

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER SUN IN MOBILE LEGENDS

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the denotative, connotative, and myth meanings of the signs present in the character Sun using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. This research uses qualitative methods and Roland Barthes's theory to analyze data. Meanwhile, the data collection methods used are observation and documentation. The data in this research is in the form of screen captures and descriptions of Sun's character as explained in the game. Then the data will be analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory, namely two-order signification, to find denotative, connotative, and myth that contained in the character Sun. The results of this research show that denotative and connotative meanings can be found in research data. These two meanings are presented implicitly and explicitly which provide a more detailed explanation of Sun's character. furthermore, the myth built on the character Sun shows the relationship between the character Sun and the culture and ideology of today's society.

1. Introduction

Online games are one of the media to fulfill human needs for entertainment now. But as time goes by, games are now not only a vehicle for fulfilling human needs for entertainment but also a vehicle for conveying messages from the game developer to the players. Now, online games are developed to the point where the game has a storyline, meaning, and ideology hidden behind the story. Many game developers display signs to convey their message to the players of the game. This is as Sobur said "With signs, humans can communication with each other" (Sobur, 2004).

Online games are one of the innovations created due to the rapid development of technology. Online games continue to develop from time to time. Which was originally

only available on computers, and then developed into a game console, until now online games are present in gadgets to make it easier for people to access them. One of the online game genres that are often played now is multiplayer online battle ground game (MOBA), this genre also well-known with action real-time strategy or RTS. This genre is a game where one player in a team competes against another player on the opposite team in one arena. One of the best-selling and most popular MOBA games is Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB). Mobile Legend was recorded to have been downloaded more than 100 million until May 2021 based on Play Store.

Sun is one of the characters presented by Moonton in the Mobile Legend Bang Bang game. Sun is an adaptation of the famous Chinese folk tale "The Monkey King: Sun Go Kong" which originates from Chinese literature by Wú Chéng'ēn (1506 - 1582). Both of them have similarities in terms of appearance and background story. Sun in Mobile Legend is described by Moonton in the story page as an immortal creature who has been sleeping soundly for thousands of years in a rock. The sun is said to have been created from the essence of the mountain spirit frozen in the rock. Sun has a very unusual appearance. His entire body is covered in golden brown fur. His body is very muscular and decorated with Buddhist ornaments, such as the prayer beads around his neck and the robe he wears. As in folklore, Sun in Mobile Legend also has a red crown on his face. There are many signs of the Sun in Mobile Legend: Bang Bang that can and need to be analyzed more deeply.

In this research, the researcher uses a semiotic approach. Semiotics is a systematic study method for studying signs. Roland Barthes' semiotic model is the theoretical basis for analyzing the research objects in this research. The aims of this research are to identify the signs: denotation and connotation meaning and the myth that found in Sun. Researchers focus on the meaning of the signs present in Sun's character in order to obtain a detailed meaning of Sun's character.

2. Literature Review

Ulil Latifah and Nova Kristiana (2021) write an article entitled Visual analysis of the Gatotkaca character in the Mobile Legends Bang Bang game. This study aims to describe visual physical characteristics and analyze the visual message of the Gatotkaca character contained in Mobile Legends Bang Bang. The authors found that in general the physical characteristics, nature, and story of Gatotkaca in the wayang story are the

same as the characteristics of Gatotkaca in the Mobile Legends Bang Bang game. Rezza Agus Alfian and Tri Cahyo Kusumandyoko (2020) also analyze representation of meaning in Mobile Legend game. the study entitled Representation of the meaning of Kadita's character in the online game Mobile Legend Bang Bang. The purpose of this study is to analyze the visual elements in more detail, as well as the existence of mythical elements that can be associated with contemporary phenomena, based on the character values of feminism, masculinity, science, and success. the authors draw conclusions from the analysis that Kadita's character is a representation of the Indonesian folklore "Nyi Roro Kidul". She is visualized as a beautiful and brave woman who is able to represent today's gender equality. Although there is masculinity in Kadita's character, there is still a feminine side that comes with the makeup that she wears.

