

Exploring Madurese Cultural Symbols in the Film *Sangkolan Kona*: A Semiotic Analysis Based on Roland Barthes

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Abstract: This research explores how cultural and moral values are represented in the local Madurese film *Sangkolan Kona* using a semiotic analysis approach. The growing role of regional films in shaping cultural identity and promoting local wisdom serves as a critical context for this study. The objective is to uncover embedded signs and symbols that convey cultural norms, ethical values, and social messages within the film's narrative and visual elements. This qualitative research employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth to decode the layers of meaning in selected scenes and dialogues. Data were collected through documentation and textual analysis of the film, followed by interpretative categorization. The findings reveal that *Sangkolan Kona* contains strong representations of Madurese values such as familial loyalty, communal solidarity, respect for elders, and moral accountability, expressed through culturally specific signs such as traditional sarongs, local rituals, and idiomatic expressions. These elements not only construct a distinctive cultural identity but also promote ethical reflection among audiences. The study concludes that regional films like *Sangkolan Kona* serve as effective communicative tools in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting moral values across generations.

Keywords: *Sangkolan Kona* Film, Sarong Culture, Moral Values, Madurese Society.

Introduction

In the modern era, films have evolved into a highly influential mass communication medium in global society, including in Indonesia. Films are no longer just a form of entertainment but have become a space for cultural expression, ideology, as well as an effective medium for conveying social and moral messages (Leliana, Ronda, & Lusianawati, 2021). The combination of visual and audio elements in films can create an immersive experience, allowing viewers not only to see but also to feel and understand the social realities portrayed (Effendy, 2020).

In the context of media and communication studies, films are seen as cultural texts that embed ideology and specific meaning constructions. Hall (1980) emphasized that every media text involves encoding and decoding processes, which can be analyzed in-depth using a semiotic approach. One important figure in semiotics is Roland Barthes, who introduced three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Barthes' approach is particularly relevant for analyzing representations in films, including the cultural and moral symbols embedded in the narrative and visual elements (Mandaru, Nafie, & Lada, 2022).

The rise of local films that highlight regional culture has become a form of resistance against the dominance of popular culture and, at the same time, serves as a medium for preserving local identity. Local films play a significant role in documenting and socializing cultural values that are gradually eroding over time, including those within Madurese society (Wibowo, A., & Marzuki, 2020; Yogie Alontari, 2022). In this context, the film *Sangkolan Kona* stands as a cinematic representation that showcases the sarong culture as a symbol of the Madurese people's cultural identity.

The sarong culture in Madura is not only related to traditional clothing but also reflects social values such as simplicity, honor, solidarity, and religious obedience (Hidayat, D. H., Yulianto, B., & Savitri, 2023). The sarong becomes part of a cultural practice rich in symbolic meaning, both socially and spiritually. Unfortunately, these values have increasingly been sidelined due to modernization and globalization, particularly among the younger generation who are more exposed to digital culture and consumerism (Fajrin, M. N., & Murtadho, 2020).

The *Sangkolan Kona* film attempts to reconstruct these meanings through a visual medium that portrays the local reality of Madura. Through its narrative and the scenes depicted, the film reintroduces the cultural values embedded in the daily lives of the people, particularly the use of the sarong as a cultural symbol. This aligns with (Barker, R., & Gaut, 2009; Chris Barker, 2018).

Further literature supporting the importance of a semiotic approach in film analysis is provided by research conducted by (Mandaru et al., 2022; Pamungkas, Mandaru, & Nafie, 2023), which investigates film as a construction of social meaning through implicit cultural symbols. This study highlights how signs in films have the power to shape social perceptions, including the moral values conveyed by characters or the story's setting.

Research by (Nugroho, 2019) and (Prasetya, 2019) also emphasizes that cultural representation in local films often contains symbolic forms that are not only informative

but also normative, subtly embedding moral values and teachings. This needs to be critically examined to avoid oversimplifying the complex nature of local cultures.

Given the importance of film in representing culture and conveying moral messages, Barthes' semiotic approach becomes an appropriate analytical tool for understanding the meaning structure in *Sangkolan Kona*. By analyzing the visual and narrative signs in the film, researchers can uncover how cultural and moral meaning constructions are formed and communicated to the audience.

