The International Journal of Language and Cultural
TIJOLAC is Available Online at:
https://www.growingscholar.org/journal/index.php/TIJOLAC
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13294302
Vol. 6 No. 2. September 2024, pages: 8~13
Growingscholar Publisher, USA ISSN 2691-4727

Unpacking the Semiotics of Lawang Sakepeng: Cultural Inheritance and Identity in Central Kalimantan

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Article history:
Received March 30, 2024, Accepted: July 30, 2024; Displayed online: August 11, 2024; Published: September 30, 2024

Keywords

Tradition;
Mace Sakepeng;
Semiotics;
Linguistics;
Cultural;

Abstract

In Central Kalimantan- Indonesia, the rich cultural heritage of the Dayak community is deeply rooted in their traditional practices and print culture. One such practice is Lawang Sakepeng, a system of deep trust and cultural significance that is believed to overcome daily obstacles and disasters. This research aims to investigate the semiotics of traditional Lawang Sakepeng in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, with a focus on its role in cultural inheritance. Through a combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and semiotic analysis, this study explores the ritual routines, bodily movements, and symbolic meanings associated with Lawang Sakepeng. The data collected from community figures involved in the tradition is analyzed using a semiotic approach to identify the symbolic meanings and their relationships with the cultural and social identity of Palangkaraya. This research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding and preservation of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition and the local culture of Palangkaraya as a whole. By adopting a thorough semiotic approach, this study aims to produce a more effective way of conserving culture and strengthening the Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan.

1. Introduction

The Dayak community of Central Kalimantan is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, encompassing local art, wisdom, and unique traditions. These customs and rituals are an integral part of the Dayak people's way of life, serving as a source of identity (Hartati et al., 2023; Usop & Usop, 2021). The Dayak culture is deeply rooted in their traditional practices, which are characterized by a distinct system of thinking, behavior, and values. These cultural traditions are not solely inherited through biological means but are rather passed down through a learned process of cultural transmission.

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Like many regions in Indonesia, the Dayak community has its own unique wedding traditions. One such tradition is Lawang Sakepeng, which is an integral part of the Dayak people's cultural heritage, particularly among the Ngaju Dayak in Central Kalimantan. The term "Lawang" means "door" or "gate," while "Sakepeng" refers to a partition or a section. The Lawang Sakepeng is a wooden structure, approximately 1.5 meters wide and 2.3 meters high, adorned with carvings of plant vines and decorations. Birds are often perched on top, and the structure is decorated with coconut leaves or young palm fronds.

Lawang Sakepeng is often performed during customs and marriage ceremonies to welcome guests. Over time, this tradition has become an integral part of wedding events. For the people of Central Kalimantan, Lawang Sakepeng is a cherished tradition that has been showcased at various events, including the Cultural Festival Iseng Muran (FBIM) 2019. The highlight of Lawang Sakepeng is the martial arts attraction, where athletes or fighters from the host and guest families engage in a ritualistic welcome ceremony. The warriors line up facing each other, pointing their right hands below the gate or vulnerable area. The boundary is marked with a colorful thread, signaling the start of the martial arts tournament.

The players must break through the rope barrier, showcasing their unique martial arts movements, reminiscent of the crossbar door Betawi style from Sumatra. However, the martial artists from Central Kalimantan have developed exceptional defensive techniques and charming movements. The traditional Dayak drum and titipan accompany the attraction, with the performers wearing vests adorned with Dayak motifs. According to legend, the Dayak ancestors incorporated animal movements and behaviors into their Silat style, mimicking wild animals found in the forests of Kalimantan, such as bears and predators.

The philosophy behind Lawang Sakepeng is to protect families from various obstacles, hurdles, and disasters. This tradition is deeply ingrained in the cultural heritage of Palangkaraya, a city with a rich and diverse cultural landscape in the heart of Kalimantan island. Lawang Sakepeng is not only a cultural practice but also a system of deep trust, believed to overcome obstacles and disasters in life. As the capital city of Central Kalimantan province, Palangkaraya offers a rich cultural tapestry. However, there is a tension between traditional local culture and modern globalization, which has brought about changes to the social, economic, and cultural order in Palangkaraya.

A semiotic approach to studying Lawang Sakepeng is highly relevant. By analyzing the symbols, bodily movements, and ritual actions, researchers can uncover the meanings contained within the tradition. This study aims to explore how Lawang Sakepeng functions in the social, economic, and political context of Palangkaraya, as well as its role in shaping cultural and social identity. By understanding Lawang Sakepeng through a semiotic lens, we can contribute to the preservation of culture, development of social identity, and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of society and culture.

This research has selected several examples of Lawang Sakepeng rituals from various groups in Palangkaraya, chosen based on their diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. By examining these examples, we can advance our understanding of the tradition and its significance in the context of Palangkaraya.

