Sufi journey in Richlatu Ibn Fathumati by Najib Machfouzh Carl Thompson's Travel Literature Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand the experiences of Sufism adherents while on a spiritual journey exploring several countries in the novel Richlatu-Ibnu Fathumati by Najib Machfouzh using Carl Thompson's (2011) travel writing theory approach. This approach has the basic principles of reporting the world, revealing the self and representing the other. The study revealed that Qandil's journey is presented in three forms, namely (1) reporting the world in the form of stories about the environment in the form of buildings, communities and natural surroundings; (2) revealing the self in the form of Qandil's feelings, emotions and reactions during the journey; (3) representing the other in the reality of life at the places visited which turned out to be a different culture from the cultural reality he had encountered in his home country. This research is important when the traveller's background influences the three narrative forms of reporting the world, revealing the self and representing the other.

Keyword   Carl Thompson; Representing the other; Revealing the world; Travel writing

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم قصة رحلة روحية للطالب الصوفي في عدة بلدان عند رواية رحلة ابن فطومة لنجيب محفوظ. يستخدم هذا البحث نهج نظرية كتابة السفر لكارل طومسون باستخدام نظرية أدب السفر لكارل طومسون (٢٠١١) والتي لها مبادئ أساسية ؛ تصوير العالم و الإفصاح عن الذات وتمثيل الثقافات الأخرى. تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن رحلة قنديل تقدم في ثلاثة أشكال هي (١) تصوير العالم على شكل قصص عن ظروف البيئة المحيطة في شكل المباني والمجتمع والطبيعة المحيطة. (٢) الإفصاح عن الذات ؛ مشاعر قنديل وانفعالاتها وردود أفعالها خلال الرحلة. (٣) تمثيل الثقافات الأخرى ؛ واقع الحياة في المكان الذي توقف فيه قنديل أثناء الرحلة مختلف عن الواقع الثقافي الذي واجهه في وطنه. يصبح هذا البحث مهمًا عندما يتبين أن الخلفية الصوفية للمسافر تؤثر على تصوير العالم والكشف عن الذات والتمثيلات الثقافية الأخرى أثناء الرحلة.

كلمات أساسية   كلمة أساسية ١: الأدب السفر ٢: تصوير العالم ٣: كارل طومسون ٤ الإفصاح عن الذات

INTRODUCTION

Before humans could write, they travelled undocumented, communicating orally rather than in written form. Their journeys were made to meet their life needs, fulfil their curiosity about new things or defend themselves from threats. In line with the development of human knowledge and abilities, written stories that describe the journey add to what humans encountered in the world around them, what they felt during the journey and a comparison of life at the places they visited to what they had experienced in their home country. Travel stories written and retold in narratives are classified into several genres including autobiographies, memoirs and travel literature (Hooper, 2017).

Travel literature that contains religious values such as Sufism portrays the spiritual journey of a Sufi, both physical and spiritual journeys. Sufism teaches students to gain knowledge as a provision for their spiritual journey. Knowledge is sought in two forms, (1) groups who live in tasawuf institutions based in one location (Sorgenfrei & Stjernholm, 2019) and (2) groups of Sufis who leave their homes to travel long distances to study. Abu Sulaiman stated in the book al-Luma'a by Tousi, (1960, p. 240), that he will go to knowledge even though he has to walk as far as 1,000 farsakhs (1 farsakh is equivalent to 5,541 meters). The student's journey from one place to another must have the value of worship such as Hajj, meeting the Shaykh, connecting kinship with family, or seeking knowledge (Tousi, 1960). Sufis' journeys are not only limited to sites of worship as there is evidence showing they travelled to Europe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Kuehn, 2023). Sufi literature greatly contributes to knowledge of the lives of these spiritual travellers (Mahbub et al., 2022).

Richlatu Ibn Fatumati depicts the journey of a person named Qandil or Ibn Fatumah who is disappointed with his situation. His desire to improve his situation prompted him to leave his country to find a perfect place (Machfuzh, 1983). His journey began in a country called Darul Masyriq but he was expelled from the area because he had different political thoughts and views of the leaders in power at that time. Next, he travelled to Darul Hirah where he was imprisoned for twenty years because he was accused of slander. His journey continued to Darul Helbah, Darul Aman, and Darul Ghurub (Machfuzh, 1983).

