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## **NARRATING RELIGIOSITY THROUGH INDONESIAN HORROR MOVIE: A Semiotic Reading of Qur'anic Verses in *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin* (2025)**

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**Abstract:** *Recent Indonesian horror movies have shown a tendency to feature Islamic elements, ranging from Islamic-themed diction in titles to the appearance of Qur'anic verses in their narratives, which serve as both a representation and a reception of the sacred text. This study aims to analyze how Qur'anic verses can be functionally received and how they represent certain concepts through Roland Barthes' semiotic reading, Stuart Hall's Representation, and Ahmad Rafiq's Reception frameworks. The results of the study show that, first, the representation of people who seek protection from God in Surah Al-Nās is depicted as always receiving His help when facing Satan's disturbance. Second, the representation of moral opposition between two characters refers to the concepts of al-fujjār and al-abrār in surah Al-Mut}affifin. Third, the functional reception of the verses of the Qur'an in the form of performative practices through the ritual of ruqyah, namely Surah Ali }Imrān verses 26-27, Al-Naml verse 30, Al-Jinn verses 1-6, Al-Ikhlās} verses 1-4, Al-Falaq verses 1-5, and Al-Nās verses 1-6. These findings indicate that films can be a popular medium that enlivens and constructs religious moral messages based on verses from the Qur'an through cinematic narratives, thus opening up further research on the interaction between sacred texts, media, and religious practices in society.*

**Keywords:** *Horror Films; Indonesian Movie; Qur'anic Verses; Islamic Symbolism; Semiotic Analysis.*

## INTRODUCTION

Films play an important role in society. In addition to providing entertainment amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, films invite viewers to reflect on life for a moment, witness the diverse socio-cultural dynamics of society, and gain new knowledge or insights through the narratives they construct (Gamayo et al., 2024). In this case, films become a medium that shapes the paradigm of society: if presented correctly, they will have a positive impact on society, but if presented carelessly or accepted with a misunderstanding, they will have a negative impact on society. (Halimah, 2021) In addition, it is not uncommon for films to depict myths or even form stereotypes in society through character representations and verbal interactions (Wijaya et al., 2025). One of the film genres that presents such representations is horror.

Nowadays, Indonesian horror films that are full of Islamic themes or elements have experienced significant changes, starting from the use of verses from the Qur'an in the film's narrative to the choice of titles with diction that shows Islamic identity (Ahmadi, Yusuf, et al., 2025), such as *Siksa Kubur* (2024), *Jembatan Shiratal Mustaqim* (2025), *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin* (2025), and others. The presence of verses from the Qur'an in the film here marks a shift in the medium of the holy text's reception from visual (*mushaf*) to audiovisual (film) forms (Alfathah & Maulana, 2023), enabling the production and dissemination of religious meaning through popular culture (Hamandia et al., 2025). In addition, questions arise regarding how Islamic identity, in this case, the holy verses of the Qur'an, can be perceived and represented in films narratively.

Generally, the representation of Islam in Indonesian horror films is depicted through protagonist characters in the form of religious figures, such as *kiai* or *ustaz* who perform exorcisms or *ruqyah* using verses from the Qur'an and related prayers (Ahmadi, Nawawi, et al., 2025), as seen in one scene of the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin* (2025). The film, directed by Hadrah Daeng Ratu and produced by Rapi Films, tells the story of a woman named Yuli who initially has a good and sincere nature. However, Yuli becomes evil and vengeful after being repeatedly insulted and mistreated by her stepfamily. Moreover, before her death, Yuli's late stepmother confessed to her that she was the one who had killed her biological parents. Therefore, Yuli decided to visit a shaman to send deadly black magic to all members of her stepfamily. Since then, all members of Yuli's stepfamily slowly feel the terror of black magic that threatens their lives, until finally, there is resistance through a scene of *ruqyah* by a local religious figure.

The film of *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin* is interesting to study because it presents verses from the Qur'an in its narrative, representing Islamic concepts and demonstrating the reception of Quranic verses in both informative and performative forms of text and practice. However, in this study, the researcher focuses on several topics. *The first* is the representation of *'aidh* (one who takes refuge in Allah) in surah *Al-Nās* verses 1-6, so he receives assurance of safety from Him. This surah is shown at the beginning of the film in the form of recited text, in the *ruqyah* scene, in the various scenes such as worship, and among others reflecting the value of this surah: self-protection by Allah from various forms of evil from both jinn and humans. Researchers see that the recitation of this surah at the

beginning of the film seems to represent the concept of self-protection in Islam as the main issue intended to be conveyed to the audience. Where only *'aidh* (people who always seek refuge in Allah) who will receive salvation from Him, as represented by the character of Tika, the only family member who survived the deadly black magic.

The second topic is the representation of *al-fujjār* (rebellious people) in surah *Al-Mut}affifīn* verses 7-9 so that the record of his deeds is written in the book of *Sijjīn*, and *al-abrār* (good/devoted people) in surah *Al-Mut}affifīn* verses 18-21 so that the record of his deeds was written in the book *Illiyīn*. These verses are presented in the form of explanations in a scene where Abuya is delivering a lecture at the prayer room (surau). Furthermore, the choice of diction in the film's title is clearly derived from these verses. In the researcher's view, one of the characters representing *al-Fujjār* and an interesting character to study is Yuli. As the film director explained in several podcasts, this protagonist transforms into an antagonist because she was never appreciated or given any reciprocation for her kindness. Therefore, at the peak of her frustration, she decides to take revenge as a form of justice. Meanwhile, one of the characters representing *al-abrār* and interesting to study is Tika, because in the film, she is depicted as a person who likes doing pious deeds and always gets closer to Allah.

