



Semiotic Analysis of Artistic Symbols and Da'wah Messages in the Jaranan Tril Turonggo Mudo Dance of Blitar, East Java

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Abstract The aim of this research is to conduct a semiotic analysis of the artistic symbols and da'wah messages in the Jaranan Tril Turonggo Mudo Dance from Blitar, East Java. This study employs a qualitative research approach, with the subjects including dancers, cultural figures, and members of the community who appreciate the Jaranan Tril performance and possess in-depth knowledge about it. These subjects consist of one spiritual leader, one trainer, two dancers, and one resident of Gogodeso Village, Kanigoro District, Blitar Regency. Informants were selected using purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, documentation, and literature review. The data were analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive method, with the analysis results presented in narrative form to explain the phenomena examined in this research. The findings reveal that the Jaranan Tril Dance performance is divided into three acts: the opening act (*bukak kalangan*), the main session, and the final session (*kesurupan*) and closure. Each session carries symbolic meaning. The opening act is intended to seek protection from the Creator and symbolizes the start of the Jaranan Tril Dance performance. This session includes an introductory sequence of five movement types that express the prowess of warriors or knights as heroes, embodying boldness and courage. The main session features three movement types symbolizing warfare. The *kesurupan* (trance) and closing session hold symbolic meaning related to beliefs in the existence of other, unseen life forms, or invisible spirits. During the *kesurupan* session, the possessed dancers (*caplok*) perform unconscious actions and feats. This study recommends that future researchers interested in similar topics explore other types of Jaranan dances found across Java, which may offer new and deeper perspectives on the cultural and symbolic richness of Jaranan dance in this region.

Keywords : Semiotics, Art Symbols, Da'wah Messages, Jaranan Tril Dance

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Jaranan* Dance has existed since the 15th century, prior to the arrival of Islam in Indonesia, and it originates from animistic traditions with the purpose of communicating with ancestral spirits. With the arrival of Islam, the function and purpose of the *Jaranan* dance underwent changes, becoming more symbolic and used in traditional ceremonies to ward off illness, disasters, and evil spirits. The *Jaranan* Dance is performed using a mock horse made from woven bamboo, painted in colors resembling a real horse. The *Jaranan* Dance is highly popular on The Java Island, including in The Blitar region of East Java, and has its own version known as *Jaranan Tril*. In this version, mythological and heroic elements are added, depicting the bravery of warriors in battle. The *Jaranan Tril* dance reflects the cultural creativity of The Javanese people. The *Jaranan Tril* performance begins with the accompaniment of gamelan music and the voices of male and female *sinden* (singers), signaling the start of the performance.

An interesting aspect of The *Jaranan Tril* Dance is that its movements are much faster and more agile than those of The *Jaranan Senterewe* Dance. *Jaranan Tril* exhibits a higher

speed and distinct precision in its movements compared to other *Jaranan* Dances. The foot and hand movements in The *Jaranan Tril* Dance are more varied and slightly firmer or more assertive than those in other *Jaranan* Dances. *Jaranan Tril* features a wide range of movements and dynamic variations. This dance portrays warriors or commanders engaged in battle. *Jaranan Tril*, a distinctive *Jaranan* Dance from Blitar, has been recognized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia as an Intangible Cultural Heritage/*Warisan Budaya Tak Benda* (WBTB). The dance is called *Jaranan Tril* because the dancers perform vigorous, leaping movements in sync with the dynamic, fast-paced rhythm of the *kendang* drum. Additionally, in *The Jaranan Tril* Dance, there is a somersaulting scene, known as *koprol*, which symbolizes that the horse being ridden is resistant and rebellious at first. The dance depicts the horse rolling on the ground, a movement performed as the dancers enter the arena or stage one by one and then line up according to the number of dancers, which can be 4, 6, or 8.

