

# Semiotic Studies of The Menara Pinisi Symbolization in Visual Identity

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**Abstract**—Menara Pinisi is Academic Administration Center building which is an important academic building at Universitas Negeri Makassar (Makassar State University). This landmark is located on Jalan Andi Pangerang Pettarani, Makassar, the capital city of Sulawesi Selatan. The main design of the Menara Pinisi was inspired by Pinisi, that is a Bugis Makassar traditional boat that is well known to the world as a UNESCO world heritage. As an iconic building, Menara Pinisi has become a symbol and identity of a new landmark in Makassar. As a symbol, some visual identities were made to take the main design of this building as inspiration. This study describes the semiotic studies of the Menara Pinisi symbolization in several visual identities, the metaphor analysis used, visual representation and visual perception created, and the stages of visual framing to read the meanings. The research method is conducted qualitatively using purposive sampling technique. Data in the form of collected logos take all or part of the Menara Pinisi as a visual expression in the visual identity creation. The entire visual identity taken is directly related to the Universitas Negeri Makassar.

**Keywords**—logo, semiotic, meaning, visual identity, Menara Pinisi

## I. INTRODUCTION

Menara Pinisi is a symbol of the Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM). Its monumental shape resembles from Pinisi, the Bugis Makassar traditional boat, presenting at Menara Pinisi the most iconic academic building in Makassar even in Indonesia. In many reviews on the internet, Menara Pinisi always ranked first as the most iconic academic building in Indonesia and one of the best in the world. Today, Menara Pinisi was transformed into the most iconic Makassar landmark. Some promotional materials created to promote the city of Makassar always displaying the Menara Pinisi image inside it.

As a landmark of Makassar and becoming an icon of UNM, the Menara Pinisi was later adapted several times into a visual communication design work, specifically the design of visual identity in the form of a logo. A logo is a visual expression that becomes a symbol to represent a particular identity. The shape of the Pinisi Tower was then commonly found in the logos of activities held by the UNM academic community, both in academic activities, campus bureaucracy and student activities. The main purpose is to communicate that the activity was carried out by UNM academic communities or the activity was held at Menara Pinisi.

Several logos adapt directly to the physical shape of Menara Pinisi into a visual identity. Other logos try to take part in the Menara Pinisi form, then make it in silhouette or make a visualization of the shape that is considered to represent this iconic building. From many visual identities that adapt the Menara Pinisi, it takes a study in terms of Visual Communication Design especially about semiotics and signs analysis. This study is needed to identify the visualization process so that the transformation of the meaning and character of Menara Pinisi does not just disappear when used as an element in visual identity.

From the description above, the problems raised in this study are: (1) How to identify the transfer of the meaning of Menara Pinisi into visual identity; (2) What is the metaphor used in the visual identity that makes the Menara Pinisi as an inspiration; (3) What is the visual perception that arises when seeing the icon /symbol of the Menara Pinisi in some of these visual identities.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Method

The method used in this study is qualitative with purposive sampling technique, by collecting several logos containing the Menara Pinisi symbols inside. For the purposes of this study, the steps are as follows:

1) *Understanding*; The first step is to determine the perspective of the problem in observing visual expressions in a logo. In this case, the problem observed was identifying symbols and metaphors in visual identities related to the Menara Pinisi UNM. An understanding of metaphors in a visual identity is important for the development of learning about symbols in visual identity.

2) *Observe*; At this stage, an observation was made of Menara Pinisi and several visual identities that were used by UNM both in certain activities and used as symbols. Observation of the Pinisi Tower is done by observing the visual form along with the parts that are characteristic. Similarly, observations of visual identity are the material of research. The observed logos are close to the expected tendency, namely logos that specifically adapt the visual characteristics of Menara Pinisi, using part or all of the shape of the Pinisi Tower in the visualization of the logo. One study that supports this research is the study of logo events conducted by Budiman [1] in Sumatera Barat, and

Jayanegara [2] about semiotic studies of RSU Surya Husadha logo.

3) *Point of View*; Based on observations made, a connection was established to identify the symbols in the logos based on the metaphor used. The point of view used is semiotic theory from Pierce, visual representation and perception of Bryan Lawson, Iconography theory and Erwin Panofsky's iconology, and Visual Framing from Lulu Rodriguez as a comparison.

4) *Evaluate*; At this stage, an analysis of the use of the point of view has been carried out.