In another related study, Reni Fitria Khairina (2016) analyze Grand Theft Auto V game. This study focuses on game poster of GTA V to find out the denotative, connotative, and myths that appear on the GTA V game poster. Based on the analysis and discussion phase, the author found that each sign in the game poster reflect messages to communicate related to the story of Grand Theft Auto game. The author also found the mythical signification is about masculinity. Masculinity is set of attributes, behaviors, and generally associated with boys and men.

3. Research Method

This research will use a qualitative approach which is the object are the signs that appear in character Sun in Mobile Legend. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), where they mean that qualitative research also includes the methodology used for research procedures that produce descriptive data. Qualitative research methods emphasize more on intuition, feelings than on numerical data. Qualitative research methods focus more on writing descriptive words rather than using numbers. The use of a qualitative approach in this study aims to make it easier for researchers to describe data analysis, considering that the main data of this research is visual signs.


Research data was taken from the character Sun in the Mobile Legend game which visually contains signs. The technique of collecting data in this research is the researcher watching Sun on the display presented in the game. Then the researchers collected and selected scenes to be used as research data after obtaining all the data that can potentially be researched sorting the most relevant data used as primary research

data.

In the data analysis stage, the researcher used Roland Barthes' analysis model where sign analysis was divided into 2 stages. At the first level of meaning, denotation is what everyone sees without thinking about how it belongs to their society, culture, or ideology. The level of the denotation produces an explicit, direct and definite meaning. While connotation is an interaction that occurs when the sign is associated with the user's feelings or culture. The meaning can be subjective or intersubjective (Barthes, 1981)

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Data 1

Signifier	signified
	the face of an ape is red and fanged
Denotative signs	
The face of an ape with sharp eyes and sharp teeth	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
Sun's face has the face of an ape with a color dominated by red and sharp teeth	shows feelings of anger, especially the red color on its face that indicates this. Another sign of his hot-tempered nature is his sharp teeth and grin like a cold-blooded beast.
Connotative signs / myths	
Someone's anger is depicted with a red face	

1. Denotative stage

Sun in Mobile Legend is depicted as having an ape-like face with quite long golden-brown fur around his face. His entire face was bright red with a hint of white at the edges. Apart from that, you can see a pair of bright yellow eyes with the copyright drawn upwards. Between his eyes, there is also a frown in the

middle. Below his eyes, there is a nose which is also red and also his mouth. Its teeth are white and sharp and large. The mouth is wide and twisted.

2. Connotative stage

Brown feathers are a representation of the earth and earth elements. Where monkeys are lying animals whose lives depend on nature. Then, the choice of red and white on his face has its own meaning. According to Nugroho (2008: 36-38), on the negative side, white means empty, red means anger. Moreover, Sun in his background story has a drowning story where he was locked under a rock by god because of his bad nature and his behavior likes to cause trouble.


Other characteristics that show the angry and wild nature of Sun's character are found in the eyes and mouth. Eyes that bulge and are bright yellow indicate the eyes of a predator who is not afraid of anything. And also his teeth are sharp and show his irritability. In the in-game narrative description, Sun's grumpy nature is shown in a paragraph which explains that Sun is irritated and angry when there are creatures in the forest who cry continuously.

3. Myths

Apes are mammalian primates that have many similarities/characteristics that are identical to humans. Especially in the element of feelings in monkeys who have roles like humans. Whether sad, happy, angry, confused and other feelings that animals in general rarely have.

Sun has visuals like a monkey which emphasizes emotions/emotions more. This is clearly visible from the part of his face which is predominantly red, his forehead is furrowed, his lines are sharp and his teeth are wide. As stated by Bartlett and Izard (Steward, 1985) describe the expression of an angry person as characterized by the following characteristics, wrinkled forehead, sharp eyes appearing at the object of anger, enlarged nose lobes, lips pulled back showing gripped teeth, blushing. red skin, and fear. Fear is an emotional response to a threat. Fear is a basic life protection mechanism that occurs in response to a particular stimulus, such as pain or the threat of danger. Several psychologists have also stated that fear is one of the basic emotions besides happiness, sadness and anger.

