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Symbolic Interpretation of Prophet Moses' Sandals in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12: A Semiotic Analysis Based on Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory

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Abstract

The Qur'an contains many symbolic narratives, necessitating a reading that goes beyond the literal and requires an interpretive unpacking of meaning. This study is motivated by the importance of understanding the Qur'an in an open-minded manner. This research is a qualitative library study. The method employs descriptive-analytical analysis using sources from classical exegesis, contemporary exegesis, and other relevant books. The data will be analyzed through Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic framework. The research findings indicate that sandals are not merely interpreted as footwear but as a symbol of humanity's connection to the profane world. From the semiotic analysis, the sandal as a representament reflects the human condition of Prophet Moses; as an object, it points to worldly attachment; and as an interpretant, it gives rise to a spiritual meaning: the necessity for Moses to purify himself before entering the sacred space, namely the Valley of Tuwa. The command fa-khla' na'layka (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) is interpreted as a symbol of existential transformation toward a servant's readiness to receive revelation. Therefore, this research contributes to the development of semiotic-based interpretation and can provide implications that sacredness is not enough to be realized only through external symbols, but through inner awareness, reverence when facing God which is likened to wearing a mukena for a woman.

***Keywords**: Semiotics, QS. Taha [20]: 12, Moses' Sandals*

Abstrak

Al-Qur'an memuat banyak narasi yang bersifat simbolik, sehingga diperlukannya pembacaan yang tidak hanya bersifat literal saja, melainkan diperlukannya pembongkaran makna secara interpretatif. Kajian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya memahami al-Qur'an secara terbuka. Pada penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dengan jenis penelitian kualitatif. Metode menggunakan deskriptif-analisis dengan menggunakan sumber dari tafsir klasik, tafsir kontemporer, serta buku-buku relevan lainnya. Data-data tersebut akan di analisis melalui kerangka semiotika triadik Charles Sanders Peirce. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terompah tidak hanya dimaknai sebagai sebuah alas kaki, akan tetapi sebagai sebuah simbol keterikatan manusia dengan dunia profan. Dari hasil analisis semiotik, terompah sebagai representamen mencerminkan suatu kondisi manusiawi Nabi Musa, sebagai objek menunjuk kepada keterikatan duniawi, serta sebagai interpretant melahirkan sebuah makna spiritual berupa keharusan Mussa untuk penyucian diri sebelum memasuki ruang sakral, yaitu Lembah Tuwa. Perintah fa-khla' na'layka (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) dimaknai sebagai simbol transformasi eksistensi menuju kesiapan seorang hamba menerima wahyu. Maka dari itu, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan tafsir berbasis semiotika serta dapat memberikan implikasi bahwa kesakralan tidak cukup hanya diwujudkan melalui simbol lahiriah, melainkan melalui

kesadaran batin, kekhsyukan ketika berhadapan dengan Tuhan yang diibaratkan dengan memakai mukena bagi seorang wanita.

***Kata Kunci**: Semiotika, QS. Taha [20]: 12, Sandal Nabi Musa.*

Introduction

The Qur'an is described as presenting not only normative messages but also symbolic narratives rich in meaning.[1] The Qur'an was revealed to guide humanity in both simple matters and the complex challenges of the world.[2] These symbols often convey profound theological, moral, and even spiritual messages. Consequently, this necessitates a reading that is not merely literal but also interpretive.[3] One of the most compelling prophetic narratives examined in this study is this study is that of Prophet Moses. Moses is known as a central figure in the Abrahamic religious tradition,[4] and his name is mentioned most frequently in the Quran.[5]

In general, Moses is one of the prophets whose story is among the most significant in the history of prophethood.[6] In the story of Prophet Moses, there is an account that led to him being known as *Kalimullah*, the prophet who could speak directly with Allah. This event began when Prophet Moses received his first revelation in the Valley of *Thuwah*, where Allah commanded Moses to remove his sandals before meeting Him.[7] One of the significant symbols that has caught the attention of exegetes is God's command to Prophet Moses to remove his sandals, as stated in QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12.

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[1] Wardani Wardani et al., "Hijrah Among the Youth: Religious Conversion and Modes Of Understanding Of Related Qur`Ä€Nic Verses," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 22, no. 1 (2024): 43–44, https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v22i1.13735.

[2] Abdul Hakim et al., "Analisis Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 233: Studi Tafsir Ilmi dan Tafsir Tematik Kementerian Agama," *Syams: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 3, no. 1 (2022): 27, https://doi.org/10.23971/js.v3i1.4623.

[3] Romelus Blegur et al., "Etika Dalam Beribadah:," *Te Deum (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pengembangan Pelayanan)* 13, no. 1 (2023): 132, https://doi.org/10.51828/td.v13i1.315.

[4] Muhamad Aroka Fadli et al., "The Story of the Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh in the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Implementation of Structural Da'wah," *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2024): 223, https://doi.org/10.15575/hanifiya.v7i2.37949.