Thus, this research not only contributes to the study of film and cultural communication but also plays a role in preserving local values that are threatened by the tide of modernization. Through films, cultural messages can be packaged aesthetically and effectively conveyed to younger generations, ensuring that these values remain alive and relevant.

This research aims to answer three main questions: (1) How are cultural and moral values represented in *Sangkolan Kona*? (2) How are symbols and signs used to convey Madurese cultural messages? (3) How can film serve as an effective medium for preserving and revitalizing cultural and moral values?

Methodology

In this study, the author discusses and describes the methods used in managing and analyzing data from the *Sangkolan Kona* film. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, which was chosen because it can describe and reveal cultural and moral meanings hidden in symbols, scenes, and dialogues in the film. Qualitative research is a method used to examine objects in natural conditions (Abdussamad, 2021; B.Bungin, n.d.; Moleong, 2017) With this method, the author will collect data using certain techniques, which are then analyzed to understand how cultural and moral values are represented in the film.

This research method emphasizes the discovery of new concepts and knowledge related to cultural representation in film media. The facts in this study are dynamic according to the cultural context being studied. The data collected in this study are not in the form of numbers, but in the form of words, pictures, and film scenes that represent certain meanings. Therefore, this study uses a descriptive approach, with analysis based on narrative structures and visual symbols contained in the film.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used in this study are as follows:

1. Observation, conducted by watching directly and observing scenes in each scene, dialogue, gesture in the *Sangkolan Kona* film. Furthermore, capturing scene clips that are considered to represent culture and then analyzing them using established methods.
2. Documentation, conducted by collecting data and reviewing various literature that is considered relevant to the research object so that it can be used as argumentation and reference material such as books, newspapers, journals, the internet and other sources that can increase the researcher's insight.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted by observing signs that represent cultural meaning in the *Sangkolan Kona* film. Observations were conducted by watching films through the Youtube application and capturing (screenshots) in the form of scenes, dialogues, gestures, symbols, icons, which were considered to represent cultural meaning (Kriyantono, 2006; Marcel Danesi, 2018). Furthermore, the findings obtained will be analyzed using Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotics.

By using this method and approach, this research is expected to contribute to the study of cultural representation in films, as well as help filmmakers and film lovers to better understand the cultural and moral messages contained in cinematic works (Leliana et al., 2021; Mandaru et al., 2022; Pamungkas et al., 2023)

Result and Discussion

This study analyzes a short film entitled *Sangkolan Kona* produced by the Film, Television, and Media Studies Program (FIK) of KH. Bahauddin Mudhary University (UNIBA) Madura. This film highlights the culture of sarongs as part of the original cultural heritage of the Madurese people, with the aim of conveying a message about the importance of preserving this culture, especially among the younger generation of Madurese. The film is set in two filming locations located in Sumenep Regency, East Java, and reflects the life and traditions of the Madurese people, with an emphasis on the use of sarongs in various aspects of daily life. The shooting and selection of these locations aim to depict the authenticity of Madurese culture, while introducing the beauty of nature and the life of the Madurese people to the audience.

Faridatul Habibah, the film's scriptwriter, explained that the film was made with the hope of inspiring the younger generation to remain proud and preserve the sarong culture, which is an inseparable part of the Madurese people's identity. In the process of making this film, the author attempted to combine visual and narrative elements that show how the sarong is not just clothing, but also a symbol of honor, pride, and tradition in the daily lives of the Madurese people. The *Sangkolan Kona* film is expected to not only be a means of entertainment, but can also function as an educational tool that reminds the younger generation of the importance of maintaining and continuing local cultural values that are increasingly being eroded by the development of the times. Thus, this film has the potential to strengthen cultural awareness among Madurese youth, as well as being a means to introduce Madurese culture to a wider audience.

Semiotic Analysis of the Film *Sangkolan Kona*

The semiotic analysis of the film *Sangkolan Kona* was conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, which focuses on the relationship between the sign, object, and interpretant. This film conveys a strong cultural message, particularly regarding values related to the *sarong* culture as a symbol of Madurese identity. In this analysis, we identify both visual and verbal signs found in the film and relate them to the cultural and moral context intended by the filmmakers.

1. Visual Signs: The Sarong as a Cultural Symbol

In this film, the sarong is not only a garment but also a sign that embodies cultural meaning and identity. According to Peirce's semiotics, the sarong serves as the representamen (the sign), which relates to the object, namely the Madurese culture itself—encompassing traditions, moral values, and the social system of Madurese society. The sarong is shown in various contexts throughout the film, such as in traditional celebrations, ceremonies, or daily activities, demonstrating that it is more than just attire—it is a symbol of honor, dignity, and pride.

