



ResearchInfinity

WWW.RES00.com

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1996.01.02.6

# Study of *Ashab Al-Kahf's* Story in the Book of *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah*: A Naturalistic Hermeneutical Perspective

Fadlil Munawwar Manshur<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Jl. Sosio Humaniora, Bulaksumur, Sagan, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55281. Email: fadlil@ugm.ac.id

## Abstract

This study discusses the story of *Ashab al-Kahf* in the book of *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah* by As-Sayyid Murtadha Al-Huseiny Fairuzabadi in which there are interesting and intelligent dialogues between Ali bin Abi Talib and a Jewish priest. Ali bin Abi Talib was one of the Prophet Muhammad's companions who was smart and very trusted. The story of *Ashabul-Kahf* contains many lessons and life's wisdom for humans who consistently maintain their faith and stay away from the power oppressive center to their people. The formal object of this research is the story of *Ashabul-Kahf* which is very popular in Islamic society, both in the Arab world and outside the Arab world. The material object uses *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah* Book. This study uses the naturalistic hermeneutic theory by Mantzavinos. The results showed that the actions of seven young men who fled to the cave due to they were being chased by the tyrannical King Dikyanus and they did not feel like sleeping in the cave for 309 years. This research reveals a series of material events since they fled from the kingdom and were chased by King Dikyanu's army and finally they fell asleep in the cave for more than three centuries until they woke up from their long sleep and were again killed by God. Between one event material with others each other has a relationship of interrelated meaning. In this study, it is proven that the use of naturalistic hermeneutic theory can guide researchers in revealing the hidden actions meaning of the seven young men from the pursuit of King Dikyanus in the cave. The meaning revealed is that there is a causal relationship between the story of *Ashabul-Kahf* text and its readers (researchers). The story complexity in the story's text is later explained through the nexus concept, which essentially looks for material that occurs in the historical reality area and expresses it through an exclusive causal relationship. Therefore, through this nexus, the problematic meaning of *Ashabul-Kahf* story can be revealed.

**Keywords:** Naturalistic Hermeneutics, *Ashabul-Khafi*, *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah* Book, Incident Material

## 1. Introduction

Academically, the study of the story of *Ashabul-Kahf* has not been widely carried out by academics. Fewer studies use a naturalistic hermeneutic approach. Indeed, there are many studies on the interpretation of Qur'an letter Al-Kahf, where there is the story of *Ashabul Kahf* according to the Qur'an version. However, studies on the story of *Ashabul Kahf* are not widely found. Studies of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kahf have been carried out from various perspectives and approaches. Fadlilah and Mahfudhexamine Al-Kahf's letter using the perspective of Ian Richarde

Netton's structural-semiotic theory (Fadlillah & Mahfudh, 2019). Toorawastudy from the translation point of view Tottolifocuses on the features and peculiarities of Arabic text Sūrat al-Kahf in the Qur'anic manuscripts (Toorawa, 2021; Tottoli, 2018). Aljarah, Alkofahi, and Aiqdah studied the pronouns antecedent of Surah al-Kahf from a functional textual perspective to highlight its influence in forming cohesive and communicative bonds of the Qur'anic text (Aljarah, Alkofahi, & Aiqdah, 2008). Using a structural approach, Fatahizadeh and Zakeri conclude that the structuralist approach to the Qur'an verses is a modern and influential attitude in the science of interpretation (Fatahizadeh & Zakeri, 2016). According to both, the principles in this approach include the fact that Qur'an cannot be distorted and is always based on three principles, namely unity of purpose, diversity of subjects, and harmony. Each Surah, including Al-Kahf, is considered a structure and a system that includes two structural units: a formal structure and a meaning structure. Each of these two units consists of surface structure and inner structure of the former is discrete whereas consequence of the latter is distance. The formal surface structure of the Surah contains the lexicon, syntax and harmony of the verses. The formal inner structure includes the Surah artistic aspects. The Surah semantic surface's structure is the collection of its verses, and finally, the Surah semantic's structure in which connects the different parts of the Surah to each other in the form of distances.

A study of the few stories of *Ashabul Kahfi* was carried out, among others, by Iqbal who attempted to analyze the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery in 1947 that substantially changed the ideas surrounding Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity (Iqbal, 2017). According to Iqbal, Islamic scholars paid little attention to the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery, mainly due to the perception that it was exclusively Judeo-Christian matters. However, scientific dynamics compel Muslim scholars to respond to certain unanswered questions. Iqbal uses a new perspective in explaining the story of *Ashabul Kahfi* by referring to the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery. Ellassal which investigates the influence of the story of *Ashabul Kahf* on the miniaturists artistic thinking in medieval and 17th century Islamic manuscripts (Ellassal, 2018). Hadi uses literary theory (*al-manhaj al-adabi*) to study the story of *Ashabul Kahf* (Hadi, 2021). According to Hadi, the story of *Ashabul Kahf* proves that the stories in the Qur'an are not just historical data. Since in this story historical elements such as characters, place and time tend to be omitted. The Qur'an does not clearly state the number of young *Ashabul Kahf* and the time they lived in the cave. The story of *Ashabul Kahf* narration which is intended to prove Muhammad's apostolate and as an answer to some of the Mecca polytheists' questions asked Muhammad when testing the veracity of his apostolate and teachings. For Hadi, such narrative has a psychological impact on the listener so that it can reveal the message stored in it.

