

# Unveiling the Hidden Meanings Behind the *Karembong Beureum* Illustration: A Study of Visual Communication Semiotics in the Work of Ayi R. Sacadipura

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## Abstract

Illustrations serve as a powerful form of visual communication, conveying messages and meanings that transcend words. This study delves into the visual expression style of Ayi R. Sacadipura, specifically focusing on the illustration titled "*Karembong Beureum*." Employing Roland Barthes' Communication Semiotics theory, a descriptive interpretative analysis is conducted to uncover the hidden meanings embedded within the illustration. The analysis reveals how Ayi R. Sacadipura utilizes various visual elements, including color, shape, and composition, to craft and communicate messages effectively. By dissecting the semiotic codes, the study demonstrates how these elements contribute to the overall visual expression style of the artist. Furthermore, the analysis explores potential connections between the visual meanings and societal phenomena, particularly the cultural and social values embedded within the artwork. This study underscores the significance of illustrations as mediums that transcend mere decoration, highlighting their capacity to convey complex messages that can resonate with viewers on an emotional and intellectual level.

Keywords: Visual Communication Semiotics, Ayi R. Sacadipura, *Karembong Beureum* Illustration, Visual Expression Style

## 1. Introduction

Illustrations have long been recognized as valuable tools for enhancing communication, providing visual representations that complement and enrich written text. They transcend linguistic barriers and cultural differences, offering a universal language that can be understood by audiences across the globe. Illustrations can simplify complex concepts, evoke

emotions, and spark the imagination in ways that words alone often cannot. A single illustration can encapsulate a story, ignite a conversation, or challenge societal norms - all through the power of visual storytelling.

The field of visual communication has evolved significantly throughout history. From cave paintings depicting hunting scenes to the intricate illustrations found in medieval

manuscripts, illustrations have served as a vital tool for recording history, conveying religious beliefs, and transmitting knowledge across generations. In the Renaissance, artists like Michelangelo and Da Vinci elevated illustration to new heights, depicting profound narratives and human anatomy with stunning detail.

The arrival of the printing press in the 15th century marked a significant turning point for illustration. Woodcuts and engravings became a popular means of illustrating books and pamphlets, making information and stories more accessible to a wider audience. This democratization of illustration continued with the advent of photography in the 19th century and the development of various printing techniques throughout the 20th century.

The rise of digital technologies has further revolutionized the field of illustration. Artists now have access to a vast array of tools and techniques, enabling them to create intricate and expressive artworks. Software programs provide artists

with the ability to manipulate images, experiment with color palettes, and explore new design possibilities. However, the core principles of visual communication remain the same. A successful illustration must effectively utilize visual elements such as color, shape, line, composition, and perspective to tell a story, convey information, or evoke an emotional response from the viewer.

Ayi R. Sacadipura stands out as a master of illustration in the contemporary art scene. His works are known for their vibrant colors, intricate details, and powerful symbolism. Sacadipura's illustrations often draw inspiration from his Indonesian heritage, incorporating traditional motifs and cultural references into his compositions. He skillfully blends these elements with contemporary aesthetics, creating artworks that resonate with global audiences. His work has garnered international recognition, with his illustrations gracing the pages of prestigious publications and adorning gallery walls around the world.

This study aims to delve deeper into the visual expression style of Ayi R. Sacadipura. By focusing on a specific illustration titled "*Karembong Beureum*," the research will utilize Roland Barthes' Communication Semiotics theory to analyze the semiotic codes embedded within the artwork. By dissecting these codes, the study seeks to uncover the hidden meanings and messages conveyed by the artist. The analysis will explore how Sacadipura uses visual elements to craft and communicate messages, and how these messages resonate with viewers on both an emotional and intellectual level.

However, the significance of this study extends beyond simply understanding a single illustration. By analyzing Sacadipura's work, we gain valuable insights into the role of illustrations in contemporary society. Illustrations are not merely decorative elements; they are powerful tools for communication, education, and social commentary. They can expose societal inequalities, challenge cultural norms, and spark critical thinking.

Furthermore, examining the work of artists like Sacadipura allows us to explore the interconnectedness of global and local cultures. Sacadipura's illustrations serve as a bridge, drawing upon his Indonesian heritage while engaging with a global audience. This study will contribute to a broader understanding of how artists utilize visual communication to navigate and transcend cultural boundaries.

