

CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

ETHICAL AND AESTHETICAL MESSAGE IN FIGURATIVE
CALLIGRAPHY PAINTING

A. Symbolic Interaction Through Figurative Calligraphy Painting

Arabic calligraphy has been pioneering the way of knowledge, as well as writing in all languages.¹ Although, calligraphy developed in various forms and cover a wide range of function and areas that are not directly connected to al Qur'an text, there is a relation principally between calligraphy that begin from al Qur'an context only, and spiritual substance Qur'an continues to grow in all aspects of Islamic calligraphy. Calligraphy came to occupy a special position in Islam, so it can be referred to as the ancestor visual arts of Islam and has a special position in Islamic civilization.²

Calligraphy is the basic of coupling points and lines in various forms and rhythms that never ceases to stimulate memory (*tidhkār* or *dhizkr*) through divine pen. *Qalam* or pen is the active pole of divine creation that allows realizing the divine archetype hidden in magical repertoire in *lawh Al-Mahfudh* along with letters and words that are paradigm all over the form of world. The pen is used to write is a direct symbol of *Qalam* Allah, and calligraphy is the shadow of God's calligraphy that wrote the realities in the universe.³

By submitting oneself to the will of God, the artist made himself as a pen in the Hands of God. Artist such as the pen that with it he wrote down the sheets of life as a masterpiece either in form or content. The works were forms of divine incarnation medium, which enables the formation of

¹ Kamil Al-Baba, *Dinamika Kaligrafi Islam*, translator: Drs. D. Sirojuddin AR., (Jakarta: Darul Ulum Press, 1992), p.55.

² Seyyed Hosein Nasr, *Spiritualitas Dan Seni Islam*, translator: Drs. Sutejo, (Bandung: IKAPI, 1993), p. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

norms. The entire of Qur'an is contained in the surah *al-Fatiḥah*, and surah *al-Fatiḥah* is contained in *basmalah*, and *basmalah* is contained in *ba'*, and *ba'* is contained in point. Allah is a point. An only person who has relation with source of point that can become a pen in Hand's God and a medium to create Islamic calligraphy, which whole of it comes from the source is Supra-individual.

In the next development, calligraphy is not only evolved limited to beautiful writing and according to the rules, but it also began to be developed in visual art. The presence of calligraphy painting got various response and reactions, even the often harsh reaction and lead to a declaration of war. That's because the artists in painting calligraphy without involving rules pattern "*khaṭṭiyah*". The calligrapher assumed that the painters have strayed. This is due to the fact that many of mistakes often found writing letters from lack of caution or lay in their paintings. Either the mistake in putting the point, the less of *nibrah*, less or more points, therefore feared would create different meaning.

Critics on the calligrapher also required, the painter consider them is poor of shades and does not offer a unique idea, because they just stare at the models that have been pioneered by the classical master in Middle East. Certainly, it is patent that they write on plain white paper with black ink. Even when they have to turn to the media that require color, purity letters remain dominant and not susceptible to deformation. Therefore, they were dubbed "just finished the letters" by calligraphy painter. According to the painter, it was very saturating. Thus, need for new and unique ideas to express an idea in a work of art.⁴

Through calligraphy strokes, Moslem artists interact to the society by the work of art, it is the figurative calligraphy painting with symbolic interaction. They want to convey the message, the religious message. Posts contain praying illustrated in the form of '*abid* is praying. It contains the meaning that human is weak creature and always does wrong. Therefore,

⁴ Kamil al-Baba, *op. cit.*, p. vii-viii.

humans need forgiveness from Allah. Posts of ‘Ali Ibn Abi Thalib was illustrated in the form of lion. It describes and contains the meaning of braveness and heroism of Ali in defense of Allah religion. The post of “*basmalah*” in the form of ‘*anqa*’ bird has the message about *rahīmān* and *Rahīm* of Allah. And the other post of “*basmalah*” in the form of *tughra* has the meaning about a wise. Pieces verses of Qur’an about Prophet Solomon as., in the form of guava fruit that has the meaning the best gift is following Islamic religion. *Shahadat* was illustrated in the form of ‘*abid* in *taḥiyat*. It contains the expression meaning of totally submission to Allah.

