

Symbols and Meaning of Tattoos in the PUNK Community in Surakarta: Roland Barthes Semiotics Study

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the symbols and meanings of tattoos in the punk community. Tattoos in the Punk community in Surakarta contain symbols and meanings that they want to convey to the community. This research aims to dismantle and explore the meaning contained in tattoos, highlighting the symbolic role in shaping the collective identity of the punk community of Surakarta. However, there is a negative stigma that develops in the midst of society towards a Punk community, one of which is in tattoos. So Roland Barthes's semiotic theory approach is used to prove the negative stigma about tattoos that develop in the midst of society. This research is expected to provide in-depth insight into how tattoos become an identity in the context of the punk community in Surakarta, as well as contribute to a broader understanding of the role of tattoos in responding to and representing the values of the punk subculture in the local community. This study uses a qualitative research method that is descriptive to uncover a message contained in the tattoos of the Punk community. This research found that the symbols contained in the tattoos of the Punk community such as the symbol of Anarchy, the symbol of Peace, the symbol of Equality, the symbol of Resistance, and the symbol of Antifa. Meanwhile, the meaning of tattoos based on experience is grouped into tattoos as identity, tattoos as artistic expressions, tattoos as spiritualists, tattoos as memories, tattoos as motivation, and tattoos as expressions of feelings. The negative meaning that is a stigma about tattoos that develop in society, is not something that can be proven. Rather, tattoos in the punk community are a medium to voice their anxiety about social inequality, and as a medium of individual experience.

KEYWORDS

PUNK, Denotation, Connotation, Myth, Surakarta

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INTRODUCTION

Surakarta is a city located in Central Java, Indonesia, this city is ruled by Sunan Surakarta and Adipati Mangkunegaran. In his social life, there are many groups or communities of young people in this city, one of which is the Punk community. This community usually uses dark clothes with various types of accessories, such as chains, pins, pins, spike bracelets, spike necklaces, piercings, colored hair and tattoos all over the body or on part of the body. Etymologically, Punk comes from the English language, namely the United States Not Kingdom Public which is abbreviated as P.U.N.K or in Indonesian means unity or community outside the Kingdom or government

(Wikan, C.E, 2015:51).Based on the observation of researchers, in the Punk community, tattoos are not just images on the body or mere decorations, but a unique medium full of symbols and meanings. I limit this research to only researching tattoos in the Punk community in Surakarta, precisely in Jebres sub-district and the streets of Surakarta. This research focuses on the symbols and

meanings of tattoos in the Punk community. In seeing these tattoos as a visual language, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach provides an adequate analytical framework. Barthes' theory is comprehensive and can logically connect the elements of a sign, as well as provide a structural description of all marking and signing systems (Sobur, 2016:156). The same research researched about tattoos, namely Hatib Abdul Kadir Olong. Tattoo. Yogyakarta: LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2006. Galuh Candra Kirana. "Tattoo as Social Identity" Thesis to achieve a bachelor's degree from S-1 State Islamic University (UIN), Malang 2010. Gumgum Gumilar "The Meaning of Symbolic Communication Among Tattoo Users in the City of Bandung. This research aims to dismantle and explore the meaning contained in tattoos, highlighting the symbolic role in shaping the collective identity of the punk community of Surakarta. As well as proving is a negative stigma that develops in the midst of society towards a Punk or the Punk community, one of which is in tattoos with uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory approach, to understand the stigma that develops in the midst of society and tries to explain the real role of tattoos. This research is expected to provide in- depth insight into how tattoos become an identity in the context of the punk community in Surakarta, as well as contribute to a broader understanding of the role of tattoos in responding to and representing the values of the punk subculture in the local community. For the research on Symbols and Meanings of Tattoos in the Punk Community in Surakarta: A Study of Roland Barthes' Semiotics, the formulation of the problem that will be the focus of the research is, What are the symbols and meanings contained in tattoos in the punk community of Surakarta? And How to analyze the stigma of Tattoos through the Roland Barthes semiotics approach?

