



## Semiotic Analysis on “Keda” Ende Lio Traditional House Building in Ngalupolo Village

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan mengkaji makna dari berbagai jenis tanda yang terdapat pada Keda, rumah adat Ende Lio di Desa Ngalupolo, Kecamatan Ndonga, Kabupaten Ende, Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, di mana para peneliti melakukan analisis data secara menyeluruh berdasarkan perspektif semiotika Saussure dan makna triadik Pierce, dengan mengikuti dua langkah umum analisis data. Pertama, para peneliti mengumpulkan data melalui observasi dan wawancara. Kedua, mereka mengidentifikasi tanda-tanda di setiap bagian bangunan Keda. Ketiga, peneliti menganalisis data berdasarkan teori semiotika yang ada. Temuan dan analisis dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada sembilan model tanda yang ditemukan dalam rumah adat Keda. Para peneliti juga menemukan bahwa makna-makna dari tanda-tanda tersebut memiliki arti dan makna sosial tersendiri yang menggambarkan rutinitas masyarakat setempat serta pelestarian kearifan lokal dan warisan leluhur yang berasal dari nenek moyang sejak zaman dahulu.

**Kata Kunci:** *semiotika, tanda, penanda, petanda, representamen, interpretan, referen/objek.*

**Abstract:** This study aims to ascertain and examine the significance of the various types of signs exhibited on Keda, the Ende Lio traditional house in Ngalupolo Village, Ndonga District, Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach where the researchers conducted a thorough analysis of the data based on the Pierce's triadic meaning, adhering to two general steps of data analysis. First, the researchers collected data through observation and interviews. Second, they identified the signs in each part of the Keda building. Third, they analyzed the data based on the existing semiotic theory. The findings and analysis of this research show that there are nine sign models found in the Keda traditional house. The researchers also found that the meanings of these signs have their own meanings and social meanings that describe the routines of the local community as well as the preservation of local wisdom and ancestral heritage originating from ancestors since ancient times.

**Keywords:** *semiotics, signs, meaning, symbol, reference, referent.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Etymologically, the term Semiotics is derived from the Greek word *semesion*, meaning sign, *semainon* which means signifier and *semainomenon* meaning signified or indication. Historically, semiotics has been considered as a branch of philosophy written in John Locke’s essay in 1689, entitled Human understanding that leads to the conceptual understanding of language meaning and signs during the medieval period. Yakin and Totu (2014) documented that “the term semiotics only appeared at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century when introduced and applied by a German philosopher, Lambert” (p.5). Then, in the 20<sup>th</sup> the scope of semiotics began to expand, particularly in the domains of epistemology and language research (Panuti & Zoest, 1996). Rahmawati et al. (2020) stated that since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, semiotics has grown into a serious field of study of body language, art forms, rhetorical discourse, visual communication, media, myth, narrative, language, artifacts, gestures, eye contact, clothes, advertisements, food, ceremonies based on the social, cultural, political, ideological context.

Furthermore, there have been a number of conceptual meanings of semiotics. Saussure’s theory revealed that semiotics is a study of sign in society as Yakin and Totu (2014) stated, “the gist and primary focus of Saussure’s theory is the principle that emphasized language as a system of sign existing the world of mankind” (p.5). In the same vein, Umberto (1979) stated that everything in real world is semiotic system construction in the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects as Jakobson (1964) documented, those are the semiotic systems that become the central aspects of human language. In addition, Chandler (2022) documented that “Jacobson defined semiotics as the general science of signs which has as its basic discipline linguistics, the science of verbal signs”(p.8), which is line with the concept of semiotics as the system of theoretical and practical science of the objects (Liszka, 1996). Furthermore, in modern linguistic discourse, the semiotics conceptual framework was introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, known as the founders of contemporary semiotics, a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of signs.

Saussure's concept of semiology postulates that human life is permeated by a multitude of signs that facilitate the interpretation of meaning for humans (Sebeok, 2021). Chandler (2022) stated that for Saussure, “linguistics as a branch of semiology” (p.7), and “a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept (signified) and a sound pattern (signifier)” (p.14) found in the media or literary arts. Although Jakobson proposed that “semiology is a branch of linguistics”(Chandler, 2022,p.8) however, Barthes (1972) argued that the most common term used in linguistics discourse is Semiotics one of the linguistics branches which is

