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Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Meaning of Al-Ibil in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghasiyyah [88]: 17

Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes terhadap Makna Al-Ibil dalam Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghasiyyah [88]: 17

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the meaning of the word Al-Ibil (camel) in Surah Al-Ghāsiyyah [88]: 17 through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The issue raised is the symbolic understanding in the text of the Qur'an, which is not only limited to literal meaning, but also includes connotative and mythological dimensions. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review and descriptive-analytical approach. The results show that Al-Ibil does not only refer to camels as animals of transport, but also symbolizes the power and greatness of Allah. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis framework, two layers of meaning were found: first, the denotative meaning that describes camels as animals with practical functions, and second, the connotative meaning that signifies Allah's power in creating extraordinary creatures. This study enriches the understanding of interpretation with a more comprehensive semiotic approach.

Keywords: Al-Ghāsiyyah; Camel; Roland Barthes; Semiotics; Symbolism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna kata Al-Ibil (unta) dalam Surah Al-Ghāsiyyah [88]: 17 melalui pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes. Masalah yang diangkat adalah pemahaman simbolik dalam teks Al-Qur'an yang tidak hanya terbatas pada makna literal, tetapi juga mencakup dimensi konotatif dan mitologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka dan analisis deskriptif-analitik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Ibil tidak hanya merujuk pada unta sebagai hewan pengangkut, tetapi juga melambangkan kekuasaan dan kebesaran Allah. Melalui kerangka analisis semiotika Roland Barthes, ditemukan dua lapisan makna: pertama, makna denotatif yang menjelaskan unta sebagai hewan dengan fungsi praktis, dan kedua, makna konotatif yang menandakan kekuasaan Allah dalam menciptakan makhluk yang luar biasa. Penelitian ini memperkaya pemahaman tafsir dengan pendekatan semiotik yang lebih komprehensif.

Kata Kunci: Al-Ghāsiyyah; Unta; Roland Barthes; Semiotika; Simbolisme



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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an teaches religious values by presenting analogies and vocabulary choices derived from concrete objects and everyday human life, so that the noble divine messages can be accepted, understood, and applied more effectively by humankind.¹ Included in the discussion of the universe is the subject of fauna or animals. According to The Last Dialogue, there are 31 types of animals mentioned in the Qur'an.² Among them are birds in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 260, monkeys in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 65, ants in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Naml [27]: 18, horses in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Isrā' [17]: 64, spiders in the Qur'an, Surah Al-'Ankabut [29]: 41, donkeys in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 256, pigs in the Qur'an, Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 145, types of livestock in the Qur'an, Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 142-144, and so on. These parables serve as warnings and lessons for Muslims and humanity, such as the meaning of the word "Al-Ibil" (camel) that Allah used when conversing with the Prophet Muhammad in Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17. The use of the word "Al-Ibil" in this surah and the message contained within the text provide valuable and broad lessons. Therefore, we need to conduct an in-depth study to uncover Allah's intention by examining the text and context of the meaning of the verse.

Previous studies on the application of Roland Barthes' theory tend to focus on words related to law and society. For example, in his study, Fuji Nur Iman examines the term *naskh*,³ Alfi Ifadatul Umami examines the word *darajah* in the Qur'anic verse, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 228,⁴ Afifatur Rasyidah explains the meaning of the word *syiban* in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Muzammil [73]: 17,⁵ Muhammad Aziz and Supriadin show the meaning of *fasadu* in the Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rūm [30]: 41,⁶ Dewi Umaroh reveals the meaning of *abasa* in the Qur'an, Surah 'Abasa [80]: 1,⁷ and Matsna Afwi Nadia describes semiotics in the interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah An-Nisā' [4]: 76 and Surah Yūsuf [12]: 28.⁸ Furthermore, there are studies on camels in the Qur'an, some of which are by Siar Ni'mah and Muzakkir, who examine mammals—one of which is camels in the Qur'an—from an *tafsir ilmi* perspective.⁹ Then Adnan Mohamed Yusoff examines livestock in