The functional reception of the verses of the Qur'an as performative practice, as shown through the *ruqyah* scene at the end of the film, is becoming the third topic. These verses consist of: (1) surah *Āli Imrān* verses 26-27 about the omnipotence of Allah in determining whom He will give power, glory, life, even death, (2) surah *Al-Naml* verse 30 about the opening of the letter from the Prophet Sulaiman which begins with *basmalah* (3) surah *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6 about the types of jinn - namely obedient and disbelievers - as well as a warning for humans not to ask for protection from *jinn*s who will only lead to error, (4) surah *Al-Ikhlās* verses 1-4 about monotheism or the oneness of Allah as the only place to depend, (5) surah *Al-Falaq* verses 1-5 about the command to ask Allah for protection from evil creatures, night, magic, and envious people, (6) surah *Al-Nās* verses 1-6, as explained previously, conceptually point to the concept of divine protection based on monotheism.

This study examines the functional representation and reception of the above Qur'anic verses through the lens of Roland Barthes's Semiotics with additional theoretical frameworks, namely Stuart Hall's Representation and Ahmad Rafiq's Reception. This kind of research has existed before, such as "The Representation of Islamic Teachings in the Film *Siksa Kubur*" (Satria & Prathisara, 2025), "Representation of the Value of Ikhlas in the Film *Qodrat 2: A Thematic Study of the Verse of Ikhlas*" (Khairunnisa & Islamiyah, 2025), "Ronald Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of Joko Anwar's Film *Siksa Kubur (2024)*" (Junika et al., 2025), "Fear in Faith: Pierce's Semiotic Analysis of Religious-Horror Films" (Fajri, 2025), "Aesthetic and Functional Reception of the *Ruqyah* Scene in the Film *Roh Fasik: A Study of the Living Qur'an*" (Nurmansyah et al., 2022), "Living the Qur'an in the Digital Era: An Analysis of the Aesthetic and Functional Reception of the *Ruqyah* Scene in the Film *Qodrat*" (Annisa et al., 2024).

Although several studies have discussed the representation of Islam and the reception of Qur'anic verses in horror films, these studies generally stand separately, and no research

has combined the two. Furthermore, it is rare to find research that represents specific concepts from Qur'anic verses in horror films through semiotic analysis. These factors distinguish this study from previous studies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how Qur'anic verses can be functionally received and how they represent certain concepts through semiotic reading. This study seeks to show that the use of Qur'anic verses in horror films is not merely an additional element but is part of a sign system that produces and constructs religious meaning in the narrative of Indonesian horror films.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study focuses on the analysis of signs in religious narratives in films, so that the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth can be known in the representation and reception of the verses of the Qur'an in the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin*. The material object of this research is the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin*, while the formal object is the religious narrative produced, constructed, interpreted, and told through the popular medium of film, in both the frame of representation and reception. The primary data consists of scenes in the film that represent: (1) *'a'idh* (people who take refuge in Allah), (2) *al-fujjar* (people who like to commit disobedience) and *al-abrār* (people who like to do good), and (3) showing the functional reception of the verses of the Qur'an in the form of performative practice in the *ruqyah* scene at the end of the film. Each form of representation/reception of the verses of the Qur'an will be represented by one film scene, where the representative scenes are selected based on their relevance to the concept being studied. The data were collected through observation and documentation techniques: watching the film thoroughly, identifying relevant scenes, and capturing screenshots of them. Meanwhile, the secondary data comprises various sources on horror films, semiotics, representation, reception, and related topics, collected through a literature review.

Next, the film's scenes are analyzed step by step. *First*, identify the denotative meaning of the direct signs in the film scenes being studied, whether in the form of sound, visuals, or others. *Second*, identify the connotative meaning of the film scenes by describing the meaning behind other signs that are not immediately apparent. *Third*, the hidden myths/ideologies constructed by the film to help humans understand the world are identified through the narrative presented and the efforts to convey it (Barthes, 2004; Gibraltar et al., 2023). *Fourth*, strengthening the results of the analysis using Stuart Hall's Representation theory for the reading of the verses of the Qur'an in the form of representation, and using Ahmad Rafiq's Reception theory for the reading of the verses of the Qur'an in the form of *ruqyah* rituals. In this study, the researcher acknowledges the subjectivity involved in determining the concept of representation for the scenes to be analyzed. However, the analysis in this study was carried out systematically by following the stages of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. Then the results of the analysis were strengthened by Stuart Hall's Representation theory and Ahmad Rafiq's Reception theory. Thus, the form of researcher subjectivity remains within controlled methodological limits.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## The Qur'an, Islam, and Horror Films in Indonesia

In the contemporary era, religious identity, which was previously seen only in religious practices, is now manifested in various dimensions of space and time, from film and art to social media (Dahlan et al., 2025; Zhang, 2025). The introduction of Islamic elements in film is intended as a form of preaching to the wider community, because as a digital medium—in this case, film—it receives quite a lot of attention from the community, so it is suitable to be used as a means to spread Islamic preaching (Ahmadi, Yusuf, et al., 2025). Therefore, films play an important role in shaping narratives and representations of religious values and in conveying them to the audience through communicative language (Fadhilurrahman et al., 2025).

