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The Impact of Islamic Culture on Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

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Dedication

It is with genuine gratitude and warm regard that I dedicate this work to Allah, my family, and my friends

To my parents

Dgamal and Fatima

For their endless love, support, and encouragement throughout my educational career and life over the years. I hope this achievement will be a step to fulfill the dream you envisioned for me

To my brothers and my sisters

Fares, Adam, Sabrina, Meriem, Samira

For their support and being there for me, I will always appreciate all you have done; especially since you have never left my side.

And to my cutest angels Retan and Mounim.

To my sweet friends

Meriem and Nadjwa

I am extremely grateful to be your friend, both of you have been my best cheerleaders.

CHEYMA BENIDIR



DEDICATION

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

"And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping

you to achieve it." Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

I dedicate this work to:

My parents YAMNA and MOHAMMED

For their love, encouragement, and endless sacrifices, for being special parents and making me a strong successful girl.

My beloved sister WAFÀ

Who, for months past, has encouraged me attentively with her fullest and truest attention to accomplish my work with truthful self-confidence.

And my life support is my brothers OTHMAN and HAMZA.

To the beloved of my heart and the warm embrace, my sweet little ones, the source of love and tenderness: ADKAR, ABRAR, NASRO, BASSEM, IYAD, ILINE, MERYEM, DORSAF.

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for her efforts to make this work a success.

All my teachers and all my friends.

Maroua Ben Haddia



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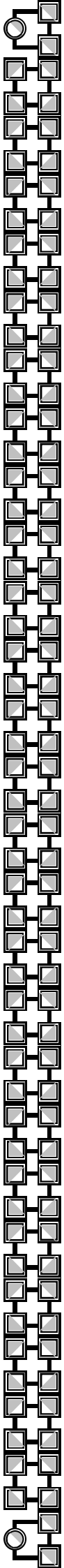
We are also indebted in many ways to our teachers at Kasdi Merbah's English Department for their unwavering support in the last five years.

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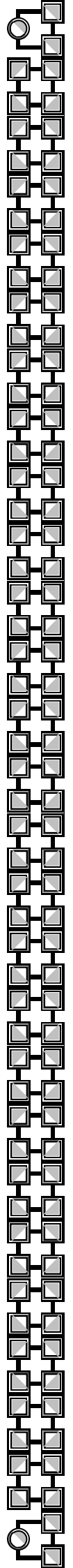




Abstract

This research discusses one of the bestseller novels around the world, Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. The objective of the study is to explore the Islamic culture presented through the journey of the protagonist, Santiago; it especially seeks at exploring the role of Islamic culture and its impacts on Coelho's work. Moreover, this dissertation provides a detailed background of Islam, as well as an examination of the main aspects of this culture through the novel in the light of cultural studies theory, Daring's theory. The study relied on a descriptive analytical approach by investigating and analyzing the main aspects of Islamic culture in the novel, and used the qualitative method. The research concludes that the novel was influenced by the Islamic culture, which has a significant role in the plot of *The Alchemist*, especially since the events take place in the Arab and Islamic world, and it also concludes that the writer was influenced by this culture in several aspects.

Keywords: *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho, Islam, Cultures, Islamic Culture, Cultural Studies.



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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Paulo Coelho Brazilian novelist is known for employing rich symbolism in his depictions of the often spiritually motivated journeys taken by his characters (Pallardy & Calvert, 2021); and also known for a Guinness World Record for being the most translated living author for his book '*The Alchemist*'. The book hit the New York Times best- seller list, an important milestone for any author, and stayed there for more than three hundred weeks; it has been translated into more than eighty different languages, and is widely considered one of the ten best books of the twentieth century (Coelho, 1993).

The Alchemist is an inspiring story about following your dreams and self-discovery, and an exciting novel that bursts with optimism; it's the kind of novel that tells you that everything is possible as long as you really want it to happen. It skillfully combines words of wisdom, philosophy, simplicity of meaning, and language, which makes it particularly readable and accounts for its bestselling status.

With this masterpiece Coelho shares a lot of messages by using magic realism, the novel itself is filled with many fantastical and magical elements that have been integrated into the characters' reality in believable ways. Moreover, the novel shows a lot of cultures one of them being Islamic culture. Which is one of the most popular cultures in the world, it has already spread around the world.

2. Motivation of the Study

First of all, the success and reputation that the novel gets, it has won the Guinness World Record as the most translated book by a living author in 2009 (Racoma, 2013). So, these facts attract us trying to find what is so special about it, and why it gains such status and recognition among readers and critics as well.

Second, *The Alchemist* is really interesting to be read because shows not only European cultures especially 'Spanish' but also 'Arabic Culture' which contains a lot of Islamic aspects. It also can be categorized as a religious philosophical novel.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:

- Examining the journey of the protagonist in Islamic world.
- Investigating Coelho's inspiration for writing about Islamic culture.
- Identifying the characteristics of Islam reflected in novel.
- Explaining the Aspects of Islamic Culture that are presented in *The Alchemist*.

4. Statement of the Problem

Islam is the religion that brings peace, loving each other, showing the rule of life, believing in Allah and Muhammad as Muslim's prophet. Islam always appreciates culture, especially the culture that gives benefits to Muslims in the world. There are so many different cultures presented in *The Alchemist* as Islamic culture is one of the overriding subjects. This novel contains a lot of values and characteristics, especially Islamic ones, which are very important for the people to improve their morality.

Based on that, this study is an attempt to analyze *The Alchemist* novel focusing on the aspects of Islamic culture in it, and its influence on the plot of this novel.

5. Research Questions

According to the above objectives, this study is based on the followings research question:

- What did inspire Paulo Coelho to write about Islamic Culture in his novel?

And these sub-questions:

- How did Coelho highlight Islamic world through the journey of the protagonist?
- What are the characteristics of Islam reflected in *The Alchemist*?
- How did the aspects of Islamic culture present in the novel?

6. Methodology

Islamic cultures are not Arabic or Eastern or Middle Eastern but it has varieties and rich diversities. There are elements in Islamic culture that are constant and universally accepted by all Muslims but there are also elements that are different from country to country and person to person. The universals are based on Quran and Sunna while the variables are based on the local customs of various people. Thus Islamic cultures actually exist in every culture in the world such as in Indonesia which can be called Indonesian Islamic Culture.

There are several steps in analyzing data in this study. The Qualitative Method was used in analyzing the data. The primary data is collected from a novel entitled *The Alchemist*, means that is taken from narration which is narrated by the author, and the dialogues of the characters. The secondary data are some literary texts, books, articles, documents, and some trusted websites that are all related to the study. So, the data is in essay forms.

Then, the study stands on the analytical descriptive approach to examine the aspects of Islamic culture presented in the novel by using the theory of cultural studies.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

The research will be divided into two main chapters: 'The Theoretical Background' and 'Identifying Islamic culture in Coelho's *The Alchemist*'.

The first chapter will be a general overview of Islam as a religion and its characteristics in order to facilitate the comprehension of the subject. In addition, it will provide a set of definitions of the term culture. Moreover, it will highlight the Islamic culture and its main aspects (Name, Dressing, Women, Marriage, and Religion). It will conclude by presenting a relationship between Islam and Western literature.

The second chapter will explain and explore the Islamic culture that is presented in the novel and its impact in the events by introducing the cultural studies theory of this study. Then, it will examine the Islamic world through the protagonist's journey. And also will investigate

Coelho's inspiration for writing about *The Alchemist*. Moreover, it will examine specific aspects of this culture through the novel.

8. Literature Review

A considerable number of researches and studies have been conducted concerning *The Alchemist*; it has been the source of research for many researchers of different nationalities. This research deals with the Islamic culture in this novel, and some previous studies are relevant to this topic. Therefore, the study has taken into account the three most important Indonesian works related to this topic.

The first is an unpublished work by Dr. Bambang Irawan entitled "Islamic Cultures in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*" Based on Cultural Studies", the objective of this research is to find out Islamic cultures presented in the novel, based on theories of During (2005) and Yahya (2009), it aims to show the four categories of Islamic cultures which are: shepherd, caravan, broker and commission, and falconry.

The second is a graduating paper by Fajar Kurniawan (Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta, 2010) entitled "The Principles of Islamic Faith in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*", the objective of the study is to reveal religious teachings from the novel, particularly about the principles of Islamic faith, based on the moral-philosophical approach, it aims to find out the principles of Islamic faith in *The Alchemist* through the plot of the story and to reveal the teachings and positive values.

Then, a graduating paper by Novia Rekno Widyastuti (Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, 2017) entitled "Portrayal of Muslim Community and Culture Reflected in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (1988): A Sociological Approach", the objectives of this study is to understand and identify the Muslim culture society reflected in *The Alchemist* novel, also the research aims to identify the characteristics and the symbols of Muslim society in the novel. In this respect, this research is conducted to explore the impact of Islamic culture in the plot of the novel as well as to show its influence on Paulo Coelho's works.



Chapter One:

The Theoretical Background

1.1. Introduction

That we live in a world of racial, cultural, ideological, and religious differences is a fact of existence, Islam and its culture are one of these differences. Therefore, Islam has attracted the attention of many readers and writers around the world, and it became one of the most important subjects in many literary works as we find in the novel "*The Alchemist*" by Paulo Coelho.

The first chapter gives a general overview of Islam. Moreover, it offers a detailed background of Islamic culture. Afterward, it provides close explanations of the basic aspects of Islamic culture, which is the most important section of this research, it is divided into three parts: names and dressing, controversial topics such as women, marriage, and polygamy, as well as it sheds light on beliefs and practices of the religion. The end of this chapter deals with Islam and western literature, it deals with the thoughts of western writers about Islam and Muslim character.

