



Ethnic Symbols in Korrie Layun Rampan's Novels (Cultural Semiotics Study)

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Abstract. This article discusses the significance of ethnic symbols found in Korrie Layun Rampan's novel in depicting Dayak society in East Kalimantan. This paper attempts to describe the existence of literary works and issues that occur in Dayak society that show ethnic symbols of the Dayak tribe. This study uses Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics study, which is a study to reveal the Dayak ethnic symbols in Korrie Layun Rampan's novel. The research method used is a qualitative approach, the steps are divided into three main parts. First, to identify the Dayak ethnic symbols highlighted in Korrie Layun Rampan's novel. The next step is to analyze the ethnic symbols in the novel using the cultural semiotics study initiated by Yuri Lotman. The final step is to explore the problems in interpreting the symbol analysis, discuss some data, and draw implications in the conclusion. The analysis used is hermeneutics. The results of this study show that the three titles of Korrie Layun Rampan's novels studied fulfill the principles of cultural semiotics work and reveal ethnic symbols in the research.

Keywords: Symbols, Ethnicity, Korrie Layun Rampan, Cultural Semiotics.

1 Introduction

Korrie Layun Rampan's literary works play an important role in Indonesian literature by vividly depicting the richness of Dayak ethnic traditions [1]. As a prominent writer from East Kalimantan, Rampan often incorporates ethnic symbols in his writings to shed light on indigenous issues that are often overlooked [2]. His stories not only captivate readers with engaging narratives but also carry deep meanings rooted in the social life and customs of the Dayak people, offering valuable insights into their way of life [3]. The social environment and customs surrounding Dayak communities provide fertile ground for exploring Indigenous semiotics, where each ethnic symbol in a text has multiple layers of significance waiting to be deciphered [4]. Rampan's works serve as a bridge connecting Dayak culture to wider Indonesian society, showcasing the intricate tapestry of indigenous heritage and customs through a literary lens [5], [6].

The study of the semiotics of ethnic symbols in Rampan's work is particularly relevant. Observations of Indigenous semiotics help reveal evidence of ethnic self and Indigenous values represented and maintained through letters. This matter is of

utmost significance in the effort to protect indigenous harmony in Indonesia. This study will focus on the study of the indigenous semiotics of ethnic symbols in Korrie Layun Rampan's stories, with the aim of uncovering the meaning behind the symbols and representing Dayak's indigenous self-evidence. Although Korrie Layun Rampan's novels are dominated by the richness of *adat* (custom/tradition) and its symbolism, there is also a lack of in-depth description of how these ethnic symbols are represented and interpreted in cultural semiotics. The main issue identified in this study is about the ethnic Dayak symbols in Rampan's novels delivering the meaning of *adat* (custom/tradition) environment as well as efforts to formulate these symbols in a wider *adat* (custom/tradition) framework.

Exclusively, this study aims to: (1) to recognize the ethnic symbols that appear in Rampan's novels, (2) to examine the meaning and conditions of use of these symbols, and (3) to interpret the role these symbols play in Dayak ethnic custom and self-evidence. By approaching these objectives, this study is expected to make an important contribution to literary research.

The main justification of this study from a scientific perspective is that the results of the study can provide current thoughts about ethnic representation in Indonesian novels and enrich the description of Dayak customs maintained and informed through texts. The relevance of this study also grows to recognize and protect the harmony of the Dayak custom itself against the diversity of tribes in Indonesia.

To further comprehend the meaning of semiotics as well as cultural semiotics, here are several experts who come with diverse explanations. Semiotics, known as the science of signification, is a field that delves into the study of signs and sign processes, including semiosis, indication, performance, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, meaning, and communication [7]. It is a science that focuses on understanding the meaning of decisions in the Saussurean tradition, emphasizing the interpretation of symbols and signs [8]. Semiotics plays an important role in various disciplines, such as literature, sports, and poetry, where it helps uncover hidden meanings and interpret symbols to enhance understanding and communication [9]–[11]. By analyzing symbols and signs through a structured system of linguistic distinctions, semiotics enables the interpretation of texts, advertisements, and various forms of communication to reveal deeper layers of meaning.