The use of symbols that employ specific signs and meanings serves as a medium for non-verbal communication. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, semiotics is a concept used as a tool or material for analyzing signs, where various meanings emerge as a result of interpreting the message conveyed by those signs. Semiotics, as defined by Charles Sanders Peirce and cited by Wibowo, is the study of signs and everything related to the signs themselves. Charles Sanders Peirce categorizes semiotics into three elements: Representamen, Object, and Interpretant, which are known as the triadic relationship in semiotics. This relationship is referred to as semiosis. Therefore, Charles Sanders Peirce's definition forms the foundation of semiotic studies in communication.

Peirce further divides the three categories mentioned above into three subcategories. Based on the Representamen, Peirce categorizes signs into three types: 1. Qualisign, 2. Sinsign, and 3. Legisign. Qualisign refers to the quality of a sign. Sinsign denotes the actual existence of a sign, while Legisign represents the meaning or norms inherent in the sign itself. Based on the Object, Peirce categorizes signs into three types: 1. Icon, 2. Index, and 3. Symbol (sign). An Icon is a sign that bears a resemblance to its original object. An Index is a sign that is related to its object based on a cause-and-effect relationship. A Symbol is a sign that relates to both its signifier and signified. Regarding the Interpretant, Peirce also divides it into three categories: 1. Rheme, 2. Dicent Sign, and 3. Argument. A Rheme is a sign interpreted or understood differently from its original meaning. A Dicent Sign is a sign that has meaning according to its factual reality. In contrast, an Argument is a sign that contains reasoning about a particular matter.

Previous research has primarily focused on the movements of The *Jaranan* Dance and the accompanying chants. Among these studies is the research titled "Semiotic Study of Traditional Chanting in *Jaranan* Performances in Perangat Baru Village, Marangkayu District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan" by Dimas Billal M. from Halu Oleo University, Kendari. The findings indicate that there has been a shift in the characters portrayed and the properties used in Konda District, where only the characters *Buto Prenges* and *Buto Teleng* have been preserved. This study provides insights into how The *Jaranan Buto* Horse Dance functions as a means of cultural identity preservation within modern society. Another relevant study is titled "Semiotic Study of Traditional Chanting in *Jaranan* Performances in Perangat Baru Village, Marangkayu District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan" by Tri Indrahastuti. The research findings reveal that there are three forms of icons, four forms of indexes, and three forms of symbols present in the chants of The *Jaranan* performance in Perangat Baru Village, Marangkayu District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan.

This study aims to examine how the community interprets The *Jaranan* Dance, or *Kuda Lumping*, particularly The *Jaranan Tril* version, as a sign that not only entertains but also conveys profound cultural and symbolic messages. The *Jaranan Tril* Dance is a distinctive dance from Blitar that uniquely differentiates itself from The *Jaranan* styles of Kediri and Tulungagung, characterized by variations in *rempeg*, *seseg irama*, and the distinctive shape of the horse props used by the dancers.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted with The *Jaranan* Turonggo Mudo group in Gogodeso Village, Kanigoro District, Blitar Regency. This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on subjects such as dancers, cultural figures, and community members who appreciate The *Jaranan Tril* performance and possess in-depth knowledge about it. These subjects include one spiritual leader, one trainer, two dancers, and one resident of Gogodeso Village, Kanigoro District, Blitar Regency. Informant selection was carried out using purposive sampling techniques based on specific criteria, including being a member of The *Jaranan* Turonggo Mudo group from Gogodeso Village, a *Jaranan* art enthusiast, and possessing specialized knowledge about The *Jaranan* dance. The data utilized in this research are qualitative and were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and literature reviews. The gathered information was subsequently clarified and related to the phenomena discussed in the research problem formulation.[7] Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using a descriptive

method, where the results of the analysis are presented in narrative form to address and elucidate the phenomena raised in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The arts serve as a medium of communication, manifesting their existence in accordance with the atmosphere and character of the community, and enduring over time through changes in eras. The arts possess expressive power, allowing them to symbolically reflect inner life. The Jaranan dance is performed to fulfill a vow or promise made upon the realization of a wish or desire. The people of Blitar also organize *Jaranan* performances for various occasions, such as village clean-up events, circumcisions, thanksgiving ceremonies, and others. According to Soemaryono, *Jatilan* Art performances in villages are particularly intended for fulfilling vows, village clean-up events, circumcisions, and similar occasions. As a result, this often leads people to have differing interpretations; some still regard it as a manifestation of a vow, while others do not believe in its significance, viewing it merely as entertainment or a performance. Each audience member has their own perception of The *Jaranan* Dance performance, as this is linked to the interactions and symbols present in The *Jaranan Tril* Dance, which carry specific meanings. Consequently, each viewer or admirer of the *Jaranan Tril* dance develops their own interpretation.