### *B. Scope of Research*

This research includes several studies of visual expressions and symbols in visual identity. The theories that develop in visual communication have a long history of interesting speculations and ideologies about how sight works and how to understand visual presentation. The scope of this research is as follows:

1) *Visual Representation and Visual Perception*; According to Lawson [3], perception comes from the Latin word: *percipere*, meaning to accept. Then it developed into *Perceptio* or perception in English. Perception means a sensory picture of the external structural features of objects and processes of the material world that directly affect the sensory organs. In this regard, the object of perception is anything that is present in consciousness, including sensory data, images, illusions, visions, ideas, and concepts. Perception is also considered as the organization and interpretation of crude sensory data. In other words, perception is based on perceptions. That visual communication relies on the functioning eye and on the brain that can understand all sensory information received. Visual perception involves something that is a complex interplay of responses both outwardly and learned from visual stimuli. According to Harisah [4], the occurrence of perception is influenced by many factors such as experience, knowledge, physical, social and cultural background. The process of communication between humans and objects only occurs if signs, symbols and spatial can be read by human cognition equipped with these factors which then form perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Visual perception is the ability of humans to interpret information captured by the eye. The results of this perception are referred to as vision (eyesight, sight or vision). The various psychology elements in vision are generally summarized in the visual system. Visual systems in humans make it possible to adapt to information from their environment.

2) *Semiotics of Sign Analysis*; According to Tiburnako [5], the logo as a visual communication design work has verbal language and visual signs, and refers to the text of visual communication design and a visual presentation containing icons mainly functioning in non-linguistic systems to support linguistic messages. According to Pierce, the signs in the image can be classified into icon, index, and symbol. An icon is a sign that is similar to the object it represents, an index is a sign that has a causal relationship with what it represents, and a symbol that is a sign based on a convention, regulation, or agreement agreed upon. The

metaphor is the borrowing of an entity to another entity, borrowing one object or combining one different object on another object in order to move the meaning that is on the borrowed object in the hope that the meaning can be built on the object that is borrowed. As already mentioned, the process of borrowing meaning in a metaphor is by combining two objects into one new object, with the two objects different. Merging these two objects can be prepared by (1) Mimetic, namely the full imitation of borrowed objects. Mimetic is the most effective way of conveying clear meanings, but the design values displayed have visual qualities that might be very low; (2) Stylation, namely the process of imitating an object by exaggerating one part, and reducing the other part. The similarity factors that occur at the stylation can still be captured by perception, but high visual quality can still be achieved, because compromise is still very possible; (3) Abstraction, is the process of imitating an entity, except that the imitation is more fundamental, essential, so that significant differences occur between objects that are treated with objects that are the inspiration.

3) *Iconographic theory and Iconology*; This theory is used as a comparison. this theory usually used to read and understand a work of art. This theory was put forward by Erwin Panofsky [6]. Panofsky is claiming that iconography is descriptive and classificatory, while iconology is identification. Panofsky explains three ways in the meaning of art, as follows: a) pre-iconographic description captures the first meaning of a work of art by identifying pure forms such as line and color configurations. These forms are considered as representations of a natural object; b) The stage for identifying secondary meanings for aspects of representation, both metaphor and allegory, namely stories told in the form of symbols, by looking at the relationship between the motives of a work of art and the elements, concepts or meanings associated with the events raised in an image, explain the meaning of a work of art from literary sources; c) iconological interpretation is a way of understanding artwork through the determination of the meaning of its contents by revealing the principles contained in it. This meaning is associated with a part of the basic cultural mentality that manifests another culture, (science, religion, philosophy, ideology) because the artwork is the symptom of the era (*zeitgeist*).

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *A. Menara Pinisi as Symbols and Metaphors*

Menara Pinisi is academic administration center of UNM, designed by Yu Sing, as the winner of the competition the design of the Academic Service Center Building as a new icon for UNM and the city of Makassar in 2009. According to Yu Sing in Salam [7] design exploration of Menara Pinisi prioritizes the deepening of local wisdom as a source of inspiration, namely the meaning of the UNM Logo, the traditional Makassar house, the philosophy of life of the people of South Sulawesi (*Sulapa Eppa*), and the Pinisi, the Bugis Makassar traditional boat, a masterpiece, a symbol of glory, pride and grandeur of Sulawesi Selatan. A series of executions of forms and details of design solutions sourced

from local wisdom is believed to be able to form an international class campus environment today.

Yu Sing designed Menara Pinisi as the new icon of the first tall building in Indonesia to use the *Paraboloid Hyperbolic* facade system and is a futuristic expression of the application of sophisticated science and technology. The Menara Pinisi is an embodiment of a series of meanings, functions, and applications of technology that are transformed into architectural figures. The wealth of meaning according to Yu Sing increases the architectural value of Menara Pinisi to be more than just an aesthetic figure but also has the grandeur of the values contained in it.

