

Interpretation of The Setan Card in Tarot Nusantara: A Semiotic Study Based on Roland Barthes

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ABSTRACT

Tarot cards contain complex symbolic systems, including The Setan (the Devil) card in Tarot Nusantara. This complexity makes Barthes' semiotics relevant for uncovering deeper meanings through denotation, connotation, and myth. This qualitative descriptive study aims to identify the similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses between the researcher's interpretation (based on Barthes' semiotic framework) and a tarot practitioner's interpretation of the Setan card in Tarot Nusantara. The data were analyzed using a commensurate method, a comparative analytical approach used to examine relationships between interpretations. The analysis involved identifying and classifying the key symbolic elements of the card, followed by systematic comparisons to determine similarities, differences, and core meanings between the researcher's interpretation and that of the tarot practitioner. Both interpretations associate the card with human powerlessness driven by lust and desire, representing the darker aspects of human nature. However, the semiotic analysis reveals that the card also conveys a symbolic message of self-awareness and the potential for liberation from psychological and spiritual attachment. The analysis shows that the researcher's interpretation focuses on psychological dimensions and the potential for self-transformation, while the practitioner's interpretation emphasizes external negative consequences and immediate risks.

Keywords

Semiotics, Roland Barthes, Major Arcana, Tarot Nusantara, The Setan

Article History

Received: 2026-02-25
Accepted: 2026-03-11

Copyright © 2026, Mulia et al.
Published by MAN 4 Kota Pekanbaru
DOI: [10.56113/takuana.v4i4.435](https://doi.org/10.56113/takuana.v4i4.435)

1. INTRODUCTION

Symbols play an important role in human communication and cultural expression. In semiotic studies, symbols are understood as signs that convey meaning and reflect social and cultural values. Semiotics therefore provides a framework for interpreting how meaning is constructed and communicated through symbolic systems (Liu & Kwon, 2020). One cultural medium that relies heavily on symbolic representation is tarot. Tarot cards consist of a complex system of images, figures, and objects that function as signs, each carrying layered meanings related to human experiences, beliefs, and psychological states (Punto Hendro et al., 2020). Because of this symbolic complexity, tarot can be examined using a semiotic approach to reveal the deeper meanings embedded in its imagery. In

contemporary semiotic studies, Roland Barthes' theory is widely used to analyze cultural symbols through the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. This framework allows researchers to explore not only the literal meaning of symbols but also the cultural narratives and ideological values embedded within them (Fauzan, 2020).

The academic study of tarot cards is generally related to the field of psychology because tarot is considered capable of interpreting, reflecting, and describing a person's psychology (Kumar, 2019). Several previous studies have examined tarot from semiotic and symbolic perspectives. For example, Semetsky (2011) analyzed tarot imagery using semiotic and Jungian frameworks and argued that tarot cards function as symbolic representations of archetypes and human psychological processes. Other studies have also suggested that tarot can be understood as a symbolic communication system that conveys meaning through images, figures, and cultural narratives (Michelson et al., 2024).

Studies that specifically apply modern semiotic frameworks particularly Roland Barthes' concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth to analyze individual tarot cards remain limited. Moreover, research focusing on culturally localized tarot decks, such as Tarot Nusantara, is still scarce. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by applying Barthesian semiotics to interpret the Setan card in Tarot Nusantara and comparing the interpretation with that of a tarot practitioner. State that semiotics as the science of signs and meanings, offers a theoretical framework to dissect the complexity of symbols in tarot. They clearly state that there is a reciprocal relationship between tarot and semiotics as a study that helps decipher the meaning of tarot theoretically (Semetsky & Campbell, 2018).

