

Symbolism of Rain in the Qur'an: Semiotic Analysis Based on Charles S. Peirce's theory

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Charles S. Peirce; Semiotic; Rain; Al-Qur'an	This study analyzes the symbolism of rain in the Qur'an using the semiotic approach developed by Charles S. Peirce. In the Qur'an, rain is often used as an analogy for various spiritual and moral concepts such as mercy, sustenance, and signs of Allah's power. Peirce's semiotic theory, which involves the triadic concepts—representamen (the sign itself), object (what the sign refers to), and interpretant (the meaning produced in the observer's mind)—is utilized to explore the meaning behind the symbol of rain in Qur'anic texts. This research identifies and interprets various verses mentioning rain to uncover hidden meanings and the contribution of the rain symbol to the overall message of the Qur'an. By focusing on three verses: QS. Al-Furqan: 48-49 (rain as mercy), QS. Asy-Syu'aro: 173 (rain as disaster), and QS. An-Nur: 43 (rain as a natural phenomenon), this study reveals how the Qur'an uses natural symbols to convey spiritual and ethical messages. The results of this analysis are expected to enrich the interpretation of symbolism in sacred literature and demonstrate the relevance of Peirce's semiotic theory in the study of religious texts.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Charles S. Peirce's theory of semiotics has become a widely used approach in various cross-disciplinary scientific studies. Especially in the fields of art, popular culture, and visual media, this theory has been proven to be able to uncover the hidden meanings contained in the symbols that appear. Peirce's semiotic approach, which is famous for its triadic model of representation, object, and interpretation, allows for a deeper reading of each sign that appears in an object of study. With this analytical tool, researchers can explore a broader dimension of meaning, not limited to what appears on the surface.

A number of studies have used Charles S. Peirce's theory to analyze objects of art and popular culture. For example, an article entitled *Analysis of Semiotic Studies in Chairil Anwar's Poetry Using Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory*. (Rahayu, 2021) shows how symbols in poetry can contain deep values and meanings through semiotic reading. Likewise in film, the article *Representation of Moral Messages in the Film of the Copycat of Light: An Analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics*. (Kartini et al., 2022) managed

to uncover the hidden messages behind the visual and narrative symbols in the film, which are not always explicitly visible.

The study of semiotics also penetrated into the world of fine arts. *An article on the semiotic analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce's work by Rajudin's statue entitled Menyeso's Self*. (Patriansyah, 2014) describes how sculpture as an art medium can contain a deep symbolic representation of regret and self-reflection. In fact, simple visual objects such as traffic signs have become the object of semiotic study. This can be seen in *Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis article on Dead End Traffic Sign Symbols* (Aryani & Yuwita, 2023), which interprets the symbolic meaning of the shape and color of signs as a form of non-verbal communication in public spaces.

In addition, the article *Socio-Cultural Value in Film Viewing (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Study)* (Puspitasari, 2021) presents a symbolic reading of the social phenomena represented in short films, which are often associated with stereotypes, local culture, and social dynamics of society. In fact, Peirce's semiotic study is also used in the analysis of logos and advertisements, as seen in *Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis on the Meaning of the Sukabumi Regency Tourism Logo* (Malik et al., 2021) which explores symbolic meaning in the design of regional tourism logos, as well as in the article *Representation of Muslim Women's Clothing in Advertising (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis on Wardah Cosmetic Advertisements in the Tabloid)* (Dewi, 2013) which engulfs religious symbols and identities in the context of product promotion.

However, although Peirce's semiotic studies have been widely applied in various fields, their application in Islamic studies, especially in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, is still very minimal. In fact, the Qur'an as a sacred text has a complex and multi-layered symbolic structure. Each word and verse contains a rich potential for meaning, both literally, metamorphosically, and spiritually. Therefore, it is unfortunate that there have not been many, or even yet, studies that specifically apply Peirce's theory of semiotics to examine symbolism in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is said to be the main holy book in Islam, full of complex and profound symbolism. One of the natural elements that is often mentioned in the Qur'an is rain. Rain is not only considered a natural phenomenon that is essential for life, but also as a symbol that is rich in spiritual and moral meaning. In many verses, rain is used as an analogy to illustrate various concepts such as Grace, sustenance, and the sign of Allah's power. To understand the symbolic dimension of rain in the Qur'an, an approach is needed that can explore the meaning behind the text and symbols.

