajalli* (theophany), *wahdat al-wujud* and *al-Insan al-Kamil* (the perfect man). This concept is further studied by the author through the theory of natural symbolism.

Ibn Arabi used natural elements in his Sufic poems to mediate mystical concepts that are difficult to express verbally. Therefore, he used the method of symbolism in order to convey his ideas. There are many symbols of nature used by Ibn Arabi in his poems, but in this case the author just discussed some natural elements that exist in the solar system such as the sun, moon, stars, the sky, and the earth; and then link with concepts of Sufism of Ibn Arabi.

In the dictionary of *Lisan al-Arab*, the word *Shams* (The Sun) is only interpreted by the word *ma'rufah* (the well-known). It is something that is already known by everyone and everywhere.³⁰ Therefore, there is no meaning other than *Matahari* (the Sun) as translated into Indonesian by the author of *al-Munawwir* dictionary. Nevertheless, the dictionary of *al-Munawwir* also adds another meaning, which is giant light.³¹ Based on these

²⁸ Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, 517-522.

²⁹ Khafaji, *Al-Adab Fi Turats Al-Shufi*, 230.

³⁰ Manzur, *Lisan Al-Arab*, vol 6, 113.

³¹ Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Al-Munawwir Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Progressif, 1997), 740.

explanations, it can be concluded that the word *shams* has only one meaning, namely the sun.

Ibn Arabi uses the symbolism of the sun (*Shams*) in various contexts, and particularly a symbol of God, such as:

بذر الله تزداد الذنوب وتحتجب البصائر والقلوب³²
With *dzikr* (the act of remembering) to God, sin is increasing
Eyes and Heart be closed
وترك الذكر أفضل منه حال فإن الشمس ليس لها غروب
And leaving *dzikr* is better
Because actually the sun never sets

The poem is closely related to the concept of remembrance in Sufism of Ibn Arabi. When reading the poem, there must be a big question, why *dzikr* is regarded as something negative and should be avoided? Etymologically, *dzikr* means remembering, calling, and recalling. The opposite of *dzikr* is *ghaflah* (negligent). According to the encyclopedia of Sufism, *dzikr* has two meanings. First, *dzikr* means remembering or pronouncing the name of God through *tayyibah* (good) sentence.³³ Secondly, it means to feel the presence of God in our hearts.³⁴

Based on such understanding, the author concluded that the remembrance that should be abandoned is the temporal remembrance, which is the remembrance of Allah only at certain times. This is confirmed by Ibn Arabi with a parable that the sun never sets. Then, what is the real meaning of the sun in this verse? From the context of the poem, it can be understood that in fact, the sun is a symbol of Allah that never goes away (*فإن الشمس ليس لها غروب*) and always be there anytime and anywhere. It is just like the sun, which in fact never sets, but only changes the time and place when illuminating, but its existence remains.

In addition to referring to God, the word *shams* also refers to the holy Qur'an, as in this stanza:

³² Ahmad Hasan Basaj, *Diwan Ibnu Arabi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1996), 9.

³³ *Kalimah tayyibah* are good words commonly used in such *tahmid* (to praise Allah), *takbir* (to glorify Allah), *tasbih* (to purify Allah), and *tahlil* (oneness of Allah).

³⁴ Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, 1506.

هنينا لأهل الشرق من حضرة القدس بشمس جلت أنوارها ظلمة الرمس
Welcome (to enjoy) the presence of (soul) *Quds*, O the people of
syarq (east)
Along with the sun's rays illuminating the darkness of the grave

وجلت عن التشبيه فهي فريدة فليست بفصل في الحدود ولا
جنس
He also looks at those resemble him, alone
He is not limited to what and whom

ويدرك منها في الكمال وجودنا كما يدرك الخفاش من باهر
الشمس
From him our beings are perfected
Like bats recognizing the sparkle of sunlight

فله من نور أنته رسالة تصان عن التخمين والظن
والحدس
Only belong to God do all the lights attended by treatise
Guarded from all prejudices and guesses

The meaning of the word *Shams* in the first stanza could not be understood before understanding the other words. *Ahlu al-Sharq* etymologically implies the eastern part occupants.³⁵ For Ibn Arabi, *Sharq* is always faced with the word *Gharb* (West), as well as day and night. *Sharq* for Ibn Arabi is interpreted as something that *Zahir* (visible) or the nature of the material. Meanwhile, *Gharb* is interpreted as something inner or invisible or immaterial. *Sharq* means visible and *Gharb* means inner.³⁶ Based on this, it is certain that the meaning of *ahlu al-Sharq* here is a human being as a creation of Allah. Then, who does the man refer to in the poem?

