



Interpretation of the Ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi, Sungai Penuh using Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

The Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is one of the oldest mosques in Jambi Province. The mosque was built on June 1, 1874 and completed at the turn of the 20th century. The mosque not only has interesting architecture but is also covered by various unique ornaments that are not only as decorations but also have symbolic meaning behind its creation. This study aims to analyze the symbolic meaning of the Masjid Agung High Cottage Ornaments using the abbreviation Charles Sanders Pierce Semiotics. The results showed that the ornamental meaning of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is a symbol of the traditional order and system in Kerinci. One of them is the takah tigo motif which is a customary system in Kerinci known as *sko ngah takah tigo* (three levels), consisting of *Sko Depati*, *Sko Ninik Mamak* and *Sko Anak Laki*. This system is a norm about the implementation of the king's customary order (*depati*) in maintaining and managing government in the Kerinci region.

Keywords: *Symbolic Meaning; Ornament of the Masjid Agung the High Lodge; Semiotics of Charles Sanders Pierce*

Introduction

Indonesia is home to many types of cultures that are the result of the diversity of ethnic groups in it. The culture of each region is represented through various objects. Traditional houses and buildings are one example of a variety of cultural objects as a source of identity for an area. There are traditional houses and buildings in almost every corner of the archipelago. Most of these traditional houses have a history based on their shape or ornaments or decorations that cover all or part of the exterior. Ornament is the application of decoration to a product that has the function of beautifying the decorated object (Widagdo, 2022: 03). This is also similar in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi Kerinci which still stands firmly until now precisely in Sungai Penuh City and is also a cultural heritage in Jambi Province.

The Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi has an ornament that almost covers the entire exterior. People often do not realize that the ornaments on this traditional building have an implied message and meaning because they are so fascinated by its beauty alone. Such ornaments convey not only a message, but also an ideal that represents the beliefs of its owner. The Kerinci community believes that they should not carelessly present or apply certain ornamental themes to their homes, furniture, or clothing because of the

iconic values or symbols that are present in the form of these ornamental patterns. As explained by Gustami (2000: 190), mastery of ornaments in traditional houses shows the refinement of classical aesthetic achievement techniques. The overlapping tendrils, the series of interlocking panel constructions, the harmonious completion of planes and compositions, are a reflection of the extremely high technical and aesthetic capabilities of the craftsmen in monumental works of art, it reflects a comfortable and quiet life and gives rise to sentiments of pride, elegance and majesty. All this is the result of mastery of the techniques and aesthetics of craftsmen, as well as their ability to realize creative concepts.

A message is often difficult to explain verbally and represent through symbols, whether in the form of motion, music, or imagery, because this symbolization process begins with emotions or forces that are difficult to express in physical reality. Therefore, ancient ornaments and decorations not only produce something aesthetically pleasing, but also communicate the message, high ideals, social status of the owner, and even magical abilities. Soedarso (1990: 25) states that: Indonesian artists were never as interested in capturing natural or naturalist forms as our eyes see them but further into it, it turned out that they were more interested in describing something deeper in nature. The born form is always a visible symbol of what is invisible or analogous to the similarity of its nature.

The decoration of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is represented by carving or painting it on the surface of the building. Tendrils and geometric motifs are various ornamental motifs in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi. The representation of these themes has been arranged and arranged in such a way that it has a distilled form and proportions that are different from the original. The shape of the objects and motifs displayed are symbols that must be understood more deeply in their meaning and philosophy. The motifs contained in the ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi are made not only to beautify but also have symbolic and philosophical connotations, because they reflect the ideals and expectations of the previous community.

In order for Kerinci traditional ornaments to continue to exist, people must realize the important meaning behind them. As a result of the current preference of Kerinci people towards houses with modern designs and the general public's misunderstanding of the variety of peculiarities of traditional Kerinci ornaments that are considered outdated, so that Kerinci traditional ornaments are increasingly difficult to find and replaced with more modern ornaments. So the research question is what is the symbolic meaning of the ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi?

