



Balinese Social Reality in Reconstructing Identity Seen By Oka Rusmini's *Tarian Bumi*: A Semiotic Study of Charles Sanders Peirce

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ABSTRACT: Local wisdom always faces conflicts and problems dealing with new insights provided by “the new world.” Oka Rusmini’s *Tarian Bumi* (The Earth’s Dance) interestingly delivers the topic due to the strict tradition of Hinduism in Bali. This research is qualitative, and the data obtained was presented in the form of a description analyzed by the semiotics theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. The data in question are words, phrases, or clauses containing icons, indexes, and symbols in the novel. The focus of this study is the analysis of the novel’s descriptions of icons, indexes, and symbols. The results in this study show that the Balinese social reality deeply influenced by the caste system could confine an individual in gaining his/her independent perspectives of life. The research highlights the presence of symbols that signify Balinese culture throughout the novel. These symbols encompass various aspects, including language, locations, pronouns, and ceremonial practices, which hold significant meaning within Balinese society.

KEYWORDS: social reality, marriage system, semiotics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literary works mediated by language are a creative art whose subjects are human beings and their social lives. The social reality depicted in literary works is related to and even reveals social life itself. Literary works indirectly portray or advocate for certain values in social reality. Literature cannot be separated from social, cultural, and societal life. Therefore, literary works generally contain social realities presented in human life. One of the various forms of literary works is the novel. A novel that portrays the social reality of society is Oka Rusmini’s *Tarian Bumi*.

The novel *Tarian Bumi* provides a depiction of the social reality of Balinese society, which

experiences various social problems and must adhere to various customary rules. This novel elucidates the dark side of the journey of Balinese women’s lives, rarely found in other literary works. Oka Rusmini’s novel *Tarian Bumi* tells the story of the main character named Luh Sekar. Luh Sekar is an ambitious woman, determined to achieve all her hopes and desires by any means necessary. Her first desire is to become a renowned Joged dancer and be the most beautiful and seductive woman among the dancers. After various efforts, she eventually succeeds in becoming the most beautiful and seductive dancer. Her next desire is to marry a nobleman from the Brahmana caste lineage, and she finally marries a nobleman named Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada. They have a daughter named Dayu Telaga Pidada as the result of their love. Telaga is a beautiful woman from the Brahmana caste, but she falls in love with Wayan Sasmita, a man from the Sudra caste. As a result, Telaga has to leave her noble title behind because she marries a man from a different caste.

The semiotics approach is used to analyze the novel *Tarian Bumi*, encompassing icons, indexes, and symbols. Oka Rusmini’s novel, which portrays the cultural background of Bali, is considered suitable because the scope of semiotics includes social events existing within society and culture, including signs. Semiotics also discusses systems, rules, and conventions that allow these signs to have meaning (Jabrohim, 2014). The semiotic analysis of this novel is expected to enable readers to understand the signs used by the author. The sign system conveyed by the author in the novel, as a work of Indonesian literature, needs to be recognized and understood because each author has their own distinctive characteristics in expressing their ideas and concepts in their works. Based on these considerations, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled “Social Reality in Balinese



Marriage System through Oka Rusmini's Novel *Tarian Bumi: A Semiotic Study of Charles Sanders Peirce* specifically to explore icons, indexes, and symbols to gain a clearer understanding of the caste system and marriage in Bali. This research uses semiotics with the aim of being able to understand the signs in the novel. The system of signs or symbols that the author put in the novel is as a product of Indonesian literature needs to be known and understood because each author has its own characteristics in expressing ideas in their works. The

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Charles Sanders Peirce was an American philosopher, logician, and semiotician who made significant contributions to the field of semiotics, the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. Peirce developed a comprehensive semiotic theory that examined the nature of signs, the process of signification, and the relationship between signs, objects, and interpretants. At the core of Peirce's semiotic theory is the concept of the sign, which he defined as anything that stands for something else in some respect or capacity. He proposed a triadic model of signs, known as the "triangle of meaning" or "semiotic triad," which consists of three essential elements:

1. Representamen (Sign)

The representamen is the physical or perceptual form of the sign. It is the material or sensory aspect that signifies something else. The representamen can take various forms, such as words, images, sounds, gestures, or any other perceptible medium that conveys meaning.

