

## Freemasonry's Symbols in Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*

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### Abstrak

Karya tulis ini membahas Freemasonry, Simbol-simbolnya, dan keberadaan simbol-simbol Freemasonri di gedung-gedung bersejarah Washington DC seperti yang diungkap pada novel ini. Pembahasan ini fokus pada dua masalah utama, (1) Bagaimana simbol-simbol Freemasonry digambarkan pada novel ini, dan (2) apa hubungan antara simbol-simbol Freemasonry dan gedung-gedung bersejarah seperti yang digambarkan dalam novel. Simbol-simbol Freemasonri pada novel Dan Brown *The Lost Symbol* sangat menarik dianalisa dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotik. Arti semiotic adalah teori umum mengenai tanda-tanda dan simbol-simbol. Semiotik lebih memperhatikan makna pesan dan cara pesan disampaikan melalui tanda-tanda dan simbol-simbol. Terdapat lima simbol utama yang ditunjukkan penulis untuk pembaca. Melalui simbol-simbol tersebut mereka akan mengetahui pemikiran penulis bagaimana dia memandang dunia dan bagaimana dia berpikir mengenai tindakan dan objek-objek umum. Brown menggunakan The Chamber of Reflection, The hand of Mysteries , The Double-headed Eagle, The Masonic Ring , dan The Masonic Pyramid untuk menceritakan tentang Freemasonri. Simbol-simbol tersebut menggambarkan identitas Freemasonri sehingga pembaca dapat mengerti dengan jelas apa dan bagaimana Freemasonri itu. Freemasonri mempunyai banyak rahasia-rahasia yang tersimpan pada simbol-simbol yang diciptakannya. Selanjutnya simbol-simbol tersebut juga muncul di arsitektur gedung-gedung bersejarah Washington DC misalnya The House of Temple, The US Capitol Building, dan George Washington Masonic Memorial. Di novel ini, Brown membangkitkan rasa ingin tahu pembaca dengan menciptakan misteri-misteri di balik simbol-simbol tersebut. Dia selalu memberikan dorongan dan pengetahuan baru sehingga pembaca akan membaca novelnya hingga akhir. Mereka akan mempunyai kesan mendalam tentang novel yang mereka baca.

Kata Kunci : Simbol-simbol, Freemasonri, Gedung-gedung bersejarah.

### Abstract

This paper deals with Freemasonry, its symbols, and the existence of Freemasonry's symbols in Washington DC historical buildings as revealed in the novel. Thus this study focuses on two major problems, (1) How is Freemasonry's symbols described in the novel, and (2) What is the relationship between Freemasonry's symbols and historical buildings in Washington DC as reflected in the novel. Freemasonry's symbols Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* is very interesting to be analyze d by using semiotic approach. This approach is defined as a general theory of signs and symbols . It more concerns to the meaning of the message and how the message is delivered to signs and symbols. There are five main symbols which the writer shows to the readers. Through the symbols they will know the writer's mind on how he views the world and how he thinks of common objects and actions. Brown takes The Chamber of Reflection, The hand of Mysteries , The Double-headed Eagle, The Masonic Ring , and The Masonic Pyramid to tell about Freemasonry. Those symbols represent Freemasonry's identity. The readers can gain clearly the ideas of what and how Freemasonry is. It has a lot of secrets in the symbols which it creates. Furthermore those Freemasonry's symbols appear in the architecture of historical buildings in Washington DC such as The House of Temple, The US Capitol Building, and George Washington Masonic Memorial. In this novel, Brown evokes the readers curiosity by creating mysteries behind the symbols. He always gives impulse and new knowledge, so that the readers will read the novel till the end. They have certain impression about the novel which they read.

Keywords : Symbols, Freemasonry, Historical Buildings

### Introduction

Freemasonry as an organization has long history especially in America. It is a society with secret rather than secret society, using full of symbols to communicate with each other. The symbols that it creates had a lot of meanings and mysteries. The mysteries reflected in the novel are influenced by Dan Brown's life in which his family liked to play puzzle. Thus this research is going to analyze its symbols and the existence of its symbols in architecture of Washington DC Historical Buildings as reflected in the novel.