Islam, a religion practiced by the majority of Indonesians, always adheres to sacred texts (the Qur'an and hadith) to regulate various dimensions of its people's lives (Fattia et al., 2025). In this case, the Qur'an not only contains Islamic laws but also various teachings, one of which is belief in the existence of supernatural beings, such as angels, *jinn*, and devils (Afidah, 2024). These beliefs are firmly embedded in society as cultural or customary practices passed down from generation to generation (Arwani & Bakti, 2024) and were later adopted as a new color in horror films in Indonesia. Because of this, most Indonesian horror films today combine mysticism with the sacred text of the Qur'an, either explicitly or implicitly.

As in the film of *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin*, judging from the title, it is clear that there is use of diction that refers to the surah *Al-Mutaffifin*. Then the film opens with the recitation of Surah *An-Nās*, verses 1-6, preceded by *ta'awudz* and *basmalah*. Not only that, there are several other verses of the Qur'an which are conveyed informatively or performatively by several characters in the film, such as Surah *Al-Mutaffifin* verses 7-9 and 18-21, *Āli 'Imrān* verses 26-27, *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6, and so on. This shows that the use of Qur'anic verses in films also shapes and reinforces the religious narrative intended for the audience. The existence of this religious narrative within the framework of representation and reception can be understood through semiotic reading.

### Representation of 'Aidh in Surah *Al-Nās*

Surah *Al-Nās* is classified as one of the surahs of *al-mua'wwidhatāin*, which contains the meaning of the command to seek refuge in Allah from various kinds of evil or demonic disturbances that enter the human soul, both from the group of *jinn* (invisible) and humans (visible). (Kementerian Agama RI, 2011) In Surah *An-Nās*, the expression for self-protection is found in the word "*a'udhu*" (I take refuge) which comes from the word *'adha*. Judging from the structure of the definition, the noun of the word is *'aidh*, namely the person who takes refuge (in Allah), (*Terjemahan Dan Arti "A'idh" Di Kamus Al-Ma'ani*, n.d.).

In the context of the *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin* film, the representation of *'aidh*, which is the most prominent, can be seen through the character of Tika. Since appearing in the film, Tika is depicted as a veiled and religious person, marked by her willingness to teach small children to recite the Qur'an at the prayer house (00:07:09), then attending the Qur'an

lessons delivered by Abuya there (00:07:24, 01:02:25). In addition, among all her family members, she is the only one depicted as diligent in performing prayers (00:28:19, 00:43:09, 00:52:37, 00:58:44), both obligatory and sunnah prayers. She is also the one who invites her family members to goodness and reminds them of badness. For example, when her grandmother—whom she called Oma—passed away, she was the one who suggested to her mother that they hold a *tahlil* event as a form of commemoration for the 3rd anniversary of her grandmother's death (00:32:22), and in various other incidents. One of the scenes that shows the character Tika receiving help from Allah because she always asks for His protection is as explained in the following sequence (series of scenes).

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#### Scene of Yuli carrying Tika's full name paper

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**01:19:16 – 01:19:23**

#### Description:

In an abandoned house where Yuli usually performs black magic rituals, Yuli prepares to cast a black magic spell on Tika. She holds a piece of paper with Tika's full name written on it, which she then rolls up to perform the next stage of the black magic ritual.

The denotative meaning of the scene is that Yuli's two dirty hands are holding a piece of paper with Tika's full name written on it, which is behind a piece of brown cloth or an object with almost the same shape and size, then slowly rolled up. In the scene, the lighting tends to be dim with several objects around it, such as mortars, candles, and so on, being blurred, so that the focus is on Yuli's hands and the paper she is holding. There is no sound/music when showing the scene, only the sound of the paper being held and rolled up. The connotative meaning is that the quiet, empty, and dim setting, accompanied by someone's full name, reflects the elements in the ritual of black magic/witchcraft that are dark and evil. Like the perpetrator's heart that is already filled with darkness, so that it cannot distinguish between good and bad.

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#### Scene of Yuli performing a ritual to cast black magic spell on Tika

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**01:25:23 – 01:25:26**

#### Description:

In the same place, Yuli was performing a ritual to cast a black magic spell on Tika. She inserted a scroll of paper with Tika's name written on it into the skin of a corpse she had torn earlier while reciting a spell. However, when she tried to seal the tear with a wooden pin, the pin she stabbed into the corpse failed to penetrate the skin.

The denotative meaning of the scene is in a dimly lit room. Yuli, with her hair down, is stabbing a wooden pin into a torn piece of the corpse's skin that contains a roll of paper with the full name of her black magic target while reciting a spell. In the scene, Yuli's eyes are seen bulging with her nose slightly raised and her mouth biting in annoyance because

the wooden pin she is holding is not successfully stabbed into the corpse's skin. The background music during the broadcast of the scene seems to convey tension, thus adding to the audience's impression of nervousness. The connotative meaning is that Yuli, who performs a black magic ritual with bulging eyes, shows anger and seriousness in her intent to avenge all the mistreatment she endured. Meanwhile, the existence of an unusual obstacle when Yuli fails to stab the wooden pin into the torn piece of the corpse's skin indicates the presence of another force that is hindering her black magic ritual.