1.2. Definition of Religious Discourse

Discourses of religion are forms of social interaction in which a connection to religion is foregrounded, this can be because the setting or particular features of the social interaction have a distinctively religious character (Parks M. & Tracy, 2015). They mentioned four main types of religious discourse, Rituals, religious styles of speaking, religious language outside religious settings, and religion-linked public controversy. According to the previous research, all types of religious discourse have the function of doing religious identity work, while it is also possible for social interaction itself to be sustained by religious membership.

Islamic religious discourse refers to Quran, the holy book of Islam; Hadith, Prophet Mohammed's sayings; and Islamic practices and doctrines such as praying and fasting ("religious discourse", n.d.).

In other words, Islamic discourse refers to the normative textual tradition of Islam, as enshrined in Quran and Sunna, to make its peculiar choices and assertions appear compelling, ineluctable, and unassailable (Krämer, n.d.).

1.3. Introduction to Islam

Islam is one of the world's major monotheistic religions, it began in the early 7th century, and its founder was the Prophet, Muhammad ("The Origins of Islam", n.d.). Depending on the above research, Islam comes from the word "al-silm" and "istaslama" which means peace and surrender. And Also, the god in Islam is referred to as Allah, which in Arabic means "the god" or "the deity", a person who believes and practices the religion of Islam is called a Muslim.

According to the oxford dictionary "Islam is the religion of Muslim people. Islam teaches that there is only one God and that Muhammad is his prophet ". The word "Muslim" means one who submits to the will of God; in a broader sense, anyone who willingly submits to the will of God is a Muslim; thus, all the prophets preceding Prophet Muhammad are considered Muslims ("Who is a Muslim", 2013).

Islam can be followed by anyone who declares and believes that there is only one God and that Muhammad was His final Messenger, and it sees no difference between people other than in their deeds; for instance race, wealth, or nationality, grant no special status (Culture Vulture, n.d.). Islam is considered by many observers to be the world's fastest-growing religion, yet it is the most misunderstood of the world's major faiths (Yahya, 2009).

1.3.1. The Journey of the Prophet Muhammad

Based on research entitled "Islam and Religious Art", that the rise of Islam is intrinsically linked with the Prophet Muhammad, believed by Muslims to be the last in a long line of prophets that includes Moses and Jesus, because Muhammad was the chosen recipient

and messenger of the word of Allah through the divine revelations, Muslims from all walks of life strive to follow his example (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 33). After the Holy Quran, the sayings of the Prophet (Hadith) and descriptions of his way of life (Sunna) are the most important Muslim texts. His journey could divide into four main parts:

1.3.1.1. Early Life

Muhammad lived from 570 to 632, he was born in Mecca into a middle-class family in a powerful tribe of nomadic herders and successful merchants, his father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was only six years old, he was raised by an adopted family in his adult life ("The Origins of Islam", n.d.). Depending on the former research, Muhammad worked as a merchant for several years on the trade routes between Arabia, Syria, and Yemen, then he met a wealthy widow named Khadija who hired him to protect her caravans on the trade routes and they eventually married.

1.3.1.2. Divine Revelations

According to Churdaicliyska et al (2012, p. 33); when Muhammad was roughly forty, he began having visions and hearing voices. Searching for clarity, he would sometimes meditate at Mount Hira, near Mecca. On one of these occasions, the Archangel Gabriel (Jibra'il in Arabic) appeared to him and instructed him to recite "in the name of [your] lord." This was the first of many revelations that became the basis of Quran, the holy book of Islam. These early revelations pointed to the existence of a single God, contradicting the polytheistic beliefs of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula.

Initially overwhelmed by the significance of what was being revealed to him, Muhammad found unflinching support in his wife and slowly began to attract followers; his strong monotheistic message angered many of the Meccan merchants, they were afraid that trade, which they believed was protected by the pagan gods, would suffer (2012, p. 33).

From that point forward, Muhammad was ostracized in Mecca; for a time, the influence and status of his wife and his uncle, Abu Talib, the chief of the clan, protected Muhammad from persecution, after they died, however, Muhammad's situation in Mecca became dire (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 33).

1.3.1.3. The Hijra

In 622, Muhammad, his family, and his followers became persecuted for their beliefs and had to flee Mecca, the flight from Mecca to Medina is called the Hijra (see figure 01), and they were welcomed into the city of Medina and were able to freely practice their religion, there the first mosque was built and he and his followers would pray towards Mecca ("The Origins of Islam", n.d.).

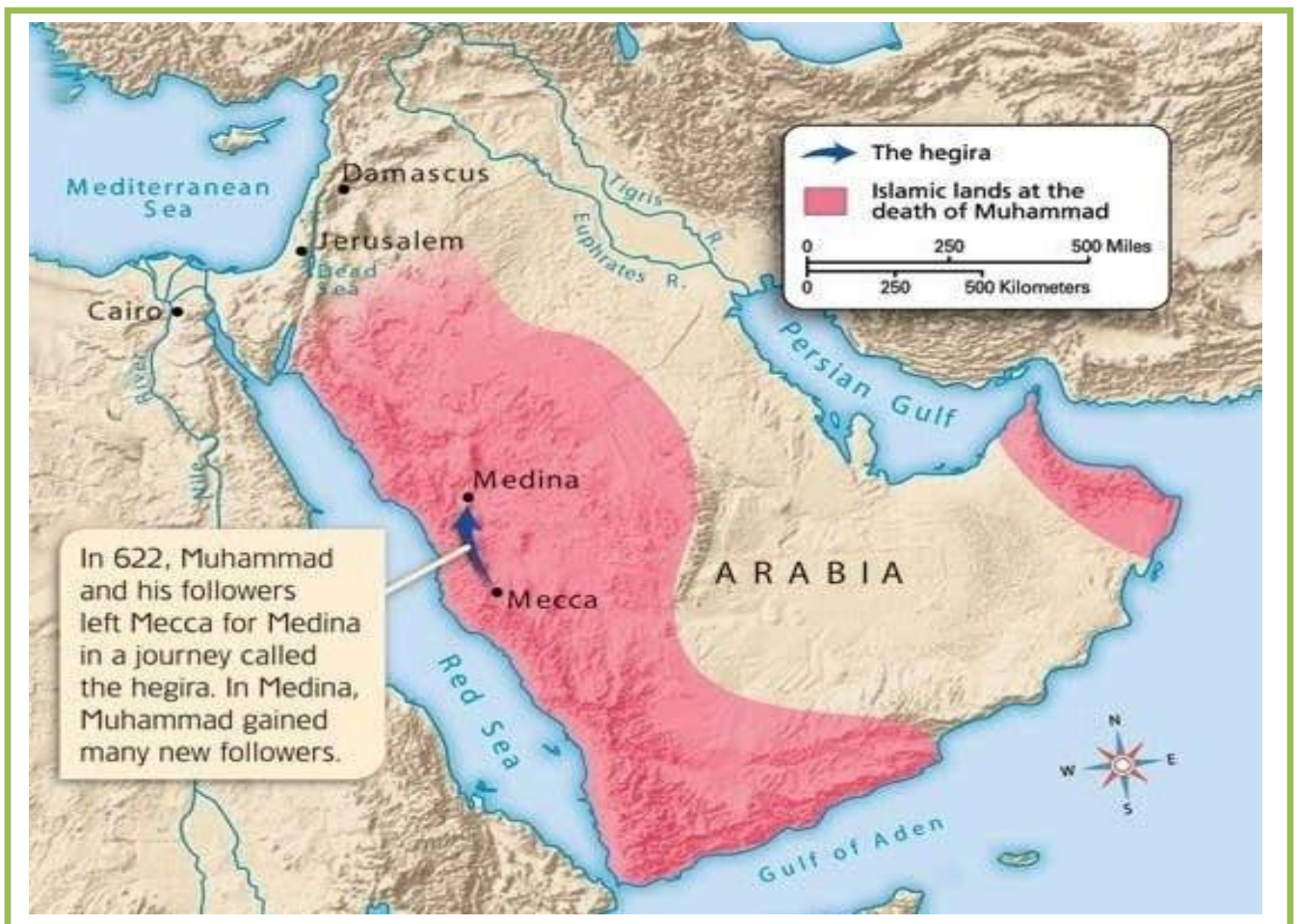
According to the previous research, at this time the pagans in Mecca tried to go to war with the Muslims in Medina. After several battles, the Muslims defeated the pagans, and in 629 Muhammad returned to Mecca with 1500 converts and took control of the city. Over the next 2 years, most of the Arabian Peninsula converted to Islam. Muhammad died in 632 as the effective leader of Islam and ruler of Southern Arabia.

1.3.1.4. After the Prophet's Death

Based on Churdaicliyska et al (2012, p. 35) , when Muhammad died in 632, he had not named a successor. One faction, the Shi'a, believed that only individuals with a direct lineage to the Prophet could guide the Muslim community righteously. They thought that 'Ali, Muhammad's closest surviving blood male relative, should be their next leader (caliph). The other faction, the Sunnis, believed that the Prophet's successor should be determined by consensus and successively elected three of his most trusted companions, commonly referred to as the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman), as leaders of the Muslim community; 'Ali succeeded them as the fourth caliph.