METHOD

The research with the title "Symbols and Meanings of Tattoos in the Punk Community in Surakarta; Roland Barthes Semiotics Study" using Qualitative Research Methods. According to Sugiyono, the qualitative research method is called a new method, because its popularity has not been long ago, it is called the postpositivistic method because it is based on the philosophy of postpositivism (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2013:7).

This study uses purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is a deliberate or random sampling technique. (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2013:217). Researchers determine for themselves the samples to be taken because there are certain considerations. Data sources come from library data, or libraries, such as journals, books, scientific magazines, internet sources, and conduct direct interviews with resource persons. The interviewees were informants who had knowledge about tattoos, and members of the Punk community in Surakarta.

Data Collection Techniques, The author made direct observations in the Jebres area, Surakarta. The goal is to obtain data from the object being researched and also data from other places related to punk children in Surakarta. The main source of data was recorded through interviews with several members of the Punk community found in Jebres, Surakarta, with the aim of providing information about the problems that have been compiled by researchers. Documentation techniques are carried out by recording voices during interviews, video interviews with interviewees, taking photos of tattoos on the body parts of the interviewees are carried out directly, to complete the research results and the perfection of the research results. The technique used by the author in analyzing the data uses interarchative analysis techniques. Huberman and Miles (1992) proposed an analysis model called interactive analysis. Interactive analysis has three stages, namely: Data Reduction, Data Presentation, and Drawing Conclusions The process of presenting the results of data analysis in this study is presented after the data collected in the form of writing, photos, videos, recordings using the method of presenting the results of informal analysis. In the submission of the results of this data analysis, it is formal and informal

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Riyadi, an idea is always limited by time. When you stop using it, the Movement becomes a sign or symbol (Riyadi Swandhani, 2023:184). Meanwhile, according to aulia about signs, in general, signs contain two forms, First, signs describe (either directly or indirectly) something with a certain meaning. Second, signs communicate the meaning of a meaning(Aulia, 2021:440). In this

regard, the symbols found by the researcher, basically, there are five symbols that were born in Punk, and are applied in the form of tattoos as a medium of expression in expressing the anxiety voiced in the punk community wherever they are. The symbols are such as the symbol of Anarchy, the symbol of Peace, the symbol of Equality, the symbol of Resistance, and the symbol of Antifa.

In addition to tattoos with visual symbols in PUNK, there are also tattoos made with meaning based on the individual experiences that researchers found, this is the same as conveyed by Pranoto that the meaning contained in a work of art cannot be separated from a personal experience, a group of people, so that it has a view in describing the visual elements of the work of art (Pranoto, 2020:277) As for the tattoos which are grouped into tattoos as identity, tattoos as artistic expressions, tattoos as spiritualists, tattoos as memories, tattoos as motivation, and tattoos as expressions of feelings.

1. Tattoos as a symbol of the PUNK community

Symbol of Anarchy

The word anarchie is derived from an absorbed word from anarchy which comes from England a combined form of a/an (no) and archia (government or power). (<https://p2k.stekom.ac.id/ensiklopedia/Anarkis>, n.d.). This means that anarchy is a symbol of rejection of the government that does not give the right to freedom of expression and voice to the people. The Anarchy Symbol is a monogram consisting of a capital letter "A" surrounded by a capital letter "O". The letter "A" is taken from the initial letter of "Anarchy" or "Anarchism" The letter "O" stands for Order. When combined into "Anarchy is Order".



Figure 1. Symbol of Anarchy

Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/958633470652834019/>

Symbol of Peace

The symbol of Peace was originally used as a symbol of nuclear disarmament by the anti-nuclear movement. Designed by Gerald Holtom on February 21, 1958, the symbol is a semaphore combination of the letters "N" and "D" of the flag which stands for "Nuclear Disarmament". The semaphore for the letter N is two flags in the inverted V position, while the sign for the letter D is a vertical line formed by two flags (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lambang_perdamaian, n.d.). Punk adapted the symbol to voice peace or a world without war.