For example, in scenes where characters wear the sarong during traditional gatherings, the sarong functions to signify unity, kinship, and attachment to ancestral values. This scene emphasizes that the sarong is not merely a physical garment but a symbol of emotional and cultural connection to the Madurese community.

2. Verbal Signs: Dialogue and Narration

In *Sangkolan Kona*, the characters' dialogues serve as verbal signs that reinforce the message of preserving local culture. These dialogues act as verbal representamens, connecting the audience to the intended cultural object. For instance, a line from the main character emphasizes the importance of wearing a sarong as part of one's identity and as a form of respect for tradition. Through its language, the film invites viewers to become more aware of the noble values within Madurese culture.

One significant quote analyzed comes from Faridatul Habibah, the screenwriter, who states that the film aims to deliver a message so that young Madurese generations do not forget the sarong culture. This highlights that the film's dialogue and narration are not merely storytelling tools but also instruments for embedding deeper cultural meanings in the minds of the audience.

3. Interpretant: The Meaning Constructed by the Audience

The interpretant is the result of the audience's interpretation of the signs present in the film. Viewers construct meaning from the visual and verbal signs based on their cultural knowledge, personal experiences, and values. In this context, the sarong as a visual sign may be interpreted as a symbol of cultural strength and local pride that must be preserved. Viewers might also interpret the film's message as a call to return to respecting and maintaining traditions in a modern era increasingly influenced by globalization.

These interpretations may vary depending on the viewer's background. For Madurese audiences, the sarong might be directly linked to their ethnic and social identity, while for viewers from outside Madura, it could be seen as a symbol of rich culture that deserves to be introduced to younger generations.

4. Semiotic Theory in *Sangkolan Kona*

The film also showcases various elements that highlight the relationship between symbol and meaning in local culture. The use of the sarong as a symbol in this film reflects Peirce's semiotic theory, which posits that every sign has a close connection to the object it represents, as well as to the interpretant that arises within individuals or groups observing the sign. In this film, the sarong becomes a representamen that signifies the continuity of Madurese culture, where the object is

local culture and values, and the interpretants range from cultural awareness to pride in ancestral heritage.

Discussion

The film *Sangkolan Kona* is a work that highlights the cultural and moral values embedded in the lives of the Madurese people, with a primary focus on the sarong culture as a symbol of cultural identity. This discussion will outline how the film successfully conveys cultural messages through in-depth semiotic techniques, and its role in raising awareness of the importance of preserving local culture in the face of modernization. Through its use of semiotic techniques, *Sangkolan Kona* also functions as a tool to express and convey deeper cultural meanings that can be read and interpreted in various ways by different viewers. The use of the sarong in the film carries a more complex meaning than merely a visual representation—it also serves as a medium to connect the audience with broader cultural messages.

1. Representation of Cultural and Moral Values in *Sangkolan Kona*

Sangkolan Kona represents the cultural and moral values of the Madurese community through the central symbol of the sarong, which in the local context functions not only as traditional clothing but also as a marker of identity, social ethics, and intergenerational relationships. The sarong appears in various social activities such as rituals, family interactions, and as a symbol of maturity and honor. This representation aligns with the concept of cultural representation as proposed by (Johnson, 2006), where culture is understood and constructed through symbolic practices displayed in media, including film.

The cultural values presented in *Sangkolan Kona* include:

- a. Loyalty and Family Harmony – depicted through respectful interactions between older and younger generations and their commitment to preserving tradition.
- b. Identity and Local Pride – the film affirms that the sarong is not merely clothing but a symbol of Madurese identity.
- c. Morality and Respect for Ancestors – seen in the main character's upholding of cultural heritage values and rejection of lifestyles that deviate from traditional norms.

Peirce's semiotic approach is used to interpret the meanings of symbols in the film. In this case, the sarong serves as the representamen, referring to the object of Madurese culture, producing an interpretant in the form of moral awareness and collective identity (Peirce, 1931).

Moreover, moral representation is also portrayed through the inner conflicts of characters when faced with the choice of preserving tradition or adapting to change. This dilemma reinforces the message that upholding moral values in the modern era is a conscious act of social responsibility (Geertz, 1973).

