

**REVEALING THE MEANING OF SEMIOTICS-BASED
ARCHITECTURAL ART AT THE TOMB OF TEARS OF MOTHER
AROSBAYA BANGKALAN**

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Abstract

The Tomb of Mother's Tears (Air Mata Ibu) stands as a significant religious tourism site in Madura, housing the burial complex of Madurese nobles nestled within Buduran Village, Arosbaya District, Bangkalan Regency, on the island of Madura. Perched upon limestone hills, the nomenclature of this burial site derives from the narrative of Queen Mother Syarifah Ambami. Beyond its profound historical significance, the complex boasts a distinctive cultural architectural artistry imbued with semiotic representations of the local culture. This research endeavors to elucidate the architectural artistry of the Mother's Tears Tomb and delve into the philosophical underpinnings of this site through the lens of sociolinguistic inquiry, with a specific focus on semiotic analysis. Employing systematic linguistic research methodologies, this study aims to decipher the nuanced meanings embedded within the architectural motifs of the tomb, drawing from data gathered through field surveys and interviews conducted with tomb custodians. Through semiotic analysis, the myriad architectural motifs adorning the Mother's Tears Tomb will be examined, thereby elucidating the singular uniqueness and profound meanings encapsulated within its architectural design. The findings of this analysis and mapping endeavor promise to offer a comprehensive introduction to religious tourism in Madura, particularly in the region of Bangkalan.

Keywords: Mother's Tears Tomb, Semiotics, Religious Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Pesarean Aer Mata Ibu or Makam Rato Ebu in Arosbaya cannot be separated from the historical story of the island of Madura itself. Ratu Ibu herself, is Syarifah Ambami, the wife of Raden Praseno, the ruler. Madura who was titled Cakraningrat I. From this marriage he had three children, namely RA Atmojonegoro, Ri Undagan and Ratu Mertoparti. Although Panembahan Cakraningrat I ruled in Madura, he spent much of his time in Mataram, assisting Sultan Agung. Seeing this situation, Syarifah Ambami felt very sad. Day and night she cried and wept for herself. Finally, she was determined to practice asceticism. Then she ascended a hill located in the Buduran Arosbaya area. In her hermitage, she begged and prayed that her descendants, up to seven generations, would be destined to become the rulers of the government in Madura (Cull, 2009).

It is also told that in his hermitage, spiritually he met the Prophet Khidir AS. from that meeting he received news that his request was granted. How happy his heart was, finally he hurried back to Sampang. Sometime later, Panembahan Cakraningrat I came from Mataram. She told Panembahan Cakraningrat I of all her experiences since her husband had been in Mataram, that she had practiced asceticism, and also told him the results of her asceticism. After listening to his wife's story. Panembahan Cakraningrat I, was not happy, but he felt

sad and disappointed with his wife, why she only prayed and asked for only seven derivatives. Seeing this disappointment, Sharifah returned to her meditation and cried without stopping asking forgiveness to Allah for her mistakes.

The religious tourism of the Tomb of the Mother's Tears can be developed and has the potential to increase the creative economy in the Madura region (Purnomo, 2016). The uniqueness of the architectural art of the Tomb of the Mother's Tears building needs to be explored further to be introduced to the international world, this is one step to increase tourist interest and the prestige of the religious tourism of the Tomb of the Mother's Tears in the international arena (Anwar et al., 2017). One of the steps that can be taken is to first understand the semiotics or the meaning and philosophy of the architectural motifs of the tomb of tears of the mother in the village of Buduran Arosbaya Bangkalan, which can then be explored further so that it can then be presented and introduced to the international world. That way, it is hoped that the religious tourism of Air Mata Ibu will not be less competitive with other tourism outside Madura and can take part more widely (Djakfar, 2017). This will certainly also have a positive impact on the sustainability and development of the creative economy of the people in the Bangkalan area, especially Arosbaya. Fiske & Littlejohn (Kriyantono, 2006: 265) argued that semiotics departs from three main elements called Peirce's triangle theory of meaning or triangle meaning, which are as follows:

- a. A sign is something physical that can be captured by the five human senses and is something that refers (represents) something else outside the sign itself, this sign reference is called an object.
- b. The sign reference (object) is the social context that becomes the reference of the sign or something that the sign refers to.
- c. The user of the sign (interpretant) is the concept of thought of the person who uses the sign from deriving it to a certain meaning or the meaning that exists in a person's mind about the object that a sign refers to.