The story of the journey in Sufism is presented beautifully by Machfuzh in this novel: a student of Sufism in addition to going on a physical journey embarked on a spiritual journey to leave the bad for the good. This spiritual journey of a Sufi student will provide a spiritual experience for each student which is subjective and can differ from one student to another (Lala, 2023). In the story, Machfuzh writes many narratives in the form of revealing the self, reporting the world and representing the other with several shapes. The Sufis were expelled by the rulers and residents of various countries because they differed in principle

from the local authorities. The rulers did not allow the development of different ideologies, aiming to prevent the birth of other potential powers and influences outside of their own (Nath, 2023). The principle of a student of Sufism does not want to be influenced by the ruler's rules, goodness for a Sufism practitioner is absolute goodness as well as evil. According to Sufi principles, bad leadership occurs when the ruler governs as a dictator or with an iron fist. The difference of opinion between a Sufi who seeks the truth and the ruler causes the Sufi to be expelled from Darul Hirah. The strength of the Sufi principle is due to his awareness that his journey towards his goal is not an academic journey that expects someone's judgment but a spiritual journey. Determination of one's worth is not by one's judgment but by spiritual maturation and one way of measuring one's spiritual maturity is the noble ethics of a Sufi (Thohri & Hadisaputra, 2022). Sufism groups that raise moral nobility as the main emphasis in their learning are known as akhlaqi tasawuf which has a central figure al-Ghazali (Purwanto et al., 2023).

The literature was reviewed to determine the position of this study within existing research. The study revealed that the journey of a Sufi student is bound by ethical values that determine their attitudes, emotions and feelings when exploring a new world. The spiritual journey undertaken by the Sufis will add a different spiritual experience for everyone who takes the journey (Mirjalili, 2021). Several great Sufi figures such as Al-Qushairi, al-Tousi, al-Ghazali, and Rabia understand that a Sufi is someone who takes a spiritual journey with the ultimate goal of love for Allah (Ni'am, 2020). The presence of Rabia as a central figure of Sufi women in tasawuf is proof that women can and have the same rights as men in embarking on a spiritual journey of the world of tasawuf (Hassan, 2023). Women can also occupy positions, not only as students who study Sufism, but as supervising teachers who teach Sufism (Smith et al., 2023).

The journey of Sufi figures to various regions spread their teachings widely in Arabia and the Middle East at the beginning of the seventh century AD or the second century Hijri. Consequently, this teaching was popular among Muslims in various parts of the world in the 20th century AD (Ridgeon, 2014). The Sufis' journeys are widely regarded as a journey of life which is read from revealing the self as a peaceful and calm journey without any problems or challenges. However, the biggest challenge in their journey was to achieve their life goals, love and the love of Allah. Sirriyeh (2014) found that in the last few decades, Sufism, which is identical to the principle of leaving the world to pursue a spiritual journey, has become less interested than modernist Islamic groups whose teachings are seen as more attuned to Western modernity as a result of globalisation.

The Sufis' background with the expression of simplicity of appearance, attitude and movement has a role in the reaction of students or revealing the self of a Sufi who travels. Sufis' emotions and feelings are based on Sufism knowledge which is widely known as the teachings of inner science, so named because it relates to the actions of invisible limbs, namely the human heart (Manshur, 1998). Sufis have faith in the truth that comes from inspiration. Inspiration is a guide or guidance in the form of dreams that come to pious people, dreams to pious Sufis for Sufis are a guiding light from Allah (Mittermaier, 2012). These dreams also determine the expression of the Sufi when they discover a new world on their journey. Mystical matters and beliefs in the occult have made the Sufis dominant by discussing magic and superstitions and being far from social or political movements (Weismann, 2011). Their cultural awareness and knowledge of Sufism will result in other (cultural) comparisons when encounters with various cultures occur on the way.

Sufism invites people to curb negative behaviour so that they can focus on one point, namely God. The noble characters and ethics that appear in the travel literature narrative in the form of revealing the self, are the main capital to introduce the beauty of Islamic teachings to those outside Islam (Heck, 2006). Sufi ethics in general have universal values in the form of similar values and characters in the teachings of other religious ethics and do not conflict with other cultures encountered during the journey of a Sufi (Canon, 2020). The Sufis' values, character and ethics can be seen in revealing the self of the Sufis while travelling. Their journey is essentially in the form of devotion to God so that they can better understand what is called the dignity of seven. They must first go through the phases of sharia, tarekat, essence and makrifat to understand the dignity of the seven (Sangidu, 2002).