2. Object

The object refers to the thing or concept to which the sign refers. It is the subject matter or referent that the sign represents. The object can be either real and existing or abstract and conceptual.

3. Interpretant

The interpretant is the mental or cognitive effect produced in the mind of the interpreter by the sign. It represents the meaning or understanding that arises from the interaction between the sign and the interpreter. The interpretant can be further interpreted by subsequent signs, leading to a chain of signification. Peirce emphasized that signs are not isolated entities but are part of a dynamic process of meaning-making. He proposed further classifications within the semiotic framework:

author's idea that describes the social reality and problems that exist in the novel.

This research will answer two problem formulations: 1) How does Semiotics describe the marriage system in Bali through the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini? 2) how is the social reality of the Balinese people regarding the existing system? There are several parts in this research: 1) introduction, 2) theoretical framework, 3) methodology, 4) results and discussion, and 5) conclusion.

1. Ground, Object, and Interpretant

Peirce categorized signs based on their relationship to the ground (the basis or foundation of signification), the object (the referent or what the sign stands for), and the interpretant (the understanding or interpretation of the sign). This categorization provides a more detailed analysis of signs within the semiotic framework.

2. Qualisign, Sinsign, and Legisign

Peirce classified signs based on their ground, distinguishing between signs that represent qualities (qualisign), individual instances (sinsign), and general rules or laws (legisign).

3. Rheme, Decision, and Argument

Signs can also be classified based on their interpretant, including signs that convey simple qualities (rheme), signs that involve decision or action (decision), and signs that engage in logical or argumentative reasoning (argument).

4. Icon, Index, and Symbol

Peirce categorized signs based on their relationship to the object, distinguishing between signs that have a similarity or resemblance to the object (icon), signs that have a direct relationship or association with the object (index), and signs that rely on convention or arbitrary agreement to represent the object (symbol).

Peirce's semiotic theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the process of signification and the nature of signs. It offers insights into the complex relationships between signs, objects, and interpreters, highlighting the dynamic nature of meaning creation and interpretation. Peirce's work laid the foundation for further developments in semiotics and has influenced various disciplines, including linguistics, communication studies, cultural studies, and philosophy. This research focuses on the relationship between the object and the sign. Icon and index are the formation of very simple signs, while symbol represents the formation of highly modern signs (Ariffin & Rijal, 2019).



1. Icon

An icon is a sign that shows a resemblance relationship between the sign and its object. Examples of icons include a map and a portrait (Sudjiman & Zoest, 1992). An icon is the connection between the sign and its referent, based on their similarity. It is a natural connection or a resemblance relationship between the sign and its referent. Portraits and maps are considered icons (Sobur, 2016). Icon can involve a relationship of similarity, such as the mention or placement at the beginning or front (as a sign that is considered important) (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). A sign that has a close relationship or similarity with its intended meaning is called an icon. Icon is the connection between the sign and its referent based on "resemblance" between the representamen and its object, whether the object actually exists or not. This connection is a relation of similarity (Jabrohim, 2014).

2. Index

The relationship that emerges is due to the proximity of existence. A compass and a road signpost are examples of indexes (Sudjiman & Zoest, 1992). An index is a sign (representamen) that points to a concept (interpretation) about a specific object based on a causal or contiguous relationship (Faruk, 2012). It is a sign that directly refers to truth or describes a natural relationship between the sign and the signified, which involves a cause-effect relationship. Index is a relationship of existence proximity, for instance, a gloomy face indicates sadness, being reprimanded but not responding

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive-qualitative research. It aims to naturally describe the phenomenon under investigation. Natural in this context means that the targeted phenomenon is described as it is, without any treatment, measurement, or calculation. It produces data in the form of words, that is written or spoken, not in the form of numbers. The gathered data is presented in descriptive form and analyzed based on the theoretical perspective of Charles Sanders Peirce.

