

# Representation of Malay Symbols: A Semiotic Analysis on Songket Monument and Keris Monument in Pekanbaru

Cutra Aslinda and Dyah Pithaloka

*Department of Communication Science, Universitas Islam Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia*

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**Abstract:** This research aims to analyze the representation of Malay Symbols of Songket and Keris Monument in Pekanbaru at denotations and connotations context. The semiotic approach that used in this research is referencing to Roland Barthes's mythology. The data was collected through nonparticipant observations and in-depth interview with a Malay Culture expert. Data analysis techniques in this study are the meaning of two stages sign of semiotic Roland Barthes. At the end, this research has two results, first of all is about the Keris Monument. There were four parts of the monument that has been analyzed. The second result is about Songket Monument, the Malay symbol is presented in nine parts. The results showing that not both of the monuments were fully built to represent Malay culture. The Songket monument signifies the values of Malay culture in the form of personality, attitudes, manners, social values, guidance in attitude and self-character, also how to socialize in accordance with Malay cultural values. The Keris monument signifies the Malay honor, however based on interview with Riau cultureists (Al Azhar), there is a mismatch between the meaning of keris position, that should not be downward, since it means surrender.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A city is a representation of the community. It means when a city change, the people in the city will also changing (Hamid and Budiarto, 2011). Almost every city in the world has their signature food, traditional dress, or iconic building that representing the culture of the city.

One of the most famous city in Indonesia is Bali. When referring to the island of Bali, we find there are monuments in the city that placed at almost every intersection and roundabout, that happened because monument is related to the beliefs of the Hindu community in Bali.

Other than Bali, city that will be discussed in this research is Pekanbaru. Pekanbaru is the capital of Riau Province in Sumatra, Indonesia. If we travel around Pekanbaru, we will find many languages, accents, monuments. The monuments were built at several spots in the city. There are several monuments, namely pesawat Terbang Monument, Keris Monument, Perjuangan Rakyat Monument, Bambu Runcing Monument, Demokrasi Monument, Songket Monument, Kompang Monument, Pahlawan Kerja Monument, Lancang Kuning Monument, Adipura Monument, Selais Monument, and the newest is Anti

Korupsi Monument that built in 2016.

Some important things that must be considered if we talk about monument are monument is a sign, a symbol, it means that monument must be able to signify or symbolize something that a city want to symbolize, wheter it is from the shape, artistic level, where it will be located, how it is related and representing the local culture, what kind of concept and what material will be picked to build the monument. All of that must be think carefully. Also it should be discussed with various related parties, such as culture expert in the country so that the monument can be built perfectly as a symbol of a country or city.

There was a research done by Junaidi form Lancang Kuning University that study about the monument in Pekanbaru, the differences with this research are in the subject and the semiotic analysis used. That research explored the meaning of the signs found in three monuments in Pekanbaru. Those monumensts are Tepak Sirih Monument, Tari Zapin Monument, and Keris Monument (Junaidi, 2014). Peirce's semiotic analysis approach was used to interpret the signs found in that monuments. The results showed that the monuments were made to represent Malay culture. The Tepak Sirih monument signifies the friendliness of the Malays in welcoming guests, the Tari Za-

pin monument signifies the zapin dance as a Malayan dance originating from Riau, and the Keris monument signifying Malay honor. Although these three monuments feature Malay culture, there was a mismatch between the markers used and Malay culture. The three pillars are also not quite right in presenting the concepts of aesthetics and balance. The message conveyed through the monument was not in accordance with the cultural meaning contained in Malay society that causing debate in the community.

According to the previous research, some monuments in Pekanbaru apparently built only as decoration, regardless of the meaning of the monument and the suitability of location where the monuments built. Those were the main problem this research was conducted.

In this research, only two monuments that will be focus on: the Songket Monument and Keris Monument (as seen on figure 1 and 2 below this paragraf). The determination of these two monuments is because those monuments look related each other seen from the perspective of the use of male malay traditional dress that often be equipped with a keris.



Figure 1: Songket Monument.

In this study, we analyze the representation of Malay culture in those two monuments as a symbol of Malay culture in Pekanbaru using the Communication Science approach in Semiotic analysis which examines what is the meaning behind a sign using Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis. In addition to using semiotic analysis the researcher will interview Malay culture expert that understands the meaning of Malay symbols to be more objective.

## 2 LITERATURE STUDY

### 2.1 Representation

Representation is an act of representing, being represented, what is representative, or representative. Rep-

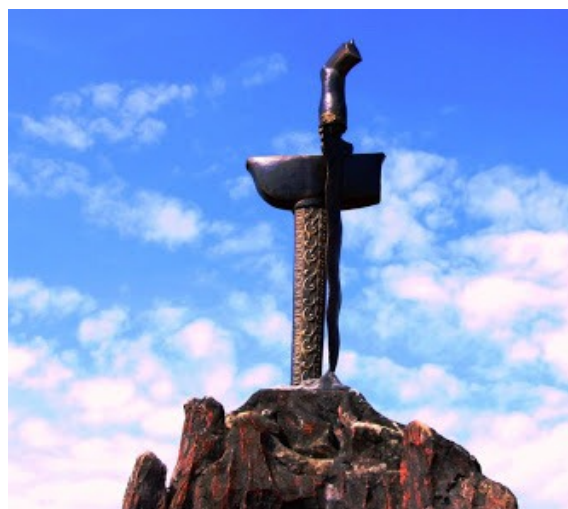


Figure 2: Keris Monument.

resentation can also be interpreted as an illustration (Rafiek, 2010).

