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JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC STUDIES

<https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/jiis>

Symbolic Psycho-Sufism of Sunan Kalijaga in Serat Dewa Ruci: A Semiotic Analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure

Agung Drajat Sucipto ✉

Institut Nahdlatul Ulama Ciamis, Indonesia

Articles

Information

History:

Received: February

Approved: March

Publish: April

Keywords: Serat Dewa Ruci; Sunan Kalijaga; Psycho-Sufism; Semiotics; Ferdinand de Saussure; Javanese Islamic Literature

Abstract

Serat Dewa Ruci is one of the most significant works of Javanese Islamic literature, containing symbolic narratives that reflect the integration of local wisdom and Sufi teachings within the tradition of cultural da'wah associated with Sunan Kalijaga. While previous studies have primarily examined the text from philosophical, cultural, and mystical perspectives, limited attention has been given to its symbolic structure as a system of psycho-sufistic meanings. This study aims to analyze the symbolic elements embedded in *Serat Dewa Ruci* using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory and to interpret their meanings through a psycho-sufistic framework. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study examines symbolic episodes, characters, and narrative elements found in the text, focusing on the relationships between signifiers and signified meanings. The findings reveal six major symbols that structure Bima's spiritual journey: Mount Candramuka, the Tribaksara Forest, Rukmuka and Rukmakala, the Dragon, the Ocean and *tirta pawitra sari*, and Dewa Ruci. Semiotic analysis demonstrates that these symbols form an interconnected system of meanings representing successive stages of spiritual development. Through a psycho-sufistic interpretation, the symbols are found to signify the strengthening of faith, awareness of human vulnerability, responsibility for worldly blessings, emotional regulation, the search for ultimate truth, and the attainment of divine self-knowledge. The study contributes to Islamic studies by demonstrating how symbolic narratives function as vehicles for transmitting spiritual teachings within Javanese Islamic culture. Furthermore, it offers a novel integration of Saussurean semiotics and psycho-sufistic analysis, providing a new perspective on the relationship between literature, spirituality, and cultural da'wah in the intellectual legacy associated with Sunan Kalijaga.

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Introduction

The Islamization of Java represents one of the most significant examples of cultural accommodation in the history of Islamic expansion in Southeast Asia. Rather than replacing local traditions, Muslim scholars and missionaries adopted adaptive strategies that integrated Islamic teachings into pre-existing cultural expressions, thereby facilitating the acceptance of Islam among Javanese communities (Ricklefs, 2006; Woodward, 2011). This process generated a distinctive form of Islamic civilization in which religious values were transmitted through indigenous cultural media, including literature, architecture, music, and performing arts. Among these cultural instruments, wayang occupies a particularly important position because it functions not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a vehicle for moral instruction, religious education, and spiritual reflection (Geertz, 1960; Simuh, 2016).

Within the tradition of Javanese Islam, Sunan Kalijaga is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in promoting cultural da'wah through artistic and literary media. His missionary approach emphasized dialogue between Islamic teachings and local culture, allowing religious messages to be conveyed through symbols and narratives that were already familiar to society (Amin, 2000; Florida, 2019). Instead of rejecting wayang as a pre-Islamic tradition, Sunan Kalijaga reinterpreted its stories and symbolic structures to communicate Islamic values, particularly those related to faith, morality, and spirituality. Through this strategy, wayang evolved into an important pedagogical medium through which complex theological and mystical concepts could be understood by diverse audiences across social strata.

One of the most prominent literary texts associated with this tradition is *Serat Dewa Ruci*. The text narrates the spiritual quest of Bima (Werkudara), a heroic figure from the Mahabharata tradition, who undertakes a journey to seek *tirta pawitra sari*, the sacred water of life. Throughout this journey, Bima encounters a series of symbolic challenges and mystical experiences that culminate in his meeting with Dewa Ruci, a miniature divine figure who reveals profound spiritual truths. Beyond its narrative function, this encounter symbolizes the human search for self-knowledge, spiritual purification, and ultimate awareness of God. Consequently, *Serat Dewa Ruci* has long been regarded as one of the most important representations of Javanese Islamic mysticism, reflecting the synthesis of local wisdom and Sufi teachings within the intellectual tradition of Islam Nusantara (Zoetmulder, 1990; Mulder, 2005).