Tarot uses a system of symbols and the subconscious. Basically, symbols are part of signs that have a connection with the unconscious. Symbols are representations or substitutes for something that cannot be presented in language. So, in understanding complex symbols such as tarot, it is very important that a tarot practitioner must know the boundaries of the meaning of existing symbols (Meng FRSA, 2025). The complexity of the symbols contained in tarot cards is the reason why Roland Barthes' theory is considered suitable for describing the complex meanings on tarot cards. Roland Barthes is one of the figures of post-structuralist semiotics who introduced the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth as structured layers of meaning (Hammouri, 2020). This approach is relevant to analyze how tarot symbolism builds a deep cultural narrative on each card. Roland Barthes (Malau, 2022), expanded Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic analysis by emphasizing that signs do not only consist of signifiers and signs, but are also connected to culture (myths) as ideological values that are considered natural by society.

Tarot cards are divided into two types, namely major and minor Arkana. Arkana major or also called the main Arkana has a total of 22 cards that symbolize things that are spiritual and spiritual in nature (Michelson et al., 2024). The major Arkana is conceptualized with every day and personal human features, such as the Priest, Lover, Death, and World cards. The major arcana is enriched with symbols that are signs, as well as these signs have an important relationship in explaining meaning, thus forming the tarot language. In the major Arkana there are connections with legends, myths, archetypes of human personality, and even relationships with the universe (Fink, 2022). The Setan card is the 15th (XV) row of major Arkana cards out of all the major Arkana cards.

The major Arkana cards in Tarot Nusantara take on the ethnic nuances of the Indonesian nation with dominant Javanese and Balinese elements. For example, the color

element carries Javanese-Balinese culture with a combination of red and brown colors visualized with Javanese-Balinese batik motifs (Fachri, 2010).

This study aims to analyze the symbolism of the Setan card in Tarot Nusantara using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, particularly the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. The study also compares the researcher's semiotic interpretation with that of a tarot practitioner in order to identify similarities and differences in meaning construction. Through this comparison, the research seeks to contribute to semiotic studies by demonstrating how Barthesian analysis can be applied to interpret symbolic systems in culturally localized tarot decks.

2. METHOD

To understand the meaning of a symbol in semiotics, there are two main concepts that need to be considered, namely sign and signifier. According to Saussure, the sign is referred to as the referent or signified, while the signifier is referred to as the signifier. For example, when someone says the word 'dog' (signifier) in a swearing tone, it can be interpreted as a sign of insult (signified). For Saussure, signifier and signified are an inseparable unity, like two sides of a piece of paper (Tawakkal et al., 2021).

However, the significance of Saussure's work in the history of semiotics has received mixed responses. In its development, Saussure's theory of semiology/semiotics began to be commented on and developed by many figures, one of whom was Roland Barthes. Barthes provides a more in-depth approach by including the influence of the reader's subjectivity in meaning. In addition, Barthes argues that a sign has levels of meaning, namely reality, denotative, and connotative meanings, and is influenced by the social and cultural context (myth) behind it (König et al., 2016). This makes the study using Barthes' theory more in-depth than Saussure's semiological theory because the reader's assumptions and perspectives greatly affect the meaning and enrich the interpretation of a sign. This is where the main difference between Saussure and Barthes lies, although Barthes still uses the signifier-signified terms introduced by Saussure (Jazeri & Susanto, 2020).

Table 1. Roland Barthes' map of signs

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Signifier</i> | 2. <i>Signified</i> |
| 3. <i>Denotative Sign</i> | |
| 4. <i>Connotative Signifier</i> | 5. <i>Connotative Signified</i> |
| 6. <i>Connotative Sign</i> | |

Source: Wibisono & Sari, 2021; Siregar, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2020; Patricia, 2018

Based on the sign map above, it can be seen that the denotative sign (3) consists of a signifier (1) and a signified (2). However, at the same time, the denotative sign also functions as a connotative marker (4). The denotative sign provides a clear and direct meaning, while the connotative sign has a more open and implicit meaning that allows for various other interpretations. In this context, Barthes states that connotative signs not only have additional meanings, but also include both elements of the denotative sign underlying their existence. According to Sobur (Salsabila et al., 2025), Barthes in this case has made a significant contribution in developing Saussure's semiological theory which only focuses on marking at the denotative level.