Research Methods

This research method uses a qualitative type of research. The data in this study was sourced from ornaments contained in Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi. Data collection tools and techniques in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation studies. In analyzing the meaning of ornaments found in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi using Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic approach.

The description of the symbolic meaning of ornaments in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi, here uses the triadic semiotic approach (three basic elements) of Charles Sander Pierce, namely representation [sign = T; something], object [O; something in human cognition], and interpretation [I; process of interpretation]. According to Pierce, in every human life is not far from signs, because signs have meaning. Then meaning has a message in communicating with the audience visual objects.

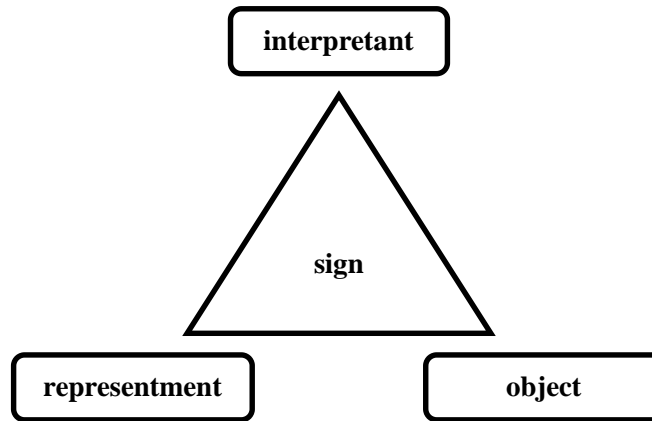


Fig.1. Pierce's Semiotic Triangle

Discussion and Results

1. History of Pondok Tinggi Grand Mosque

Islam has always been a part of life for the Malay population. Jambi is one of the cultural areas of Malay descent that has deep Islamic origins. There are several old mosques that remain silent witnesses of da'wah da'wah in the region. The Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is one such building.



Fig.2. Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi

This mosque can be found on the side of Jalan Depati Payung in Pondok Tinggi village in Sungai Penuh City in Jambi Province. In the context of Islamic history near Mount Kerinci, the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is a very important historical relic. On June 1, 1874, several people worked together to build this place of worship, both men, women, the elderly, and children. It was built precisely on a Wednesday, which was considered by the local community at that time to be the right day to start construction of the house of worship.

The Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi which became the aspiration of the local community was finally completed at the turn of the 20th century. This historic building has been preserved to this day and continues to be a source of pride for the community. In fact, the image of this mosque can be seen engraved on the emblem of the Sungai Full city government.

It is common knowledge that this mosque was once only known as Masjid Pondok Tinggi. This building was visited by the Vice President of Indonesia at that time, Mr. Mohammad Hatta in 1953. The Indonesian Proclamation proposed that it be added as a grand mosque because of its grandeur. Since then, the name of the mosque has been changed to reflect its status as the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi.

2.Ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi

Art is a necessity for humans to achieve perfection in life, both spiritual and spiritual. To meet these needs, various efforts are made, ranging from beautifying themselves or bodies, equipment and objects of daily life, to residential buildings and the surrounding environment. History shows that the values of beauty are not only needed by modern societies with established lifestyles, but also by traditional and even primitive societies.

Art that appears in traditional society certainly has a different purpose and background from art that appears in modern society. Sometimes, art is used for religious reasons and traditional ceremonies rather than for beauty. Likewise, its embodiment is sometimes not beautiful when compared to contemporary art concepts.

Art is integral to traditional buildings. In the past, the traditional people of Kerinci were also involved in art, one of which was by decorating their buildings with various carving motifs. One of the art traditions of the Kerinci community is carving in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi. The carvings, which can still be seen today, were made in simple forms and placed on certain parts of the building, not complementing all its elements.