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### Scene of Abuya performing *ruqyah* on Laras (Mrs. Tika)

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01:25:29 – 01:25:36

#### Description:

When Yuli was performing a black magic ritual for Tika at Abuya's prayer room, the previously unconscious genie inside Laras's body suddenly woke up and warned Abuya not to interfere or he would be destroyed. The genie seemed to be about to attack Tika as Yuli had requested in her black magic ritual. However, Abuya tried to protect Tika and expel the genie inside Laras's body by reciting verses from the Qur'an, beginning with the recitation of *ta'awudz* and *basmalah*. As a result, the genie, who was moving to attack Abuya, was held in the air while screaming loudly.

The denotative meaning of the scene is a fairly large room with little lighting. Abuya is seen standing while reciting the surah of *Al-Jinn* with prayer beads in his hand to fight the genie who possesses Laras's body. In the scene, Laras who is possessed by the genie is seen sticking to the wall, then about to attack Abuya, but is held in the air while screaming loudly because she hears the recitation of the verses of the Qur'an read by Abuya. Meanwhile, the people in the room who previously participated in reciting prayers to expel the genie in Laras's body look shocked to the point of stepping back. The connotative meaning is the power of the verses of the Qur'an through Abuya's recitation, which is able to stop and suppress the genie in Laras's body, reflecting that the power of the genie will appear weak when it is faced with the authority of the holy text that comes from Him.

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### Scene of Yuli vomiting blood

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01:26:52 – 01:26:54

#### Description:

Just after Abuya finished reciting the Quranic verses, concluding with the takbir (recitation of the Quran), Yuli vomited blood and a small object that resembled a bone. Earlier, she felt both her arms stiff and unable to move. She felt something inside her was obstructing her breathing.

The denotative meaning of the scene is Yuli in a slightly bent standing position, vomiting something from her mouth, which turns out to be thick red blood and several small objects resembling bones. After vomiting it, she is seen with her eyes closed, still coughing while expelling the remaining blood from her mouth. The connotative meaning is that the blood and small objects resembling bones that came out of Yuli's mouth are a sign that she has failed to complete the black magic ritual that was carried out because another force was holding her back. Thus, the black magic she sent returned to her, as evidenced by the unnatural vomit from her body.

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#### Scene of Yuli's death

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**01:30:04 – 01:30:19**

#### Description:

The black magic ritual for Tika that Yuli failed to complete returns to her. In another world, Yuli lies down, surrounded by several people—including the ones she cast the black magic on—dressed in white, as they beat her with stones until her entire body is covered in wounds. Meanwhile, in the real world, Yuli is seen beating herself to death.

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The denotative meaning of the scene is that in another world/dimension, Yuli lies helplessly being beaten by many people dressed in white, including those whom she has cast black magic on or whose bodies she has used for black magic rituals, such as Ambar, Rudi, Dean, and Yono. When showing the scene, the film provides tense background music, along with the distinctive sounds of people hitting something until it bleeds. Meanwhile, in the real world, still with the same background music, Yuli appears to be lying with her right hand continuously hitting her left hand until it is crushed and covered in blood. After Yuli finishes her blows on her left hand, the music slowly fades, then is replaced by the sound of a convulsing body, with the screen showing Yuli convulsing and then dying with her eyes bulging and her legs separated from the bottom of her heels. Then beside her, there's Ambar's body lying stiff and dark in color as if it were about to rot. The connotation is that Yuli, who unknowingly beat herself to death. However, in another world, it appears to be beaten, which is the consequence of not completing the black magic ritual aimed at Tika. Previously, Yuli had been told that the black magic she chose was dangerous and threatened her life, but her desire for revenge was far greater than the fear of the consequences. She, who had too often buried various wounds within herself, felt no longer cared about new wounds or bad things that would befall her.

Based on the series of scenes above, the myth or ideology constructed by the film, making it seem natural and reasonable, is that those who continually seek protection from Allah and draw closer to Him will be saved from evil, including temptations and disturbances from Satan. In this case, the salvation referred to is not only salvation from mystical disturbances of Satan, but also seduction or deception that leads humans to fall into the pit of error. At all times, Satan will always tempt, seduce, and lead humans into error, evil, and other sinful acts, such as seeking protection from his group. (Herzfeld, 2025). In fact, the only one we can and deserve to be asked for protection is Allah, as He

commands in Surah *An-Nās*, verses 1-6. People who always remember Allah every day will find it difficult for Satan to approach. On the other hand, people who are negligent and forget Allah are easily led to do bad things through unexpected means (Kaffah & Mursalin, 2023).

According to Stuart Hall's Constructionist Representation theory, meaning is formed through the medium of language used (Utomo et al., 2022). In this case, the film constructs the character of Tika as *'āidh* through the narrative of the pious deeds and the battle between the sacred texts in Abuya's *ruqyah* ritual and Yuli's black magic ritual aimed at him. This representation is emphasized through Tika's presence, which is fine, while Yuli is depicted as devastated and committing suicide without realizing it. This demonstrates the film's narrative construction that establishes a power relationship between Qur'anic verses and black magic within a dramatic cinematic framework.