³⁵ *Ahl* literally is defined by family or relatives. *Ahl al-bait* is the resident of the house. *Ahl al-rajul* is a wife, while *ahl al-islam* is followers of Islam, and so on. The word *syarq* means east, where the sun rises. Syihabuddin Abu 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), 46 & 714.

³⁶ Su'ad Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat* (Beirut: Dandarrah, 1981), 647.

As with the word *Shams*, to understand *ahl al-Sharq*, we also have to understand the poetry context overall.

The second word that also needs to be explained is *hadrah al-Quds*. The word *hadrah* etymologically means presence and witness, whereas the word *quds* means *tuhr* (pure, clean). In the dictionary of *al-Maqayis fi al-lughah*, it is explained that Gabriel is also called *ruh al-Quds* (the Holy Spirit). Thus, *hadrah al-Quds* is defined as the presence of the Angel Gabriel.³⁷ In the view of Ibn Arabi, *hadrah* is a collection of various entities that later appeared in other form as a new entity (كل حقيقة من الحقائق الإلهية (والكونية مع جميع مظاهرها في كل العوالم).³⁸

Next word that needs interpretation is *zulmah al-rams*. *Zulmah* linguistically means darkness, while the *rams* means land and wind.³⁹ Abi Khuzam in *Mu'jam al-Mustalahat al-Sufiyah* interprets *rams* as grave.⁴⁰ Thus, *zulmah al-rams* means dark grave. Based on these explanations, we concluded that *zulmah al-rams* is essentially human soul. As known human is made of soil (*Turab*) and human's body for the Sufis are like tombs of darkness that requires enlightenment.

If so, *Shams* (the sun) meant by Ibn Arabi is the revelation of God or al-Qur'an, while *Ahlu al-Sharq* is the Prophet Muhammad. *Hadrah al-Quds* is the angel Gabriel who delivered the revelation. This revelation (al-Qur'an) then illuminates the darkness of the human soul (*zulmah al-rams*).

The understanding that *Shams* means the Qur'an is corroborated by the next verse:

فله من نور أنته رسالة تصان عن التخمين والظن والحدس
Only belong to God do all lights attended by treatise
Guarded from all prejudices and guesses

³⁷ 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya*, 877.

³⁸ Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 323.

³⁹ 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya*, 422.

⁴⁰ Anwar F Abi Khuzam, *Mu'jam Al-Mustalahat Al-Sufiyyah*, 1993, 91.

The treatise intended in the poem is absolutely al-Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is a book that is constantly maintained by The Owner from all defilements and deviations.

In the poems of Ibn Arabi, there are three terms used to describe the moon. They are *Hilal* (crescent), *qamar* (moon), and *badr* (full moon). In the dictionary of *al-Maqayis fi al-lughah*, it is mentioned that the crescent is something in the sky. It is named that because the origin of the word is '*al-ihlal* is *al-sari*' which means something fast since the crescent can only be seen quickly. What is called as *al-hilal* is the moon which appears on the eve of the first, second, and third. After that, it will be called as *al-qamar*.⁴¹ The *Hilal* word itself has been borrowed into Indonesian. This is evident from the inclusion of the word to the KBBI (Indonesia Dictionary). It is mentioned in KBBI that the new moon is a crescent moon arising on the first of Islamic calendar.⁴² The original meaning of *Qamar* itself is something white, so the moon is called the *qamar* as it is white.⁴³ But, as mentioned earlier, we know that *qamar* is the month after the new moon phase. The original meaning of *Badr* is something full and perfect. It is also defined as something that goes faster on the other. Moon is called as *Badr* in a state of complete and perfect.⁴⁴ It will happen when the state of moon is in the opposite direction to the sun which is about date 14-15, so that the part of moon makes contact with visible light completely.⁴⁵

These three words which are *hilal*, *qamar* and *badr* are used by Ibn Arabi in his poems. Then, does the different use of these words in Ibn Arabi's verse have a specific purpose and meaning? The use of the word *hilal*, *qamar* and *badr* by Ibn Arabi -if analyzed- might refer to a person's level of knowledge about God called *ma'rifah* (gnosis) through symbol. In the Encyclopedia of Mysticism, it is explained that to achieve *ma'rifah* stage, one must go through three stages. They are *zuhd* (asceticism)⁴⁶,

⁴¹ 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya*, 1055.