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- 1 Aksin Wijaya, *Menalar Autentisitas Wahyu Tuban*. Yogyakarta: (IRCISOD, 2020).
 - 2 The last dialogue, "Animals In Quran A List Of All Animals Mentioned In Quran". Web berita, thelastdialogue.org (blog), accessed December 29, 2024, <https://www.thelastdialogue.org/article/list-of-all-animals-mentioned-in-quran/>
 - 3 Fuji Nur Iman, "Mitologi Naskh Intra Quranic (Studi Atas Q.S. Al-Baqarah Ayat 106 Aplikasi Teori Semiotologi Roland Barthes)," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 4, no. 2 (September 2019): 27–50, <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v4i2.66>.
 - 4 Alfi Ifadatul Umami, "The Meaning of Men's Degrees are Higher Over Women (Application of Roland Barthes Semiotics Against QS Al-Baqarah [2]:228)," *Taqaddumi: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 1, no. 2 (Desember 2021): 46–61, <https://doi.org/10.12928/taqaddumi.v1i2.4822>.
 - 5 Afifatur Rasyidah Insan Nasyithatul Aminah, "Makna Kata Syiban dalam Al-Qur'an: Aplikasi Teori Semiotika Roland Barthes terhadap QS. Al-Muzammil (73):17," *ULIL ALBAB: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 2, no. 10 (Agustus 2023): 4666–74, <https://doi.org/10.56799/jim.v2i10.2213>.
 - 6 Muhammad Aziz and Supriadin Supriadin, "The Meaning of Fasadu in QS. Ar-Ruum [30]: 41; Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes," *Spiritus: Religious Studies and Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (Februari 2024): 23–29, <https://doi.org/10.59923/spiritus.v2i1.65>.
 - 7 Dewi Umaroh, "Makna 'Abasa Nabi Muhammad dalam Al-Qur'an (Aplikasi Semiotika Roland Barthes terhadap QS.'Abasa [80]: 1)," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (Februari 2021): 116–27, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v5i2.11640>.
 - 8 Matsna Afwi Nadia, "Mitos Perempuan dalam Meme Al-Qur'an," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 8, no. 2 (Desember 2022): 201–16, <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v8i2.425>.
 - 9 Siar Ni'mah and Muzakkir Muhammad Arif Ahmad Marzuki, "Kajian Tafsir Ilmi tentang Hewan Mamalia dalam Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Al-Mubarak: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (Desember 2022): 12–31, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-mubarak.v7i2.1397>.

the Qur'an in terms of quantity and mention.¹⁰ Finally, there is a thesis written by Ahmad Dahlan Harahap, discussing the *amtsal* of camels in the Qur'an.¹¹ Based on a review of a number of previous studies, a research gap was found, namely that Roland Barthes' semiotic theory had not been used in studying Qur'anic verses with a focus on animal symbols. The novelty of this research lies in the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to the symbol of *Al-Ibīl* in the Qur'an, which is not only interpreted as an object of fauna or empirical reality, but also as a cultural-religious sign that represents theological, educational, and essential messages.

This study aims to determine the meaning of *Al-Ibīl* through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17, which has not been studied by researchers in the fields of Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Studies. The semiotic approach is used as an analytical tool to read the Qur'an comprehensively, not only at the textual-literal level, but also at the symbolic, connotative, and mythological levels in accordance with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The interpretation of the verse about *Al-Ibīl* in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17, through Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective, reveals layered structural meanings (denotation, connotation, and myth) that represent the theological and educational messages of the Qur'an through a dialogue between the text and human empirical experience.¹²

This study departs from the theoretical hypothesis that all words used by Allah in the Qur'an are conveyed concisely and precisely, but contain fundamental meanings that transcend the literal understanding of the text. This discussion opens up an academic discourse to examine the meaning of the word *Al-Ibīl* through a semiotic approach. In linguistic discourse studies, meaning is understood as the result of communicative signs that can influence the reader's perception, thoughts, and understanding. According to Roland Barthes, each sign functions as a system of signs that articulates codes of meaning through structural characteristics and the construction of ideas produced through the process of meaning production, which ultimately gives rise to linguistic and mythological conceptions.¹³

Method

This research is a qualitative study using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which is then analyzed through literature study and descriptive-analytical style.¹⁴ The use of Roland Barthes' semiotic approach describes the Qur'an as a system of signs consisting of various layers of denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings.¹⁵ This method was chosen to conduct an in-depth analysis of the word *Al-Ibīl* in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17, not only at the linguistic level, but also at the symbolic and ideological dimensions that represent the theological and educational messages of the Qur'an. The main source of data in this study is the text of the Qur'an, specifically Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17, which mentions the word *Al-Ibīl*, while additional sources of data include classical and modern *tafsir* books, Arabic language books, and scientific works on Roland Barthes' semiotics and the study of Qur'anic semiotics.

