

The Charm of Damarwulan: A Symbol of a Hero Shining in the Midst of Darkness (Peirce's Semiotic Study)

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on Serat Damarwulan, which is an important symbol in local culture and is often seen as a representation of courage and sacrifice. In the context of Javanese culture, Damarwulan is a symbol of strength and struggle. However, research that examines Serat Damarwulan in the context of the symbol of Damarwulan's charm has not been studied. The novelty of this study is the use of Peirce's semiotics in the symbol of Damarwulan's Charm. Peirce's Semiotic Theory explains that signs have three basic elements, namely representamen, objects, and interpretants. In the context of Serat Damarwulan, representamen can be seen from the shape and physical characteristics of Damarwulan. Objects include various meanings contained in traditions or folklore that connect Damarwulan with the concept of heroism. Interpretant is the meaning that appears in relation to the symbol that is believed. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Data collected through interviews, and literature studies related to Serat Damarwulan. The results of the study show that Serat Damarwulan is not just a physical object, but also contains complex symbolic meanings. Damarwulan is interpreted as a symbol of courage, determination, and hope in the midst of rebellion. This sign serves as a reminder of the struggle of local heroes who inspire future generations to continue fighting in difficult situations. In addition, this research can increase the cultural value of local and the identity of Wong Jawa in Serat Damarwulan.

INTRODUCTION

Charm / Physical attraction is beauty or attractiveness (Sobol, 1999:49). Physical attraction means someone who has a strong attraction to attract others (Szymczak, 1978:95). Mehrabian and Blum (1997) stated that physical attraction falls into the category of emotional reactions, but Buss (2001) focused on universal criteria to be able to judge handsome/beautiful. Pawlowski (2009) formulated an operational definition of attraction shown by someone either from the body parts morphologically, namely shape, smell, or color. Physical attraction has important implications in traditional culture, for example Ache women who are attractive if they have larger reproductive organs (Hill & Hurtado, 1996).

Attractiveness is closely related to facial masculinity. Male facial masculinity varies depending on culture and society (Mueller & Mazur, 1997). The Kung San Bushmen consider that people with wide chins and stocky bodies have relatively high reproductive rates. This is attractive to Kung San Bushmen women. Gangestad & Thornhill (2003) stated that men with masculine faces are men who have larger bodies and facial symmetry.

Dixon et al (2003) discussed about how women's preferences towards men, he stated that women in England and Sri Lanka prefer a slim and muscular body type (mesomorphic), have a medium and thin body. The body type (endomorph) is the least preferred by women. They prefer men with broad shoulders, proportional waist/hip size.

Physical attraction is always interesting to discuss. This can be used to explore the charm of a character in Serat Damarwulan. The character Damarwulan is a character who has

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extraordinary charm. Described with the language style "panyandra" as someone who is handsome and at the same time a hero. In Javanese culture, a hero is depicted and visualized as having handsome physical characteristics, a proportional body, and has tough strength. The visualization of the language style that describes the charm of the character Damarwulan is interesting to study using semiotic theory.

Research on physical charm/attraction was conducted by Lubomir Lamy. The article discusses the phenomenon of ideal partner preferences. Men tend to prioritize the physical attractiveness of women, while women tend to focus on the income aspect (Lamy, L. 2020). Other research on Serat Damarwulan was conducted by Hervina Nurullita focusing on the development of compassionate and chivalrous characters through the stories contained in Serat Damarwulan for local history courses (Nurullita, H. 2022). Peirce's Semiotic Study has also been conducted by Arisni Kholifatu. This study aims to identify the meaning and signs in the collection of poems *Kita pernah saling cinta* (Shofiani, A.K.A. 2021).

The current research is different from the previous three studies. This research focuses more on the style of language used to show the charm (physical attraction) possessed by the character Damarwulan. The style of language is attached to Damarwulan because he is portrayed as a hero who tries to overcome a problem. This research does discuss the figure of Damarwulan from the side of his heroism, the same as what Nurullita has done. However, this research focuses more on how the construction of the symbol of the style of language charm Damarwulan. The use of Peirce's semiotic study has also been done often, but applied to different objects of study. Therefore, research on "Pesona Damarwulan: Symbol of a Hero Shining in the Darkness (Peirce's Semiotic Study)" is worth doing.