Figure 2. Symbol of Peace

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/Ga6429Vz7Vg7XqoP8>

Symbol of Equality

The symbol of equality discusses the unrest over social disparities in aspects of gender, age, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Punk holds the principle of togetherness among fellow punks, equal and no difference. The concept of the symbol of equality voiced by punk is in the form of the letter "E" taken from the word Equality and circle means togetherness (Eris Kuswara, 2020).



Figure 3 Symbol of Equality

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/t7JJYsvTGCAZ1Zn9>

Match Symbols

Punk is known as a movement of resistance, rebellion, and rejection of corruption, oppression, sexual violence, pleading, war, social inequality, poverty and so on that occur in every aspect of life. Punk represents with skull visuals as a form of resistance, rebellion, and rejection. So it is not uncommon to find skull tattoos on the body of individuals who have tattooed their bodies as punks. The shape of the skull is used as a symbol of rejection and a reminder of irregularities in the government that interpret all to die to their end.



Figure 4 Match Symbols

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/EnDXcaMP4QaGr5zb9>

Antifa Symbol

The Antifa symbol was adapted from an ideology of anti-fascist organizations in Germany, namely the KPD party and the SPD party in 1932. This symbol tells the story of the rejection of the fascist government, and does not give freedom of expression to every individual carried out by the public government. The lack of freedom of expression carried out by the public government has become a rejection among the public, one of which is Punk. The Antifa symbol consists of two red flags representing Communism and Socialism in the 1917s and a black flag representing the Anarchy Movement and Autonomy in the 1980s in a circle that reads "Antifaschistische" which means anti-fascist and "Aktion" which means movement) (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antifa_Jerman, n.d.).



Figure 5 Antifa Symbol

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/9kLM78UExCZ5FcBh>

2. Tato Pemaknaan Pribadi Dalam PUNK

Tattoos as Identity

Many communities use tattoos as an effort to characterize the appearance identity of their community, although there are no special symbols that are obligated to make tattoos and the rules for placing tattoos on the body, one of which is tattoos on the punk community. It is not uncommon for us to find tattoos on the body of a punk, so that this gives birth to a stigma in society, that tattoos are the identity of a community, including Punks, although there are no definite tattoo provisions in the punk community.



Figure 6. Tattoo on Ogek's Right Hand
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Tattoos as an Expression of Feelings

Tattoos are one of the mediums of expression expressing the feelings of artists, or tattoo users that are visualized on the body permanently. In the Punk community, some tattoo users express their feelings through tattoos. The feelings you want to express are diverse, such as expressions of feelings of sadness, fear, disappointment, happiness, resistance, rebellion, and pleasure.



Figure 7 Tattoo on Juki's Back
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Tattoos as an Artistic Expression

Tattoos are one of the parts of fine art that also have aesthetic value, it is not uncommon for a person to express artistic expressions that he considers beautiful and then applied to his body permanently. Tattoos have become one of the branches of art in their own right, artistic arrangement and creativity in itself. It is not uncommon in the Punk community that some of those who use tattoos make it an expression of artistic expression.



Figure 8. Tattoo On The Chest Of A Man
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Tattoos As Spirituality

The history of tattoos was originally found in inland tribes, and there is no definitive data on how humans began to recognize tattoos. But in Egypt, by the 1300s people had already started using it as a sign of identification and part of religious rituals. The meaning of tattoos as spiritual in the

current era is also found in many tattoo users themselves, as well as those found in punks themselves who also use it as a reminder in religious activities or show their beliefs.



