Semiotic Analysis of Batik in Riau Islands

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Abstract

Batik is one of the many Indonesian cultural heritages worldwide and has become a hallmark of Indonesian society. Every Batik contains meaning. Meaning in signs is also called semiotics. This article aims to clarify the semiotic meaning of the colors and motives of the Riau Islands Batik. The researcher took the data from the interpretation of the Riau Islands' cultural symbols by the locals. In clarifying the data, the researcher was done by using qualitative methods. The result showed the semiotic meaning of Batik and how the interpretation of the Riau Islands recognized the cultural values of Batik. For practical purposes, the research results are expected to promote the culture of the Riau Islands and its characteristics for Indonesia and the international community. It is also hoped to provide knowledge about the ornaments of Riau Island to the community, especially the people of the Riau Islands, so that the cultural heritage is not lost. The data were analyzed by using Charles Sanders Pierce.

Keywords: Semiotics, Signs and Symbols, Semiotic Meaning

INTRODUCTION

Language is something people have made. Language is an integral component of human existence. Without language, it would be impossible to communicate with other people, regardless of their location. Language plays a role that is also played by human life. Humans are also considered organisms that use language. Language is as important to human life as breathing. Everyone needs a language and must be able to speak it, because the most common language in the world is used when communicating with other people. It is used to communicate with other people, and without language, their world would be empty. There are several types of languages in the world, and they all have distinct meanings, so language is unique.

According to Manullang & Lizasadela (2021), the language can be known from the circle or social class where the person is from, but generally, it talks about how symbols can stand for
something else, how they can be used to communicate, and how they can be imbued with meaning. For example, in symbolic language, the word "cat" is symbolic of the idea of a cat; the word "dollar" is symbolic of $1 in economic value; the word "yes" or "no" is a symbol of confirmation; grimacing is a symbol of disapproval; and the smiley face emoji is a symbol of happiness.

When people say "language is symbols," they do not mean "what they say" (what symbols they use), but "what they mean" (what the symbols they use mean; what they're attempting to communicate). The symbols they use in language have a deeper "symbolic and semantic" significance than their literal meaning. This field of study is known as semiology or semiotics. According to Yakin & Totu (2014), studying the lives of signs in society is a general approach to studying signs. In every cultural life, or even culture as a type of language, there is a dualistic notion of sign, linking the signifier as a form of spoken word or phrase with the signified as a mental concept.

Important to note is that, according to Saussure (1983), the sign is completely arbitrary; there is no necessary connection between the sign and its meaning. Barthes (2006) proposes another term for understanding signs with the order of signification in his theory, where the sign has three stages in meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. In his book Semiotics: The Basics, Chandler (2017) concludes, "To semioticians, the defining feature of the mark is that they are treated by their users as standing for or representing other things."

Color is a process that occurs when light hits an object. Everyone likes color because the presence of color can give beauty and aesthetic value. In addition, color is also considered to have an influence on one's psychology. Generally, people will choose colors according to their respective characters, so that someone's favorite color is sometimes not the same as another's. Color is very useful in human life. Color is a complement to the image and represents the psychological atmosphere in communication. Color is also a very sharp element that touches the sensitivity of vision so that it can stimulate feelings of emotion, sadness, joy, mood, enthusiasm, etc. According to Elliott (2015), color is a phenomenon that occurs due to the presence of three elements: light, objects, and observers (which can be eyes or measuring instruments). Color theory, according to Brewster (1831), was first put forward in 1831. This theory simplifies the colors that exist in nature into 4 color groups, namely primary, secondary, tertiary, and neutral colors. These color groups are often arranged on the Brewster color wheel. The Brewster color circle explains the theory of complementarity, complementary splits, triads, and tetrads.