⁴² Tim Penyusun, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 401.

⁴³ 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya*, 861.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 118-119.

⁴⁵ Tim Penyusun, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 173.

⁴⁶ *Zuhud* is an understanding of distancing one's self from the life of the material world.

tasawwuf (Sufism) and *ma'rifah* (gnosis). Therefore, according to Dzu Nun al-Misri, there are three kinds of *ma'rifah*. First, *ma'rifah* of layman (the public), to those who know that there is no god but Allah through justification creed. Secondly, *ma'rifah* among scholars and philosophers who think about and reflect on these natural phenomena; they know the God from the signs or the arguments of thought. Third, *ma'rifah* of the guardian and the saints, which those who know God by their mystical experience, that is to know God by God. This *ma'rifah* is then viewed in the neighborhood of Sufism as the ultimate and highest *ma'rifah*.⁴⁷

Other meaning of these three words of nature symbolism could refer to what was said by al-Qushayri. He mentioned that there are three potential capacities of human beings, that are *qalb* (heart), soul, and *sirr*. *Qalb* is a potential capacity to determine the attributes of God. Soul is the potential capacity to love God, while *sirr* is potential capacity to see God.⁴⁸

To understand more clearly about the meaning of the symbolism in the poetry of Ibn Arabi, the author analyzes through the following verses:

أبیت فی المحدثات ضیاء إذ طلع البدر عشاء
When the full moon shines brightly, it rises at night
I saw it shining in the absence

ولیس له نور إذا شمس أشرقت وقد كان ذلك النور منه عشاء
It no longer shines as the sun rises
Light at that night was derived from it (the sun)

فما النور إلا من نكاه لذاك لم یکن یغلب البدر المنیر نكاه⁴⁹
Nur (of moonlight) would not exist without the sun,
Therefore, the full moon will not be able to beat the sun

⁴⁷ Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, 794-795.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 796.

⁴⁹ *Dzukâ* is *isim alam* (noun name) or other word from the sun. This word is a derivation of the word *dzaka- yadzku dzaka'a* which means that the fire was hot as hell. *Thala'at dzukâ* means that the sun rises.

In other poem:

يا هلال الدياج لح بالنهار فلقد أنت نزهة الأبصار
O *Hilal* of darkness, begone with the arrival of daylight
Stop all the treats to the eye

أنت محو وأنت في العين بدر بتجليك في الضياء المحار
You fade out, but in this view, you seem like the moon
Because of your appearance in the light of heat

And in other poem he said:

قمر شاهد الغيوب عيانا بين جسم وبين روح دفين
Moon witnesses the hidden things clearly
That exists between the body and buried soul

وحباه الإله منه بعلم لم ينله بعد المطاع المكين
And love of both (body and soul) to God with knowledge
Who does not take it anymore after (the present) is adhered and
strong

In the poems of Ibn Arabi, the moon is actualized within three terms. They are *hilal*, *qamar*, and *badr*. The three types of moon, according to the author's analysis, are the symbol of *tajalli* (appearance) of God in human beings. *Hilal* is the symbol of the first *tajalli* of God or called as *al-tajalli al-wujûdi* (appearance of existence). The *tajalli* of God in this phase only reflects His attributes in humans. *Qamar* itself is a symbolism of God's appearance process into *al-tajalli al-syuhûdi* (observational appearance) symbolized by *badr* (full moon). *Al-tajalli al-syuhûdi* in the concept of Sufism of Ibn Arabi is the image of God perfectly on creatures called *al-Insan al-Kamil* (perfect man). *Al-Insan al-Kamil* in question is the Prophet Muhammad. Based on this, the author divides *tajalli al-rabb* (appearance of God) in the concept of Ibn Arabi into three parts, which are *al-tajalli al-Hilali* (God's appearance of crescent), *al-tajalli al-Qamari* (God's appearance of moon) and *al-tajalli al-badri* (God's appearance of full

moon). The three sections are essentially the phases of God's *tajalli* in humans.