Relying on earlier research, today the Islamic community remains divided into Sunni and Shi'i branches. Sunnis revere all four caliphs, while Shi'is regards 'Ali as the first spiritual leader. The rift between these two factions has resulted in differences in worship as well as political and religious views. Sunnis are in the majority and occupy most of the Muslim world, while Shi'i populations are concentrated in Iran and Iraq, with sizeable numbers in Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012).

Figure 01: *The Hijra*



Note. This picture describes the journey of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina.

From "The Origins of Islam", n.d., Students of History (<https://www.studentsofhistory.com/the-origins-of-islam>).

1.3.2. Quran

Muslims believe that Quran, the holy book of Islam, was revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years, starting with the initial revelation at Mount Hira, and after the Prophet's death, his successors compiled these divine revelations in a manuscript (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 36). Moreover, Quran contains prayers, moral guidance, historical narrative, and promises of Paradise.

Churdaicliyska et al. (2012, p. 36) stated that Quran places Muhammad at the end of a long line of prophets that began with Abraham. Although the narrative is not central to Quran, it includes the stories of Noah, Moses, and Jesus, and it recognizes Jews and Christians as "People of the Book"; as a result, Muslims accept many of the teachings of the Jewish Torah and Christian Bible.

From the former research, Muslims believe that Quran contains the literal words of God, which were spoken in Arabic, their written form is considered the purest expression of God's intent, and Muslims throughout the world share a linguistic bond based on the desire to read Quran in its original language (2012, p. 37).

1.4. Islam and Culture

Islam has broad parameters of rules and regulations and within these parameters; an African can remain as much a Muslim as a Pakistani or a Bangladeshi or an English-man or Scots-man or an American or Chinese or any individual from any country anywhere in the world (Rahim, n.d., p.73). Rahim stated that Islam like many other religions claims to be universally accommodating within its fold the cultures of all its adherents provided that the bounds of the religious laws are not transgressed. Nevertheless, there is a difference of opinion on whether Islam has its own distinct culture.

1.4.1. Definition of Culture

The term "culture" could refer to several meanings, and also it has a wide range of sometimes contradictory definitions. According to John Lederach, "Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (1996, p. 9).

Hofstede stated that "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." (1984, p. 51).

Moreover, Useem said that "Culture has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings" (1963, p. 169).

However, Parson defined culture as "...consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes"(1949, p. 8).

In other words, Culture is a term that refers to a large and diverse set of mostly intangible aspects of social life. According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective, culture also includes the material objects that are common to that group or society (Cole, 2019).

According to those definitions above, culture could refer to the customs, ideas, beliefs, literature, art, music, etc of a particular society.

1.4.2. Definition of Islamic Culture

Columbia University research by Richard W. Bulliet (2003, p. 611), defines the Islamic culture as:

The term "Islamic culture" embraces a wide variety of peoples and societies spread over many countries. What they hold in common is membership in the umma, the Arabic term that designates the totality of the world Muslim

community at any point in time. The umma originated in western Arabia in the seventh century AD when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers made a trek from his home city of Mecca to the farming oasis of Medina to the north. There they joined with the Medinans to form a new kind of community, one based on shared belief in one God, whom they called Allah, and in Muhammad's role as a messenger bringing to humanity Allah's eternal message in the form of revelations later collected into the book known as the Quran.

Although at first glance the term "Culture of Islam" is no different from the term "Islamic culture". However, according to the research by DR. Ali Imran Sinaga, put the word Islam at the beginning of the word culture, its meaning is much different from the first definition. He stated that 'Islamic culture' and 'Culture of Islam' are two different cases, the two events happen because of cultural factors, Culture of Islam has come to an end with the end of revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, but Islamic culture is still ongoing throughout the Muslim giving his work in addressing each of the teachings of Islam (2016, pp. 90-95).

1.5. Aspects of Islamic Culture

Islamic culture refers to cultural practices which are common to Islamic people, and which have developed around the religion of Islam. However, the term "Islamic Culture" has a wide meaning and may refer to many concepts, due to many aspects are contained in. In this part, we will discuss the most important aspects of Islamic culture: First, Names and Dressing; Then, Women and Marriage, and finally, Religion.

1.5.1. Names and Dressing

Since names and dress styles are considered one of the aspects of culture, they differ from one place to another, even in Islamic countries, but Islam determined the standards for these names and dress styles. According to Yahya (2009, pp. 29-34), that Muslims should use the name of a righteous individual of history or a name that has a positive meaning, Quran lists many good and great names that are in fact Hebrew in origin. Also, they should avoid

some categories of names including derogatory names, names with pessimistic meanings, names unique to Allah, names that indicate submission to gods other than Allah, names that are deemed spiritually self-righteous, and names that are known to be specific to the opposite gender.

And their dress should be according to the teachings of Islam and any dress style that meets Islamic dress requirements is acceptable, in other words, they should cover their body in conformity with Islamic standards of modesty as mentioned in Quran and Hadith (Yahya, 2009, p. 34).

1.5.2. Women and Marriage

Marriage and the position of women are one of the important topics that have attracted the interest of non-Muslims to understand Islamic culture, but they ended up being misunderstood. According to Samuel M. Zwemer about these topics:

The position of women in the "Time of Ignorance" was, in some respects, inferior; but in others far superior to that under Islam...Nor can there be the least doubt that polygamy and slavery have had a tremendous power in the spread and grasp of Islam...A Moslem can have four wives and can divorce at his pleasure; he can remarry his divorced wives by a special though abominable arrangement. (1909, pp. 5-7)

And also he mentioned that:

The whole marriage relation are summed up by Ghazzali when he says: "Marriage is a kind of slavery, for the wife becomes the slave of her husband, and it is her duty absolutely to obey him in everything he requires of her except in what is contrary to the laws of Islam."Wife-beating is allowed by the Koran, and the method and limitations are explained by the laws of religion. (1909, p. 127)

The stereotype of Muslim women as choiceless, voiceless victims of their culture and religion is unfounded. Islam came to protect the rights of women and raise their honor and status in society. Thus, the idea of 'wife-beating' is allowed by Quran, it is incorrect. Scholars interpret

the word beating in different ways; whereas the consensus interprets it to mean "to strike", some hold that the term means "to separate".

34...If you fear high-handedness from your wives, remind them [of the teachings of God], then ignore them when you go to bed, then hit them. If they obey you, you have no right to act against them: God is most high and great. (The Quran 4:34)

While there are many interpretations of the verse, but everyone who knows Islam well and understands Islamic law as outlined in Allah's book, Quran, and the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, will see a great emphasis on the importance of respecting women.

Historically, in Islamic culture and traditional Islamic law marriage is not valid without the consent of the woman, and they have been forbidden from marrying in another religion. Polygamy is an option and an exception; it is not a norm. Allah, the Almighty has declared in Quran:

3 If you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three, or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s): that is more likely to make you avoid bias. (The Quran 4:3)

This verse permits polygamy on the condition that there is no likelihood of refraining to observe fairness and justice, whereas Quran makes it quite clear that if they doubt their ability to behave equally and justly with their wives, they should suffice themselves with one wife. However, it is something that most men are not competent enough to accomplish.

1.5.3. Religion

In addition to what we have formerly introduced about Islam as a religion, Islam is a monotheistic religion and helps us develop a close relationship with Allah by first telling us what to believe in by 'the Six Articles of Faith', and then explaining how to implement these beliefs in our lives and that according to 'the Five Pillars of Islam'.

1.5.3.1. Pillars

The ritual obligations of Muslims are called the Five Pillars which are the five obligations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life according to Islam. Each of the five pillars is alluded to in Quran. Further insights concerning these commitments are given in the Hadith. Carrying out the Five Pillars demonstrates that the Muslims are putting their faith first, and not just trying to fit it in around their secular lives. According to Zwemer that:

While, generally speaking, Islam means resignation to the will of God, Mohammed stated that it was, especially, to be submissive to His will in the observance of five duties. These five duties merit reward and are called "the pillars," or foundation, of religion. Their pious observance is the mark of a true Moslem; to break loose from any one of them is to be in peril of damnation. Mohammed said: "A Moslem is one who is resigned and obedient to God's will, and (1) bears witness that there is no god but God, and that Mohammed is His Apostle; and (2) is steadfast in prayer; and (3) gives zakat (legal alms); and (4) fasts in the month of Ramazan; and (5) makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, if he have the means. (1909, p. 99)

Profession of Faith (shahada). The belief that "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah" is central to Islam, and one becomes a Muslim by reciting this phrase with conviction (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 30).

Prayer (salat). Churdaicliyska et al., (2012, p. 30) stated that, Muslims pray facing Mecca five times a day: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and after dark. Prayer includes a recitation of the opening chapter (sura) of the Quran, and is sometimes performed on a small rug or mat used expressly for this purpose. Muslims can pray individually at any location or together in a mosque, where a prayer leader (imam) guides the congregation. Zwemer viewed that "...Mohammed used to call prayer "the pillar of religion" and "the key of Paradise." " (1909, p. 104).

Alms (zakat). Following Islamic law, Muslims donate a fixed portion of their income to community members in need (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 30). And it was stated by Zwemer that:

Since the gift of a portion of one's gain or property would purify, or sanctify, the remainder. There are seven classes to whom these legal alms may be given, viz., the poor, the homeless, the tax-collector, slaves, debtors, those engaged in fighting for Islam, and wayfaring travellers. (1909, p. 109)

Fasting (sawm). Depending on Churdaicliyska et al., that during the daylight hours of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, all healthy adult Muslims are required to abstain from food and drink, through this temporary deprivation, they renew their awareness of and gratitude for everything Allah has provided in their lives. During Ramadan, they share the hunger and thirst of the needy as a reminder of the religious duty to help those less fortunate (2012, p. 30).