The research design is qualitative descriptive, utilizing content analysis techniques. The obtained data is analyzed through descriptive explanations. The data in question can consist of words, phrases, or clauses containing icons, indexes, and symbols in the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini. The focus of this research is the analysis of

indicates arrogance, and thick black smoke billowing indicates a fire (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). A sign that contains a cause-effect relationship with what is signified is called an index. For example, clouds indicate that it will rain (Endraswara, 2013). Index is a cause-effect relationship (Ratna, 2014).

3. Symbol

A symbol is a connection that has been formed conventionally. Nodding can indicate agreement, and linguistic signs are also symbols (Sudjiman & Zoest, 1992). A symbol is a sign in which the relationship between the sign and its object is determined by a conventionally agreed-upon rule. For example, if someone nods their head when asked a question, and this is associated with a convention meaning "answering in the affirmative," then in Peirce's terminology, the symbol is a thirdness (Zoest, 1993).

According to Peirce's concept, a sign that refers to a specific object beyond the context is called a symbol. The relationship between a symbol and its signified is conventional. Its interpretation is based on the agreed-upon convention. (Sobur, 2016). When a relationship has been formed conventionally, the sign belongs to the category of symbol. A sign that encompasses several conventions within society. The relationship between the sign and the object does not show resemblance or proximity but is formed through agreement. For example, bodily gestures as signs to convey specific meanings, specific colors (such as red, white, black, and yellow) signifying certain things, and language (Nurgiyantoro, 2013).

the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini based on a semiotic study through the description of icon, index, and symbol meanings. Describing social reality and the data found are presented in the form of descriptions that are analyzed based on the perspective of Charles Sanders Peirce. The data can include words, phrases, clauses, or excerpted sentences in the form of narration, dialogue, and monologue that incorporate icons, indexes, and symbols.

The data source for this research is Oka Rusmini's novel, specifically *Tarian Bumi* published in 2000 by *Gm Pustaka Utama* with a total of 176 pages. In this study, the data collection techniques employed are documentation, reading, and note-taking. This is a qualitative research study, and all the data obtained will be described based on their original characteristics throughout the data collection



process until completion. According to Miles (2009), this research follows three stages of data analysis, which are: data reduction, data presentation, and data

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The character of Luh Sekar serves as an iconic representation of an ambitious woman who is relentless in pursuing her desires. Luh Sekar is a Sudra woman who possesses lofty dreams. Sekar is a beautiful woman who becomes the center of attention in her dance community. Despite being from the Sudra caste, Sekar highly values aristocratic values. It is said that Luh Sekar always rejects the love of Sudra men. She aims to improve her life by marrying a man from the noble class.

“Apa pun yang akan terjadi dengan hidupku, aku harus menjadi seorang rabi, seorang istri bangsawan. Kalau aku tak menemukan laki-laki itu, aku tak akan pernah menikah!” Suara Luh Sekar terdengar penuh keseriusan. (Tarian Bumi, 2022: 22)”

Luh Sekar's next desire is to become a dancer. She firmly believes that she possesses a unique beauty and talent and wants to prove to everyone that she is capable of being the only dancer endowed with the powers of a hundred dance gods, with distinctive movements that can enliven her village's dance group. Even after Luh Sekar has a child, she fervently hopes that her child will marry a nobleman who is of equal status, and she also wishes for her child to become an exceptionally beautiful dancer.

“sekarang dia ingin buktikan pada masyarakat desanya bahwa dialah satu-satunya penari jaged yang memiliki kekuatan beratus-ratus dewa tari. Sekar sadar tubuhnya indah. (Tarian Bumi, 2022: 26)

The character of Telaga, depicted as a strong female figure, is clearly portrayed in the novel. As she grows older, she strongly despises the processes that occur within her and her life due to the numerous rules that must be adhered to as a woman from the Brahmin caste. No one is capable of defying something that has become her desire, especially after she becomes acquainted with a Sudra man who grows within her heart. This ambition has been instilled in her by her mother.

conclusion and verification.