The purpose of this research is to introduce and explain the architectural art form of the tomb of the mother's tears and analyze the philosophical meaning of the tomb of the mother's tears using sociolinguistics studies focusing on semiotic studies, which are used to analyze meaning using systematic linguistic research. The source of data in this research is obtained from the results of field surveys and through interviews with tomb guards or caretakers of the Air Mata Ibu tomb. Furthermore, the various architectural art motifs will be analyzed using semiotic studies, then the uniqueness and meaning contained in the architectural art at the tomb of the mother's tears can be mapped. The results of the analysis and mapping will more widely introduce religious tourism in Madura, especially Bangkalan (Yoeti, 1983).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The source of data in this research is obtained from the results of field surveys and through interviews with tomb guards or caretakers of the mother's tears tomb. Furthermore, the various architectural art motifs will be analyzed using semiotic studies, then the uniqueness and meaning contained in the architectural art at the tomb of the mother's tears can be mapped. From the results of the analysis and mapping, it will be more widely introduced religious tourism in Madura, especially Bangkalan (Pawito, 2007).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The tomb of Ratu Ibu in Arosbaya Bangkalan is the tomb complex of Adipati Cakraningrat. The location of this tomb is on a stepped hill, as is common for stepped pundens in Indonesia. Initially this tomb was the tomb of Ratu Ibu, the consort of Cakraningrat I at the end of his stay. Cakraningrat was the ruler of Madura at the beginning of Mataram's control of Madura, his government was in Sampang. Cakraningrat was the first duke, according to the history of Madura, Cakraningrat was one of the descendants of Majapahit as a result of marriage with the daughter of Cempa, namely Lembu Peteng (nonim, 1951). The term Lembu Peteng is found in many places and literature. Some scholars estimate that Lembu Peteng is a descendant of a duke rather than an empress. This lineage confirms and emphasizes that Cakraningrat is a descendant of the great kingdom of Majapahit. In this tomb complex there are seven descendants of Cakraningrat who served as dukes in western Madura, namely Sampang and Bangkalan. The burial complex is now often called the tomb of Aer Mata or the tomb of Ratu Ibu. The tomb of Ratu Ibu is located in Buduran Village, Arosbaya District, Bangkalan Regency. Since hundreds of years ago, Aer Mata has not only been popular for its unique architecture, but also for its sacredness (Dharma, 2016).

Apart from the tombs of the kings of Madura. Another attraction is the unique motifs and carvings on the tomb furniture. Those are the andesite stone arrangement on the second gate, the peringgitan cupola where the guests of the pilgrims are received, the cupola where the weapons and the rest of the royal furniture are stored, the cupola of the caretakers, and the three main cupolas where the bodies of the kings reside. The same goes for the memolo and kemuncak ornaments that are scattered on the roof tops of each cupola. The beauty and distinctiveness of the Aer Mata Pasarean's architectural style begins to be felt when entering the gate of the Pasarean uphill. The chain of stairs and the long fence on either side of the tomb are made of andelis stone ("tenacious" as the Madurese call it) without cement adhesive (Syahdan, 2017).

The peak of Pasarean Aer Mata's aesthetic beauty lies in the three main cupolas, namely the tomb cupola of Ratu Syarifah Ambami (1546 - 1569), and the cupolas of Panembahan Cakraningrat II and V and Panembahan Cakraningrat VI and VII. The background of each main cupola measuring 40 X 20 meters is decorated with 7 waru leaf-shaped thrones filled with unique antique carvings made of marble type alabaster stone. All the tombs of Ratu Syarifah Ambami and Panembahan Cakraningrat II, V, VI, VII as well as several merchants and nobles of the king's descendants are all topped with charming antique carvings of marble stones arranged without using cement adhesive (Wibowo, 2011).

Complicated indeed, our understanding of the carving configuration in the tomb complex. Moreover, behind the carving configuration is a mystery symbol that symbolizes the harmony between people from the three religions that developed at that time, namely Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. If pilgrims are careful, the symbol of harmony, although faint, appears transparent, because among the various forms of carving art, there are lotus flower carvings that symbolize Buddhism, miniature Ganesha as a symbol of Hinduism, and calligraphic carvings as a symbol of Islam (Dharmojo, 2005). All three are intertwined to illustrate a story of interfaith harmony in Madura in the past.

