

**REPRESENTATIONS OF ISLAM IN PETER BERG'S:  
*THE KINGDOM***



**RESEARCH PAPER**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of Study

*The Kingdom* was entered active production on July 10, 2006 and released on September 28, 2007 under the production house of Universal Pictures. This 109 minutes of running time movie need US \$ 80 billion of budget and in the end, this movie can reach more than US \$ 86,578,768 gross revenue, (*Movie Review: The Kingdom 2007*).

This is a thriller action movie directed by Peter Berg that tells the long checkered relationship between AS and Saudi Kingdom. As a director Peter Berg smartly combines thriller action story and talented actors, it blends result amazing performance. This movie present famous actors and actress, there were: Jamie Foxx (Special Agent Ronald Fleury), along with Jennifer Garner (agents Janet Mayes), Jason Bateman (Adam Leavitt) and Chris Cooper (Grant Sykes). The story was inspired by real events of bombings at the Riyadh compound and the Khobar housing complex. *The Kingdom* explains how FBI agents conduct investigation in foreign land (Saudi Kingdom) to find evidence of terrorist act which kill America civilian.

The early scene opens with a prologue of the movie describes how oil drilling has transformed the Middle East and abroad in a timeline sequence. It portrays the conflicts that have risen since the late 1940s for the rightful

ownership of the oil industry. The oil drilling was raised the conflict inside Saudi Kingdom which involve America interest. It tries connecting to histories fact in order to make realistic.

The next scene of the movie starts in a game of softball played by Americans in their oil company's housing compound Saudi Arabia, terrorists( the Jihadist) set off a bomb, and killing many Americans, as well as Saudi State Police. The terrorists impersonated Saudi State Police members and while one team hijacked a car and started shooting residents of the area, another runs out onto the baseball field, then he blows himself up with everyone near him. The FBI's Legal Attaché in Saudi Arabia, Special Agent Francis Manner, calls up his colleague Special Agent Ronald Fleury to tell him about the attack. Shortly after this a second bomb explodes in the compound killing more people, including Manner.

In the U.S., Fleury briefs his FBI team on the happenings in the Kingdom. He supposes to send a small investigation team led by him into Saudi Kingdom. In fact the higher-ups deny them permission to conduct investigation in the Kingdom to find who behind that crime. While his higher- ups debating that crime, Fleury blackmails the Saudi ambassador into letting them use a Saudi plane to get into the country in order to conduct an investigation. Finally Fleury and his team of Janet Mayes a forensic expert, Adam Leavitt an intelligence analyst and Special Agent Grant Sykes a bomb technician, get permission goes to Saudi Arabia, where they are met by Colonel Faris al-Ghazi (Ashraf Barhom), the commander of the Saudi State Police force tasked with policing the compound.

Conducting mission in Saudi becomes extraordinary task for Fleury and team. Though they are success boarding into Saudi and get permission the Saudi Kingdom, actually still their higher up moreover USA government does not let them. Without supporting their government Fleury led the team does the job as best as they can with limitation time just five days. It makes Fleury responsible as the team leader harder. His objective picked team has the skill to pull off the most demanding of mission, but bringing them safely home.

The one of obstacles faced by them in Saudi is Saudi Arabian National Guard does not give them permission to investigate. Rather they are just to observe the investigation, but Fleury is never giving up find the way. When the FBI team has invited by Prince Rufus' for a dinner, Fleury is succeeds to convince the Prince to allow FBI led the investigation.

With this new change in leadership, the Americans are allowed investigation to the crime scene. But working in Saudi that nothing experiences about the country gives them complicated culture shock. They face lack of communication while they bring their American behavior the loud swearing into Saudi. When Fleury talk almost full of swearing and Adam Leavitt behave that tends to disparage about Islam and Saudis tradition those are very bother Colonel Faris al-Ghazi. Moreover the traditions hamper Mayes doing investigation which forbids her touch dead Muslim. That makes their task more complicated than their thinking.

In late development the Americans succeed found evidences in the crime scene. They discover that the second bomb was set off in an Ambulance, and the

bombs used marbles as projectiles. It brings them into deep analysis which guide to another clues. Those clues lead them to discover that the brother of one of the terrorists had access to ambulances and State Police uniforms. Finally the police raid the house and kill a few heavily armed men, but terrorist who has killed in the house is not the main target.

Unfortunately Fleury runs out the time and their Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Damon Schmidt (Jeremy Piven) told that they have to go home immediately although the investigation not yet finish. On their way to the airport, Fleury's team has attacked by terrorist, Fleury manages to wound one attacker, and al-Ghazi commandeers a civilian vehicle to chase the terrorist car into the dangerous Suweidi complex. Inside the Suweidi complex a gunman launches a rocket at them and a fire fight starts. The end of scene Fluery teams success defeat all terrorist although Colonel Faris Al-Ghazi (Ashraf Barhom) was killed in the battle.