Pilgrimage (hajj). Every Muslim whose health and finances permit it must make at least one visit to the holy city of Mecca, in present-day Saudi Arabia, Pilgrimage focuses on visiting the Ka'ba and walking around it seven times, and Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, believers from all over the world have gathered around the Ka'ba in Mecca on the eighth and twelfth days of the final month of the Islamic calendar (Churdaicliyska et al., 2012, p. 32). In addition, Zwemer views that "...The pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca is not only one of the pillars of the religion of Islam, but it has proved one of the strongest bonds of union..." (1909, p. 109).

1.5.3.2. Articles of Faith

'Imaan' or 'Faith' is the foundation of Islam and is a crucial part of a Muslim's life; there are six articles of faith. These are derived from the Holy Quran and Sunna of the prophet Muhammad. Its importance is found in the following Quranic verses:

136. You who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. Anyone who does not believe in God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers, and the Last Day has gone far, far astray. (Quran 4:136)

Allah said; "177. Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets ;..." (Quran 2:177).

Belief in the Oneness of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah is the creator of all things, and that Allah is all-powerful and all-knowing. Allah has no offspring, no race, no gender, nobody, and is unaffected by the characteristics of human life (The Muslim Student Association, n.d.).

Belief in the Angels of Allah. Muslims believe in angels, which are pure and spiritually obedient creatures, Allah created them to fulfill His commands and worship Him tirelessly (Dar al-Ifta Al-Misriyyah, n.d.).

Belief in the Books of Allah. Based on The Muslim Student Association, Muslims believe in the revelations sent by Almighty Allah to His prophets and messengers including the Quran, the Torah, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham, and the Psalms of David. Furthermore, Muslims believe that these earlier scriptures in their original form were divinely revealed, but that only Quran remains as it was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

Belief in the Prophets of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah's guidance has been revealed to humankind through specially appointed prophets, twenty-five of these prophets are mentioned by name in Quran, Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last in this line of prophets, sent for all humankind with the message of Islam (The Muslim Student Association, n.d.). Muslims believe the prophets should be respected but never worshipped.

Belief in the Day of Judgment. One of the most emphasized beliefs in the Holy Quran is the belief in the Day of Judgment. Muslims believe that life on Earth is a test and

that, after they die, they will be judged by Allah and sent to either Paradise or Hell (Dar al-Ifta Al-Misriyyah, n.d.).

Belief in the Divine Decree. According to The Muslim Student Association, Muslims believe in Allah's will, namely that whatever happens in one's life is preordained, and that believers should respond to the good or bad that befalls them with thankfulness or patience. This concept does not negate the concept of 'free will', since humans do not have prior knowledge of Alla's decree, they do have freedom of choice.

1.6. Islam and Western Literature

In Literature, religion plays a role in a vast majority of works as a result of religious influence. According to Shahzad Latif Chaudhary in her research about "Glimpses of Religion in English Literature" (2013), its result was that literature and religion are interdependent. She stated that Religion leaves a great impact on literature, whether positively or negatively. And both of them have a harmonious relationship, Religious prospers through literature and literature saturates religion.

Islam is considered one of the religions, it also played the main role to influence some works of literature, and even western literature has had its share of this influence. Dr. Syed Mashkooor Ali had mentioned in his book "*Blessing in Disguise*" how Islam affected western writers and their literature. He stated that most of the western writers were immensely impressed and deeply influenced by Islam; he gave examples of writers who wrote under the influence of Islamic doctrines like Dante, Shakespeare, E.M. Forster, Dorris Lessing, and T.S. Eliot. Some of them presented it in a distorted form like Dante while writing the Divine Comedy as an avenged of Miraj literature of the period depicted Christians in hell, so he showed the portrayal of the Prophet in hell, which is considered an anti-Islamic text (Khan, 2013).

Others presented Islam favorably like Washington Irving, who was the first American to penetrate the soul of Islam and to discover Islam in its right kiln. He presented an unbiased biography of the Holy Prophet of Islam was entitled *The Life of Mahomet*, which culminated Washington Irving's portraits of Muslim Spain and Islam (Ali, 2007)

There are a few scholars who assert that Washington Irving was not merely impressed by Islam, but also embraced it. He described the forceful personality of the Holy Prophet when he said:

His intellectual qualities were undoubtedly of an extraordinary kind. He had quick apprehension, a retentive memory, a vivid imagination, and an inventive genius. Owing but little to education, he had quickened and informed his mind by close observation, and storied it with a great variety of knowledge concerning the systems of religion current in his day, or handed down by tradition from antiquity. His ordinary discourse was grave and sententious, abounding with those aphorisms and apologies so popular among the Arabs; at times he was excited and eloquent, and his eloquence was aided by a voice musical and sonorous.(Irving, 1949)

However, it is not only Islam religion that occupied the thinking of Western writers; even Islamic culture took its share of this impact. For instance, the Islamic atmosphere and Muslim character have been used in a lot of literary works like in *The Zahir* and *The Alchemist* by the Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho.

Moreover, according to research by Schimmel (2021), Islamic or Arabic literature has long been known in the west by Investigation of Western scholars; in the first half of the 19th century the publication of numerous translations of Eastern poetry, especially into German, began to interest some Europeans. An “Orientalizing style,” which employed Arabo-Persian literary forms such as *the ghazal*, which is a short graceful poem with monorhyme, became fashionable at times in Germany. Also, he mentioned that the fairy tales known as "*The Thousand and One Nights*", first translated in 1704, provided the abundant raw material for many a Western writer’s play, novel, story, or poem about the Islamic East.

1.7. Conclusion

To sum up, Islam is the fastest-growing major religion in the world, since Islamic culture has influenced and assimilated much from different cultures. This chapter aimed at understanding the Islamic culture by presenting its different aspects; which will aid in conducting a thorough analysis of these aspects throughout one of the famous novels of postmodern literature. Consequently, the next chapter of the present research shall shed light on the impact of Islamic culture in constructing the plot of *The Alchemist*, and more importantly find examples of these aspects in the novel.



Chapter Two:

Identifying Islamic Culture in

Coelho's *The Alchemist*

2.1. Introduction

Paulo Coelho presents a blend visionary of spirituality, magical realism, and folklore in *The Alchemist*, which is a story with the power to inspire nations and change people's lives. However, we shall now introduce the other side of this novel, The Islamic Culture.

After discussing the aspects of Islamic culture, as well as its influence on western literature in the previous chapter, this chapter provides a practical analysis of the novel. At first, introduces the selected cultural studies theory of this study, moreover, spotlights on Coelho's inspiration in writing *The Alchemist*, and on also the novel itself by presenting Islamic world during the protagonist's journey to provide a framework for the novel's analysis. Then, the end of this chapter tackles the main aspects of Islamic culture employed by Coelho throughout *The Alchemist*.

2.2. Cultural Studies Theories

The term Cultural Studies is now well known as the title for an important set of theories and practices within the humanities and social sciences. As its international journal, Cultural Studies puts it, the field is "dedicated to the notion that the study of cultural processes, and especially of popular culture, is important, complex and both theoretically and politically rewarding" (Turner, 2005).

In "Introducing Cultural Studies" (Walton, 2008), Walton finds that Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler have observed, cultural studies has no particular methodology. Furthermore, it is 'pragmatic, strategic and self reflexive'. But, John Frow has argued that even though Cultural Studies exists 'in a state of productive uncertainty about its status as a discipline' there has been sufficient institutional consolidation of the area for practitioners to identify themselves with one another. Accordingly, Walton stated that cultural studies did not pre-exist theory and practice, it is a product of them.

Additionally, the development of cultural studies, which brought together the elements of literary criticism, Marxist theory, sociology, and several other disciplines within the humanities, is then traced from its beginnings in Britain in the 1960s until its current status worldwide (Francuski, 2016).

The first of these 'culturalist' writers is Richard Hoggart, then Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson, which they called the "founding fathers" of British cultural studies. Moreover, Stuart Hall is the most influential figure in cultural studies. Through several versions of this theory, this study will use Cultural Studies theory according to the New Zealander Simon During.

2.2.1. During's theory

According to Simon During in his book titled "Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction"(2005), cultural studies deal with the study of culture from a sociological rather than an aesthetic viewpoint. The early cultural studies were an engaged form of analysis because they studied about the social inequalities, the theory of cultural studies is different from the objective social sciences, it relied more on literary criticism which was considered more political, the rapid development of Cultural Studies as a "new discipline" is closely related to the progress of postmodernism, it may even be considered the real product of the era (Joy, 2011).

During noted that Cultural Studies appears as a field of study in Great Britain in the 1950s 1960s, and 1970s, and has been subsequently taken up and transformed by scholars from many different disciplines around the world. Two of its founding figures, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. From this fact, one should easily understand that this study is still closely related to the study of literature, and this consequently means that any methods one has used with literature may be applied to cultural studies as well. However, for one or more reasons, people are probably led into confusion as the object of discussion in cultural

studies is not merely a piece of canonical literature. Even, in its development, cultural studies tends to grasp or to pierce into any kind of text, because for cultural studies anything can be text. This condition will surely remind us of the phenomenon of postmodernism which “completes” the era of modernism. Therefore, we may be certain that cultural studies stands as an extension of literary studies and develops by the progression of postmodernism’s philosophical thought.(Joy, 2011)

According to the above research, Cultural studies looks at various kinds of texts within the context of cultural practice, that is, the work, production, and material stuff of daily life marked as it is by economics and class, by politics, gender, and race, by need and desire. The term cultural studies itself, of course, suggests that it is the study of culture, or, more particularly, the study of contemporary culture (Joy, 2011).