Figure 9. Tattoo On The Right Hand Dani
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Tattoos as Motivation

The meaning of tattoos in the current era is diverse, depending on the tattoo user, one of which is used as a motivation for life. Humans need an internal or external impulse and it is not uncommon for that impulse to be used as a motivation for life. One of them is by exploring one's own body with visuals that he considers as a reference or motivation for life, either in the form of writing or pictures permanently. One of the mottos of life in punk is D.I.Y, which stands for 'Do It Yourself', which means that a punk must be himself, and be responsible for every action he does or says. As well as being an independent person in his life.



Figure 10. Tattoo on Ketek's Right Hand
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Tattoos as a Memento

Punk life on the streets makes them always move around, so it is not uncommon for them to always be nomadic. Of course, they get a lot of memories from the journey they went through. Likewise in terms of new friendships and cultures. Some of the punks chose tattoos to commemorate their stories, although there were also other memories they had gained besides their travels.

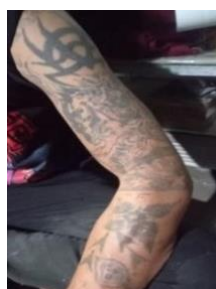


Figure 11. Tattoo on Tulank's left hand
Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

3. Tattoo Stigma Analysis Through Roland Barthes' Semiotics Approach **Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory Concept**

According to Barthes, semiotics has several core concepts, namely signification, denotation, connotation, and myth.

1) Signification

According to Barthes, signification can be understood as a process in the form of an action that connects signifiers and signified that are interdependent with each other so as to produce a sign. A signifier is a physical form of a sign in the form of an image, letter, word, object, sound,

smell/fragrance or something that can be felt by the human senses. Meanwhile, a sign (signified) is the meaning contained in the message that has a concept in the sign (Risa Kusuma, 2023:2).

2) Denotation (Denotation)

In Barthes's semiotic theory, Denotation is a term that describes the relationship between signifiers and signifiers that produce signs with meanings according to reality, explicit, direct and certain. In her book entitled Elements of Semiology (1964), Denotation is The First Order of Signification (Risa Kusuma, 2023:3).

3) Connotation (connotation)

In Barthes's semiotic theory, Connotation is a term that describes the relationship between signifier and signified that produces a sign with a meaning that is not in accordance with reality, not explicit, indirect and open to all possibilities. In her book entitled Elements of Semiology (1964), the connotation is The Second Order of Signification (Risa Kusuma, 2023) In the First Level of Signification, the sign (sign) produced changes into a form in the Second Order of Signification. Form is a signifier that is ambiguous because the marker is both a meaning and a form. Meanwhile, the concept is a sign (signified) that is historical as well as intentional (Roland Barthes, 2013:120). Here the form becomes a signifier and a signified as a concept, the sign produced at this second level is called a myth (Sunardi, 2004:8).

4) Myths (Myths)

According to Barthes, there is a fallacy in modern social life about myths. First, society thinks that institutions and intellectuals are a good thing because they encompass something natural. Second, society sees language as a phenomenon that is more than a set of conventional forms. This was analyzed by Barthes and criticized through Barthes' book entitled Mythology (1957). Based on this mistake, Barthes explained about a new concept called Myth, the purpose of which is to uncover the message that the myth maker wants to convey. Myths are not a lie, but a distortion of their true meaning. Myth is a way of expressing a message that results from speech rather than language. The myth that Barthes refers to is not a story about gods and goddesses that are considered to have existed and recognized as true by the society that supports them, and is a story with a long narrative. However, the Roland Barthes myth is a type of speech, a type of speech (a type of speech action) that is presented with a discourse (Roland Barthes, 2013:152). In Roland Barthes' theory, there are denotation meanings, connotation meanings, and myths in the perception of tattoos in the punk community in Surakarta as follows:

First, the "denotation meaning" or "first stage of meaning system" in Roland Barthes' semiotic system explains that an object or something that is a sign has a real meaning. In tattoos, tattoos are signifiers, and signified is an image that is permanently scratched on the skin by putting ink on the skin using a needle or tattoo machine, then the sign (sign) produced on the "meaning of denotation" or "first stage meaning system" in Roland Barthes' semiotic system, namely, Tattoo is an image that is scratched on the skin permanently by putting ink on the skin using needles or tattoo machines.