The semiotic theory developed by Charles Sanders Peirce offers an appropriate analytical tool for exploring symbolism in religious texts. Peirce introduced the triadic concept in the analysis of signs consisting of representations (meanings generated in the mind of the observer). Through this model, each sign has the potential to convey various layers of meaning that can be interpreted differently by each individual or community of readers. This approach is particularly relevant for analyzing symbolism in the Qur'an because it allows for a more open reading of the symbolic meanings contained in the sacred text.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the symbolism of rain in the Qur'an through Peirce's semiotic lens. By identifying and interpreting various verses that mention rain, such as QS. Al-Furqa: 48 – 49, Qs. Ash-Shu'ara: 173, and QS. An-Nur: 43, this study seeks to uncover the hidden meanings behind the symbols and how these meanings contribute to the overall message of the Qur'an. This study will also highlight how rain symbols are used in texts to convey profound theological and moral messages, while demonstrating the relevance of semiotic approaches in the study of religious texts.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach that focuses on Charles S. Peirce's semiotics to examine the symbolism of rain in the Qur'an. Peirce's theory of semiotics known as the triadic model—representations (signs), objects (references), and interpretants (meanings)—is used as a framework for interpreting the symbolic meaning of rain in three main verses; QS. Al-Furqan: 48-49, QS. Ash-Shu'ara: 173, and QS. An-Nur: 43. The selection of the three verses is

based on the diversity of contexts of the meaning of rain in the Qur'an, both as grace, punishment, and natural phenomena. The main data in this study is the text of the Qur'an, while the secondary data is obtained from the book of tafsir Al-Muyassar as well as academic literature relevant to the study of semiotics and the study of the Qur'an.

Data collection is carried out through literature studies by identifying verses that make rain symbols and examining the interpretation of mufasssir related to these verses. Furthermore, the analysis is carried out by applying Peirce's semiotic theory, starting from identifying the representation (symbol of rain), determining the object referred to (such as mercy or punishment), and then elaborating on the interpretation that arises from the interaction of the two in the spiritual and ethical context of the Qur'an. To maintain the validity of the data, the interpretation of these symbols is taken from the interpretation in the book of tafsir Al-Muyassar. Thus, this study not only highlights the symbolic richness in the Qur'an, but also demonstrates the relevance of the semiotic approach in interpreting transcendental messages in sacred texts.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Charles Sanders Peirce was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States on September 10, 1839 AD, and died on April 19, 1914 AD, at the age of 75. He is the second child of Menjamin Pierce and Sarah Pierce. His father was a professor of mathematics and astronomy at Harvard University (Primary, 2023). Charles Sanders Peirce was a genius and an expert in several fields of science such as logic, philosophy, history, linguistics, geodesy, gravimetry, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and cosmology. He is also the founder of semiotics, pragmatism, and new creations in logic as well as methods of inquiry that can be used as scientific and educational problems (Firmansyah, 2022).

His formal academic career began after graduating from Harvard in the United States as the oldest and best university in the world today, he graduated in 1859 A.D. Ranked 71st out of 90 students in his group. Then in 1862 he received an MA degree from Harvard as an early achievement outside of formal education, in 1868 he received an Sc.B with honors (Summa Laude) in chemistry, this predicate was the first student to be achieved in physical sciences, in 1861 he was appointed to a full-time worker position with the prestigious United States Coast Survey, even if it is not an academic department at the University. Charles S. Peirce was highly respected in Europe and Britain, he was also the first American delegate to attend the Paris international geodetic conference where he was a speaker making a significant contribution to the gravitational constant in 1875 A.D. 12 He was also a member of the Harvard Observatory. In 1869 and 1870 he lectured at Harvard University in philosophy and from 1870 to 1871 he was a lecturer in logic. In 1879 he was appointed as a part-time lecturer in logic at Johns Hopkins University but was dismissed in 1884 AD (Firmansyah, 2022).