10 Adnan Mohamed Yusoff and Abdoul Karim Toure, "Haiwan dan Ternakan dalam Quran: Statistik dan Objektif Penyebutan: Animals and Livestock in the Quran: Statistics and Objectives of Mention," *Ma' alim al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* 16, no. 2 (Desember 2020): 69–89, <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v16i2.232>.

11 Ahmad Dahlan Harahap, "Amtsal unta dalam perspektif al-qur'an" (undergraduate, IAIN Padangsidimpuan, 2019), <https://doi.org/10/1/1510500003.pdf>.

12 Iman, "Mitologi Naskh Intra Quranic (Studi Atas Q.S. Al-Baqarah Ayat 106 Aplikasi Teori Semiologi Roland Barthes)."

13 Kaelan, *Filsafat Bahasa Semiotika dan Hermeneutika* (Paradigma Yogyakarta, 2017).

14 Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2008).

15 Kaelan, *Filsafat Bahasa Semiotika dan Hermeneutika*.

Data analysis techniques are carried out in a gradual and systematic manner. The first stage is linguistic analysis to identify the meaning and linguistic structure of the word *Al-Ibil* in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17. The second stage is meaning analysis by interpreting the symbol *Al-Ibil* as a religious sign related to the social environment and observable human experiences. The third step is mythological analysis as formulated by Barthes, which is to reveal the deeper and ideological system of meaning constructed by the sign *Al-Ibil* to find the layers of connotative meaning attached to the symbol *Al-Ibil*, then produce a more complete and in-depth interpretation in accordance with Barthes' idea of myth in his semiotic theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Roland Barthes' Semiotics: A Theoretical Framework

Roland Barthes was an influential intellectual figure in France after World War II. Barthes was born in Cherbourg on November 12, 1915, and died on March 26, 1980.¹⁶ He was a very active scientist and was famous as an innovator in many fields. In addition, Barthes was also an active educator in Egypt and Romania, teaching various subjects, such as language, culture, literature, and media. Roland Barthes was an alumnus of the University of Paris, majoring in French Literature and Classics.¹⁷ Some of his works include: *Mythologies* (1957), *Elements of Semiology* (1964), *S/Z* (1970), *The Empire of Signs* (1970), *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971), *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), *The Death of the Author* (1977), *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), *Image, Music, Text* (1997).¹⁸

In 1976, Barthes was appointed professor of literary semiology at the College de France. This period marked his struggle with structuralism, particularly semiology, leading him to publish two works related to semiology in 1964: *Elements de Semiology* and *Sur Racine*. The work *Elements de Semiology* ultimately established Roland Barthes as one of the important figures in structural semiology, and his last work was *Systemte de la Mode* (The System of Fashion), which applied structural analysis methods to women's clothing by investigating articles on women's fashion in two magazines from 1958/1959. He discovered that behind the seemingly trivial and random nature of women's fashion, there was actually a system.¹⁹

In terms of terminology, semiotics is the study of signs in various phenomena, both socio-cultural and literary.²⁰ Etymologically, semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion*, which means sign. A sign itself is defined as something that symbolizes something or something that is a designation of something. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, which are an important tradition in communication. Semiotics includes theories about how signs represent objects, ideas, situations, circumstances, feelings, and so on. Roland Barthes came from a Protestant Christian family. He was known as a literary expert, critic, philosopher, and semiotician who continued and developed the semiotic theory pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure.²¹

16 Roland Barthes, *Mitologi*, trans. By Nurhadi (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2006), h. 20.

17 Yosi Vanesa Aulia, "Makna Abaqa Nabi Yusuf Dalam Al-Qur'an (Aplikasi Semiotika Roland Barthes Terhadap QS. As-Saffat: 140)," *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (Juni 2022): 17–32, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v2i1.11445>.

18 Barthes, *Elemen-elemen Semiology*, trans. By Ardiansyah, M (Yogyakarta: Basabasi, 2017), h. 160

19 Asep Mulyaden, "Kajian Semiotika Roland Barthes terhadap Simbol Perempuan dalam Al-Qur'an," *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 4, no. 2 (Agustus 2021): 139–54, <https://doi.org/10.15575/hanifiya.v4i2.13540>.

20 Rachmat Djoko Pradopo, "Semiotika: Teori, Metode, dan Penerapannya," *Humaniora* 10, no. 1 (Juli 2012): 42–48, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.607>.