The theory used in this research is based on the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Alex Sobur, semiotics seeks to understand how humans interpret various objects or phenomena as signs without necessarily communicating them directly.[9] Charles Sanders Peirce defines the meaning of a sign as a cognitive process known as semiosis. Semiosis involves three important stages: first, the absorption of the representamen of the sign through the senses; second, the spontaneous association of the representamen with the individual's cognitive experience; and third, the interpretation of the object based on that experience, a stage known as the interpretant.

Peirce classifies signs into three main categories known as the triadic sign: icon, index, and symbol. An icon is a sign that shares a physical resemblance with the object it represents, which can be in the form of an image or linguistic expression that depicts that object. An index, on the other hand, indicates a causal or conventional relationship between the sign and its object, often based on cause-and-effect relationships or direct presence. Unlike the other two types of signs, a symbol does not have a natural relationship with the object it represents. A symbol is a sign whose existence and meaning depend on social conventions or agreements, allowing it to represent ideas, concepts, or objects in both abstract and concrete forms.

The represented form is the object that comprises icons, which are signs based on resemblance; indexes, which are categories of signs born from cause-and-effect relationships; and symbols, which are systems of signs that are conventional in nature. A sign that emerges or is generated certainly carries meaning that enables an individual to interpret it, referred to as the interpretant. Interpretations that remain potential are termed rheme, while an interpretation that possesses a certain truth is called a dicent sign. Argument, on the other hand, refers to the truth of a sign that has been interpreted in accordance with general concepts and conventions.



Image 1 Analysis of Symbolic Meaning in The *Jaranan Tril* Dance

The *Jaranan Tril* Dance is typically performed by 6 to 8 dancers dressed as warriors or military leaders. This performance usually takes place in the courtyard of a house or in a field, depending on the location of the audience for The *Jaranan Tril* art performance. The movements of The *Jaranan Tril* are very assertive, reflecting the character of the people of Blitar (Riady, 2022). The presentation of The *Jaranan Tril* dance is divided into three acts. Prior to the performance, there is a pre-show where the musicians, performers, hosts, and guests gather in the designated space or area for The *Jaranan Tril* Dance performance to conduct a ritual beforehand.

The three acts are as follows: 1. The opening act begins with the entry of the dancers into the performance area, carrying woven bamboo props for The *Jaranan*. The dancers enter one by one, forming a straight line. The accompanying gamelan music includes pieces such as "*Suluk Wigar*," "*Ya Habibal Qolbi*," "*Anoman Obong*," and several others. 2. In the second act, the *Jaranan* dancers enter, followed by a wild boar (*Celeng*) performing a salute. The dancers then engage in a collective dance, simulating a battle between The *Jaranan* and the wild boar. 3. The core and closing act is marked by the sequential appearance of *Barongan* (dragon) figures. All dancers perform together with the accompaniment of *gangsaran*. At the end of the

event, they engage in *ndandi* to entertain the audience. The *ndandi* phase occurs when the *paneges* gives a signal through expressions that the dancers interpret as a sign of *kalap* or *ndadi*, resulting in individual, uncoordinated movements. Subsequently, the *pawag* neutralizes the dancers who are possessed or *ndandi*, indicating that the performance is about to conclude.