[5] Mikdar Rusdi et al., "Prinsip-Prinsip Pendidikan Dakwah Islamiyah Menerusi Sejarah Nabi Musa A.S. Dalam Al Quran," *Jurnal 'Ulwan* 10, no. 1 (2025): 293–306.

[6] 170201033 Adelia Desti Indah Kurnia, "Relevansi Kisah Nabi Musa Dalam Al-Quran Surah Al-Qashash Ayat 1-13 Dalam Pandangan Tafsir Ibnu Katsir Pada Pendidikan Agama Islam" (other, UIN Ar-Raniry Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, 2023), 1, https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/26473/.

[7] Abu Ja'far Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari Jami' al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, Terjemah Bahasa Indonesia, Jilid 17 (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2007), 54.

From the perspective of classical exegesis such as that of at-Tabari it is noted that in QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12, regarding the phrase *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) which refers to the command to remove one's sandals there has been significant disagreement among scholars. Some scholars argue that Allah commanded Moses to remove his sandals because they were made from the skin of a dead donkey, which is considered impure, while others argue that Moses' sandals were made from the skin of a dead cow.[8] Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir's commentary on the phrase *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) makes a similar point, noting that Prophet Moses' sandals were made of inferior donkey leather hence the analogy of someone about to enter the *Ka'bah* and so that Moses could feel the ground directly beneath his feet while in the sacred place.[9] In Tafsir al-Munir, it emphasizes the importance of demonstrating *tawadhu* and courtesy when meeting with God.[10] Furthermore, the Tafsir al-Azhar explains the same point as the commentaries of at-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, namely that the sandals worn by Prophet Moses contained impurities or filth.[11]

However, developments in contemporary scholarship have opened up new avenues for interpreting this verse through an interdisciplinary approach, one of which is semiotics.[12] A semiotic approach allows researchers to explore the meaning behind signs, whether in terms of form, the referent, or even the interpretations that result. Charles Sanders Peirce, known as a leading figure in pragmatic semiotics, proposed the concept of the sign triad, consisting of the representamen, the object, and the interpretant.[13] Within this framework, the symbol of the sandals is understood not merely as a physical article of footwear, but is also seen as a sign representing one's inner state, one's profane status, and the process of transition into the sacred realm. Thus, the command *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) can be interpreted as a call for an existential transformation from a worldly state to a servant's spiritual readiness to receive a revelation.

Several studies have examined the story of Prophet Moses and analyzed it using Charles Sanders Peirce's approach; for instance, Ahmad Ashabul Kahfi

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[8] Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari Jami' al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, 757–62.

[9] Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir*, Terj. Bahasa Indonesia, Jilid 5 (Bogor: Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2003), 372–73.

[10] Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir (Aqidah, Syari'ah, Manhaj)*, Jilid 8 (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2013), 455–57.

[11] Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Jilid 6 (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2016), 4402.

[12] Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawsea, 2017), 45–47.

[13] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 228–31.

concludes that Prophet Moses possessed the qualities of determination and patience in facing various challenges and is portrayed as a mature figure.[14] Furthermore, the article written by Annisa Firadus explains that the lessons from the story of Prophet Moses can be applied to the lives of Muslims in the modern era and highlights the significance and relevance of the story of Prophet Moses through interpretation.[15] Next is Masdiana's work, which presents her research findings regarding the film "*Ajari Aku Islam*." From this film, she identified four principles of tolerance that must be upheld: respecting differences in belief, ensuring religious freedom, fostering mutual understanding among religions, and not judging others based on physical or psychological differences.[16] Additionally, Nur Hikma Usman's work from the film "*Aisyah Biarkan Kami Bersaudara*" tells a story of interfaith tolerance through mutual respect, freedom of choice, and mutual understanding among people of different faiths.[17]

Based on the analysis and review of previous research, the researcher concludes that there has been no study of QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12 using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. This study is significant because, to date, interpretations of the story of Prophet Moses in the Valley of *Ṭuwā* have primarily been approached through theological and linguistic exegesis, while a semiotic approach has been relatively rare. Through the framework of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, this study will demonstrate the existence of a conceptual gap in understanding the symbolic dimensions of Qur'anic verses. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to interpret the symbol of the sandal as a sign of a transformation from the secular or profane realm to the sacred. This study also presents analytical insights relevant to modern contexts.

Based the research question in this study is: How can the symbolic analysis or interpretation of the meaning of the sandals in Surah Ṭāhā [20]:12 be approached through the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce? The objective

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[14] NIM 1520510035 Ahmad Ashabul Kahfi, "Kisah Nabi Musa Dalam Al-Qur'an Perspektif Psikologi Sastra (Analisis Kepribadian Nabi Musa Tinjauan Teori Kepribadian)" (skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2018), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/31966/.