According to design concept of Menara Pinisi in Salam [7], Yu Sing designing the structure of the Menara Pinisi earnings inspiration from the Makassar traditional house which consists of 3 parts (under/*awa bola*, body/*lottang*, and head/*rakkeang*) and is influenced by the structure of the cosmos (lower realm, middle nature, and upper nature).



Fig. 1. Design of Menara Pinisi and existing now.

Therefore, the Menara Pinisi also consists of 3 parts, namely the lower part, the body, and the head. In the concept of Yu Sing's design, an explanation of the 3 parts of Menara Pinisi along with the accompanying metaphors is described as follows:

- The bottom is in the form of a platform / stage. This underside section is located 2 meters above the road so that the building looks more magnificent than the surrounding environment. This underwater floor is designed to blend with a landscape that is designed sloping to the pedestrian area around the land. The foot building consists of 2 parts, namely the runway and under. The runway section is a semi-cemented floor that functions as a parking area and service. This runway section is designed as if it is located under a landscape elevated to 2 meters, forming a natural fence around the land. All the land around the building functions as a university forest. In front of the western runway, there is a fairly large, triangular artificial lake with terraced pools flowing towards the pond. This artificial lake serves as a natural filtering pool of used rainwater and dirty water that will be reused as a source of clean water for toilet and garden watering. The underside is an open space under the podium as a joint socialization room. The height is 1.5 times the height of the other floors to give the impression of being spacious and relieved. On this floor, there is a semi-open campus canteen function. The runway section facing toward the existing campus is designed as an amphitheater with stairs as a place sitting along the east side of the building.
- The body part is a podium. The podium consists of 3 floors, a symbol of 3 body parts in the Makassar Traditional House (front part/*risaliweng lotang*, middle room/*lotang ritengngah*, and back room/*lotang rilaleng*). This part of the podium also means double as a symbol of land and water. The podium building has a trapezium shape with its sloping sides facing the main road on the west side. Sloping buildings are a response to the land angle and also as a strategy to extend building facades as well as visual control from outside the building. People outside the land will always look at buildings in perspective to improve the visual quality of city space. In the design process, the building of the podium is divided into 4 sections according to the symbol of the living philosophy of the people of Sulawesi Selatan which consists of *Sulapaq Eppaq* (meaning 4 elements / human consciousness will be given a metaphor into other parts of the building). The building is divided into 4 parts (which are inspired by a row of Pinisi boats on the beach) creating a wind tunnel and an entrance for sunlight into all the spaces on the podium. Right in the center of the axis of the back of the tower building, there is an empty elliptical void that cuts the podium building. At the bottom of the voids, it functions as a fountain that always rattles with ramps that surround the voids. The empty voids in the center are metaphors of brightly colored circles at the center of the UNM logo, which are explained as centers of the study of science, technology and/or art. At its peak there is an exhaust turbine to drain the steam pool as an element of cooling the temperature of the building, it is a metaphor of 3 triangular screens facing the void. The podium building is also a metaphor for soil and water. The wall of the podium is a brownish reflector glass like the color of the ground, with sun retaining fins made of stainless steel that reflect light like water. These fins are also designed as part of a building façade with a wave pattern.
- The head section is a tower. The tower consists of 12 floors which are a metaphor of the Pinisi boat sail screen and also double as a symbol of wind and fire. The tower building has a symmetrical trapezium plan, with a façade on both sides of the sloping (North and South sides) using a *Paraboloid Hyperbolic* structural system. The tower façade experiences rhythmic rotation to form dynamic building expressions. Using the *paraboloid hyperbolic* system, the tower façade is a metaphor of the main said screen of the Pinisi boat. Horizontal canopies in the façade of the North and South sides can also function as photovoltaics to convert solar energy into electrical energy. On the façade of the West and East sides of the tower, there is a wall of three-dimensional ornament that is formed from a series of triangular fields, as a barrier to the sun. The shape of the tower building becomes increasingly attractive because it has a different visual form when viewed from a different perspective. At the top of the tower, there is a rhythmic pipeline that can also be used as a telecommunication tower. Tower buildings are also a metaphor for wind and fire elements. The façade of the screen represents the element of the wind, while the spire of the tower is a simplification of the shape of the tongue of fire.