The symbolic dimension of *Serat Dewa Ruci* has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Previous studies have examined the text from the perspectives of Javanese philosophy, cultural studies, mysticism, ethics, and Islamic spirituality. Zoetmulder (1990) emphasized its metaphysical dimensions as an expression of Javanese mystical thought, while Mulder (2005) interpreted the narrative as a reflection of spiritual self-discovery and religious consciousness. Other scholars have explored the educational values, moral teachings, and cultural significance embedded within the story, demonstrating its continuing relevance in contemporary discussions of character formation and religious education (Simuh, 2016; Endraswara, 2018). Studies on Sunan Kalijaga have likewise highlighted the role of symbolic narratives and cultural adaptation in disseminating Islamic teachings throughout Java (Ricklefs, 2006; Florida, 2019).

Despite these contributions, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. First, most studies focus primarily on the philosophical, historical, or cultural dimensions of *Serat Dewa Ruci*, while relatively little attention has been devoted to the systematic analysis of its symbolic structures as interconnected systems of meaning. Second, although the text is frequently associated with Sufism, previous research generally discusses mystical teachings in broad theological terms without examining how specific symbols communicate stages of psychological and spiritual transformation. Third, studies integrating semiotic theory with psycho-sufistic interpretation remain scarce, particularly those employing Ferdinand de Saussure's framework to uncover the relationship between signifier and signified within the symbolic episodes of Bima's journey. Consequently, the psycho-sufistic meanings embedded in the narrative remain insufficiently explored.

This gap is significant because *Serat Dewa Ruci* is fundamentally constructed through symbolic language. Elements such as Mount Candramuka, the Tribaksara Forest, the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala, the Dragon, the Ocean, and Dewa Ruci itself function not merely as narrative components but as signs that convey deeper meanings concerning human existence and spiritual development. According to Saussure (1983), meaning emerges through the inseparable relationship between the signifier and the signified. Applying this framework enables a deeper understanding of how symbolic representations operate within literary texts and how spiritual teachings are encoded through cultural narratives.

Furthermore, the psycho-sufistic perspective provides a valuable lens through which these symbols may be interpreted. Psycho-Sufism emphasizes the integration of psychological development and spiritual purification, viewing human growth as a process involving faith, self-awareness, emotional regulation, moral refinement, and transcendental consciousness (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2014; Anshari, 2018). Within this perspective, spiritual maturity is achieved through continuous self-transformation and the cultivation of inner awareness. The symbolic experiences encountered by Bima can therefore be understood as representations of successive psycho-sufistic stages through which individuals move toward spiritual perfection and inner tranquility.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of Saussurean semiotics and psycho-sufistic analysis to examine the symbolic structure of *Serat Dewa Ruci*. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize philosophical or mystical interpretations, this research systematically investigates the signifier-signified relationships embedded in the narrative and interprets them as stages of psycho-sufistic development. Through this approach, the study demonstrates how symbolic episodes within the text communicate processes of strengthening faith, developing self-awareness, cultivating gratitude, regulating emotions, fostering humility, and recognizing humanity's ultimate return to God. This integrated perspective offers a new contribution to the study of Javanese Islamic literature and expands scholarly understanding of how spiritual teachings are transmitted through symbolic cultural forms.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyze the principal symbols contained in *Serat Dewa Ruci* using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory and to interpret their meanings through a psycho-sufistic framework. By doing so, the study contributes to broader discussions on Islamic studies, Javanese literature, cultural da'wah, and the

transmission of spiritual knowledge within the intellectual legacy associated with Sunan Kalijaga.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design to explore the psycho-sufistic meanings embedded in the symbolic structure of *Serat Dewa Ruci*. Library research was considered appropriate because the primary object of investigation was a literary text containing symbolic narratives, spiritual teachings, and cultural representations that required interpretive analysis rather than empirical observation. The study focused on understanding how symbolic signs within the text communicate psycho-sufistic concepts associated with spiritual transformation and self-purification.