21 Surya Darma et al. *Pengantar Teori Semiotika*, (Jawa Barat: Media Sains Indonesia, 2022).

Saussure introduced the main concept in semiotics, namely the construction of signs consisting of two inseparable elements: the signifier and the signified, which together form the sign, Barthes then expanded on this concept. He argued that the construction of signs has two levels. The first level relates to language (linguistics) as a basic sign system, the second level involves what Barthes calls myth or metalanguage, which is an additional layer of meaning that emerges from the first sign. This concept of myth is characteristic of Barthes' theory of semiotics. Through this approach, Barthes paved the way for a broader semiotics than Saussure's, with a focus on the social and cultural environment. This approach became known as post-structuralism.²² The first level is called connotative meaning and the second level is called denotative meaning. Connotation is used to express meaning indirectly, while denotation is used to express meaning explicitly. Myths cannot be separated from the cultural life that underlies their creation. Denotative meaning is the relationship used in the first level of a word that freely plays an important role in speech.²³ Denotative meaning is direct, namely the specific meaning contained in a sign, and in essence can be referred to as a description of a sign. Meanwhile, connotative meaning is defined as the aspect of the meaning of a word or group of words based on the feelings or thoughts that arise or are evoked in the speaker (writer) and listener (reader).²⁴

Table 1. Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis framework

Linguistics	}	Signifier I	Signified II
		Signification I and Signifier II	Signified II
Myth	}	Signification II	

Source: Ach. Faidi Rasyadi²⁵

From the diagram above, we can see that Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is divided into two levels. The first is interpretation using a linguistic system or denotative meaning, in which the meaning of words is interpreted literally and consists of signifier I and signified I, resulting in sign I. The second level is interpretation using a mythological system or connotative meaning. Furthermore, at this second level, the meaning of sign 1 becomes the basis for interpretation in this mythological system. This connotative meaning produces a mythical meaning that becomes a new signifier, generating a deeper layer of meaning. At this level, signs also have meanings that are influenced by the experiences, values, and culture of society.

Lexicality and Context of the Mention of the Word *Al-Ibīl* in the Qur'an

The word "*Al-Ibīl*" (camel) in the Qur'an displays a variety of lexical meanings full of wisdom. The word and meaning of camel in the Qur'an are not presented in one form, but are scattered across various stories and contexts divided into nine types of words that refer to the meaning of camel. This study does not discuss all of these variations, but focuses specifically on verses of the Qur'an that contain the keyword *Al-Ibīl*. The term *Al-Ibīl* in the Qur'an is found in two surahs, namely Surah Al-An'ām [6]: 144 and Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17. In an effort to reveal the meaning, context, and semiotic implications of the use of this word, this study refers to the

22 Ridho Adiansyah et al., "Roland Barthes Semiotic Study: Understanding the Meaning Word of 'Azab, A Reinterpretation for Modern Society," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 2, no. 3 (Juli 2023): 255–74, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v2i3.1445>.

23 Lusi Fitriani. *Analisis Semiotika Pesan Moral Film Cemara*. (Riau: UIN Suska Riau 2021)

24 Akhmad Muzakki, *Kontribusi Semiotika Dalam Memahami Bahasa Agama* (Malang: UIN-Maliki Press, 2007), <https://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/1509/>.

25 Ach. Faidi Rasyadi, "Kajian Semiotika atas Thawb dalam QS. AL-Muddatsir (74): 4: Perspektif Roland Barthes dan Relevansi bagi Santri Milenial," *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 10, no. 1 (Juni 2025): 101–18, <https://doi.org/10.14421/mjsi.v10i1.4224>.

book *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān* as a reference and aims to trace the verses of the Qur'an that discuss camels through the keyword *Al-Ibil* regularly,²⁶ so that the message contained therein can be easily understood in depth and based on its context.