#### 1. Statement of The Problem

- a) How is Freemasonry's symbols described in the novel
  - b) What is the relationship between Freemasonry's symbols and historical buildings in Washington DC as reflected in the novel ?
2. Purpose of The Study
- a) To analyze in details the meaning behind the symbols that Brown uses to convey his mind about Freemasonry
  - b) To show how Freemasonry's symbols relate with the historical buildings in Washington DC

3. Theoretical Approach

This study uses semiotic approach based on Daniel Chandler's semiotic theory and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. Daniel Chandler stated that semiotic is study of sign whereas Charles Sanders Pierce stated that semiotic is an account of signification, representation, reference, and meaning.

4. Source of Data

The researcher takes data and samples from any sources that can be used to complete this research. The sources may come from books, papers, previous research and online sources (internet).

5. Limitation of The Study

This study only concerns on the Freemasonry's symbols, and how its symbols influence in the development of US Capitol and some buildings in Washington DC. This study uses the semiotic theory as the method that analyzes the hidden meaning behind the Freemasonry's symbols. Then the readers's curiosity will be solved.

6. Procedure of analysis

Firstly, the researcher chooses the topic which will be discussed. Then the researcher collects the data about autobiographical issues of the author, the review of Brown's *The Lost Symbol*, the history of Freemasonry and the semiotic theory to support the discussion by finding some sources from books, previous research, papers or online media(internet). After collecting the data, the researcher learns and analyses them. Having analyzed the data, the researcher organizes the outline. Through the outline, the researcher writes the thesis.

### **Semiotic Theory by Daniel Chandler and Charles Sanders Pierce**

In *The Lost Symbol*, Brown used symbols to tell his mind about Freemasonry. One of the theories that could help readers to understand those symbols was *semiotic*. Semiotic is defined as a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. It more concerns to the meaning of the message and how the message is delivered to signs and symbols which are imaginery, ambiguity, mystery, and confusing. The discussion will use semiotic theory from Daniel Chandler and Charles Sanders Pierce because Daniel represents of the present semiotician in which his theory shows the modern thinking of semiotic. Whereas, Pierce is a founder and an expert in semiotic. His theory is simple and can be used until now. Those theories are appropriate to discuss *The Lost Symbol*.

#### **Daniel Chandler's Semiotic Theory**

His theory stated that semiotic analysis is just one of many techniques which may be used to explore sign

practices. Semiotics could be anywhere. The shortest definition is that it is *the study of signs*. It is about visual sign. . Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something - referring to or standing for something other than itself. Signs divided into three types : icon, index, symbols. Daniel focused on sign. According to him, an object was a sign which should be disclosed in some different point of views. He used to mention of 'refer to'. He was more modern thinking than Pierce. In *The Lost Symbol*, The Hand of Mysteries was not just only used by Freemasonry but other fraternities also used it. So the perception of the Hand of Mysteries was not only from Freemasonry point of view but also others. For Freemasonry, it referred to an invitation for a candidate to keep the great secret whereas in ancient age, it referred to 'alchemical'. Chandler showed to the readers how to analyze the symbols in different ways.

#### **Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic Theory**

His theory stated that semiotic is an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else. For him 'a sign... is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity'. He declared that 'every thought is a sign'. Peirce uses numerous terms for the signifying element including "sign", "representamen", "representation", and "ground". For Peirce, the relationship between the object of a sign and the sign that represents it is one of determination: the object determines the sign. His theory is divided into three elements : the signifying element of signs, the object, and the interpretant. The explanation of Pierce's theory was easy to analyze the whole part of symbols in Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*. So the readers could understand clearly the study of symbols which appeared in this novel. Most of his theories disclose about 'sign', and he determines it 'icon'. This could be seen through Masonic Ring. It was the icon of Masonic members. Here, the Masonic Ring was determined as the icon not a symbol because it had a simple shape. Pierce also mentions about 'representation'. The Chamber of Reflection in *The Lost Symbol* represents a Masonic meditation.