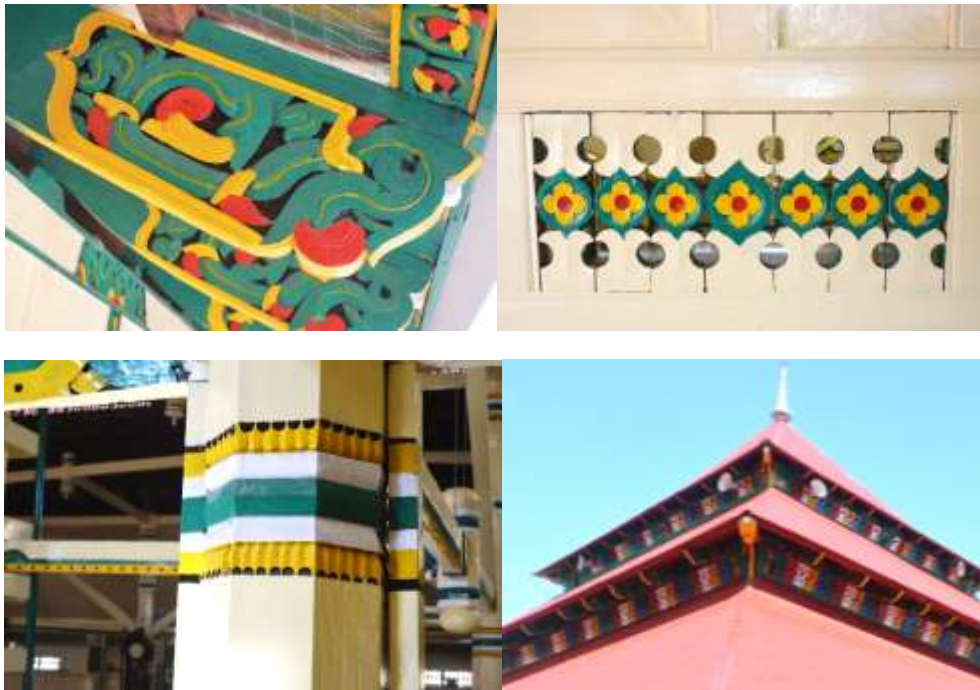


Fig.3. Some Ornaments on the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi

After the entry of Islam, the development of carving and ornaments became more rapid in the Kerinci area, motifs on building carvings not only implied the value of customs but also with consideration of norms in Islam, one of which is prohibited from depicting motifs with animal and human objects, so that collaboration between customary and Islamic norms becomes a unity. No less important factor in the development of carving and ornamentation in Kerinci is the influence and support of

traditional leaders, with the implication of symbolic meanings in each carving. Similarly, the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is decorated with carvings both exterior and interior of the mosque, the top and bottom. Carvings on parts of the mosque include columns, front and inner walls, terraces or palasa, entrances, windows, *alang* and rafters.

The ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi consist of plant shapes, geometric patterns, and a combination of both. The application of carvings on the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi shows the sensitivity and technical expertise of the Kerinci community about aesthetics. The people of Kerinci at that time were able to create and live the values of beauty, as well as techniques that emerged through the creation and application of ornaments in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi. As explained by Gustami (2000: 190), mastery of ornaments in traditional houses shows the refinement of classical aesthetic achievement techniques. The overlapping tendrils, the series of interlocking panel constructions, the harmonious completion of planes and compositions, are a reflection of the extremely high technical and aesthetic capabilities of the craftsmen in monumental works of art, it reflects a comfortable and quiet life and gives rise to sentiments of pride, elegance and majesty. All this is the result of mastery of the techniques and aesthetics of craftsmen, as well as their ability to realize creative concepts.

The motifs carved on the surface of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi not only function as construction and aesthetics, but also as the identity, social status of the building, and practical function of the building. Compared to other traditional Kerinci buildings, the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is said to have the best and most decoration because it is a place of worship that is considered noble and sacred.