### **Representation of *al-Fujjār* and *al-Abrār* in Surah *Al-Mut}affifin***

The word *al-fujjār* in the surah of *Al-Mut}affifin* verse 7 means disobedient people, whose deeds will be recorded in the book of *Sijjīn* with demons and all evil creatures. Meanwhile, the word *al-abrār* in the surah of *Al-Mut}affifin* verse 18 means good/devoted people, whose deeds will be recorded in the book of *Illiyīn*. In the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyin*, this explanation is delivered directly by Abuya during his study in the prayer room (00:07:16 – 00:07:58). In the context of the film, the representation of *al-fujjār*, the most prominent character, is seen through Yuli. Initially, Yuli has a good character despite being treated badly by her stepfamily, as shown by her speaking softly, taking good care of her sick stepmother (00:05:58), preparing household needs (00:05:24), and so on.

However, when her stepmother died, Laras, her stepsister did not want her to participate in bathing the body (00:12:07). Then when the prayer was about to be held, when the family members were allowed to kiss the body for the last time, Yuli, who was about to do so, suddenly remembered her stepmother's bad treatment of her as a child (00:13:22). At that moment, she saw her stepmother's body open its eyes and looked at her while saying, "You're dead!". Suddenly, Yuli was shocked, stepped back while screaming, which made everyone there turn to her. Then Laras approached and slapped her cheek while insulting her in front of the people there (00:14:01). After that incident, Laras, who had been annoyed with Yuli from the beginning, saw everything Yuli had done as a mistake, so she accused Yuli of doing bad things and continued to insult herself and her mother in front of many people. That's why she decided to take revenge on all members of her stepfamily by visiting a shaman, as in the following scene.



00:19:02 – 00:19:39

## Description:

One afternoon, Yuli asked Yono to take her to a shaman who could help her exact revenge on her entire stepfamily for their mistreatment of her. Yuli made this decision after Laras slandered her and insulted her mother in front of everyone. Furthermore, her late stepmother had previously confessed to the deaths of both her parents.

## Dialog:

Yuli : (handing over Ambar's family photo) I want this family to be destroyed, like they destroyed my life.

Witch doctor : Are yesterday's people dead? Do you want them to be blind, disabled, or dead?

Yuli : I want everyone to die.

Witch doctor : Are you ready for the risk?

Yuli : (nods slightly)

The denotative meaning of the scene is that in the afternoon, in a house far from where she lives, Yuli, with her hair tied in a ponytail, is sitting in front of an old male shaman. Then Yuli hands over a complete photo of her stepfamily and expresses her desire to destroy the family. When saying this, Yuli's facial expression is blank. While smoking, the shaman asks Yuli several questions and takes the family photo from Yuli's hands. The connotative meaning is that Yuli, who was always patient and steadfast in facing the mistreatment by her stepfamily, has now felt fed up. She is tired of the attitude of her stepfamily members who always insult and demean her and her mother's dignity. Therefore, at the end of her patience, she, who was originally a victim, moves to become an active perpetrator of the destruction of her stepfamily through black magic.

The myth or ideology constructed by the film in this scene is that patience has limits, so that continuous suffering or mistreatment can change someone from good to evil, and from a victim to a perpetrator of destruction. As experienced by the character Yuli, her anger is human and can be understood dramatically in the story. It is born from prolonged social pressure. Therefore, the decision she takes, namely, revenge, is a response to her patience that has exceeded its limits. Then, according to Stuart Hall's Constructionist Representation theory, the film constructs the character Yuli as *al-fujjār* (a disobedient person) through the narrative of her arrival to meet a shaman, who is to perform a black magic ritual using a photo of her stepfamily. This representation is emphasized by Yuli's blank, emotionless expression, which conveys her seriousness and determination. Through these signs, the film positions Yuli as *al-fujjār within* the religious hierarchy.

Next, the most prominent representation of *al-abrār* can be clearly seen in the character of Tika, who is depicted as consistently performing good deeds and seeking protection

from Allah from the beginning of the film. This is evident in the film's opening scene, when Tika says goodbye to her parents to fulfill her promise to Abuya by teaching the Qur'an and attending religious studies with her friends in the prayer room (surau), as seen in the following scene.



00:05:38 – 00:05:51

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Description:

In the afternoon, at home, Tika was preparing to put on her headscarf while saying goodbye to her parents—Rudi and Laras—to go to the prayer room (surau). At that time, Tika was about to refuse permission from Laras, but she admitted that she had already made a promise to Abuya. In the same scene, the film shows Yuli preparing food on the dining table, then feeding her stepmother, Ambar, who was sick and in a wheelchair. In Yuli's busy schedule, Tika said she would help her.

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Dialog:

Rudy : Where to, son?

Tika : To the prayer room. Go ahead, sir.

Barrel : What are you doing? reciting the Qur'an every day? Grandma is sick, you know. Don't you want to just stay at home?

Tika : But, Tika has already promised Abuya.

