

Cultural Semiotics and the Crisis of Modern Civilization: A Critical Reading of the Mythopoetic Text “*Kebangkitan*” by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana

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ABSTRACT: This research examines the script of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana's *Resurrection* using a cultural semiotic approach. This script is an imitopoetic drama that not only discusses spiritual and moral awakening, but also delivers a sharp critique of the crisis of values in modern society. Using Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotic framework and Takdir's own theory of cultural values, this research discusses how figures such as the Hero, Giant, Goddess of Love, Religious Figure, Politician, Economist, and Scientist run a complex system and culture in the context of global ideological conflict. This drama is interpreted as a cultural text that implies the tension of ethical values and ideological forces driven by power, fanaticism, capitalism, and scientific positivism. The results of the analysis show that *Resurrection* conveys the importance of changing human values and responsibilities in building a freer and more civilized world. The Hero figure, who receives legitimacy from the Goddess of Love and the power of the universe, is positioned as a cultural figure who seeks to bridge the global crisis with the spirit of universal humanism. Through its symbolic structure, mythical narrative, and value conflict, this manuscript becomes a field of ideological struggle that emphasizes the importance of integrating the values of solidarity, aesthetics, and spirituality in a turbulent world.

Keywords: *Cultural semiotics, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, mythopoetics, crisis of civilization, humanism, modern myth*

I. Introduction

In the era of globalization and modernity, which intensifies the erosion of human values, literature remains a vital medium for expressing the anxieties of the age. Amidst the multidimensional crises affecting contemporary society—political, economic, religious, and scientific—this work offers a space for reflection and critique on the disorientation of human values and morality. One monumental work that presents a philosophical and aesthetic contemplation of this condition is *Kebangkitan* (The Awakening), a mythopoetic drama by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana.

The script of *Kebangkitan* is written in lyrical prose, rich with symbolism and cultural thought, born out of a creative experiment at the Toyabungkah Art Center, Bali, in 1983. This work not only presents dramatic conflict between archetypal characters such as the Hero, the Giant, the Goddess of Love, the Cleric, the Politician,

the Economist, and the Scientist, but also redefines the basic values that sustain the existence of rational and moral beings. Through a dramatic structure grounded in imitos and archetype theory, the script affirms the urgency of ethical responsibility in confronting ideological disruption and the humanitarian crisis of the modern era.

Furthermore, Takdir's own reflections on cultural values—as formulated in his work *Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society and Culture*—provide a theoretical framework for reading *Kebangkitan* as a narrative of transformation and the reconstruction of value systems. The values of solidarity, aesthetics, and spirituality, championed by the characters of the Hero and the Goddess of Love, serve as counter-narratives to the fanaticism, greed, and lust for power embodied by antagonistic figures under the influence of the Giant.

Therefore, this study not only aims to interpret *Kebangkitan* within a literary framework but also positions it as a gateway to explore the universal crisis of modern civilization. The script deserves to be regarded as a cultural narrative that proposes the “awakening” of a new human being—one who is conscious of their responsibility as a bearer of values and as a continuing agent in the evolution of spiritual life in an ever-changing universe.

II. Literature Review

Historical Context and Intellectual Background of the Work

The *Kebangkitan* manuscript, written in 1983 by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, emerged during a period of intense modernization and global unrest. From a historical perspective, this era was marked by the dynamics of the Cold War, which polarized the world into capitalist and communist blocs, and the dominance of an aggressive, causality-driven science that lacked ethical or spiritual balance. Domestically, Indonesia was entering the consolidation phase of the New Order regime, which strongly upheld political stability and economic growth—often at the expense of humanity, the arts, and critical voices against power.