Motives are one of the basic elements in Batik because every Batik motive has its own charm. Many things can be learned from each Batik motif design, such as cultural background, beliefs, customs, the natural environment, spirituality, etc. Although many Batik motives have experienced cultural development and acculturation, Batik motives have not experienced a shift in meaning and have not lost the characteristics of Batik itself, which has traditional values and philosophical meanings. The existence of Indonesian Batik is strongly supported by the development of Batik itself, both in terms of the uniqueness of the motives, colors, and symbolic meanings contained as
well as the price of Batik on the market.

Taking into account the many things that can be analyzed through semiotics Semiotics, visual language that can be observed as a sign system, either a single sign or a collection of signs, is what the researchers detail in their analysis, especially the symbols in the Riau Island Batik. The researchers took some Batik data from the internet, libraries, and family collections. The researchers discusses color symbols in Batik because the researchers want to know the meaning of color in Riau Island Batik. The main objective of this study is to identify the meaning of color and motif symbols in Batik. The purpose of this research is to study the types of color and motive symbols that are there as an object of discussion because learning about traditional cultural tokens is very interesting. The Researchers hope that by conducting this research, several young generations of Riau Islanders will learn about their culture, which is also part of the language and must be preserved for the next generation of Riau Islanders, as well as be useful for future research.

Based on the research background, the researchers formulate the problem of this research, namely, what are the semiotic meanings and cultural values of Riau Island Batik. The purpose of this research is to identify semiotic interpretations in Riau Island Batik and to elaborate on the cultural values of Batik in the Riau Island Province.

To avoid overlapping and misleading discussions, this research is only focused on the semiotics of Batik colors and motives. This study uses Pierce's order of significance theory to analyze the data and obtain the semiotic meaning behind Batik. The result of this research is expected to provide meaning for the reader, and the results of the research are expected to provide an explanation of how the signs are depicted on Batik in the Riau Island Province. It is also hoped that it can provide an explanation of how Pierce's marking order theory can be implied in interpreting signs on Batik in the Riau Island Province. For practical purposes, the research results are expected to promote the culture of Riau Island and its characteristics not only for Indonesia but also for the international community. It is also hoped that it can provide knowledge about the ornaments of Riau Island to the community, especially the people of Riau Island, so that the cultural heritage is not lost.

**Semiotics**

In general, semiotics studies signs or symbols and their meanings. Signs or symbols of various origins. There are those from humans, animals, plants, and signs or symbols of human creation. Semiotics is also often seen as having an important anthropological dimension, and every cultural phenomenon can be studied as communication (Situmorang, 2014).

**Some Semiotic Theories**

There are several semioticians around the world. However, the researchers only concentrate on the theory of three famous semioticians. In its development, semiotics is divided into two types, namely, semiotics from Pierce (as cited in Gaparov, 2021) (English Saxon semioticians) and semiotics from Saussure (as cited in Yakin & Totu, 2014) (continental semioticians). The semiotic meaning of the two is different. because Peirce was a philosopher and logician while Saussure was a linguist.
Semiotics, but in a different way, where multiple signification systems collaborate in meaning transmission (spoken and written language, gestures, and facial expressions during chat or as part of a theatrical or film representation, which can be conveyed by new media such as computers).

**Kind of Semiotics**

Based on the explanation above, there are several kinds of semiotics as follows;

**Analytical Semiotics.**

Parret (1983, p.1) analyzes the sign system. Peirce's semiotics takes an object and uses analysis to become an idea and a feeling (Ed. Innis, 1985, p.5).

**Faunal Semiotics (Zoosemiotics)**

Hawkes (1977, p.124) Semiotics only explains the signs produced by animals.

**Cultural Semiotics**

Semiotics only describes the system of signs in a specific cultural society. It is known that humans, as social beings, have a certain cultural system that has been demonstrated and respected for generations. (Ikegami, 1985; Lamb, 1984; Kelkar, 1984). Example: In the Toba language, the Batak people usually wear ulos. People can find out which parties they will attend by looking at their ulos. If people want to see him get married, they usually use Ragi Hotang Ulos. If people comes to the death ceremony, they usually wear Sibolang and Bolean ulos. In the Toba language, the Batak usually wear a black skirt when they come to a death ceremony, and when someone comes to a wedding, it must be complete.