Fig. 2. Design of Menara Pinisi look from the left side

### B. Visual Representation and Visual Perception of Menara Pinisi

Understanding visual representations, Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic theory is used in the articles suggested by Basin [8]. A sign is something that can represent something else within certain limits. Peirce then divides the known sign in three parts, namely: (1) an icon, a relationship that emphasizes similarity and is commonly called a metaphor; (2) index, which emphasizes closeness in existence; and (3) symbols, which emphasize that the sign is recognized under the law of the convention. Most representations use more than one type of relationship between object marks. The use of visual metaphors to represent certain objects such as the Pinisi boat which is considered to represent Makassar is common in the world of visual communication. Research on advertising conducted by Jeong [9] found that visual metaphors are able to convey messages more persuasively in the form of visual arguments and in metaphorical rhetoric.

In order to understand the theory of visual representation, let's think about what happened when we saw the Menara Pinisi? Do we see the Pinisi boat for real? Does Menara Pinisi remind us of the Pinisi boat? Is Menara Pinisi able to represent the Pinisi boat visually? Do you feel the same looking at Menara Pinisi with the experience of looking at a Pinisi boat? Do we have the illusion of a Pinisi boat when we look at Menara Pinisi? Do we feel that we saw the Pinisi boat when we saw the Menara Pinisi? The subtle differences in these questions (and their answers) reflect the key ideas of various representations and visual perceptions.



Fig. 3. Visual Relationship between Menara Pinisi and Pinisi boat

According to Atkin [10], Pierce describes the relation of the sign and the object it represents. From this context, Pierce's theory explains the relation between signs and objects such as Menara Pinisi as a marker and Pinisi Boat as a marked object, used to read signs that represent Makassar or Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM). In the view of

semiotics, the Menara Pinisi and Pinisi boat have iconic relations that emphasize similarities, as well as symbolic relationships. Iconic relations were built through sail screen adaptations on the Pinisi boat as the main part of the Menara Pinisi. The iconic relationship between these two objects also builds indexical relationships that make these two objects also have symbolic relationships. Pinisi boats are a formidable boat across the ocean. The same symbolic meaning was built by Menara Pinisi as a "boat" that was tough to navigate the sea of knowledge. From this iconic and symbolic relationship, a mental construction relationship is built about resilience and effort that does not easily give up.

Efforts to build semiotic relations between Menara Pinisi and Pinisi boats were also carried out by Yu Sing in the design of the Menara Pinisi. Symbolic representation of relationships to build visual perceptions is carried out through several metaphors in design such as *sulapa eppaq* elements for space division, three world concepts in traditional homes and also elements of water/ waves at the bottom of buildings.

### C. Menara Pinisi Symbolization in Visual Identity

Being a new landmark for UNM and Makassar, Menara Pinisi later became a new iconic symbol. The Menara Pinisi presentation on various media then created symbolic relations between these landmarks and everything related to UNM and Makassar. Relations like this are duplicates of the previous relationship between the Pinisi boat and Makassar which was built through the use of the Pinisi boat symbol on the logos of activities carried out in this city. The symbol of the Pinisi boat in the visual identity shows the whole or part of the Pinisi boat as a sign that this activity was carried out in Makassar. According to Rodriguez [8] visual framing methods like this use visual as a denotative system, the first level in framing visual meanings.



Fig. 4. Symbolize the Pinisi boat in the logo of national activities held in Makassar

However, the symbolization of the Pinisi boat in a visual identity to signify the activities that took place in Makassar so far only limited to indexical relations based on causal relations did not lead to ideological representations related to the use of these symbols. Because this activity was carried out in Makassar. As a result, his visual identity used the Pinisi boat as an icon of Makassar. In this case, the index relation built was preceded by an iconic relation between the Pinisi boat and the city of Makassar.

Referring to the process of borrowing meaning that can be done in three ways, namely: (1) Mimetic, the full imitation of the borrowed object, the most effective way of conveying clear meanings; (2) Stylation, the process of imitating an object by exaggerating one part, and reducing the other part; (3) Abstraction, is the process of imitating an entity, except that the imitation is more fundamental, essential, so that significant differences occur between

objects treated with objects of inspiration, selected visual identities relating to Menara Pinisi and UNM, along with their studies as follows:

1) *Logo of 50th Fakultas Teknik UNM Golden Anniversary*: This logo uses a portion of the original Menara Pinisi design drawings. This logo was made in 2014 as a visual identity warning the establishment of the Faculty of Engineering UNM in September 2014. Borrowing the meaning of Menara Pinisi on this logo uses the mimesis method, fully imitating it by taking pictures of the Menara Pinisi design into a visual element on the logo. The original design pieces of Menara Pinisi are installed intact on top of other markers such as writing and gears as an icon of the engineering world.