Ultimately, this study aims to celebrate the power of illustration as a unique and compelling artistic form. By delving into the world of Ayi R. Sacadipura's "*Karembong Beureum*," we gain a deeper appreciation for the artist's talent and the profound impact that illustrations can have on viewers.

## 2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive interpretative approach. The primary objective is to analyze the visual expression style of Ayi R. Sacadipura's illustration titled "*Karembong Beureum*" through the

lens of Roland Barthes' Communication Semiotics theory In this study, data was gathered using appropriate techniques aligned with the objective nature of the research methodology. The specific instruments employed for data collection included:

- a. Literature Review: A comprehensive review of relevant literature, including scholarly journals, articles, and books, was conducted to gain insights into the fields of visual communication, semiotics, and the work of Ayi R. Sacadipura.
- b. Documentation Analysis: Existing documentation related to Ayi R. Sacadipura's works, such as artist statements, and online portfolios, was collected and analyzed to understand the artist's creative process, inspirations, and intended meanings behind his artworks.
- c. Deep Interview: A semi-structured deep interview was conducted with Ayi R. Sacadipura to gain a deeper understanding of the specific creative decisions made in the creation of the

"Karembong Beureum" illustration. The interview delved into the artist's use of visual elements, symbolism, and intended message for the artwork.

These data collection techniques provided a rich and diverse set of information to inform the analysis of Ayi R. Sacadipura's visual expression style and the hidden meanings embedded within the "Karembong Beureum" illustration. The collected data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (as described in Guba, 1990), which involves four stages:

- a. Data Reduction: The vast amount of data was systematically reduced by identifying key themes, patterns, and concepts that aligned with the research objectives.
- b. Data Display: The reduced data was organized and presented in a clear and structured manner, utilizing tables, charts, diagrams, and other visual representations to illustrate the findings.

- c. **Data Verification:** The validity and reliability of the analysis were ensured through rigorous checks, including peer review, triangulation of data sources, and self-reflection.
- d. **Drawing Conclusions:** The analyzed data was synthesized to draw meaningful conclusions about the visual expression style of Ayi R. Sacadipura and the hidden meanings embedded within the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration.

By employing this multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis, the study aims to uncover the hidden meanings and messages embedded within Ayi R. Sacadipura's "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, revealing the artist's unique visual expression style and its significance within the broader context of visual communication.

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. Subjects of Analysis

The subjects of analysis in this study are divided into three categories:

- a. **The visual illustration artwork "*Karembong Beureum*":** The primary focus of the analysis is the illustration itself, examining its visual elements, composition, and overall aesthetic to uncover its inherent meaning and symbolism.
- b. **Ayi R. Sacadipura as the illustrator and primary informant:** Ayi R. Sacadipura, the creator of the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, serves as a crucial informant. In-depth interviews with Ayi will be conducted to gain insights into his creative process, intentions, and the messages he aimed to convey through the artwork.
- c. **Viewers as supporting informants:** A selected group of individuals who have viewed the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration will be interviewed to gather their perceptions and interpretations. This will provide valuable perspectives on how the illustration's meaning is received and understood by different audiences.



Fig. 1 "Karembong Beureum" Illustration.

### 3.2. Research Approach

The research will employ Roland Barthes' model of communication semiotics as the overarching framework for analysis. Barthes' semiotic approach allows for a structured and systematic examination of the signs and symbols within the illustration, revealing the deeper levels of meaning they convey.

The research structure will be tailored to the specific needs of analyzing an illustration as a form of visual communication. This involves considering the unique characteristics of visual language and how it constructs meaning.

Key Aspects of the Research Approach:

a. Denotative and Connotative Analysis: The illustration's visual elements will be analyzed at both denotative (literal) and

connotative (associative) levels, uncovering the multiple layers of meaning they carry.

b. Signifier-Signified Relationship: Barthes' concept of the signifier (form) and signified (meaning) will be applied to deconstruct the illustration's signs, revealing the connections between the visual elements and the underlying ideas they represent.

c. Cultural Context and Intertextuality: The illustration will be examined within its cultural context, considering the influence of Sundanese culture, art traditions, and contemporary social issues on its meaning. Intertextual references and connections to other artworks or texts will also be explored.

d. Audience Perception and Interpretation: The research will delve into how viewers perceive and interpret the illustration's meaning, considering the influence of their individual backgrounds, experiences, and cultural perspectives.