4.2 Data 2

Signifier	Signified
	The gold crown
Denotative signs	
Gold crown pinned on the forehead	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
A precious golden crown adorns the character Sun's face	The crown symbolizes the throne and power. The gold material and color symbolize glory and prosperity
Connotative signs / myths	
A king/ruler wears a crown to indicate his position	

1. Denotative stage

Sun's character is said to be a monkey king in a valley who has a bad character and often creates chaos. To emphasize this, Mobile Legend added a crown on his forehead. This crown is medium sized and curls around the thick top hair. This crown is gold with carvings in the middle. If you look closely, the carving in the middle of the crown is similar to the shape of the nose of apes in general.

2. Connotative stage


In the story page of the origin of Sun's character it is written that "Sun's domain stretches across the boundless expanse of masterpieces, heaven and earth bow to his will". as a result, this story is hinted at the object that Sun wears in his appearance, which is a crown. The crown on Sun's head is one of the important stuff he wears besides his weapons. This crown shows a lot about the sun. First, Sun is a monkey king who has the power and strength to protect his kingdom. Second, Sun is a leader who can control and order his flock of monkeys. Lastly, this crown also gives the impression of a king's courage in fighting his enemies who threaten his people. Supporting the 3 meanings above,

the most common meanings associated with the crown are Power and Domination, Monarchy, Pain and Suffering, Glory and Achievement, Immortality, Strength and Courage (Reese, 2023).

3. Myths

The word monarch is derived from (*mónos*), meaning "one,/single" and (*árkh*), meaning "to rule". Therefore, a monarchy can be defined as a form of government headed by a hereditary king or queen. It is one of the oldest forms of governmental system in the world (Afifa, 2024). The myth of the depiction of Sun wearing a crown is a representation of a monarchical system of power or a royal system where a king has full power over his people. Which means every word of the king is absolute and must be obeyed by his people. In this system, leadership is usually passed down from generation to generation through the bloodline. However, in the context of Sun, Sun has the power to control his flock until he becomes the leader of his flock.

4.3 Data 3

Signifier	signified
	prayer beads necklace
Denotative signs	
A large black prayer beads necklace around his neck	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
A giant prayer beads necklace is wrapped around Sun's neck which gives the impression of purity	This prayer beads necklace is one of the ornaments from the Buddhist religion where the background of the inspiration for the character Sun originates
Connotative signs / myths	
The prayer beads necklace symbolizes the sanctity of Buddhism which is used by monks to worship	

1. Denotative stage

Sun has several supporting accessories for her appearance. One of them is her prayer beads necklace. This prayer beads necklace is large in size and black in color. This prayer beads looks like it is made of pure iron so it has a dark black color. This necklace consists of dozens of prayer beads where the beads are tightly connected to each other.

2. Connotative stage

Tasbih is a tool for praying or reciting remembrance to God. You could say that tasbih is also a counting tool for dhikr with a certain amount for each number of beads. Having prayer beads makes worship more solemn and easy to count with each dhikr. The material for making prayer beads is made from wood and the number of seeds varies.


According to Padjadjaran University Anthropology lecturer, Rusyanti, prayer beads are a sign of purity or are called aksamala in Hinduism and Buddhism. In Buddhism, prayer beads are called *O-Juzu* or *Nenju* in Japanese. This name has the meaning *Nen* = mind/attention, *Zu/Ju* = count/calculate. So it can be concluded that *Juzu* are beads used for awareness training.

The use of prayer beads in Sun's appearance has meaning and connection with what is explained about prayer beads above. Where Sun is an adaptation of a Chinese folk story which is closely related to the teachings of Buddhism. Prayer beads are a religious tool for Hinduism as a reminder of God. Moonton applied this in making Sun with a prayer beads necklace around his neck. This prayer beads also have an implied meaning that Sun, who has a wild and cruel nature, has a tool to control himself, namely the prayer beads.