**The Cosmology of Riau Island**

Geographically, the Riau Island province is bordered by neighboring countries, namely Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, which have an area of 251,810,71 km2, of which 96 percent is water, with 1,350 large and small islands that have shown progress in implementing government, development, and community activities. The provincial capital of Riau Island is Tanjung Pinang. This province is located on strategic sea and air transportation routes and is busiest at the international level, as well as on the lips of world markets that have market opportunities. The highest point on Riau Island is Mount Daik (1,165 masl), which is on Lingga Island. (Sukiyah et al., 2018). Traditional clothing in Tanjung Pinang is Batik, commonly made of cotton, the traditional textile of Indonesia and the garment of choice for many Indonesian businesspeople. The fabric is also light and cool, which makes it a practical choice in tropical weather. People can get their own Batik shirt and scarf, or even try creating their own designs, at Batik Gonggong.

**Cultural Awareness**

According to the Collins Dictionary (accessed in 2022), a person's cultural awareness is their understanding of the differences between themselves and people from other countries or other backgrounds, especially differences in attitudes and values. Cultural awareness is a basic communication skill that involves being able to step back from ourselves and be aware of our cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions.
Cultural Semiotics

The culture of the people of Riau Island is one of the well-known cultures that can never be separated from Indonesian culture. There are differences that distinguish the people of Riau Island from other communities in Indonesia and around the world, namely the uniqueness of the language and the type of Batik. This is very familiar in Indonesia because it has several unique colors. For the people of Riau Island, color is a symbol of life. This is very important because without color, life becomes empty or meaningless. There are many colors in this world, but only three are dominant in the Riau Island Culture, namely red, yellow, and green. This is often found in all kinds of activities or matters concerning the culture of the Riau Islands.

Batik

Batik is one of the many Indonesian cultural heritages that are known worldwide and has become a hallmark of Indonesian society. In Javanese, the word Batik comes from the words "amba" and "tik." Batik has the meaning of writing and dots; these activities are related to a work that is smooth, soft, and small in the form of dots that are combined in such a way and contain an element of beauty (Setiati, 2007). Every Batik motive contains meaning. Meaning in signs is also called semiotics.

Several regions in Indonesia have distinct Batik fabric characteristics. Batik motives have their own philosophy. These differences in Batik motives are influenced by ethnicity, race, and cultural values. The Riau Islands are one of them.

Around the end of the nineteenth century, the history of Riau Island Batik was known and developed together with that of other Batik regions. The art of Batik textiles was developed through cultural exchanges with Javanese craftsmen. Currently, Batik production centers in the Riau Islands are growing thanks to the support of the local government and the strong cultural community in the Riau Islands.

This province has a unique textile tradition called Telepuk. Telepuk is a special technique for decorating textiles with gold or bronze dyes. This tradition has developed since the Lingga Sultanate in the 19th century. The Telepuk tradition is still maintained in Batik production on Riau Island.

Kinds Batik of Riau Island

1. Gonggong Siput

Gonggong (Strombus Turturella) is a type of sea slug found around the coastal area of Bintan Island and Riau Island. Gonggong is a local delicacy in Tanjung Pinang. This motive represents the Riau Island Province's geographical area, which is 95% ocean.

2. Ikan Tambal

The word "Ikan" refers to the actual fish. The philosophical meaning of Ikan Tambal is togetherness, simplicity in social life, and treating others fairly, regardless of social class. The wave pattern depicts the ups and downs of people's lives and contains advice to face social problems with patience.
3. **Gonggong Beruntun**

This motive depicts that one should maintain a positive attitude and speak kind words so that one can achieve good fortune, success, and a glorious life.