Fig. 5. Transfer of the meaning of the Menara Pinisi in the Logo of "50<sup>th</sup> Fakultas Teknik UNM Golden Anniversary

Referring to the theory of visual meaning framing proposed by Rodriguez [8], the process of transferring meaning through this method is included in the denotative system, the sign or image displayed represents the actual object. Referring to Panofsky's theory [6], this process stops at pre-iconographic descriptions in capturing the first meaning of a work of art by identifying forms that are still pure such as shape, line, or color configurations. Menara Pinisi in this logo is considered as a representation of the Menara Pinisi in its actual appearance, limited to index relations and does not lead to ideological relations. The visual perception that arises when looking at this logo is the activity carried out by the Faculty of Engineering. This logo is directly recognizable as part of UNM because the Menara Pinisi is shown the actual situation (Mimetic).

2) *The Logos of Dies Natalis UNM 2015-2018*: The logos of the Dies Natalis UNM in the range of 2015 - 2018 adapted the form of Menara Pinisi through the stylization process. The method of transferring this meaning is done by simplifying the iconic form of Menara Pinisi into simple but still recognizable forms. The stylization of the form created is then merged into one unity in the logo.

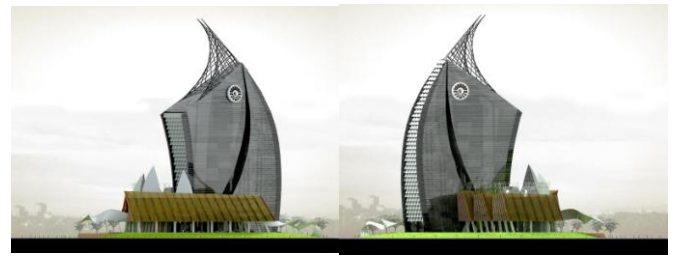


Fig. 6. The Logos of Dies Natalis UNM 2015-2018

Visually, all above logos use a combination of Menara Pinisi objects that have undergone a stylization process as a sign that these logos are activities carried out by UNM. Borrowing the meaning of Menara Pinisi which has undergone a process of stylization, combined with other markers such as numbers, writing and wave stylization that form a dynamic impression is an effort to form new visual perceptions as semiotic-style representations, the third level in Rodriguez's theory [8]. Stylization of Menara Pinisi can also be seen as an effort to make UNM a symbol of a boat that is navigating the sea of knowledge.

3) *Logotype of UNM*: Borrowing the meaning of Menara Pinisi on the logotype of UNM uses the abstraction method, where values and visual perceptions are created when viewing the Menara Pinisi adapted into a logotype. The transfer of the meaning and symbol of the Menara Pinisi into this logotype according to Rodriguez [8] uses the visualization system as an ideological representation. According to Panofsky's theory [6], the interpretation that wants to be built in this logotype is an iconological interpretation, namely understanding Menara Pinisi as a work of art through the determination of its meaning by revealing the principles contained in it. The iconic form of Menara Pinisi cannot be found directly in this logotype, only the ideological concepts used by Menara Pinisi such as elegance, a monumental and dynamic landmark, the toughness of navigating the ocean of knowledge is displayed through forms that share the same ideological concept.



Fig. 7. Logotype of "UNM"

The method of abstraction in the metaphor does not directly move the iconic form of Menara Pinisi into the "UNM" logotype. What is prioritized is the ideological relationship between Menara Pinisi and the "UNM" logotype. What is done is an iconological interpretation, by understanding the Menara Pinisi through determining the meaning of its contents and revealing the principles contained therein. As described by Yu Sing in Salam [7], the meaning contained in Menara Pinisi is the majesty and elegance of the life values of the Bugis people of Makassar and South Sulawesi. This meaning is then associated as the basis for the creation of logotypes, by adopting these values. According to Rodriguez [8] identification carried out on the creation of the "UNM" logotype is visual as an ideological representation. The perception that arises when looking at the UNM logotype is the same as the perception that arises when viewing the Menara Pinisi.



Fig. 8. Evaluation of the "UNM" Logotype ideological relationship with the Menara Pinisi UNM

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Making Menara Pinisi a sign and marker for the city and the UNM academic community is an interesting study material in semiotic studies. Identifying the transfer of the meaning of Menara Pinisi into visual communication design works such as logos must consider the semiotic theory used along with iconographic concepts and iconology. The identification used in this study is based on Pierce's semiotic

theory which divides meaning into three, namely icons, indices, and symbols. Furthermore, to identify the process of transferring meaning from the Menara Pinisi object to the object of a new visual identity, the mimesis, stylation, or abstraction approach is used. From this identification process, the visual perceptions that arise when looking at the icon/symbol of the Menara Pinisi in some visual identities are then measured using four levels of visual framing: visual as a denotative system, visual as a semiotic system, visual as a connotative system, and visual as an ideological representation.

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