Also, this theory sees 'theory' as a resource to be used to respond strategically to a particular project, to specific questions, and specific contexts. It continues to wrestle with various modern and postmodern philosophies, including Marxism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, pragmatism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism (Joy, 2011).

2.2.2. Characteristics of Cultural Studies

Besides the precedent Cultural Studies Theory, Cultural Studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field, and its objective is to understand the culture in all its complex forms, and analyzing the social and political context in which culture manifests itself. According to research by Yolagani about Cultural Studies, through identify the main characteristics of these Studies, which stated that the history of Cultural Studies has provided it with certain distinguishable characteristics that can often be identified in terms of what Cultural Studies aims to do: (Yolagani, 2007)

1. Cultural studies aims to examine its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and their relation to power. Its constant goal is to expose power relationships and examine how these relationships influence and shape cultural practices.

2. Cultural Studies is not simply the study of culture as though it was a discrete entity divorced from its social or political context. Its objective is to understand the culture in all its complex forms and to analyze the social and political context within which it manifests itself.

3. Culture in Cultural Studies always performs two functions: it is both the object of study and the location of political criticism and action. Cultural Studies aims to be both an intellectual and a pragmatic enterprise

4. Cultural Studies attempts to expose and reconcile the division of knowledge, to overcome the split between tacit (that is, intuitive knowledge based on local cultures) and objective (so-called universal) forms of knowledge. It assumes a common identity and common interest between the knower and the known, between the observer and what is being observed.

5. Cultural Studies is committed to a moral evaluation of modern society and to a radical line of political action. The tradition of Cultural Studies is not one of value-free scholarship but one committed to social reconstruction by critical political involvement. Thus Cultural Studies aims to understand and change the structures of dominance everywhere.

2.3. *The Alchemist*

The Alchemist was written in 1987 by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho and was first published in Brazil in 1988, since that day, the book has sold over 65 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 80 languages making Coelho the most translated living author, also achieving an outstanding record of being the longest book currently staying on the Times bestseller list (Al-Swedy, 2016). The novel is about how a person will reach his destination or his dream by believing in his personal legend.

Furthermore, Paulo Coelho sheds light on Islamic culture through the characters and the novel's setting. So, our aims in this section are to present the journey of the protagonist in Islamic world, as well as to find Coelho's main inspiration in writing this novel.

2.3.1. The Journey of the Protagonist in Islamic World

The setting of any literary work involves both time period and geographic region; *The Alchemist* takes place in four main regions: Spain, Morocco, The Desert, and Egypt (As illustrated in Figure 02). On other hand, it is not clear the period when the novel is set; however, from the description, it seems set in the pre-modern time, before advanced technologies existed. According to the dialogue below with the Englishman, the character reveals that books were written: "many centuries ago". Therefore, due to the presence of books in "*The Alchemist*", we can imagine the journey took place after the creation of the printing press in 1440, but before the advent of modern technology (Al-Jabri et al., n.d.).

"When were these books written?" the boy asked. "Many centuries ago." "They didn't have the printing press in those days," (Coelho, 1993, p. 79).

Coelho began to narrate *the Alchemist* by introducing the protagonist 'Santiago', an Andalusian boy who gave up on his father's dream of being a priest to become a Shepherd to see the world. Then, the events move to the scene where he stops with his sheep at an abandoned church with a sycamore tree growing from the place where the sacristy had once been. He begins to see a recurring dream, about finding a treasure at the Pyramids of Egypt, which turns his life upside down.

In fact, his journey to Islamic world started at the moment he decided to find an interpretation for his dream in Tarifa, a town located in the Andalusia region in southern Spain. So, he visits a gypsy woman and meets an old man. The man reveals himself to be the King of Salem, Melchizedek, who told him the obvious: a treasure awaits him at the

Pyramids of Egypt. Thus, his decision to take an adventure became clear after the insisting of a 'king of Salem' and the omens to follow his Personal Legend.

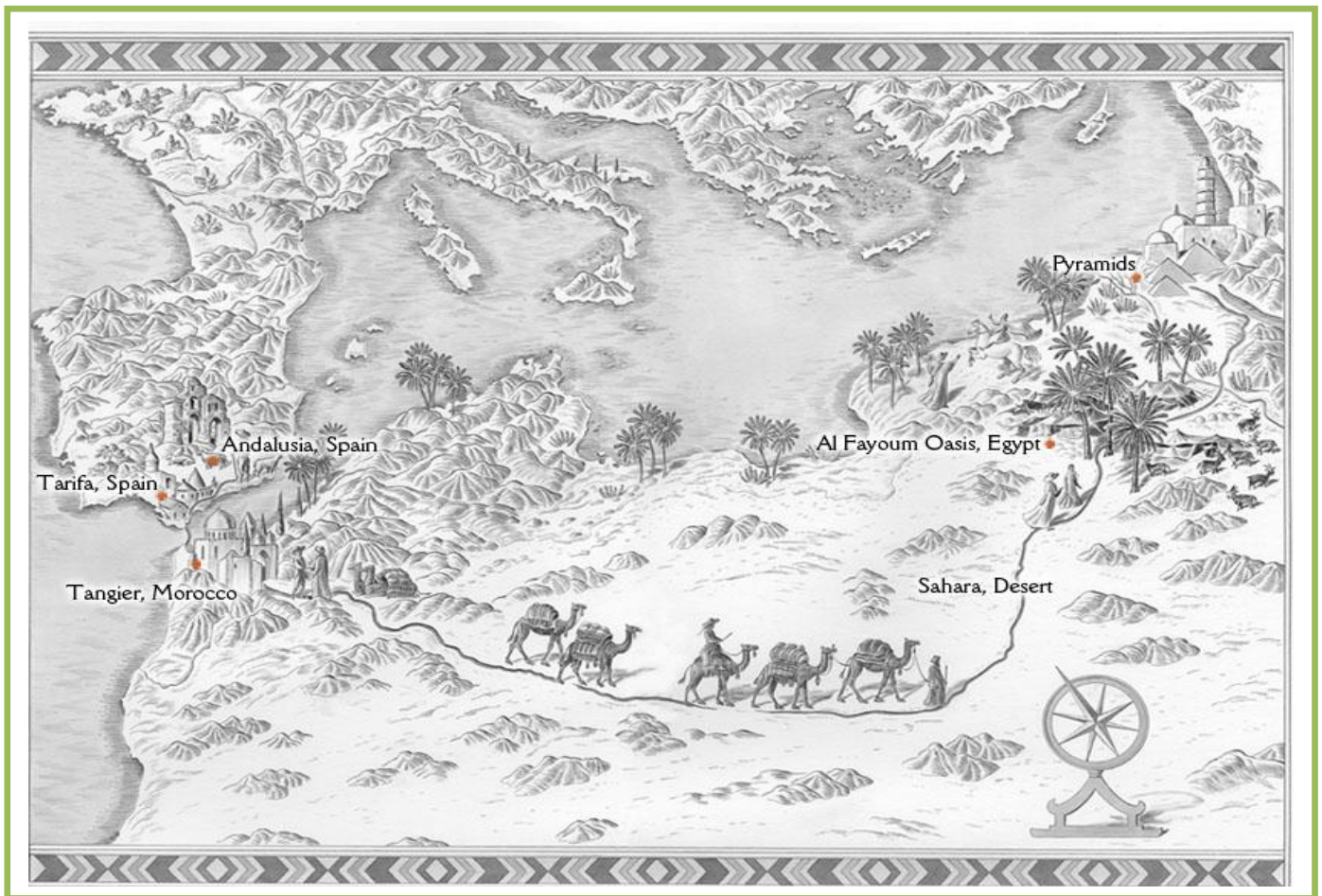
Morocco, was his first stop in Islamic world, since he set foot in Tangier, in North Africa, his adventure began. However, he does not feel comfortable about the place. He finds everything around negative; Islamic culture, food, strangeness of the place, and so on. On the very first day of his arrival, he is deceived by an Arab man who claims that he will take him to the Pyramids but instead steals all his money. The boy was crestfallen and begins to feel as if God is unfair. However, he wakes more hopeful the next day and resolves to see himself as an adventurer rather than a victim. Fortunately for him, he meets a Crystal Merchant who helps him by offering a job in his shop, this makes Santiago change his negative thought of Muslims. The boy assists the Merchant to revive his business and increasing his profit. This stage of the journey ends when the Merchant helps Santiago decide to continue his journey toward Egypt, and search for his dream.

The Desert, was the second stop, the boy decides to continue his personal legend. Then he joins a caravan crossing the desert where he meets an Englishman, who heard from a friend that an Alchemist lives at an oasis in Egypt, and he wishes to apprentice under him, to learn the Universal Language. The boy and the Englishman help each other through this adventure, as well as in developing their understanding of the Universal Language. During the whole trip, Santiago was observing the desert and was contemplating the miracles of Allah's creation.

Al-Fayoum oasis, was the third stop on his journey, also is considered the main stage in his life. While the boy and The Englishman are searching all over the oasis for the Alchemist, he meets a beautiful Muslim woman with dark eyes named 'Fatima', who tells them where they could find him, but the Alchemist doesn't accept The Englishman as a disciple and instead tells him to attempt converting Lead to Gold. Then after, Santiago saves

the people of the oasis from the attack, by he informs the elders of the omens he had seen an image of an attack on the oasis, while he was in the desert. That night, the boy meets the Alchemist, who was looking for the person that had read the omens in the flight of the hawks to take him as a disciple. After, he confesses his love to Fatima and asks to marry her. He was hesitating to continue his journey, but Fatima encourages him to go on with his personal legend and that she will be waiting for him.