Charles as a scholar in his field of science was very productive with his works, but not all logical theories could be publicized due to the lack of support from the famous universities of the time. Before entering Harvard at the age of 16, he had been doing a 10-year internship in the chemistry lab and reading Whitely's logic. His concentration is at Harvard in philosophy and physics. He wrote from 1857 until his death for about 57 years. Published works reach 12,000 pages and unpublished manuscripts 80,000 pages. Topics in her work cover a wide range of fields including physics, mathematics, social, economics, and others.¹⁴ Charles S. Peirce married Marriet Melunisa Inadequasies in 1862, and in 1862 she was the first feminist in America to shed the spirit of renewal by inviting her husband into the fellowship of the Episcopal church. Charles became a member of the Episcopal Church and acknowledged the existence of the trinity (Firmansyah, 2022). The first time it was developed was to develop three systems of categories of Kant's work to fit the trinity.

Theory Semiotics Charles Sanders Peirce

Etymologically, the term semiotic is derived from the Greek word "semeion" which means "sign". The sign is understood as something that, based on a social agreement formed before, can represent

something else. In a terminological sense, semiotics refers to a field of science that studies various objects, events, and cultural elements as signs. In other words, semiotics is the science that studies signs, including the systems, rules, and conventions that allow a sign to have a meaning (Musyarofah, n.d.).

According to Peirce's thought, semiotics is not only related to language and culture, but also includes the basic nature of various natural events or known as pansemiotics. Signs serve as representations that help humans understand the reality of life. In this context, signs have two main characteristics: as a form that represents something, and as a means of interpretation, where the meaning that arises depends on who uses or interprets it (Siddik Firmansyah, 2022).

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, semiotics is a discipline that studies signs, which is something that represents other things, both in form, quantity, and the meaning they contain. Peirce called a sign in its physical form a representation, which is a tangible form that represents something. The meaning or understanding that arises from the representation is called the interpretant, while the object is the thing that is the reference of the sign. These three elements: representation, object and interpretant, are interrelated and form a structure known as a sign triangle or triadic model. In Peirce's view, signs not only function as representations, but also as a medium of communication that can act as a signal or symbol that is easily captured and understood by the recipient (Hidayat, 2020).

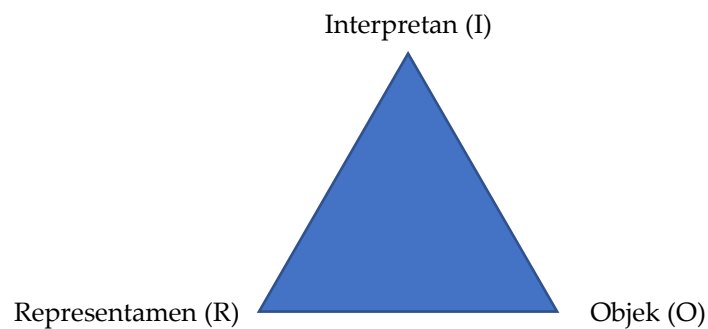
Pierce classifies signs into three main categories, namely icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a sign that bears a visual or shapely resemblance to the object it represents. The index indicates a direct or causal relationship between the sign and its meaning. Meanwhile, symbols are signs whose meaning is determined based on social agreements or conventions. These three categories are designed to make it easier to convey messages, starting from the process of understanding (decoding), acceptance by the audience, to the influence given by the sender of the message. This approach reflects the strong influence of pragmatist philosophy in Peirce's semiotic thought, which emphasizes the ease of interpreting different types of signs (Hidayat, 2020).

Charles Sanders Peirce explained that signs must have a function in order to be interpreted, and the basic elements that make this possible are called ground. Based on his understanding, signs are always formed in three elements, namely *ground*, object and interpretant. According to this triadic framework, Peirce devised a classification of signs relating to *the type of ground*. He divides them into three types: **qualisign**, which is an intrinsic quality in a sign, such as smooth, loud, or coarse; **Sinsign**, which is a sign that arises from a concrete event, such as the word "turbidity" in the phrase "cloudy water"; and **Legisign**, which is a sign based on certain rules or conventions, such as traffic signs that regulate human behavior through socially agreed symbols (Permana, 2022).

The theory of semiotics developed by Charles Sanders Peirce introduced the concept of trichotomy which consists of three main elements: Representation, Object, and Interpretation. In Peirce's view, the science of the sign is semiosis, which is a process of meaning that takes place through three stages. He emphasized that signs are not just static structures, but part of dynamic processes (Chanel, 2016). The first stage begins with representation, which is the concrete form or outward appearance of a sign that indicates the existence of the sign. The second stage is the object, which is what the representation refers to, or the meaning that it refers to in the cognitive realm. The process of relationship between representation and object is called semiosis- that is, the process of meaning that continues (Permana, 2022).