By employing Barthes' semiotic framework and adapting it to the

analysis of visual communication, this research aims to unveil the hidden meanings embedded within the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, providing a deeper understanding of Ayi R. Sacadipura's artistic intentions and the illustration's significance within the context of Sundanese art and culture.

### 3.3. Sign Analysis in the "*Karembong Beureum*" Illustration

The "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration is a work by Ayi R. Sacadipura that was used as an illustration for a short story of the same name (*Karembong Beureum*) in the magazine "Sunda Midang" around 2017.

The initial stage of the analysis process involved identifying the signs that appear and are used by the illustrator (Ayi R. Sacadipura) in the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration.

The visible visual signs in the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration include: visual elements or forms such as curved and random cross-hatching lines, curved lines used as

object outlines, star-shaped planes, abstract planes, and black color on the background, and white on the objects. The visual objects used are divided into main and supporting visuals. The main visual is a female dancer character, and the supporting visuals consist of: a karembong (scarf), kemben (breastplate), earrings, two male characters, and two knives.

### 3.4. Analysis of Sign Structure in the "*Karembong Beureum*" Illustration

The structure of signs in the illustration by Ayi R. Sacadipura will be analyzed based on the levels of signs in Roland Barthes' model of communication semiotics. The signs that appear and are visible in the illustration will be divided into two levels, namely denotative and connotative signs, each of which consists of two main components: signifier (signifier) and signified (signified).

Based on the analysis of the "*Karembong Beureum*" Illustration, it depicts a scene with the main subject being a female dancer, surrounded by elements that show

conflict and violence, all conveyed through the use of lines, shapes, and colors.

### 3.5. Context Analysis

In the context analysis stage, the author tries to examine the context related to the illustration work itself; such as where the illustration was made, when, its purpose, the cultural, social, and historical context that influenced the creation and understanding of the illustration. Context analysis is carried out after the author obtains data from the results of in-depth interviews with Ayi R. Sacadipura as the illustrator who created the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustrations.

The "*Karembong Beureum*" illustrations were created in mid-2017 in Bandung, precisely at the editorial office of the book publisher Pustaka Jaya, Jl. Gumuruh No.40, Gumuruh, Kec. Batununggal, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40275. The illustrations were made to order by the magazine Sunda Midang to be used as illustrations for short stories. The illustrations created are more in line with the context of the

content of the story in each short story.

The visuals presented in each illustration are taken from one of the scenes that Ayi considers to be the most interesting or able to represent the premise of the story. The visual objects used and depicted in the illustration work are objects that often appear in the story script. Several things such as emotions, time setting, and the main theme or concept of the story are usually represented through visual elements such as lines, whether in the form of hatching or outlines, plane shapes, and black or white colors.

As an illustrator, Ayi's abilities have been trained and honed since childhood. In addition to being born into a family of artists in Bandung, Ayi has a strong background in fine arts education, honing his skills since childhood and learning from several great artists in Bandung. Moreover, Ayi focuses on continuing to pursue the field of fine arts, from studying fine arts at IKIP Bandung, to continuing to work in various publishing houses as an illustrator.



Ayi's works are greatly inspired by Indonesian maestro artists such as Pa Onong, Basuki Abdullah, Raden Saleh, and Barli. This influence is evident in the detailed illustration style and the use of hatching techniques and complex compositions. The most influential in Ayi's illustration style is Pa Onong, as can be seen from some of his illustrations that at first glance resemble Pa Onong's illustrations. One example is the illustration of an old man carrying a zither that was once published as an illustration of a short story in the online newspaper ayobandung.com, many considered by Indonesian art observers to be an illustration of Pa Onong's work.

In the process of his work, Ayi often observes the surrounding community as a source of inspiration and reference.

### 3.6. Message Analysis

The message analysis stage delves into the message the illustrator intends to convey through the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration. This analysis considers themes, concepts, and ideas Ayi aims to communicate to the

audience. Through in-depth interviews with Ayi R. Sacadipura, we can identify the specific messages he wants to transmit to viewers.

