

**SPIRITUAL VALUES IN ANCIENT ORNAMENTS OF
TJONG A FIE MANSION: A SEMIOTIC STUDY
NILAI SPIRITUAL PADA HIASAN KUNO RUMAH TJONG A FIE: STUDI SEMIOTIKA**

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Abstract

This study has the aim of finding ornaments and the meaning behind the symbols on the ornaments found in the Tjong A Fie Mansion building. In its meaning, the researcher uses the theory of Roland Barthes. This research is a qualitative research, with data collection techniques of observation or field research, documentation, direct and indirect interviews with museum managers and curators as well as staff of Tjong A Fie Mansion and also looking for other sources of information from the internet and some references from previous research. The researcher focuses on providing knowledge about one of the tourism icons of the city of Medan to readers by examining the ornaments that are closely related to the cultural and religious values with semiotic approach adopted by Tjong A Fie as the owner of the building. there is a meaning behind the symbols in every ornament on the Tjong A Fie Mansion building, Bat (Fu), Phoenix (Hong Bird), Dragon (Lung), Qilin, Plum Blossom, Peony Blossom, Bamboo Tree, Fu Lu Shou Symbol, Three-legged Frog, and the last Lantern.

Keywords: Tjong A Fie, Tjong A Mansion, Ornaments, Chinese Culture, Tourism, Semiotics.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan ornamen dan makna di balik simbol-simbol pada ornamen yang terdapat pada bangunan Tjong A Fie Mansion. Dalam pemaknaannya peneliti menggunakan teori Roland Barthes. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi atau penelitian lapangan, dokumentasi, wawancara langsung dan tidak langsung kepada pengelola dan kurator museum serta staf Tjong A Fie Mansion dan juga mencari sumber informasi lain dari internet dan beberapa sumber lainnya referensi dari penelitian sebelumnya. Peneliti fokus memberikan pengetahuan tentang salah satu ikon wisata kota Medan kepada pembaca dengan mengkaji ornamen-ornamen yang erat kaitannya dengan nilai budaya dan agama dengan pendekatan semiotika yang dianut oleh Tjong A Fie selaku pemilik bangunan. Terdapat makna di balik simbol-simbol pada setiap ornamen pada bangunan Rumah Tjong A Fie, Kelelawar (Fu), Phoenix (Burung Hong), Naga (Paru), Qilin, Bunga Plum, Bunga Peony, Pohon Bambu, Simbol Fu Lu Shou, Katak Berkaki Tiga, dan Lentera terakhir.

Kata Kunci: Tjong A Fie, Tjong A Mansion, Ornamen, Budaya Tionghoa, Pariwisata, Semiotika.

Introduction

In everyday life, the author often finds symbols or signs in an object. These symbols are found in an ornament in a building. The symbols in an ornament do not only have value as decoration, but there are several meanings and intentions behind the symbols of an ornament. In linguistics, there is a field of science that focuses on studying and discussing the meaning of a symbol or sign in everyday life, namely semiotics.

Semiotics and semiology are branches of literary research or a scientific approach that studies the relationship between signs (Siregar, 2022: 3). According to Littlejohn, (2009: 53) in his book *Communication Theories of Human Communication* edition 9, Semiotics aims to find out the meanings contained in a sign or interpret these meanings so that it is known how communicators construct messages. In the architecture of a building, we often find ornaments in the form of carvings, paintings, or sculptures that add to the value of beauty or have meaning and purpose behind the ornament. Especially in religious buildings such as Mosques, Temples, Churches, and so on. Rohman (2018) in his article explains that ornament is not merely an empty space decoration without meaning, let alone past ornament motifs. Various forms of ornament actually have several functions. According to Kincaid and Schram (in Sobur, 2013:244), the meaning is sometimes in the form of an association, related thoughts as well as feelings that complement the concept applied (Kusuma, 2017: 200).

There are a lot of ornaments in buildings that can be researched with semiotic studies to find out about the meaning and intent behind the ornaments. . Especially traditional Chinese house buildings always contain spiritual elements in them, both in terms of the architectural form of the building and the carvings or ornaments contained in the houses they build and inhabit based on the beliefs they profess. For example, in the Tjong A Fie Mansion building. The historic building is the home of rich merchants and multi-culturalist conglomerates that very famous and respected by various levels of society in Medan City because of his generous nature, respect for other religions, and have a high leadership spirit. Tjong A Fie is a successful businessman with ethnic Chinese in Medan City. Tjong A Fie as known as Tjung Fong Nam born in Sung Kow Village (Mei Hsien) Kanton, 1860. In 1878 Tjong A Fie followed his brother Tjong Yong Hian migrated to Deli, the Coast of East Sumatera, with only 10 Manchu funds, and arrived in Labuan. (Nurhaiza, 2013: 37).

Therefore, this research will focus on the spiritual value of the ancient ornaments in Tjong A Fie Mansion. The research will focus on several objects such as statues, support poles, and the shape of the roof on the Tjong A Fie Mansion building. In order to develop previous research and add insight to the public that there is historical and spiritual value in this building which is also a silent witness to the development of the city of Medan at that time and evidence of the diverse blend of cultures in the city of Medan which is presented in a Tjong A Fie Mansion building.