Within this value framework, Takdir viewed such phenomena as a fundamental ignorance of the values that should thrive in modern society. Science had turned into technocracy, religion into fanaticism, economics into exploitation, and politics into a quest for power. One of Takdir’s convictions—clearly articulated in works such as *Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society, and Culture*—is that modern societies tend to fragment values, when in fact these values are the “energy of integration” that connect humans with their culture. Takdir proposed six fundamental values that shape human civilization: theoretical values, economic values, religious values, aesthetic values, power values, and solidarity values. If one value dominates without being stimulated or balanced by the others, a cultural crisis will inevitably arise.

Kebangkitan is an aesthetic expression of Takdir’s anxiety over this value crisis. Through a mythopoetic style, he crafted a symbolic drama in which characters such as the Cleric, the Politician, the Economist, and the Scientist represent distorted manifestations of values, driven by a destructive force symbolized by the Giant (Raksasa). In contrast, the characters of the Hero and the Goddess of Love embody the values of solidarity, spirituality, and compassion—offering humanity a path to salvation from the devastation caused by ambition, greed, and fanaticism.

The birth of this work is also deeply influenced by Takdir’s cosmopolitan and transcultural thinking. He did not reject modernity; rather, he sought to reconstruct modern values by integrating them with moral and spiritual consciousness. This idea is strongly reflected in *Kebangkitan*, where Takdir envisions a “new human”—one who is aware of their responsibility not only as a thinking being (*homo sapiens*), but also as a moral being (*homo ethicus*) within an interconnected universe.

Thus, *Kebangkitan* is not only significant as a literary work, but also as a cultural text that voices resistance against the fragmentation of values and the domination of ideology in modern society. It offers an alternative narrative for the direction of civilization—one that calls for the awakening of integral values: ethics,

compassion, spirituality, and cosmic responsibility.

Cultural Semiotics: Yuri Lotman's Approach

Cultural semiotics is a branch of semiotics that views culture as a complex system of signs, a place where the production, exchange, and conflict of meanings take place. From Yuri Lotman's perspective (1990), culture is understood as a semiosphere, or semiotic space, where various sign systems interact and shape social order (Salsabila et al., 2025; Rahman, 2019; Sosrohadi & Wulandari, 2022). The semiosphere is heterogeneous, dynamic, and always divided into central and peripheral structures. Lotman emphasized that every cultural text, including literary texts, not only conveys meaning but also reflects and transforms the ideologies, values, and social order surrounding it.

Lotman also introduced the concept of a model of the world, a symbolic construction produced by a cultural text to represent a society's worldview. In this regard, the characters in the drama "Resurrection," such as the Hero, the Giant, the Religious Man, the Economist, and the Scientist, can be read as semiotic representations of ideological conflicts in modern society. The actions, utterances, and symbolic attributes of these characters are expressions of competing value systems within the global semiosphere: solidarity and egoism, spirituality and fundamentalism, knowledge and destruction.

Takdir Alisjahbana's Theory of Cultural Values

Another important foundation for understanding the Awakening is Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana's own understanding of cultural values. In his work **Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society, and Culture** (1974), Takdir divides cultural values into six main categories: theoretical values, economic values, religious values, aesthetic values, power values, and solidarity values. These six values form the framework for understanding culture as the total expression of human reason.

In the context of the Awakening, these four figures: the Religious Man, the Politician, the Economist, and the Scientist, represent certain values that have deviated: fanaticism in religion, authoritarianism in politics, greed in economics, and destructive positivism in science. Conversely, the figures of the Hero and the Goddess of Love represent the values of solidarity, aesthetics, and spirituality, which Takdir views as a saving force in building a new, more civilized world. Takdir believes that the crisis of the modern era is not simply a technological or political crisis, but rather a crisis of values that causes moral disorientation and cultural decay. Therefore, "Resurrection" is a dramatic text depicting the struggle between value systems in the evolutionary process of human civilization.