according to Saussure, the study of sign is concerning with the signifier (*words, sound, image, or gesture*) and signified (*the mental concept, meaning, and interpretation of signifier*). In line with that, Ijam and Abdulla (2021) stated that "the signifier is a chain of sounds while signified is the associated abstract of the mental concept of particular sound chain turning the word itself a sign" (p.272). Furthermore, Barthes' concept of semiology is based on the Saussure's theory of signifier and signified. Bouzida (2014) pointed out that Barthes' conceptual framework of sign is categorized into signified which is concerning with materials, and signified that is related to the connotative and denotative meaning. Denotative meaning represents the common, literal interpretation of the signs, offering an explicit description of visual elements presented in the image. Meanwhile, connotative meaning is regarded as a visual representation of a concept, this image is open to a variety of interpretations, which are primarily shaped by individual's social, cultural, economical, political and ideological background.

Whereas, Charles Sanders Peirce's perspective, "semiotics is synonymous with the concept of logic that focuses on the knowledge of human thinking process" (Yakin & Totu, 2014, p.6) as according to Peirce's ideas, Hoopes (2014) stated that sign is the manifestation of feeling of human being, the collaboration of thought and contexts delivered through icon, symbols, and indexes. Based on Saussure's ideas, Sebeok (2001) stated that "Peirce called the signifier as *representamen* (*literally something that does the representing*), a form inheriting in the physical strategy of representation it self (*the use of sounds, hand movements, etc. for some referential purposes*)" (p.6). In the same vein, Chandler (2022) documented Peirce's concept of sign, "*the representamen* (sign vehicle), an *interpretant* (sense made of the sign) and an *object/ a referent*. In this context, the term "sign" is used to refer to the representation of an object, the act of representing it and the interpretation of that representation are two key concepts in semiotics.

Sebeok (2001) documented three types of sign, they are symptom, signal, and names. Symptoms is produced by the human body to achieve specific purposes such as warnings, prohibitions, and the indication of acceptance based on the intellectual and emotional intelligence of the phenomena occurring (Sebeok, 2001). Signals are generated by the "creators" and subsequently received by the "reactors" for the purpose of achieving specific outcomes such as as regulating, eliciting, or influencing an action or reaction, nodding, winking, glancing, looking, nudging, kicking, and head tilting (St Clair et al., 2018). Names are markers which are applied to various members of a given species in a way that serves to distinguish one member from another based on variables such as ethnicity and gender in social life.

Furthermore, Peirce proposed three types of signs, they are icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons is "a sign that is made to resemble, stimulate, or reproduce its referent in some way" (Sebeok, 2011,p.10), the signifier is perceived as bearing similarities to or serving as a representation of the signified (Chandler, 2002), and "thing that is being marked"(Romdhoningsih et al.,2023,p.7520). Indexes is the signifier which is directly connected, tangibly or causally to the signified, regardless of any intent that may be present and either directly observed or indirectly inferred (Chandler, 2022), something which can be in the form of material substances, natural phenomena, sounds or noises, and strokes (Romdhoningsih et al.,2023). For example, smoke serves as an indicator of fire, highlighting the precise location of the fire, a cough can be regarded as an indicator of a cold, providing insight into where the cold may be present (Sebeok,2021). Symbols is a sign that serves to represent a concept in a way that is not inherent to the concept itself, but rather is a convention established by society (Romdhoningsih et al.,2023; Sebeok,2021). For example,"language is general (plus specific language, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases and sentences), numbers, morse code, traffic lights, national flag" (Chandler, 2022,p.36). The purposes above are accomplished through communicative processes between communicators and communicants for the conventional social purposes, for example "warning lights, flares, beacons, balefires, red flags, warning lights, traffic lights, alarms, distress signals, danger signals, whistles, sirens, beepers, buzzers, knocking, gongs, bells, and drums"(Sebeok,2001,p.10). Kralemann and Lattmann (2013) revealed that "every sign principally has meaning" (p.3402) that can be manifested into the Pierce's semiotic triangle of meaning; "representamen (*signifier*), interpretant (*signified*), object (*represent*)" (Rezeki & Sagala,p.122).