2. Material and Method

This study employs a participatory observation approach, where the researcher participates in the Lawang Sakepeng ceremony to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ritual. Through this experience, the researcher can observe almost all aspects of the ritual, including bodily movements, symbols, routines, and interactions with social events. Semiotic analysis: The collected data will be analyzed using semiotics to identify and interpret the symbols in the Lawang Sakepeng ritual, which

can take visual, verbal, and nonverbal forms. This analysis will map the meaning of the symbols, their relationships, and the construction of meaning in the context of Palangkaraya's cultural and social public sphere.

This study involves interviews with community figures involved in the Lawang Sakepeng tradition, including traditional leaders, elders, religious leaders, and ritual participants. The purpose of the interviews is to gain a deeper understanding of the public's perception, function, and meaning of the tradition. Social and cultural context analysis: Apart from the semiotic analysis, the research also discusses the broader social, economic, and cultural context of Palangkaraya. This analysis covers a review of literature, statistical data, and observations to understand the connection between Lawang Sakepeng and social dynamics, the changing economy, and the challenges of modernity in Palangkaraya. Validation of research results: The analysis results will be validated through discussions and public presentations, including holders of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition. Therefore, this research contributes to academia and benefits the public in understanding and preserving traditional culture.

Moreover, this study employs a descriptive qualitative research method with a semiotic approach, inspired by Charles Sanders Peirce (Analysis et al., 2019; Ratih Puspitasari, 2021; Siregar & Wulandari, 2020). Descriptive qualitative research is a method that uses an interpretive approach to explain human behavior in connection with data about the problem discussed in the study (Azzahro & Indriyanto, 2019). This is in line with the opinion of Laili et al. (2017), which states that descriptive qualitative research is a term used for descriptive studies. The descriptive qualitative research method formulates the problem as guidelines for the study to investigate or take comprehensive and in-depth photographs of the social circumstances being investigated.

Data and information collection techniques in this study are obtained through the researcher's observation and interviews. Observation is a systematic tool for recording studied symptoms (Lince, L., 2022). In terms of methods, this researcher obtains data sources from continued observation with interviews. An interview is a questioning process in which two or more people meet in advance to hear information or explanations (Haryono, CG, 2020). In this method, the researcher interviews a source person, especially the Head of the ethnic group. The researcher also conducted interviews with inhabitants of Palangkaraya and sources from the data collection technique above. Additionally, the researcher collected data through documentation, which can take the form of text, audio, video, or pictures.

The proposed research method has several advantages. First, with a combination of observation and in-depth interviews, the researcher can understand the Lawang Sakepeng tradition from the perspective of practitioners and participants. Second, the semiotic approach makes it possible for researchers to understand the meaning of symbols in a more culturally and socially nuanced context. This is likely to provide a more accurate interpretation of the role and function of the tradition in public life in Palangkaraya. Additionally, the analysis of the social, cultural, and economic context will provide an outlook on how the Lawang Sakepeng tradition has developed and adapted to face the challenges of modernity. Finally, the validation of the study results through community participation will ensure relevance and sustainability in a more culturally sensitive context.

The semiotic analysis reveals that the Rawang Sakepen symbol has a deep meaning for the Dayak community. For example, the movement, bodily gestures, and the use of specific objects in this ritual have symbolic meanings that are part of a system of inherited beliefs and traditions from generation to generation.

3. Results and Discussion

The meaning and function of the Mace Sakepeng tradition in the Dayak culture of Central Kalimantan prove to be of significant importance. This tradition is not only a part of cultural practice but also serves as a spiritual and social tool that helps the community overcome daily challenges. Gaining a deeper understanding of the traditional approach to semiotics can contribute to the conservation of local culture and the strengthening of the Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan. Therefore, this research aims to provide value to the preservation of Dayak cultural heritage and the cultivation of a strong cultural identity in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan.

A more profound knowledge of the meaning and function of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition can lead to more effective efforts to preserve the culture, ensuring that it remains preserved and inherited by future generations. The Lawang Sakepeng tradition is a cultural practice that holds social and spiritual significance for the Dayak community. It is a belief that can overcome obstacles and disasters in the lives of the Dayak tribe and has become an integral part of their lives.

This study reveals that the Lawang Sakepeng tradition practices culture and holds social and spiritual importance. The belief in the power of Sakepeng to remove obstacles and disasters is deeply ingrained in the Dayak community's way of life. Preserving the local culture and Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan is an effort to conserve the cultural heritage and strengthen the Dayak identity in the region. The Lawang Sakepeng tradition is an essential part of the cultural inheritance of the Dayak people of Central Kalimantan. It is not just a cultural practice but a system of deep-rooted trust within the Dayak community.