This study aims to compare several studies of travel literature in Arabic literature, which so far have tended to study the teaching concepts adopted by the Sufis without considering their life process. Specifically, the Sufi's journey of life. In line with that, three questions were formulated: (a) How is the world reported in Richlatu Ibnu Fathumati's novel, (b) What is revealed in the form of the main character's expressions of emotions and feelings, and (c) Are there any representations of the other that the main character finds on his journey.

METHOD

The data was analysed according to the concept of Miles and Huberman (1994) regarding qualitative data analysis. The first step is data reduction which includes sorting out data sources and reading material objects and other text. The second step presents the data which includes an inventory of research-

supporting data, classification of data that has been found under the research formulation, making relationships between phenomena and analysis of the available data using the theory. The third step is verification of data or concluding which includes confirming the meaning of the results of data analysis, drawing conclusions and describing a problem that was previously unclear and becomes clearer after the research.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Reporting the World

Writing travel literature related to reporting the world aims to convey news or information from the wider world and spread information about unknown places. The concern in this process is the change from a travel experience to a travel text which reduces the accuracy and objectivity of the depiction. This depiction in Thompson's (2011) concept is a fiction of factual representation.

In Richlatu Ibn Fathumati, the journey description is presented in the third person, with the main character Qandil travelling from his home country Dar Islam to Dar Masyriq and subsequently, several other countries. The author, Najib Machfuzh, wrote this as a fictional novel as he was not on the journey.

Qandil's reporting of the world begins in Darul Masyriq, where he observed a gap in the form of dwellings occupied by ordinary people and those occupied by kings. He described how ordinary people's housing was shabby tent huts standing in a mess in the middle of a thick, unkempt grass meadow, whereas the dwellings occupied by the kings and their relatives were magnificent palaces situated in large gardens with shady trees and various flowers and surrounded by a high fence. There were horsemen with full weapons on guard at every gate and corner of the fence (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 22-28).

Qandil travels to a country called Dar al-Chirah which is described as a dense settlement with narrow streets containing various community facilities such as health clinics, stalls, and markets with conditions that are far from feasible. Not far from a densely populated area, Qandil also found large palaces inhabited by the king and his relatives (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 52).

Unlike the settlement conditions described in the two previous Qandil stopover locations, at the third stopover, Dar Chelbah, Qandil found a comfortable place. Qandil recounted from inside the luxury hotel where he was staying that there was a very well-groomed settlement around the hotel. The hotel was surrounded by high-rise apartments with a very wide and straight street, with a large river on the other side of the road and a large stout bridge connecting the two major roads on both sides (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 70-71).

Several times, the novel describes the world around as having a state of high social inequality between the rulers and the little people. Subsequently, the condition of the surrounding world is described as being filled with regular rows of high-rise luxury apartments, all of the same shape and size. Between the luxurious apartments is a huge street that is empty and deserted during working hours, with no unemployed people sitting on the side of the road. All residents, both male and female, are busy working. The city has no very poor or very rich people, there is equality in the economic class (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 101-102).

These descriptions provide an objective depiction of the world, there is no element of subjectivity usually present in the form of comments or disagreements on the new world described in the novel.

Revealing the Self

Travel literature is practically understood as a physical experience and participation in the journey produces awareness, reception and responses or reactions to various experiences (Forsdick, 2015). Body expression on a journey is described in the novel in the form of Qandil's journey from one country to another, not merely a physical journey to discover new things. His journey is also a spiritual journey that provides a spiritual experience for Qandil. This novel displays many expressions of Qandil's feelings, thoughts, emotions and reactions on the journey which shows the narrator's participation in commenting on the conditions, situations and conditions of the world encountered on the way. In Thompson's view (2011), self-disclosure at the extreme point will display more self-disclosure narratives of travellers, reporting the world only becomes a foothold for the self-disclosure of someone who travels.

Machfuzh's subjectivity can be found in Qandil's attitude during the trip to express his feelings, being sad or happy he realises he can increase the maturity of his soul and spiritual experience (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 48). Revealing the self looks at the values, the reasons a traveller survives overcoming sadness on their journey. First, the determination to follow Allah's shari'a, this principle keeps the heart happy after realising that the sadness he experiences is a worldly thing (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 56). Second, the journey is not forever: Qandil realised that his journey was only temporary, so the sadness he experienced during the trip was also temporary. Qandil travelled to seek knowledge and wisdom to improve his home country upon his return (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 119).