#### **Discussion**

##### **The Revelation of Five main Freemasonry's symbols in the novel**

The analyzing would reveal Freemasonry's symbols that Brown used in this novel so that the readers could understand those symbols clearly. There were five main symbols would be analyzed such as The Masonic ring, The Hand of Mysteries, The Chamber of Reflection, The Double-headed Phoenix, and The Masonic Pyramid. Second , the readers would be shown the relationship between those symbols and historical buildings in Washington DC. Here, The hand of mysteries represents invitation. This invitation is a sign that someone had

believed to keep secret. *The Hand of the Mysteries goes by many other names, including the Hand of the Master Mason, Hand of the Philosopher, and the Emblematic Hand of Mysteries.* There are five symbols in The Hand of Mysteries such as crown, star, sun, lantern, and key. The Hand of Mysteries is used by Freemasonry to tell the secret of knowledge and wisdom to the selected one. Brown showed the readers that the function of The Hand is not used commonly as people do. He uses the term 'The Hand of Mysteries' since he wants to stress that this hand belongs to Freemasonry as an invitation, and its fingers refer to symbols with mystery meaning behind them. Dan Brown also considers that this invitation is good news for a mason to get valuable and ancient knowledge. Every Mason can not receive easily the valuable and ancient knowledge, except the Master Mason give *the Hand of Mysteries* to a new mason as the clue to get valuable and ancient knowledge. Secondly, Brown shows us about Mason's mortality in *Chamber of reflection*. In this room a mason meditates about the meaning of life in which that we have to face death than gain valuable life. The Chamber of Reflection is a small darkened room adjoining the Lodge room. It is a sombre place of meditation and reflection for candidates for initiation into Freemasonry, and is sometimes used in higher degrees. Brown wants the readers to know about function and purpose from The Chamber of Reflection. It is one of the Freemasonry's way of life. Thus, the chamber indicates a beginning and an end: the end of one's life as a profane, and the beginning of a new life as an initiate in search of light, truth and wisdom. This can also be interpreted as a form of resurrection. The purpose of such a room is to give the candidate a period of time to meditate and reflect on what he is about to undertake. In this room a mason meditates about the meaning of life in which that people have to face death than gain valuable life. The third symbol is *masonic ring*. Every part of ring has a meaning. Masonic ring has different background colors to distinguish where lodge he is a member of or certain degree of status in that brotherhood. The ring have red (belongs to Grand Lodge of Scotland), blue (belongs to Grand Lodges of England), green (belongs to Grand Lodge of Scotland), black, white, purple, and gold in color. A masonic ring also symbolizes the three backbone principles of masonic, they are love, relief, and truth. It is describing a natural circle that represents a relationship between a mason and brotherhood. Freemasonry considers that the brotherhood is very important to each other. The brotherhood among the members is very strong. There is no discrimination. It is also represents the identity. Someone who is wearing a ring is recognized a mason. A Mason that part of the purpose or meaning of the ring is merely to identify oneself to other Masons. It is needed to be followed whenever you attend meetings and are a part of the ceremonies. The ring often includes the Masonic square and compasses, with or without the letter G at its center. These symbols are honorable and important for Masons. The fourth is *the masonic pyramid*. The pyramid appears in the ritual of some (not all) jurisdictions and represents the great builders of the past. *The Masonic*

*Pyramid* is also known the Unfinished Pyramid, without its tip. The unfinished pyramid is significant. The Freemasons believes that their work will go unfinished in their life time on earth, and it continued into the afterlife. It is a symbolic reminder that man's ascent to his potential entirely needs process and hard effort. The Unfinished Pyramid represents many things, but its deepest meanings represent man kinds spiritual and physical evolution. If the square and compass, Freemason's symbols, are put over the pyramid, this spells the word 'M-A-S-O-N'. This word is appeared in The Great Seal of United States and one dollar bill. Freemasons helps to find and build the United States. In Freemasonry the glowing pyramid and eye represented the so-called Great Architect of the Universe or the Supreme Being, both named for God. *The Pyramid and the All-Seeing Eye* on the American dollar bill are the ultimate "conspiracy theory" symbol. The last symbol is *the double-headed eagle*. The double-headed eagle is the emblem of the thirty second and thirty-third (and highest) degrees of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. In the novel Brown mentioned that the Double-Headed Eagle is the symbol of Masonic wisdom. This meant that the Double-headed Eagle represented the highest degree of Freemasonry and is honored by the members. It is the important rule and prime wisdom of the Mason. Since the wisdom is from the highest degree, the masons have to obey and honor it. The eagle symbolize strength, courage, farsightedness, and immortality. It is considered to be the king of the air and the messenger of the highest gods.

