

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of The Study

Language is a way to communicate one another. According to Wijana (2016: 195) from the language can be known from the circle or social class where the person is from or from the language, maybe it can also be known from the region or what ethnicity the person came from. But, language is not only about words. According to DeMichele, language is symbolic in more ways than can be summarized in a sentence or paragraph, but generally it talks about how symbols can stand for something else, how they can be used to communicate, and how they can be imbued with meaning. For example of symbolic language: the word cat is symbolic of the idea of a cat, a dollar is a symbol of \$1 of economic value, the word yes or a nod is a symbol of confirmation, a grimace is a symbol of disapproval, and a smiley face emoji is a symbol of happiness. (<http://factmyth.com/factoids/language-is-a-system-of-communication-that-uses-symbolism/>, June 1, 2020)

According to Sebeok, words in general are symbolic signs. But any signifier - object, sound, figure, etc. - can be symbolic. A cross figure can stand for the concept 'Christianity' ; a V-sign made with the index and middle fingers can stand symbolically for the concept 'victory' ; white is a colour that can be symbolic of 'cleanliness', 'purity', or 'innocence', but dark of 'uncleanness, 'impurity', or 'corruption'; and the list could go on and on. These symbols are all established by social convention. (Sebeok, 2011: 11)

When we say “language is symbolic” we are not talking about “what we say” (what symbols we use), but “what we mean” (what the symbols we use mean; what we are trying to communicate). Language is symbolic in that the symbols we use have a deeper “symbolic and semantic” meaning beyond their literal meaning. The study of this can be called semiology (or semiotic, as it is known better in America).

According to Saussure, semiology (from the Greek *Semion* “sign”) studies the life of sign within societies. This is general approach to the study of sign in every cultural life, or even of culture as a sort of language. He proposed a dualistic notion of the sign, relating the *signifier* as the form of the word or phrase uttered, to the *signified* as the mental concept. And it’s important to note that according to Saussure, the sign is completely arbitrary, there was no necessary connection between the sign and its meaning.

Roland Barthes proposed another term to understand the sign by his theory’s order of signification where the sign has three stages in meaning; denotation, connotation, and myth.

To conclude, Chandler in his book, *Semiotics, The Basics*; wrote “To semioticians, a defining feature of signs is that they are treated by their users as ‘standing for’ or representing other things.” (Chandler, 2007: 60)

In Batak Toba culture, there are so many symbols with its hidden meaning especially ornaments in *Lapo Batak*. *Lapo*, in Kamus Bahasa Batak Toba by Op. Faustin Panjaitan (2010: 130), means *warung*, *kedai* (food stall). *Lapo Batak* is not only about a restaurant that serves food, but it is also a place where Batak people gather. They will also get closer to their family members of the same clan. For Bataknese, it is

required the involvement of each family from each clan to discuss anything about the culture; marriage, births, and also funeral ceremonies.

In *Lapo Batak*, there are a lot of symbols with differential meanings, such as; *gorga*, *ulos*, and a picture of goldenfish (ornaments).

The researcher is interested in analyzing the ornaments in *Lapo Batak* in Medan since the ornaments are not just for decorations as advertising, but there are also some interesting meanings behind it, and the researcher would be able to do its social context on how Batak people see their cultural symbols.

B. The Problem of The Study

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulates the problems of the study as follows:

1. What semiotic meaning are in Lapo Batak ornaments culture?
2. How are the cultural values of Lapo Batak ornaments in Medan?

C. Objective of The Study

Based on the research question above, the writer has several objective of the research as follow:

1. To identify the semiotic meaning in Lapo Batak ornaments culture.
2. To elaborate the cultural values of Lapo Batak ornaments in Medan.

D. The Scope of The Study

To avoid an overlapping and misleading discussion, the study was only focused on Batak Toba ornaments in 2 Lapo Batak in Medan Sunggal, namely; RM. Dainang, and RM. Khas Batak Evi with 8 ornaments in total. The study used Barthes's order of signification theory to analyze the data to get the semiotic meaning behind the ornaments.

E. The Significance of The Study

The analysis of this research is expected to be able to give significance for the reader, both theoretical and practical. For theoretical significance, the results of the research are expected to give explanation on how signs portrayed on ornaments in Lapo Batak in Medan. It is also expected to give explanation about how Barthes' order of signification theory can be implied in interpreting signs in Lapo Batak ornaments in Medan.

For practical significance, the results of the research are expected to promote Batak culture and their characteristics not only for Indonesian but also for international. It is also expected to give knowledge about Batak ornaments to people especially Batak people so the cultural heritage will not be vanished.