The Pyramids, was the last stop on his journey in Islamic world, he sets off for his personal legend with the Alchemist. They journey through the perilous desert, and overcome several obstacles, for instance, he finally turns himself into the wind to not kill by the tribesmen. Then, The Alchemist shows Santiago the possibility of turning lead into Gold. He then leaves Santiago and asks him to complete the last stage on his own. The boy reaches the place that he dreamed of, but he finds nothing. Suddenly, Refugees of the war appear, before he tells them about his treasure, they rob him and beat him. But before they left, the leader of the group came back to the boy and tells him about his dream that he had seen a treasure in Spain at a ruined church under a sycamore tree and only a fool would believe such a dream. Then, the boy laughs because now he knew where his treasure was. He returns to the church in Spain to find his treasure buried under the sycamore tree. Finally, the boy finishes his journey and returns to Fatima, "I'm coming, Fatima," he said."(Coelho, 1993, p. 161).

Figure 02: *Map of Santiago's Journey.*

Note. This image is a map showing the route of Santiago's journey from Morocco to Egypt. From Map of Santiago's Travels, by Romina Perez, 2011, *The Alchemist* (<https://www.plattonline.com> › map *The Alchemist*).

2.3.2. The Origin of the Story

It is common to find a novel based on folk tales in weaving its plot, but it is strange to find the convergence between the two plots to the extent of being identical at some stage. Some research found that *The Alchemist* sounds familiar, especially its events. Coelho's novel had the almost same structure as the Arabic folk tales. As stated by Dr. Mohammad Mahmoud Harb in his research titled "The Influence of Classical Arabic Narrative on Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*" that Coelho had been influenced by Al-Tanukhie's story "*He Saw in*

His Dreams That His Richness Would Be in Egypt", as he found a strong relationship between the two works (Harb, 2015).

Moreover, "*Thousand and One Nights*" or as known as "*The Arabian Nights*" contained a tale about a dream titled "*The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again Through a Dream*". The tale is about a broken man from Baghdad who had a dream that a speaker tells him to go to Cairo to get his fortune, the events moved till he was stopped by Police (see Appendix A). After the man explains his story to them, the Wali tells him he also had a dream in which was said fortune was to be gained from a certain house in Baghdad, but he was smart and did not go. Fortunately, the man finds out the described house is his own and he discovers a great treasure there.

Thus, as seen above Coelho's version and the Arabic tale have comparable elements of plot by sharing the Freytag's five parts, 'Exposition', both had dreams about treasure. 'Rising Action', both believed in their dream and took the adventure to reach it. 'Climax', both of them faced difficulties that led to their surrender and regret in believing in the dream.' Falling Action', both of them reached the place they dreamed of and did not find their treasure. In 'Denouement', they both found the treasure in the most unimaginable place after another character confessed his dream.

Furthermore, this comparison between the two stories prompted many researchers and critics to look at the case as if it is considered plagiarism, or that Coelho was inspired by it or it is a form of Intertextuality.

On the other hand, there are evidence presumed that Coelho was inspired by *The Arabian Nights*, based on the interview by TIM with Paulo Coelho stated that: "*Arabian Nights*, [which] had a huge influence on me, Scheherazade and all the other stories, so then I started understanding and loving Arab culture." (2014). And that influence is clearly

expressed in *The Alchemist* through mention it: "It looks like *The Thousand and One Nights*," said the Englishman."(Coelho, 1993, p. 84).

The end of this controversy came to prove the source of the novel from its owner himself, literally in his novel *The Zahir*, he wrote:

Then, one evening, I happen upon (happen upon?) an interesting story in *The Thousand and One Nights*; in it I find the symbol of my own path, something that helps me to understand who I am and why I took so long to make the decision that was always there waiting for me. I use that story as the basis for another story about a shepherd who goes in search of his dream, a treasure hidden in the pyramids of Egypt. I speak of the love that lies waiting for him there, as Esther had waited for me while I walked around and around in circles.(Coelho, 2005)

2.4. Islamic Culture

In *The Alchemist*, Santiago runs into many Islamic aspects through his journey in Islamic world, and these elements help him along his way to find his Personal Legend and also to reach his treasure. Thus, our aim in this study is to find some of those elements in the novel and analyze them based on previous cultural theory.

2.4.1. Names and Dressing

As mentioned early, Names and Dressing are considered one of the aspects of culture, which could recognize Muslim from non-Muslim by these elements. In fact, there is no uniformity in Muslim naming systems as Muslims come from different cultural backgrounds; also, Islamic dress code for males and females is prescribed to be modest (The Office of Multicultural Interests, 2015).

In *The Alchemist*, Coelho was niggardly by giving names to his characters, nearly all the characters did not have a real name, and most of them had a name that expresses the job they perform in the novel such as The Merchant's Daughter, The Crystal Merchant, The Camel Driver, and The Alchemist. Or had a name that expresses an adjective as The Old Woman, The Young Man and The Englishman. The only had names are the protagonist

'Santiago', and the female protagonist 'Fatima'. The reason for that was clear in the novel when Santiago was reading his book which contained very difficult names: "If he ever wrote a book, he thought, he would present one person at a time, so that the reader wouldn't have to worry about memorizing a lot of names"(Coelho, 1993, p. 15).

However, Fatima is the only name that refers to Islamic Culture. Near one of the wells at the oasis, Coelho introduced her as:

"Fatima," the girl said, averting her eyes. "That's what some women in my country are called." "It's the name of the Prophet's daughter," Fatima said. The invaders carried the name everywhere." The beautiful girl spoke of the invaders with pride.(Coelho, 1993, p. 90)

Indeed, Fatima is a female given name of Arabic origin used throughout the Muslim world. It is known as the name of Prophet Muhammad's daughter from his first wife Khadija. She is regarded by Muslims as an exemplar for men and women. Besides, the literal meaning of the name is one who weans an infant or one who abstains (Forenames, 2014).

Moreover, Coelho's use of 'Fatima' as a name for his female protagonist proves that he was influenced by Islamic culture, and also infers the extent of his knowledge about the most common female names in Islamic world. Fatima is ranked as the 40th Most Common name in the World; approximately 7,251,577 people bear this name (Forenames, 2014).

Fatima is also used by non-Muslims above the world, particularly in the Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking worlds. This explains what he said about using this name in his country in the above quotation.

Secondly, as expected; Islam does not reject any style of dress, besides those which did not respect the dress code of Muslim appearance. Despite, many various dressings differ in Islamic countries and traditions, nevertheless all traditions strictly follow the Islamic principle of modesty, especially in dress.

Concerning the appearance of Muslims, Coelho reveals several clothes are worn by his characters, for male and female. One of those examples is the protagonist's appearance while he was traveling in the desert by dress special cloth, as Coelho writes; "He dressed in his Arabian clothing of white linen, bought especially for this day. He put his headcloth in place and secured it with a ring made of camel skin. Wearing his new sandals..."(Coelho, 1993, p. 57).

This passage made clear the author's awareness of Islam, as it is known in Islamic culture; Muslims like to wear white on their most important occasions, such as Fridays and celebrations, as well as in the rituals of Hajj. In this case, Santiago wore it on his most significant day, because he finally decided to continue pursuing his dream. In general, the white color symbolizes in most cultures purity, clarity, and serenity. The Messenger of Allah said: "Wear the white among your garments, for indeed they are among the best of your garments, and shroud your dead in them." narrated Ibn Abbas (At-Tirmidhi).

Moreover, Coelho also adds another model in the former passage, the 'headcloth' is known in Arabic tradition as 'Keffiyeh' or 'Ghutra' which is a traditional male headdress. It is commonly worn in areas with arid climates, and provides protection against direct sun exposure, but also dust and sand, while its ring is known as 'Agal', it is part of a headdress, which is a thick circular band, fixed around the 'Ghutrah' to keep it in place (Long, 2005).

There is one more type of headdress was mentioned, the 'Turban'; "They were tribesmen dressed in blue with black rings surrounding their turbans..."(Coelho, 1993, p. 132).

Furthermore, the women's dress code has a part in the sequence of events; Coelho compares married and unmarried women in their style of dress at the oasis. he describes at the beginning that there are women in black clothes and their faces are covered, Santiago did not know that they were married, or that he was forbidden to talk to them according to the

traditions, this is especially apparent when the woman said; "She advised the boy that he had better not try to converse with women who were dressed in black, because they were married women."(Coelho, 1993, p. 87).

While, the unmarried women, appeared by a headscarf, without a face covering, and in clothes other than black, Coelho states; "Finally ,a young woman approached who was not dressed in black .she had a vassel on her shoulder and her head was covered by a veil, but her face was uncovered “ (Coelho, 1993, p. 88).

As taking into consideration, Paulo Coelho is not a Muslim or an Arab; however, he was able to transmit a portrayal of the Arab Islamic society that could be almost correct. He refers to this variation in customs and traditions, not to the teachings of Islam because the Islamic religion does not distinguish between women in their appearance, whether they are married or not.