Sidik states that there is an intertextual relationship between the drama script and the Qur'anic text and its interpretation as a hypogram (Sidik, 2016). The approach used in his research is reception/transformation, while the analysis technique is carried out by comparing, aligning, and contrasting drama texts of *Ahlul Kahf* and the Qur'an as a hypogram. The results obtained from research conducted by Sidik are that the drama script *Ahlul Kahfi* is an absorption, copying, innovation, and transformation of the Qur'an. (Sidik, 2016, p. 11) There is a close relationship between the story of *Ashabul Kahfi* and *Ahlul Kahf* as a result of innovation and transformation. The drama *Ahlul Kahfi* emerged due to the story *Ashabul Kahfi*. Jumini states that according to Al-Kindy's relativity, any object that moves faster than the speed of light will experience length and time dilation (Jumini, 2017). In addition, the seven youths of Aṣḥābul Kahf who were put to sleep by Allah for 309 years only felt half a day or a day. Their bodies in the cave by Allah were turned over and moved beyond the speed of light so that they experienced a long dilatation and a very fast time. Wildan, Yusuf and Rifiyal state that the plots contained in the tale of Eelia Tujoh and Surah Al-Kahfi in Ibn Kathir's Sahih Tafsir have similarities and differences (Wildan et al. , 2017). The data that has been grouped is 12 data similarities and differences which include six similarities in events and seven differences in events. Three similarities and differences in conflict and two similarities and differences in the climax. Meanwhile, Rahmansyah connects the story of *Ashabul Kahf* with education, therefore according to him the values of Islamic education in the story of Aṣḥābul Kahf in the Qur'an are (1) belief in signs of God's power who has sent youths in the cave, (2) belief in the protection that Allah gives to his servants, (3) belief in Allah's promise regarding the Day of Judgment and the Day of Resurrection, (4) strive and put your trust in Allah, (5) instill the nature of *tawadhu*, *tasamuh* (tolerance), *istiqamah*, *siddiq*, and *zuhud* in social life, (6) always *tafakkur* in taking actions, (7) fearing Allah and always

being careful heart in every action, and (8) prioritizing the interests of others, and always introspecting oneself (Rahmansyah, 2020).

## 2. Method

This study uses naturalistic hermeneutic method that emphasizes the researcher's ability to understand all the text meanings. Researchers when reading a text must know whether there is a relationship between the text and its meaning. If it is found that there is a complex text, it is necessary to know in advance which type of nexus is in the reality area and how the exclusive causal relationship is. What is meant by reality area is the reality in the story of *Ashabul-Kahf*'s text. What is meant by an exclusive causal relationship is a special relationship between one reality and another reality in the story.

Naturalistic hermeneutic theory deals with human actions and texts with a hypothetical-deductive method, the standard method used in the natural sciences. The hermeneutic method is a method for interpreting human actions and texts so that they have meaning. The central thesis advocated by Mantzavinos is that there are no fundamental methodological differences between the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 2). In naturalistic hermeneutic theory perspective, it is said that human actions and the texts they produce are seen as meaningful. According to this theory, human actions and all meaningful matter can be dealt with scientifically using natural sciences methods. Thus, in naturalistic hermeneutics theory, there is no fundamental methodological difference between the natural sciences, on the one hand, and the social sciences and humanities, on the other. Naturalistic hermeneutic theory is basically oriented to how to guide readers or researchers in highlighting and overcoming problems of meaning in a naturalistic way. This theory also explains, for example, how to understand a sketch in a naturalistic way and how to express the problem of meaning in the sketch and understand the relationship between one another with an integrated approach. That is, human actions are generally above all texts and can be understood by a unified method. In the context of meaning, if someone reads a text, is there a relationship between meaning and cause and effect. If there is complexity in the text, what kind of nexus occurs in the reality area?, or is it possible only a nexus of meaning or an exclusive causal relationship (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 73).

There are three concepts related to this problem of meaning, namely that (a) there is a causal relationship or only a relationship of meaning in all reality areas, (b) there are certain reality areas that allow only the meaning nexus to appear, and (c) in other places only a causal nexus appears. Therefore, this nexus works to reveal the problem of meaning (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 74). From these three concepts, there are two methods of understanding and expressing meaning as follows. First, in strong version, when the problematic of meaning is exaggerated, the thesis is that the world consists only of a nexus of meaning. In other words, all the facts found in the world have meanings that must be understood. This radical thesis implies that there are only relationships of meaning to be discovered or experienced, not only in socio-historical reality, but also in nature. According to this strong version, even when the natural scientific way of thinking usually tries to determine causal relationships, the relationships of meaning must be sought. The metaphorical text is applied to the world as a whole, and the text model is considered to be generally accepted. The problem of meaning dramatization in a strong version implies that the knowledge totality from the empirical sciences no longer has a legitimate place. In accordance with this position, the knowledge produced by the sciences aiming to study causal relationships is almost useless, due to it does not provide any information concerning the relations of meaning that are supposed to be constitutive for the facts of the world. Second, in its weak version, the problem of meaning usually develops to recognize causal relationships for nature. However, only the relation of meaning is considered important for the socio-historical world. This view is thus a variation of the old dualism between man and nature: It is expressed mainly in the fact that the social sciences and humanities data involve phenomena with internal meanings that cannot be understood by natural scientific methods which Gellner calls negative or defensive variations of anthropomorphism (Mantzavinos, 2005, pp. 74–75).

## 3. The Story of *Ashabul-Kahf* in *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah* Book

*Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah* Book (hereinafter abbreviated as FKSS) is Murtadla al-Husaini Fairuzabadi (Fairuzabadi, 1963c). This book contains the story of *Ashabul Kahf* which is sourced from the stories

of the Prophets (*qishash al-anbiya*). In addition, the FKSS book also uses authoritative sources from the Qur'an, particularly Surah Al-Kahf verse 10, to discuss the story of *Ashabul Kahf*.