The results of observations in the field show that the layout of ornaments in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi is strictly regulated, its placement adjusts the significance of the meaning of the motif. The motifs are located at the top, middle, and bottom which cannot be reversed due to the significance they contain. Some ornamental motifs are applied to relatively high portions, while other motifs are applied to relatively low portions. The sculpting of ornamental motifs is modified in proportion to the area of their placement. Decorative motifs in the form of tendrils are affixed to the horizontal plane. Placing and positioning ornamental motifs according to custom is believed to bring good luck.

Various other factors also affect the ethics of the layout of the ornaments, because the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi and its carvings do not stand alone, but develop side by side with elements of culture, customs, and norms of the Kerinci community. As Soengeng Toekio explained, ornamentation is very important in craft. Ornamentation is basically dressage applied to an object to achieve elegance and elegance. The main function of ornament is as a means to beautify or elevate a work. But one or two others have symbolic value or contain certain meanings, (Toekio, 1987: 10). In addition to its aesthetic value, these carvings represent the customs, culture, and religion of the people who own them.

In terms of color, based on literature findings, it shows that the carvings of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi did not always use color elements. This may be due to several reasons. One of them may be because the cultivation of carvings with colors was not yet common in the Kerinci community at that time, or maybe because the Kerinci people did not know the understanding of color itself at all (Zakaria, 1984: 78).

However, according to the Kerinci Tourism and Culture Office document archive, the colored carvings are basically based on the use of striking colors, which complement the living sources that already exist in the Kerinci tradition. A knowledge system about color taste has long existed in Kerinci, with colors selected from natural ingredients then processed into core colors preferred by the people of Kerinci. The following colors are used in Kerinci ornamental art: red, white, yellow, black, blue, and green.

In the ornaments of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi at this time have been given colors, the dominating colors consist of colors that tend to be primary such as red, yellow, green, white and black.

This is due to the ability and knowledge of the people at that time to create and use these colors. In addition, it is also adapted to various perspectives and norms that apply in society. In addition, color also serves to create and strengthen the shape of the motif. Here are the ornaments found in the grand mosque of pondok tinggi based on the motif:



Fig.4. Kluk paku kacang belimbing motif

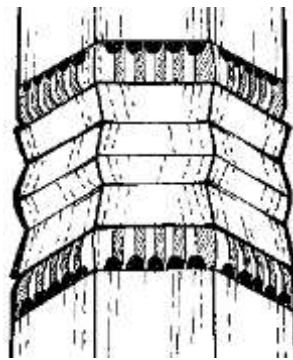


Fig.5. Takah tigo motif

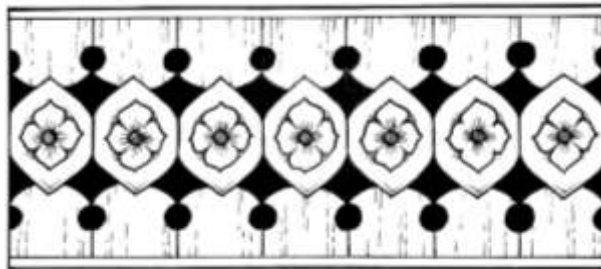


Fig.6. Tampok nio motif

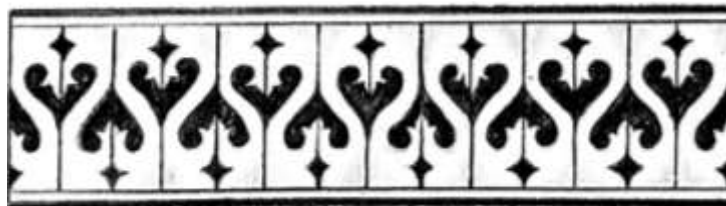


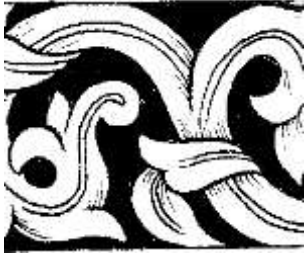
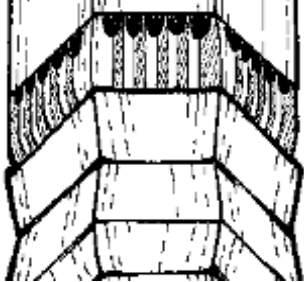
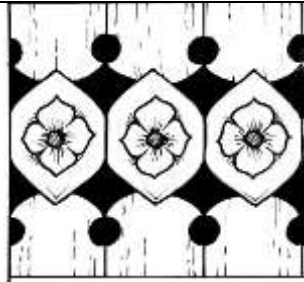
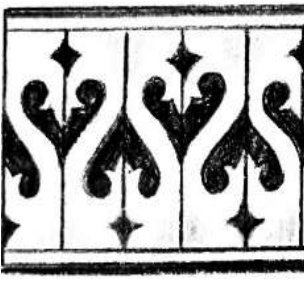
Fig.7. S motif

3. Ornamental Meaning of Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi

The description of the symbolic meaning of ornaments in the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi, here uses the triadic semiotic approach (three basic elements) of Charles Sander Pierce, namely representation

[sign = T; something], object [O; something in human cognition], and interpretation [I; process of interpretation]. According to Pierce, in every human life is not far from signs, because signs have meaning. Then meaning has a message in communicating with the audience visual objects.

Table 1. Representation of Symbolic Meaning 4 Ornamental Motifs of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi (Charles Sander Pierce Semiotics)

Sign (T)	Object (O)	Interpretation (I)
	<i>Kluk Paku Kacang Belimbing Motif</i>	It is a symbol of a detailed proverb about the responsibility of a man, namely <i>kluk paku kacang belimbing, anak dipangku kemenakan dibimbing</i>
	<i>Takah Tigo Motif</i>	It is a symbol of the Kerinci customary system known as Denal with the term <i>ske ngan takah tigo</i> .
	<i>Tampok Nio Motif</i>	It is a symbol of the closeness of the Kerinci community to its nature
	<i>S Motif</i>	It is a symbol of Balance.

a. Kluk Paku Kacang Belimbing Motif

This motif has the meaning of describing the philosophy of the Kerinci people: *kluk paku bean belimbing, anak dipangku kemenakan dibimbing*. The term "*anak dipangku kemenakan dibimbing*", has the meaning that adult men have two duties, namely *anak dipangku* means that the biological child is full responsibility or as the main priority, while *kemenakan dibimbing* must receive guidance and as a second

periority. Therefore, this motif is applied to house poles and pole clamps because of their important role in building construction: the poles serve as foundations, and the clamps serve as locks or wall binders, and all wall slabs come off when the pole clamps open. So that adult men should have enough wisdom and knowledge so that the foundation is strong to become a leader starting from their own family.

b. Takah Tigo Motif

This motif is found in many other traditional buildings in Kerinci such as the Umah Larik building, Umah Gedang and the traditional Rice Room. According to Nofrial in his book *Rumah Etnik Kerinci – Architecture and Carving* it is explained that *the takah tigo motif* is a symbol of the traditional order and system in Kerinci called *ske ngah takah tigo* (three levels), consisting of *Sko Depati*, *Sko Ninik Mamak* and *Sko Anak jantan*. This system is a norm about the implementation of the customary order of the king (*depati*) in maintaining and managing the government in the Kerinci area. Terms in Kerinci custom: *bediri umah sekato teganai*, *bediri luhah sekato depati*, *bediri alam sekato raja*. The meaning of this term is that the return of decisions is regulated from the highest government of its division to the family (Nofrial, 2016: 212-214). So that the *tigo takan motif* is a symbol of the hierarchy of the three traditional levels starting from *depati*, *ninik mamak* to *teganai* who have their respective authority and duties. *Sko Depati* is the king or representative of the king who governs the government, *Sko Ninik Mamak* is the person who is exalted, flattered, and dituakan who governs their respective regions and *Sko Anak Jantan* is the nephew and son (*teganai*) who manages the household and *anak batino*. Decision making must know the three *ske* according to the level and level of the problem. If the problem in the house cannot be solved by the *ske anak jantan* it will be taken up to *the ninik mamak ske*, if it has not found a bright spot it will be raised again to the *depati ske*. Vice versa, in the delivery of messages and decisions, the *depati ske* will first pass on to the *ske ninik mamak* and will be handed down again to his people with the intermediary of the *teganai ske*.

