

ARBITRATIONAL RELATIONSHIP OF SIGNS IN THE LOCAL TRADITION OF SELAPANAN IN NGELANGGERAN TOURIST VILLAGE SEMIOTIC STUDY OF ROLAND BARTHES

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Abstrak

Keywords:

Selapanan Tradition,
Roland Barthes' Semeotics,
Arbitrary Sign Relationships,
Local Culture,
Tourism,

This study aims to analyze the arbitrary relationship of signs in the local tradition of Selapanan in Nalanggeran Tourism Village through Roland Barthes's semiotic approach. The Selapanan tradition, which is part of the local culture in Nalanggeran, involves various symbols and signs in its implementation, such as traditional clothing, food, and ritual objects. With a semiotic approach, this study examines how symbolic meanings in the tradition are formed through arbitrary relationships between signifiers (physical signs) and signifieds (meanings produced by the community). This study uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques in the form of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using Barthes's semiotic theory to deconstruct the symbols in the Selapanan tradition, as well as to understand how these signs shape the cultural identity of the Nalanggeran community. The results of the study show that although the symbols in the Selapanan tradition seem to have fixed meanings, these meanings are actually socially formed and can change according to context. In addition, this study also found the influence of modernity and tourism on the meaning of symbols in tradition, and how the Nalanggeran community tries to maintain the meaning of the original culture despite changes due to globalization. This study contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of preserving local culture amidst the flow of modernity and the influence of tourism.

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INTODUCTION

In semiotics there is a concept of sign system (sign system) and social system (social system) and both are interconnected with each other, as Saussure stated that language does not have a natural order but in language there are social conventions while



language is as a convention that is arbitrary. Why is language arbitrary? Arbitrariness itself means 'as you like', language is arbitrary in the context of the relationship between language and meaning is not mandatory, can change at any time, and cannot be explained why the meaning can be the basis for referring to a specific meaning. Furthermore, Semiotics according to Barthes, consist of three essential levels: denotation, connotation, and myth which Barthes calls the "Order of Signification". This concept refers to the hierarchy of signs in the formation of meaning which allows us to understand a message or signification in a more comprehensive and sophisticated way. According to Barthes, a sign does not have an inherent or fixed meaning, but its meaning depends on its position in a system or sign structure (Barthes, 1967:94).

The approach used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. Sugiyono (2016: 15) states that the qualitative research method is a method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, the qualitative research method is used for research that focuses on the natural conditions of objects. In addition, using data collection techniques with triangulation (combination), inductive or qualitative analysis. The results obtained from using qualitative research itself emphasize the meaning of generalization.

Semiotics is the science that studies a sign (Saussure Quoted by Hoed, 2014: 05). A sign is an interaction of meaning that is conveyed to others through signs. Signs can be flags, song lyrics, words, silence, nerve movements, events that cause a blush, gray hair, or a glance. In order for a sign to be understood correctly, the same understanding is needed. However, people often have their own understanding of the meaning of a sign with various reasons behind it. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced four important concepts, each of which is presented dichotomously, namely *langue* and *parole*, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, synchronic and diachronic, and signifiant and signifie (Hoed, 2014). Thus, the definition of semiotics according to Ferdinand de Saussure is the science that studies a sign and consists of four important concepts.

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Charles Sanders Peirce defines semiotics as the study of signs and everything related to them, namely how they function, their relationship with other signs, their sending, and their reception by those who use them (Van Zoest, 1987, in Rusmana, 2005: 5). According to Peirce, signs consist of Symbols (signs that arise from agreements), Icons (signs that arise from physical representations) and Indexes (signs that arise from cause-effect relationships). While the reference of this sign is called an object. The object or reference of a sign is the social context that is the reference of the sign or something that the sign refers to.

A rural area that has uniqueness and special attractions (both in the form of physical attractions/uniqueness of the rural natural environment and social and cultural life of the community), which is managed and packaged naturally and attractively with the development of supporting tourism facilities in a harmonious environmental system and good and planned management so that the rural attractions are able to drive tourist visits to the village, as well as foster tourism economic activities that improve the welfare and empowerment of the local community.