In FKSS, Fairuzabadi recounted that when Umar Ibn al-Khattab took position as a caliph, several Jewish priests had come to him. They said to him: "O Caliph Umar, you are the ruler after Muhammad and his companion, Abu Bakr. We would like to ask you some important questions. If you can give us the answers, then we will understand that Islam is the true religion and Muhammad is truly a prophet. On the other hand, if you cannot give the answers, it means that Islam is false and Muhammad is not a prophet". "Please ask about anything you want," said Caliph Umar. "Explain to us about the master lock (padlock) that locks the sky, what is it?" Asked the priests, starting their questions. "Explain to us about the existence of a grave that walks with its inhabitants, what is it? Show us about a creature who can warn his people, but he is neither human nor *jinn*? Tell us about the five types of creatures that can walk on the surface of the earth, but these creatures are not born from the womb of the mother? Tell us what does the quail (fat bird) said when it was chirping? What does the rooster say when it is crowing? What does a horse say when it is neighing? What does the frog say when it is making a sound? What does the donkey say when it is neighing? What does the sparrow say when he is chirping?"(Fairuzabadi, 1963c) Caliph Umar bowed his head to think for a moment, then said: "For Umar, if he answered 'don't know' to questions for which he did not know the answer, it's not something to be ashamed of!"(Fairuzabadi, 1963c) Hearing Caliph Umar's answer like that, the Jewish priests who asked the question stood up and down with joy, saying: "Now we testify that Muhammad was not a prophet, and the religion of Islam it is vanity!"

Realizing the unfavorable situation, Salman al-Farisi, who was in their midst at that time, immediately got up and said to the Jewish priests: "You wait a moment!" He quickly went to Ali bin Abi Talib's house. After meeting, Salman said: "O Aba al-Hasan, save the religion of Islam!" Ali was confused, then asked: "Why?" Salman then told what was being faced by Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Ali immediately went to the house of Caliph Umar, walking leisurely wearing a *burdah* (a piece of cloth covering the back or neck) left by the Prophet Muhammad. When Umar saw Ali bin Abi Talib coming, he got up from his seat and hurriedly hugged him, saying: "O Aba al-Hasan, whenever there is a big problem, I always call you!" After confronting the priests who were waiting for the answer, Ali bin Abi Talib said: "Please ask about anything you want. Muhammad has taught me a thousand kinds of knowledge, and each type of science has a thousand kinds of branches of knowledge!" The Jewish priests then repeated their questions. Before answering, Ali bin Abi Talib said: "I want to put a condition to you, namely if it turns out that I later have answered your questions according to what is in the Torah, you are willing to embrace our religion and believe!" "Yes fine!" they replied. "Now ask one by one," said Ali bin Abi Talib (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

They began to ask: "What is the master key (padlock) that locked the doors of heaven?" "The master key," replied Ali bin Abi Talib, "is *shirk* to Allah. For all the servants of Allah, both male and female, if he *shirks* in Allah, his deeds will not be able to rise to the presence of Allah!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

The Jewish priests asked again: "What key can open the doors of heaven?" Ali bin Abi Talib replied: "The key is a testimony (*shahada*) that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Prophet! The Jewish priests were exchanged glances between them, saying: "That person is right too!". They asked again: "Explain to us about the existence of a grave that can walk with its inhabitants!" Ali answered: "The grave is the shark (*al-hut*) that swallowed the Prophet Yunus ibn Matta. " "The prophet Yunus was carried around the seven oceans!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c). The priests continued their question again: "Explain to us about a creature that can warn its people, but that creature is not human and not a *jinn*!" Ali bin Abi Talib replied: "That creature is the ant of Prophet Sulaiman, son of Prophet Dawud. The ant said to his people: "O ants, go into your dwellings, so as not to be trampled by Sulaiman and his troops while they are unconscious!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

The Jewish priests continued their fifth question: "Tell us about five kinds of creatures that walk on the surface of the earth, but not one of them is born from the womb of its mother!". Ali bin Abi Talib replied: "The five creatures are, Adam, Eve, the camel of Prophet Salih, the lamb of Prophet Abraham, and the staff of Prophet Moses (which transformed into a snake)" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c, p. 328).

Two of the three Jewish priests after hearing the answers and explanations given by Imam Ali r. a. then said: "We bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Prophet!". But another priest, stood up and

said to Ali bin Abi Talib: "O Ali, the hearts of my friends have been seized by something similar to faith and belief in the truth of the religion of Islam. Now there is one more thing I want to ask you." "Ask whatever you want," said Imam Ali. "Tell me about some people who in ancient times had been dead for 309 years, then were brought back to life by God. What's the story about them?" asked the priest. Ali bin Abi Talib replied: "O Jewish priest, they are cave dwellers. The story about them has been told by Allah to His Messenger. If you want, I will read their story." The Jewish priest replied: "I have heard a lot about your Qur'an!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c, p. 330).

The Jewish priest continued, "If you really know, try to mention their names, the names of their fathers, the names of their cities, the names of their kings, the names of their dogs, the names of their mountains and caves, and all their stories from beginning to end!" Ali bin Abi Talib then adjusted his seat, bent his knees in front of his stomach, then supported him with a *burdah* tied to his waist. Then he said: "O Jewish brother, my beloved Muhammad has told me that the story took place in the land of Rome, in a city called Aphenus, or also known as Tharsus. But the name of the city in ancient times was Aphenus (Ephese). Only after Islam came, the city changed its name to Tharsus (Tarse, now located within the territory of Turkey). The people of the land used to have a good king. After the king died, the news of his death was heard by a Persian king named Diqyanus. He was a pagan king who was very arrogant and tyrannical. He came to invade the land with the strength of his army, and finally succeeded in capturing the city of Aphenus. Therefore the city was made the capital of the kingdom, then a palace was built" (Fairuzabadi, 1963a, p. 331).