[15] Annisa Firdaus, "Penafsiran Kisah Nabi Musa As Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Al-Qur'anul Majid (An-Nūr)" (bachelorThesis, 2024), https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/80685.

[16] Masdiana, "Analisis Semiotika Pesan Toleransi Dalam Film 'Ajari Aku Islam' (Metode Charles Sanders Pierce)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, 2021).

[17] Nur Hikma Usman, "Representasi Nilai Toleransi Antarumat Beragama dalam Film 'Aisyah Biarkan Kami Bersaudara' (Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Pierce)" (diploma, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, 2017), https://repositori.uin-alauddin.ac.id/8433/.

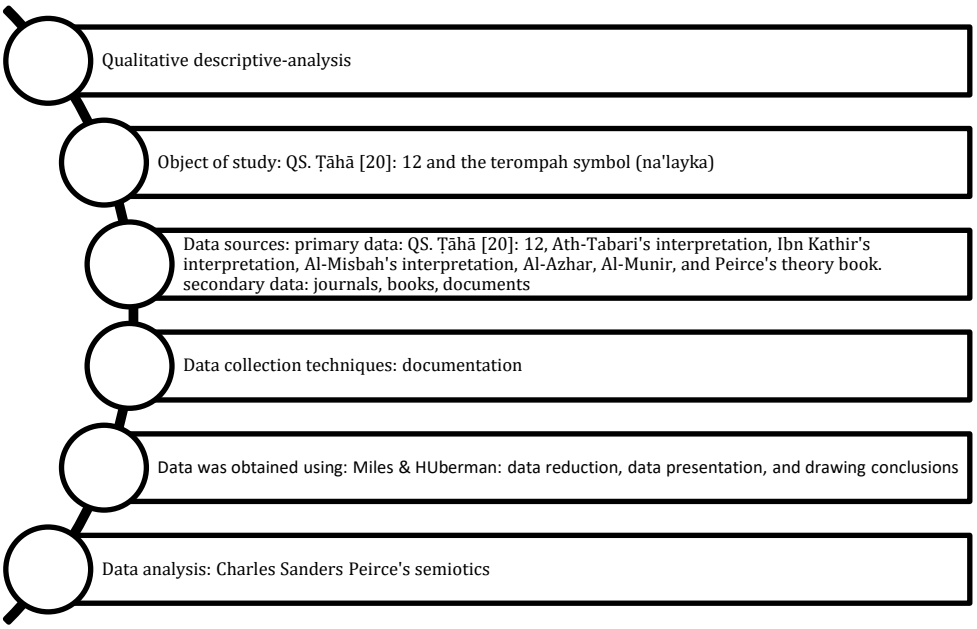
of this study is to uncover the symbolic meaning of Prophet Moses' sandals through semiotic analysis and to explain the structure of signs that can foster theological and spiritual understanding in the modern era.

Method

This study is a qualitative library research study. Library research was chosen because this study examines textual sources derived from verses of the Qur'an. This means that this study requires an in-depth analysis of exegetical texts, books, and scholarly articles. The data collection method used is documentation.

The data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the Quranic verse QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12, A book on semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce, Arabic dictionary, classical exegeses (Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Ath-Tabari), and contemporary exegeses (Tafsir Al-Misbah, Al-Azhar, and Al-Munir). The selection of interpretation books in this study is based on the consideration of being able to represent two types of interpretation, namely classical and contemporary. Tafsir Ath-Tabari and Tafsir Ibn Kathir were chosen because they are used as representations of classical tafsir *bi al-ma'tsūr* which emphasizes narration, the authority of the *sanad*, and the understanding of the verses of the early generation of Islam. Meanwhile, Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar are used as representations of contemporary interpretations that are characterized by *adabi ijtima'i* which is more contextual, rational, and relevant to socio-religious problems in the modern era. Meanwhile, Tafsir Al-Munir was chosen because it has *a fiqhi-lughawi* style that integrates linguistic analysis, Islamic law, and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* comprehensively. Thus, these interpretation books were chosen because they not only represent different time periods, but also epistemological differences, so that they can support an in-depth symbolic analysis of QS. Taha [20]: 12. This data selection is expected to allow for a more complete view of the meaning of the verse, which is not only rooted in classical traditions, but is also relevant to the modern context.

For secondary data, on the other hand, is derived from journal articles, the internet, and documents related to the article's title. The data was obtained using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves three steps of data collection: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions, as illustrated in picture 1.