4. **Tikar Natuna**

The **Tikar Natuna** motives are adapted from traditional *pandan* mat making in the Natuna Islands. The tradition of mat weaving has a special meaning and has been maintained for centuries by locals on the island of Natuna. This form of traditional creativity in the Natuna culture can still be traced to this day. The creation of this *Batik* textile also aims to increase awareness in the local community about the traditional woven *pandan* mats.

**METHOD**

There are several steps taken to show that this research is included in semantic research. These steps include data sources, data collection methods and techniques, data analysis methods and techniques, and finally, analysis presentation techniques. This study uses field research as a method for collecting and analyzing data.

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive design. The researchers collect some data about *Batik* from his family's collection and discusses and finds out the meaning of the colors and motives in *Batik*, so they also conduct interviews with several elders of the Riau Island community. As the researcher explained in the previous chapter, this study discusses the semiotic interpretation of *Batik* on the Riau Islands. The subject of this research is *Batik* found on Riau Island.

Research data were collected by using the documentation method because the research data were in the form of words and pictures and were described qualitatively. Furthermore, the data can be analyzed by several theories, including the theory of semiotics put forward by Saussure (1983) and Bhartes (1957).

This semiotic theory was put forward by Saussure in 1857–1913. In this theory, semiotics is divided into two parts (dichotomies), namely the signifier and the signified. Markers are seen as physical forms that can be recognized through the form of architectural works, while signs are seen as meanings that are revealed through concepts, functions, or values contained in architectural works.

Barthes' theory of semiotics is almost literally derived from the theory of language, according to Saussure. Barthes emphasizes that there are two main meanings: connotative and denotative. Connotative meaning includes aspects of color related to feelings and emotions as well as the cultural values and points of view of a community group. For example, a smiling face can be interpreted as an expression of happiness or an expression of contempt. Meanwhile, denotative meaning includes things indicated by words or explicit relationships between signs and references or reality in the denotative marking stage. For example, there are pictures of people, animals, trees, and houses in red, yellow, blue, and white. At this denotative stage, only data information is conveyed.

Meanwhile, there are several techniques used to analyze the data. First, Saussure's theory is
used to find signifiers and signifiers in verbal and visual mural signs. In order to get the aspects of the signifier, the aspects of the signifier must first be explained. Then, using Bhartes’ theory, the marking order is analyzed in depth into denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings or ideologies. There are colors and their meanings, as follows:

Table 1. List of Pierce’s Colors and Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Color Symbol</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>blood, courage and courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>truth, holiness and justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>mysticism, faith and medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>fertile and rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>gray</td>
<td>maturity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, the researchers presented data analysis based on 4 types of Riau Island Batik.

Table 2. Kinds Batik of Riau Island

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Kinds Batik of Riau Island</th>
<th>Colors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tikar Natuna</td>
<td>blue and red colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gonggong Sipat</td>
<td>green, magenta and purple colors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the table above, there are 4 Riau Island Batiks, of which the four Batiks have different motives and colors.

**Discussion**

These motives depict that one must maintain a positive attitude and speak good words to achieve good luck, success, and glorious life.

Many people wear Batik to show how much they appreciate and are part of a culture. Batik also provides another spirit of nationalism, represented in Nationalist Batik. The role of Batik in international and world diplomacy has made Batik a commodity that preserves Indonesian culture. Batik has a simple but elegant design. The Batik theme is still used in traditional rituals and events because it symbolizes peace and simplicity. People also like to wear Batik because it is unique and attractive. Batik also has a symmetrical pattern.

**Tikar Natuna**

The researcher use Pierce's model as follows:

![Tikar Natuna](image)

**Picture 1. Pierce's Model Tikar Natuna**
The Natuna mat (Tikar Natuna) motives are adapted from the traditional pandan mat making in the Natuna Islands. The tradition of mat weaving has a special meaning and has been maintained for centuries by locals on Natuna Island. This form of traditional Natuna cultural creativity can still be traced today. The creation of this batik cloth also aims to increase the awareness of the local community about the traditional woven pandan mats.