The primary source of data was *Serat Dewa Ruci*, particularly the version attributed to R. Ng. Yasadipura I, which has become one of the most influential texts in the Javanese literary tradition. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, and academic studies related to Javanese Islam, Sufism, psycho-Sufism, cultural da'wah, wayang traditions, and semiotic theory. These secondary sources were used to contextualize the symbolic meanings identified in the text and to support the interpretation of psycho-sufistic concepts.

The unit of analysis consisted of symbolic episodes, characters, and narrative elements appearing throughout Bima's spiritual journey. Particular attention was given to six major symbols that play a central role in the narrative: Mount Candramuka, the Tribaksara Forest, the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala, the Dragon, the Ocean and the sacred water (*tirta pawitra sari*), and Dewa Ruci. These symbols were selected because they represent critical stages in Bima's spiritual quest and contain rich metaphorical meanings relevant to psycho-sufistic development.

Data collection was conducted through close reading and textual documentation. The researcher repeatedly examined the text to identify symbolic expressions, narrative events, and dialogues related to Bima's spiritual experiences. Relevant textual excerpts were then classified according to their symbolic functions and organized into thematic categories. This procedure enabled the researcher to systematically map the symbolic structure of the narrative before conducting interpretive analysis.

The analytical framework was based on Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, which conceptualizes a sign as the inseparable relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified* (Saussure, 1983). The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, the researcher identified the signifiers, namely the observable symbols, characters, places, and narrative objects appearing in the text. Second, the corresponding signified meanings were examined by interpreting the conceptual and symbolic ideas represented by those signs within the narrative context. Third, the identified meanings were interpreted through a psycho-sufistic perspective to uncover their spiritual and psychological significance.

The psycho-sufistic interpretation was informed by Islamic psychological and Sufi perspectives that emphasize faith, self-awareness, moral refinement, emotional regulation, humility, and spiritual closeness to God. Through this interpretive framework, symbolic elements in *Serat Dewa Ruci* were understood not merely as literary devices but as representations of successive stages in human spiritual development. The integration of semiotic analysis and psycho-sufistic interpretation enabled the study to reveal how

symbolic narratives function as a medium for transmitting Islamic spiritual teachings within the cultural tradition associated with Sunan Kalijaga.

To ensure analytical rigor, interpretations were continuously compared with relevant scholarly literature on Javanese mysticism, Islamic spirituality, psycho-Sufism, and semiotics. This triangulation of textual evidence and theoretical perspectives enhanced the credibility of the findings and reduced the risk of subjective interpretation.

Results

Symbolic Narrative Structure of Bima's Spiritual Journey

The analysis of *Serat Dewa Ruci* reveals that Bima's journey is constructed through a sequence of symbolic encounters that form the narrative foundation of the text. Rather than functioning solely as literary elements, these encounters create a coherent system of signs that guide the progression of Bima's quest for *tirta pawitra sari* (the sacred water of life). The narrative begins with Bima's departure from the kingdom, continues through a series of trials and confrontations, and culminates in his encounter with Dewa Ruci, the central figure of spiritual wisdom.

From a semiotic perspective, the narrative structure consists of several major symbolic elements that repeatedly appear as significant stages in Bima's journey. These elements include Mount Candramuka, the Tribaksara Forest, the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala, the Dragon, the Ocean and the sacred water, and finally Dewa Ruci. Each symbol functions as a signifier that conveys a deeper signified meaning within the narrative. Together, these symbols establish an interconnected symbolic system that shapes the overall meaning of the text.

Mount Candramuka as a Symbol of Spiritual Commitment

One of the earliest symbols encountered in the narrative is Mount Candramuka. Bima is instructed by Resi Drona to travel to this mountain in search of the sacred water of life. As the first destination in his journey, Mount Candramuka occupies an important position within the symbolic structure of the text.