Picture 1. Steps in the data mining and analysis process

Subsequently, this data will be analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method, specifically by describing QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12 and then analyzing it through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. To put it more simply, according to Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic theory (the triangle of meaning), there are three main elements that constitute a sign: the representment/sign/ground (the sign), the object, and the interpretant. Peirce argued that the sign takes the form of a word, while the object is what the sign refers to. Meanwhile, the interpretant is the meaning that exists in a person's mind regarding the object referred to or the reference of a sign.[18]

Results and Discussion

The Historical Context of the Event in the Valley of *Ṭuwā* in QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12

The account of Prophet Moses' encounter with God in the Valley of Tuwa is one of the most pivotal moments in the narrative of Moses' prophethood in the Qur'an. QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12 is a verse that forms a narrative sequence with the preceding verses, namely QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 9–14, which describe the beginning of direct communication between Moses and God, and mark a

[18] Syuhada Farhan, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce Pada Iklan Telkomsel Semangat Indonesia" (Thesis, 2024), 21, http://repository.umsu.ac.id/handle/123456789/24008.

fundamental transition from the phase of flight to the phase of prophetic mission.[19] In contemporary Qur'anic studies, this moment is understood as a form of call narrative that parallels the stories of prophetic calling in the Semitic revelatory tradition.[20]

When viewed in its historical context, this event occurred while Moses was traveling from Midian to Egypt with his family.[21] In the midst of the dark and cold surroundings, Moses saw a fire in the distance, which marked the beginning of Moses' divine encounter with God.[22] Before that incident occurred, Prophet Moses was living in exile after accidentally killing an *Qibthi* in the city of Egypt. Fearing retaliation from Pharaoh's regime, Moses left the city of Egypt and headed for the region of Midian.[23] There, Moses lived a long life as a shepherd, got married, and lived far from the seat of power in Egypt.

After Moses had completed his stay in Midian, he decided to return to Egypt with his family. During the journey, Moses faced harsh natural conditions, particularly the cold of the night and the darkness of the desert at that time. In that situation, Moses saw a fire (*nār*) and told his wife to go to the fire in order to seek guidance or light.[24] When Moses approached the fire, the Qur'an states that this was described as a divine call coming to him from the direction of the fire, not from the fire itself. This event marked the beginning of direct communication between Moses and God, and served as a space for dialogue between the divine dimension and a servant.

In the classical tradition of exegesis, the Valley of *Ṭuwā* is understood as a sacred place (*al-wādī al-muqaddas*), so Moses' presence there required him to observe proper etiquette and maintain spiritual readiness.[25] Therefore, the first divine command received was not a call to preach or a social mission, but

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[19] *Aplikasi Qur'an Kemenag in Mr. Word*, released 2019, QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 9–14.

[20] William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadith Qudsi*, Religion and Society 7 (Paris: De Gruyter, 2010), 69–72, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110803594.
Graham uses the term "Semitic revelatory tradition" to describe the patterns of revelation in the Semitic religions namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which emphasize revelation as the divine word conveyed verbally or directly to chosen prophets. Thus, in this tradition, revelation is understood not merely as an inner inspiration, but as divine speech possessing authority and capable of establishing a communicative relationship between God and the prophets.

[21] Abu Ja'far Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Al-Ṭabari: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl Āy al-Qur'Ān*, Terjemahan Bahasa Indonesia, Jilid 16 (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2007), 150–1552.

[22] *Aplikasi Qur'an Kemenag in Mr. Word*, QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 10.

[23] Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Al-Ṭabari: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl Āy al-Qur'Ān*, 231–36.

[24] Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, terj. Bahrun Abu Bakar, Jilid 6 (Bogorr: Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2004), 258–61.

[25] Fakhruddin al-Razi, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*, Juz 22 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1209), 34–36.

a symbolic command: "Take off your sandals." From a historical-narrative perspective, this command marked the end of Moses' phase as an ordinary wanderer and the beginning of a new phase as a prophet sent to confront the Pharaoh and to liberate the Children of Israel.[26] Thus, this event was not merely a personal spiritual experience for Moses, but marked the beginning of a prophetic mission with far-reaching consequences.

A Linguistic Analysis of the Phrase *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) in QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12

A linguistic analysis of QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12 does not focus solely on verse 12, but requires consideration of the preceding verses, namely QS. Ṭāhā [20]:9–14. This aims to reveal the overall linguistic structure, choice of diction, and semantic relationships that form the narrative of the call to Prophet Moses. The sequence of verses in QS. Ṭāhā not only conveys a story but also presents a message that portrays Moses's journey from an ordinary human being to a recipient of revelation (a prophet).

QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 9 opens a series of linguistic analyses with a rhetorical interrogative structure.[27] In the sentence هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ which pragmatically functions as a discourse opener. The particle *hal* (هَلْ) indicates a rhetorical question intended to capture attention, while the past tense verb أَتَاكَ conveys a sense of certainty that the story of Moses is highly significant and worthy of attention. Then, the phrase حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ in the genitive case emphasizes the focus on the story of Moses as the main meaningful information.[28]

The continuity of the narrative in verse 9 is then evident in the following verse, namely QS. Ṭāhā [20]:10, which presents the sequence of events chronologically. The temporal markers in إِذْ serves to link events to their preceding context, meanwhile *fa* (فَ) on فَقَالَ describing Moses' reaction to the fire he saw during his journey. Command امْكُثُوا reflects a calm situation, while the emphasis إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا reflects the beliefs and hopes associated with that story. The Word آنَسْتُ semantically, it does not merely refer to seeing with the five senses, but also to sensing a sense of clarity or a soothing presence. Then in the phrase لَعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى indicates an element related to the hope of obtaining practical benefits in the form of fire or the symbolic meaning of that fire, which is believed to serve as a guide. In terms *balaghah* alternative use أَوْ demonstrates a balance between Moses' worldly and

[26] Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *Asbābun Nuzul: Sebab-Sebab Turunnya Ayat Al-Qur'an*, terj. Tim Pustaka Azzam (Pustaka Azzam, 2009), 338–39.