Ali was brilliantly able to answer all the questions of the Jewish priests, until then all the Jewish priests converted to Islam. With a discussion full of admiration, the Jewish priests said, "O Aba al-Hasan, you do not add and do not subtract, not even a single letter! Now do not call me a Jew, for I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the servant of Allah and His Messenger. I also testify that you are the most knowledgeable person among this ummah!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963b, p. 334).

#### **4. Naturalistic Hermeneutic Perspective on the Story of *Ashabul-Kahf* in *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min alShihahi al-Sittah* Book**

Observing the story of Ashabul Kahf in FKSS, it seems that the strength of this story is intended to show the greatness and superiority of Ali ibn Abi Talib compared to other companions of the Prophet Muhammad, including Umar ibn al-Khattab. This makes a lot of sense, since Fairuzabadi himself is one of the Shia scholars, who placed Ali as the best and most noble companion of the Prophet Muhammad. The FKSS book itself for the most part contains Fairuzabadi's respect and praise for Ali ibn Abi Talib. The first part up to one third of the 1st volume of the FKSS book contains the praise and majesty of the Prophet Muhammad (Fairuzabadi, 1963a). The final part of the 1st volume and the entire 2nd volume of this book contains the story of the greatness, excellence, and majesty of Ali ibn Abi Talib (Fairuzabadi, 1963c). Meanwhile, the third volume of the FKSS book contains stories about the advantages of Ali's family members, starting from Fatimah ibn Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ali, and Husein ibn Ali (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

An interesting aspect of the story of *Ashabul-Kahf* is that this story is only written in the Qur'an and in the Torah, but not in the Bible, either the New Testament or the Old Testament. Historically, above the cave (*alkahf*) there was a Byzantine-style place of worship; the currency found around it indicates that the place was built during the reign of Justinus 1 who reigned between 418-427 AD. It is stated that the rulers who oppressed the followers of the Prophet Jesus, among others, were those who ruled from 98 to 117, or about 112. In those years, the rulers of that era decreed that anyone who refused to worship the gods was punished as a traitor. It is also stated that the seven youths who took refuge in the cave evaded the ruling issued in 112, and they slept for 309 years. That is, they woke up from sleep around the year 412, which is when the ruling government had freed Christians from oppression.

From naturalistic hermeneutics perspective, the stories abstraction mentioned by Fairuzabadi confirms that the story fragments show a picture of the nexus or actual entity network of Ali's character who is superior to other companions of Prophet Muhammad. This is the main naturalistic hermeneutics perspective which emphasizes the effort to understand all the meanings of the text so that it can produce a general picture of the story of *Ashabul Kahf* as told by Ali ibn Abi Talib (Mantzavinos, 2005).

When presenting the story of Ali in dialogue with the Jewish priests, Fairuzabadi himself seems to be trying to make a connection between the text (Ali's narrative) and its meaning (Mantzavinos, 2005). Fairuzabadi's narration of Ali's story about the request of a Jewish priest to describe the palace in the era of *Ashabul Kahf*, for example, shows a relationship between the text and its meaning, which can be seen in the depiction of the Jewish priest's gestures when he heard Ali's answer, as shown in the following story: only half of Ali explained, the Jewish priest who asked the question stood up, then asked: "If you really know, please explain to me the shape of the palace, how the porch and rooms are!" Ali bin Abi Talib explained: "O Jewish brother, the king built a palace that very majestic, made of marble. The length is one *farsakh* ( $\pm 8$  km) and the width is one *farsakh*. Its pillars, which numbered a thousand, were all made of gold, and the lamps, which numbered a thousand, were also all made of gold. The lamps hung from silver chains. Every night the fire is lit with a kind of fragrant oil. On the east side of the porch were made a hundred light holes, as well as on the west side. So that the sun from sunrise to sunset can always illuminate the porch. The king also made a throne of gold that sized of 80 cubits long and 40 cubits wide. To his right are 80 chairs, all made of gold. That's where the commanders sat. On his left there are also 80 chairs made of gold, to sit on *pepatih* and other high rulers. The king sits on a throne with a crown on his head. (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

In the story about the Jewish priest's request to Ali to mention the material used to make the crown, there seems to be a complex narrative, so that in the naturalistic hermeneutics perspective it is necessary to know in advance which type of nexus is in the reality area of the story and how the exclusive causal relationship is (Mantzavinos, 2005). The complexity was seen when Ali answered the Jewish's question approach about the raw material for the crown. Ali replied, "O Jewish brother," said Imam Ali explaining, "the king's crown is made of gold pieces, has nine legs, and each leg is studded with pearls that reflect light like stars illuminating the darkness of the night. The king also had 50 servants, consisting of the children of the elders. All of them wore red silk sashes and clothes. Their pants are also made of green silk. All of them are decorated with very beautiful anklets. Each was given a stick made of gold. They had to stand behind the king. In addition to them, the king also appointed six people, consisting of the children of scholars, to be ministers or assistants. The king did not take any decision without consulting them first. The six servants were always on either side of the king, three on the right and the other three on the left." (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