For this reason, since the reign of Panembahan Cakraningrat I five centuries ago, the importance of inter-religious harmony has been emphasized. Especially in Bangkalan,

Madura. Unfortunately, the good teachings about religion and the philosophy behind the uniqueness and mysteriousness of Pesarean Aer Mata are not widely known.

In Islam, there is a prohibition to depict any living creature, let alone humans. In the archipelago there are times when the art is still maintained, producing a statue but this statue has been so disguised with carving skills that it no longer depicts living creatures. For this decorative art one does not hesitate to take patterns from antiquity which mainly consist of patterns: leaves, flowers, hills, landscapes and geometric lines. The tombs are decorated not only the headstones but also the cupola, the columns of the cupola and anything else that can and should be decorated. In the Aer Mata Ibu cemetery, the wall on the north side is called *gunungan* and is carved with very fine sculptures. On graves that are grouped and arranged in a row, the *gunungan* is connected together, like a carved veil.

According to the caretaker, all the carvings and decorations are from Mojokerta/Trowulan. However, there are some residents who say that the carvings were made by an expert carver from Jepara. These residents also believe that the carving expert is also buried in the Aer Mata complex. From the above narration, there are at least two kinds of carving and ornamental art patterns in the Aer Mata tomb (Suminto, 2015). The findings in the field also indicate the influence of these two styles. The Mojokerto style can be seen in the simple plant carvings. The Jepara style is more complex and diverse. It depicts the world of animals and plants. Carving and decorative art is a symbol that is full of meaning. Some of the meanings of these symbols are:

a. Tombstones (*Gunungan*)

The shape of this tomb *gunungan* has a triangular shape that is connected to one another and some are separate, or stand alone. The material used is made of olet stone (Mujib, 2016). The variety used is also very varied, ranging from flora, fauna, and mythological creatures. The variety of flora is dominated by lotus, pandanus and some fruit trees. Mythological animals are present such as elephant heads, *kemamang*, water and others (Wibawa, 2018).



Figure 1. Tombstones (*Gunungan*) Architecture

Table 1. Pierce's Semiotic Table of Tombstones (*Gunungan*) Architecture

Pierce's semiotictable	
Sign	
Object	Tombstones (<i>Gunungan</i>) Architecture
Interpretant	Depicts the universe in Hinduism. In the puppet show, the gunungan is a symbol of the turn of a new chapter or episode.

Such a triangular shape is very close to the tree of life, especially the *kekayon wayang*. This triangular shape is very close to the primordial principles of the people. This means that the expression of the triangle as a manifestation of the mountain, or the dwelling place of sacred spirits, is strongly expressed here. So although the Chinese lineage such as Putri Cempa and Putri Cina are their ancestors, the influence of Majapahit is very prominent.

b. Lotus Flower

It is a motif inherited from Buddhist culture. Buddhists describe that this flower is the foundation or place of buddhas. In the *aermata* tomb complex the lotus flower is found in the lowest layer.



Figure 2. Architectural Symbol of Lotus Flower

Table 2. Pierce's Semiotic Table of Lotus Flower

Pierce's semiotic table	
Sign	
Object	Architectural Symbol of Lotus or Lotus Flower
Interpretant	Depicts the similarity of the function of the lotus flower that supports the life above it. The lotus flower also symbolizes eternity.

The lotus flower is an old and important symbol in many religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. In different faiths, there are slight variations on the meaning of the lotus flower but the general concept is the same. The meaning of the lotus flower comes from the way it grows in nature. It begins as a bud underwater, often in a murky pond, in deep mud, away from the sun. But, sooner or later, it reaches the light and becomes a very beautiful flower. The Lotus Flower is considered in many different cultures, especially in eastern religions, as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth. Its characteristics are a perfect analogy for the human condition, even when its roots are in the dirtiest waters, the lotus produces the most beautiful flowers. There are generally 3 meanings associated with the Lotus flower, namely:

a) Symbol of Purity

The lotus flower emerges from murky water very clean and beautiful, so it is also a symbol of purity. The meaning of the lotus flower has such power because it can give hope and strength to people struggling in everyday life. It is a symbol that shows that no matter where you start in life and what you experience, you have the ability to rise to the top, overcome all negativity and find happiness as you emerge from your struggles. During the process of the bud pushing through the murky water, the petals are never touched or affected by the water, so the center remains uncontaminated throughout its unpleasant journey. This is symbolic of the purity of the human spirit and whatever we experience cannot tarnish it.