Qandil then revealed his inner turmoil, several times as a Sufi disciple who went on a spiritual journey he faced things that could damage his faith. Qandil revealed that he could not resist the temptations around him, finally lapsing into committing sins that he should not have fulfilled his lust for. First, he drank an intoxicating drink as he felt affected by his environment, intoxicating drinks were

consumed everywhere he visited (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 44). Second, Qandil saw women's genitalia in Helbah (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 25), where all the women were not wearing any clothes. Nudity in public places was something he had never experienced in his native country (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 33-36). After Qandil sees a naked woman, Arosa, he is attracted to her beauty and feels that he really loves her and is eager to marry her. Qandil was afraid to leave Arosa (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 45) but if he was to continue his journey, he could not take her as taking indigenous women from Dar Chelbah was an act that violated customary rules. Qandil's decision to continue his journey and leave Dar Chelbah caused his marriage to Arosa to fail. He felt lonely without a wife on his travels and he continued to have feelings of love and affection for the woman he left behind. In Dar Chelbah, Qandil expressed his love and interest in Shaykh Subki's daughter Samiyah and remarried to fulfil his desire for the opposite sex (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 87-88).

Qandil when revealing his self demonstrates his inner turmoil which is filled with doubts after drinking many worldly pleasures. The love for women, the love for the children from his marriage to Samiya, and the wealth he has earned from work have weakened Qandil's will to travel. Qandil realised that he had turned away from his original intention and was no longer focused on achieving his one goal (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 43-44). The peace of mind, and the comfort of life that he felt in Daar Chelbah made him not want to return to his country Dar Islam (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 89).

Qandil's motivation to fulfil all his passions and desires ended as he revealed that he was at the point of realising that he had sacrificed many things: the family he left behind, especially his mother whom he loved very much, time and energy wasted (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 65). His longing for his family at home suddenly focused his mind to return immediately to make the family he left behind in his country happy, while his heart asked him to continue his journey (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 48).

Qandil's restless mental state continued to interfere with his intention to complete the journey. His hesitation between returning or continuing the journey became a negative emotion that weakened his resolve. He realised and understood that there is no pleasure in the dark world except that which is based on lust and is deceptive (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 65). Qandil's inner restlessness was finally able to turn into serenity as he entered Daar Chelbah, where again he could hear the call to prayer unline the other countries he had visited (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 74). Immediately, Qandil seemed to come back to life, with his passion and desire to travel returning. He was determined to repent for the mistakes he had made and decided to leave the world's pleasures that captivated his heart.

Revealing the self as narrated by Machfuzh the writer in the form of Qandil's emotions and reactions becomes a form of travel writing that displays Qandil's efforts as a Sufi disciple in his search for his true self.

Representing the Other

Thompson (2011) regards the term 'other' in the concept of travel literature as a way to identify differences between one culture and another. Machfuzh included comparisons between Qandil's cultural background and the different cultures that he encountered in the various countries he visited.

Context related to leadership, Machfuzh presents several leadership styles in various countries. *First*: in Dar Masyriq the leadership is run in a dictatorial style and the king's decisions and wishes cannot be challenged, changed or cancelled by anyone The people are the slaves of a leader in Dar Masyriq (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 28). *Second*: Machfuzh wrote that the form of leadership in Dar Chirah was a kingdom with the highest power fully held by a king who is positioned as a god. If there are people who try to oppose or disagree with the king's decision, they will be sentenced to death (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 50-53). *Third*; Dar Aman had a form of leadership that puts forward equality between the leader of the country and its people. Qandil found a king who became the people's friend with no barriers and inequality between the leader of the country and his people even though he was only a sweeper. The leader will not be replaced for life as long as national security is guaranteed, agricultural products are abundant, production is advanced, and science and art are growing rapidly (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 106). *Fourth*; in Dar Islam, the country of origin of Qandil, the leadership is dominated by religious leaders who use religious teachings as a tool to meet their needs (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 93). A person who is seen as a guardian of Allah must be obeyed and obeyed like human obedience to God, absolute obedience with full trust without doubt (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 50).