Barthes developed a systematic model to analyze the meaning of signs. Barthes emphasized the concept of two-stage signification (two orders of signification). In the two-stage signification described, there are several interrelated elements of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. According to Barthes, the first stage of signification includes denotation, while the second stage involves connotation and myth.

| | | | |
|---------|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Reality | Denotation | Connotation | Myth |
| | | Distortion Process Occurs → | Signifier |
| | | | Signified |
| | | | Sign |

Figure 1. Myth formation process

Source: Swandhani et al., 2023

Myths can be understood as the way a culture explains or understands various aspects of reality and natural phenomena. Myths are the result of a social class that has achieved a certain dominance. Myths serve to express and provide justification for the dominant values prevailing in a particular period. According to Barthes, myths are the result of the development of connotations that have existed in society for a long time. In this context, myths refer to things that have become part of the culture and are believed by a community. Barthes views myths as a semiological system, a system of signs interpreted by society. For Barthes, myth is not just a view of things that are superstitious or irrational, but a way of communicating (style of speaking) in society. This type of research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. According to (Sugiyono, 2016), qualitative research methods are approaches used to study objects in natural conditions. In this method, the researcher acts as the main instrument. Qualitative research results focus more on meaning than generalization. Kriyantono (Wibisono & Sari, 2021) explains that descriptive research seeks to describe or describe things as they are, and uses qualitative data that will produce descriptive data in the form of written words based on observations.


| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Card Number | XV |
| | Card Name | Setan |
| | Object | 1. Chains and doors 2. Torch 3. Pentagram |
| | Figure | 1. Devil (Rangda) 2. Naked men and women (inhabitants of hell) |

Figure 2. The Setan Card in Tarot Nusantara

Source: Fachri (2009:58)

The symbols on Tarot Nusantara the Setan cards were reduced and sorted according to the needs of the analysis. After that, the symbols are analyzed using Barthes' semiotic theory, based on the denotation, connotation, and mythical meanings. Furthermore, the symbols are needed to become a unified meaning (text) that represents the full interpretation of the card. The researcher applied a commensurate method to compare the

meanings derived from the semiotic analysis with the interpretation provided by a tarot practitioner. The analysis involved identifying the key symbolic elements of the card and systematically examining the similarities and differences between the two interpretations. The same technique is also used in making the key to the researcher’s interpretation. Finally, the researcher will compare the researcher’s interpretation with the tarot practitioner’s interpretation to see if there are similarities or differences in the two existing interpretations. Also to find out the advantages or disadvantages of the interpretation that the researcher produced.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Analysis of denotative, connotative, and myth meanings of Tarot Nusantara the Setan Card

The results of the research obtained are the symbols on The Setan card that the researcher has observed. The symbols on each card are summarized and reduced based on the symbolism found on each major Arkana card in general, namely numbers, card names, objects, and figures.

Table 2. Denotative, connotative, and myth meanings of Tarot Nusantara the Setan Card

| No | Signifier | Signified |
|----|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | XV | <p>Denotative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The number fifteen is in the top center of the card, indicating that the card is fifteenth overall. b. The number fifteen is the number represented by XV (Roman) or 15 (Arabic). <p>Connotative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The number 15 or 6 (1+5=6) in numerology is often associated with materialism, responsibility, and worldly temptations. In occult numerology, the number fifteen is also associated with matter, illusions, temptations, and hidden powers. b. The Satan card itself is a symbol of lust, inner enslavement, dependence, and manipulation. The number fifteen as a symbol in the context of this card reinforces the connotative association with the fascination with worldly things, the dark side of man, and the forces that bind individual freedom. <p>Myth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In Javanese philosophy, odd numbers are often considered to have supernatural or spiritual powers that are stronger than even numbers. b. The number fifteen is the midpoint in the <i>Weton</i> system (market day + weekday). c. In Islam, some scholars say that the age of 15 is considered the limit when a person begins to bear the burden of the law (puberty). This is where people begin to be bound by the sharia and begin to be tested by their lust. The number 15 as an early symbol of man’s test of lust and demons, fits the main theme of this card. d. The Jewish Kabbalah says that the 15th letter in the Hebrew alphabet is the samekh (ס) which is shaped like a circle, symbolizing a prison or enclosure. This parallels the Satanic card that binds two humans with chains. The number 15 can be depicted as a symbol of spiritual prison, a vicious cycle, or a cycle of attachment. |