The purpose of this research is to find out the signs and meanings contained in "Keda" and to understand the meaning of the signs contained in "Keda" in Ngalupolo Village, Ndonga District, Ende Regency, NTT, Indonesia. The Keda is a structure erected on the site of the Ende Lio traditional house. It possesses the characteristics of a high thatched roof and functions as a place for deliberation, a place which regularly functioned to store traditional ritual equipments and historical relics, and an ancestral residence. Spiritually, the Keda is believed to be a spiritual place for the spirits of the ancestors or forefathers of the Ende Lio people

Based on the introduction, this research endeavored to find out and analyse the meaning of a number of signs found on Keda which famous as one of the Ende Lio traditional houses located in Ngalupolo Village, Ndonga District, Ende regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Then, the researchers employed the concept of Pierce's semiotics triangle of meaning for

the purpose of finding out the meaning of the signs, referent and and reference. Thus, in light of the aforementioned analysis, the following research questions emerge:

- 1) What are the signs found in the traditional houses construction?
- 2) What are the meaning of signs analyzed within Pierce's semiotic triangle of meaning?

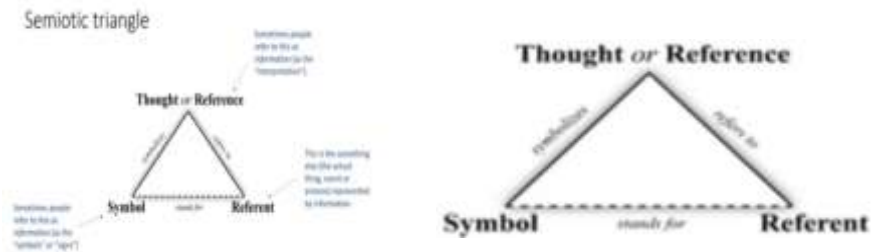
## **METHODS**

The present study employs a qualitative research method as defined by Sugiyono (2017), this is a "scientific way to obtain data with specific purposes and uses" (2). Consequently, the selection of an appropriate research method is imperative to obtain data that will be examined in a study (Sugiyono, 2017). As one of the qualitative data processing techniques, it is defined as a technique that combines various existing data collection techniques and data sources. In addition to the data collection processes to be used in research, this study uses a triangulation method for data collection by observation, interview, and documentation. This process is carried out in order to produce information that is more relevant and can be described in the the real situation during the process of data collection. The researchers' approach entails direct engagement with the research site, conducting interviews, and meticulously documenting the results of these interviews.

Furthermore, Sugiyono (2017) documented that observation is a method of data collection technique that possesses specific characteristics when compared to other techniques. It is confined not only to human subjects; but also can be applied to other natural objects. In this study, observation entails the direct observation of the object of research, namely the signs found on Keda in Ngalupolo village. Meanwhile, data collection by Interview According to Esterberg in Sugiyono (2017), an interview is defined as a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through questions and answers, so that meaning can be constructed on a particular topic. In this study, the researchers employed an interview method that entailed the formulation of questions and the identification of sources for data collection. In this study's interview methodology, the child interview's recipient is first established. Subsequently, we formulated the primary inquiries that would serve as the foundation for the interview. The interviews were transcribed and recorded. The analysis of these interviews yielded results that were insufficient to meet the study's objectives. To address this limitation, we employed additional data collection techniques, including direct observation, photography, and the recording of the research situation or target object.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the study, the researchers identified the signs and analyzed the meaning of the identified signs found Keda. The analysis was conducted in accordance with the Pierce triangle of meaning as it is shown in the following table.



Picture 1: Pierce's triangle of meaning

**Research question 1: What are the signs found in Keda Traditional house?**



Picture 1:Keda Traditional House

Based on the observation, a number of signs are found on Keda Traditional house:



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**Research question 2 : What are the meaning of signs analyzed within  
Pierce's semiotic triangle of meaning?**

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Ritual equipment, historical relics, an ancestral residence, and spiritual place.

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Keda, Lio Traditional House

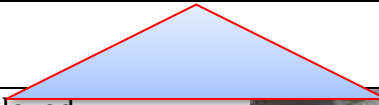


The Keda structure was constructed at the site of the traditional Ende Lio house. The architectural feature of this structure is its elevated thatched roof. The Keda building serves multiple purposes, including its role as a venue for communal discourse, a storage space for traditional ritual equipment and historical relics, and as an ancestral residence. From a spiritual perspective, the Keda structure is considered the site where the spirits of the ancestors of the Ende Lio community reside.

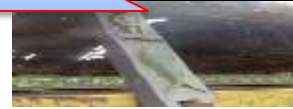
**Sign 1.**

Sustenance and means of income.

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A sculpture of a man fishing is displayed on the right pillar of Keda building.

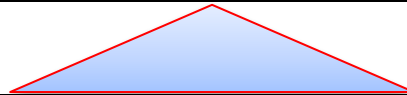


Angalupolo villagers have historically relied on fishing as a primary livelihood, making it an integral aspect of their ancestral livelihoods. Given their coastal location, fishing also plays an important role in their daily lives and has become integrated into their cultural practices and traditions.