Qandil also encountered a comparison between the culture in his country and the countries he visited in addressing the role of religion. *First*; in Dar al-Masyriq, where people's lives are completely free and without rules, everyone finds it easy to fulfil their desires without any religious restrictions (Machfuzh, 1983: 42). As for the people who embrace a religion, it does not ask its adherents for anything that is burdensome or that they cannot do (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 39). People who practice religious teachings make the moon their God, when at night they see the moon, especially when the moon is perfectly round then they come out of the house and gather in the field to perform rituals of worshipping the moon (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 29). In that country, most people are lovers of the world who do not practice worship (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 30). The life of the people of Dar al-Masyriq without any rules is the best life they can choose. *Second*; in

Dar Aman, the people worship the earth (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 107). The Dar Aman community believes that it is the earth that stores and provides all human life including water, plants, and vegetables, and humans who have died will be given to the earth. When religion is a form of respect and worship for the earth, then all people in the country get the maximum yield of the earth. They can fulfil their daily needs in the form of food, shelter, clothing, education, and health. *Third*; in Dar Chelba, the people live in a state of peace and many believe in Islam. Religious leaders live in sufficiency, the state provides all life necessities for religious leaders in the form of living expenses, vehicles and good apartments (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 79). The Muslim community teaches Islam according to the social conditions of the people in that place (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 75). Islam in Dar Chelba opens wide opportunities for ijtihad. Religious leaders or mufti guide Islamic ways that do not burden the Chelba community, teaching that Islam must be flexible and not reject modernity (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 79). For the Chelba community, Islamic teachings are applied in daily life with reasonable considerations that do not burden its adherents (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 90). The phenomenon of Islamic culture that Qandil encountered in this country was different from his home country. *Fourth*, in Daar Islam, many people lived in poor conditions due to the low level of education. In various places, it is easy to find people who are poor or sick (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 108). The Muslim community must be bound by one particular school (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 79) and a practising Muslim is limited to his chosen school. The phenomenon often found is the limitation of Islam which can only be found in its teachings in mosques. Muslims do not do much work and achievement outside the mosque (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 95-99), regarding the mosque as a place to only think about rituals and worship. The existing Muslims are very far from the spirit of Islam. The condition of Islam is very worrying because its religious adherents are filled with superstition and crimes (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 106-108).

Machfuzh again shows the differences in the social status of women between the countries visited by Qandil. *First*; in Dar al-Masyriq, a woman is in the full power of a father and can be hired by anyone with an agreement and payment between the tenant and the woman's father (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 42). In this country, no woman is married to a man. After the contract and agreement are completed, the man may leave the woman (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 36-37). The culture of changing partners is easy making it unclear who the biological father of the child is and the lineage is finally passed on to the mother (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 45). *Second*; in Dar al-Chirah, women are regarded as equal to men with no difference whatsoever between them. Women are no longer a commodity and can be found doing various activities that are also carried out by men, such as working, having a career in government and even holding roadside protests

(Machfuzh, 1983, p. 50-60). *Third*; in Dar al-Chelbah, women have the same right to associate with the opposite sex. Qandil met his teacher Shaykh's wife who ate at the same table with him, the Shaykh and other male relatives (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 79). In this country, women also have rights and opportunities to cooperate with men's rights in general (Machfuzh, 1983, p. 89).

After looking at the results of the analysis of travel literature theory in Machfuzh's works, it was found that Machfuzh wrote in detail in his novel how a main character named Qandil, who goes on a spiritual journey, moves through space as a form of Machfuzh's Reporting the World around the main character. Through expressing the feelings and emotions felt by the main character, Machfuzh also reveals the self of the main character, and Mahfuzh also shows the other side of the story in his novel.

CONCLUSIONS

Machfuzh responds to the phenomenon of the spiritual journey of the Sufis with various criticisms and thoughts in the socio-religious field. His ideas and thoughts are narrated in travel literature within three main elements: reporting the world, revealing the self and representing the other. Reporting the world records phenomena that show the occurrence of many imbalances in the economic conditions of the people who are visited by Sufis on their spiritual journeys. Inequality in the economic conditions of the community is illustrated by the condition of the poor settlements which are slums, dirty, narrowly filled with inhabitants and unfit for habitation. This condition is inversely proportional to the state of the royal family's residence which is magnificent, luxurious, surrounded by a large garden with various flowers. The kingdom is indifferent and has no concern for its people's suffering. There are only a few decent housing conditions with most people living in inadequate settlements. Revealing the self can be found in notes that display various feelings and inner states experienced by Qandil, the main character on his spiritual journey. Qandil wants his goal to be achieved but desires to be in love and be loved by the women he meets and his children. His mind is not always calm, peaceful and firm as most people think of the Sufis. Doubt, doubt, regret, disappointment, sadness, joy and happiness mingled in Qandil's mind during his spiritual journey. Representing the other is told in the rich culture in the countries Qandil visited which turned out to be very different from that in his native country. The culture and character of the countries he visited seemed to tell Qandil that his country has an advanced cultural and national order that makes all its inhabitants happy.

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