By using naturalistic hermeneutics, we come to know that the interpretation of actions and texts is directed at finding meaning and mystery (Mantzavinos, 2005). The mention of the youths's names of *Ashabul Kahfi* proves that Fairuzabadi is trying to uncover the meanings and mysteries that surround the story of *Ashabul Kahfi*. When the Jewish priest asked, "O Ali, if what you say is true, please state the names of the six people who were the king's assistants!" According to Fairuzabadi, Ali replied, "My beloved Muhammad told me that the three people standing at the right hand of the king, named Tamlikha, Miksalmina, and Michaslimina respectively. As for the three assistants standing on the left, one named Martelius, Casitius and Sidemius. The king always consulted with them on all matters. Every day after the king sat down in the verandah of the palace surrounded by all the elders and courtiers, three servants came in before the king. One of them carried a golden goblet filled with pure fragrance. Another was carrying a silver cup full of flower juice. While the other one brought a bird. The person who brought this bird then made a signal sound, then the bird flew over the goblet filled with flower juice. The bird dabbled in it and after that it fluttered its wings and feathers, until the essence of the flowers was sprinkled all over the place around it. Then the bird bearer made another sound. The bird flew too. Then alighted on the chalice containing the pure fragrance. While dabbling in it, the bird fluttered its wings and feathers, until the pure fragrance contained in the chalice was splashed all over the place. The bird-bearer gave another sound signal. The bird then flew and landed on the king's crown, spreading its two fragrant wings over the king's head. Thus the king was on the throne of power for thirty years. During that time he had never been attacked by any disease, never had a headache, stomach ache, fever, drooling, spit or runny nose (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

As a writer, scholar, and also a Shia figure, Fairuzabadi seeks to build and present stories concerning human actions through texts that he produced (Mantzavinos, 2005) so as to produce a meaningful story of *AshabulKahf*, as well as strengthen the majesty and nobility of Ali ibn Abi Talib who told this story in front of the Jewish priests. This can be seen, for example, in Fairuzabadi's description of Ali's explanation of changes in the behavior and actions of the arrogant, disobedient and oppressive king. He claimed to be "god" and did not want to acknowledge the existence of God. The king then summoned the leading people of his people. Whoever is obedient and submissive

to him, is given clothes and various other gifts. However, whoever does not want to obey or is not willing to follow his will, he will be killed immediately. Therefore, everyone was forced to agree to his will. For a long time, everyone obeyed the king, until he was worshiped and revered. They no longer worship and revere Allah. On the day of his birthday celebration, the king was sitting on a throne wearing a crown on his head, suddenly a commander came in telling him that a foreign army had invaded into his kingdom, with the intention of waging war against the king.

Fairuzabadi's explanation of Ali's explanation of the king's arrogance but not in accordance with his actually weak mentality shows that Fairuzabadi tries to emphasize Ali's prowess in argumentation, so that in the end the Jewish approachers gave up and followed Ali's invitation to become a Muslim. Ali continued to answer at length, the king was so sad and confused that the crown he was wearing fell from his head without realizing it. Then the king himself fell from the throne. One of the maids standing on the right—an intelligent man named Tamlikha—was watching the king's condition with all his heart. He thought, then said to himself: If Diqyanus is really a god as he claims, he certainly will not be sad, he will not sleep, he will not urinate or defecate. These are not the attributes of God. "The six servants of the king held a meeting at the place of one of them every day in turns. One day it was Tamlikha's turn to receive a visit from five of his friends. They gathered at Tamlikha's house to eat and drink, but Tamlikha himself did not eat and drink. His friends asked: "O Tamlikha, why don't you want to eat and don't want to drink?" "Friends," said Tamlikha, "my heart is being troubled by something that makes me not want to eat and not want to drink, nor do I want to sleep. His friends chided: "What is troubling your heart, O Tamlikha?" "I've been thinking about the sky for a long time," Tamlikha explained "I then asked myself: 'who raised it up as a roof that is always safe and maintained, without hanging from above and without pillars supporting it from below? Who runs the sun and moon in the sky? Who adorned the sky with scattered stars? Then I thought of this earth too: Who stretches out and spreads it across the firmament? Who is holding it with the giant mountains so that it does not wobble, does not wobble and does not tilt?' I also thought to myself for a long time: "Who brought me out as a baby from my mother's belly? Who nourishes my life and feeds me? Everything must have been made, and certainly not Diqyanus" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

Up to this point, Fairuzabadi tries to guide the reader to highlight and overcome the problem of meaning in a naturalistic way (Mantzavinos, 2005). He gave a picture or personification of the youths of *Ashabul Kahf* in facing a dilemmatic atmosphere, as said by Ali, "Tamlikha's friends then bowed knee in front of him. Tamlikha's two feet were kissed while saying: "O Tamlikha in our hearts now feels something like the one in yours. Therefore, please show us a way out for all of us!" "Brothers," answered Tamlikha, "Neither I nor you find any sense other than having to run away from the tyrannical king, go to the King who created the heavens and the earth!" "We agree with your opinion," said his friends. Tamlikha then stood up, continued to go to sell dates, and finally managed to get 3 dirhams of money. The money was then tucked into a shirt pocket. Then set off on a horse ride with five of his friends. After walking 3 miles away from the city, Tamlikha said to her friends: "Brothers, we are now separated from the king of the world and from his dominion. Now get off your horses and let's go on foot. Hopefully Allah will ease our affairs and provide a way out (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

Fairuzabadi's efforts to describe the characters actions in the story of *Ashabul Kahf* have succeeded in creating a deep image of how these characters view and believe in religion and religiosity. Fairuzabadi successfully presented the religious beliefs and religiosity of the youth leaders through the texts of Ali's explanation in front of the Jewish priests, as explained by Ali, they got off their horses. Then walk 7 *farsakhs*, until their feet are swollen with blood since they are not used to walking that far. Suddenly a shepherd came to greet them. To the shepherd they asked: "O shepherd, do you have water or milk to drink?" "I have everything you want," said the shepherd. "But I see your faces are all like nobles. I assumed you must have run away. Please tell me how the story of your journey was!" "Ah..., how difficult this person is," they answered. "We have embraced a religion, we cannot lie. Will we survive if we tell the truth?" "Yes," answered the shepherd. Tamlikha and his friends then told everything that had happened to them. Hearing their story, the shepherd immediately knelt before them, and kissing their feet, he said: "In my heart now feels something like the one in your heart. You just stop right here. I want to return the goats to their owners. I will come back to you soon. " Tamlikha and his friends stopped. The shepherd immediately went to return his flock of goats. Soon he came again on foot, followed by his dog (Fairuzabadi, 1963a).