The third stage is interpretation, which is the advanced meaning formed as a result of the relationship between the representation and the object. This interpretation gives rise to a new meaning, so that the sign continues to develop. Peirce explained that this process of meaning does not really stop, but continues in a cycle called *unlimited semiosis* or the process of infinite semiosis. In its frame of mind, each sign has two main principles: representative nature and interpretive nature. Representational properties mean that signs serve to represent something else, while interpretive properties indicate that each sign can be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the perspective and understanding of the recipient or user of the sign (Permana, 2022).

Peirce's triadic model (Representamen (R) + Object (O) + Interpretant (I) = Sign) shows the large role of the subject in the process of language transformation (Chanel, 2016). Here's a picture of a triadic relationship of the Peirce sign:



Discussion

Rain in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is an extraordinary holy book, with a wide variety of verses. Some verses specifically discuss the subjects of aqidah, such as the issue of faith and belief. In addition, there are also verses that review the laws of fiqh (ahkam), the stories of the previous ummah, and not a few verses that allude to the phenomenon of the universe, known as *the kauniyah verse* (Rusydi, 2018).

In the Qur'an, there are many mentions of natural phenomena, including changes in day and night, sky, earth, rivers, sun, and rain. The use of the word 'rain' or various vocabulary words in the Qur'an that have the meaning of rain shows a high frequency of repetition. There are 71 data on the meaning of rain in the Qur'an, which are found in 66 verses and use 19 different vocabulary. Each of these data is examined from the perspective of lexical, grammatical, and meaning components. The results showed a shift in meaning in these data, with six data experiencing an expansion of meaning, 45 data experiencing a narrowing of meaning, and ten data experiencing a complete change in meaning. Meanwhile, refinement or roughening of meaning was not found in the research data. Furthermore, this study identified the dominance of the use of figurative language (majas) with 47 data compared to the use of actual meaning (essence) which amounted to 24 data (Khalwani et al., 2017).

The Qur'an states that water is a divine gift that is managed in various forms of natural resources. After the rainfall, the distribution of water occurs in three main mechanisms: first, some evaporates back into the atmosphere due to warming; second, flowing on the surface forms river flows or stagnates in lakes, ponds, rice paddies, and ground basins; third, it seeps into the soil as infiltration water, which although not visible on the surface, is still available and can be utilized through underground flows and seepage to the surface (Afifah, 2022).

In the Qur'an, there are many verses that describe the phenomenon of rain with various types and functions. These verses not only explain the process of rainfall, but also relate it to the power of Allah, the signs of His greatness, and the benefits and wisdom contained in it. Rain is said to be the grace of Allah that grows plants and provides sustenance for humans and animals, as explained in Surah Al-A'raf verse 57, where Allah says that He sends down water from the sky to grow plants and fruits. In addition, in Surah Ar-Furqan verse 40, rain is a symbol of trial or even punishment. In Surah An-Nur verse 43, Allah speaks about how rain comes out of the cracks of the clouds, including the grains of ice that are inflicted on whom He wills and eliminated from whom He wills. Another meaning of rain is in Surah Ar-Rum verse 48 which gives a sign that rain that falls on the earth as a way to revive or resurrect the dead (in this context it is plants and barren soil).

If you have ever known Arabic, you must be familiar with the word *مطر* which means "rain". Many Muslims also pray for rain to be sent using the word *مطر*. In fact, when referring to the Qur'an, the word *مطر* is never used for the meaning of rain at all. However, this word is always used to mean "adzaab" from the sky. As in QS. Al-A'raf:84, Al-Hijr:74 and Al-Furqan:40. These verses tell about adzaab. When

mentioning rain that brings blessings and nourishes the soil, Allah uses two words, namely: (الماء) Water and (الغيث) Rain. As in QS. Al-A'raf: 57, Al-Hajj: 5, Luqman: 34, Ash-Shura: 28 (Heryani, 2019).

Many letters discuss rain in the Qur'an, however, in this study, the author limits the study to three letters that contain discussions about rain, namely QS. Al-Furqan: 48-49, QS. Ash-Shuara: 173, and QS. An-Nur: 43. This is because the author wants to take samples from each category: rain as grace, rain as a disaster, and rain as a natural phenomenon and rain as a symbol of the resurrection of life.