Representation reconstructs and displays various facts of an object so that the exploration of a meaning can be done to the maximum (Ratna, 2007).

### 2.2 Symbols

The symbols or symbols in the Webster (1997) dictionary are explained as something that shows, represents or gives an impression of something else; an object is used to represent something abstract; symbol, for example, doves are a symbol of peace.

### 2.3 Semiotic

Semiotics comes from the word semiotikos, which means sign theory. According to Paul Colbey, the basic words of semiotics come from the word "Seme" (Greek) which means interpretation of signs. Semiotics is the science of signs. The study of signs and all that relates to them, how they function, relationships with other signs, their transmission and acceptance by those who use them.

The sign itself is defined as a basis for social conventions that were built before and can be considered to represent each other. Signs and symbols are tools and materials used in interactions, so that the message can be received effectively, it is necessary to interpret the message, because only humans have the ability to use and interpret symbols, and develop branches of knowledge that discuss how to understand symbols or symbols.

Semiotic is the study of a series of outer objects, events of the whole culture as a sign. The semiotic

analysis used refers to the theory of Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes traces the meaning of a cultural approach, in which Barthes gives meaning to a sign based on the culture behind the emergence of that meaning. Thus the meaning at the level of myth can be revealed in accordance with the semiotic superiority of Roland Barthes who is famous for the mythical element.

## 2.4 Roland Barthes's Mythology

According to Barthes, semiology wants to learn how human interpret things. Understanding in this case cannot be equated with communicating. Semiology aims to take in any systems of signs whatever their substances and limits like images, gestures, musical sounds, and objects. It describes the interactions that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of their users and the values of their culture (Fiske, 2012).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Approach

This research uses descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Arikunto (Arikunto, 2002) states that qualitative research is a descriptive study because this study attempts to describe data with sentences separated by categories to get conclusions.

### 3.2 Subjects

The research subject is the method of data sources that are asked for information in accordance to the research problem. The source in research is the subject from which data is obtained (Arikunto and secara Manusiawi, 2002). The subjects in this study were Riau Culturalists: Mr. Al Azhar.

### 3.3 Data Collection Techniques

In this study, researchers used several data collection techniques, namely: observation, interview and documentation.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

In carrying out the analysis, researchers used Roland Barthes's model that has two significant stages in analyzing objects. The first stage is the significance stage of denotation, in this stage the relationship between

the signifier and signified in a sign occurs in external reality, namely the most obvious meaning, in another definition, signifier is an image or mental impression of something verbal or visual, such as voice, writing. Whereas in the second stage, it is called the connotation stage. In this stage the interpreter will interpret the signified as the meaning produced by the sign.

The stages of data analysis that will be carried out is to collect all the data, then the researcher classifies the data according to the research questions that have been determined. The classification here is intended to simplify or group data into certain categories according to the formulation of the problem proposed by the researcher, with the aim of making it easier to understand and facilitate researchers in the process of data analysis later. After the data is classified, the analysis of the data using Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis is used to understand the meaning of Malay Symbols in Songket and Keris Monument.

## 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the short review above, researcher describe the results into 2 parts. First part about Malay symbols at Songket Monument and the second part is about Malay symbols at Keris Monument.

The Malay symbol at Songket are presented in 9 parts: (1) Siku Keluang design means personality that has the nature of responsibility to be the dream of every malay man. (2) Siku Awan means character, manners and gentleness is a principle of malay civilization, guarding the community with noble character. (3) Pucuk Rebung Kaluk Pakis Bertingkat Design, means the value of knowing oneself is a very important trait, in accordance with the expression of knowing oneself with the command of knowing to sit upright to know the plot properly. (4) The meaning of Pucuk Rebung Bertabur Bunga Cermat is the value of compassion, respect for gentle and clean heart to be a reference in Malay. (5) Siku Tunggal design means that reflects the attitudes or behavior of Malay people who strongly prioritize faithfulness or fusion either among fellow Malay people or immigrants. This is become the reflection of Malay people who always accept anyone who comes with a "clear face and a clean heart". (6) Daun Tunggal Mata Panah Tabir Bintang, it means the values of the philosophy of nobleness and refinement of intimacy and peace. (7) Wajik Sempurna design means gratitude for the blessings and gifts bestowed by Allah. (8) Pucuk Rebung Penuh Bertali that has a meaning of Islamic values that give guidance and guidance to become human beings have noble character so that they live the right

teous life. (9) The Umbrella above the songket that means protecting the whole parts of Songket either showing greatness.

The Malay symbols at Keris Monument are presented in 4 parts: (1) The keris position that interpreted as a symbol of courage, greatness. (2) The sheath's carving and luk's number means greatness, power, majesty and authority, charisma. (3) The yellow color of sheath means prosperity, greatness and authority and grandeur and power. (4) Hulu Keris that faced towards the body and or behind the person who wearing it, means the person come with peace. Meanwhile the upstream of the keris that faced out, has the meaning of arrival, anger, killing.

The results above showing that not both of the monuments were fully built to represent Malay culture. The Songket monument signifies the values of Malay culture in the form of personality, attitudes, manners, social values, guidance in attitude and self-character, also how to socialize in accordance with Malay cultural values. The Keris monument signifies the Malay honor, however based on interview with Riau cultureists (Al Azhar), there is a mismatch between the meaning of keris position, that should not be downward, since it means surrender.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Regarding the research findings in the field, there are some conclusions presented below:

- Malay Symbols are only represented fully at Songket monument
- Keris monument has representing Malay symbol, except for the position of Keris that facing the ground. In Malay culture, Keris means honor, bravery, strong, but downward position has opposite meaning, that is surrender.

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