“kau adalah harapan Meme, Tugeg. Kelak, kau harus menikah dengan laki-laki yang memiliki nama depan Ida Bagus. Kau harus tanam dalam-dalam pesanku ini. Sekarang kau bukan anak kecil lagi. Kau tidak bisa bermain bola lagi. Kau harus mulai belajar menjadi perempuan keturunan brahmana. Menghapal beragam sesaji, juga harus tahu bagaimana harus mengukir janur untuk upacara. Pegang kata-kataku ini, Tugeg. Kau mengerti?” Suara perempuan itu lebih mirip paksaan daripada sebuah nasehat. (Tarian Bumi, 2022: 67)”

Royal Blood is highly revered by Balinese society, especially by the nobility themselves. However, this is not the case for Telaga, who is also a member of the noble class. Telaga never exalts the Royal Blood he possesses. He does not want to live a miserable life due to the burdensome rules of nobility that he must adhere to. Telaga desires to live a happy life according to his own wishes, even if it means sacrificing his noble lineage due to his marriage to Wayan Sasmitha, who comes from the sudra caste, the lowest caste in Balinese culture. Telaga has to abandon the title of "Ida Ayu" and adopt "Luh" as a prefix to his name. Additionally, he must perform the patiwangi ceremony to relinquish his nobility.

“Telaga mulai membuka bajunya. Dia hanya mengenakan kain sebatas dada. Seorang pemangku mengucapkan mantra-mantra. Kaki perempuan tua itu diletrakan pada kepala Telaga, tepat di ubun-ubun. Air dan bunga menyatu. Kali ini, Telaga merasakan air dan bunga tidak bersahabat dengannya. Air menusuk-nusuk tubuhnya, bunga-bunga mengorek lebih dalam lukanya. Sebuah upacara harus dilakukan demi ketenangan keluarganya...(Tarian Bumi, 2007: 174)”

In Oka Rusmini's novel, Tarian Bumi, there are two forms of indices, namely the index of suffering experienced by the character Sekar and the index of misfortune befalling the character Telaga. The index of Sekar's suffering is caused by her marriage to a man from the Brahmana caste, a noble lineage. Sekar believed that this marriage would elevate her and her family's lives, but it turned out differently. After officially becoming the wife of the Brahmana man, Sekar faced numerous sufferings. The most painful aspect she had to endure was the loss of her ability to use the name Ni Luh Sekar. A woman who marries a Brahmana man must change



her name. Sekar had to adapt to being called Jero Kenanga. Luh Sekar also had to leave her family and her usual customs. Her mother tongue had to be polite towards her own child because she was no longer considered equal. Luh Sekar also had to constantly face her harsh and angry mother-in-law.

The index of Telaga's unfortunate fate is depicted after Telaga marries a man from a different caste. Balinese women are bound by customary rules. According to Balinese cultural customs, women from the Brahmana caste are not allowed to marry men from a different caste, especially from the Sudra caste. This event is what caused Telaga's unfortunate life, as she was not accepted as a daughter-in-law. According to Balinese society's beliefs, a Sudra man is prohibited from marrying a Brahmana woman. It would bring bad luck if such a thing were to happen. Likewise, Telaga's life took a turn for the worse after officially marrying a Sudra man, as many misfortunes occurred in her life. Telaga's life changed dramatically; she had to abandon all her customs as a Brahmana woman, and she couldn't even bring a single diamond with her because she married a Sudra man. Shortly after getting married, her husband passed away. This made her mother-in-law even more convinced that Telaga brought misfortune. She also had to deal with a disrespectful sister-in-law.

The novel portrays the life and culture of Bali, presenting numerous terms used by the Balinese community, including everyday language, locations, pronouns, and ceremonial paraphernalia. These symbols hold special meanings and can serve as guiding principles for the Balinese society, all of which are depicted through the Balinese language used in the sentences of this novel. The symbols found in this novel are related to cultural aspects encompassing various elements, such as the use of words guiding the lives of the Balinese community and the artistic traditions that have been passed down through generations. Additionally, specific locations and customs that have existed since ancient times are also part of the symbols of Balinese culture, each carrying their own unique significance.