In the poem of Ibn Arabi, the symbolism of moon has close relationship with the symbolism of the sun. The sun, as previously described, almost entirely refer to the same meaning of the Lord of the universe. The existence of the moon is never separated from the sun. The moon was shining as receive beam of sunlight, or in terms of the Sufis it is called as the *Fayd* (the emanation, the delegation).⁵⁰ The conception of creation of *Fayd*, often use the analogy of the sun and the light emanating from it. The sun is the light source, and the source of all existence. The light radiates from the sun, and depends on it. However, it is not identical with it, because when the sun is gone, there goes the light.

The mention of the word moon (*hilal*, *qamar*, and *badr*) is closely related to the concept of *tajalli* adopted by Ibn Arabi.⁵¹ Etymologically *tajalli* defined as exposing and appearance of something (انكشاف الشيء) (وبروزه).⁵² In the terminology of the Sufis, *tajalli* is the appearance of God himself who is the Absolute in its natural form that is limited.⁵³

In the verse, we can find the word *hilal* and *badr*. *Hilal* in the actual meaning is the symbolism of the first level of God's *tajalli* or called as *al-Fayd al-Aqdas*, which is *tajalli* of the substance in nature. This *tajalli* firstly needs to go through a phase of *takhalli* (abandonment). *Takhalli* is emptying themselves of despicable traits and fill it with commendable traits. In the verse, the phase of *takhalli* is not mentioned explicitly, but implied by the expression *لح بالنهار* (scram with the arrival of daylight). The daylight is identical to the sun. And the word "scram" is the same as "empty".

Nevertheless, we may have heard commendation or *shalawat* upon prophet stating *طلع البدر علينا* (the full moon has been rising in front of us). The full moon in this matter is the Prophet Muhammad who has been

⁵⁰ *Fayd* is a creation theory which states that all reality begins exactly from a Being Perfect One, and Eternal. Ibid, vol 1, 370.

⁵¹ In the world of Sufism, *tajalli* also conveys the same with *al-faid* (emanation), *al-zuhur* (appearance), *al-tanazzul* (drop), and *al-fath* (conquest). Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 257.

⁵² 'Amr, *Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Fi Al-Lughah Li Abial-Husain Ahmad Ibnu Faris Ibu Zakariyya*, 257.

⁵³ Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, vol 3, 1246.

believed by Muslims as a perfect human being.⁵⁴ At this perfect man, according to the author, lies *tajalli al-Badari*. While the law of moon rotation occur to the other creatures except the the Prophet Muhammad, which is the possibility of receiving the emitted light only a little, medium or full.

Ibn Arabi uses two terms for the star, which are *Najm* and *Kaukab*. However, the use of the word *Kaukab* is more than the *Najm*. In the dictionary of *Lisan al-Arab* and *al-Munawwir*, *al-Kaukab* has the same meaning with *al-Najm*.⁵⁵

In the concept of Sufism of Ibn Arabi, star becomes a symbol of the human soul, as in this stanza:

لما بدا السر في فؤادي فنى وجودى وغاب نجمي⁵⁶
When the secret (*sirr*) was present in my heart
My existence goes annihilation, and my star disappears

وحال قلبي بسر ربي وغبت عن حس جسمي
Lord changed my heart by His *sirr*
So I disappear from the physical sense

In another poem:

كوكب قال بتنزيه نفسه فرماه العجب في سجن رسمه⁵⁷
A star says about the purification of its soul

⁵⁴ In al-Mu'jam al-Sufi it is stated that word *badr*, its plural is *abdār*, which literally means something that is perfect and full. The word *badr* was used by Ibnu Arabi as a *tamsil* (comparison) of his concept of *tajalli*, *nur* (light) and *khilafah* (caliphate). The sun is the light of the actual owner (the original). When sunlight on the moon is full, it is called the full moon. So did the event *tajalli* (the God's appearance) on *khalifah* (human). *Badar* in this term is *khalifah* (human). *Khalifah* (*badr*) happens when the sun covers the entire surface of the moon the event God's *tajalli* on human soul. During a full moon, then the man is called as *al-khalifah al-ilahi* (divine caliphate). *Badr* becomes a representation from the divine caliphate. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 188.

⁵⁵ Manzur, *Lisan Al-Arab*, vol 1, 721; Munawwir, *Al-Munawwir Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary*, 1240.

⁵⁶ Basaj, *Diwan Ibnu Arabi*, 7.

⁵⁷ Al-Kiyyali, *Fusus Al-Hikam*, 16.