Semiotics, also known as a fundamental model in the social sciences interprets the world as a complex system of relationships centered around signs and symbols [7], [8]. Derived from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning 'sign', semiotics delves into the study of sign language systems, codes, and human communication, emphasizing the importance of symbols in generating meaning [12], [13]. Furthermore, semiotics plays an important role in human communication, highlighting the exchange of meaning as the essence of communication and emphasizing the social and cultural polysemous nature of signs, which necessitates exposure to various disciplines for a comprehensive understanding [14].

There is a tendency for the term semiotics to be more popular than semiotics, so even adherents of the Saussurean school often use the term semiotics. But clearly, both are sciences that study the relationship between signs based on certain codes. These signs appear in human communication through language, both spoken and signaled [15, pp. 9–10].

The scope of semiotics is so broad that it gives the impression of arrogant 'imperialism' [16]. Semiotics is also seen as an integrative study, where all forms of communication including words (language) are considered as arbitrary signs [17, p. 69]. This explanation positions the word as a sign of communication. The meaning of a word as a sign is arbitrary and subject to change over time. The tendency in this definition is to place the sign as something that communicates in a literal way, namely the communication of meaning.

It can be ascertained that there are processes and systems of signaling owned by a sign that have aspects of cognition and rhetoric. The cognitive aspect concerns what knowledge is contained in a word so that it can be said to have meaning. The rhetorical aspect indicates that the sign is formed neatly and uniquely, from which it becomes a distinguishing feature from other signs. This results in a perception that in communication, signs operate on the aspects of cognition and rhetoric to lead an individual towards meaning or ultimate meaning [18].

Cultural semiotics, as defined by various authors, encompasses the study of signs, codes, and icons in societies characterized by a particular culture [19]. It involves the analysis of the material aspects of signs and the associated concepts, emotions, or behaviors [20]. Moreover, cultural semiotics plays an important role in understanding the hierarchy of sign systems in culture and the historical correlations between these systems [21]. Furthermore, it involves interpreting cultural history as cultural semiotics and vice versa, emphasizing the importance of history and temporality in semiotic analysis [22]. By utilizing a cultural semiotic approach, researchers can probe the depths of cultural heritage, generating and applying knowledge to advance the understanding, use, and experience of cultural artifacts with the help of modern computational capabilities [23].

The researcher has a tendency to choose a semiotic study using Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory which is more specific to cultural semiotics and has compatibility with the research conducted. The concept of Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics is as follows: (1) The defined text is not merely the literal meaning of a script or writing, but things related to culture and society [24]. (2) Semiosphere of semiotic space which is a fundamental idea in his semiotic theory [25], [26], [27], [28]–[32]. (3) Boundaries in this case bridge the complexity of translation and transformation that produces new information, so that actual and metaphorical boundaries act as filters, mechanisms, translations, catalysts, and communication controls that shape the flow and interpretation of information [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39]. (4) Symbols and Signs as mediators between different levels of culture and language. Symbols are an important mechanism of cultural memory, which can transfer plot outlines, texts, and other semiotic formations, from one level of cultural memory to another [24]. The text must be organized in a certain way, to be considered as a semiotic whole. (5) Centre and Periphery A cultural system consists of a core and a periphery. Things located at the center of a cultural system are more neutral/normal (common to all). While those on the periphery, 'brightly colored and marked' also tend to be more dynamic. (6) Us (Inner Space) and Them Outer Space), Inner space refers to us or our group, while outer space means them or not our group, so what is not in accordance with 'us' means not good / wrong [24]. (7) Autocommunication can be interpreted as communication/memories stored in the mind. Some texts function as

memory catalysts, which then trigger autocommunication [24]. Is part of the identification and transmission of cultural processes in general [40].