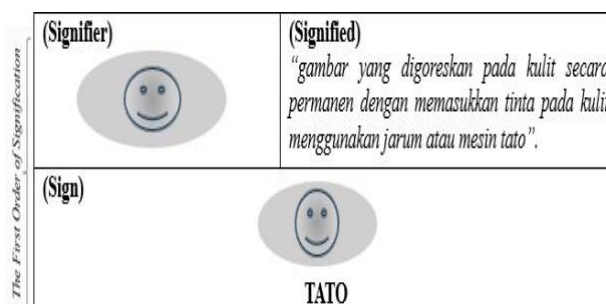


Figure 12. Roland Barthes Semiotics Chart First Order Signification

Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

Second, connotation meaning is meaning that arises from individual, or social interpretation with a conceptual meaning. This means that the meaning produced by multiple interpretations depends on certain situations and conditions. An expert also argues about the meaning of the connotation, that according to Chaer in (Nina Selviana, 2018:1). That is, tattoos as signs that are

produced "in the meaning of denotation" become a form or signifier in the "meaning of connotation" or "second-level system of meaning". Meanwhile, the signs (signified) or concepts obtained are "synonymous with negative things, such as criminal acts, brandal, narcotics users and other bad things". Signs or forms and signs or concepts become a unit called a sign.

Third, the Roland Barthes Myth arose due to Roland's own perception that behind the signs, there is a mysterious meaning, which eventually gave birth to a myth. That is, Myth is the final stage of the semiotic processing of Roland barthes. The sign produced in the "connotation meaning" or "second stage system of meaning" is called a myth, which develops in the midst of society, even though the meaning of the sign produced in the "connotation meaning", cannot be proved. This is because the purpose of the myth itself is created to give something that must be believed to be true even though it cannot be proven. Just like explained above, the purpose of creating myths is to reveal the message that the myth maker wants to convey. This is in accordance with what Asrofah said that the myths in question are related to signs in daily communication, either through speech or in writing. So that the meaning of myths is beyond function and form (Asrofah, 2014:4).

As explained above, tattoos on the "connotation" or "second-stage system of meaning" on Roland Barthes' semiotic system have become a sign or a myth. So the sign produced on the "denotation meaning" or "first stage meaning system" in Roland Barthes' semiotic system is, "A tattoo is an image that is permanently scratched on the skin by inserting ink on the skin using a needle or tattoo machine". After that, the sign undergoes a wider interpretation, "tattoo" as a sign that is produced "in the first level of the meaning system" becomes a form or signifier in the "connotation meaning" or "second level meaning system". Meanwhile, the signs (signified) or concepts obtained are "synonymous with negative things, such as criminal acts, brandal, narcotics users and other bad things". Signs or forms and signs or concepts become a unit called signs. The sign produced on the "meaning of this connotation" is called a myth. Tattoos have become a myth in the final stages of the Semiotics of Roland barthes. The myth that develops in the midst of the community about tattoos is that tattoos are synonymous with negative things, such as criminal acts, brandal, narcotics users and other bad things" thus, becoming a stigma that develops in the midst of society. But the reality is, not all tattoo users do negative things, as well as tattoo users in the punk community, they have reasons for using tattoos, namely as a medium of expression and as a symbol of expressing anxiety. So when viewed from the meaning of the myth that "crime, brandal, criminal acts, and negative things have nothing to do with tattoos".