| No | Signifier | Signified |
|----|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Doors and chains | <p>Denotative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There is a chain that binds male and female figures. The chain is connected to the door in the middle of the two figures. Chains are interconnected metal objects, usually used to bind, lock, or hold things from moving or free. Whereas, a door is literally a structure for entering or exiting a space; a symbol of transition between spaces or conditions. <p>Connotative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In the context of this card, the chain symbolizes an unfree attachment. The chains here not only limit the body, but also symbolize the idea of humans unconsciously choosing to be bound. In the picture it can be seen that the chain is loose and detachable, hinting that slavery was an illusion or a choice, not an absolute coercion. The door in this card can be read as a hope or an opportunity to free oneself from attachment and darkness. In a symbolic sense, a door can be a gateway to enlightenment or downfall, depending on the direction of the subject's step. The door in this card shows that behind the tyranny of demons, there is always the potential for freedom. However, it is often hidden by ideological systems or constructions (such as fear or pseudo-pleasure). Chains in the connotation level are symbols of human attachment to lust and systems of oppression that can be interpreted spiritually as well as socially. The door symbolizes the possibility of liberation or change, but in this card it is hidden behind an illusion created by the devil. At the level of connotation, chains and doors show how humans allow themselves to be enslaved, even though freedom is always available. <p>Myth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chains can be interpreted as a form of karma or the result of past actions that bind a person in the circle of samsara (rebirth). In the context of spiritual restraint, chains can be interpreted as a form of mental attachment to worldly desires, similar to the concept of <i>klesha</i> in Hindu-Buddhism. In the Western/Christian tradition, especially in the depiction of hell, a chain is a symbol of the bond of the soul shackled by sin, greed, lust, or the devil. In the modern context, chains can also be interpreted as symbols of structural oppression (for example, in Marxian theory). In the culture of the archipelago, the gate (such as Bentar Temple or Paduraksa) marks the transition from the profane world to the sacred world. The door can also symbolize the boundary between the visible world and the supernatural world, often associated with the world of spirits, spirits, or jinn in the local culture. In Greek mythology, doors are often a symbol of the journey between life and death, such as the gate of Hades. In Mayan or Aztec beliefs, the door can be associated with a gate to the underworld (<i>Xibalba</i>) which is full of spiritual trials and trials. In Sufism, the door is sometimes interpreted as <i>a chapter</i>, a symbol of man's encounter with the divine (Allah) through certain spiritual stages. |
| 3 | Torch | <p>Denotative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The torch was held by the demon in his right hand. A torch is a lighting device used to provide light in a dark place or a flame that burns at the end of a stick or a wooden log. <p>Connotative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A downward-pointed torch can symbolize a will to destroy or control. This is in line with the theme of this card which deals with oppression, shackles, and the illusion of freedom. Fire is often associated with animal passions, temptations, and urges. In the context of this card, the torch can signify a burning lust that can trap humans in the shackles of dependence (sexuality, material, etc.). |