In the research to be conducted, the researcher only displays eligible concepts or dominating texts in Korrie Layun Rampan's novels based on Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics theory.

2 Methods

The research method used is a qualitative approach, the steps are divided into three main parts. First, identifying the Dayak ethnic symbols highlighted in Korrie Layun Rampan's novel. The next step is to analyze the ethnic symbols in the novel using the Cultural Semiotics study initiated by Yuri Lotman. The last step is to explore the problems in interpreting the symbol analysis, discuss some data, and provide implications in the conclusion. The analysis used is hermeneutics to interpret and understand the ethnic symbols contained in the novel by Korrie Layun Rampan.

This method is expected to show the research results that the three data sources studied in Korrie Layun Rampan's novels fulfill the principle of literary works that devote ethnic symbols. These symbols illustrate important aspects of Dayak culture and provide deep insights into the issues facing Dayak society.

3 Results and Discussion

In the research conducted on the novel by Korrie Layun Rampan, some texts are indicated to correspond to Yuri Lotman's concept of cultural semiotics, namely the concepts of text, semiosphere, and automatic communication which are very dominating. The results of the research are described in the following explanation:

3.1 Text

Based on Yuri Lotman's concept of text, when viewed from Lotman's perspective, text has a communicative function that implies a certain message or meaning represented by the symbols and language structures used. Lotman emphasizes that text is a system consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic elements that interact with each other to convey meaning. The following paragraph excerpt is in line with this indicator.

After deliberating with local residents, the Japi Officials brought all their residents downstream to the Namuk River and finally arrived at the Nyawatan River. In an area that is considered suitable, *bivocasses* and *teratak* are erected for temporary accommodation. The elders know the name of the beautiful Rantau on the banks of the Nyawatan River called Dempar. [41, pp. 7–8]

In the context of the text excerpt, we can see that there are important elements that can be analyzed based on Lotman's concept. Firstly, in looking at the narrative of

Petinggi Jepi and his people's journey up the river to arrive at an area called Dempar, Lotman's text concept emphasizes the construction of meaning from the narrative. The narrative creates a picture of the people's physical and metaphorical journey, which can be interpreted in the context of a community's history, culture, and identity.

Furthermore, Lotman's concept of intertextuality can also be applied to this analysis. The discovery of the name 'Dempar' as a place on the banks of the Nyawatan River may contain certain meanings or references in the local tradition or mythology of the local community. This notion links the text to the wider cultural landscape, which is connected to the delivery of deeper messages behind the travel narrative.

In the following text excerpt, it can be seen that the elements that Lotman considers paradoxical concepts in the text, namely love in this text excerpt, appear to be paradoxical because it is not only understood as a feeling or emotion, but it is also a whole of being that exists with the state of men and women in a domestic partnership.

"The word lover grows from habit. Although I myself feel that love starts from attachment. That attachment makes everything close, and that closeness creates habits. And the habits that come together to build a relationship."

"Isn't it love itself that brings us closer, Rusdi?"

"It's love."

"Just love?"

"No. Mature love is not just a feeling that waves and dreams into the blue sky. Love is also not only responsible for wealth and body. Love is the whole existence that corresponds to the condition of men and women who unite themselves in the Communion of the household." [42, p. 36]

In the context of this text excerpt, love is discussed in relation to attachment, closeness, and familiarity bound up in a domestic partnership. This suggests a network of relationships between elements in the text that contribute to shaping the overall meaning. The concept of code in Lotman's analysis is also relevant in understanding the symbolic system used in the text to convey meaning about love and human relationships. The use of keywords such as 'attachment,' 'closeness,' and 'familiarity' indicates the importance of understanding the interconnected subjects in the context of the existence of mature and adult love mentioned in the text.