Semiotics is a set of theories to study signs which are living systems in a culture (Danesi & Peron, 1999:64). Semiotics is an exploration of meaning obtained from objects (Berger, 2017). Peirce's semiotics assumes that a sign is something that represents something. The Semiosis model which is the basis for the meaning of signs is divided into three stages, namely representamen (something) ---- object (something that exists in human cognition) ---- interpretan (interpretation process) (Hoed, 2011). The main goal of semiotics is to understand our brain's ability to produce and understand signs and the activity of building knowledge about something in human life. It can be concluded that semiotics is a powerful tool for analyzing various forms of cultural expression including language, tourism, traditional clothing, food, buildings, etc.

Peirce built an alternative to classical mechanical ontology with his concept of reversible time and ontological view of absolute transcendental natural law. His triadic semiotic pragmatism shares the same empiricism as logical positivism. Peirce's semiotics is based on dynamic triadic categories that make him understand humans and the universe as a symbolic self-regulating development process (Brier.S. 2018). Peirce's semiotics can be understood as the significance of symbols or simply as the study of signs in social life (Yakin, H. & Tolu, 2014).

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Peirce's Semiotic Model consists of three elements, namely; 1) Signs based on their meaning are called representamen, signs are objects that form the basis of the sign being interpreted. Signs are based on some qualities, events, or laws. 2) signs represent some objects. Objects are all signs that require a referent to convey information in more depth.

Objects are divided into two, namely active (dynamic) objects and passive objects. 3) Interpretant is the effect produced by a sign on the mind of the person who receives and understands the sign. So Peirce points to the fact that a word only represents something if it is understood as such. Interpretant is a series of three things, namely signs and objects. Peirce also said that interpretant is a rule of habit based on a sign that is changed into another sign (Savan, David. 1988) (Johansen & Larsen, 2002) (Chandler, 2004).

The formulation of the problem in this study is how to analyze the style of language of Pesona Damarwulan as a symbol of a shining hero in the midst of darkness using Peirce's semiotic study. The aim is to provide new insights into the various ways in which the meaning of a symbol of Pesona Damarwulan as a hero can be understood in a broader social and cultural context. This study is expected to be a reference for further studies on semiotics and local culture in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is research based on narration and description. Qualitative research is more dominant in presenting data in an interpretive manner. Denzin & Lincoln (2009) stated that qualitative research emphasizes the process of meaning rather than measurement. Qualitative research emphasizes more on investigation, finding answers to the phenomena that occur. As stated by Canella & Lincoln (2004) epistemologically, there are different views on how qualitative methods should be assessed based on evidence.

Qualitative research aims to obtain information about the main phenomena explored in the research, research participation and research location (Cresswell, 2021). In addition, qualitative research can also state the research design written in "technical" terms derived from qualitative research language (Schwandt, 2007). Specifically in this study, qualitative methods are used to describe how the language style of Damarwulan's charm as a symbol of a hero who shines in the midst of darkness uses Peirce's semiotic study.

The data collection technique used in this study was to collect qualitative documents related to Serat Damarwulan, journals, and books related to the topic. In addition, the researcher also conducted qualitative interviews with cultural actors who understand the Damarwulan story, namely the Dalang and Kethoprak players. Furthermore, the data recording technique was carried out through audio visuals. The results of interviews with informants were recorded and transcribed as interview data.

Data analysis techniques are carried out by separating data (MacQueen & Namey. 2012), which is a process that focuses on some data and ignores other parts. This process is also different from quantitative research where researchers try to maintain all data and reconstruct and replace lost data. In qualitative research, the impact of this process is to

combine data into a small number of themes, namely five to seven themes (Creswell, 2013).