The Balinese society still highly upholds the norms of ancestral customs and cultural heritage. In this novel, the author extensively describes the traditions and customs that are still prevalent in Bali. Among them is the caste system, which classifies social status based on ancestry. In Bali, there are four castes: Brahmana, Ksatria, Waisya, and Sudra. The

Brahmana caste holds the highest position and is occupied by the noble class. Therefore, individuals with noble titles are respected by the surrounding community. This depiction can be observed in the following quotation:

"Nenek, perempuan yang luar biasa keras. Dia adalah seorang putri Bangsawan. Sejak kecil nenek selalu bahagia. Apa pun yang dimilikinya selalu terpenuhi. Ayah nenek seorang pendeta yang mempunyai banyak sisya, orang-orang yang setia dan hormat pada griya. Otomatis sejak mudanya nenek punya kedudukan yang lebih tinggi dan terhormat di banding dengan perempuan-perempuan lain di griya. (Tarian Bumi, 2022: 14)."

The caste system in Bali also significantly influences the determination of life partners in the institution of marriage. Marriage can only occur if the individuals belong to the same caste. Women from the Brahmana caste are required to marry men from the Brahmana caste as well. In contrast, men are free to choose their life partners from any caste. However, if a marriage occurs between a woman from the Brahmana caste and a man from a lower caste, she will be disowned and ostracized by her family as it is believed to bring bad luck. This depiction can be observed in the following quotation:

"Berkali-kali tiang berkata, menikah dengan perempuan Ida Ayu pasti mendatangkan kesialan. Sekarang anakku mati! Wayan tidak mau mengerti. Ini bukan cerita dongeng. Ini kebenaran. Kalau sudah begini jadinya aku harus bicara apalagi!" Luh Gumbreg memukul dadanya. Menatap Telaga tidak senang. (Tarian Bumi, 2022: 152)."

This novel narrates the struggle of a Balinese woman in pursuit of happiness and her encounters with the social and cultural realities around her. Telaga is a portrayal of a Balinese woman's rebellion against oppressive cultural practices in her own unique way. She lives her life amidst the threshold of acceptance and non-conformity, between surrender and freedom. However, in life, there is never absolute freedom, and the same goes for Telaga.

The Balinese society is known for its caste system, which categorizes social classes based on birth. This system influences the institution of marriage and various cultural norms that actually become attractions for the Balinese community. Although fundamentally everyone is born equal and with the same rights, it feels unjust when a society has a



social class categorization like the caste system in Bali. The Brahmana caste, the highest caste in Bali, is always regarded with respect, while those born in the Sudra caste, the lowest caste in Bali, are expected to constantly honor and serve those born as royalty. Telaga and Luh Sekar depict the struggle of socialist feminism in this novel. Socialist feminism understands the oppression of women by specific social groups or classes. They act against customs, particularly in the institution of marriage, hoping to find happiness in their chosen paths despite the significant risks involved. Telaga is born into the Brahmana caste and marries Wayan Sasmita, a Sudra man. On the other hand, Luh Sekar, who is born into the Sudra caste, attempts to marry a Brahmana man to gain honor and prestige. It is clear that they struggle and strive to adapt to their new ways and seek acceptance within their new families as well.

V. CONCLUSION

In the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini, the social reality of the Balinese marriage system is depicted, highlighting the influence of the caste system and its impact on individuals' lives and choices. The caste system in Bali categorizes individuals into different social classes based on their birth, resulting in a hierarchy that affects the possibilities and limitations of marriage.

The novel portrays the struggles faced by characters like Telaga and Luh Sekar, who challenge the norms and expectations of their respective castes in pursuit of happiness and personal fulfillment. Telaga's marriage to a man from a lower caste defies societal conventions, leading to her being rejected and ostracized by her own family. Similarly, Luh Sekar's desire to marry a Brahmana man is driven by her aspiration for honor and prestige.

The social reality presented in the novel reflects the complexities and tensions within Balinese society. While the caste system may serve as a cultural heritage and a source of identity, it also perpetuates inequalities and restricts individual freedom in choosing life partners. The characters' struggles highlight the conflicts between societal expectations and personal desires, shedding light on the challenges faced by individuals who seek to challenge or navigate the confines of the caste-based marriage system.

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