Tradition is the similarity of material objects and ideas that come from the past but still exist today and have not been destroyed or damaged. Tradition can be interpreted as a true legacy or legacy of the past. However, traditions that occur repeatedly are not done by chance or intentionally. More specifically, tradition can give birth to culture in the community itself. Selapanan is one of the traditions of Javanese society that is carried out from generation to generation, carried out when the baby has reached the age of 35 days from the day of birth, 35 days are obtained from 5 Javanese days (Pahing, Legi, Kliwon, Wage, Pon) and 7 National days, so the multiple of the number 35 is met.

Myth is a type of speech." Barthes (1972:107) defines Myth as a "system of communication." Moreover, he explains that myth is a mode or form of meaning (signification), which must be studied and analyzed as a form before being given historical bounds and conditions, and related to the society that created and used the myth. In this case, Barthes describes myth as a symbolic system that involves certain conventions in the use of language, images, and other symbols, which form a form of message or mode of signification that functions in a particular society.

Myth is a story in which a culture explains or understands several aspects of reality or nature. Primitive myths are about life and death, man and God, good and bad. While the latest myths are about masculinity and femininity, about family, about success about science and so on. Myth, for Barthes, a culture of thinking about something, how to conceptualize or understand it. Barthes sees myths as the links of related concepts (Fiske, 2014: 143-144).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the symbolic meanings embedded in the Selapanan tradition of Nglanggeran Tourism Village through Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. To achieve this objective, this study addresses the following research question: 1. How do the signs and symbols in the Selapanan tradition construct cultural meanings for the Nglanggeran community?

The findings are expected to contribute to the understanding of local traditions and demonstrate how semiotic analysis can be used to interpret cultural symbols and their meanings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics has become one of the most widely used approaches for examining cultural traditions because it explains how meanings are produced through signs and symbols within a particular society. According to Barthes (1972), signs function at two levels of meaning: denotation, which refers to the literal meaning, and connotation, which reflects cultural values and social beliefs. Through repeated cultural practices, these meanings may develop into myths that become naturalized and accepted as common knowledge within a community. Therefore, Barthes' semiotic theory provides an appropriate framework for interpreting the symbolic meanings embedded in traditional rituals.

Traditional ceremonies are not merely sequences of cultural activities but also systems of signs that communicate collective values, beliefs, and identities. In Javanese culture, ritual objects, food offerings, clothing, and ceremonial practices function as symbols whose meanings are socially constructed rather than inherently attached to the objects themselves. Their meanings are maintained through continuous cultural transmission and collective agreement within the community.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Barthes' semiotic approach in analyzing Indonesian cultural traditions. Jamiatul Hasanah and Wisri (2021) examined symbolic interaction in the Pandhaba tradition in Situbondo and found that ritual symbols function as a medium for expressing religious beliefs, social solidarity, and collective values. Similarly, Iskandarsyah Siregar (2022) analyzed the *Palang Pintu* tradition using Barthes' semiotics and showed that denotation, connotation, and myth work together to construct cultural meanings within the Betawi wedding ceremony. Likewise, Mohamad Jazeri and Susanto (2020) revealed that symbolic objects in Javanese wedding rituals represent prayers, advice, responsibilities, and cultural expectations that are collectively understood by the community rather than derived from the physical characteristics of the objects themselves.

Although previous studies have successfully examined the symbolic meanings of various Indonesian traditions, most of them primarily focus on interpreting symbols, cultural values, or social interactions. Limited attention has been given to explaining how the relationship between signifiers and signifieds is constructed as an arbitrary cultural system within the *Selapanan* tradition, particularly in Ngelanggeran Tourism Village. This indicates a research gap regarding the application of Barthes' concept of arbitrariness in understanding the production of meaning in local ritual practices.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the arbitrary relationship between signs and meanings in the *Selapanan* tradition by applying Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The study seeks to explain how ritual symbols construct cultural meanings, reinforce myths, and contribute to preserving the cultural identity of the Ngelanggeran community.

METHOD

Sukmadinata (2005) The basis of qualitative research is constructivism which assumes that reality exists in a plural, interactive and dynamic in an experience man or social context. Sutopo and Arief (2010) concluded several can experts about the meaning of qualitative research there are: (1) describe and analyze the phenomenon, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, individual and group thinking (2) planned activities to capture the practice of understanding of respondents or informants to the world (Emik or verstehen) who are always compound, different and dynamic, (3) describes, expresses and explain (to describe, explore and explain). The approach used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. Sugiyono (2016: 15) states that the qualitative research method is a method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, the qualitative research method is used for research that focuses on the natural conditions of objects. In addition, using data collection techniques with triangulation (combination), inductive or qualitative analysis. The results obtained from using qualitative research itself emphasize the meaning of generalization.