*Batik Tikar Natuna* has two types of colors, namely, blue and red. The meaning of this color is courage, while the blue color means calm. The color of *Batik* means a strong ambition for public awareness.

**Gonggong Siput**

The researcher use Pierce's model as follows;

![Picture 2. Gonggong Siput](image)

*Gonggong* (Strombus Turturella) is a type of sea slug found around the coastal area of Bintan Island, Riau Island. *Gonggong* is a local culinary in Tanjung Pinang. This motives are also reflects the geographical area of the Riau Island Province (Riau Island), of which 95% is ocean.

*Batik Gonggong Siput* has three types of colors, namely, green, magenta, and purple. The meaning of green color means hope, the meaning of the magenta color magenta means joy, and the purple color purple means ambition. Of the three colors, *Batik Gonggong Siput* has a strong meaning of hope and aspirations for joy for the people of the Riau Islands.

**Ikan Tambal**

The researcher use Pierce's model as follows;

![Picture 3. Ikan Tambal](image)

The word "Ikan" refers to the actual fish. The philosophical meaning of *Ikan Tambal* is togetherness, simplicity in social life, and treating others fairly, regardless of social class. The wave
pattern depicts the ups and downs of people's lives and contains advice to face social problems patiently.

**Gonggong Beruntun**

The researcher uses Pierce's model as follows;

![Graph of signifiers and interpretants for Gonggong Beruntun Batik]

**Interpretant (Good fortune, success, and a glorious life)**

**Sign (black, magenta, blue, and grey colors)**

**Object (Gonggong Beruntun)**

**Picture 4. Gonggong Beruntun**

This motive depicts that one should maintain a positive attitude and speak kind words so that one can achieve good fortune, success, and a glorious life.

Batik Gonggong Beruntun has 4 colors: black, magenta, blue, and gray. The meaning of black color means a mythism, the meaning of the magenta color means cheerfulness, the meaning of the blue color means calm, and the gray color means maturity. Of the four colors, the meaning of Batik Gonggong Beruntun is that humans must maintain their faith to live peaceful life.

According to Saussure, a linguistic sign is defined as a two-sided entity. One side of the sign is what he calls the signifier, the material aspect of a sign. What the signifier engenders in every sign is what Saussure refers to as the signifier as a mental concept. Peirce proposes a triadic model (three parts) consisting of a representamen, interpretant, and object based on Saussure's sign model in the form of a self-contained dyad. Representamen has a similar meaning to Saussure's Significant, while the interpreter has a different quality from signified: it is a sign in the interpreter's mind. Meanwhile, Barthes' order of signification theory continues Saussure's thought by emphasizing the interaction between signs and their personal and cultural experiences. Users are expected to be able to use Batik as a means of interaction with culture to maintain the existence of the culture itself in every cultural event. To sum up, there are many colors in the world, 10 colors of them found in the 4 types of Riau Islands Batik: red represents courage, green represents loyalty, black represents mysticalness, blue represents serenity, gray represents maturity, purple represents ambition, magenta represents cheerfulness, brown represents strength, gold represents prosperity, and orange represents spirit. Color is very important in Riau Island life.

**CONCLUSION**

Each color in Batik has different signs, expressions and meanings; the same goes for Riau Islands Batik. The meaning of semiotics in Batik is recognized by using Saussure's theory to find
signifiers and signified in verbal and visual mural signs. In order to get the aspects of the signifier, the aspects of the signifier must first be explained. In comparison, Peirce's theory's main principles are the human mind and sign boundaries, the three-dimensional system (triadic) and the relativity regarding the three typologies or taxonomies of signs (icon, index and symbol). The use of Barthes' theory to signify order, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. Batik provides specific information to respondents about the characteristics of Batik, knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and cultural ceremonies of the Riau Islands. However, most of the respondents need to learn the true meaning of Batik. Cultural values are embodied in the semiotic meaning of Batik.

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