In the following excerpt, there is a symbolic expression involving natural elements such as flowers, trees, and the environment as a representation of the social and environmental conditions disturbed by human actions. Lotman emphasizes the importance of semantic structure analysis and symbolic interpretation in the text, which is evident in the simile of Bunga's tears rolling down at the sight of human greed in deforesting the forest. This reflects the degraded nature and Bunga's emotional attachment to her beloved environment.

As well as Flowers. His eyes seemed to see the pace of progress. The trees that were destroyed by the HPH management were replaced with new trees by the hands of residents who love the beauty of the environment. Sometimes Bunga tears roll when she

sees the greed of the HPH holders who deforest, leaving the priceless area, the sandy lands that stretch the arid desert. Damaged environments and wild bushes without a price sprang up as if scrambling to fill the earth. Serasa Bunga finds herself in the middle of the environment she loves, cultivating it herself, making loose and fertile soil as a seedbed for rice and crops. It is like he takes care of all that is loved, carrying him with a loving heart.

"Nothing helps you, Pras, no, but kindness and truth. Your eyes must be alert, your ears must be abundant, and your senses must be alert throughout the day. Failure will bring ridicule, but on the other hand, success will bring many difficulties. Ants will swarm the honey, where sugar spills, where there are mountains of life-fighting for sweetness. You remember Pras, everything sweet must be licked. Success will invite licking. [43, p. 70]

The concept of intertextuality can also be applied in this analysis because the moral messages conveyed through the characters' dialogues about success, goodness, and truth illustrate the struggle of moral and ethical values in the context of human life. The messages also reveal the characters' internal conflicts and the dynamics of human relationships with the environment and with others.

Analyzing these snippets of text can provide deeper insights into the narrative structure and meaning hidden within them, as well as the role of the text in transmitting the cultural values, history, and identity of a community. In addition, it is necessary to contemplate the deepening of meanings, the complexity of messages, and the symbolic relationships embedded in the texts, thus forming a deeper understanding of the narratives and the messages they carry.

3.2 Semiosphere

Yuri Lotman's concept of the semiosphere requires us to understand the semiosphere in reference to the overall conceptual framework of the semiotic system. Lotman emphasizes that every message or sign has a context and scope of belonging within a wider semiosphere. The narrative excerpts that researchers managed to find in Korrie Layun Rampan's novel on the concept of the semiosphere are as follows.

A year ago, Jepi officials stepped on Jakarta for the first time. According to experts in Jakarta, he has done something very beneficial for environmental sustainability. The Dempar village he built has not yet reached the age of twenty years but has shown signs of steady development in the future. [41, p. 25]

In this quote, we can see the interaction between Petinggi Jepi and the environment described in the narrative. Lotman's concept of semiosphere highlights the importance of context and the relationship between symbols and the reality represented by signs in a text. Petinggi Jepi is linked to actions that benefit environmental sustainability, which is defined and assessed by experts in Jakarta through a framework of understanding and interpreting the environment.

In addition, the quote reflects Rampan's understanding of the evolution and development of signs in semiotics. The Dempar Village built by Petinggi Jepi

symbolically represents a symbol of development and a promising future. The quote also emphasizes the importance of identifying and analyzing how signs evolve and interact within a wider context.

The following quote refers to the character's personal experience expressed through nature imagery and natural elements such as forest, huma, and wind. The natural context forms a strong backdrop in reinforcing the meaning and emotions that the character wants to convey.

My face felt even hotter. I remember everything, I remember clearly the shadow of the past, an incident on the edge of the forest, in the far direction of the newly opened huma, and the mischievous wind coming from the far bay of the rattan forests to the north. [42, p. 92]

Furthermore, Lotman's concept of intertextuality also plays a role in this analysis. The references to past images and events at the edge of the forest create a connection between the character's experience and past memories and experiences. This shows how the signs in the text are connected to the broader narrative, enriching the interpretation of the character and the situation he faces.

In Lotman's concept of semiosphere, natural elements such as forest, huma, and wind can be seen as signs that form a unity of meaning in the text. Lotman emphasizes the importance of analyzing how these elements interact with each other and contribute to the sensations, emotions, and overall meaning of the narrative.