#### 3.6.1. Thematic Message

Based on the interview with the illustrator, it's evident that Ayi, through the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, strives to communicate the core theme and narrative of the short story titled "*Karembong Beureum*." The interview reveals that Ayi chose a single scene he considered most impactful from the story. This scene depicts a tragic event unfolding at a night market. While everyone is engrossed in watching the captivating stage dancer, a fight erupts between two young men vying for the dancer's affection. The confrontation ends with the death of one of the men.

#### 3.6.2. Visual Communication of the Message

The illustration is intentionally designed to juxtapose two contrasting elements: the beauty and grace of the female dancer performing on stage and the tragic event transpiring behind her. Ayi

translates the emotions, atmosphere, and timeframe described in the story's narrative into visual elements like lines, shapes, and the black and white color scheme.

Here are the key messages Ayi intends to convey to viewers through the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration:

- a. A Scene from a Night Market: The illustration depicts a phenomenon occurring during a night market, where a captivating stage performance is underway.
- b. Tragic Conflict: The illustration portrays a fight between two men, resulting in the death of one, fueled by their rivalry over a woman they both admire.

### 3.6.3. Enhancing Message Clarity

To ensure the message is effectively communicated, Ayi utilizes a realistic illustration style. Each object is depicted in detail to narrate the events unfolding, allowing viewers to readily grasp and interpret the intended story. For added appeal, Ayi incorporates dramatic elements through the use

of visual effects and a black background.

### 3.7. Audience Perception Analysis

The audience perception analysis explores how viewers interpret the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration based on their cultural background, personal experiences, and knowledge. This stage involves data collected through interviews with a selected group of individuals who have seen the illustration.

#### 3.7.1. Understanding Audience Interpretations

By analyzing the interviews with viewers who have encountered the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, we can gain valuable insights into their perceptions of the message conveyed. The initial visual focus tends to be on the stage dancer positioned prominently in the foreground. Viewers then often shift their attention to the two men depicted in the background.

#### 3.7.2. Common Interpretations

Generally, viewers share a common understanding of the visuals in the illustration – a conflict between two men over a woman.

However, the interpretation of the deeper meaning varies based on individual perspectives. Here are some potential interpretations identified:

- a. **Conflict and Tragedy:** A clash between two men driven by their desire for the same woman, culminating in violence and death.
- b. **Duality Behind Beauty:** The illustration highlights the potential for darkness and conflict to lurk beneath a surface of beauty and entertainment.
- c. **Power and Domination:** The fight represents the struggle for power and control, with the woman potentially symbolizing a prize in a larger power dynamic.
- d. **Love and Loss:** The illustration depicts the lengths to which someone might go for love, even risking their life.

### 3.7.3. Factors Influencing Interpretation:

The way viewers perceive and interpret the message in the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration is significantly influenced by their

individual backgrounds. Here are some key factors:

- a. **Cultural Background:** Cultural values and norms play a role in shaping interpretations. For instance, viewers from cultures with a strong emphasis on honor might interpret the fight as a consequence of a broken code of honor.
- b. **Personal Experiences:** Past experiences with conflict, love, or similar themes can influence how viewers connect with the illustration.
- c. **Knowledge of Aesthetics:** Understanding of artistic styles and symbolism can shape how viewers decode the visual language employed in the illustration.
- d. **Educational Background:** Educational attainment can affect the level of analysis viewers apply to interpret the illustration's meaning.
- e. **Media Influence:** Viewers' exposure to various media forms can influence their expectations of visual storytelling.

f. Gender: Gender roles and expectations within a viewer's society might influence how they interpret the characters and their actions.

#### 3.7.4. Evaluating Audience Perception:

To gain a comprehensive understanding of audience perception, it's crucial to consider the professional and cultural backgrounds of the chosen interview sample. Ideally, the sample should encompass individuals from fields like visual communication design, interior design, and illustration, along with those involved in Sundanese cultural education and preservation.

By analyzing audience perception through interviews with a diverse sample, this research aims to uncover the richness and complexity of interpretations that the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration evokes in viewers.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

Visual communication is an integral part of our daily lives. Whether we are at home, on the

street, or at work, we are constantly bombarded with visual messages. Illustrations, as a form of visual communication, play a significant role in conveying information, ideas, and emotions. To fully comprehend the depth and richness of an illustration's meaning, it is essential to delve into the realm of semiotics, the study of signs and symbols.