Mythology and Archetypes in Jungian Studies

As a mythopoetic work, "Resurrection" can also be analyzed through Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes. According to Jung, myths and symbols in works of art are manifestations of the collective unconscious, which harbors universal archetypal patterns. Characters such as the Hero and the Giant represent classic archetypes: the Hero as a transformative figure who struggles against a destructive force (the Giant), and the Goddess of Love as the anima archetype who guides the soul toward awakening. This play reflects an archetypal narrative structure called the monomyth (Campbell, 1949), namely the journey of a character facing trials and crises, and ultimately achieving transformation of self and society. Thus, *The Awakening* speaks not only to the socio-political context of modern Indonesia, but also to the universal archetypal dimensions of humanity seeking meaning, salvation, and integration of the soul.

Mythopoetic Narrative and Symbolic Structure

In reading the *Resurrection*, it is important to understand that its dramatic structure is not constructed solely through a realistic plot or everyday events, but rather through a symbolic and mythopoetic framework. Mythopoetic narrative is a form of storytelling rooted in myths, archetypes, and collective symbolic structures

that persist in the cultural consciousness of humanity across time. These structures not only convey moral messages but also activate deep emotional and spiritual responses to the meaning of life, crisis, and transformation.

Carl Gustav Jung's thinking on archetypes and the collective unconscious is crucial to understanding this mythopoetic foundation. Jung argued that within the human collective unconscious, there are recurring narrative and symbolic patterns, such as the Hero, the Giant, the Anima, or the Spirit Guide, that structure human experience across cultures and time. The Hero in this text reflects the classic archetype of the transformative protagonist, while the Giant represents destructive forces (shadow archetype), and the Goddess of Love symbolizes the anima, or the spiritual feminine wisdom principle that guides humanity towards integration.

Furthermore, the narrative structure of Resurrection also conforms to the monomyth or hero's journey pattern as formulated by Joseph Campbell (1949). In this pattern, a main character (the Hero) is called to face a major crisis, experiences identity destruction or confusion, then receives spiritual guidance, and ultimately achieves enlightenment and transformation, not only for himself but also for the society around him. The dramatic plot of Resurrection demonstrates this pattern in its entirety: from the Hero's search for values, his descent into ideological crisis, to his rebirth through the help of the Goddess of Love and his victory over the power of the Giant.

From Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotic perspective, this kind of mythopoetic narrative acts as a transcoding mechanism in the semiosphere. Transcoding is the process of changing meaning or shifting a sign system from one order to a new one. In Resurrection, the storyline and mythical structure serve not only as an aesthetic framework but also as a semiotic device that transforms destructive value systems (fanaticism, greed, power, technocratism) into new ethical, spiritual, and integrative value systems. Thus, narrative becomes an active part of the semiosphere's shift from ideological dominance to cultural awareness.

By reading "Resurrection" as a mythopoetic and symbolic text, we not only understand the characters and symbols separately but also interpret how the entire dramatic structure forms a narrative system that conveys profound and layered cultural meaning.

III. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using the method of cultural semiotic analysis. This approach is chosen for its ability to explore symbolic meanings and cultural representations embedded within literary texts, particularly in the script *Kebangkitan* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana. The analysis is based on the theory of mythopoetic semiotics, drawing from the ideas of Northrop Frye and Carl Gustav Jung's archetypal theory, to identify narrative structures, symbolic characters, and sign systems that reflect cultural values within the work.

The primary data source for this research is the *Kebangkitan* script, which is analyzed in depth as both a literary and cultural text. The analysis involves identifying motifs, symbols, and inter-character relationships that represent the crisis and reconstruction of civilizational values. Additionally, the study refers to the framework of universal values developed by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in his various works, particularly *Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society, and Culture*, as an analytical tool for examining the cultural messages embedded in the text.

Through this approach, the research aims to reveal how *Kebangkitan* represents a cultural and philosophical response to the challenges of modernity and the disorientation of values in contemporary society.