Table 1
Opening Round

No.	Icon	Index	Symbol
1.		<p>The pre-performance ritual is marked by the entrance of the <i>pengrawit</i>, <i>paraga</i>, and <i>paneges</i>, along with the host and guests, who gather in the room or area designated for The <i>Jaranan Tril</i> dance performance to conduct the ritual beforehand.</p>	<p>It signifies that the performance is about to begin, with a ritual involving the recitation of mantras and the whip being struck against the ground around the performance area to seek protection from the Creator, ensuring that there are no disturbances from supernatural beings or humans. Additionally, the <i>pawang</i> aims to focus the audience's attention on the upcoming <i>Jaranan</i> dance.</p>

Source: Data processed by researchers

The table above indicates that the *pawang* strikes the whip against the ground, symbolically signaling the commencement of the performance and representing a request for protection from The Creator to ensure the smooth execution of The *Jaranan Tril* dance. This pre-performance ritual aims to avert disturbances from supernatural beings and humans. This belief reflects the aura and mystical elements in Javanese customs, which significantly influence the interpretation and meaning within The *Jaranan Tril* performance in Blitar.

Furthermore, during the opening act, The *Pawang* strikes the ground a second time to signify the transition of The *Jaranan* dancers. This process is repeated three or four times, after which The *Jaranan Tril* dancers perform synchronized movements known as *bledro*. According to Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, the action of striking the ground in this analysis is categorized as a symbol. In semiotics, a symbol is a sign whose meaning is not determined by similarity or causal relationships with what it represents, but rather by social convention. Therefore, this act of striking the ground symbolizes a plea for protection from the

Creator, allowing The *Jaranan Tril* performance to proceed smoothly and remain free from disturbances by supernatural entities (the unreal) or actual disturbances caused by humans. The belief in the existence of supernatural beings remains strong among the people of Blitar, reflecting the enduring nature of mystical culture, including that of The *Jaranan Tril*.

In the initial session of The *Jaranan Tril* Dance, various performance elements can be analyzed through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, which includes icons, indexes, and symbols, among others:

Tabel 2

The *Jaranan* performers enter and are followed by a boar (*celeng*) performing a salute

No.	Icon	Index	Symbol
1.		The <i>Jaranan Tril</i> dancers perform the <i>junjiungan</i> movement, which involves lifting one leg to knee height. They then execute the <i>lenggang</i> movement, stepping backward while raising one hand to the side. Next, the dancers perform the <i>nyirik</i> movement, which involves dragging their feet to the right and left. The dancers also carry out the <i>pancake ngoko</i> movement, where they alternately raise their hands above their heads, followed by the <i>sendi</i> movement, which consists of a brief pause while touching their heads to signal a change in dancers.	The five movements performed by the dancers symbolize the bravery and valor of a warrior or commander, embodying the heroic spirit in the struggle against the enemy.

Source: Data processed by researchers

The commander or warrior symbolizes heroism, fighting spirit, and courage in confronting the enemy. The movements performed by The *Jaranan Tril* dancers are highly varied, characterized by a rapid rhythm, such as the *lunjak-lunjak*, which symbolizes assertiveness. The dancers' movements are not merely for entertainment; they serve as an icon representing the firm character of The Blitar community, which is rich in stories of local

warriors. This illustrates that The *Jaranan Tril* Dance, particularly its movements, is a powerful symbolic representation of Blitar's cultural identity and history. The five movements are believed by the local community to express values of heroism and bravery that are characteristic of the Blitar knights. Thus, these five movements in The *Jaranan Tril* dance not only represent physical strength but also reinforce the community's ties to local traditions and legends. The *Jaranan Tril* dance is viewed as an icon that revives narratives of heroism and preserves cultural history and values within the performing arts.

The symbolic meaning inherent in the *Jaranan Tril* dancers is that life must possess an identity or distinctive characteristic, represented by the role of a knight on horseback. This signifies that to navigate life, one must have a vehicle or mount, symbolized by knowledge or expertise pursued in a particular field. Therefore, individuals are compelled and obligated to seek knowledge and practice it for the betterment of humanity. Following this, in the next segment, the boar dancers appear, dressed in costumes distinct from those of the *Jaranan Tril* dancers. They ride bamboo structures shaped like wild boars, painted in various colors, with cloth bands wrapped around their legs. The boar dancers symbolize that, after acquiring a mount or expertise, it is essential to view it as a savings bank or a store of good deeds used in life. This serves as a reminder that success is hollow without the acknowledgment of a more eternal life, which is the afterlife.