[27] Izutsu, Toshihiko, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio Institute, 2002), 60–75.

[28] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Jilid 5 (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 278.

spiritual needs, so that this verse serves as a transition in Moses' journey from an ordinary human being to a recipient of revelation.[29]

QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 11, فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَىٰ which linguistically marks the culmination of the transition leading up to the event of revelation. Particle فَلَمَّا indicates a direct chronological sequence, whereas *fi'il* أَتَاهَا describes an action that is actually approaching. The use of the passive form نُودِيَ conveys a sense of sacredness because the source of the call is not explicitly mentioned, whereas the address يَا مُوسَى, with the vocative particle (*nida'*) يَا, marks the beginning of direct divine communication with Moses. The structure of that sentence conveys a sense of sacredness while shifting the narrative's focus from human experience to the reception of revelation.

The phrase *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12 is a linguistically dense construction rich in meaning and plays a significant role in the theological structure of the verse. Grammatically, this phrase consists of three main elements: the particle fa (فَ), the imperative verb *ikhla'* (اِخْلَعْ), and the object *na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ).[30]

The particle fa (فَ) at the beginning of the phrase functions as a *fā' al-ta'qīb*, indicating a direct connection to the preceding statement, namely "*innī anā rabbuka*" (Indeed, I am your Lord). Thus, from a linguistic perspective, the command "*fa-khla' na'layka*" appears as a logical consequence of the acknowledgment of Allah's divinity, not as a standalone instruction.[31] This structure underscores the cause-and-effect relationship between the recognition of God and the demands of proper conduct in His presence.

The verb *ikhla'* (اِخْلَعْ) is the imperative form of the root خ-ل-ع (kh-l-a'), which in classical Arabic lexicography is defined as "to deliberately remove something that is attached" or "to pull off with full awareness".[32] The choice of this word is significant, as it differs from other verbs such as *tarak* (to leave) or *anzil* (to lower), which do not always imply an element of intentionality or awareness. In the context of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12, the use of the word *ikhla'* (اِخْلَعْ) indicates that the command to remove his sandals required Moses to be mentally and spiritually prepared to respond to God's presence.

The word *na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ) derives from the root ن-ع-ل (*na'ala*), which literally means footwear or something that protects the soles of the feet from

[29] Ibn al-Tabari, *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, Jilid 16 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 179–80.

[30] *Aplikasi Qur'an Kemenag in Mr. Word*, QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12.

[31] Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'Ān*, terj. Tim Pustaka Azzam, Jilid 2 (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2008), 174–76.

[32] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, Jilid 8 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 86–87.

the ground.[33] The form *na'layka* is the dual form *mutsannā*, which literally means "your two sandals." The use of the dual form in this verse carries significant linguistic and semantic weight, as it emphasizes the completeness of the act of removing them, rather than merely a partial symbol.[34] The word is also accompanied by a second-person pronoun (*dhamīr mukhāṭab),* which signifies a direct and personal relationship between God and Moses. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of this direct form reinforces the sense of intimacy and divine authority in the communication. Furthermore, in the sentence structure *fa-khla' na'layka*, the particle *fa-* (ف) indicates a direct consequence of the preceding statement, namely the acknowledgment of Allah's divinity (*innī anā rabbuka*). This indicates that the removal of sandals is not a separate act, but rather a theological consequence of acknowledging God's presence.[35]

From a symbolic-semantic perspective, *na'layka* does not merely refer to a material object, but also represents humanity's connection to the outside world. Footwear serves as protection from the ground, dust, or dirt. Thus, removing it can be interpreted as an act of opening oneself completely, without intermediary, in the presence of the Most Holy.[36] Therefore, this command is not merely physical in nature, but carries a deeper meaning: the shedding of one's ego, social status, and traces of worldliness before entering the divine realm.

A Semiotic Analysis of Moses' Sandals According to Charles Sanders Peirce's □heory

This research uses Peirce's theory. To strengthen the depth of analysis, symbols are included in QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12 can be read through Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective as a conceptual comparison. In Barthes' framework, signs are understood through two levels of meaning, namely denotation and connotation.[37] At the denotative level, sandals (*na'layka*) is interpreted as a literal footwear worn by the Prophet Moses. Meanwhile, seen at the connotative level, the act of removing the sandals h represents a symbolic meaning in the form of self-abasement, respect for sacred space, and the

[33] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, JIlid 11 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 673–74.