From the idea and message aspect, the calligraphy painter wants to do interaction to other people through calligraphy painting. In this case, painting calligraphy is one of communication medium between idea of artist and public art. In order to be fast and deep and memorable the public art has religious consciousness quality. The calligraphy painter makes Allah as the inspiration in create the work. That is, what makes them special than other, the beauty that is displayed is an expression of the majesty of Allah is *Jamāl wa Kamāl*. In other word, their work is an expression of the form of Allah, Perfect in Beauty and Almighty.

While *self*-owned by the calligraphy painter used the figurative symbols that are easily understood by the public art. This is one of the advantages of artist to choose the figurative calligraphy painting, which makes the public art easy to interpret the meaning of that painting. *Self* of artist appears in the form of ‘*abid* is praying as the symbol of disability and resignation to Allah, from of lion is the symbol of braveness and heroism, form of ‘*anqa* bird is symbol of affection of Allah, the form of *tughra* is the symbol of wisdom, form of guava fruit is the symbol of gift, and form of ‘*abid* is *taḥiyat* as the symbol of *tawḥid*. Simply, through the figurative symbols, although the public art do not know the Arabic writing, they were able to guess the meaning of painting through the figurative symbols. Because, artist used the common figurative symbols which easy to understand.

Furthermore, the work can affect the mind and self of society as the public art. Public art will face to symbolic interaction such as: the expression of 'abid in praying, lion, 'anqa bird, *tughra*, guava fruit, and 'abid is *taḥiyat*. It is one way the artist invites the public art to interact through figurative calligraphy paintings, in order the mind and self of public art can understand the meaning and message of the painting, especially, the ethics and aesthetics messages in the figurative calligraphy painting.

B. Ethical and Aesthetical Message in Classical Figurative Calligraphy Painting

1. The Ethical Moral Message in Classical Figurative Calligraphy Painting

According to I Wayan Sadra, the first orientation of artist in the work is value. Value is viewing and believing of something good, beautiful and right. Because value relates to option, thought, and personal acts, so the believing of good, beautiful and right is determined by artist itself. According to him, the good work is the work that was created based on good understanding about the object reality truth for his work. The truth reality is not sense, but essence is spiritual or idea.⁵

As the author has been explained in the previous chapter about the figurative calligraphy painting, so the moral message in the expressions of figurative calligraphy painting is:

a. How to paint

Many hadiths are regarding the prohibition of painting. Painting and sculpture were restricted by universal consent to conventional design, because of the association of the forms of

⁵ Bambang Sunarto, 2010, *Etika dan Pertimbangan I Wayan Sadra dalam Penciptaan Karya Seni*. retrieved 18 November 2014 from <http://bsunarto.blogspot.com/2010/09/etika-dan-pertimbangan-i-wayan-sadra.html?m=1>.

living creatures with idolatrous worship.⁶ In the Islamic law, pictures and paintings that were painted in the pieces, such as paper, clothing, walls, floors, and money convicted unclear, because, it has to look at in the first goal, if the painting was shaped something that become a symbol of another religion, the artist applies a threat as words of the Prophet Muhammad, because they are considered spreading the *kufur* and apostasy.

وَعَنْ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ : إِنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الْمُصَوِّرُونَ. (رواه البخارى و مسلم)

Translation: “and from Ibnu Mas’ud r.a. said: ‘I heard the Prophet said: indeed, those most severe torment on the Day of Judgment is a painter’”. (H.R. Bukhara and Muslim)

According to Yusuf Qardhawi revealed from Imam Thabari (224-310 H) that the meaning of the hadith is the people who drawing something to be worshiped except Allah, while he knew and purposely. Then this person has *kufur*. But, if it has no such intention then he classified as a sinner because drawing only”.⁷ Meanwhile, people who paint with the aim to match the God’s creation, that is, he assumes that he is capable of making and creating the latest models such as the creation of God. Then he is deemed to have come out of the monotheism religion. Then apply the following threats:

إِنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا الَّذِينَ يُضَاهُونَ بِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ. (مسلم)

⁶ Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Cultural Side of Islam (Islamic Culture)*, (New Dehli: Kitab Bhavan, 1981), p. 73.