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The denotative meaning of the scene is that one afternoon, near the dining table, Tika seems to be getting ready in a plaid shirt, curling her hair, wearing a square headscarf, and asking her parents for permission to study the Qur'an in the prayer room. When she was about to ask her mother's permission, her father came with groceries, asking her why she was getting ready. Meanwhile, her mother stood next to the dining table, counting money in her hands, then putting it in her wallet. The connotative meaning is that Tika held tightly to her promise to Abuya to study the Qur'an at the prayer room. Even though her mother almost refused permission because of her grandmother's health condition, with kind and polite words, Tika emphasized that she would still go to keep her promise to Abuya. Tika's decision did not mean setting aside the family's interests. However, in Tika's context at the time, many family members could replace her in caring for her sick grandmother, so she had to prioritize her promise to Abuya.

The myth or ideology of the film constructed in this scene is that promises must be kept. This aligns with Allah's command in Surah *Al-Nabl*, verse 91, which directs His servants to fulfill their promises. Fulfilling promises here also represents a form of trustworthiness, which is closely related to one's faith. As the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) narrated by Imam Ahmad states that a person's faith will not be complete if they lack trustworthiness, just as a person's religion will not be complete

if they fail to keep their promises (Husna, 2022). Moreover, breaking a promise to one's neighbor is considered breaking a promise to Allah, and He really hates this act. (Mustofa, 2024) Then, according to Stuart Hall's Constructionist Representation theory, the film constructs Tika's character as *al-abrār* (devout people) through the narrative when she fulfills her promise to Abuya to study the Qur'an in the prayer room. This is clarified by Tika's preparations, such as wearing a headscarf. The representation of *al-abrār* on Tika's character is also shown by this film through Tika's kind and polite words when asking permission from her parents.

### Functional Reception of Qur'anic Verses in *Ruqyah* Practice

Reception of the Qur'an is the acceptance of the verses of the Qur'an by an individual or a group through certain interpretations or practices. (Rafiq, 2021) In the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyin*, receiving Qur'anic verses takes various forms. One of these is *ruqyah*, which involves physical and spiritual healing through Qur'anic verses, prayers, and so on. (Zein, 2022) *Ruqyah* in the film is performed by the character of Abuya (01:22:47 – 01:30:47), which process uses some verses from the Qur'an from various surahs: *Āli 'Imrān* verses 26-27, *Al-Naml* verse 30, *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6, *Al-'Ikblās* verses 1-4, *Al-Falaq* verses 1-5, and *Al-Nās* verses 1-6 as in the following series of scenes.

#### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Āli 'Imrān* verses 26-27



01:23:50 – 01:24:35

Description:

At night, at the prayer room, Abuya was squatting near Laras who was in a trance while reciting surah *Āli 'Imrān* verses 26-27 then ended with the basmalah and takbir, causing Laras to vomit blood and lose consciousness. Before reciting these verses, Abuya and a group of people behind him—including Tika—recited various prayers and dhikr for Laras, causing the previously unconscious Laras to wake up and move away while screaming loudly and doing a bridge pose.

The denotative meaning of the scene is that one night, in a fairly spacious room in the prayer room, Laras was seen wearing a red dress and possessed, so that her body assumed a bridge pose, with her head and feet touching the floor, her hands stiff and palms wide open. She screamed with her mouth wide open and her eyes staring at Abuya when he and a group of people there recited Surah *Āli 'Imrān* verses 26-27 and dhikr of *h}asbunallah wa ni'ma al-wakīl ni'ma al-mawla wa ni'ma al-nas}r*. While reciting the verses, Abuya—who was squatting near Laras's head, wearing a pious dress, sarong, peci, a turban-like cloth on his left shoulder, and a prayer bead in his hand—began with the recitation of taawudz and basmalah, then ended with the recitation of basmalah and takbir while directing his right palm holding the prayer bead towards Laras. Right after that, Laras's body was lying quietly and facing straight up. She's bleeding from her mouth until it hit several parts of her face and dripped down her right and left sides, then fainted by rolling her head to the right.

Seeing this, while crying and gasping for breath, Tika, who had previously been sitting with a group of people there, shouted for her mother and ran towards where her mother was lying. However, his movement was blocked by Abuya who shook his head and pointed his right hand at the group of people there.

The connotative meaning is that the reciting of surah *Āli Imrān* verses 26-27 by Abuya to the possessed Laras seems to create the impression of a significant spiritual effect, causing Laras's body to react in pain to the point of unconsciousness. Furthermore, the moment when Abuya blocks Tika's approach to Laras while she is unconscious after the verses are read suggests that the *ruqyah* process is still ongoing and that not just anyone can perform it. Therefore, Abuya, who points his right hand to where a group of people are sitting, seems to be asking Tika to return to her place and recite a prayer/dhikr to help her mother recover.

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### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Al-Naml* verse 30

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01:25:10 – 01:25:22

#### Description:

After asking Tika to return to her seat, Abuya turned around and found Laras standing staring at him, then warned her not to interfere in his affairs if she didn't want to be destroyed. However, Abuya ignored her words, and instead recited surah *Al-Naml* verse 30, then directed his right hand holding the prayer beads towards Laras, causing Laras to be pulled backwards and hit the wall. Seeing this, the people there were shocked and said the sentence of *istighfar*. The moment where the genie awoke in Laras's body after being unconscious happened at the same time as Yuli who was performing a black magic ritual for Tika.