2.4.2. Women and Marriage

Islam asserts the equality of men and women in every aspect of life. According to the research entitled "Woman in Islam and Her Role in Human Development" stated that:

Islam establishes complete and genuine equality between man and woman. This is a fact readily acknowledged by everyone who knows Islam well and understands Islamic law as outlined in God's book, the Qur'an, and in the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. (Al-Khayat, 2003)

As Muslims, we believe that prayer and supplication are a great way to get closer to Allah, so the servant prays to his Creator to grant him success, help him, and achieve his goal. Coelho was able to present this idea in his novel, as he described: "The women had remained in their tents, praying for the safekeeping of their husbands" (Coelho, 1993, p. 107). He illustrates the image of a woman and a good, faithful wife who always seeks to protect her husband, even if only by prayer.

Fatima as a desert woman appears only in a few countable pages, limited in speech and dialogue but plays a vital role because she is no ordinary woman (Nadamala, 2021). She was described as:

Fatima is a woman of the desert," said the alchemist. "She knows that men have to go away In order to return. And she already has her treasure: it's you. Now she expects that you will find what it is you're looking for. (Coelho, 1993, p. 113)

Coelho created 'Fatima' not only to play the character of a Muslim woman but also as an important person and supporter of Santiago's dreams, she said, "That's why I want you to continue toward your goal..." (Coelho, 1993, p. 93). Coelho described a woman's life, which is different from a man's life, as it is normal and lacks surprise, they would sit in the tent, fill the water, take care of their men who went out to war, or bring food, and the men were often absent. And this does not indicate contempt and underestimation of the role of women, but rather to protect her and preserve her safety from dangers. These last quotes show the extent of the role of women and their strength, patience, and respect for the dreams of others, and also show Fatima's love and a staunch belief in destiny.

Everywhere in the world, they have customs and traditions that govern them and are the background to their beliefs and religion that they apply in their daily lives. And we can see these traditions appear on different occasions in society, such as Marriage; "The Tradition teaches men how to cross the desert, and how their children should marry..." (Coelho, 1993, p. 102). In fact, marriage is one of the Sunnas of the Prophets, as well as, Islam urged it and set conditions and provisions for it, Allah said: "21 Another of His signs is that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live within tranquillity: He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect." (The Quran 30:21).

Coelho was able to present Muslim characters to some extent true and realistic, as it is possible to compare two different characters of women, namely 'Fatima' the Muslim woman

and 'Andalusian girl', the daughter of the Merchant, and discover how different Islam is from other religions, as women's dealings with strange men have limits, and that was seen when Santiago revealed his love to Fatima, "Fatima appeared at the entrance to the tent. The two walked out among the palms. The boy knew what it was a violation of the Tradition, but that didn't matter to him now" (Coelho, 1993, p. 116).

Regardless of the clarity of the extent to which Coelho was affected by Islamic culture, his knowledge of Islam remains superficial. Since love in Islamic culture must be based on marriage, otherwise it is not permissible; Allah said "235... Do not make a secret arrangement with them; speak to them honourably"(The Quran 2:235). Moreover, Islam has prohibited touching a woman outside of marriage, and this is what made Fatima ashamed when he touched her; "The two embraced. It was the first time either had touched the other." (Coelho, 1993, p. 117). Although the people of the desert are more conservative, but Coelho showed Fatima in this behavior.

2.4.3. Religion

Although many religions are mentioned in the novel such as Islam and Christianity, however, Islam has a great impact on *The Alchemist*. Since most of the events take place in Islamic world, as well as are dominated by the main characteristics of the Islamic religion.

2.4.3.1. Pillars

Referring to the above mentioned, the Five Pillars are considered the ritual obligations of Muslims. This idea was clearly mentioned in the novel, as Coelho enumerates the five pillars through a dialogue between Santiago and the Merchant,

Then he said, "The Prophet gave us the Koran, and left us just five obligations to satisfy during our lives. The most important is to believe only in the one true God. The others are to pray five times a day, fast during Ramadan, and be charitable to the poor." He stopped there. His eyes filled with tears as he spoke of the Prophet. He was a devout man, and, even with all his impatience, he

wanted to live his life in accordance with Muslim law. "What's the fifth obligation?" the boy asked. "Two days ago, you said that I had never dreamed of travel," the merchant answered. "The fifth obligation of every Muslim is a pilgrimage. We are obliged, at least once in our lives, to visit the holy city of Mecca. (Coelho, 1993, pp. 51-52)

This quote shows the extent of Coelho's attention to the smallest details of Islamic culture. Moreover, Muslims, in general, cannot hold back their tears when the Hajj is mentioned; Mecca is the only place that every Muslim, rich or poor, dreams of. In addition to the foregoing, the pilgrimage is not obligatory for all Muslims, but rather for those who are financially or physically able to do so. Coelho presents another example through the character of a cobbler, confirming the status of Hajj among Muslims,

All who went there were happy at having done so. They placed the symbols of the pilgrimage on the doors of their houses. One of them, a cobbler who made his living mending boots, said that he had traveled for almost a year through the desert, but that he got more tired when he had to walk through the streets of Tangier buying his leather. (Coelho, 1993, p. 52)

Although the journey to Hajj is longer and takes time and effort than walking in the streets of Tangier, this fatigue is incomparable and is not felt because it is an intention to get closer to Allah.

Furthermore, the pilgrimage's subject in the novel took on a greater position compared to the other four pillars. Through the events, Coelho shows two contradictory personalities in their idea of going to Hajj. The first character is a camel driver, who got his big relief after he fulfilled his dream of going to Mecca, "... One year, when the crop was the best ever, we all went to Mecca, and I satisfied the only unmet obligation in my life. I could die happily, and that made me feel good." (Coelho, 1993, p. 72). The second is the Merchant, who had always dreamed of going to Mecca, but he did not want to, for fear that if his dream was realized, he would not find a reason to live, "Well, why don't you go to Mecca now?" asked the boy. "Because it's the thought of Mecca that keeps me alive...I'm afraid that if my dream is realized, I'll have no reason to go on living." (Coelho, 1993, p. 52).

Hajj literally means, "To continuously strive to reach one's goal." ("Hajj",2010). If a person does not strive, but only dreams; he will not reach his dreams and goals. Santiago, for instance, strived a lot to achieve his dream, but he did not care whether he would reach his goal or not, but most importantly, he tried.

In addition, it can be noted that throughout the novel's events, Coelho's description of Islamic culture was differing. In the beginning, when Santiago arrived at Tangier, he saw everything negatively, and among these things was prayer, "...and chanting their strange prayers several times a day." (Coelho, 1993, pp. 17-18). In this quote, Santiago described their behavior and their prayer as strange. In another situation, he provocatively described the Muslim's prayer, " As he waited, a priest climbed to the top of a nearby tower and began his chant; everyone in the market fell to their knees, touched their foreheads to the ground, and took up the chant. Then, like a colony of worker ants, they dismantled their stalls and left." (Coelho, 1993, p. 36).

As the events of the story evolved Santiago's view of prayer and Islamic culture overall changed, after he lived among Muslims and got to know their culture. And this is a nice gesture from Coelho; it explains the idea that most foreigners see Islam in a negative way, Due to their different culture and their lack of correct knowledge of Islamic culture.

2.4.3.2. Articles of Faith

From earlier details, the six articles of faith are belief in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, The Day of Judgment, and His Decree. Some of those Articles have greatly impacted Paulo Coelho's novel *The Alchemist*.

First of all, Muslims believe that there is no one greater than Allah, they put their full faith in Allah and rely on him to guide them the right way. This is shown in the novel when the leader of the caravan swore by Allah and asked everyone else to swear by their god to follow him;

There are a lot of different people here, and each has his own God. But the only God I serve is Allah, and in his name I swear that I will do everything possible once again to win out over the desert. But I want each and every one of you to swear by the God you believe in that you will follow my orders no matter what. In the desert, disobedience means death.(Coelho, 1993, p. 68)

Second, in the Islamic faith, the Holy Quran is revealed to guide all nations, and it is the main source of Allah's commandments upon his servants as in their worship, and their treatment of each other or with non-Muslims. As shown by Santiago's experience with the Crystal Merchant;" "You didn't have to do any cleaning," he said. "The Koran requires me to feed a hungry person." "(Coelho, 1993, p. 44).

Muslim practices the Islamic faith in his daily life by referring to Quran, as the Merchant helped Santiago in the problems he was facing because Quran always recommends in its verses to help the needy, the hungry, as well as the wayfarer who is a stranger, a traveler or a guest; Allah say;

The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, toorphans, the needy, travellers and beggars,(The Quran 2:177)

Coelho represents this character as a 'Real Muslim' that led the protagonist to change his thoughts about Islam, after what he faced with the Arabic thief, as well as his stereotypical ideas about Muslims as he described them when he first arrived in Africa;

How strange Africa is, thought the boy...and priests that climbed to the tops of towers and chanted—as everyone about him went to their knees and placed their foreheads on the ground."A practice of infidels," he said to himself. As a child in church, he had always looked at the image of Saint Santiago Matamoros on his white horse; his sword unsheathed, and figures such as these kneeling at his feet. The boy felt ill and terribly alone. The infidels had an evil look about them.(Coelho, 1993, p. 32)

Lastly, Muslims believe in the Divine decree, this idea inspired Coelho in writing *The Alchemist*. It is especially presented through using a word that comes up again and again in the novel, it is first used by the Crystal Merchant who employs Santiago, and later it is

adopted by other characters, including Santiago, the Camel Driver, and Fatima. The word “Maktub”, as the Crystal Merchant explains, means;

"Maktub," the merchant said, finally. "What does that mean?". "You would have to have been born an Arab to understand," he answered. "But in your language it would be something like 'It is written.'" (Coelho, 1993, p. 56).