*The Kingdom* cannot escape the controversy because it involves two different cultures America and Islam which crushed. *The Kingdom* brings ideological contradictions of the war on terror. There is a huge sensitivity about Islam versus America moreover after 9/11. The controversy has dragged many people and came from various points of view each person. As in the movie, Islam was depicted as a terrorist, barbaric no mercy and careless human right to achieve the goal, and the Jihad was portrayed bad and dangerous faith which promote violence.

There are many comments for *The Kingdom* from its users starting from favorable comments up to unfavorable comments. One of favorable comment that argues this is a creative movie comes from a New York Times critics A.O. Scott called it "a slick, brutishly effective genre movie". He also stated that "Just as Rambo offered the fantasy of do-over on Vietnam, *The Kingdom* can be seen as a wishful revisionist scenario for the American response to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism." More Weekly Standard columnist John Podhoretz called the film "perfectly paced" and "remarkably crisp and satisfying", arguing that it evokes the films *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *The New Centurions*, (*Movie Review: The Kingdom 2007*).

While one of unfavorable comment comes from Kenneth Turan of The Los Angeles Times called it "a slick excuse for efficient mayhem that's not half as smart as it would like to be." He added that "the film's thematic similarity to those jingoistic World War II-era 'Yellow Peril' films makes it hard not to feel your humanity being diminished". Furthermore New York Post critic Lou Lumenick stated that "Hollywood provides the Islamic world another reason to hate America with *The Kingdom*," calling it "xenophobic" and "panderin (*Movie Review: The Kingdom 2007*). It can be conclude *The Kingdom* introduce violence and prejudice for some group to spectators.

Though this movie was not Oscar-nominated movie, but *The Kingdom* get Taurus Award nomination and receive great revenue (*Movie Review: The Kingdom 2007*). *The Kingdom* itself has released in 2007 and grossed £919,537 in the United Kingdom about \$1.9 million. It also becomes second rank in Box

Office; the film grossed \$17.1 million in 2,733 theaters in the United States and Canada on its opening weekend. As of December 15, 2007, the film has grossed an estimated \$47,536,778 in the United States and \$39,042,352 at the foreign box office with a worldwide gross of \$86,579,130. The film has been extremely successful in the rental market, grossing \$77.4 million in the United States as of April 13 2008 (*Box office performance*).

The appeal of *The Kingdom* is the story, actually the story is a fictional, but inspired by bombings at the Riyadh compound on May 12, 2003 and the Khobar housing complex on June 26, 1996 in the Saudi Arabia. The story follows a team of FBI agents who investigate the bombing of a foreign-workers facility in Saudi Arabia (*Reviews: The Kingdom 2007*).

Peter Berg has shown his talented in *The Kingdom* by exploit real moments happening in his society America. This is a realistic action thriller movie that year. It blends action scene with true life events circumstance that period. It can be seen in the prologue of the movie which tries to presence the histories fact such as terrorism, Islam, the war on terror, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden into the story in order to make his work as if realistic. Those phenomena has been common in society especially American and it make the movie more valuable.

Furthermore the key in maintaining this realistic is cannot separable with cinematography. Everything from the sand of the desert to the Sheik's monstrous palace and gun fight, bomb explodes has arrangement cinematographer to give dramatis realistic effect. Moreover for the action scene has got Taurus Award for the best stunt.

The next point of interest *The Kingdom* is the characterization. Every member of the actors embodied their character very well. Jamie's character commanded respect and had an endless supply of raw determination as the team leader. Jennifer was realistically unglamorous as an agent in this environment and fought side by side with the boys. Chris brought a sense of wisdom and experience to his character. Jason's character was the funny through his character; it was given comedy sense. Ashraf Barhom gave us a sharp role as Colonel Faris Al Ghazi, the only true ally to the team's cause.

This movie also shows to us the diversity of Islam, inside Islam there are so many schools of thought and groups which have different ways to break the problem. *The Kingdom* not only clashed AS and Islam, but also clashed Islam versus Islam. In the story there are two groups of Islam who trigger the conflict that dragged AS in their war. First is Islam tolerant (moderate), it represents as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which has a tolerant and open relationship with USA. In contrast is Islam conservative (the terrorist/ Jihadist) who resists all kinds of relationships between the Kingdom and USA. According to the Jihadists their alliance is unholy in contradiction with Islam's teachings, they suppose to eliminate USA from Saudi lands although careless human rights to achieve the goal (terrorism act). It makes *The Kingdom* more interesting than other movies.

The main subject which would be analyzed in this movie is the representation of Peter Berg to Islam. According to Danesi (2004:16) the concepts of representation refer to the use of signs to portray recognizable reality in some physical form in order to give it certain meaning. It also involves the construction



meaning of belief, people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. Furthermore the meaning of images and language attempt fixed by dominant power and ideology

It means representation is relative and very ideologies. That why the meaning unfixed and openness to change. The attempt to fix the meaning is when power and ideologies enter in. When we connected representation with the work (*The Kingdom*), representation is the way of director to depict meaning some group in his work.