| No | Signifier | Signified |
|----|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | <p>c. The torch usually carries a positive meaning as a source of light, but in this card, it can mean false light, i.e. “knowledge” or “freedom” that is actually misleading. The torch can be a tool of power from a demonic figure to show that he is in control of light and dark in a manipulative way.</p> <p>Myth:</p> <p>a. Prometheus (Greek mythology) stole fire from the gods to give it to humans, an act of rebellion that symbolized human enlightenment through knowledge.</p> <p>b. The torch held by the demon can be read as a myth of knowledge that is stolen and becomes a curse. When enlightenment is given by a non-holy being, he becomes a source of attachment, not liberation.</p> <p>c. The god Hades (Greek mythology) as the ruler of the underworld is often associated with hellfire or a torch that burns eternally.</p> <p>d. The mythical meaning is the torch as a fire of desire, power, and eternal punishment. In the context of this card can mean being entangled by destructive worldly desires.</p> <p>e. The Luciferianism Church considers the torch to be associated with Lucifer as a “bearer of light” (<i>luc/lux</i>=light). Lucifer is a symbol of the quest for knowledge, but also of rebellion against the divine. In this card, the fire pointing downwards implies knowledge that traps or false light.</p> <p>f. Hindu culture recognizes fire as an element of purification (Agni). Agni is the god of purifying fire. In the context of this card, fire can actually be interpreted as a failed purification, that is, a fire that burns without results that depicts futile suffering.</p> |
| 4 | Pentagram | <p>Denotative:</p> <p>a. The pentagram symbol on the head of the demon figure.</p> <p>b. Literally, a pentagram is a five-star-shaped geometric shape that is generally depicted upside down.</p> <p>Connotative:</p> <p>a. In many early cultures, the pentagram (five stars) was a symbol of protection or spiritual element. In reverse context, pentagrams are often associated with the occult, black magic, or satanic rituals.</p> <p>b. Pentagrams illustrate how right can look wrong, and vice versa. As this card is often interpreted as a representation of attachment to worldly things, physical pleasures, and dependence.</p> <p>c. An inverted pentagram can be interpreted as a resistance to the social structure or morality formed by social norms.</p> <p>Myth:</p> <p>a. In Western contexts (Christian and Central European), the inverted pentagram is associated with demons and denial of God. It symbolizes disobedience, misguided freedom, and moral deviance.</p> <p>b. In contrast, in an upright form, a pentagram can symbolize the five wounds of Christ or even human perfection (as in Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian painting of man).</p> <p>c. In Wicca and other pagan traditions, the pentagram often symbolizes the balance between the elements of nature and the human soul. When circled, it symbolizes unity and protection. When reversed, it symbolizes material domination over the spirit or the worship of worldly desires.</p> |
| 5 | Naked Men & Women (Inhabitants of Hell) | <p>Denotative: Naked male and female figures. Two naked human figures tied with chains and standing under a demonic figure.</p> <p>Connotative:</p> <p>a. Nudity symbolizes vulnerability and openness to animal temptations or urges. Men and women symbolize dependence on worldly desires, such as sexuality, power, and material pleasures. Satan as the dominant figure indicates that they are “enslaved” by lust or false illusions of freedom.</p> |