c. Tampok Nio Motif

It is a coconut fruit motif that has undergone styling of shape. According to the father, this motif is also found in many other traditional buildings in the Kerinci area, namely in the buildings of *Umah Gedang*, *Umah Lahik*, and Kerinci Tradisional Rice Room. Based on Mr. Hazril's narration (interview 03 May 2023), this motif is a symbol that the people of Kerinci are very familiar with their natural environment, both flora and fauna because the Kerinci area is an area that is almost all surrounded by jungles and mountains. So that nature plays an important role in the lives of the Kerinci community. Society at first adapts to nature, then uses tools and begins to interpret nature. The Kerinci people in ancient times were also people who were adept at brave the wilderness. So this is one of the foundations for the use of flora motifs in their traditional buildings, one of which is the *tampok nio* or coconut *tampuk* motif. Coconut fruit is the fruit most often used by the people of Kerinci because starting from the tip of the leaf to the root can be used both for feed and food purposes.

d. S Motif

This motif is most often seen in bronze vessels left by the Kerinci community which are stored in the National Museum-Jakarta. The Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi also has the same ornamental variety, namely the S motif in the middle of the door and the top wall of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi which also functions as an air vent. Judging from the pattern of nail niches in this motif, although they are on different sides and in opposite directions, they are united in straight bars, which shows that the oppositions that exist in the universe are united. There is day and night, there are men and women, there are good, of course, there are also bad and it is a balance of the universe. so it becomes the role of individual policy to choose what and how the role will be.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The carving art of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi was influenced by the religion and belief system of the Kerinci people at that time, the ancient people who lived in the Kerinci area were mostly Muslim, so the variety of ornaments used in traditional homes and mosques did not contain fauna (animal) or human motifs. This is due to the fact that Islamic law forbids drawing and depicting humans and animals. The carved forms of this mosque are in the form of geometric motifs and plants that have been distilled in shape. From the findings of researchers identified the variety of ornaments contained in this mosque consisting of 4 motifs which were then spread in each area of the mosque. The ornamental variety consists of *kluk paku kacang belimbing motif*, *takah tigo motif*, *tampok nio motif* and *S motif*.

Not only as decoration, of course, this variety of ornamental ornaments has a symbolic meaning that underlies it. To get the meaning of ornamental varieties The pumpkin mask uses the triadic semiotic approach (three basic elements) of Charles Sander Peirce, namely representation [sign = T; something], object [O; something in human cognition], and interpretation [I; the process of interpretation].

The results of the analysis show that almost all ornamental varieties of the Masjid Agung Pondok Tinggi have meanings derived from the beliefs and customary systems of the Kerinci people. The *kluk paku kacang belimbing motif* is a symbol of the unwritten norm of the Kerinci community which is known as the proverb *kluk paku kacang belimbing, anak dipangku kemenakan dibimbing* meaning that the child is the top priority while the nephew is the second priority, this is a form of responsibility of a man. The *takah tigo motif* is a symbol of the traditional system of the Kerinci people known as *ske ngah takah tigo*, consisting of *Ske Depati*, *Ske Ninik Mamak* and *Ske Anak Male*. This system is a norm about the implementation or delivery of messages from the king (*depati*) in maintaining and regulating order in areas in Kerinci. The *tampok nio motif* is a symbol of the familiarity of the Kerinci people with nature, because the Kerinci people not only use nature but also learn from nature. The *S motif* is symbolic of the balance of opposition.

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