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The denotative meaning of the scene is in the same place and time setting. Precisely after being unconscious, Laras with her face still showing traces of blood, suddenly stands facing Abuya with her head and body leaning to the right. When Abuya and Laras face each other, the film uses a sound cue to indicate surprise. Then Laras approaches Abuya while saying, "Don't interfere or you will be destroyed! Destroyed ... destroyed ...." in a firm tone, except when saying her last word, which is made long and accompanied by laughter. At this moment, the film provides a tense musical accompaniment. After that, Abuya recites Surah *Al-Naml* verse 30 without starting with *taawudh* or *basmalah* and directs his right hand towards Laras without touching her, so that a sound like a drum being beaten is heard. The reciting of the holy verse of the Qur'an makes Laras' body pull backwards until it hits the wall, and the people who witnessed the incident also retreat their bodies with shocked facial expressions while saying the sentence *istighfar*. The connotation suggests that the awakening of the spirit within Laras, who was previously unconscious, appears to be influenced by the black magic ritual for Tika, which Yuli is simultaneously performing. Furthermore, Laras warned Abuya not to interfere in her affairs or face

destruction. This scene appears as if the spirit within Laras is attempting to destroy Tika, but is restrained by Abuya's protection.

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#### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6

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01:25:30 – 01:26:53

#### Description:

Laras was about to attack Abuya, but was suspended in the air unable to touch him because the surah of *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6 was recited. Hearing the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an, Laras screamed loudly, while the people there looked shocked, shivering, and afraid. After the verses were recited, ending with the *basmalah* and *takbir*, Abuya directed his hand downwards, so that Laras, who was originally floating in the air, fell to the floor. Moments after the incident, in another place, Yuli, who had previously failed to complete her black magic ritual for Tika, suddenly bled and had small objects like bones coming out of her mouth

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The denotative meaning of the scene is that in the same place and time. Laras, who was on the wall, moved to attack Abuya. However, when Abuya recited Surah *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6, beginning with *taawudz* and *basmalah*, Laras screamed loudly with an expression of pain, and her body was stuck in the air without being able to touch Abuya. Both of her hands were seen moving as if reaching for Abuya, but she could not. When reciting the verses of the Qur'an, Abuya's facial expression looked serious and focused, with his right hand holding a prayer bead while being directed at Laras, while his other hand was behind his body. The people there who witnessed the incident showed fear in their body movements and facial expressions. Even Tika, who witnessed her mother's condition at that time, cried bitterly while hugging the body of the woman next to her. Then Abuya closed the recitation with *basmalah* and *takbir*, then lowered his hands as he backed away. Right after, Laras fell down until the floor was destroyed, and dust appeared around her. Throughout the recitation of the holy verses of the Quran, the film provides dramatic background music with additional sounds such as Laras's screams. The connotative meaning is that the moment when Laras stands on the wall shows that Laras's body is under the control of a genie, so that she can do everything that logically cannot be done by humans in general. In addition, Laras, who cannot reach/touch Abuya, seems to show that the power of magic/evil will not be able to touch or even penetrate the power of the holy text of the Quran.

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### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Al-Ikhlās* verses 1-4

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01:27:14 – 01:27:35

#### Description:

After falling to the floor, as instructed by Abuya, Laras, who was beginning to regain consciousness, was supported by Tika and two other women. However, while being supported, Laras' body fell and she became possessed again. Then, those around her recited surah *Al-Ikhlās* led directly by Abuya. Elsewhere, Yuli screamed in silence because her left hand was unable to stop her right hand which was moving itself to pick up the bones she had vomited.

The denotative meaning of the scene is Laras, who is starting to regain consciousness and is about to get up while being supported by Tika and two women who are wearing closed clothing and headscarves. However, Laras falls to the floor in a sitting position, and she's again possessed. Her two hands are stretched out alternately: the left first, then the right. Both hands look stiff with fingers spread wide. Abuya leads the people there in reciting the *Al-Ikhlās* starting with the *taawudz* and *basmalah* while circling Laras. Meanwhile, Laras, who heard the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an, screamed while crying in pain and her body looked as if it was being pulled to the left. Meanwhile, with the help of one of the women, Tika held Laras' upper body while crying sadly, and another woman held Laras' lower body. When showing this scene, the film added tense music, but the sound of the Qur'an's verses was more dominant. The connotative meaning is that the moment when Laras screamed after being recited the surah of *Al-Ikhlās* by Abuya, seems to demonstrate the magical effects of reciting the Qur'anic verses during the *ruqyah* ritual. This is why the genie in Laras's body appears to be crying and screaming in pain. Furthermore, several people holding Laras's possessed body seem to indicate that *ruqyah* rituals—especially in cases of possession—sometimes require several companions, allowing the ritual leader to freely recite the Qur'anic verses and related prayers.

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### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Al-Falaq* verses 1-5

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01:27:36 – 01:27:57

#### Description:

After reciting the surah of *Al-Ikhlās* Abuya leads the group in reciting surah *Al-Falaq* to Laras, who is still possessed, causing her to scream. Elsewhere, after Abuya finishes reciting surah *Al-Falaq*, Yuli, who had previously unconsciously picked up a sharp bone, suddenly stabs it into her right cheek, causing her to scream in pain.