| No | Signifier | Signified |
|----|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | <p>b. In this connotation, nudity can also hint at a loss of control over oneself, that they are in a state of lack of protection, both physically and spiritually.</p> <p>c. It can be seen as a representation of human beings trapped in an unconscious state and deceived by outside forces.</p> <p>Myth:</p> <p>a. In Hinduism, the naked body can be interpreted as a symbol of attachment to <i>kama</i> (lust). Naked men and women under the power of Satan reflect humans who are controlled by <i>moha</i> (confusion) and <i>kama</i> (lust). This myth assumes that people who are too compliant with their desires will be trapped in samsara and unable to achieve moksa (spiritual freedom).</p> <p>b. In the Abrahamic religion, nudity after the fall of Adam and Eve from Eden (heaven) means a loss of purity and innocence. In this context, naked men and women are representations of human beings who have “fallen”, lost self-control, succumbed to sin and the temptations of Satan. They become symbols of the soul trapped by its own choices.</p> <p>c. In Taoist philosophy, the balance between Yin (feminine) and Yang (masculine) is the main principle of nature. When associated with this card, the naked man and woman controlled by the devil signify a disturbance of that harmony. Where these two main energies are no longer balanced with each other, but are enslaved by external forces. It symbolizes the disharmony of the mind and the world.</p> |
| 6 | Devil figure (Rangda) Card name "Setan" | <p>Denotative:</p> <p>a. The demonic figure is above the middle of the naked male and female figures. This demonic figure is depicted as Rangda (Balinese mythology). This demonic figure becomes the main symbol and represents the name of this card (Setan).</p> <p>b. Setan is a mythological or religious being associated with evil, temptation, or hell. On this card, the demonic figure is a non-human depicted with horns, long nails, chains, and a dominant position.</p> <p>Connotative:</p> <p>a. Setan is associated with desire, sexual temptation, materialism, and power.</p> <p>b. In Jungian psychology, it can be associated with the dark side of the human being rejected or suppressed.</p> <p>c. The demonic figure on this card is interpreted as an encouragement to get out of the norm, reject dogma, or free oneself from social shackles. Symbolizes the evil, the taboo, or the forbidden.</p> <p>d. At the level of connotation, the devil is considered the main enemy in religious or ethical narratives. Also, the representation of the inner voice that leads man to the wrong path.</p> <p>Myth:</p> <p>a. Figures like Rangda in Bali depict destructive energy and spiritual darkness. Rangda is not like the devil in the Western sense, but a symbol of an uncontrollable force that can bring destruction or spiritual testing. There are also Leak or spirit creatures in Balinese beliefs that also contain the meaning of dark forces that can control humans if they are unable to control themselves.</p> <p>b. In the Western/Christian mythological sense, Satan is the tempter, the bringer of man's downfall (e.g. the story of Eve and the serpent in Eden). In the context of this card, Satan symbolizes the bondage of matter, lust, and the human ego that is chained by his own desires, not by force.</p> <p>c. In Taoism and Buddhism, attachment to the world (worldliness, possessions, and lust) is the source of suffering. “Satan” is a symbol of that attachment. Similar to Mara in Buddhism, which is an entity that tempts the Buddha from attaining enlightenment.</p> |

Analysis of denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings is done as a first step in knowing and making interpretations on Tarot Nusantara the Setan card. After the interpretation of each card has been obtained, the researcher can create an interpretation key that will be used to compare it with the tarot practitioner's interpretation. Researchers will compare the two interpretations to see the similarities or differences between the two, as well as to find out the advantages or disadvantages of the interpretations that researchers have produced.

Based on the analysis above, the symbols on the Setan card collectively construct a layered meaning that corresponds to Barthes' levels of signification. At the denotative level, the card presents visual elements such as chains, a torch, a pentagram, naked human figures, and the demonic figure of Rangda. At the connotative level, these elements signify human attachment to desire, loss of self-control, and the illusion of freedom. At the level of myth, the symbols draw on broader cultural and religious narratives such as spiritual bondage, temptation, and moral conflict which reinforce the idea of human entrapment in worldly desires. Through this Barthesian semiotic framework, the Setan card can therefore be interpreted as representing the condition of individuals who are psychologically and spiritually bound by their own desires.

3.2. Interpretation of Tarot Nusantara the Setan Card

This card gives an important message to the querent about the inner struggles they are facing, especially those related to temptation, dependency, and the illusion of freedom. The symbol of the chain that appears to bind the human figure suggests that the current perceived entanglement is actually a false condition, where freedom seems to exist but is often masked by desires and anxieties that disturb the mind. The figure of Satan identified as Rangda from Balinese mythology reminds us that the dark side of the self, such as lust, greed, or the tendency to ignore morality, can take control when self-control weakens.