3. Myths

In this third data, which shows Sun wearing a prayer beads necklace around his neck, there is a sign that related to religion, especially Buddhism. Basically, prayer beads are a worship tool used by various religions in the world. however, if we pull back again where Sun's character comes from, it was from China where the majority are Buddhists. The prayer beads worn by Sun are ornaments that show the Buddhist entity in Sun's character.

4.4 Data 4

Signifier	Signified
	A hand armor with a skull shape
Denotative signs	
An arm armor made of iron with the top part having the shape of a skull	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
The skull is a vital part for humans	The skull symbol is closely related to death
Connotative signs / myths	
In various cultures and religions, skulls tend to have unfavorable meanings because it was beckon about death	

1. Denotative stage

In Mobile Legends, there are many characters that players can use. These characters are classified into several divisions based on their abilities and fighting style. Sun himself is classified as a fighter role, and in this game, he usually serves as an initiator on the front line. For this reason, fighter heroes must have a strong defense.

Likewise with the sun. Sun has abilities that help him survive when fighting. Therefore, Sun is depicted wearing steel armor on his left arm and both calves. what stood out more was the armor on his arms. This armor is so large that it covers his entire arm. This armor is made of iron which is blackish silver in color. This armor is divided into 2 parts, Top and bottom . The top of the armor is designed to look like a skull and the bottom that protects the fingers. This discussion will focus on these 2 details. First,the main material comes from iron and second is shape of the upper hand armor is in the shape of a skull.

2. Connotative stage

A soldier must wear protective clothing to protect himself. Clothing that aims to protect a soldier's vital parts is called armor. From time to time, armor has developed in terms of size, function and raw materials. A soldier is very dependent on the armor he wears when fighting. Sun wears armor on several parts of his body. One of the most prominent part is the armor on his arms. This design indicates Sun's strong defense. It also indicates the usefulness of Sun, who is included as a fighter initiator hero whose presence is really needed on the front lines. Battle armor or armis a piece of clothing that protects the body from sharp weapons such as swords, arrows, and others thereby reducing the risk to the body wounded. This armor is made of metal or fiber material form certain patterns and cover certain areas. The use of armor itself began to be known since the Roman era ancient and still simple in shape (Purnomo et al., 2018).


Another side that we can describe about this sun hand armor is the top part which is in the shape of a skull. We can assume this skull is the skull of an ape. Of course, choosing the shape of the skull has its own purpose. This skull can be interpreted as a symbol of death. Which should be a warning sign to his opponent of how dangerous it will be if his opponent still insists on fighting Sun. The use of a skull as a visual symbol generally has contradictory meanings, including a symbol of death, religiosity or an expression of courage. The skull is also used as a symbol of death and courage such as the skull symbol on pirate ships where the skull symbol functions as a warning sign and identity claim for the enemy (Kurniawan, 2018).

3. Myts

The skull symbol is often used in various cultures and religions to represent something dangerous or even death. This is based on the fact that the skull is an important part that includes vital organs for humans. There are important organs there such as the eyes, nose, ears, and brain. In Buddhism (Tantris) death's head covered in blood symbolizes death. It is an attribute of Yama, the God of Death. In Christianity the death's head symbolizes contemplation of death, it is also one of the attributes of Christian ascetics. Death's head with a cross symbolizes eternal life. In Maya Indian society death's head and skeleton symbolize death and the world of the dead (Cooper 1978: 53). In today's developments, the skull symbol is also used in various fields of life, such as in the field of chemistry, the skull and crossbones symbol that we often see in laboratories indicates that a

chemical is dangerous and toxic. (Alifah, 2023)

4.5 Data 5

Signifier	signified
	A half body robe
Denotative signs	
red and yellow robes with tiger skin motifs	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
Sun wore a red and yellow robe to cover his body	The colors red and yellow mean prosperity and glory
Connotative signs / myths	
Red and yellow are glorified colors in Chinese society	