First, Qur'an Surah Al-An'am [6]: 144

وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ ءَالَّذَكَرْتُمْ حَرَّمَ أَمْ الْأُنثَيْنِ أَمْ الْأُنثَيْنِ
 أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَصَّكُمْ اللَّهُ هَذَا فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

"and a pair of camels and a pair of cow. Ask (them), "Has He forbidden (to you) the two males or the two females or what is in the wombs of the two females? Or were you present when Allah gave you this commandment?" Who does more wrong than those who fabricate lies against Allah to mislead others without (any) knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people." [144]

Second, Qur'an Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾

"Do they not ever reflect on camels – how they were (masterfully) created;" [17]

In this paper, the author will only discuss the meaning of the word *Al-Ibil* found in Qur'an Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17. Surah Al-Ghāsiyah is the 88th surah in the Qur'an and belongs to the Makkiyah category. This surah consists of 26 verses and has a profound meaning about the Day of Judgment, the reward for human deeds, and the greatness of Allah's creation. In the Tafsir Al-Munir, Wahbah al-Zuhaili explains the *asbābun nuzul* of Qur'an Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17. Namely, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, and Abad bin Hamid narrated from Qatadah, who said, "When Allah described the pleasures of heaven, those who had gone astray were astonished by it. Then Allah SWT revealed the verse, "Do they not ever reflect on camels – how they were (masterfully) created;" Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17.²⁷

Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Word Al-Ibil

Linguistic System

The first level in understanding the meaning of Roland Barthes' theory is the linguistic system or denotative meaning. Words are interpreted based on their literal and direct meanings. The word *الإبل* (*Al-Ibil*) is the Arabic form of the word camel. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), camel is defined as a mammal with even-toed hooves, a long neck, a hump (one or two humps) on its back, used as a beast of burden, living in Arabia, North Africa, Central Asia, and so on, and is an animal used to cross deserts.²⁸ Wahbah al-Zuhaili interprets the word *Al-Ibil* in a *mufradat lughawiyah* manner, stating that *الإبل*, which means camel, is the plural form of the word *البعير*. The word *الإبل* does not have a singular form, similar to the words *قوم* and *نساء*.²⁹

26 Muhammad Fu'ad Abd Al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadits, 1364 H), h. 2

27 Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir jilid 15*. Trans. By Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani, dkk., (Jakarta: gema insani, 2013), hal. 507

28 "Hasil Pencarian-KBBI VI Daring," accessed 15 Januari 2026, <https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/unta>.

29 Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir jilid 15*. Trans. : Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani, dkk., (Jakarta: gema insani, 2013), h. 507

In the Tafsir Al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab interprets the word camel in this verse by referring to the previous word, namely إِلَى (*ila* or 'to'). The word *ila* is paired with the word يَنْظُرُونَ (*yanzhurun* or 'see' or 'observe'), to encourage everyone to look until the end indicated by the word *ila*, in this case, the camel. So that the view and attention are truly comprehensive, perfect, and steady in order to draw as much evidence as possible about the power of Allah and the greatness of His creation.³⁰

Ath-Thabari interprets this word "camel" by narrating a question and then referring to two accounts, namely from Yazid and Muhammad bin Ja'far. "So, do those who deny Allah's power over all things not pay attention to the camel, how it was created and subjugated and made obedient to them, and how He made it carry its burdens on its knees and then rise? The Lord who created it would have no difficulty in creating all that is mentioned in heaven and hell. So, do they not observe the camel and learn from it, and know that the power that was able to create it would have no difficulty in creating something similar?" Our opinion in this matter is in accordance with the statements of the exegetes. Those who hold this opinion mention the following narrations:

37187. Bisyr told us, he said: Yazid told us, he said: Sa'id told us from Qatadah, he said, "When Allah explained what is in heaven, the misguided people were amazed by it. Allah then revealed the verse, أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ 'Then do they not look at the camels, how they are created?' because camels are part of the livelihood of the Arabs and are synonymous with their traditions. 37188. Ibn Al-Mutsanna told us, he said: Muhammad bin Ja'far told us, he said: Shu'bah told us from Abu Ishaq, from the one who heard Shuraih, he said, "Come out with us, see how the camel was created."³¹

Referring to Tafsir Al-Azhar, Buya Hamka interprets the word camel as the animal most closely associated with the lives of Arabs throughout the ages, since humans first inhabited the land.³² It should be noted that there are also linguists who understand the word *Al-Ibīl* in this verse to mean clouds, likening clouds to camels, however, this opinion is not popular.³³