In this segment, the barongan or dragon dancers, often referred to as *Caplok*, make their appearance. The barongan performers wear large wooden masks shaped like dragons, intricately carved with features such as a nose, teeth, and tusks. A mechanism crafted by artisans allows the performer to pull a handle, causing the barongan to appear as though it is devouring everything in its path, crowned with carvings made from cowhide depicting *Bathara Kala*, positioned at the center of the crown. The first meaning is that the dragon, as a mythical creature, can consume anything before it, while *Bathara* signifies a deity, and *Kala* represents time. The contextual meaning of the *Caplok* itself relates to the cause and effect of the interpretations of *Jaranan* and boar dancers, emphasizing why individuals should seek knowledge and practice good deeds. Every being in the world is bound by and pursued by time as they face the Creator. All creatures are bound by the time or era predetermined by God Almighty. In the closing segment of The *Jaranan Tril* performance, there is an attraction of possession followed by an analysis using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics:

Tabel 3

**The main and closing rounds are marked by the appearance of the
Barongan (dragon) one by one**

No.	Icon	Index	Symbol
1.		<p>The performer or dancer portraying the <i>caplokan</i> becomes possessed, exhibiting movements that are out of control or behaving like an enraged animal. There is a <i>Jaranan Tril</i> Shaman who uses a whip to heal or restore the consciousness of the performer or dancer portraying the <i>caplokan</i>.</p>	<p>In this life, there are not only humans but also supernatural beings that are also creations of God Almighty. These supernatural beings are very invisible to the naked eye, yet they can still demonstrate their existence. The contextual meaning of The <i>Jaranan Tril</i> Shaman wielding a whip or lash signifies that a person who takes on a role as a leader must be able to inspire or motivate others, using the whip or lash as a representation of the teachings from the religion we adhere to. Furthermore, a leader or figure must be capable of setting a good example for the community.</p>

Source: Data processed by researchers

The research findings indicate that The *Jaranan Tril* dance holds significant meaning that refers to the belief in the existence of unseen entities, often termed supernatural beings. The possession sequence reflects how this phase is considered a symbol within Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. According to Peirce, a symbol is something that represents an idea, thought, or object through social agreement rather than through direct similarity or causal relationship. The possession session in The *Jaranan Buto* Dance demonstrates the spiritual life recognized by a community that still adheres to mystical beliefs. The performer or *caplokan* dancer engages in extreme acts such as consuming glass shards, walking on hot coals, or eating live animals. However, based on interviews and observations, the performances at The *Jaranan Tril* Dance Studio are more moderate, involving acts such as performers being struck with a whip. This adjustment signifies that the safety and health of the dancers are of utmost priority

while still maintaining the symbolic aspects of the possession session. The changes in the intensity and types of attractions showcased reflect a cultural adaptation to contemporary challenges, all while preserving the connections between tradition and the spiritual values that have been passed down through generations.

4. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that The *Jaranan Tril* dance performance is divided into three acts: the opening act (*bukak kalangan*), the core session, and the final session (*ndadi*) and closing. Each session contains symbolic meanings, with the opening act serving to seek protection from The Creator. The symbolic significance of the performance area marks the beginning of The *Jaranan Tril* Dance. In this opening act, there is an introductory session consisting of five varied movements that express the power of warriors or knights as heroes and a character known for their valor and bravery. The core session showcases three types of movements that symbolize warfare. The possession and closing acts carry symbolic meanings related to the belief in the existence of other life forms that are not visible to the human eye or the presence of supernatural beings. The performer or *caplokan* dancer experiences possession, engaging in attractions beyond their conscious awareness. This study recommends that future researchers interested in similar topics conduct studies on other types of *Jaranan* found in Java, which may offer new and deeper perspectives on the cultural richness and symbolism of *Jaranan* dance in the region.

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