⁷ Syech Muhammad Yusuf Qardhawi, *Halal dan Haram dalam Islam*, translator; Mu’ammal Hamidy (Surabaya: PT. Bina Ilmu, 1980), p. 142.

Translation: “indeed, those most severe torment on the Day of Judgment is people who emulate God’s creation”.(H. R. Muslim)⁸

Prophet Muhammad said;⁹

كُلُّ مُصَوِّرٍ فِي النَّارِ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ صُورَةٍ صَوَّرَهَا نَفْسًا فَيُعَذِّبُهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ.

Translation: “each artist goes to hell, God created soul for every image he made, and then tortured him in the Hell *Jahannam*.”

One of stringent scholar for this case is Imam an-Nawawi (631-676 H/1233-1277 M) has opinion that everything about painting (the living thing) was disallowed. His opinion was supported with hadith:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذَهَبَ يَخْلُقُ كَخَلْقِي فَلْيَخْلُقُوا حَبَةً أَوْ ذَرَّةً (رواه

البخارى و مسلم)

Translation: “Who is more despotic person except someone who works like My deed? So, please try to make seed”. (H.R. Bukhara and Muslim).¹⁰

Allah reveals his word here with the words “*dhahaba yakhluqu kakhalqi*” (He works like My deed), this suggests the existence of a deliberate action to match, and even challenge the God in the creation and beauty. Then Allah challenged them to make a seed (*dharrah*). Allah said: “turn what you create”, they are forced to breathe the spirit of the paintings, but they are not capable.¹¹

⁸ Syech Muhammad Yusuf Qardhawi, *loc. cit.*

⁹ Yusuf Qardhawi, *Islam Bicara Seni*, translator: Wahid Ahmadi, M. Ghazali, Lc., Fadhlan A. Hasyim, Lc., (Solo: Intermedia, 1998), p. 99.

¹⁰ Syech Muhammad Yusuf Qardhawi, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 M) has other views about the hadith, according to him people were found paints the animate being is forbidden is the very old-fashioned in understanding the hadith. According to him, hadith was intended only for certain elements, it the goal is not for it but only to be enjoyed or for beauty. So the purpose of the hadith was not directed there.¹² It is also in line with the opinion of Yusuf Qardhawi, paint the living creature is allowed (not forbid) when the purpose not for sacred, elevated and challenge the God's creation.¹³

Nevertheless, moslem artists choose to be careful in expressing his ideas. They prefer to avoid the situation; they paint according to the flow of feelings and artistic inspiration that sticks to the ethics of Islam. They have their own style in painting animate being; they are distanced from element of motion that is argument of life and shy away from its natural form. Thus, their works seem abstract, but it nevertheless demonstrated the harmony between words and painting. And in the ethical message, the works can be justified. Because from the works looked good and the message that want to share is good. It was due to hold on Islamic ethic in painting.

b. Ethical message in figurative expressions

1) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of *'abid* in praying

A calligraphy painting described human is weak creature and always does wrong. Therefore, humans need forgiveness from Allah. It was painted with his feet and lifted his hand up. An expression of relief petition due to inability to pay the punishment for sin and the wrong that was done to Allah. Because it can be, Allah will punish

¹² Kamil al-Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹³ Syech Muhammad Yusuf Qardhawi, *Halal dan Haram...., op. cit.*, p. 144-145.

people in the Hereafter for the sins that have been done in the world, although the reasons forgotten and wrong to act that is forbidden. And it can be, Allah will give liability and heavy loads. But, actually the wrong and forgetting are two things that can be expected to receive forgiveness, if the person who made a mistake has struggled mightily and hold firmly to the principles of his religion does not do it anymore. And Allah will not impose a burden on his creatures, but according to their ability. They will receive the reward of good deeds and the sins of the crimes done.