As he marveled in prison locking him

طلعت حكمة مولاه ليلا
لمحياء فأودت بنفسه
(when) The Lord of wisdom shines at night
in his conscious, then approached the star

فشكا الكوكب وجدا وشوقا
لسناها عند أبناء جنسه
The stars of the pit with love and longing
We are not part of their

To understand the meaning of *Najm*, we must first understand that the word *sirr* interpreted with a secret language. According to the Sufis, *sirr* is an organ of contemplation (*musyahadah*), while the heart⁵⁸-which in this poem called by *fuad*- and also the spirit, both are organs of divine knowledge and love (*mahabbah*). *Sirr* in many cases located after the spirit.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the word *wujud* (existence) combined with the letter of *ya mutakallim*, is defined as a natural material world that can be touched⁶⁰, or body where the soul resides. If so, it can be concluded that the *Najm* (Star) meant by Ibn Arabi in essence is spirit.

In the second verse, the meaning of the symbolism of *Kaukab* has no different from *al-Najm*. It is about the human spirit. This was revealed by the expression after, which is *tanzih al-nafs* (self-purification). The spirit amazed while watching the divine wisdom, which is knowledge and testimony of God's essence, its attributes, and its merits when the soul imprisoned in the body. *Sijn* (prison) here seems to be a form of symbolism

⁵⁸ Heart etimologically means turning or rotating back. So named because it is easily changed. Sometimes it tends to the goodness or even badness. In Sufic terminology, heart describes spiritual substance which lies between spirit and soul, which is a substance where the site of a humanitarian nature lies. The heart is the core, a medium between the physical and spiritual aspect of human. Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, 727.

⁵⁹ Spirit is a part of layer heart enjoying the light's point of view on Allah, where Allah shows the embodiment without veil. Ibid, 727.

⁶⁰ Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 664.

of the human body⁶¹. *Ruh* always miss the owner. This poem is closely connected with the concept of *al-hubb al-Ilahiyyah* (Divine Love) of Ibn Arabi. It appears from the phrase 'the stars of the pit with love and miss'.

For Ibn Arabi, the universe is the appearance (*tajalli*) of God, and thus, all things and all that is therein is His appearance. Therefore, God and the universe, they cannot be understood except as a union between ontological contradictions. These contradictions are not only horizontally but also vertically. It looks as described by the al-Qur'an, that God is the Hidden (*al-Batin*) once The Looks (*al-Dzahîr*), the One (*al-Wahid*) while the Many (*al-Kathir*), The Last (*al-Qadîm*) while The New (*al-Hadith*), The Existing (*al-wujud*) as well as The Nothing (*al-`Adam*).⁶²

In Ibn Arabi's poems, he often uses contradict symbols of nature, such as heavens and earth. In the dictionary of *Maqayis al-lughah* as quoted by Su'ad al-Hakim, the word *ard* (earth) is defined with everything low, and become the opposite of *al-sama* (the heavens). The word *al-sama* is everything high. *Sama'uhu* is interpreted as the top part of something. And *ardhuhu* is interpreted as the bottom of something. In the holy al-Qur'an, the *ard* always refer to earth occupied by humans.⁶³

Then what is meant by the word heavens and earth in verse of Ibn Arabi?. We note the following verse:

على لسان الإنسان الكامل لا الإنسان الحيواني⁶⁴

Perfect Man is not human of Animal

لي الأرض الأريضة والسماء وفي وسطى السواء والاستواء⁶⁵
The poor of the earth and the heavens is mine

⁶¹ Abdu al-Mun'im Al-Hafni, *Mu'jam Al-Mustalahat Al-Sufiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Masirah, 1987), 77.

⁶² Ibrahim Al-Jilli, *Al-Insan Al-Kamil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1997), 37-40.

⁶³ Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 63-64.

⁶⁴ Basaj, *Diwan Ibnu Arabi*, 39.

⁶⁵ *Al-sawâ'* and *al-istiwâ'* come from the same syllable. In the dictionary, it is defined as *al-istiqamah wa al-I'tidal* which mean settled and steady between two things. Louis Ma'luf, *al-Munjid*, p. 365-366. For Ibnu Arabi, *al-istiwâ'* is the nature of God almighty abote 'arsy (the Throne). Therefore, *Istiwa'* gave raise to many interpretations, such dwelling, settling, master, govern, purpose, etc. Another meaning of *istiwa*, according to Ibn Arabi, is *tajalli* in its place. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 622 & 624.