From the interpretations presented above, we can see that the word *Al-Ibīl* has two meanings: camel and cloud. However, according to Quraish Shihab, the interpretation of cloud is not widely used, and there are not many sources that explain in detail that *Al-Ibīl* means cloud. Therefore, the author has chosen the meaning of camel. Then it is mentioned that the meaning of the word camel is not just a camel. Camels are commanded by Allah to be observed in detail, because everything about camels is complex so that it can make us aware of Allah's power. Camels are created in such a way and are very suitable for the Arabian habitat so that they make human life easier. There are many benefits of camels that can facilitate human activities. Camels have a very strong physique, enabling them to survive in extreme conditions, and they also have food reserves in their bodies, specifically in their humps. This is one of the benefits of camels as a means of transportation for humans, as they can survive long journeys in the extreme Arabian climate. Camels can also survive long distances while carrying heavy loads. The benefits of camels are not limited to that. Their bodies can be used by humans as food, such as meat and milk. Additionally, camel skin and fur can also be processed by humans for daily needs. The

30 Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an volume 15*, (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002) h. 233

31 Ath-thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an jilid 25*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1978) h. 517-518

32 Haji Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar jilid 10* (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1990), h. 7980

33 Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an volume 15*, (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002) h. 235

author also found an article discussing camel urine, which is beneficial in scientific medicine. Despite the Islamic law regarding the impurity of urine, it has been proven that camel urine can provide healing.³⁴

Mythology System

The next stage moves on to the second level of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, namely the system of mythology or connotative meaning. Meaning here is based on the meaning obtained from linguistic meaning or previous denotative meaning. From this, a broader meaning than before can be obtained. This system works by conducting a contextual analysis to obtain a broader and deeper meaning, including by studying *asbābun nuzul*.³⁵ The *asbābun nuzul* of Qur'an Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17 is found in the Tafsir Al-Munir book, Wahbah Al-Zuhaili explains it as follows:

*"Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, and Abad bin Hamid narrated from Qatadah, who said, "When Allah described the pleasures of Paradise, those who had gone astray were astonished by it. Then Allah revealed the verse, 'Have they not considered the camel, how it was created?'" Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17.*³⁶

Buya Hamka interpreted camels as versatile animals. Camels are used to transport goods on long journeys, cultivate rice fields, or draw water from deep wells. Camels are also a source of food, with edible meat and milk that can be milked. Camel hair is used for clothing. The camel's large and strong body can withstand the scorching heat of the desert, hunger, and thirst. Its food is also easy to find, in the form of desert grass that other animals cannot eat, even thorny grass. Camels are very obedient to humans, following commands to stop, sit, or stand. Even when walking long distances at night, camels remain calm, nodding their heads. They often travel in caravans from south to north, from Yemen to Sham, passing through Hejaz or Nejd. At night, the stars in the sky guide their journey, as the desert sky is rarely covered by clouds, so they rarely get lost.³⁷

Quraish Shihab refers to the Tafsir Al-Muntakhab compiled by a team of Egyptian experts. The above verses are commented on as follows: *"They mention the extraordinary creation of camels, which demonstrates the power of Allah and needs to be contemplated."* This interpretation discusses the uniqueness of camels as evidence of Allah's power. Camels have extraordinary physical adaptations, such as eyes that are protected from sand, nostrils and ears that can close, long legs, and wide palms that make it easy for them to walk on sand. Camels can survive for long periods without water, efficiently utilizing their body's water reserves, and are not easily affected by blood pressure even when they lose a lot of fluid. A camel's hump serves as an energy reserve, not a water storage.³⁸ Quraish Shihab, in his *tafsir* book, adds several notes regarding the meaning of camels in this verse, *"it can be added that camels are greatly affected by beautiful sounds and tones. They can walk faster when they hear them. This animal also does not "lie." It will not sit down to rest to avoid heavy loads, but will continue to walk until it reaches the end of its strength.*

34 Nurul Aiman Mat Abdullah, "Rawatan Menggunakan Air Kencing Unta Menurut Perspektif Islam dan Sains," *Fikiran Masyarakat: Kamala Indonesia* 6, no. 3 (Juni 2018): 129–135, http://www.kemalapublisher.com/index.php/fm/article/view/333/pdf_80.

35 Azkiya Khikmatiar, "KONSEP POLIGAMI DALAM AL-QUR'AN: (Aplikasi Semiologi Roland Barthes)," *QOF* 3, no. 1 (Juni 2019): 55–66, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v3i1.903>.