From the perspective of Saussurean semiotics, Mount Candramuka functions as the signifier, referring to a physical mountain characterized by elevation, distance, and difficulty. The mountain is depicted as a place that requires considerable effort and determination to reach. The corresponding signified meaning refers to a demanding path that requires persistence, dedication, and unwavering commitment.

The analysis indicates that Mount Candramuka serves as the initial stage in Bima's symbolic journey. The mountain does not merely represent a geographical location but functions as a meaningful sign that introduces the theme of struggle and perseverance that continues throughout the narrative.

The Tribaksara Forest as a Symbol of Human Vulnerability and Struggle

After failing to find the sacred water at Mount Candramuka, Bima continues his quest to the Tribaksara Forest. This location is described as a dangerous and uncertain environment filled with obstacles that challenge his determination.

As a signifier, the forest refers to a dense natural landscape characterized by darkness, complexity, and potential danger. Within the narrative, the forest represents a space where Bima encounters various challenges that hinder his progress. The signified meaning associated with this symbol relates to hardship, uncertainty, and struggle.

The findings reveal that the Tribaksara Forest functions as a transitional stage within the narrative. Unlike Mount Candramuka, which emphasizes the initiation of the journey, the forest introduces experiences of difficulty and vulnerability. Through this symbol, the narrative depicts an environment in which perseverance is continuously tested.

Rukmuka and Rukmakala as Symbols of Worldly Honor and Prosperity

During his journey through the forest, Bima encounters two giants, Rukmuka and Rukmakala. These figures initially appear as threatening supernatural beings that obstruct his progress. After being defeated, however, they reveal a different identity associated with noble and divine origins.

As signifiers, Rukmuka and Rukmakala are represented as powerful giants possessing extraordinary strength and authority. Their physical appearance evokes fear and respect. The signified meanings associated with these figures are linked to honor, prosperity, and elevated social status.

The analysis demonstrates that these giants occupy a unique position within the symbolic system of *Serat Dewa Ruci*. Unlike previous symbols represented by places, Rukmuka and Rukmakala are embodied in characters whose meanings emerge through narrative transformation. Their appearance and subsequent revelation indicate that symbolic meanings within the text are often layered and cannot be understood solely from external appearances.

The Dragon as a Symbol of Hidden Obstacles

Before reaching the ocean, Bima encounters a giant dragon that blocks his path. The dragon appears as one of the final challenges before he enters the deepest stage of his journey.

As a signifier, the dragon is represented as a powerful creature hidden within the natural environment. It is portrayed as dangerous, intimidating, and capable of preventing further progress. The signified meaning associated with this symbol refers to an obstacle that must be confronted before access to deeper knowledge can be attained.

The findings indicate that the dragon functions as a boundary marker within the narrative structure. Its appearance separates the earlier stages of the journey from the final stage represented by the ocean and the encounter with Dewa Ruci. Consequently, the dragon serves as a significant symbolic element in the progression of the narrative.

The Ocean and Tirta Pawitra Sari as Symbols of Transcendental Truth

The ocean represents the ultimate destination of Bima's search for the sacred water. After passing through numerous challenges, he arrives at the vast expanse of the ocean, where he continues his quest beneath its surface.

As a signifier, the ocean is portrayed as a limitless and mysterious realm extending beyond ordinary human experience. Likewise, *tirta pawitra sari* functions as the central object sought throughout the narrative. The signified meanings associated with these symbols concern purity, transcendence, and the pursuit of ultimate truth.

The analysis shows that the ocean differs from previous symbols because it serves simultaneously as a destination and a threshold. Rather than concluding the narrative, it introduces a deeper stage of exploration that ultimately leads to Bima's encounter with Dewa Ruci.

Dewa Ruci as the Symbol of Self-Knowledge and Divine Consciousness

The climax of the narrative occurs when Bima encounters Dewa Ruci, a miniature figure who closely resembles himself. This meeting constitutes the most significant symbolic event in the entire text.