And in between the two (is events of) funeral

لي المجد المؤئل والهباء⁶⁶ وسر العالمين والاعتلاء
Source of glory and darkness is mine
Also secret and the glory of the whole universe

By author of *Dîwân Ibn Arabi*, the above verse is entitled to *al-insan al-kamil la al-insan al-hayawani*, that means that plenary human is not human animal. Other term also used by Ibn Arabi to purpose *al-insan al-kamil* is *al-insan al-azali*. *Al-Insan al-Kamil* or *al-Insan al-azali* is perfect in terms of human beings and knowledge. The perfection in terms of the substance is that he is the perfect manifestation of God's image, which in itself is reflected in the names and the nature of God as a whole. The perfection in terms of knowledge is that he had reached the highest level of consciousness, which is aware of the essence of unity with God, called gnosis. Ibn Arabi looked perfect man as a container of God's *tajalli*. Such a view is based on the assumption that all beings have only one reality. The single reality is the absolute being free from all thoughts, relationships, direction and time. He is a pure essence, is not named, and has no relation with anything.⁶⁷

Absolute form then creates *tajalli* perfectly in the universe of this double round. The *tajalli* has coincided with the creation of the universe done by God from nothing into existence (creation ex nihilo). The perfection of the perfect man is basically due to the *tajalli* of God himself perfectly through the essence of Muhammad (al-haqiqah al-Muhammadiyah). The essence of Muhammad (nur Muhammad) is a

⁶⁶ *Al-haba'* is defined by al-gubar, which is dust. Its other meaning is the low intellect or idiot. Louis Ma'luf, *Al-Munjid*, 853. In the Sufi world, *al-haba'* is defined by the darkness, and become the antonym of *al-'aql* (mind), which means light. Briefly, *al-haba'* (dust) is *al-zhulmah* (darkness), *al-aql* (mind) is *al-nur* (light), and al nafs (soul), that lies between the two such *al-sudfah* (something between dark and bright). The three elements are what occupy the universal human soul (*al-nafs al-kuliyah*). Rafiq Al-'Ajam, *Mausu'at Mustalah Al-Tasawuf Al-Islami* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nasyirun, 1999), 1005.

⁶⁷ Detailed explanation of *al – insan kamil* (the perfect man) and *al-insan al-hayawani* (human of animal) can be found at Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 156-168.

container of *tajalli* of perfect God, and is the very first thing created by God.⁶⁸

Human of animal is the opposite of perfect human. Human of animal is beings in a biological sense, composed of several elements of living beings. Ibn Arabi called the human of animal with *al-hasyarat* (insect). When he becomes a plenary, then he will be called as the caliph. *Insan Kamil* exists inside human of animal.⁶⁹

According to al-Hallaj, human is comprised of two elements, which are physical and spiritual. Physical elements consist of the material, while the spiritual elements consist of divine essence. Therefore, human has the sense of humanity (*Nasut*) as well as divinity (*Lahut*), which the spirit connects the two. Based on this, the author concludes that the earth is a symbol of the human of animal, which called *al-Nasut* by al-Hallaj. Therefore, Ibn Arabi called it as *al-ard al-aridah* or lowly earth. The *al-sama'* means a perfect man or the perfect soul called the *al-Lahut* by al-Hallaj, which is high divinity. Both of these properties, the humanity and divinity, according to Ibn Arabi are mine'. Then, the human body consists of the two properties. The link between the two is *al-istiwa* or *al-sawa'* (equability). If so, what is meant by *al-istiwa* these? See from what was said al-Hallaj, that which connects between *Nasut* and *Lahut* is the spirit. The word *fi wasati* (in the center of my middle) became *qarinah* (indicator), that what is meant by *al-istiwa* is a soul breathed by God in body human, and *istiwa* '(residing) in it.⁷⁰ This is also confirmed by the next stanza:

وسر العالمين والاعتلاء	لي المجد المؤئل والهباء
Source of glory and darkness are mine	
Also the secret and the glory of the whole universe	

Al-haba' in the dictionary is defined by *al-gubar*, which is dust. Another meaning is low intellect or idiot.⁷¹ Dust is essence of the earth, and

⁶⁸ "Konsep Insan Kamil Ibn Arabi," n.d., <http://pengkajianpelitahati.wordpress.com/2011/04/25/konsep-insan-kamil-ibn-arabi/>.