IV. Results

Analysis of Signs and Symbols in the Resurrection Manuscript

Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana's Resurrection Manuscript is a dramatic text rich with a system of cultural signs and symbols. It reflects the crisis of values in modern society and presents ideological struggles through allegorical

figures representing global currents of thought. The following analysis uses Yuri Lotman's (1990) cultural semiotic framework, Takdir's (1974) value theory, and Carl G. Jung's (1964) archetypal approach to uncover the hidden meanings behind the script's dramatic structure.

1. The Hero: Symbol of Ethical Awareness and Moral Resistance

The hero is the center of the semiosphere in the play. He symbolizes a conscious human being undergoing a process of spiritual transformation. In Lotman's semiotics, he represents the center of the cultural code that still maintains integrative values such as solidarity, responsibility, and justice (Lotman, 1990). In Jungian theory, the hero is a classic archetype who undergoes a hero's journey.

The following dialogue shows the existential dilemma that the Hero experiences in facing a chaotic world:

Data 1

"Apakah yang dapat kulakukan,
Dalam dunia penuh pertentangan dan kejahatan,
Ketika manusia masing-masing menuntut haknya,
Dengan melupakan kewajiban dan tanggung jawab?"
(Naskah Kebangkitan, hlm. 39)
"What can I do,
In a world full of conflict and cruelty,
When each man demands his rights,
Forgetting his duties and responsibilities?"
(Resurrection Manuscript, p. 39)

This confusion marks the starting point of a quest for true values, which will eventually be guided by Dewi Kasih. In Takdir's symbolism, the Hero carries the cultural responsibility to "restore a harmonious configuration of values."

2. The Giant: A Symbol of Cosmic Chaos and Distorted Values

The Giant in this drama does not merely function as an antagonist, but rather as a representation of natural forces and destructive impulses that have broken free from moral control. He is not simply "evil" in the moral sense, but symbolizes vital energy that has not yet been shaped by ethical consciousness.

Data 2

"Jangan manusia menyangka,
Ia akan dapat menguasai segala di bumi,
Malahan alam semesta,
Dengan akalnya yang angkuh dan angkara!"
(Naskah Kebangkitan, hlm. 28)
"Don't let people think,
He will be able to rule everything on earth,
In fact, the universe
With his arrogant and arrogant mind!"
(Resurrection Manuscript, p. 28)

In Lotman's framework, the Giant represents a peripheral element that threatens the order of the central semiosphere and attempts to replace it with an alternative value system based on power, desire, and domination. However, at the end of the drama, his energy is redirected by the Hero to create a new world—demonstrating that value transformation can be achieved not through destruction, but through reconstruction.

3. Dewi Kasih: The Embodiment of Solidarity and Spirituality

Dewi Kasih is a character who embodies the values of love, cosmic awareness, and spiritual responsibility. She reminds the Hero of his duty as a guardian of human evolution.

Data 3

"Engkau tak boleh putus asa oleh tenaga-tenaga yang jahat itu.
Yang benar itu selalu benar, yang baik itu selalu baik.
Tak ada kompromi antara kebenaran dan kedustaan."
(*Naskah Kebangkitan*, hlm. 53)
"You must not be discouraged by these evil forces.
What is right is always right, what is good is always good.
There is no compromise between truth and lies."
(*Resurrection Manuscript*, p. 53)

She/he represents the values of solidarity and aesthetics within Takdir's value system (1974). From Jung's archetypal perspective, Dewi Kasih is the *anima*—a spiritual guide who restores harmony between the soul and the world.

4. The Mask: A Symbol of Ideology and Distorted Identity

One of the key symbols in the drama is the mask placed by the Giant on the faces of the Cleric, Politician, Economist, and Scientist. In cultural semiotics, the mask functions as a *metasign* (Lotman, 1990)—a signifier of an imposed value system. Each mask signifies a distortion of values.