The data analysis techniques used in this study are; 1) compiling and preparing Damarwulan's charm symbol data for analysis. 2. Reading all Damarwulan's charm symbol data. 3) Coding the style of language data included in Damarwulan's charm. 4) Describing each data in detail. 5) Interconnecting the descriptions that have been made. 6) Interpreting the meaning through Peirce's Semiotic theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Damarwulan was the son of the Majapahit Prime Minister named Mahundara and his mother named Dewi Campursari. Damarwulan expressed his heart to serve Majapahit. He was accompanied by his loyal servants, namely Sabdopalon and Nayagenggong. Damarwulan was asked to meet the Prime Minister Logender. Upon arriving in Majapahit, he became a gatekeeper and took care of the war horses. He lived his days obediently.

In the midst of Kencana Wungu's confusion and sadness because the Duke of Tuban who was ordered to kill Menak Jingga had failed. Kencana Wungu was worried and confused, who was the Duke/soldier who was able to kill Menak Jingga. Menak Jingga had also threatened all Kings/Patih's who intended to help Kencana Wungu would face him. Menak Jingga was very angry with Kencana Wungu's insult because of the rejection he made. This can be seen in the quote below:

Wus ginêbag titahing déwa di/ adinira sampun ingambilan/angumpul sinaring manéh/ pinét ing sarinipun/ sari nulya sinaring malih/ ingambil cahyanira/ kang cahya binubut/ kantun galihé kéwala/ gya binubut pinatut ing Déwa luwih/ dadya Dyan Damarwulan/ / (Dandanggula, 21:11)

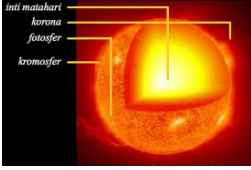
This means:

It is related to the wishes of the Almighty God/ His greatness has been taken/ gathered into a light/ his essence has been taken/ the essence that lights up shines again/ taking his light/ the light that is pulled out/ until only the essence remains/ immediately taken out by the Almighty God/ becoming Raden Damarwulan/ / (Dandanggula, 21:11)

The quote shows that Damarwulan is symbolized as the core of light (*kang cahya binubut/kantun galihe kewala*). Damarwulan in the Serat reveals the origin of his creation. He was created by God from the essence of light. The Sun is the source of light created by God. Without light, all creatures on Earth will not be able to live. Likewise, the metaphor of the figure of Damarwulan who will be the light and solution to the sadness and confusion of Kencana Wungu. Damarwulan who was created from light, his pure figure will defeat the darkness which is the symbol of Menak Jingga. The analysis of the language style of "*kang cahya binubut/kantun galihe kewala*" can be seen from the table below;

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Tabel 1. Language style *kang cahya binubut, kantun galihe kewala*

Tanda	Obyek	Interpretan	Keterangan
<p><i>kang cahya binubut, kantun galihe kewala</i></p>	 <p>https://www.kompas.com The image is the core of the sun. The core of the sun is 15,000,000 °C, while the surface is around 5,000 - 6,000 °C. Of course the light in the core of the sun is brighter than what we see from Earth.</p>	<p>The meaning of the sign is Damarwulan as a figure of light for Majapahit. He is the solution to Kencana Wungu's confusion. Damarwulan is a heroic figure like light who is able to eliminate darkness which is a symbol of Menak Jingga.</p>	<p>Damarwulan's purity exceeds that of most people because he has a chivalrous nature that is reflected in his obedience. He prioritizes the interests of Majapahit over his family and his fears.</p>

The creation and symbolization of Damarwulan as the light is closely related to Javanese spiritualism. Javanese religious phenomena are divided into two categories, namely; 1) belief and 2) rite. Belief is a state of opinion consisting of representations of something. Rite is a special form of action (Endraswara, 2015). All religious beliefs, both simple and complex, show one common characteristic, namely requiring the classification of everything, both real and ideal. This classification is divided into two things, namely, profane and sacred. Sacred is a condition that is more personal, subjective, and only known by certain parties. While profane is more common and known by others.