As a signifier, Dewa Ruci appears as a small human-like figure possessing profound wisdom and spiritual authority. Despite his diminutive appearance, he functions as the source of knowledge and insight within the narrative. The signified meaning associated with Dewa Ruci concerns self-knowledge, spiritual awareness, and the recognition of ultimate reality.

The findings reveal that Dewa Ruci functions as the central symbol through which the narrative's deepest teachings are communicated. Unlike the preceding symbols, which primarily represent stages or challenges within the journey, Dewa Ruci embodies the culmination of the quest itself. His presence marks the transition from external exploration toward internal understanding.

Summary of Signifier–Signified Relationships in *Serat Dewa Ruci*

The semiotic analysis demonstrates that the symbolic structure of *Serat Dewa Ruci* is built upon interconnected relationships between signifiers and signified meanings. Each symbol contributes to the progression of Bima's journey and collectively forms a coherent system of meaning.

Table 1. Signifier–Signified Relationships in *Serat Dewa Ruci*

Symbol	Signifier	Signified
Mount Candramuka	A high mountain requiring effort to reach	Perseverance, commitment, and determination
Tribaksara Forest	A dense and dangerous forest	Hardship, uncertainty, and struggle
Rukmuka and Rukmakala	Powerful giant figures	Honor, prosperity, and social status
Dragon	A giant creature obstructing the journey	Hidden obstacles and barriers
Ocean and Tirta Pawitra Sari	A vast ocean and sacred water	Purity, transcendence, and ultimate truth
Dewa Ruci	A miniature divine figure	Self-knowledge, spiritual awareness, and ultimate reality

Overall, the findings demonstrate that *Serat Dewa Ruci* employs a structured symbolic system in which each narrative element functions as a meaningful sign. Through the interaction between signifiers and signified meanings, the text constructs a symbolic journey that progresses from external challenges toward deeper forms of spiritual understanding. This symbolic framework provides the basis for a psycho-sufistic interpretation of the narrative, which is discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Psycho-Sufistic Symbolism as a Spiritual Pedagogy in *Serat Dewa Ruci*

The findings demonstrate that the symbolic structure of *Serat Dewa Ruci* extends beyond literary aesthetics and functions as a medium for transmitting spiritual knowledge. The sequence of symbols encountered by Bima forms a coherent psycho-sufistic journey that guides individuals through successive stages of spiritual maturation. In the tradition of Islamic mysticism, spiritual development is not achieved instantaneously but through a gradual process of self-purification, moral refinement, and increasing awareness of God's presence. This gradual process resembles the concept of *maqāmāt* in Sufi thought, which refers to the spiritual stations traversed by seekers in their journey toward divine proximity.

The symbolic episodes identified in this study reveal that Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual pedagogy was deeply embedded within cultural narratives. Through symbolic language, abstract mystical teachings were transformed into concrete experiences that could be understood by ordinary audiences. Consequently, *Serat Dewa Ruci* may be interpreted not merely as a literary work but as a spiritual guide that integrates Islamic teachings with Javanese cultural expressions.

Mount Candramuka and the Strengthening of Faith

The first psycho-sufistic stage represented in the narrative is the strengthening of faith. This stage is symbolized by Mount Candramuka, the initial destination assigned to Bima in his search for the sacred water of life. As revealed in the findings, the mountain signifies a difficult path that requires determination and perseverance.

Within Islamic spirituality, faith (*īmān*) serves as the foundation of all spiritual development. Sufi scholars emphasize that the journey toward God begins with certainty and trust in divine guidance. Before acquiring spiritual knowledge, an individual must first possess the willingness to undertake the journey despite uncertainty and hardship. The symbolic meaning of Mount Candramuka therefore reflects the necessity of spiritual commitment and unwavering belief in God's wisdom.

This interpretation aligns with studies emphasizing that spiritual growth begins with faith-based resilience and the willingness to persist despite challenges. The mountain symbolizes the first step in human transformation, namely the decision to embark upon a path whose destination cannot yet be fully understood.