Data 4

- a. *Agamawan*: *fanatisme* → "Sekarang benar-benar aku sakti penuh tenaga, sanggup membasmi segala yang tak percaya." (hlm. 29)
- b. *Politikus*: *ambisi kuasa* → "Ya, kita mesti menang... Menaklukkan segala negara dan bangsa." (hlm. 31)
- c. *Ekonomiman*: *keserakahan* → "Apa saja dan siapa sekalipun dapat dibeli." (hlm. 33)
- d. *Ilmuwan*: *positivisme destruktif* → "Kami telah dapat membuat bom nuklir... seluruh bumi dapat dihancurkan." (hlm. 36)
- a. Cleric: fanaticism → "Now I am truly powerful, full of strength, able to annihilate all non-believers." (p. 29)
- b. Politician: lust for power → "Yes, we must win... Conquer all nations and peoples." (p. 31)
- c. Economist: greed → "Anything and anyone can be bought." (p. 33)
- d. Scientist: destructive positivism → "We are now able to create nuclear bombs... the entire Earth can be destroyed." (p. 36)

These masks symbolize the dominance of ideology that conceals their humanity and can only be removed through a process of enlightenment (see the unmasking scene at the end of the drama).

5. Symbols of Nature: Talisman, Shell, and Garland

Magical objects such as the shell, talisman, and garland given by the Water Goddess and Earth Goddess symbolize the unity between humans and the forces of nature. In cultural semiotics, these objects are *cultural tokens* that restore the harmony between humans and the cosmos.

Data 5

"Dengan azimat ini... engkau tak dapat dikalahkan... sebab tenaga samudera dan udara bersamamu." (*Naskah Kebangkitan*, hlm. 56)
With this talisman... you cannot be defeated... for the power of the ocean and the air are with you." (*Kebangkitan Manuscript*, p. 56)

These symbols serve as manifestations of ecological and spiritual values that are often forgotten in

modernity, offering a way out of the value crisis through reconnection with nature.

6. The Removal of Masks and the New World: A Symbol of Collective Transformation

The scene in which the Water Goddess and Earth Goddess remove the masks from the Cleric, Politician, Economist, and Scientist signifies a liberation from narrow ideologies toward a more universal collective consciousness.

Data 6

"Sesudah topeng itu dilepaskan... mereka melihat ke sekitarnya penuh keheranan. Sadarlah mereka bahwa mereka ada di dunia yang lain... lebih luas dan lebih dalam." (Naskah Kebangkitan, hlm. 83)

"After the masks were removed... they looked around in amazement. They realized they were in another world... wider and deeper." (Resurrection Manuscript, p. 83)

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Within Lotman's framework, this marks a cultural transition or a shift from one configuration of sign systems to a new, more inclusive and harmonious system.

7. Contemporary Relevance of the Script *Kebangkitan*

Although written in 1983, *Kebangkitan* remains highly relevant to the dynamics of contemporary society. This drama is not only a cultural artifact of its time but also a mirror reflecting the profound issues that continue to shadow human civilization to this day. Through symbolic characters and a mythopoetic narrative, *Kebangkitan* offers a sharp reflection on a value crisis that has grown even more complex in new forms.

First, the script highlights the ethical crisis in science and technology. The Scientist character portrays the glorification of technology devoid of moral responsibility, as reflected in his pride over possessing the power to destroy the earth with nuclear bombs. A similar phenomenon can be observed in today's development of artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and digital exploration, which often neglect ethical considerations and their ecological or social impacts. Fundamental questions such as "For whom and for what purpose is knowledge used?" have once again become crucial.

Second, the drama also frames the issue of ideological extremism, which remains a global problem. The Cleric, Politician, and Economist characters symbolize distorted forms of ideology: religious fanaticism, political authoritarianism, and unchecked capitalism. These characters represent contemporary phenomena such as populism, political polarization, religious conflict, and growing economic inequality. Globally, these symptoms can be seen in the rise of ultra-nationalism, extreme religious conservatism, and a crisis of trust in democratic institutions.

