

A Semiotic Study on *Tuwuhan* at *Tarub* Decoration of Javanese Wedding Ceremony

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Abstrak

Dalam tata cara perkawinan Jawa, di pintu rumah yang mempunyai hajat harus dihiasi dengan *tarub* yang terdiri dari *tuwuh* (tumbuh-tumbuhan dan dedaunan) yang mempunyai makna simbolik. *Tuwuhan* tersebut diletakkan di pintu orangtua mempelai wanita sehari sebelum pesta pernikahan. Pintu tersebut dihiasi dengan *tarub* (dekorasi tumbuh-tumbuhan), yang terdiri dari *tuwuh* seperti dua tandan pisang yang masak, sepasang tebu wulung, *cengkir gading* (kelapa muda), *uborampen tuwuh* (dedaunan). *Tuwuhan* sebagai bagian dari *tarub* dalam pesta pernikahan mempunyai beberapa elemen yang mengandung tanda yang berpotensi semiotik. Tanda memiliki makna tertentu. Skripsi ini dibuat untuk mengungkap hubungan di antara tanda dan makna dari *tuwuh* dengan mengaplikasikan pengertian model segitiga Peirce. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa makna dari bagian-bagian *tuwuh* bisa ditemukan dengan menggunakan teori segitiga Peirce. Masing-masing dari *tuwuh* memiliki makna yang berbeda yang berdasarkan karakter dari tumbuhan tersebut. Makna simbolik *tuwuh* menunjukkan bahasa non-verbal yang berlaku dalam masyarakat Jawa khususnya Yogyakarta.

Kata Kunci: Makna, Semiotik, Teori Segitiga Peirce, *Tuwuhan*, .

Abstract

As a traditional wedding rule, the gate of the house must be decorated with *tarub* consisting of different *tuwuh* (plants and leaves), which has symbolic meanings. This *tuwuh* is put on the gate of the bride's parents a day before the wedding party, the gate of the house of the bride's parents is decorated with *tarub* (plant decorations), which consists of different *tuwuh* (plants and leaves) such as two banana trees with stem of ripe bananas, a pair of *tebu wulung* (reddish sugar cane), *cengkir gading* (very young coconut), *uborampen tuwuh* (different fresh leaves). *Tuwuhan*, as a part of *tarub* in wedding party, has some elements considered as signs that contain semiotic potential. The signs have certain ideas behind. This research is conducted to reveal the relationship between the sign and the meaning of *tuwuh* by applying Peirce's triangle of signification. The result of the research shows that the meaning of parts *tuwuh* can be found by using Peirce triangle theory. Each part of *tuwuh* has different meaning based on the character of the plant. Therefore, *tuwuh* shows the importance of non verbal languages in the Javanese, especially in Yogyakarta society.

Keywords: Pierce Triangle Theory, Semiotic, Sign, *Tuwuhan*

Introduction

One of the most important language functions is a means of communication. In other words, people usually use language to accomplish what they want to say (mind) and what they feel (feeling). Language is an anonymous, collective and unconscious art; the result of the creativity of thousands of generations (Sapir, 1921). Creation had been created for many years by the ancestor. These creations are wishes for their next generation. Then, it becomes a culture which always contains full of wish and messages through history.

In the study of culture and its relation to symbolism, the study is narrowed into a more specific subject matter. Considering the use of symbolism within the culture,

Javanese wedding tradition has been a very good example to carry out symbolism in conveying implied messages. To give more concise understanding about the origin culture, the Kraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat (the Sultan's Palace) at the present being is known as a center of Javanese art and culture activities. There are many traditional events and ceremonies that have been held regularly such as *Sekaten*, *Grebeگان*, *Labuhan*, *Tarub* and others. In Yogyakarta, usually a day before the wedding party, the gate of the house of the bride's parents is decorated with *Tarub* (plant decorations), which consists of different *Tuwuhan* (plants and leaves) such as Two banana trees with stem of ripe bananas, a pair of *Tebu Wulung* (reddish sugar cane), *Cengkir Gading* (very young coconut), *Uborampen Tuwuh* (different fresh leaves), such as of *beringin* (banyan tree),

mojo-koro, *alang-alang* (tall, coarse grass), *dadap srep* (flowering trees). All these plants and leaves have symbolic meaning.