The research method used in the study "Arbitrary Sign Relations in the Selapanan Local Tradition in Ngelanggeran Tourism Village: Roland Barthes' Semiotic Study" is a qualitative method with a semiotic approach. This method aims to understand the symbolic meaning in the Selapanan tradition in Ngelanggeran through the perspective of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which emphasizes the analysis of signs and arbitrary relationships between signifiers and signifieds. This study uses a qualitative approach that focuses on an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and symbolic phenomena contained in the Selapanan tradition. Researchers do not only try to explore quantitative data, but rather more on the interpretation of the meaning and context behind the existing

symbols. A semiotic approach is used to analyze signs in the Selapanan tradition. Barthes divides signs into two components: signifier and signified, which in this study will be analyzed in the context of local culture. Researchers will examine how the signs in this tradition function in forming the meaning and identity of the Nalanggeran community.

This study aims to identify signs in the Selapanan tradition in Nalanggeran Tourism Village. To analyze how the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified occurs in this tradition. To understand how symbols in the Selapanan tradition form meanings related to the cultural identity of the Ngelanggeran people.

Instrument Method

Nalanggeran Tourism Village, which is famous for its Selapanan tradition as part of the local culture that is still maintained and preserved. Local people involved in the Selapanan tradition, such as traditional figures, village elders, ceremony participants, and visitors or tourists who interact with this tradition.

1. *Primary Data*: Data obtained directly from the field through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation related to the implementation of the Selapanan tradition.
2. *Participatory Observation*: Researchers will be directly involved in the Selapanan procession and record the symbolic elements involved.
3. *In-depth Interviews*: Researchers will conduct interviews with traditional figures, village elders, or tradition participants to explore the meaning of the symbols in the ceremony.
4. *Documentation*: Collection of photos, videos, and other documentation that illustrates the implementation of the Selapanan tradition and the symbols involved.
5. *Secondary Data*: Additional data in the form of literature related to the Selapanan tradition, Barthes' semiotic theory, and relevant previous research.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used by researchers include several techniques, including:

1. *Participatory Observation*: Researchers directly observe the Selapanan ceremony procession to record various signs that appear. This observation allows researchers to understand the social and cultural context behind the tradition.
2. *In-depth Interviews*: Interviews are conducted with key informants, such as traditional figures, traditional group leaders, village elders, or residents who are directly involved in the tradition. This interview aims to understand the subjective meaning given by the community to the symbols in Selapanan.
3. *Visual Documentation*: Photos and videos are taken during the ceremony process to analyze symbolic elements in the visuals, such as colors, clothing, ritual objects, and the ritual atmosphere. Identifying various signs that appear in the Selapanan tradition, such as symbols in traditional clothing, ritual objects, and other elements used in the ceremony. Each of these signs will be analyzed to find the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Based on Barthes' semiotic theory, researchers will deconstruct the meaning of these signs. This involves analyzing the relationship between the signifier (physical sign) and the signified (meaning constructed by society).
4. *Example*: Analyzing how certain colors in clothing or food symbols in ritual processions have socially constructed meanings.

5. *Sign Arbitration Analysis*: Assessing whether the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the Selapanan tradition is arbitrary, meaning that the meaning of the sign is formed through cultural and social consensus, rather than based on natural or fixed relationships.

6. *Socio-Cultural Context Interpretation*: Analyzing how the meaning of symbols in this tradition relates to social change, the influence of modernity, and the impact of tourism on symbolic meanings in Selapanan.

This study aims to explore how symbols in the Selapanan tradition in Nalanggeran Tourism Village function to form local cultural meanings, and how arbitrary relationships between signifiers and signifieds form the social and cultural identities of local communities. Using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, this study will also show the cultural dynamics that form in the relationship between symbols, society, and social change caused by tourism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Mr. Triyana Purba Selapanan is one of the traditional ceremonies originating from Javanese culture, especially in a society that is still thick with traditional values. "Selapanan" is carried out to celebrate the age of a baby who is 35 days old or one month after birth. The name "selapanan" itself is taken from the word "selapan", which means 7 days in Javanese, so 35 days (5 times 7 days) is an important symbol in this tradition.