In this case *The Kingdom* as a tool by Peter Berg to show the Islam identities to viewer. It also used to create certain meaning about Islam that is solidified by images.

Based on the case above and social phenomena shown in *The Kingdom* movie, the writer was interested in analyzing the representation of Islam by using sociological approach. That's why the writer take a research entitled "REPRESENTATIONS OF ISLAM IN PETER BERG'S: *THE KINGDOM* ".

## **B. Previous Study**

Based on the research in the library of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Sebelas Maret State University of Surakarta, State University of Semarang, Islamic State College of Surakarta , Gadjah Mada University and some internet source, there is no research paper which examining *The Kingdom* movie directed by Peter Berg's. So, the writer concluded that there is no writer who wrote a research paper or thesis which examining the movie.

On the other hand, the writer found some movie reviews about Peter Berg's *The Kingdom*. The first movie review written by Joel Hirschhorn on *The Kingdom: Movie Review*, which was published on September 30, 2007. Hirschhorn sees *The Kingdom* from the story inside that succeeds delivering a number of messages without being preachy or overly intellectual. As he argues that "The deepest dimensions of the current conflict between the terrorist Muslim world and western civilization are wonderfully delivered through brilliant, smart dialogue that reinforces the films visual violence". Other movie review, written by John Podhoretz, which was published on October 10, 2007, on *One for the Good Guys*:

*An action thriller that approaches reality.* John Podhoretz argue that *The Kingdom* has a strong theme that gives satisfying fantasy oddly reminiscent of the most controversial foreign-policy fantasy of all time provides not only a viscerally satisfying denouement but also a portrait of cross-cultural cooperation between Saudi cops and American cops that is as wonderfully pleasing as it is utterly fictional. From some those movie reviews, the writer concluded that *The Kingdom* not only good film in visual pleasure and story it bring a contradiction issue which portrays America society that periods.

In this research, the writer tries to give an explanation about the representation of Islam by Peter Berg's which captured on his movie. Besides discussing the structural elements, the writer tries to discuss the movie to the social life of American, viewed from sociological perspective. These matters are the difference between those movie reviews above with this research.

### **C. Problem Statements**

Problem statement is one of the most essential parts for the research, it makes the study clear and focus. Based on the title the writer formulates the problem as follows:

1. What does the structural elements in Peter Berg's *The Kingdom*
2. How does the representation of Islam in *The Kingdom* by Peter Berg reflect? According Danesi (2004:16) the concepts of representation refer to the use of signs to portrays recognizable reality in some physical form in order to give it certain meaning.

### **D. Limitation the Study**

From the background of study the writer limit the study based on sociology approach to analyze how the representation of Islam in Peter Berg's *The Kingdom* shown.

### **E. Objective the Study**

Based on the title and the background of the study the writer formulates the objective:

1. To analyze *The Kingdom* based on structural elements.
2. To analyze how the representation of Islam shown in *The Kingdom* by Peter Berg based on sociological approach.

### **F. Benefit the Study**

#### **1. Academic Benefit**

This research is expected will be beneficial in providing and increasing the knowledge about sociological and support another research which related to this object.

## **2. Practical Benefit**

This research is expected will become stimulant for the other researcher who interest in this study because there are many thing can be analyzed in sociological approach, beside that this study will enlarge the writer knowledge as a teacher candidate.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

The type of research which is used by the writer is qualitative type. (Moleong, 1989:3) said that qualitative research is “a research which result is in the descriptive data”.

### **2. Object of Study**

The object of the research is *The Kingdom* movie directed by Peter Berg released September 28, 2007.

### **3. Type of Data and the Data Source**

In doing the research, the writer use two sources of data, these are:

#### **a. Primary source**

Primary source data is *The Kingdom* movie directed by Peter Berg distributed by Universal Pictures and released September 28, 2007.

#### **b. Secondary data source**

Secondary data source are taken from other materials related to the data required, such as movie script, internet, comment, books, essays, which discuss *The Kingdom* movie.

#### **4. Technique of the Data Collection**

In conducting the research, the writer collects the data by using library research by collecting both primary and secondary data. The researcher also involve some required steps to collecting data, they are:

- a. Watch the movie
- b. Read the movie script.
- c. Making notes of important data from primary and secondary data.
- d. Selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis.
- e. Drawing conclusion.

#### **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

In analyzing data, the writer employs descriptive qualitative analysis to the object of study. The analysis is begun from structural analysis of the work and finally uses sociological perspective of the literature work.

#### **H. Organization of Research Paper**

To make it easier to understand the writer divided into six chapters. Chapter I is introduction which covers background of the study, previews study,

problem statement, limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. Chapter II is underlying theory, it consist of notion of sociology of literature, major principle of sociology of literature, structural elements of the movie and theoretical application of sociology of literature. Chapter III is social background of United State of America in 201- 2007 which covers social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, cultural aspect, science and technology, and religious aspect. Chapter IV is structural analysis the movie. Chapter V is sociological analysis. Chapter VI is conclusion and suggestion.