Semiotics is the approach of the production and interpretation of meaning. Its basic principle is that meaning is made by the deployment of acts and objects which function as "signs" in relation to other signs. The systems of signs are constituted by the complex meaning-relations that can exist between one sign and another. Semiotics and that branch of linguistics known as semantics have a common concern with the meaning of signs, but John Sturrock argues that whereas semantics focuses on *what* words mean, semiotics is concerned with *how* signs mean (Sturrock, 1986: 22).

The relation between *Tarub* decoration and semiotic study is on the meaning and the function which occur in the society. The functions of this *Tarub* in Yogyakarta are used for announcing wedding event and giving some wishes by putting the *Tuwuhan* in the front gate. In addition, *Tarub* is one of the important requirements in the wedding ceremony.

Based on the object and theory that have been stated above, it is important for us to know more about the meaning and the function which occur on *Tuwuhan* at *Tarub* decoration in Yogyakarta. At least we can explore more detail about the culture in Yogyakarta especially on *Tuwuhan* at the *Tarub* in the wedding party. Thus, this issue encourages the presentation of the research entitled A Semiotic Study on *Tuwuhan* at *Tarub* Decoration at Javanese Wedding Ceremony.

There are some problems to discuss in the research. The first problem is what the meanings and the values of the symbol are in *Tuwuhan* written in *Serat Selokapatra*. The last problem is what kinds of intended meaning showed by putting the *Tuwuhan* in front of the gate.

Research Methods

Research method is presented in order to give the reader the understanding of how the research of this research is conducted. There are two types of research. They are known as field research and library research. Both of them are conducted to collect the data needed for the study. What makes them different is the environment where the research takes place.

Then, there are two types of data; quantitative and qualitative data. All data used and presented in this research are classified into qualitative data. In this research, the qualitative data are the pictures of *Tuwuhan*, the descriptive information related to the object of study, and any supporting data that are needed to analyze the object of study, whether they are taken from an interview or written documents. The research is compatible to use qualitative data since qualitative data support written information and pictures that are essential to the study of this research.

In the process of arranging this research, the writer gathers data through searching some references in the library included books or e-books related to the study. Books that

explain the symbols in Javanese culture and their philosophy are *Simbolisme dalam Budaya Jawa* and *Upacara Pengantin Jawa*. Those books mention the general view of Javanese people who use symbols in their ceremony or rituals and the kind of Javanese symbols. The next books that can be estimated as the basic data written by Chandler entitled *The Basics Semiotics*. This book explains the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce that is compatible to analyze the problems of the study. The writer does not only use Chandler's book to support the theory but also *Paul Copley* and *Winfred Noth*. In addition, the researcher has interviewed several people who are considered to be competent to provide any information concerning with *Tuwuhan*. The interview itself is conducted in unstructured interview. This unstructured interview support the data and add more information about the object of the research.

Findings

The result of the research shows that the meaning of parts *tuwuhan* can be found by using Pierce triangle theory. Each part of *tuwuhan* has different meaning based on the character of the plant. Therefore, *tuwuhan* shows how important of non verbal languages are in the Javanese society especially in Yogyakarta.

Discussion

This part discusses the relationship between the sign and the meaning of the *tuwuhan* ornaments at *tarub* decoration at wedding ceremony in Yogyakarta in Peirce's triadic relationship of signification. The writer analyzes several ornaments considered having semiotic potentials. Those ornaments are a pair of *Pisang Raja* trees with stem of ripe bananas, a pair of *tebu wulung*, *cengkir gading*, and some kinds of fresh leaves. In addition, some meaning are taken from *Serat Selokapatra*. *Serat Selokapatra* had already existed for long time ago. It was made by the Javanese ancestors. So, the meaning of the *tuwuhan* which exists in *Serat Selokapatra* are the wishes from the Javanese ancestors.