Ali's explanation in front of the Jewish priests about the youths of *Ashabul Kahf* shows that there is a causal relationship or only a relationship of meaning in all areas of reality (Mantzavinos, 2005). In addition, the Jewish

priests' curiosity over Ali's explanation suggests that there is a certain area of reality in which only a nexus of meaning emerges. The Jewish's curiosity approaches was followed by a question and answer session as explained by Fairuzabadi as follows.

Hearing Ali's story, the Jewish priest who asked jumped to his feet again saying: "O Ali, if you really know, please tell me what color the dog is and what is its name?" "O Jewish brother," said Ali bin Abi Talib informing him, "My lover Muhammad told me that the dog was black in color and his name was Qithmir." (Fairuzabadi, 1963b) Ali continued his explanation, - when the six runaways saw a dog, each one said to his friend: we are worried that the dog will reveal our secret later! They asked the shepherd to drive the dog away with a stone. The dog looked at Tamlikha and his companions, then sat on two hind legs, stretched, and spoke the words fluently and clearly: "O people, why do you want to expel me, even though I bear witness that there is no god but Allah? , there is no allies whatsoever for Him. Let me guard you from the enemy, and in doing so I draw myself closer to Allah" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c).

x

It is very clear that the Jewish experienced an inner conflict between belief and unbelief. They believed due to what Ali said about the story of *Ashabul Kahf* was in accordance with the holy instructions contained in their holy book. However, it is hard to believe since Ali can give true and correct answer. In naturalistic hermeneutics perspective, the Jewish priests were faced with a nexus that worked to reveal the problem of meaning (Mantzavinos, 2005). This can be seen in the following Fairuzabadi explanation. The Jewish priest who asked the question got up again from his seat saying: "What is the name of the mountain and what is the name of the cave?" Imam Ali explained: "The mountain is called Naglus and the name of the cave is Washid, or also called Kheram!" Ali ibn Abi Talib continued his story: "Suddenly in front of the cave there were growing trees bearing fruit and springs were gushing very fast. They eat fruit and drink water available in the place. When night came, they took refuge in the cave. Meanwhile, the dog that had been following them for a long time, was on guard, and stuck out two front paws to block the cave door. Then Allah ordered the Angel of Death to take their lives. To each of them Allah represented two Angels to turn their bodies from right to left. Allah then ordered the sun to incline when it rises to shine its light into the cave from the right, and when it is about to set so that its light begins to leave them from the left. Once upon a time when King Diqyanus had just finished his party he asked about six of his servants. He got the answer, that they had run away. King Diqyanus was very angry. Together with 80,000 cavalry he quickly set out on the trail of the six escaped helpers. He climbed up the hill, then approached the cave. He saw his six helpers who had run away were sleeping lying in the cave. He did not hesitate and confirmed that the six people were really sleeping. To his followers he said: "If I wanted to punish them, I would not inflict a harsher punishment on those who tortured themselves in the cave. Call the stonemasons so that they come here immediately!" After the stonemasons arrived, they were ordered to close the cave door tightly with stones and *jish* (a material like cement). When the work was done, the king said to his followers: "Tell those who are in the cave, if they really don't lie to ask their Lord who is in the sky for help, so that they are brought out of that place. " After that, they lived for 309 years. After a very long period of time passed, Allah returned their lives again.

If we use a strong version of naturalistic hermeneutics, when the problematic meaning of *Ashabul Kahf*'s story is exaggerated, the thesis is that the real world consists only of a nexus of meaning (Mantzavinos, 2005). In other words, all text facts have meanings that can and must be understood. This radical thesis implies that there are only relationships of meaning to be discovered or experienced, not only in socio-historical reality, but also in nature. According to this version of strong naturalistic hermeneutics, metaphorical texts are sometimes applied to the world as a whole and the text's model is seen as generally accepted. The problem dramatization of meaning in this strong version implies that the story totality of *Ashabul Kahf* empirically no longer has a legitimate place. In accordance with this position, the meaning generated from the story of *Ashabul Kahf* which aims to study causal relationships is almost useless, since it does not provide any information about the relationship of meaning that should be constitutive to the facts in the world. Fairuzabadi's metaphorical depiction of *Ashabul Kahfi*'s story reinforces this naturalistic hermeneutical perspective, as told by Fairuzabadi: When the sun has started to shine, they feel as if they have just woken up from their respective sleep. One said to the other: "Last night we forgot to worship Allah, let's go to the spring!" After they were outside the cave, suddenly they saw that the spring had dried up again and the trees had become dry. God made them start to feel hungry. They asked each other: "Which of us is able and willing to go to the city with money to get food?, but who will go to the city later so be careful not to buy food cooked with lard. " Tamlikha then said: "O brothers, I alone went to get food, but, O shepherd,



give me your clothes and take my clothes!” After Tamlikha put on the shepherd’s clothes, he went to the city. Along the way he passed places he had never known, through roads he had never known. Arriving near the city gate, he saw a green flag flying in the sky that read: “There is no god but Allah and Jesus is the Spirit of Allah.” Tamlikha paused for a moment to look at the flag while rubbing his eyes, then said to himself: “I thought I was still sleeping!” After looking at and observing the flag for a while, he continued on his way into the city. He saw many people reading the Bible. He meets people he has never known. Arriving at a market he asked a baker: “O bakers, what is the name of your city?” “Aphesus,” replied the baker. “What is the name of your king?” asked Tamlikha again. “Abdurrahman,” replied the baker. “If what you say is true,” said Tamlikha, “this business of mine is very strange! Take this money and give me food!” Seeing the money, the baker was astonished. Since the money Tamlikha brought was ancient money, which was bigger and heavier.