The Tribaksara Forest and Human Awareness of Vulnerability

The second stage is represented by the Tribaksara Forest, which symbolizes hardship, uncertainty, and struggle. Unlike the mountain, which emphasizes commitment, the forest introduces experiences of confusion and vulnerability.

From a psycho-sufistic perspective, awareness of human weakness constitutes an essential stage in spiritual development. Islamic psychology views self-awareness as a prerequisite for personal transformation because individuals cannot improve themselves without recognizing their limitations. In Sufi teachings, this awareness is closely associated with humility and dependence upon God.

The symbolic function of the forest suggests that spiritual seekers inevitably encounter moments of uncertainty and difficulty. Rather than representing failure, these experiences become opportunities for self-recognition and spiritual growth. Similar observations have been reported in studies of Islamic spirituality, which describe adversity as an important catalyst for deepening religious consciousness and strengthening one's relationship with God.

Rukmuka and Rukmakala: Responsibility for Worldly Blessings

The third psycho-sufistic stage emerges through Bima's encounter with Rukmuka and Rukmakala. Although initially portrayed as threatening giants, these figures ultimately reveal meanings associated with honor, prosperity, and elevated status.

This symbolic transformation suggests that worldly blessings are not inherently negative. Wealth, social recognition, and authority may become instruments of goodness when accompanied by gratitude and responsibility. Within Islamic teachings, gratitude (*shukr*) is regarded as a fundamental spiritual virtue that protects individuals from arrogance and excessive attachment to worldly achievements.

The findings indicate that the giants symbolize the moral challenge associated with prosperity. Spiritual maturity is therefore measured not merely by the acquisition of blessings but by the capacity to manage them responsibly. This interpretation supports previous scholarship emphasizing that gratitude functions as an essential bridge between material success and spiritual well-being.

The Dragon and Emotional Regulation

The fourth stage is represented by the dragon encountered before Bima reaches the ocean. The findings identify the dragon as a symbol of hidden obstacles that must be overcome before deeper understanding can be attained.

Within psycho-sufistic discourse, hidden obstacles are often associated with internal psychological conflicts, particularly uncontrolled desires, anger, fear, and excessive attachment to worldly concerns. Islamic psychology recognizes emotional regulation as a crucial component of spiritual development because emotional instability can obstruct moral judgment and weaken spiritual awareness.

The dragon therefore symbolizes the inner struggles that accompany human development. Unlike external enemies, internal obstacles cannot be defeated through physical strength alone. They require self-discipline, reflection, and wisdom. This interpretation is consistent with Sufi perspectives that describe the purification of the self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) as a continuous effort to regulate destructive impulses and cultivate emotional balance.

The Ocean and Tirta Pawitra Sari: The Search for Ultimate Truth

The ocean and the sacred water represent the fifth psycho-sufistic stage. As demonstrated in the findings, these symbols convey meanings associated with purity, transcendence, and ultimate truth.

In Islamic mystical traditions, water frequently symbolizes purification and spiritual renewal. The search for sacred water therefore represents the human desire to attain a deeper understanding of existence and divine reality. The ocean further intensifies this symbolism because its vastness reflects the limitless nature of knowledge and the incomprehensible greatness of God.

The findings suggest that the narrative shifts at this stage from external exploration toward internal contemplation. What initially appears to be a physical search gradually becomes a spiritual quest. This transformation reflects a central principle of Sufism: true knowledge is not acquired solely through intellectual effort but through inner purification and spiritual awareness.

Dewa Ruci and Divine Self-Knowledge

The final psycho-sufistic stage is embodied by Dewa Ruci, the central figure of the narrative. The encounter between Bima and Dewa Ruci represents the culmination of the entire spiritual journey.

As indicated in the findings, Dewa Ruci symbolizes self-knowledge, spiritual awareness, and recognition of ultimate reality. The figure's resemblance to Bima is particularly significant because it suggests that the object of the journey ultimately resides within the self. This symbolism resonates with Sufi teachings that emphasize the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of God.