The denotative meaning of the scene is that Abuya leads the people in reciting Surah *Al-Falaq*, which again begins with *taawudz* and *basmalah*, while surrounding Laras, who is sitting. Two men are sitting a little away from Laras, joining in reciting the surah while

raising both hands in front of their chests. Meanwhile, Tika and two other women are still holding Laras's body, who is trying to struggle as if she wants to stand up. When the surah is first recited, Laras seems to look annoyed at Abuya, then laughs and screams. A moment later, Laras is lying sideways on Tika's lap while screaming loudly and holding her head as if in pain. When showing this scene, the film provides tense background music with a volume not much louder than the sound of Laras's screams to the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an by Abuya and the people there. Besides, the connotative meaning is that Laras's fluctuating reactions, ranging from annoyance, laughter, rebellion, to screaming in pain when Abuya recites Surah *Al-Falaq*, indicate that Laras's body contains a pagan jinn who dislikes the *ruqyah* ritual and tries to expel it from the human body. Meanwhile, the strains of music and faint seem to emphasize its position as an accompaniment, reinforcing the tense impression of the battle between the two forces in the *ruqyah* ritual.

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#### Scene of Abuya reciting surah *Al-Nās* verses 1-6

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01:27:58 – 01:32:10

Description:

Then, Abuya recited surah *Al-Nās* making Laras scream loudly. Then Abuya asked to get water and asked Tika to pray for and forgive her mother. Tika also recited a prayer for her parents, and after that, Abuya recited the *Hiżib Barqi* prayer while holding a bottle of water. Then, ending with the basmalah and takbir, Abuya pointed his hand in front of Laras, causing Laras to vomit blood and several centipedes from her mouth. Meanwhile, Yuli appeared to lose control of her body, injuring herself to death. Meanwhile, Laras appeared to be fully conscious, but died shortly after being guided to recite *istighfar*.

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The denotative meaning of the scene is that Abuya recites the *Al-Nās* surah, starting with the *taawudz* and *basmalah*, while circling Laras, who is lying slightly sideways on Tika's lap, and occasionally looking at her. Meanwhile, Laras, who hears the holy verses of the Qur'an, seems to be wailing, occasionally raising her hands. Her body is still being held and calmed by Tika and the others. When reciting all the fourth verses of Surah *An-Nās*, Abuya's voice sounds slightly higher, with the addition of tense background music throughout the scene. In addition, the connotative meaning is that reciting the fourth verses of the *Al-Nās* surah, which sound higher than the previous verses, seems to emphasize the intensity of the battle between the power of the Qur'anic verses and the power of magic in the *ruqyah* ritual. Moreover, as the verse is recited, the film shows a scene of Yuli losing control of her body, prompting her to injure herself.

Furthermore, the myth or ideology the film constructs in the above series of scenes is that goodness will always triumph over evil. In this case, the recitation of the verses of the Qur'an seems to reflect the spiritual power of Allah that can subdue the power of the pagan

supernatural beings that are nesting in the human body. Laras's reaction of rejection towards the verses of the Qur'an, such as screaming, and so on, seems to show the powerlessness of evil towards the power of God. Even in the series of scenes, Yuli is shown receiving her own black magic because of the rejection of black magic in the *ruqyah* ritual performed by Abuya. Then, according to Ahmad Rafiq's Reception theory, the reception or acceptance of the verses of the Qur'an by humans functionally includes four models: informative reception of the text, informative reception of practice, performative reception of the text, and performative reception of practice. (Rafiq, 2021) In this case, the use of verses from the Qur'an in the *ruqyah* ritual in the film is classified as a performative reception of practice, namely the verses from the Qur'an (surah *Āli Imrān* verses 26-27, *Al-Naml* verse 30, *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6, *Al-Ikhlās* verses 1-4, *Al-Falaq* verses 1-5, and *Al-Nās* verses 1-6) are used in *ruqyah* practices to produce healing effects and self-protection from evil forces.

## CONCLUSION

This study describes the use of verses from the Qur'an in the film *Kitab Sijjin & Illiyyin*, which are not limited to sacred texts presented in the film's narrative, but also as a system of signs or symbolic devices that construct religious meaning through the representation of Islamic concepts and the reception of certain practices in line with the content of the verses. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic reading, the religious narrative constructed in the film can be clearly understood through the scenes, dialogues, and setting (place, time, atmosphere, sound, and music) presented. For example, the representation of people seeking protection from Allah in Surah *An-Na>s* is depicted as receiving help from Him when facing disturbances from demons in the form of jinn or humans. In addition, the film also builds moral opposition through the representation of two different characters. The character who is depicted as religiously devout and fond of good deeds is considered to represent *al-abrār*, or a good or devout person, while the character who is depicted as pursuing black magic, even though it began under social pressure, is considered to represent *al-fujjār*, or a disobedient person. This representation shows that the film conveys a moral message emphasizing the urgency of religious values in facing various life problems, to avoid evil or misguidance. Furthermore, the exorcism scene in the film shows the recitation of verses from the Qur'an, such as Surah *Āli Imrān* verses 26-27, *Al-Naml* verse 30, *Al-Jinn* verses 1-6, *Al-Ikhlās* verses 1-4, *Al-Falaq* verses 1-5, and *Al-Nās* verses 1-6 in the form of performative practices to ward off evil forces and protect oneself from them. This reception proves that film is a popular medium that brings the Qur'an to life through cinematic narratives that visualize religious practices. However, this study is still limited to the analysis of a single film as the research object. Therefore, future researchers can expand the study by analyzing several horror films that explicitly feature verses from the Qur'an and by using different approaches to provide a broader understanding.

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