36 Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, Tafsir Al-Munir jilid 15. Trans. by Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani, dkk., (jakarta: gema insani, 2013), h. 507

37 Haji Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, Tafsir Al-Azhar jilid 10 (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1990), h. 7980

38 Quraish Shihab, Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an volume 15, (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002), h. 234-235

*Even though it is a large animal, it is submissive and willing to be controlled even by a small child, and even though its benefits are so great, the cost of maintaining it is very low.*³⁹

The context of this verse was revealed for the polytheists who denied Allah’s power. Previously, in Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah, the blessings of Paradise for those who obey Allah were explained—before the discussion of camels in verse 17, but the disbelievers still did not believe it. Therefore, Allah mentioned camels, because camels were animals that were very familiar to Arab traditions. The Arabs at that time lived side by side with camels and made good use of them. By describing the pleasures of heaven to the polytheists, they were amazed and became even more disbelieving. So, Allah mentioned camels to make it easier for them to understand His power through something that was very familiar and extraordinary to them. Camels, as Allah’s creation, demonstrate the perfection of His power and good order, such as their ability to transport heavy loads to distant lands and their ability to withstand thirst for more than ten days. Camels are specifically mentioned because they are the most amazing animals among the Arabs, who often interact with them.⁴⁰

Allah commands—in the Qur’an—that we should not only see, but also pay close attention and reflect on the meaning of what Allah commands. So when humans reflect on how camels were created, they can see even more clearly that Allah’s power is real. Even observing and paying attention to the things closest to us already gives us a glimpse of how great Allah’s power is, which we, as His small creations, should reflect upon.

Table 2. Analysis of the word Camel within Roland Barthes’ semiotic framework

Linguistics	}	Signifier I: <i>Al-Ibīl</i>	Signified I: Camel animal
		Signification I and Signifier II: Camels are even-toed ungulates with long necks and humped backs (one or two humps), used as pack animals.	Signified II: Camels are animals created by God that have many benefits for human life.
Myth	}	Signification II: Camels are animals whose creation is so complex and extraordinary that they symbolize the greatness and power of God, which we must pay attention to and reflect upon.	

Source: Author analysis

From the interpretation of the word *Al-Ibīl* in Qur’an, Surah Al-Ghāsyiyah [88]: 17 applied to Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory, the final results are shown in the table above. At the linguistic system level, the first signifier is the word *Al-Ibīl* itself, and the first signified is the camel. From this first signifier and signified, the author derives the first meaning of the sign, which is a camel, a mammal with even-toed hooves, a long neck, a humped back (one or two humps), used as a beast of burden. After the first level of the linguistic system is obtained, we move on to the second level of the mythological system. At this first stage of the mythological system, we find the second signifier, the second signified, and the second sign (myth). The sign from the linguistic system also becomes the second signifier, then we move on to the second signified, which is the camel, an animal created by God that has many benefits for human life. After observing the stage of meaning of the second signified, the author arrives at the meaning of the second sign or myth, namely that the camel is an animal whose creation is very complex and extraordinary, so that this animal signifies God’s power, which we must pay attention to and reflect upon.

39 Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur’an* volume 15, (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002) h. 235

40 Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir* jilid 15. Trans. by Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani, dkk., (Jakarta: gema insani, 2013), h. 508

CONCLUSION

This study examines the contextual meaning of the word *Al-Ibil* (camel) in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghāsiyah [88]: 17, using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Through two levels of analysis, namely denotative and connotative, this study found that *Al-Ibil* does not only refer to camels literally as mammals, but also symbolizes the power and greatness of Allah. The denotative meaning refers to the camel as a strong beast of burden, while the connotative meaning connects it to Allah's extraordinary creation, which should be a source of reflection for humanity to contemplate His greatness. These findings demonstrate the depth of symbolic meaning in the Qur'an that transcends literal understanding.

The main contribution of this research lies in the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to understand the symbolic meaning in the text of the Qur'an, especially in relation to the use of animal symbols, which has rarely been discussed in exegetical studies. This research also enriches tafsir studies by providing a new perspective that connects linguistic understanding and mythological symbolism, offering a deeper dimension to the theological message that Allah wants to convey through these verses. With this approach, readers can see the more complex relationship between the sacred text and the social and cultural context of readers at that time.

However, this study has limitations, including examining only one word in one verse from Surah Al-Ghāsiyah and being limited to symbolic understanding derived from one semiotic theory. Further research could examine animal symbolism in the Qur'an more broadly, applying other semiotic theories or more diverse interdisciplinary approaches. Recommendations for further research include expanding the scope of analysis by comparing the symbolism of camels in Surah Al-Ghāsiyah with other animal symbolism in other verses of the Qur'an, as well as exploring the role of such symbolism in greater depth in the social and theological context of contemporary Muslims.

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