1. Denotative stage

In a fictional character, definitely that character has a costume with its uniqueness, one of the main uses of which is to distinguish it from other characters. When choosing a character's costume, certainly the creator must embed the character's identity into the costume. In Sun's character, he wears a costume in the form of a robe that covers half of his body and hangs from his right shoulder to the back of his back. This robe is dominated by maroon and gold. This robe covers his left arm and the left side of his body. In the middle of his stomach there is an armor that is attached to a rope that encircles his stomach. Under the armor there is a cloth shaped like a skirt. This fabric has a pattern like tiger skin. Then the back of the robe hangs down to his calves with a yellow leaf-like pattern at the ends.

2. Connotative stage

Clothes are not just clothes that we wear to cover our bodies. Clothing also plays an important role in forming our identity. Clothing can reveal a person's


nationality, culture, or religion. Clothing can also reflect a person's social and economic status. Not only that, clothes can also show a person's personality (Khusni F.F, 2023). Therefore, there are many signs on the clothes Sun is wearing that we can examine.

The second is color of clothes worn by Sun is red and yellow. Referring to the Chinese character of Sun, red is a color that is often used there because Chinese people believe that red symbolizes prosperity and yellow in Chinese culture means glory (Priyadi S,S. 2010). These two colors show the cultural influence that Sun's character comes from on the clothes that Sun wears. Apart from that, the meaning of these two colors which has been explained above shows Sun's identity as a person who has prosperity and glory for himself and his people.

3. Myth

Robes are clothes worn by monks to spread Buddhist teachings. This robe has various shapes and colors depending on the region of origin. For example, the robes worn by monks in India are dominated by brown, while in China, where Buddhism is the religion of the majority, the citizens use red and yellow on their robes. This is because these two colors have quite vital value for Chinese people. Chinese people have a culture that is very color-oriented. Where every meaning has an important meaning for their lives. Red in Chinese culture is considered the most noble color and the color that receives the highest honor. The positive values of the color red include prosperity, warmth, courage, dynamism, and compassion (Perbadi S, S. 2010). This red color is often used by Chinese people in important events such as Chinese New Year, weddings, etc. Like red, yellow also has its position in Chinese culture, because for them yellow symbolizes glory, gold, and prosperity. Yellow often decorates ornaments in houses, temples, candlesticks, etc.

4.6 Data 6

Signifier	Signified
	A long tail
Denotative signs	
A long tail that hangs down from the middle of the back side of the robe	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
The dangling tail is part of the animal personification of the monkey on Sun	The tail emerging from Sun's back emphasizes the ape element in Sun's creation
Connotative signs / myths	
The tail is a feature that is found in most animals that have certain uses	

1. Denotative stage

If we look at it from the back side, there is almost no striking appearance of the Sun. Except there is a tail hanging from the gap in his red robe. This tail has a fairly large diameter and is long down to the heel. The entire tail is covered with brown fur. This tail is very simple, there is only the addition of a silver ring at the point. This ring encircles the tip of the tail. And there are also small thorns on the ring.

2. Connotative stage

The tail is one part of the body that is identical to animals. The tail usually hangs from the bottom of the animal's back. The tail on the Sun character can be interpreted as personification of the monkey animal which is the inspiration for the origin of the character. This tail is very striking because it is quite large and long. Remembering Sun's human-like appearance. Monkeys are animals that are very similar to humans. The tail is the main difference between monkeys and humans. Quoted from *Nationalgeographic.co.id*, tens of millions of years ago, the ancestors of humans and all other primates had tails. However, humans were able to evolve to remove their tails and become *bipedal*. According to Michelle

Bezanson primates that retain their tails benefit in other ways, as these appendages perform a variety of useful functions. The tail helps with balance/stabilization when moving, looking for food, and even sleeping in monkeys (Nur Fadhilah, 2022).