### **The Freemasonry's symbols Appear in Washington DC's Historical Buildings as represented in the novel**

There were three significance historical buildings which have Masonic aspects. They were The House of Temple, The US Capitol Building, and The George Washington Masonic Memorial. *The House of Temple* was build in 1911. It was a Masonic temple in Washington, D.C., United States that served as the headquarters of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. Inside the building there are a meeting room, a ritual and initiation room, and several tombs of the influential Masons. The Temple also holds one of the largest collections of materials related to Scottish poet and Freemason Robert Burns in its library, the first public library in Washington, D.C. In the 2009 novel *The Lost Symbol* by Dan Brown, the building is the setting for several key scenes. *The United States Capitol*, atop Capitol Hill at the eastern end of the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is the seat of the United States Congress, the legislative branch of the U.S. federal government, completed in the year 1800. Freemasonry influences America very strong. In the development of US Capitol, there is a masonic tradition with corn, wine and oil. There are the US Senate chamber and a chamber for reflection. This building often appears in each setting of *The Lost Symbol*. The last building is *The George Washington Masonic National Memorial*. It is a Masonic building and memorial located in Alexandria, Virginia, outside Washington, D.C. It is dedicated to the memory of George Washington, the first President of the

United States and a Mason. There were several reasons why Masonic bodies finally began to build a memorial. The construction of George Washington Memorial Park sparked renewed Masonic interest in building their own memorial. Another reason was the safety of items owned or used by George Washington and which were now owned by the Alexandria-Washington lodge. There are a statue of George Washington, a museum of Freemasonry and George Washington as a Mason and his paintings with Freemasonry's symbols.

## Conclusion

Having analyzed the novel in the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that Dan Brown makes Freemasonry to be the center in *The Last Symbol* because he admires the fact that Freemasonry supports tolerance in religious differences in which Masonry helps the development of friendship through other religious organization. Moreover, Dan Brown also says about the Freemasonry : “ in the world there are people who argue whose God is the rightes, I honour very much to this organization which receives people who have different religion but ‘eat together’ in the situation of brotherhood and good friendship.” Freemasonry is not a religion but it is a organization. it is an open organization which has secrets. It is forbidden to discuss about religion among them. Brown expresses his thanks for ‘the example of noble’ of Masonry to human being. Based on this, Brown tries to change the world in which it is his main aim to be a writer. In addition, Freemasonry is unique and difficult to explain clearly. Mason has explained brotherhood as “a system of morality, secured and described through symbols. Because of Freemasonry’s mysteries and many symbols in its life, Brown is interested to reveal them in this novel. He tries to explain to the readers that *The Lost Symbol* means the lost word of Freemasonry which is the key to understand the novel entirely.

Through the symbols described by Brown in this novel, the readers can understand Freemasonry’s identity and way of life. Someone can be said to be a member of freemason, he has to wear a ring that indicates a relationship between a mason and brotherhood. The masonic ring also means the three backbone principles of masonic, they are love, relief, and truth. Then, someone become a member of elit group he received the Hand of Mysteries. It is said that the hand holds the keys to divinity, and is used as an invitation to discover the ‘great secrets’. The highest degree in Freemasonry can be seen through the Double-headed Eagle. It can be found in the center of the Masonic Ring. The Freemasonry’s way of life can be shown in the Chamber of Reflection and the Masonic Pyramid. Freemasonry has a room for meditation in the Chamber of Reflection. These rooms are designed as cold, austere places in which a Mason can reflect on his own mortality. By meditating on the inevitability of death, a Mason can gains a valuable perspective on the fleeting nature of life. It shows about Mason’s mortality. The Masonic Pyramid shows

mankinds spiritual and physical evolution. The ribbon under the pyramid contains the latin words Novus Ordo Seclorum means New World of Ages which indicate that Freemasonry wants to change the system of government in the world to become one new government controlled by Freemasonry itself. Finally Brown wants to emphasize in *The Lost Symbol* that Freemasonry is a good organization and helpful to other people. Although it has many mysteries and secrets, Brown tries to describe the Freemasonry’s identities and way of life through the symbols. From these symbols the readers can know who the Freemasonry really is.

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