The presentation of the question and answer or examination of the Jewish priests to Ali is in fact Fairuzabadi’s attempt to highlight the components of meaningful facts and events, and to classify the possible interrelationships and causal processes between the parts of *Ashabul Kahf*’s story, going hand in hand with the spread of the idea that understanding is the adequate way to access these meaningful components (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 87). In the strong naturalistic version of hermeneutics, understanding serves to identify meaning without being a concrete mental operation. Rather, it is interpreted as a concrete way of being in the world or as a way of human existence in general. The story of *Ashabul Kahf*’s meaning existentially serves to identify and understand the meaning of events (Zabala, 2009).

In a weak version of naturalistic hermeneutics, understanding serves to identify meaning, however is usually interpreted as a mental operation. Holding the nexus of meaning is directly contrasted with grasping the causal nexus, and understanding is maintained as a sufficient means to penetrate the nexus of the meaning of the story of *Ashabul Kahf*’s nexus. The characteristic ambivalence of the understanding ‘process’ must once again be kept in mind and is sometimes understood as a type of knowledge and sometimes as a method (Sperber, 1996).

This story of *Ashabul Kahf* fundamental analysis according to Fairuzabadi sometimes leads to a series of trivial descriptions of everyday phenomena. The overload of transcendental understanding only paved the way for producing a relationship of meaning description with certain aesthetic values but with little informative content. The metaphorical transfer of the text of *Ashabul Kahf*’s story to the world as a whole and the universalization that accompanies the meaning problem is sometimes difficult to digest by common sense (Shimony, 2019). In the conception that places a weak version of the story of *Ashabul Kahf* problematic meaning, understanding is generally recognized as having a major role, but unfortunately, its logical status is not explained more precisely. This lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that various writers of the story of *Ashabul Kahf* used the concept of ‘understanding’ differently, and thus the writers of these stories often speak of different purposes when discussing understanding.

The term understanding to understand the story of *Ashabul Kahf* is also a broad term, the meaning of which overlaps more with *verstehen*. However, we can tolerate the terms diversity used and different conceptions are possible, if one distinguishes between two very common uses of understanding concept (*verstehen*) namely, understanding as a type of knowledge and understanding as a method (Maddy, 2007). Both types of understanding are concerned with meaningful objects, and thus, with human actions and the results of those actions. Understanding as a type of knowledge is an understanding of meaningful material and is a special type of knowledge aimed at human actions and the results of those actions. From the history of ideas, the understanding concept explanation emphasizes feelings and experiences, we often comprehend understanding as intuition or direct empathy, particularly empathy built by religious ties (Gollnick, 1999; Tamdgidi, 2009) as in this story of *Ashabul Kahf*. This view is based on thoughts, feelings, reasons, emotions, and cognitions that describe different and even contradictory cognitive abilities in understanding the story. From a contemporary point of view, this strict separation between cognition and emotion seems untenable. This suggests that the cognitive and emotional systems, although in principle analytically separable and neurophysiologically distinct, are complementary and in constant interaction. In the story of *Ashabul Kahf* context, it seems that most people comprehend understanding as an act of direct intuition or empathy therefore it seems reasonable to us today since in the current perspective, understanding as a type of knowledge is seen as a mental process (subjective) that involves cognitive and emotional components (Ormiston & Schrift, 1989).

In understanding perspective as a method, understanding is coupled by agreement in such a way that the impossibility of a strict separation between questions of meaning and questions of validity can be postulated and normative consequences can be drawn from it. Fairuzabadi's efforts to highlight Ali's figure who was brilliantly able to answer all the questions from the Jewish priest showed that he was trying to present Ali's figure greatness through the story of *Ashabul Kahf*, due to all the Jewish priest's questions were answered in detail by him including the question of how much the old money was compared to the new money, the story of Tamlikha's meeting with the shepherd, the king, the king's dialogue with the people who brought Tamlikha, to the meeting of the new king with the youths of *Ashabul Kahf*. Until Ali bin Abi Talib stopped telling the story of the cave dwellers. Then said to the Jewish priest who asked the story: "That is, O Jews, what has happened in their story. By Allah, now I want to ask you, what are all what I tell you according to what is written in your Torah?" The Jewish priest replied: "Yes Abal Hasan, you did not add or subtract, even one letter! Now do not call me a Jew, for I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the servant of Allah and His Messenger. I also testify that you are the most knowledgeable person among this ummah!" (Fairuzabadi, 1963c, p. 339).

From the naturalistic hermeneutics perspective, we can understand the meaning of an action by identifying the motive for the action (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 88). Therefore, it can be assumed that the meaning relationship of an action is understood if the motive that drives the writer to perform the action is determined. In other words, the story of *Ashabul Kahf*'s meaning can be revealed if the author's intentions are understood. This perspective postulates a conceptual distinction between purpose and intention in a broad sense, wherein a goal is something that is seen as constitutive for an action. Thus it is often maintained that there is a conceptual and logical relationship between goals and actions, and that statements concerning certain actions goals only provide as much information as indicated (Girma, 2012).