It is undeniable that everything is Allah's willing, factors causing the absence of punishment for forgetting and by mistake was due to receive forgiveness from Allah. And factors causing the absence of heavy loads and difficult is because it gets *maghfirah* and grace of Allah. So, as a human being must be grateful to Allah. Prayer is an expression of a sign of gratitude for favors that have been given by Allah.¹⁴

- 2) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of lion

Commonly, lion is a symbol of braveness and firmness. It was also the artist depicts the figure of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Thalib, as a role model who has the braveness in war and the firmness in leadership. Ali was one of the heroes in Islam who dared to defend the Islamic religion. Therefore, do not be surprised if he was dubbed the Lion of Allah.

¹⁴ Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, penerjemah; Bahrin Abubakar, Lc., K. Anshari Umar Sitanggal, Drs. Hery Nur Ely, (Semarang: PT. Karya Toha Putra Semarang, cet. Ke-2, 1993), p. 149-153.

- 3) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of *'anqa*

'Anqa is a colossal bird that becomes a symbol of the king of all birds in the universe. The painter gives a great moral message in the painting, which was mentioned in *lafadh Basmalah* in the form of *'anqa* bird. *Basmalah* is substance of the Qur'an, secret of the entire Qur'an is composed of 6666 verses, 114 surah, and 30 chapters was summed up in a surah *al-Fatiḥah*, and the secret of all surah *al-Fatiḥah* was summed up in *Basmalah*, and the secret of *Basmalah* was summed up in *ba'*. And it was summed up in the point under *ba'*.

The relation between *'anqa* bird and *basmalah* is containing the meaning of the origin of all things. In essence, Allah is as the origin of everything that has very broad affection. Everything comes from Allah and will return to Him.

From some of the analysis conducted by the author, in addition to ethical values as has been the author explained earlier, there is also an error in the placement of the sentence. Where, it could reduce the ethical values in the painting. Like sentence of "Allah" written on the back of the painting of the bird. It showed unethical value in the placement of the sentence. The sentence of Allah is the Supreme sentence, should get a great place anyway even if only in a painting.

- 4) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of *Tughra*

Tughra is a symbol for names and nicknames of Sultan that have a wise characteristic. But, in this case, the painter used great *lafadh "basmalah"*. *Basmalah* is the great

lafadh that was always read by Moslem at every activity. That is expression of inner most self as worship. Wise Moslem is person who does activity as the worship to search of Allah's blessing.

- 5) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of guava fruit

The painter chose fresh guava fruit that as if freshly picked. The symbol of guava fruit in the painting is the gift. It was as Solomon's story that invites Queen of Balqis to worship of Allah. The gift that contains "*Basmalah*" means that Allah is the Beneficent and the Merciful is the only God to be worshiped and adored. In other word, the best gift is following the God's religion, it is Islam.

- 6) The expression of figurative calligraphy painting in the form of '*Abid* in *Tahiyat*

Lafadh Shahadatain was painted in the form of '*abid* in *tahiyat* is a consequence of testimony and complete submission, and obedience to Allah with knees to the Him. Allah is the creator of the primary and absolute, and different with His creations, it is because transcendence.¹⁵ None of that is similar to the God, because he's beyond depiction and none could reach Him.¹⁶ It reveals the meaning of monotheism (*tawhid*). And it considered confessing that Muhammad is the servant of Allah ad His Messenger, who was sent to mankind as a whole, and practices all the consequences. That is obeying his orders, confirmed his words, away from his ban and do not worship of Allah except as prescribed.

¹⁵ Isma'il Raji' al-Faruqi, *Tawhid; It's Implication for Thought and Life*, translator: Rahmani Astuti, (Bandung: Pustaka, 1982), p. 204.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 205.

2. Aesthetical Message in Classical Figurative Calligraphy Painting

When talking about calligraphy, it is inseparable from the essential elements, namely the letters of Arabic alphabet. The whole world recognizes that the Arabic alphabet is the most beautiful letters. In addition, the Arabic alphabet is also very compact compared with other letters. Therefore, the Arabic alphabet is recognized as the center of the basis among the writings in the entire world.¹⁷ In other word, basically calligraphy has aesthetic value contained in each Arabic letters.