Third, *Kebangkitan* positions humans within their damaged relationship with nature. The gifting of symbols such as the amulet, shell, and floral wreath by the Water and Earth Goddesses to the Hero conveys a message about the importance of ecological balance and cosmic spirituality. Amid today's climate crisis, large-scale environmental exploitation, and ecological disruption, this message is highly relevant. The ecological awareness and earthly spirituality conveyed in the drama offer a critique of the overly anthropocentric and exploitative relationship between modern humans and nature.

Finally, *Kebangkitan* proposes a model of value transformation that is not destructive but rather transformative and integrative. The new world built in the drama does not emerge from the annihilation of opponents but from enlightenment and awareness. This sharply contrasts with the cancel culture and zero-sum conflicts that often dominate today's digital and political public spheres. In this light, *Kebangkitan* is relevant as a call to nurture dialogic, empathetic, and inclusive values in addressing the complexities of the current era.

Thus, *Kebangkitan* is not merely a dramatic work that symbolically portrays a battle of values but also a cultural text capable of bridging intergenerational reflection on the direction of human and civilizational development. It offers a sharp literary lens for reading the present and envisioning a more virtuous, just, and sustainable future.

V. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze *Kebangkitan*, a play by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, as a cultural text that represents value conflicts in modern society, using the approaches of cultural semiotics (Yuri Lotman), value theory (Takdir Alisjahbana), and narrative archetypes (Jung and Campbell). Based on the analysis conducted, several conclusions can be drawn:

First, *Kebangkitan* is a dramatic work constructed within a complex semiotic framework, in which characters, objects, and narrative function as a system of signs reflecting ideological and value-based struggles. Characters such as the Cleric, Politician, Economist, and Scientist are portrayed as ideological figures experiencing distortions of cultural values, while the Hero and the Goddess of Love symbolize salvific values such as solidarity, spirituality, and compassion.

Second, the symbolic and mythopoetic structure of the play reflects the archetypal pattern of the hero's journey, where the hero faces a crisis, undergoes enlightenment, and subsequently brings transformation. This pattern reinforces the universal dimension of the play, allowing it to speak not only to the context of modern Indonesia but also to humanity's collective awareness of moral and spiritual crises throughout the history of civilization.

Third, through Lotman's concept of the semiosphere, the play successfully depicts how cultural transcoding occurs: destructive values that initially dominate (through ideological masks) are transformed into a new, more ethical and harmonious awareness. This indicates that true "awakening" in Takdir's view does not come from violent overthrow, but from a comprehensive awakening of values.

Fourth, *Kebangkitan* remains relevant in contemporary contexts. Today's climate crisis, religious fanaticism, scientific disinformation, and social inequality demonstrate that the value conflicts criticized by Takdir are far from resolved. The work offers a model of value restoration that is integrative and transformative, rooted in spirituality, solidarity, and cosmic awareness.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following suggestions are offered for academic development and cultural practice: For future research, it is recommended to apply intertextual or ecocritical approaches to *Kebangkitan*, especially in comparing its concepts of nature and spirituality with symbolic or mythopoetic dramas from Southeast Asia or other traditions. In the field of literary education, *Kebangkitan* deserves inclusion in the modern Indonesian literature curriculum due to its rich philosophical content and values—particularly in cultivating critical thinking, cultural ethics, and cross-value awareness among students. For cultural institutions and policymakers, the values embedded in *Kebangkitan* should be actualized in public policy discourse, especially in responding to moral crises in science, politics, and religion within contemporary Indonesian society. For theater and performing arts production, this script should be creatively re-adapted using contemporary approaches (visual, multimedia, or interactive) to reach younger audiences and bring the work to life in today's popular cultural discourse.

Thus, *Kebangkitan* is not merely an object of literary study but also a source of inspiration for building a cultured and spiritually aware society in the face of today's challenges.

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