Regardless of the descriptive approach and method used to understand the story of *Ashabul Kahf*'s meaning, in principle there is always the possibility that this relationship basic elements of meaning will also occur in connection with other actions of the same or other authors. The fundamental elements in question are all relevant mental states of the actor and all relevant mechanisms that work when an action is performed. Whenever one manages to identify the same fundamental element of a nexus of meaning in another nexus as well, it is possible to see the nexus of meaning as a causal nexus. The key to turning a meaning nexus into a causal nexus is to demonstrate invariance in the appearance of the fundamental elements in the various meaning nexuses. Here we can trace Fairuzabadi's motives or intentions in constructing Ali as a great figure who can answer the details of all the stories of *Ashabul Kahf*. In cases where such motives transformation is possible, the relation of meaning can be understood nomologically, and thus its repeated occurrence can be explained. From literary researchers point of view, the meaning of *Ashabul Kahf*'s story relationship that appears in relation to linguistic expressions can be understood by being explained externally and, if necessary, explained nomologically.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the discussion results as has been done above, the following conclusions are presented for this study. The story of *Ashabul-Kahf* is seen as a prophetic Arabic literary work since its content reveals the factual incident of seven young men who fled from a country ruled by a cruel and sadistic king, later they hid in a cave to avoid the pursuit of the king's soldiers. There are two reasons they fled from the violence and cruelty of the king. First, they ponder and think hard about who created man, the sky, the earth, the moon, the sun, and other creatures; they do not believe that the one who created all of them is their king. Second, they protested strongly to the king since many people were killed on the orders of the king due to they did not want to recognize him as a god.

The advantages and uniqueness of the story of *Ashabul-Kahf* is that the story material comes from the holy book, the Qur'an, which later undergoes reception and transformation in the cultural life of people in various countries, particularly in Arab countries and Muslim countries. This story is an important inspiration for people who seek the truth of the faith they believe in and dare to risk death threats from the ruling regime.

## References

- Aljarah, A., Alkofahi, I., & Aiqdah, M. (2008). Pronoun Antecedents in Surat Al-Kahf from Textual Functional Perspective. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 35(3), 538–546.
- Elassal, I. (2018). Stories of Sūrah Al-Kahf in Islamic Miniatures. *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality*, 12(1), 1–12.
- Fadlillah, N., & Mahfudh, H. (2019). Kajian Struktural-Semiotik Ian Richard Netton terhadap Q.S. Al-Kahf [The Study of Q.S. Al-Kahf: Ian Richard Netton's Structural-Semiotic Perspective]. *Mutawatir : Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, 9(2), 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.15642/MUTAWATIR.2019.9.2.303-322>
- Fairuzabadi, M. al-H. (1963a). *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah (al-Majallad al-Awwal)* [The Five Virtues of the Six Sahih Books, Vol. 1] Damaskus: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Fairuzabadi, M. al-H. (1963b). *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah (al-Majallad al-Tsalits)* [The Five Virtues of the Six Sahih Books, Vol. 3]. Damaskus: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Fairuzabadi, M. al-H. (1963c). *Fadhâ'il al-Khamsah min al-Shihahi al-Sittah (al-Majallad al-Tsani)* (II) [The Five Virtues of the Six Sahih Books, Vol. 2]. Damaskus: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Fatahizadeh, F., & Zakeri, M. (2016). A Structuralist Approach toward Surah Al-Kahf. *Journal of The Holy Quran And Islamic Texts*, 7(25), 101–120.
- Girma, M. (2012). *Understanding Religion and Social Change in Ethiopia: Toward a Hermeneutic of Covenant*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Gollnick, J. (1999). *Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses: Recovering a Forgotten Hermeneutic*. McGill: Canadian Corp. Studies in Religion.
- Hadi, F. (2021). A Literature Approach of The Story in the Qur'an (Study About Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah's Interpretation on the Story of Ashab Al-Kahf ). *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)*, 3(2), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.52032/JISR.V3I2.96>
- Iqbal, R. (2017). A New Theory on Aṣḥāb al-Kahf (“The Sleepers of the Cave”) Based on Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls (dss). *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 15(1), 20–47. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340044>
- Jumini, S. (2017). Telaah Al-Kindy Terhadap Relativitas Waktu Dalam Kisah Aṣḥābul Kahfi [Al-Kindy's Study of the Relativity of Time in the Story of Aṣḥābul Kahfi]. *Syari'ati*, 3(2).
- Maddy, P. (2007). *Second Philosophy: A Naturalistic Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Mantzavinos, C. (2005). *Naturalistic Hermeneutics*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ormiston, G., & Schrift, A. D. (1989). *The Hermeneutic Tradition*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Rahmansyah. (2020). *Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kisah Aṣḥābul Kahfi (Analisis Kajian Alquran Surah Al-Kahfi Ayat 9 Sampai 26)* [The Values of Islamic Education in the Story of Aṣḥābul Kahf (Analysis of the Study of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kahf Verses 9 to 26)]. UIN Sumatera Utara.
- Shimony, A. (2019). *The Search for a Naturalistic World View: Volume 1*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sidik, U. (2016). Transformasi Kisah “Ashabul Kahfi” Dalam Ahlul Kahfi Karya Taufiq Al-Hakim. *Widyaparwa*, 44(2).
- Sperber, D. (1996). *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tamdgidi, M. H. (2009). *Gurdjieff and Hypnosis: A Hermeneutic Study*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Toorawa, S. M. (2021). A Translation of Sūrat al-Kahf (Q. 18) ‘The Cave.’ *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 23(1), 109–127.
- Tottoli, R. (2018). The Qur'an of Johann Zechendorff: Features and Sources of the Arabic Text of Sūrat al-Kahf (Q. 18). *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 20(3).
- Wildan, M. R., Yusuf, Y., & Rifiyal, M. (2017). Analisis Perbandingan Kisah Ashabul Kahfi Dalam Hikayat Eelia Tujoh Dengan Kisah Ashabul Kahfi Dalam Tafsir Alquran [Comparative Analysis of the Story of Ashabul Kahfi in the Tafseer of Eelia Tujoh with the story of Ashabul Kahfi in the interpretation of the Koran]. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa PBSI*, 2(3), 297–309.
- Zabala, S. (2009). *The Remains of Being: Hermeneutic Ontology After Metaphysics*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