b) Symbol of Personal Progress

The physical aspects of the lotus flower also contribute to its meaning. The lotus flower has many petals that surround the center in several layers. As the petals unfold, more petals are revealed until the lotus is in full bloom and all layers are revealed. This process is seen as a metaphor for progress being made gradually until finally reaching spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. While different petals of the lotus bloom in different colors, the center of the flower is usually yellow, sometimes with a greenish tint. This

center of the flower symbolizes the goal of one's soul reaching enlightenment and connecting to the highest consciousness. In some beliefs, the meaning of the lotus flower also represents the seven chakras.

c) **Symbol of Spiritual Enlightenment**

The meaning of the lotus flower symbol comes from an analogy derived from the life cycle of a flower, where all humans are born into a world of suffering where they must learn to overcome difficult times in order to become a better person and achieve spiritual enlightenment. The muddy water symbolizes the struggle of life, the flower bud symbolizes a person who has not yet reached their full potential, and the lotus flower blooming on the water symbolizes a person who has reached nirvana and let go of worldly suffering.

c. Tendrils or Vines

Just like the lotus and gununga symbols in the architecture of the Tomb of the Tears of the Mother, the tendril symbol is also found in many of these chased meals.



Figure 3. Tendrils Architectural Symbol

Table 3. Pierce's semiotic table of Tendrils

Pierce's semiotic table	
Sign	
Object	Architectural Symbol of Vine or Vines
Interpretant	It symbolizes tenacity and flexibility. In addition, vines also symbolize a sense of humility towards others.

The vine architecture symbol is a visualization of the Hindu concept of cosmogony. It is one of the oldest Hindu motifs called "Padmamūla". Padmamūla, whether stylized or not, depicts lotus tendrils growing from natural roots or stems. Not only in India, in Java and elsewhere, the most common lotus root or stump, is depicted in the form of a jewel. This gem is the seed of the main part of the lotus plant, the "root" (Skr. padmamūla). The Hindu concept of cosmogony is concerned with the process of creation and unfolding of the universe, namely the golden seed that is the origin of the universe that dwells in the center of the universal water. Because the seed is in water, the tendrils are depicted as growing from creatures associated with water, such as crabs, fish, turtles, elephants and others. The tendrils are depicted as branching, curling and the branching is paralleled to the continuous branching in the process of life, from one birth to another.

d. Chinese Elephant and Dragon

In addition to the architectural art on the tomb depicting many flora symbols, it also depicts fauna symbols, consisting of Chinese Elephants and Dragons, although fauna architectural symbols are not so dominant.



Figure 4. Architectural Symbols of the Chinese Elephant and Dragon

Table 4. Pierce's semiotic table of the Chinese Elephant and Dragon

Pierce's semiotic table	
Sign	
Object	Architectural Symbols of the Chinese Elephant and Dragon
Interpretant	The elephant is a Hindu heritage that symbolizes Lord Ganesha. The dragon symbolizes tenacity strength and luck.

There is something interesting about this elephant carving, which is depicted like a mammoth because the tusks are too long. This also indicates the presence of ancient influences, Naga is a Chinese mythological animal. Although neither Java nor Madura

recognize the existence of Naga, but from continuous interaction with Chinese merchants, it is likely that Javanese artists were also influenced.

4. CONCLUSION

Air Mata Ibu tomb is one of the tombs that has high historical value, besides having historical value, the tomb also has a unique cultural architectural art, which has semiotics to represent culture. The Aer Mata tomb complex is in the form of a stepped terrace, totaling three terraces and the terrace is in the form of an arrangement of courtyard terraces. In the main courtyard there is a paduraksa gate leading to the center courtyard. This paduraksa gate connects the main courtyard and the second courtyard of the tomb, the second courtyard terrace is rectangular in shape and is bordered by a talud-talud. To enter there is a special road shaped like a temple gate. In this second complex there are several buildings and access to the Ratoe Iboe spring. The buildings on the second terrace courtyard are the tomb complexes of kings and nobles. The third terrace courtyard complex is the main and sacred building complex. This is similar to the Hindhu cosmology which places the holiest buildings at the back, including the tomb of rato ebhu or Syarifah ambani also in this last complex. The architectural art of the tombs in the air mata ibu tomb complex has five basic symbolic motifs, namely: gunung, lotus or lotus flower, vine, elephant and Chinese dragon. Each of these motifs has its own meaning and significance. So it can be concluded that the architectural art motifs at the tomb of Air Mata Ibu have the meaning of each sign.

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