4.2.1 A pair of *Pisang Raja* Trees with Stem of Ripe Bananas

a. The description of *Pisang Raja*

Bananas and plantains are today grown in every humid tropical region and constitutes the 4th largest fruit crop of the world. In most areas bananas require wind protection for best appearance and maximum yield. They are also susceptible to being blown over. Bananas, especially dwarf varieties, make good container specimens if they are given careful attention. The plant will also need periodic reporting as the old plant dies back and new plants develop. (www.crfg.org/pubs/ff/banana.html)

In Javanese culture, bananas are often used for wedding decoration. *Pisang Raja* is one of bananas species that is commonly used in this event. Javanese ancestors used

Pisang Raja for giving some symbols or wishes. The meaning of the *Pisang Raja* is taken from its characteristic in the nature. It will be described based on Charles S.Pierce theory below:

b. The analysis on the features of *Pisang Raja* which is considered containing semiotic potentials.

- Ripe *Pisang Raja*

In the *Tuwuhan*, we use *Pisang Raja* which is ripe and ready to consume. It is a wish for the couple in order to face their new life happily.

- The number of bananas in one stem

In a stem there consists of many bananas. This symbol means that the couple can be united in every condition and can support each other

A pair of *Pisang Raja*

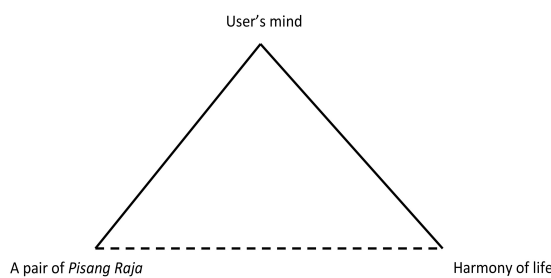


figure 1. Triadic of a pair of *pisang raja*

A pair of *Pisang Raja* are put at the right and the left side of the wedding ceremony's gate. It is expected that the couple are always in harmony through life.

4.2.2 A Pair of *Tebu Wulung*

a. The description of a pair of *Tebu Wulung*

Sugarcane is a giant perennial grass belonging to the genus *Saccharum* where most cane varieties today are derived, tribe *Andropogoneae* and family *Graminae*. Sugarcane is a tropical, perennial grass that forms lateral shoots at the base to produce multiple stems, typically three to four meters high and about five centimeters in diameter. Sugarcane is the major source of sugar around the world. It supplies 62% of the world sugar requirements. (alamendah.wordpress.com)

a. The analysis on the features of *Tebu Wulung* which is considered containing semiotic potentials

- The characteristic of *Tebu Wulung*

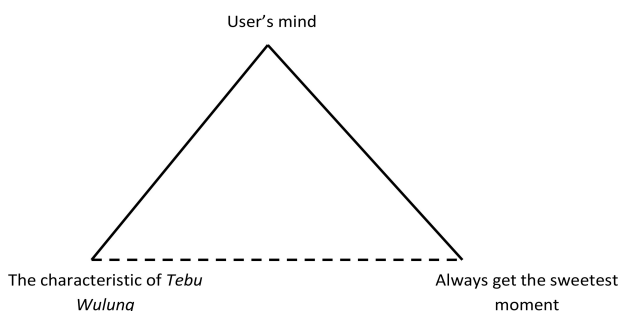


figure 2. Triadic of characteristic of *Tebu Wulung*
The characteristic's taste of all sugarcane is sweet. That is why it is as one of the parts in *Tuwuhan*. It is an expectation for the couple to get the sweetest moment in their life together and never sad.

4.2.3 A Pair of *Cengkir Gading*

a. The description of a pair of *Cengkir Gading*

Coconuts are generally classified into two general types: tall and dwarf. On very fertile land, a tall coconut palm tree can yield up to 75 fruits per year, but more often yields less than 30 mainly due to poor cultural practices. In recent years, the improvements in cultivation practices and breeding have produced coconut trees that can yield more. When the coconut fruit is still green, the husk is very hard, but the green coconuts only fall if they have been attacked by molds or other blights. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/coconut.com)

In addition, we can find several functions of these coconut in *Serat Selokapatra*. We can find completely from the function until how to consume it. It is stated clearly because a long time ago many people consumed the coconut to recover from some illness. A verse in *Serat Selokapatra* states:

“wonten malih kagemanipun,
Toyane kang cengkir gading,
Yen lare mentas kacacar,
Sampun katinggal adadi,
Pamandul tilas garitan,
Del lareki toya cengkir// (Serat Selokapatra, pp xvii)

The verse mean that we can consume the water of young coconut. This water has function to cure the smallpox by rubbing the water over the skin.

b. The analysis on the features of *Cengkir Gading* which is considered containing semiotic potentials

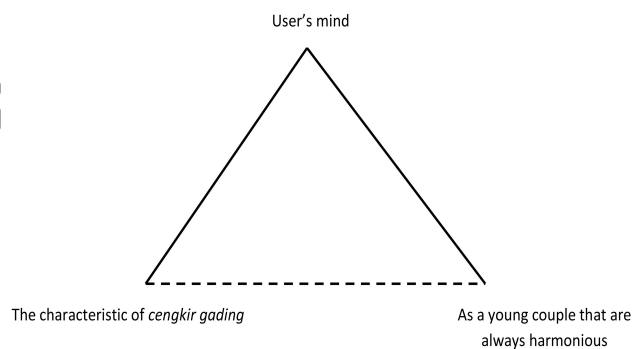


figure 3. Triadic of characteristic of *cengkir gading*

- The color of *cengkir gading* as its characteristic are yellowish and looks fresh. It is a hope for the couple to live harmoniously.

4.2.4 Fresh Leaves

a. The description of fresh leaves

Banyan leaves

Banyan tree is a huge tree with very extensive branches. It is said that at one time more than 10,000 people can sit under its shade at one time. It is an evergreen tree. Its branches spread out and send trunk like roots to the ground in order to support itself. The leaves are broad, oval and glossy. White milky fluid oozes out of the leaves, if they are broken. Its leaf, bark, seeds and fig are used for the variety of disorders like diarrhea, polynaria, dental, diabetes and urine disorders. The wood of the banyan tree is used in making door panels, boxes and the other items. (wikipedia.org)

In addition, these banyan tree are one of plants which lived in the *keraton* for long time ago. The functions of these banyan trees are for the symbol of unity, as a kingdom shelters and also the traditional medicine. It is proved in *Serat Selokapatra*. Some verses stated:

*Kayu wringin kinarsan sang aji,
Apan dadya tamanan narendra,
Ayon kathah supangate,
Tinandur ngalun-alun,
Duk ing kina dugi semangkin,
Mukarab mring kawula,
Miwah abdi ratu,
Saking karsa dalem nata,
Wit waringin satuhune anjarwati,
Didalem lan kawula// (Serat Selokapatra, pp 1)*

It means that the banyan tree as the kingdoms tree will give much benefit for everyone around it. It was plant in the yard of the kingdom and also in the Yogyakarta town square.

- Blady Grass (*Alang-alang*)

Blady grass is a yellowish-green perennial plant that grows in loose to compact tufts. Its rough edges prevent animals from eating it, and may cause scratches on the legs of people walking without long pants. The grass will flower, especially when under stress, to produce seeds. If stress is constant and long lived the grass may flowers year round. However, it typically only flowers at certain times of the year, depending on location. Blady grass produces chemicals that prevent other species from growing. The natural habitat of blady grass is humid grassland and open woodland. (wikipedia.org)

- Mojokoro

Aegle marmelos (bael or maja) be used for various medicinal purposes. The leaves have tannins that cure inflammation and ulcers. This oil naturally prepared drug should be kept and a daily tablespoon of medicinal oil that can be rubbed on the scalp, which improves resistance to colds and coughs. This oil can be massaged into the chest and forehead to get relief from breathing problems. (wikipedia.org).

- *Dadap srep*

Instead of a big tree, the height of up to 22 meters, in all parts of East Asia, wild, jungle, and of 305 hundred meters above sea level, sand land, forest, land fat alluvial (silt). The material in this herb are: seed (skin and young leaves); hypaphorine (alkaioida) containing toxic only to the frogs. (<http://isroi.wordpress.com>)

b. The analysis on the features of fresh leaves which is considered containing semiotic potentials

- The age of banyan tree

It is a hope for the couple to live together and have endless love. The couple will always love each other till the end of their life.