In the context of the symbol, the belief in the origin of Damarwulan's creation is more sacred. People do know that God created his creatures including humans. However, in this case, the belief in the heroism of Damarwulan, who is told as a superhuman created from the essence of light, is more of a belief or myth believed by the Javanese. Beliefs, myths, dogmas, Javanese legends are representations or systems of representation that express sacred things, goodness, and power that are connected to certain figures (Endraswara, 2015). The use of this symbol is to give the effect of greater power, an above-average human possessed by Damarwulan so that he deserves to be called a hero.

In the midst of darkness and hardship, Damarwulan shines as a light of hope. He becomes a symbol of an undying fighting spirit, encouraging the next generation to remember the importance of struggle and sacrifice. Damarwulan's charm is a combination of courage, intelligence, and empathy, making him not only a hero in the story, but also in the hearts of every individual who admires and respects him.

Damarwulan is a hero figure who has a captivating and deep charm. His courage in facing various challenges and enemies makes him a symbol of strength that is not only

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physical, but also mental. In the story, Damarwulan is depicted as a brave and fearless figure, always protecting his people from incoming threats.

Damarwulan's charm lies in his ability to fight for justice and truth, reflecting the noble values held firmly by the Javanese people. He is not only a hero who fights, but also a protector who brings hope to his people. His determination in upholding principles and beliefs makes Damarwulan an ideal example of an inspiring hero. The charm of Damarwulan's handsomeness can be seen from the quote below:


...sakèhing bagus2/ alus2 mêyang sigit2/ dêling myang raras2/ mêyang kang rayung2/ malêntrah myang mawi liyan/ manis sumêh/ pèrak ati mintaning angin/ kari ampas sêdaya// (Dandanggula, 21:9)

Artinya:



...among the many handsome men/smooth handsome/high-shining and felt/floating like reeds/powerless among the others/his smile is sweet/close to the heart carried by the wind/all but dregs left // (Dandanggula, 21:9)

The quote above shows the physical charm of a hero, namely Damarwulan. The hero, especially in Serat Damarwulan, is shown with a handsome face, his smile tempting the heart. His handsomeness absorbs all the handsomeness on earth, until everything is just dregs. The charm of Damarwulan's handsomeness is the key to being able to conquer women until he can finally defeat Menak Jingga. Javanese people ultimately display the figure of a hero with perfection attached to him. Damarwulan is indeed a person of low caste with a job as a caturhik. However, he has a handsome face, this handsomeness is what finally makes his path easier when he encounters difficulties. Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of the symbol of Damarwulan's handsomeness is reflected in the table below:

Tabel 2. The style of language is a symbol of handsomeness

Sign	Object	Interpretant	Description
mêyang kang rayung2/ malêntrah myang mawi liyan	 <p>https://www.istockphoto.com like reeds blown by the wind. As if other people have no power.</p>	<p>The meaning of the sign is when people see Damarwulan's handsomeness, it causes others to fall in love. The feeling of love and admiration makes others like reeds that are easily blown away by the wind.</p>	<p>People who are stunned by the handsomeness and charm of damarwulan make others have no power to refuse him. All women are crazy about him.</p>

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Sign	Object	Interpretant	Description
manis suméh/ pèrak ati mintaning angin	 <p>https://kompas.com The word <i>perak ati</i> comes from peacock ati. The peacock object is often used to symbolize beauty.</p>	The meaning of this sign is that Damarwulan's sweet smile (manis sumeh) is very beautiful and seductive to the heart, like a male peacock who is flirting. perempuan by spreading its wings and being blown by the wind.	Peacock feathers are often used by Javanese people to symbolize the beauty/handsomeness of a person. Damarwulan's charm is depicted by the beauty of peacock feathers that tempt the heart.
kari ampas sêdaya	 <p>https://pidjar.com The image above shows a coconut that has been squeezed to make coconut milk and leave behind the coconut pulp.</p>	The symbol shows how Damarwulan's charm that makes women crazy is likened to only dregs. Everything can be given only to Damarwulan.	The context of this coconut dregs is not Damarwulan, but the women who are crazy about Damarwulan's physical charm.