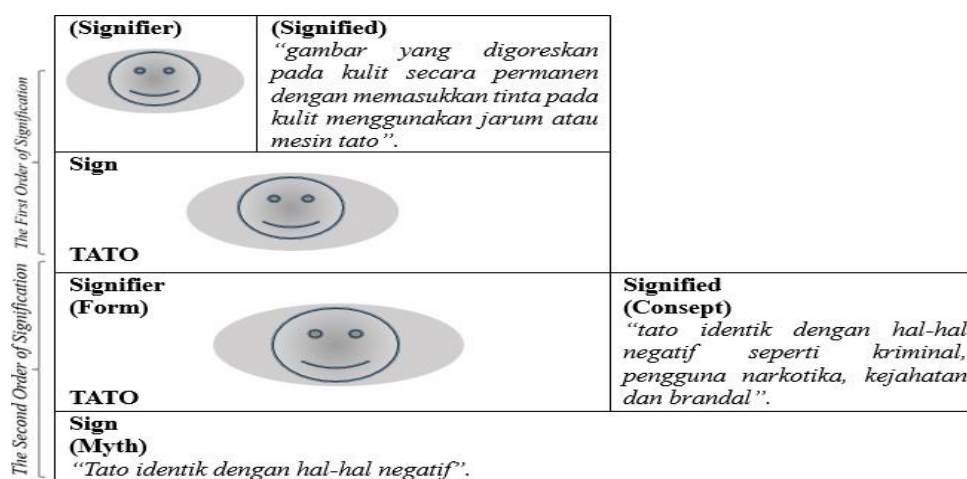


Figure 13. Roland Barthes Semiotics Chart Second Order of Signification

Source: Rudolf Abigael Panggabean

CONCLUSIONS

The research entitled "Symbols and Meanings of Tattoos in the Punk Community in Surakarta; Roland Barthes' Semiotics Study" is expected to add insight to the public who read this

research paper and minimize the negative stigma about tattoos that develop in society. Based on the research conducted by the researcher on the research object with qualitative research methods and the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the researcher found the answers to the problems discussed in this study. The first problem is about "Symbols and Meanings Contained in Tattoos in the Surakarta Punk Community". Based on the results of the research, the answer to the first problem was found, that tattoos in the punk community are one of the mediums used by the punk community to voice symbols that are commonly voiced by the punk community or a punk, as well as the punk community in Surakarta. The symbols voiced were the Symbol of Anarchy, the Symbol of Peace, the Symbol of Equality, the Symbol, and the Antifa Symbol. But there are also tattoos that are made with meanings based on individual experiences found by researchers, which are grouped into tattoos as identity, tattoos as artistic expressions, tattoos as spiritualists, tattoos as memories, tattoos as motivation, and tattoos as expressions of feelings. There is something unique about the Punk community, which is that getting tattoos is not an obligation of a punk, but tattoos are part of the Punk community.

The second problem is about "Tattoo Stigma Analysis Through the Semiotic Approach of Roland Barthes". Based on the results of the study, the answer to the second problem was found, that the researcher found that there is a negative stigma that develops about tattoos in the community, giving a bad meaning to tattoo users, as well as a punk or punk community in the eyes of the public. So, the researcher uses the Roland Barthes semiotics approach to answer this problem. Based on the study of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, a sign has a stage of meaning, which starts from the "first stage of meaning" called "Denotation meaning". Then, the sign that already has a denotation meaning will turn into a marker or called a form and the sign is called a concept at the "second stage of meaning" called "connotation meaning". A sign that already has a connotation is called a myth. The myth referred to by Roland Barthes was created to give something that must be believed to be true even though it cannot be proven. This means that the negative meaning that is a stigma about tattoos that develop in society, is not something that can be proven. Rather, tattoos in the punk community are a medium to voice their anxiety about social inequality, and as a medium of individual experience.

After researching and analyzing the symbols and meanings of tattoos in the punk community in Surakarta, the author has a suggestion, namely, the punk community is part of a society that also has a contribution to social life and punk is not criminal, so that the bad stigma in society about punk can be minimized and punk is accepted by the wider community wherever punk is. The limitations of this study are the limitations in time and resources that make this study unable to include more in-depth analysis or use more complex research methods.

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