- The function of banyan tree

The function of banyan tree symbolizes the shelter and coolness. It is interpreted that in life human meets a lot of problems, so it is a hope that the couple should protect each other to get harmony in life to make their life full of joy externally and internally.

- Blady grass (*alang-alang*)

Blady grass has special characteristic. It has sharp leaves to protect itself. It is a hope for the couple that they can protect themselves from any problems in their live.

- The function of most fresh leaf

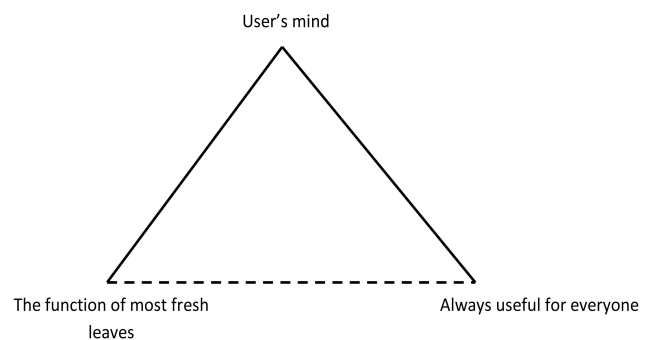


figure 4. Triadic of function of most fresh leaf

Most of these fresh leaves have function as medicine. For instance *bael* leaves (*mojokoro*) can be used to cure stomach ulcers. The aromatic of *bael* leaves can be used to reduce pain and heal ulcers in the stomach. Then, *Dadap srep* leaves are usually used to press heat and heal the sick. *Dadap srep* leaves also can be used to clean blood in our body. These fresh leaves put in front of the gate as wishes for the couple to be useful and help others.

Conclusion

Tuwuhan is several kinds of plants which is put in front of the gate as the symbols of hopes for the couple to face better life. *Tuwuhan* consists of pair of *Pisang Raja* trees with stem of ripe bananas, a pair of *tebu wulung*, *cengkir gading*, and some kinds of fresh leaves. The parts

are considered having certain ideas or meanings to be conveyed to the couple as wishes. Writers can give some conclusion about each meaning of the *tuwuhan* for example *Pisang Raja* can grow almost in everywhere. It is a hope that the couple can go through this life always together everywhere they live. In the *Tuwuhan*, we use *Pisang Raja* which is ripe and ready to consume. It is a wish for the couple in order to face their new life happily. Then, a stem of banana there consists of many bananas. This symbol means that the couple can be united in every condition and can support each other. The next *tuwuhan* is *tebu wulung*. The word “tebu” and “wulung” have their own meaning in Javanese culture. *Tebu* means *Anteping kalbu*. The parents hope that the couple have brave thinking to solve every problems in their life. Then, *wulung* means *mulus* or soft. The couple can face this life together with brilliant mind. The taste of all sugarcane is sweet. That is why it is as one of the part in *Tuwuhan*. It is an expectation for the couple to get the sweetest moment in their life together and never sad. The meaning of “*Cengkir Gading*” words have the wish for the couple in order to face their life together. Although they face many problems, they can solve it with their brilliance though. The color of *cengkir gading* are yellowish and looks fresh. It is a hope for the couple to live harmoniously. The last part of *Tuwuhan* is some fresh leaves. These all fresh leaves have similar meaning. The wishes mean that the couple can be useful and help others.

A symbol in Javanese has hundreds meanings which can be shown from all the things surround us. *Tuwuhan* is one of messengers from the Javanese ancestor. *Tuwuhan* has crucial meaning to retell the wishes from the ancestor to the new generation. So, the next generation will get the ancestor's wishes, through the things presented providing the intended meaning.

Dedication

With love and sincerity, I proudly dedicate this research to: My father, H. Abdillah Hanif Selamun, who always supports me to finish my research soon. Thank you for all of your attention, guidance, inspiration, and patience during my research writing period; My mother, Hj. Siti Munawaroh, who always encourages me to be more than I can be. Thank you for your endless prayer day and night for my success, and your patience of waiting the time when I finish my study time; My only sister, Ismi Imamaturizkia, thank you for all support that you have given to me ; Riskia Setiarini S.S., M.Hum as the reviewer of my research; My Alma Mater, Faculty of Letters, Jember University.

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