Based on the data above, it shows that Damarwulan's handsome charm gives him many advantages. Damarwulan becomes a hero figure with an amazing physical attraction. Many women are willing to give and even do anything to please Damarwulan. The women are willing to be dregs for Damarwulan's figure.

Heroism in Serat Damarwulan represents the noble values of Javanese society, where a hero must be able to be a protector and guardian of the morality of his community" (Suwardi, 2018). This is in line with the concept of heroism in Peirce's semiotics, where the sign of a hero's representation is not only determined by his strength, but also by the moral courage shown in various critical situations.

Furthermore, in Peirce's semiotic study, Damarwulan's representation as a hero is seen through the depiction of his dashing physique, his calmness and determination in facing enemies. The object of this sign involves meanings associated with his struggle against the enemies of the kingdom who threaten social and political stability. The interpretant

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or meaning of this symbol, as explained by Gunawan in his research, "can be seen from the meaning of the Javanese people towards the ideal hero figure, who always upholds the principles of truth and loyalty to the homeland" (Gunawan, 2020).

Damarwulan's heroism is not only seen from his success in conquering the enemy, but also from his sacrifice and sincerity in carrying out his duties. According to Raharjo in his study, "Damarwulan is a symbol of complex heroism because he presents the character of a hero who is full of sacrifice, but remains humane in facing dilemmas and difficulties in life" (Raharjo, 2019). This shows that the concept of a hero in Javanese culture is not only about victory, but also about honesty, morality, and determination in facing difficult situations.

As a local hero, Damarwulan remains relevant in the eyes of the public because he is not only a symbol of courage, but also an example of how an individual should act in facing challenges related to honor and humanity. Therefore, the charm of Damarwulan's heroism is not just physical, but also spiritual and moral, which connects him to the noble values of Javanese culture.

Research has shown that physical attractiveness plays a significant role in how individuals are treated in a variety of social contexts, including employment, education, and social relationships. The term "privilege" refers to an advantage or benefit that a person receives because of factors that are not directly attributable to their accomplishments or abilities. In the case of physical attractiveness, individuals who are considered physically attractive often receive better treatment, fewer social barriers, and greater opportunities than individuals who are less attractive by social standards.

A study by Langlois et al. (2000) found that people who are considered physically attractive tend to be perceived more positively in terms of competence, morality, and personality. This phenomenon is known as the "halo effect," whereby an attractive physical appearance generates positive assumptions about an individual's non-physical traits. More physically attractive individuals are also more likely to get jobs, get promoted, and receive higher salaries (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003).

In addition, research by Hamermesh and Biddle (1994) concluded that people who are perceived as more attractive enjoy what is called a "beauty premium," where they receive higher salaries than their equally qualified but less attractive co-workers. In an educational context, students who are perceived as attractive also often receive more attention from teachers, are rated more positively, and tend to get better grades (Lindgren et al., 2009).

However, physical attractiveness can also have negative effects, especially in situations where highly attractive individuals are perceived to rely on their appearance rather than their competence. In general, however, research shows that good looks are often associated with receiving privileges in many aspects of life, from social interactions to economic opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Damarwulan is not only depicted as a physically handsome figure, but also as a symbol of courage, determination, and hope in the context of Javanese culture. His physical handsomeness, visualized through a strong style of language, symbolizes strength that is more than just outward appearance. Damarwulan is interpreted as a hero who shines amidst great challenges, representing the light that defeats darkness. This is in line with the religious and spiritual beliefs of Javanese society, where the figure of a hero must demonstrate physical excellence and high morality. Peirce's semiotics identifies three important elements: representamen (Damarwulan's physical symbol), object (the meaning of handsomeness as strength), and interpretant (society's interpretation of Damarwulan's heroism). In conclusion, this study confirms that Damarwulan's physical attractiveness provides "privilege" in achieving success, with his handsomeness functioning as an important tool in facing challenges and gaining social recognition.

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