In the selapanan ceremony, usually the parents or family of the baby hold prayers and thanksgiving with the aim of asking for safety, health, and protection for the newborn baby. Some of the rituals carried out include giving tumpeng rice, reading prayers, and eating together with the family. In addition, there are also some traditional equipment such as banana leaves, eggs, and agricultural products as symbols of blessings and abundant sustenance.

This tradition reflects gratitude and hope that the baby will grow up healthy and safe, as well as to strengthen social relations within the family and surrounding community. In the selapanan tradition, Javanese people believe that not carrying out this ceremony can have a negative impact on the newborn baby and his family. The myth that has developed in society explains that selapanan is not only a cultural ritual, but also a form of protection and prayer for the newborn baby to grow up healthy, strong, and blessed. If this ritual is not carried out, then there is an assumption that the baby will be hit by disaster, get sick, or even experience difficulties in his life. The community believes that this ritual has magical and spiritual powers that protect the baby from evil spirits, and ensure that the baby can grow well, get sustenance, and have a life full of blessings.



Picture 1: <https://images.app.goo.gl/STLgyDVWzqMXSJJb9>
SELAPANAN

SELAPANAN

The selapanan tradition is part of the local tradition of the Javanese people including the Ngelanggeran Tourism Village, Yogyakarta. This tradition is often an important event in the context of thanksgiving and prayer for a newborn baby, which is usually done at the age of 35 days. This explanation gives an idea that selapanan is not only a ceremony, but also part of a form of respect for the cultural values and beliefs of the local community.

SIGNS

In the context of Javanese culture, which often contain certain symbols or meanings that can be understood by the community as signs or representations of hope and prayer. In the selapanan tradition, there are many "Signs" that appear, both in the form of objects, rituals, and certain activities that are carried out.

ARBITRER

In the selapanan tradition carried out by the community in the Ngelanggeran Tourism Village, the signs used in the ceremony are arbitrary, in accordance with Roland Barthes' semiotic concept. This symbolic meaning does not arise from natural properties but from social agreements that exist in the traditions and culture of the Javanese people. This arbitration process shows how society forms the meaning of certain signs used in the tradition, which are then accepted and understood together as a representation of hopes and prayers in the selapanan ceremony.

MYTH

In this case, the myth that has developed is that selapanan is a ceremony that cannot be missed because it has very important symbolic power. Not carrying out selapanan is considered a violation of cultural and spiritual values that have been accepted for generations. This myth reinforces the community's belief in the importance of this ritual as part of social harmony and cosmic balance between humans, nature, and God. Therefore, although on a practical level this ritual may seem like an ordinary traditional ceremony, on a mythical and symbolic level, it has a very deep meaning and is associated with the continuity of life and the blessing of the family and the newborn

CONCLUSION

The “selapanan” tradition in Ngelanggeran Tourism Village contains various signs that are “arbitrary”, meaning that the meaning of the sign is not natural, but rather formed through cultural and social agreements in society. Using Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach, signs such as tumpeng rice, boiled eggs, and various other ritual elements, although physically ordinary objects, have a very strong symbolic meaning in the context of this ceremony. Tumpeng rice, for example, is not just food, but is understood as a symbol of gratitude and hope for abundance for a newborn baby, while boiled eggs are considered a symbol of fertility and blessings. In addition to its symbolic meaning, the selapanan tradition also contains a deep myth. The community believes that this ritual has magical and spiritual powers that protect babies from evil spirits and ensure healthy and blessed growth. This myth functions as a social justification that the selapanan ritual should not be missed, because if it is not done, the baby is considered to experience difficulties in life or disaster. Thus, selapanan is not just a cultural ritual, but also a means to strengthen social and spiritual values that are collectively accepted by the community.

Overall, the selapanan tradition illustrates how the arbitrary signs used in the ceremony such as tumpeng rice and boiled eggs can form deeper meanings through social agreements and myths that develop in Javanese culture. This ritual is not only about carrying out customs, but also about strengthening social ties, religious values, and collective hopes that are passed down from generation to generations.

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