Furthermore, Lotman's concept of intertextuality can also be applied in this analysis. The isolation and loneliness felt by Prasetya can be seen as a reflection of a psychological condition influenced by his previous experiences, social interactions, or life stages. Thus, the understanding of this character can be deepened through the relationship with the wider context. This can be seen in Prasetya's description by Korrie Layun Rampan.

In the midst of the roar that echoed and whistled, Prasetya felt so strange and lonely. It feels like there is an empty abyss with a sound that is echoing in the middle, as if it is echoed by a sound that is reflected, endlessly, all echoing deep isolation and loneliness. [43, p. 48]

Prasetya is described as feeling alien and lonely amidst the intense gloom, which creates a deep sense of alienation and loneliness. Lotman emphasizes the importance of social, emotional, and cultural context in understanding the meaning of signs in a text. Prasetya's feelings of alienation and loneliness reflect his discomfort and distortion of his relationship with his surroundings.

The concept of transformation and evolution in the semiosphere is also relevant in this analysis. Prasetya's experiences that express a sense of alienation and loneliness can illustrate character development, emotional transformation, or psychological dynamics that occur in the narrative. Lotman emphasizes how signs in the text play a role in the process of transformation and evolution of character and understanding at a deeper level.

3.3 Automatic Communication

In an analysis based on Yuri Lotman's concept of automatic communication, we can see how the quote describes a communication process that takes place automatically or for generations in a cultural context or society that contains elements of myth or legend.

Villagers in the north consider the lake to be haunted. Even after the Japanese experts drowned there, no one dared to approach the lake, let alone fish or fetch water. There are a number of people who say that the lake is inhabited by a giant dragon that will prey on anyone who disturbs his residence. [41, p. 42]

"This pelulung ceremony should not be later than twelve o'clock, noon. If the sun has overflowed to the west, it means that the time must be postponed for another year," explained the voice, the voice of Grandpa Joka. "So what should you think?" [43, p. 15]

The first excerpt, a description of a lake considered haunted by the villagers and associated with the presence of a giant dragon highlights the process of automatic communication from generation to generation. Stories or beliefs about the awesomeness and fear of the lake are believed collectively by the community and become part of the cultural heritage passed down through folklore.

Furthermore, in the second quote, the talk about the pelulung ceremony that must be performed at a certain time shows the pattern of automatic communication in a particular society or tradition. Rules and customs that last from generation to generation, such as Grandpa Joka's explanation of the timing of the ceremony, reflect the automatic communication process embedded in local wisdom or traditional beliefs.

Through Yuri Lotman's concept of automatic communication, we can see how the narrative in the excerpt illustrates the transmission of messages or information in a hereditary or automatic manner in a particular society, culture, or tradition. This process of automatic communication plays an important role in strengthening the network of values, beliefs, stories, and traditions that are passed on from one generation to the next.

In the three Korrie Layun Rampan novels that the researcher studied, the concept of automatic communication was found in two of Korrie Layun Rampan's novels, namely in the novels *Api*, *Awan*, *Asap* [41] and *Bunga* [43] while in the novel *Lingkaran Kabut* [42] no narratives were found that described automatic communication.

4 Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn in this research article are as follows:

1. In Korrie Layun Rampan's three novels, the researcher found that 95.24% of the texts indicated Yuri Lotman's concept of cultural semiotics, while 4.76% of the novels did not fulfill one of the criteria of the concept of cultural semiotics.
2. Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics method and hermeneutic analysis used in this study proved to be effective in revealing and interpreting the texts following the concept of cultural semiotics.
3. This research still has the opportunity to be re-examined with in-depth and comprehensive research for future researchers to further explore the culture of the Dayak people.
4. Korrie Layun Rampan is a very intelligent writer in describing characters and places so that readers can feel the atmosphere built with very clear depictions.

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