3. Myth

The tail that emerges from the bottom of Sun's back is a sign, again confirming that Sun is the embodiment of a monkey. In Chinese culture, monkeys are considered intelligent, agile and brave animals. Therefore, monkeys are very revered and admired for them. Monkeys are widely used in various areas of Chinese life such as literature, arts, history, folk customs, and daily life.

In the Chinese zodiac, which is a very ancient part of Chinese culture, the monkey is the ninth sign of the zodiac, called “*Shen Hou*”. Monkeys are also used in many proverbs in Chinese. For example, "kill a chicken to warn the monkey" which means "punish someone as a warning to others"), then there is the saying "a monkey with a hat on", which means a worthless person in imposing attire. Next, there is the *Fangcheng Stone Monkey* statue which is a national-level intangible cultural heritage, that originated in the *Song* Dynasty and became popular during the *Ming* and *Qing* periods (Su Xin, 2018).

In the modern era, monkeys were also inseparable from Chinese culture. *Youxi Monkey* has become the most beloved comic figure on the Internet and has led to various peripheral products, including QQ chat pictures, comics, animated short films, and computer games (Su Xin, 2018)

4.7 Data 7

Signifier	signified
	A long wand
Denotative signs	
A long wand that is silver and gold on both point	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified

Weapons are tools used in combat	Weapons are something very important for a fighter
Connotative signs / myths	
Every fighter must have a weapon. Wand is one of the weapons that are commonly used by Chinese warriors. Which is where the legendary figure of the Sun's inspiration came from	

1. Denotative stage

Weapons are one of the important ornaments of a fighter that cannot be separated. The two have a significant relationship with each other. A fighter usually relies on his weapons when fighting. The weapons used by a fighter are certainly not chosen coincidentally. A fighter chooses his weapon specifically which he feels best suits his fighter. Sun himself uses a wand as his main weapon. This wand is silver in the middle and gold at both ends. There are simple carvings such as curved diagonal lines all over this stick. This stick is designed to have the ability to change its size according to Sun's wishes.

2. Connotative stage

Weapons and battle are two things that are related to each other. Weapons have the main function of attacking the enemy of the owner of the weapon. Sun is depicted using a stick as his main weapon. This stick is really needed by Sun in fighting. With the ability of this stick, it can change size according to Sun's wishes. Sun will be very helpful in both close and long-range combat.

3. Myth

Sun was inspired by the character of a classic Chinese story. *journeytothewestresearch.com* states tha Sun was inspired by the character of a classic Chinese story. *journeytothewestresearch.com* states that the story entitled Journey to the West is a script from the Tripitaka Seeks the Scriptures (*Sanzang Qujing*). Almost all of Sun's appearances in the game are similar to the character Sun Go Kong from the story. Including the weapon that Sun uses is a reference to this story. This stick is called *Jingu Ruyi Bang* or "The Compliant Golden-Hooped Rod".t the story entitled Journey to the West is a script from the Tripitaka Seeks the Scriptures (*Sanzang Qujing*). Almost all of Sun's appearances in the game are similar to the character Sun Go Kong from the story. Including the weapon that Sun uses is a reference to this story. This stick is called *Jingu Ruyi Bang* or "The Compliant Golden-Hooped Rod" (Silverfis, 2014)

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results, the conclusion of the research is All the data shows that Sun contains signs of denotation built into the game. This sign of denotation can be seen in Sun's visual design. The denotation that can be seen comes from the external appearance, starting from physical characteristics, to details embedded in the sun hero such as color and attributes. This denotation sign and its meaning mostly represent the story created for Sun's character background. The Researcher found the connotative meaning in each denotational sign that appears in the character Sun. The meaning of this connotation contains the message that Moonton wants to convey to the hero Sun. such as that Sun is based on a story character who has the embodiment of half a human and a monkey. Sun also has the temperament of a monkey. Apart from that, another connotation is that Sun is a king who has the power to rule or protect his flock. The myths that are present in the Signs of the Sun hero are related to each other. Sun is illustrated as humans who are greedy and easily ignited by anger. but besides that, Sun also has a religious side which today is vital for the life of every human being.

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