In addition to Arabic letters that make beautiful calligraphy, *khat* also has an important role in realizing the beauty of calligraphy. *Khat* is the icon of calligraphy, where the kinds of *khat* are *Nashī*, *Thuluth*, *Rayhani*, *Diwani*, *Diwani Jali*, *Ta'liq Farisi*, *Koufi*, *Dan Riq'ah*.¹⁸ Although in calligraphy painting, often ignored the rules of *khat*, however it did not mean that the artist left *khat* at all in painting. From some expressions of calligraphy painting in previous chapter can be seen that the artists use good *khat*. They are able to integrate the *khat* perfectly. Deviation and mixing between one *khat* and other is a mistake, because basically it does not fit with the established formula. But in this case, focus of calligraphy painting is not only finished on painted of letters, but also as a whole of painting that makes the letter as the one of its element. Calligraphy painting has freedom in style or the type of writing, so created a unified form of painting that is in accordance with the desire of the artist.

The beautiful value of calligraphy painting was illustrated by the variety of expressions; its letters are lengthened or shortened, widened or narrowed, given additional processed, arch, or signs and additional filler to make it.

¹⁷ Kamil al-Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ D. Sirojuddin AR. *Seni Kaligrafi Islam*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1985), p. 9.

The painting has a symbolic, religious, and aesthetic nature is bringing an aesthetic message relate to man and God, man and man, and man and nature. Human as the creature of Allah, whoever he is, if he close and submit to Allah, he will always realize the nature of Allah, perfect in beauty.¹⁹ In the term of behavior and attitude are not far from the beauty, in creativity is always based on Islamic corridor. In was also done by the artist in expressing his work. Aesthetic message in every the figurative calligraphy painting is a manifestation of the beauty that exists in the universe. That message is one of the manifestations of the One who is Most Beautiful, Allah SWT.; the beauty is realized in the form of latent reality (*al-A'yan al-Thabitah*) and further tangible in the form of “*majazi*” in the real world.²⁰ In other word, that figurative calligraphy painting is manifestation of reflection *al-Jalāl wa al-Jamāl Allāh* (Allah Almighty and The Perfect Beauty).

C. The Relation Between Ethical and Aesthetical Message in Figurative Calligraphy Painting

Artists always have inspiration in creating a work; therefore, art spawned a variety of unique and distinctive expressions. This applies also to the calligraphy painters; they made Allah as an inspiration in making the works. The figurative calligraphy painting is described the Majesty, Power, and oneness of Allah SWT., the art was created is the manifestation of *tawḥīd*. Therefore, *tawḥīd* has the important role in this case; it becomes the important principle in creating the works.

Islamic art is the result of the embodiment of the unity in diversity field. It reflected the containing of divine oneness principle, the dependence of the entire diversity of The Almighty One.²¹ The form of

¹⁹ Taufik Djafri, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

²⁰ Abdul Muhaya, *Spiritualitas Bangunan (Studi Tentang Makna Spiritual Arsitektur Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Bahru Bihari 'Asali Fadhaailir Rahmah)*, (Semarang: LP2M IAIN Walisongo Semarang, 2013), p. 82.

²¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

calligraphy expression is as a constant movement, which is the supreme God prefix creative attitude, and is one of the main ways to prove the existence of God in this world. Calligraphy is difficult to be understood; therefore it needs effort and preparation, because the pleasure derived is a reflection of a person's success in a deeper understanding of God. That is moving in His Guidance and shaping conceptions of God. Conception of God is never ending job, it is caused by the emergence of the Arabic language itself, which is connecting the letters with many forms. It led to the emergence of an experience related to the continuity and infinity, which helps to understand God.²² Geometries forms described a concept of God with the abstract, because geometries forms signed the infinity of God. Therefore, the relation between ethical and aesthetical message in figurative calligraphy painting can be seen in figurative expression in calligraphy painting, which is incorporated in the dimensions of *tawḥid*.

²² Oliver Leaman, *Menafsirkan Seni Dan Keindahan; Estetika Islam*, translator: Irfan Abubakar, (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), cet. I, p. 118