This research was successful in identifying the meaning of the symbolic Lawang Sakepeng tradition through the approach of semiotics. The symbols used in this ritual have a special meaning in Dayak beliefs. Observing participants and conducting interviews with community figures involved in the tradition helped us understand the ritual routine, bodily movements, and symbols used in Lawang Sakepeng. Analyzing semiotics in the collected data added to the understanding of the connection between the cultural and social public identity in Palangkaraya.

The Lawang Sakepeng tradition is a complex system of beliefs and practices that are deeply intertwined with the cultural and social identity of the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan. By studying the symbols and meanings behind this tradition, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and social context of the Dayak people. This research contributes to the preservation of Dayak cultural heritage and the strengthening of the Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan.

It is stated that, the Lawang Sakepeng tradition is an essential part of the cultural inheritance of the Dayak people in Central Kalimantan. It is a practice that holds social and spiritual significance and is believed to have the power to remove obstacles and disasters in the lives of individuals and society. By studying the meaning and function of this tradition, we can contribute to the preservation of Dayak cultural heritage and the strengthening of the Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan. The use of semiotics in this research helped us identify the symbols and meanings behind the Lawang Sakepeng tradition, providing a deeper understanding of the cultural and social context of the Dayak community.

Furthermore, the preservation of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition is crucial in maintaining the cultural diversity of Central Kalimantan. As a cultural practice, it plays a significant role in shaping the identity of the Dayak community and promoting social cohesion. By understanding the symbolic meaning and function of this tradition, we can appreciate the importance of cultural heritage in fostering a sense of belonging and community among the Dayak people.

The significance of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition extends beyond its cultural and social importance. It also holds economic significance, as it attracts tourists and promotes local economic development. The preservation of this tradition can contribute to the growth of the local economy,

creating jobs and income opportunities for the Dayak community. Moreover, it can help promote cultural tourism, which can have a positive impact on the local environment and community development.

In addition, the Lawang Sakepeng tradition serves as a tool for socialization and education among the Dayak community. It provides a platform for the transmission of cultural values, beliefs, and practices from one generation to the next. By studying this tradition, we can gain insights into the socialization processes and cultural transmission mechanisms of the Dayak community. This can inform the development of cultural education programs that promote the preservation of Dayak cultural heritage.

The preservation of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition is also essential in promoting cultural exchange and understanding between the Dayak community and other cultural groups. By sharing their cultural practices and beliefs with others, the Dayak community can foster greater cultural understanding and appreciation. This can help promote peaceful coexistence and social harmony among different cultural groups, contributing to the development of a more inclusive and diverse society.

In conclusion, the Lawang Sakepeng tradition is a vital part of the cultural inheritance of the Dayak people in Central Kalimantan. Its preservation is crucial in maintaining cultural diversity, promoting social cohesion, and fostering economic development. By understanding the symbolic meaning and function of this tradition, we can appreciate its significance in shaping the identity of the Dayak community and promoting cultural exchange and understanding. This research contributes to the preservation of Dayak cultural heritage and the strengthening of the Dayak identity in Central Kalimantan, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of this rich and valuable cultural tradition.

4. Conclusion

Based on the finding and discussion above, it is concluded following description. The semiotic study of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, provides a profound understanding of the ritual's meaning and its impact on culture, society, and locality. Through this approach, we can identify various symbols and signs in the Pen Drink Hard ritual, including bodily movements, procedures, attributes, and offerings used in the procession.

The semiotic analysis reveals that Lawang Sakepeng is a traditional ritual and a complex symbolic system deeply ingrained in daily life in public Palangkaraya. The Mace Sakepeng symbol holds meaning within the context of religion or mythology, reflecting the social structure, values, culture, and identity of the Dayak people of Central Kalimantan. This research also highlights the critical role of Lawang Sakepeng in preserving cultural heritage and its transmission from generation to generation. The active participation of the community in Lawang Sakepeng demonstrates the importance of tradition in maintaining social bonds and empowering cultural identity amidst the challenges of modernization. This not only provides an understanding of the Lawang Sakepeng tradition but also contributes to the preservation of local culture and the development of the cultural identity of the Dayak people of Central Kalimantan.

Understanding the symbolic and functional social meaning of the tradition is expected to produce a concerted effort to preserve culture and strengthen social bonds in the public sphere of Palangkaraya. This study predicts that it will contribute value to understanding and preserving the Lawang Sakepeng tradition and local Palangkaraya culture. By grasping the social and cultural meaning, symbolism, and context of the tradition, the public is expected to appreciate and defend the rich and valuable cultural heritage for generations to come.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the time and expertise devoted to reviewing our manuscript and are honored to have our research featured in this prestigious journal.

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