[34] Muhammad ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, Jilid 16 (Tunis: Dār al-Tūnisiyyah, 1984), 166–68.

[35] Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 72–74.

[36] Izutsu, Toshihiko, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, 72–74.

[37] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, Trans. Annette Lavers & Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), hal 89-91.

process of self-purification before facing God.[38] Even within the framework of myth, this symbol can develop into an ideological narrative which emphasizes that the release of worldly attributes is likened to a prerequisite for spiritual purity.

The study of semiotics in the study of the Qur'an has also developed over time in the international academic world, which views the Qur'an as a complex and open system of signs.[39] However, Barthes' theoretical approach tends to emphasize the symbolic and ideological layers of meaning.[40] In contrast, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach offers a more comprehensive analysis through a triadic relationship between representament, object, and interpretant. In the context of QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12, the sandals symbol is not only understood as a sign that has a connotative meaning, but also as part of a dynamic semiotic process.[41] Therefore, the use of Peirce's approach in this research shows advantages that can explain the transformation of meaning from the profane to the sacred realm more deeply.

A semiotic analysis of the symbol of Prophet Moses' sandals in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12, using Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, shows that the command *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) contains a highly complex and layered sign structure. From the perspective of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, the meaning of the symbol "clog" cannot be reduced to its material function as a type of footwear, but must be understood through the lens of the triadic relationship between the representament/sign, the object, and the interpretant that unfolds within the dynamic process of semiosis.[42] This approach is also consistent with the views of classical and contemporary exegetes, who interpret this command not merely as a physical act, but as an expression of a servant's reverence toward his Lord upon entering a sacred space.

a. Sandals (*na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ)) as a Representament/Sign

At the first level, the sandals (*na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ)) functions as a representament that is, a sign that is concretely present in a text and can be perceived by the senses. In the narrative of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12, the

[38] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), hal. 113-115.

[39] Mustansir Mir, "The Qur'an as Literature," *Religion & Literature* 20, no. 1 (1988): 49-64.

[40] Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Analysis Techniques* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2005), hal. 25-27.

[41] Marcel Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication* (Canadian Scholars' Press, 2004), hal. 312-314.

[42] Peirce, Charles Sanders, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 99–104.

sandals are described as a material object attached to Moses's body as a wanderer. It is this explicit mention that makes them a significant semiotic element, since, according to Peirce's theory, the presence of a sign is always intended to represent a specific reality outside of itself.[43] According to classical exegetical works, specifically Ath-Thabari, the phrase *na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ) in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12 has both a literal and a contextual meaning, as it is directly related to Moses' situation in the valley of *Ṭuwā*.[44]

The mention of *na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ) or sandals as a symbol depicts Moses in a wholly human state: as a traveler still bound by space, the journey, and daily physical needs. Therefore, the t sandals symbolize Moses' condition before he began receiving revelations from God that is, his ordinary (profane) state, which was still tied to worldly life.[45] Seen from the perspective of hierophany,[46] the moment of the command to take off the sandals marks the revelation of the sacred[47] into the profane space, so that this action becomes a symbol of the ontological transition from the ordinary world to the realization of the presence of the divine.

Al-Rāzī interpreted this situation as a stage preceding the appointment of a prophet, namely when Moses was still living the ordinary life of a human being. Within the framework of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, such a sign is typically open-ended, meaning that it allows for the emergence of new meanings through the relationship between the sign,

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[43] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Peirce on Signs*, ed. James Hoopes (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1991), 70–72.

[44] Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Al-Ṭabari: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl Āy al-Qur'Ān*, 150–151.

[45] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New Yotk: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1959), 10–14.
The term "ordinary (profane) state" refers to the condition of a person who remains within the realm of everyday life and has not yet entered a sacred space or had a direct encounter with God. In religious studies, this concept of the profane is often understood as the opposite of the sacred that is, the condition of a person who has not yet been sanctified or marked by the presence of revelation.

[46] The term hierophany originates from the thought of Mircea Eliade, meaning the process of "the sacred becoming visible." This refers to the situation in which the Tuwa temple, in the context of the Prophet Moses, was originally an ordinary space. When revelation came, hierophany occurred, and this is referred to as the space transforming into a sacred space. Look Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, hal. 11-12.