In this research, we will employ Roland Barthes' model of communication semiotics to analyze the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration by Ayi R. Sacadipura. Barthes' semiotic approach provides a structured and systematic framework for examining the signs and symbols within the illustration, revealing the deeper levels of meaning they convey.

### 4.1. Visual Communication, Semiotics, and Illustration

Visual communication refers to the process of conveying messages through visual elements, such as images, illustrations, graphics, and designs. It serves as a powerful tool for communicating information, ideas, and emotions, often in a more

immediate and impactful manner than written language.

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, plays a crucial role in understanding visual communication. Signs are any objects, actions, or events that convey meaning to a receiver. Symbols are a specific type of sign that have a more complex and culturally-determined meaning.

Illustrations, as a form of visual communication, utilize signs and symbols to convey messages. By understanding the semiotic principles underlying illustrations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the meanings they convey and the impact they have on viewers.

#### 4.2. Communication Semiotics and Roland Barthes' Model

Communication semiotics focuses on the study of signs and symbols within the context of human communication. It examines how signs and symbols are used to create meaning and convey messages in various forms of communication.

Roland Barthes, a renowned French semiotician, made significant

contributions to the field of communication semiotics. His model provides a structured framework for analyzing signs and symbols, emphasizing the relationship between the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning). Additionally, Barthes introduced the concepts of denotation and connotation to differentiate between the literal and associative meanings of signs.

#### 4.3. Key Aspects of Barthes' Model

- a. Signifier-Signified Relationship: Barthes' concept of the signifier (form) and signified (meaning) is fundamental to understanding the semiotic structure of signs. The signifier is the physical form of the sign, while the signified is the concept or idea represented by the sign. The relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary and determined by cultural conventions.
- b. Denotative and Connotative Analysis: Denotation refers to the literal or dictionary meaning of a sign. Connotation, on the other hand, refers to the additional

meanings and associations that a sign carries, often influenced by cultural and personal experiences.

- c. **Mythological Analysis:** Barthes introduced the concept of myth to examine how signs and symbols are used to create and reinforce ideologies. Myths are naturalized narratives that present a particular worldview as universal and unquestionable.

By employing Barthes' semiotic framework and adapting it to the analysis of visual communication, this research aims to unveil the hidden meanings embedded within the "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration, providing a deeper understanding of Ayi R. Sacadipura's artistic intentions and the illustration's significance within the context of Sundanese art and culture.

This theoretical framework provides a solid foundation for analyzing the illustration and uncovering its deeper layers of meaning. By examining the signs, symbols, and cultural context of the illustration, we can gain a more

comprehensive understanding of the messages it conveys and the impact it has on viewers.

## 5. Conclusion

This research employed Roland Barthes' model of communication semiotics to analyze the visual elements and hidden meanings within Ayi R. Sacadipura's "*Karembong Beureum*" illustration. By deconstructing the signs and symbols through the lens of signifier-signified relationships, denotation and connotation, and myth, the research aimed to unveil the deeper layers of meaning embedded within the artwork.

The analysis considered the cultural context of Sundanese art traditions and contemporary social issues, exploring potential intertextual references to further enrich the understanding of the illustration. Additionally, the research acknowledged the role of audience perception and interpretation, recognizing the influence of viewers' backgrounds and experiences in shaping their understanding of the artwork.

By employing this multifaceted approach, the research has shed light on the hidden meanings within "Karembong Beureum." This newfound understanding not only provides a deeper appreciation of Ayi R. Sacadipura's artistic intentions but also expands our knowledge of the significance of the illustration within the broader context of Sundanese art and culture.

This research serves as a springboard for further exploration. Future studies could delve deeper into specific aspects of the illustration, such as the use of color symbolism or the influence of historical events on the artwork's creation. Additionally, investigating audience reception through surveys or focus groups could provide valuable insights into how viewers interpret and connect with the illustration's messages.

Ultimately, this research highlights the power of semiotics in unlocking the hidden meanings within visual communication. By applying theoretical frameworks and considering the artwork's

cultural context and audience reception, we can gain a richer understanding of the messages conveyed through visual art.

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