Analysis Using Charles S. Peirce's Semiotic Theory

Charles Sanders Peirce was a philosopher known for his semiotic theory that focused on the three main components of signs: representation, object, and interpretation. To analyze the meaning of rain in the Qur'an using Peirce's semiotic theory, we can do it with the following steps:

1. Identification of Representations (Marks)

Representation is the form taken by the sign itself, or what we see and recognize as a sign. In this case, the representation is "rain".

2. Object Identification

An object is what the sign signifies. The object of the sign "rain" in the Qur'an can include several contextual meanings, such as water falling from the sky, natural phenomena, or meteorological events.

3. Interpreter Identification

An interpreter is the understanding or meaning produced by the sign in the mind of the person interpreting it. In the Qur'an, the interpretation of rain can vary, depending on the context of the verse and the interpretation of the scholars. In this study, three meanings of "Rain" were found which were referred to from the Quraish Shihab commentary. The three meanings are; rain as grace, rain as a test/calamity and rain as a natural phenomenon.

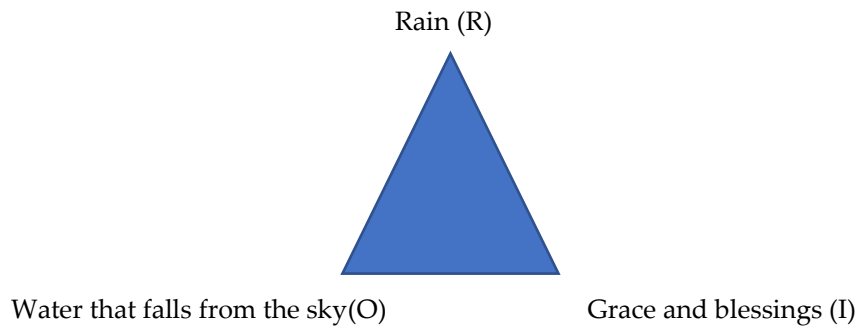
The following is Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis of the three verses of the Qur'an: Al-Furqan: 48-49, Ash-Shu'ara: 173, and An-Nur: 43.

1. QS. Al-Furqan: 48-49 It is Allah who sent the wind as a means of transporting the clouds, which then becomes a sign of the rain as a form of His Mercy to mankind. From heaven, He sent down water that had a purifying function, both physically and spiritually. Through this water, God grows vegetation in areas that were previously arid and devoid of plant life, so that the dead soil comes back to life. The water is also used as a source of life for many of His creatures, including livestock and humans in large numbers (Al-Qorni, 2012). If we refer to the Tafsir Muyasaar as it has been explained, then we can interpret rain as Grace. (Later given a footnote of muyassar's tafsir).

In the perspective of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, the rain mentioned in Al-Furqan verses 48-49 can be analyzed through three main elements: representation, object and interpretant. First, as a representation or sign, rain functions as a physical phenomenon that can be seen, felt, and experienced directly by humans. In the context of this verse, Allah sends down holy water from the sky and sends the wind to bring in rain clouds, so that rain becomes a tangible indicator of a deeper meaning.

Secondly, the object of this sign is the Mercy of Allah. In the tafsir al-Muyassar, rain is explicitly interpreted as a form of divine love, a grace that revives the dead land, grows plants, and becomes a source of life for humans and animals. Thus, the object referred to by the sign of "rain" is a gift from God that is both physical and spiritual.

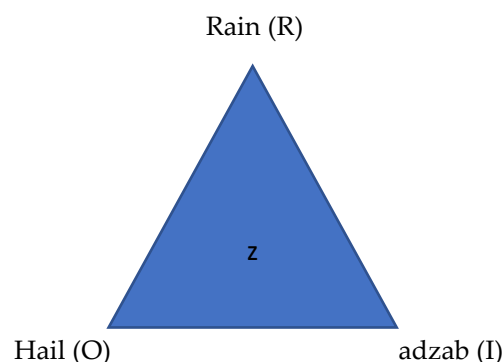
Third, as an interpretation or interpretation, rain is not just understood as a natural phenomenon, but as a manifestation of God's love, care, and power over life on earth. For believers, rain has a deep spiritual meaning, which is a symbol of divinity that shows God's care and mercy for His creatures.