As mentioned in the above quote, it is an Arabic concept that means fate or destiny; the concept comes from the Islamic notion that Allah writes one's destiny and whatever we experience occurs because it is meant to be (Fleming, 2019).

"...the future was already written by Allah, and what he had written was always for the good of man." (Coelho, 1993, p. 97).

In other words, Muslims are told to always work hard and pray to Allah despite knowing that everything good for them is already written in what they call “the Preserved Tablet.”; In *The Alchemist* context, the characters use the word “Maktub” to simply explain the fact that everything that goes on in one's life is pre-written by Allah; however, one should not use this as an excuse not to continue to pursue dreams, but in fact use it as motivation knowing their true purpose and destiny is out there and it is what is best for them (Al-Jabri et al., n.d.). As just like the Crystal Merchant, who gave up on his dream, unlike Santiago; "But you know that I'm not going to go to Mecca. Just as you know that you're not going to buy your sheep." "Who told you that?" asked the boy, startled. "Maktub," said the old crystal merchant" (Coelho, 1993, p. 58).

Moreover, Coelho presents this concept as the major overarching theme of Santiago's adventures and relationships throughout the novel. It typically appears just as Santiago is about to turn to a new chapter in his quest, usually by taking a big risk or abandoning a comfortable situation (Fleming, 2019).

2.5. Conclusion

The Alchemist became a spontaneous - and organic - phenomenon, it has attracted critical attention from various cultures, and one of them is Islamic culture. In addition, Islamic culture has been able to gain attention from many literary works, especially in the last century.

In this last chapter, through the content of the novel, one may see the influence of Islamic culture on Paulo Coelho. Therefore, this study spots light on the main aspects of Islamic culture that expressed in Coelho's novel. In a conclusion, it can be said that Islamic Culture becomes the dominant theme in most of Coelho's work.



General Conclusion

General Conclusion

To sum up, Islamic culture was and still is occupied the attention of many writers and readers all over the world, it is considered a new and rich source for Western Literature, therefore, its magic was able to inspire Paulo Coelho. So, our motivation to analyze this novel was to show Islamic culture in western literature.

From *The Alchemist*, it is clear that the core of Coelho's novels derives from magic, love, spirituality, cultures, and Islamic traditions. Thus, this novel was analyzed to explore the role of Islamic culture and its impacts on the author's work. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation was not only to analyze *The Alchemist* but also to delve deeper to explore the main aspects of Islamic culture in the novel. According to the questions on which the research depends, we reached the main results are:

- ✓ *The Thousand and One Nights* inspired Paulo Coelho to write about Islamic Culture in his novel.
- ✓ Coelho highlighted Islamic world through the journey of the protagonist from Tarifa to Morocco, Desert, and then Egypt.
- ✓ The characteristics of Islam reflected in *The Alchemist* are 'the Articles of Faith and the Pillars of Islam'.

In order to present a clear understanding of the theoretical framework followed in this work, the first chapter was devoted to the theoretical background of Islamic culture. The chapter presented an overview of Islamic faith, offered a general review of Islam and culture, highlighted its main aspects 'Name, Dressing, Women, Marriage, and Religion', and discussed its relation to western literature. The second chapter, however, focused on a practical analysis of the novel underlying the aspects of Islamic culture based on the characters and the events of the novel, such as Fatima as a Muslim woman, her name, and her dressing are considered as Islamic culture. We can also see through the plot of the story examples of Islam 'the Articles of Faith and the Pillars of Islam', which are also considered as Islamic culture. Moreover, it dealt with the origin of this story by presenting a set of evidence

that highlighted Islamic culture's influence on Paulo Coelho, especially his interest in the stories of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Furthermore, this work stands on the analytical descriptive approach through selecting and analyzing the main aspects of Islamic culture, which can be studied in the light of the cultural studies theory. Thus, we have followed the Qualitative Method.

From our study which has been conducted, it can be concluded that in *The Alchemist*, Islamic culture is superior to all cultures, since it is evident that Coelho was influenced by the Arab and Islamic heritage in most of his novels. Especially in this novel, he was inspired by the Arab heritage, as a journey about the search for happiness and adventure, as well as building a plot based on a blend of supernatural and reality, which is represented in Islamic culture.

Recommendations

This study focuses on the impact of Islamic culture in *the Alchemist* based on a cultural studies perspective. Therefore, this research suggests the following recommendations; this novel can be approached from another perspective, such as the Marxist perspective, to examine how society impacts the protagonist during his journey to follow his dream. Moreover, it can be tackled from comparative studies, for instance, a comparison can be made between both the Arab and the foreigner portrayal through selected characters from the novel; or from what we have reached before, a comparison can be made between *The Alchemist* novel and Arab folk tales in order to find the differences between the two plots.

Finally, we hope that *The Alchemist* can be used as one of the selected novels in teaching material of English literature or translation, as it is considered one of the most translated novels, as well as it contains Islamic culture.



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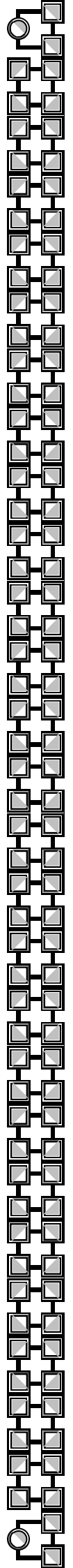
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Appendices

Appendix A

The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again Through a Dream

There lived once in Baghdad a very wealthy man, who lost all his substance and became so poor, that he could only earn his living by excessive labour. One night, he lay down to sleep, dejected and sick at heart, and saw in a dream one who said to him, 'Thy fortune is at Cairo; go thither and seek it.' So he set out for Cairo; but, when he arrived there, night overtook him and he lay down to sleep in a mosque.

Presently, as fate would have it, a company of thieves entered the mosque and made their way from thence into an adjoining house; but the people of the house, being aroused by the noise, awoke and cried out; whereupon the chief of the police came to their aid with his officers. The robbers made off; but the police entered the mosque and finding the man from Baghdad asleep there, laid hold of him and beat him with palm rods, till he was well-nigh dead. Then they cast him into prison, where he abode three days, after which the chief of the police sent for him and said to him, 'From whence art thou?' 'From Baghdad,' answered he. 'And what brought thee to Cairo?' asked the magistrate. Quoth the Baghdadi, 'I saw in a dream one who said to me, "Thy fortune is at Cairo; go thither to it." But when I came hither, the fortune that he promised me proved to be the beating I had of thee.'

The chief of the police laughed, till he showed his jaw-teeth, and said, 'O man of little wit, thrice have I seen in a dream one who said to me, "There is in Baghdad a house of such a fashion and situate so-and-so, in the garden whereof is a fountain and there under a great sum of money buried. Go thither and take it." Yet I went not; but thou, of thy little wit, hast journeyed from place to place, on the faith of a dream, which was but an illusion of sleep.' Then he gave him money, saying, 'This is to help thee back to thy native land.' Now the house he had described was the man's own house in Baghdad; so the latter returned thither, and digging underneath the fountain in his garden, discovered a great treasure; and thus God gave him abundant fortune. (Payne, 1884, pp. 134-135)

المخلص

تتناقش هذه الدراسة احد أكثر الروايات مبيعا حول العالم، وهي رواية "الخيميائي" للكاتب باولو كويلو. الهدف من الدراسة هو استكشاف الثقافة الإسلامية المتجلية في رحلة سانتياغو بطل الرواية ، خاصة أن الدراسة تسعى إلى اكتشاف دور الثقافة الإسلامية وتأثيرها على العمل الروائي لكويلو. علاوة على ذلك، تعرض هذه المذكرة خلفية مفصلة للدين الإسلامي، بالإضافة إلى فحص للجوانب الرئيسية لهذه الثقافة في الرواية مسلطا الضوء على نظرية الدراسات الثقافية، نظرية داروين. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي عبر تفصي وتحليل الجوانب الرئيسية للثقافة الإسلامية في الرواية، وكذا استخدام النهج النوعي. استنتج البحث أن الرواية تأثرت بالثقافة الإسلامية، التي لها دور مهم في حبكة رواية "الخيميائي" ، لاسيما أن الأحداث تجري في العالم العربي الإسلامي ، كما تبين أن الكاتب أيضا تأثر بهذه الثقافة من عدة نواحي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخيميائي ، باولو كويلو ، الإسلام ، الثقافات ، الثقافة الإسلامية ، الدراسات الثقافية.

Résumé

Cette recherche discute sur l'un des romans les plus vendus au monde, *L'Alchimiste* de Paulo Coelho. L'objectif de l'étude est d'explorer la culture islamique présentée à travers le parcours du protagoniste, Santiago ; il cherche particulièrement à explorer le rôle de la culture islamique et ses impacts sur le travail de Coelho. De plus, cette mémoire fournit un historique détaillé de la religion islamique, ainsi qu'un examen des principaux aspects de cette culture à travers le roman à la lumière de la théorie des études culturelles, la théorie de Pendant. L'étude s'est appuyée sur une approche analytique descriptive en enquêtant et en analysant les principaux aspects de la culture islamique dans le roman, et a utilisé la méthode qualitative. La recherche en déduit que le roman a été influencé par la culture islamique, qui a un rôle important dans l'intrigue du *L'Alchimiste*, d'autant plus que les événements se déroulent dans le monde arabe et islamique, et elle conclut également que l'écrivain était influencés par cette culture sous plusieurs aspects.

Mots-clés : *L'Alchimiste*, Paulo Coelho, Islam, Cultures, Culture Islamique, Etudes Culturelles.