Method

In this study, researchers collected data with data collection techniques through field study in the form of observation, documentation, and interviews.

According to Suratno (2016: 36), Field research or observation is a method of collecting data through direct observation or review at the research location. In collecting data with field research technique, the researchers collect the data by visiting Tjong A Fie Mansion to conduct observations, documentation, and interviews.

Result and Discussion

In this chapter, the writer will describe the researcher's findings about ornaments based on the theory of Roland Barthes.

The symbol and meaning contained in ornaments in Tjong A Fie Mansion

The Bat (Fu)

The literal meaning of the word 'Fu' is luck and happiness. The meaning of the first and second 'Fu' characters can be related, if someone gets lucky, they will also feel happiness, and vice versa.



Picture 4.1 The Bat (Fu) Symbol



Picture 4.2 The Bat (Fu) Symbol

Analysis:

Denotativemeaning: The Bat is an Animal. **Connotativemeaning:** Bats are animals which are a symbol for good luck and happiness. **Myth:** In ancient Chinese belief, if there is a bat that enters house, then the house will get good luck.

Hong Birds (Phoenix)

The meaning behind the symbol of Hong bird (Phoenix) according to Chinese beliefs and culture is that the Hong bird can bring good luck and fight evil. The Hong bird or also known as Feng Huang also symbolizes the female emperor, grace, and prosperity. This feminine described creature has broad wings and resembles all the traits and shapes of peacocks and cranes.



Picture 4.3 Hong Birds (Phoenix) Symbol



Picture 4.4 Hong Birds (Phoenix) Symbol

Analysis:

Denotativemeaning:The Hong bird (Phoenix) is a Chinese mythological animal figure.

Connotativemeaning: Hong bird (Phoenix) is one of the four supernatural creatures . **Myth:**According to Chinese beliefs and culture is that the Hong bird can bring good luck and fight evil. The Hong bird or also known as Feng Huang also symbolizes the female emperor, grace, and prosperity.

Dragon (Lung)

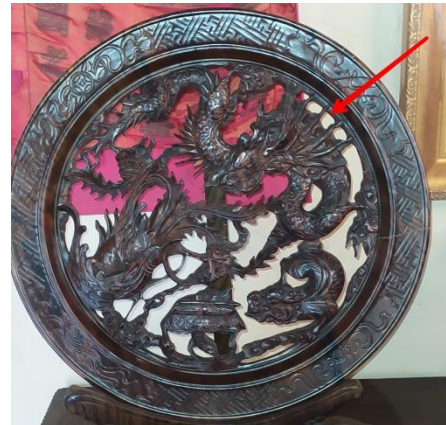
In Chinese culture, the Dragon is a symbol of the elements of goodness and luck. The Dragon symbol is considered to be religious basically serves as a bridge between the human and spiritual worlds. Dragon (Lung) is a myth that lives in the soul of Chinese society for generations and as a way of life in socializing.



Picture 4.5 Dragon (Lung) Symbol



Picture 4.6 Dragon (Lung) Symbol



Picture 4.7 Dragon (Lung) Symbol

Qilin (Chinese Unicorn)

The Qilin creature symbolizes prosperity and peace, never harms plants, animals, even small insects, but sometimes can be aggressive to punish injustice and evil. According to Chinese and Japanese beliefs, the Qilin is a messenger, who will submit to God the wishes of the people to receive a bountiful harvest, to live in prosperity and security. The Qilin symbolizes goodness, prosperity, success, long life, admiration and a successful career for dynastic officers and prominent officials. In Feng Shui, the Qilin which is a symbol of the five virtues symbolizes longevity, celebration, splendor, joy, fame, and wisdom



Picture 4.8 Qilin (Chinese Unicorn) Symbol



Picture 4.9 Qilin (Chinese Unicorn) Symbol

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: Chinese unicorn. **Connotative meaning:** Qilin which is a symbol of the five virtues symbolizes longevity, celebration, splendor, joy, fame, and wisdom. **Myth:** According to Chinese and Japanese beliefs, the Qilin is a messenger, who will submit to God the wishes of the people to receive a bountiful harvest, to live in prosperity and security.

Plum blossom

In Asian culture, plum blossoms are considered a noble flower. Plum blossoms are the epitome of winter. It is one of the first trees to bloom towards the end of winter in Asia, and is considered a flower that offers hope after a long winter. This flower is also seen as a symbol of prosperity, long life, health, and a prosperous life.