The nakedness in this card symbolizes uncontrolled openness and loss of self-restraint that places the individual in a vulnerable position to external influences. The burning torch represents strong passion, but it can become misleading if it is not balanced with awareness and self-reflection. Therefore, this card can be understood as a call to recognize the attachments that bind the self, to reconsider one's choices, and to begin the process of liberation from the shackles of deceptive desires in order to find true inner strength. This interpretation is produced through the integration of all symbols that have been analyzed using Barthes' semiotic levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. Based on this interpretative description, the researcher formulates an interpretation key that can be used as a comparison tool with the interpretation given by tarot practitioners.

To obtain a clearer understanding of the meaning of the card, the researcher's interpretation is then compared with the interpretation commonly used by tarot practitioners. In the researcher's interpretation, the Setan card represents the illusion of freedom, dependence, the dark side of the self, loss of control, and the possibility of liberation from the shackles of lust. In contrast, tarot practitioners tend to interpret this card as a sign of crime, catastrophe, chaos, violence, and other negative influences.

The similarity between the two interpretations lies in the emphasis on powerlessness and the destructive effects of uncontrolled desire. Both interpretations reflect the dark aspects of human nature, where individuals may become trapped in harmful situations.

However, the difference appears in the interpretive orientation. The researcher's interpretation focuses on psychological meaning and the possibility of self-liberation, describing the card as a symbol of inner struggle and transformation. Meanwhile, the tarot practitioner's interpretation focuses more on external consequences, such as conflict, crime, and chaotic events, without emphasizing the potential for reflection or personal growth.

The advantage of the researcher's interpretation is that it offers a constructive perspective that encourages introspection and positive change. However, this interpretation may seem overly idealistic because it tends to reduce the emphasis on harsh realities that may occur in real life. On the other hand, the practitioner's interpretation is more pragmatic and based on reading experience, but it can be limited because it often narrows the symbolic meaning of the card to negative predictions.

These differences arise from the different interpretive frameworks used. The researcher applies Barthes' semiotic approach, which analyzes the card through denotation, connotation, and myth, allowing the symbols to be understood as cultural and psychological representations. In contrast, tarot practitioners rely on practical reading experience, where the card is interpreted in relation to possible real-life events. From a semiotic perspective, this comparison shows that the same visual symbol can produce multiple meanings depending on the interpretive context and analytical framework applied. This finding indicates that tarot cards can be understood not only as divination tools, but also as cultural texts that contain layered symbolic meanings.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the interpretation of The Setan (The Devil) Tarot Nusantara card, there are similarities and differences between researchers and tarot practitioners. Although there are similarities in the themes raised, the differences in emphasis and nuances of meaning are striking between the two interpretations. This comparison shows that both speak in different sign frameworks. This is because the researcher goes through Barthes' framework of myth and denotation-connotation theory, while the tarot practitioner goes through direct and functional narrative. It shows that interpretations using Barthes' semiotic theory have differences with tarot practitioners' interpretations using direct intuition.

The strength of the researcher's interpretation lies in the depth and complexity of meaning that comes from analyzing the denotation, connotation, and mythical meaning of each symbol. It provides a broad, reflective, and contemplative view of the meaning of The Setan card. Barthes' semiotic approach allows researchers to reveal the cultural myths contained in the symbols on the cards, thus being able to interpret signs as a form of ideology in society. However, the drawback of the researcher's interpretation is the potential to be too abstract and less focused on concrete actions.

Barthes' semiotic approach provides a deeper richness of meaning, but it must be realized that in the context of a practical tarot reading, this approach may need to be simplified to make it more communicative. As such, while the researcher's interpretations provide deep insights, there are times when they may make them feel less applicable to individuals seeking more direct and practical answers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to the Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of North Sumatra, especially to the lecturers who have provided valuable guidance, knowledge, and advice in the process of writing this scientific article. The author also extends gratitude to Hisyam A. Fachri, the creator of the Tarot Nusantara cards, whose work has been the primary source of inspiration for this research, particularly in analyzing the major arcana card “The Devil” through a semiotic approach.

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