2. QS. Asy-Syu'ara: 173

This verse describes clearly and in detail the form of punishment inflicted on the people of the Prophet Luth 'alaihis salam. In the explanation of Tafsir al-Muyassar, it is stated that Allah not only destroyed the disbelievers in general, but also paid special attention to the most disobedient and disobedient, such as the people of the Prophet Luth. Allah sent down to them stones from the sky that fell like rain. The hail is not just an ordinary natural phenomenon, but a form of punishment that is directed and destructive. In this context, the word "مطر" (rain) no longer means Mercy, as is common in the Qur'an, but instead means punishment that reflects the face of Allah towards their disobedience (Al-Qorni, 2012).

If we analyze with Peirce's theory of semiotics, the word "مطر" (rain) serves as a representation or sign, which in the general context of the Qur'an means Mercy, but in the verse about the people of the Prophet Luth it turns into a symbol of punishment. The object of this sign is the reality of punishment in the form of hail inflicted as punishment for their disobedience. Meanwhile, the interpretation or meaning captured shows that the meaning of a sign can change depending on the context. In this case, rain represents Divine wrath, not love, which shows the flexibility of meaning in the language of the Qur'an. Typologically, "مطر" is symbolic, since its meaning depends on cultural-linguistic agreement, but it also serves as an index, as it refers directly to the real consequences of disobedience. This confirms that a single word in the Qur'an can carry a paradoxical meaning that reflects its rhetorical richness and typological depth.

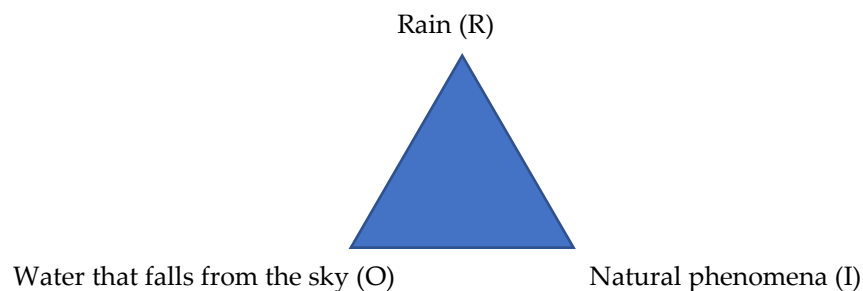


3. QS. An-Nur: 43

In An-Nur: 43, this verse says: "Do you not see that Allah parades the clouds, then gathers them between them, and then overlaps them, and then you see that rain comes out of their gaps, and Allah sends down ice from the sky, (that is) from (the clouds) like mountains, and He throws them (grains) of ice to whom He wills and turns them away from whom He wills. The flash of the clouds almost took away the vision." In this verse, the representation is rain and, the object is water that falls from the sky, and the interpretation is natural phenomena as an example of Allah's power (Al-Qorni, 2012).

This verse describes the meteorological process by forming clouds, condensation, precipitation (rain), and the formation of hailstone from large clouds. This process shows the existence of a system

and order in atmospheric dynamics, which are controlled by God's will. The intensity of lightning that can be dazzling also reflects the great potential for electrical energy in cumulonimbus cloud systems. Thus, this verse not only serves as a spiritual warning, but also contains scientific cues regarding hydrological cycles and extreme weather symptoms that can be observed and studied in atmospheric science.



Using Peirce's theory of semiotics, we can understand that the signs (rain) in the three verses have different interpretations based on their respective contexts: Al-Furqan: 48-49 - rain as Allah's grace and blessing; Ash-Shu'aro: 173 - rain as an instrument of Allah's punishment and punishment; and An-Nur: 43 - Rain as a natural phenomenon that shows the power of Allah. Each verse gives a unique meaning to rain based on its context, showing different aspects of God's power and nature.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the symbol of rain in the Qur'an has a deep and diverse meaning. Using Charles S. Peirce's semiotic approach, this study successfully identifies and interprets the symbolism of rain in various spiritual and moral contexts, such as grace, sustenance, tests and signs of God's power.

The focus on these three verses shows that the Qur'an uses natural symbols to convey spiritual and ethical messages to mankind. Rain as a blessing represents God's love and goodness, while rain as a calamity reflects a punishment or test from God, and rain as a natural phenomenon shows God's miracle and power over the universe.

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