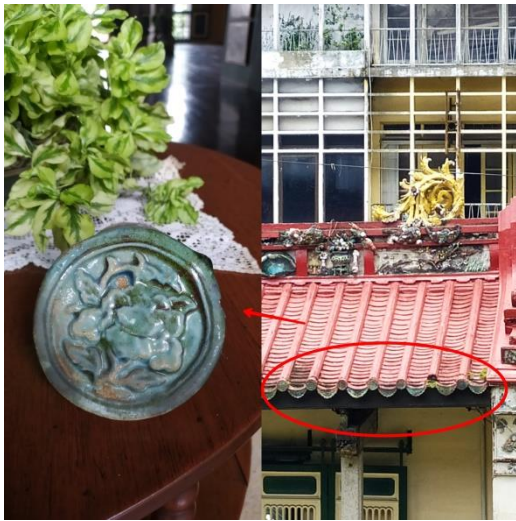
Picture 4.10 Plum Blossom Symbol

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: Flower from China country. **Connotative meaning:** Plum blossoms also symbolize endurance, hope, and offer teachings about impermanence. **Myth:** Representing the five Chinese clans. In Feng Shui, five is also a lucky number because it can represent the five elements namely fire, earth, metal, water and wood.

Peony Blossom

Peony has the meaning of love, happiness, prosperity and good luck in life. Peony also means “shy”.



Picture 4.11 Peony Blossom Symbol



Picture 4.12 Peony Blossom Symbol

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: Flower from China country. **Connotative meaning:** Peony has the meaning of love, happiness, prosperity and good luck in life. **Myth:** In Chinese culture, the peony flower is a flower that signifies beauty, high social status, luxury, and honor.

Bamboo Tree

Chinese people believe in bamboo as a symbol of hockey because of its ability to grow fast, strong and resilient. The Chinese made Bamboo a symbol of firmness and sincerity. While the Indians make Bamboo as a sign or symbol of friendship. Bamboo is often also used as a symbol of the figure of a knight, hero, martial artist and even a weapon in expelling the invaders.

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: A tree. **Connotative meaning:** The Chinese made Bamboo a symbol of firmness and sincerity. **Myth:** Chinese people believe in bamboo as a symbol of hockey because of its ability to grow fast, strong and resilient.



Picture 4.13 Bamboo Tree Symbol

The Symbol of Fu Lu Shou

According to Chinese belief, if you want to improve your quality of life, you must turn to the three Chinese gods of fortune. And they are none other than Fu (福), Lu (禄), and Shou (寿). These three Gods are collectively known as Fu Lu Shou, and each represents a different thing. Fu symbolizes good luck, Lu symbolizes prosperity, and Shou symbolizes longevity. Each deity has its own unique symbol and when placed together, they are said to change lives for the better.



Picture 4.14 Fu Symbol



Picture 4.15 Fu Lu Shou Symbol

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: Three Chinese Gods. **Connotative meaning:** These three Gods are collectively known as Fu Lu Shou, and each represents a different thing. Fu symbolizes good luck, Lu symbolizes prosperity, and Shou symbolizes longevity. **Myth:** According to Chinese belief, if you want to improve your quality of life, you must turn to the three Chinese gods of fortune. Each deity has its own unique symbol and when placed together, they are said to change lives for the better.

Three Legged Frog

The three-legged frog is one of the symbols of feng shui in Chinese cultural beliefs. The three-legged frog or also known as the word bearer of money is a feng shui symbol that symbolizes luck and wealth and is also commonly believed to attract wealth or money.



Picture 4.16 Three Legged Frog Symbol

Analysis:

Denotative meaning: Figure. **Connotative meaning:** The Chinese believe that the three-legged frog can bring more fortune, usually the symbol is placed facing the entrance. **Myth:** In Chinese folklore, the legendary three-legged frog is thought to have the ability to produce gold and silver coins from its mouth. This toad lives on the moon with Liu Hai, the God of Coins.

Lantern

In Chinese culture, lanterns use red because it has the meaning of hope that the New Year will be colored with sustenance, luck, and happiness. The color red also symbolizes prosperity. Lantern is a symbol that is always there and cannot be separated from the traditions of the Chinese community. Lanterns generally symbolize the arrival of the New Year in the Chinese calendar, therefore usually at New Year or Lunar New Year celebrations there are many lanterns that adorn places of worship, public places, and houses of the Chinese community.



Picture 4.17 Lantern



Picture 4.18 Lantern

Analysis:

Denotative meaning:Ornament. **Connotative meaning:**Lanterns generally symbolize the arrival of the New Year in the Chinese calendar, therefore usually at New Year or Lunar New Year celebrations there are many lanterns that adorn places of worship, public places, and houses of the Chinese community.**Myth:**Lanterns symbolize hope and a bright future.The color of the lanterns is generally red which symbolizes prosperity, unity, and sustenance.

Conclusion

From this research, it can conclude that:

- 1.The symbol in ornaments found in the Tjong A Fie Mansion building that studied in this study are Bat (Fu), Phoenix (Hong Bird), Dragon (Lung), Qilin, Plum Blossom, Peony Blossom, Bamboo Tree, Fu Lu Shou Symbol, Three-legged Frog, and the last Lampion.
2. All the ornaments studied in this study have very strong spiritual and cultural values. Because it is not only a decoration that adds to the aesthetic value of the building, all the ornaments studied in this study have meaning and symbolize something related to prayer, Gods, legends, and beliefs of the Chinese community.

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