At this stage, spiritual development reaches its highest expression. The journey no longer concerns external achievements or worldly success but the realization of humanity's

dependence upon God and ultimate return to Him. This interpretation parallels the Islamic concept of *ma'rifah*, which refers to profound spiritual knowledge acquired through direct experiential awareness rather than intellectual reasoning alone.

Toward a Psycho-Sufistic Model of Spiritual Development

The integration of all symbolic stages reveals a coherent psycho-sufistic model embedded within *Serat Dewa Ruci*. The narrative presents spiritual development as a progressive process beginning with faith, continuing through self-awareness, gratitude, emotional regulation, and the search for truth, and culminating in divine self-knowledge.

This finding constitutes the principal contribution of the study. Previous research has generally interpreted *Serat Dewa Ruci* through philosophical, cultural, or mystical frameworks. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that the narrative also contains a systematic psycho-sufistic structure that can be identified through semiotic analysis. The symbolic journey of Bima therefore functions not only as a literary narrative but also as a model of spiritual transformation that integrates psychological growth and Islamic spirituality.

Through this perspective, *Serat Dewa Ruci* emerges as an important example of how Islamic teachings were transmitted through cultural narratives in Java. The text illustrates the ability of Sunan Kalijaga's cultural da'wah to communicate complex spiritual concepts through symbols that remain accessible and meaningful across generations.

Conclusion

This study examined the symbolic structure of *Serat Dewa Ruci* through Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework and interpreted its meanings from a psycho-sufistic perspective. The findings demonstrate that the narrative is constructed through an interconnected system of symbols in which Mount Candramuka, the Tribaksara Forest, Rukmuka and Rukmakala, the Dragon, the Ocean and *tirta pawitra sari*, and Dewa Ruci function as signifiers that convey deeper spiritual meanings. These symbols collectively form a coherent narrative structure that extends beyond literary representation and serves as a medium for transmitting spiritual knowledge.

The semiotic analysis reveals that each symbol represents a distinct stage within Bima's spiritual journey. When interpreted through a psycho-sufistic framework, these stages constitute a progressive model of spiritual development encompassing the strengthening of faith, awareness of human vulnerability, responsibility for worldly blessings, emotional regulation, the search for ultimate truth, and the attainment of divine self-knowledge. The encounter with Dewa Ruci represents the culmination of this process, symbolizing the realization that genuine spiritual understanding emerges through self-recognition and awareness of humanity's relationship with God.

The principal contribution of this study lies in its integration of Saussurean semiotics and psycho-sufistic interpretation to analyze *Serat Dewa Ruci*. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize philosophical, cultural, or mystical dimensions, this research demonstrates that the text contains a systematic psycho-sufistic structure embedded within its symbolic narrative. The study therefore contributes to broader discussions on Islamic studies, Javanese literature, and cultural da'wah by illustrating how spiritual teachings were communicated through symbolic forms within the intellectual legacy associated with Sunan Kalijaga.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited to textual analysis of symbolic representations within *Serat Dewa Ruci*. Future research may expand this discussion by examining the reception of psycho-sufistic teachings in contemporary Javanese society, comparing *Serat Dewa Ruci* with other Islamic literary texts, or exploring the relevance of its spiritual pedagogy within modern Islamic education. Such studies would further enrich scholarly understanding of the relationship between literature, spirituality, and Islamic cultural traditions in Indonesia.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the leadership of Institut Nahdlatul Ulama Ciamis (INU Ciamis) for their continuous support and encouragement in promoting academic research as part of the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. Appreciation is also extended to colleagues in the Islamic Guidance and Counseling Study Program for their valuable support throughout the research process. The author further acknowledges the constructive comments and suggestions provided by the reviewers, which contributed significantly to the improvement of this manuscript. Finally, the author is indebted to the scholars, researchers, and authors whose works have served as important references and intellectual foundations for this study.

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