[47] In the concept of the sacred-profane dialectic, the sacred is defined as that which is holy, transcendent, or related to God. Meanwhile, the profane is defined as that which is ordinary, worldly, and pertains to everyday human existence. Thus, the profane is meant to be the initial state of humankind (the ordinary world), while the sacred is referred to as divine reality, and dialectics is defined as the process of encounter and transformation between the two. Look Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: U of Nebraska Press, 1996), hal. 11-13.

the reality it refers to, and the way humans interpret it.[48] From a semiotic perspective, the mention of sandals signifies Moses's presence as an ordinary human being who remains bound by worldly conditions and daily activities.

b. he sandals (*na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ)) as the object

At this second level, the sandals refers to the object that is, the reality or concept to which the sign refers. Thus, in this analysis, the object of the sandals is not merely the footwear known as a physical object (immediate object), but rather Moses's connection to the secular world and his social identity before he became a prophet (dynamic object).[49] This interpretation aligns with Ibn Kathir's view, who regards this event as a turning point in Moses' life from being a shepherd to becoming a chosen prophet.

When God commanded Moses to remove his sandals because he was in the sacred valley, a shift in the meaning of space occurred: the land, which had previously been neutral, became a sacred space. From the perspective of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, the relationship between the sign and the object here is existential, wherein the sanctity of the place serves as the direct cause (causal relation) for the symbolic act of removing the sandals. This underscores that signs function not merely representationally, but relationally and situationally. Thus, the object referred to by the sandals is the profane dimension that must be renegotiated when one enters the divine realm.

c. The sandals (*na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ)) as an Interpretant

At the third level, this interpretant refers to the meaning formed within the consciousness of the subject or the interpreting community. It serves as a response to the relationship between the representament and the object. In this context, the command to remove or take off one's sandals gives rise to a new interpretation stating that entering the space where revelation is received signifies the shedding of worldly symbols and the servant's spiritual readiness. In this third stage, the interpretant does not

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[48] Vincent G. Potter, *Charles S. Peirce on Norms and Ideals* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 46–49.

[49] James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 24–27.

In Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semiotics, the immediate object refers to the object as it is presented within the sign—that is, the image or concept of the object directly apprehended through the representament. Meanwhile, the dynamic object is a broader and more actual reality outside the sign—that is, the referent of the sign itself, which is not fully represented directly within the text. In other words, the immediate object is the object understood within the structure of the sign, whereas the dynamic object refers to a deeper, contextual meaning or reality that transcends the sign's form itself.

stop at Moses as a historical figure but evolves within the tradition of exegesis and the community's understanding as a principle of conduct in the presence of God. Thus, Moses' removal of his sandals conveys the normative meaning that the sanctity of the space in the Valley of *Ṭuwā* and the presence of God demand a transformation in the attitude and identity of a servant.[50]

d. Classification of Signs: Icons, Indices, and Symbols

The word sandals or "*na'layka*" (نَعْلَيْكَ) in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12 can be classified into three categories of signs according to Peirce, namely:

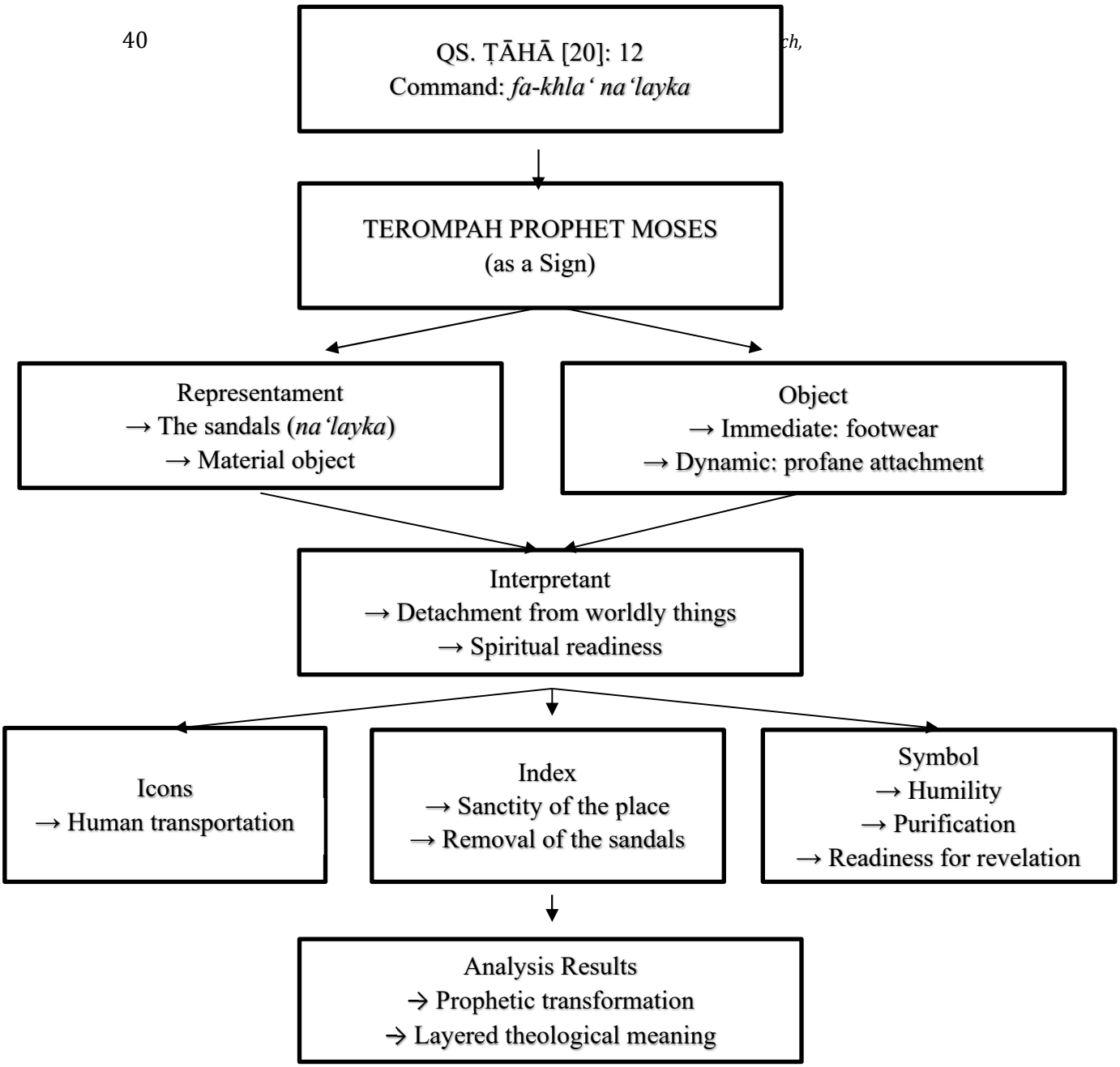
Table 1. classification of signs

Type of Sign	The sandals Shape	Relationship of Meaning	Explanation in Context QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 12
Icons	sandals as footwear	Similarity	The sandals bear a direct resemblance to the mundane reality they represent namely, the means of human travel commonly used in daily life and the physical journey of the Prophet Moses.
Index	The command to remove sandals	Causal relationship	The removal of the sandals illustrates the cause and effect relationship between the sanctity of the Valley of Ṭuwā as a sacred space and Moses' physical act of setting foot in that sacred place, which was the direct cause of the sandals being removed.
Symbol	The act of removing	Conventions and traditions of meaning	Sandals has acquired symbolic meaning through religious conventions and

[50] al-Razi, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*, 48–49.

			interpretive traditions as a sign of reverence, a servant's humility, self-purification, and readiness to receive revelation.

The sandals, or the word *na'layka* (نَعْلَيْكَ), of Prophet Moses in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12, when interpreted through the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, function as a sign marking the transition from the profane to the sacred realm (the Valley of *Ṭuwā*). Through the relationship between the representament, object, and interpretant, the command to remove or take off the sandals is not merely physical in meaning but represents Moses's release from worldly attachments and his spiritual readiness in the presence of God. The classification of the sandals as an icon, an index, and a symbol underscores the complexity of their meaning within the field of Qur'anic studies. Thus, the sandals serve as a symbol of the transformation that marks Moses's shift from an ordinary human being to a prophet who receives revelation.



Based on a semiotic analysis of the symbol of Prophet Moses' sandals in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12 using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, its practical implications in the modern era can be seen concretely in everyday life. For example, removing the sandals is not only interpreted literally, but also as a process of purifying oneself from the ego, worldly preoccupations, and inner distractions before meeting the Divine[51]. In the context of worship practices at the mosque, this message emphasizes that sacredness is not sufficiently realized through outward symbols alone, that is, it is not merely by wearing a

[51] M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 8 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 282.

prayer shawl that we have shed our worldly concerns during worship but rather through inner awareness, devotion, and spiritual readiness. Thus, a semiotic analysis of the sandals symbol does not stop at the textual dimension alone, but contributes normatively to the formation of contextual religious ethics, where physical actions considered simple can serve as a medium for the internalization of the meaning of sanctity and self-transformation in modern life.

Conclusion

A semiotic analysis of the symbol of Prophet Moses' sandals in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:12, using Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, demonstrates that the command *fa-khla' na'layka* (فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ) contains a complex and meaningful sign structure. The sandals do not merely function as a material object or physical item, but as a sign operating within a triadic relationship: the representament, the object, and the interpretant. At the level of the representament, the sandals represent Moses' condition as an ordinary human still bound to the profane realm. At the object level, sandals signify an existential attachment to the world that is renegotiated in order to enter the sacred space—namely, by removing the sandals. Meanwhile, at the interpretant level, the act of removing the sandals produces a normative meaning—that of self-purification and spiritual readiness in the presence of God. Thus, the sandals represent Moses' condition as an ordinary human still bound to worldly life, while the command to remove them signifies a transition from the profane to the sacred space. This meaning later evolved into a spiritual message about the necessity for a servant to purify oneself and prepare one's inner state when standing before God. Thus, the symbol of the sandals indicates that the Qur'an conveys its message not only through words, but also through symbolic actions.

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