⁶⁹ Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 156.

⁷⁰ Al-'Ajam, *Mausu'at Mustalah Al-Tasawuf Al-Islami*, 958; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Shufi, Al-Hikmah Fi Judur Al-Kalimat*, 233.

⁷¹ Louis Ma'luf, *Al-Munjid*, n.d., 853.

the earth is *Nasut* (human). Therefore, in the world of Sufism, the word *al-haba'* is defined with darkness and become the opposite word of *al-'aql* (mind), which is defined by the light.⁷² Hence, *al-Majd al-Muatsil* (the source of glory) is *Lahut*, or *aql*, or *nur*, or in this verse is symbolized by *al-sama'* (the High).

From the entire study of symbols and symbolism of nature in the poetry of Ibn Arabi, it brings a conclusion that *Huwa La Huwa* (He is not him). How close human fused (*ittihad*) with God, it had never really united with God. He just blends with His names, fused with the 'shadow of his', not with His essence. As revealed by a team of author of Encyclopedia of Mysticism, God is too high to be reached. Any description of Him, is a lie, belittling and restrictions.⁷³ The symbolism of the sun giving light to the moon is an indication that there is never a unity (*a-ittihad*) between God and human. The symbolism of refraction of sunlight in further reinforces the concept of *tajalli*, which is the appearance of His attributes on the creatures. The Ibn Arabi's symbolism on nature actually wants to convey that He is the one, and the universe is simply a reflection of His existence of substance. This is called by *tasybîh* and *tanzih* by Ibn Arabi. In terms of *tasybîh*, God is the same with nature, because nature is nothing but the manifestation and actualization of His attributes; in terms of *tanzih*, God is different with nature, because nature is bound by time and space, but God is the Absolute.

Conclusion

The symbol of God in Ibn Arabi's Arabic poetry is analogized as sun since this natural element transfers light to the entire world and becomes the main source of life. Moon, on the other hand, becomes one of natural elements that receives the reflection of sunlight. Therefore, Ibn Arabi makes the symbol of moon to represent the appearance (*tajalli*) of God on humankind like the role of moon in conjunction with sunlight reflection.

The concept of moon appearance, according to Ibn Arabi's thoughts, is deployed in three different etymologies, namely crescent (*hilal*), moon (*qomar*) and full moon (*badr*). These distinguished forms experienced

⁷² Al-'Ajam, *Mausu'at Mustalah Al-Tasawuf Al-Islami*, 1005.

⁷³ Tim Penulis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Ensiklopedi Tasawuf*, vol 2, 517-522.

evolution respectively symbolizing God's appearance (*tajalli*) in human. The cycle of evolution also symbolizes that human's experience of God's *tajalli* inside himself occurs temporarily. This phenomenon is also depicted by Imam al-Ghazali saying that the strength of faith can increase and decrease occasionally, or in the Arabic words known as *al-Iman yazidu wa yanqusu*.

In terms of describing the relation of God and human, Ibn Arabi also employs the symbols of sky and earth. In this case, the sky represents as divine world (*lahut*) while the earth is symbolized as human world (*nasut*). These two worlds are completely different, and therefore are bridged through the existence of stars (*kaukab*; *najm*) beautifying both divine and human worlds. The number of stars, hence, are the symbols of spirit (*ruh*) that originally come from God's blowing. The stars residing inside human bodies then become a place where the highest attributes of God and contemptible nature of human can meet.

The natural symbols henceforth clearly portray Ibn Arabi's concept of God's *tajalli*, the connection of *lahut* and *nasut*, as well as the position taken by the spirit in-between. However, this symbolism concept also gives another crucial meaning and understanding that Ibn Arabi also do not propose the concept of the unity of God and creatures (*wahdat al-wujud*). The natural symbols used by Ibn Arabi in his Sufism show a clear relation of God and human where as we realize that sun never fuses with the moon, and the sky also never be the earth, albeit a connection among them. That is to say, the emanation of sunlight does not unite the sun and the moon, as well as the existence of stars between the sky and the earth never unite them. Ultimately, Ibn Arabi employs natural symbols in his Arabic poetries to convey his concept of Sufism through analogies that can be more easily understood especially through the study of borrowing-based metaphor (*majaz isti'arah*).

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