With authentic visuals and narratives rooted in local realities, *Sangkolan Kona* succeeds in becoming a medium for cultural and moral education, especially for the younger generation who are vulnerable to identity disorientation due to globalization.

This is in line with (Naficy, 2001), who argues that local cinema can play a role in reconstructing cultural identity amid the dominance of global culture.

2. Symbols and Signs Used in the Film to Convey Madurese Cultural Messages

In Sangkolan Kona, symbols and signs are strategically used to convey Madurese cultural messages through a rich visual and narrative approach. This use of symbols aligns with Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, which views signs as a relationship between the representamen (the sign), the object (cultural reference), and the interpretant (the meaning perceived by the viewer) (Peirce, 1931; Sobur, 2009; Sunaryo, 2013).

a. Sarong as the Central Symbol

The sarong appears not only as clothing but also as a representation of cultural identity. In various scenes, the sarong is worn during important moments such as religious activities, family gatherings, and the protagonist's contemplation. This symbolizes:

- Honor and modesty (Madurese social norms)
- Maturity and dignity of Madurese men
- Emotional bonds across generations

b. Rituals and Social Interactions

Scenes of elders handing down sarongs to their children carry symbolic rituals of value transmission. This strengthens the message that culture is inherited, not just learned.

c. Language, Dialogue, and Madurese Accent

The use of the Madurese language enhances local identity. Specific dialogues contain advice and proverbs that serve as verbal icons of local culture.

d. Filming Locations: Traditional Houses and Rural Landscapes

Filming in authentic Madurese rural environments strengthens the symbol of the people's connection to nature and the value of simplicity.

e. Moral Symbols in Conflict

The conflict between preserving culture or embracing modern lifestyles is portrayed through the young character's initial rejection of the sarong, followed by eventual acceptance. This represents a transformation in cultural and moral awareness.

f. Lighting and Color

Warm tones and natural lighting throughout the film enhance the intimate atmosphere and connection to nature and tradition, reflecting the simplicity of Madurese life.

3. Film as an Effective Medium to Preserve and Reintroduce Cultural and Moral Values to Society

Film can be a highly effective medium for preserving and reintroducing cultural and moral values to society as it combines narrative, visuals, and emotion that can

simultaneously reach various layers of audiences (Himawan, 2011). The following explains how film fulfills this function:

a. Strong Visual Representation

Film concretely presents culture—traditional clothing, language, rituals, local settings, and social expressions. These visual representations make cultural values easier to understand, remember, and internalize than merely reading text.

Example: In Sangkolan Kona, the use of the sarong and rural settings strengthens Madurese cultural identity through authentic visual media.

b. Emotion and Empathy

Through characters and stories, film builds emotional closeness. When viewers witness characters facing value conflicts or moral dilemmas, they are driven to empathize, making the presented values more relevant and impactful.

c. A Popular and Accessible Medium

Film has wide reach—through cinema, television, and digital platforms—and is enjoyed by various age groups and backgrounds. This makes it an inclusive and intergenerational tool for cultural education.

d. Narratives as a Means of Social Reflection

Through storytelling, film mirrors the existing social and cultural realities in society—both those that remain alive and those that are fading. It opens space for communities to reflect on their cultural identity.

e. Shaping Collective Identity and Pride

When local culture is positively and strongly portrayed in film, audiences—especially the youth—are encouraged to take pride in their ethnic and cultural identity. Film becomes a platform that elevates the dignity of local culture amid the dominance of global culture.

Conclusion

The film Sangkolan Kona successfully portrays and communicates the cultural messages and moral values embedded in the lives of the Madurese people, particularly those associated with the sarong as a symbol of local cultural identity. Through semiotic analysis, the film demonstrates how the sarong serves as a representation of noble values, traditions, and local wisdom that must be preserved, especially by the younger generation.

Through narrative, dialogue, and visual symbolism, the film effectively educates the audience about the importance of preserving cultural heritage while promoting moral messages about loyalty, respect for tradition, and social bonding. This film is not only relevant for the Madurese community but also makes a meaningful contribution to the preservation of local culture that can be introduced to a wider audience.

Overall, Sangkolan Kona is not merely an entertainment work but also an effective effort to preserve and maintain Madurese culture, with the sarong as its central symbol. The film plays a vital role in introducing and reminding younger generations of the importance of appreciating and loving their local culture.

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