**Sign 2**

Aesthetic appeal of species, living creatures, natural resources, ecosystems that must be preserved by the villagers.

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The lower crossbar in the center is made of wooden planks.



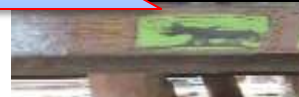
The carvings depicted include plant life, such as flowers, as well as animal life, including seabirds. The floral and avian motifs depicted in the carvings represent species of animals and plants endemic to the Ngalupolo region.

**Sign 3**

Prosperity and the value of diligent effort.

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A carving of a buffalo, designated as "Kamba,"



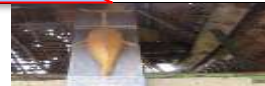
Buffaloes are frequently utilized in daily activities, such as agriculture.

**Sign 4.**

The individuals' means of subsistence, livelihood and community engagement

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The wooden board with the sculpture of fish.



The sculpture in question portrays an individual engaged in fishing, a practice known as "ngati ika," which is a cultural practice that involves the use of a boat as a means of acquiring fish from the sea. The boat serves as a tool that facilitates the process of fishing, allowing individuals to locate fish in the ocean.

**Sign 5.**

Power, Esteem and respect.

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A carving of a snake (Nipa) consuming a scorpion (Keti)



The local community has a strong belief in the power of snakes. This belief system places snakes in a position of esteem and respect. The snake itself is part of the Pamali/Haram "Nggua Raju" and the Apparition of "Nipi Tei."

**Sign 6.**

Prosperity and the value of diligent effort.

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Carvings of the following animals have been identified: Dog ("Lako"), Chicken ("Manu"), and Duck ("Bebe"),"



The presence of dogs, chickens, and ducks in Ngalupolo village has been observed to date back to the time of one's ancestors. These animals are commonly



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kept by the local community. The practice of sacrificial offerings to nature, referred to as "To Lo Tana Watu," is of particular significance

**Sign 7.**

Aesthetic appeal and biodiversity characteristic of the natural world.

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The carving's subject matter includes "Kowa Rajo" sailboats, birds, and plants.



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The carving's imagery represents the fauna and flora endemic to the Ngalupolo region. The carving's imagery conveys the aesthetic appeal and biodiversity characteristic of the natural world.

**Sign 8.**

Guidance and Navigation

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The carvings in question depict the "Dara" star and the "Kamba" buffalo. Duck "Bebe".



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Star carvings serve as representations of celestial bodies in the night sky, while buffaloes and ducks are domestic animals in the local community. According to the local community, stars are utilized as a form of guidance for fishermen, helping them navigate the sea and locate fish. the flowers in the carving are the types of plants found in the Ngalupolo area.

**Sign 9.**

The beauty of the villagers

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Sarong motif



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The flowers in the carving are the types of plants found in the Ngalupolo area. Sarong motif indicates the beauty of local wisdom that is still preserved.

**Sign 10.**

Community Collaboration

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Carvings of the Sun "Mata Leja", Fish "Ika", Duck "Itik".



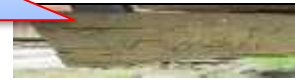
The Sun "Mata Leja" is an important part of everyday life. Meanwhile, fish and ducks are animals that are often found in the sea when people do their activities during the day. The sun has an important meaning for the community because it helps the community in the process of drying commodity products and time markers.

**Sign 11.**

Wealth, a beast

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The presence of a chicken (Manu) and an individual mounted on a horse (Jara)



Horses are of significant importance, serving as a means of transportation for goods, contributing to the community's daily lives. Wealth (Ngawu). The figure mounted on the horse, "Jara," is interpreted as a beast to be ridden, "Ola Nai," and a means of transporting cargo, "Ola Wua," to benefit the community.

**Sign 12.**

Affluence and transportation accessibility

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Chickens and horses



Chickens and horses have been identified as domestic animals that have been part of the local population's heritage since ancestral times. The chicken, represented by "Manu," is understood to be a symbol of affluence for "Ngawu." The person riding the horse, "Jara," is depicted as both a mount for "Ola Nai" and a means of transporting cargo, "Ola Wua," aiding the community.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the study of semiotics of signs and meanings in Keda in Ngalupolo village, we found many signs with their respective meanings. The meanings of the signs describe daily activities and efforts to preserve the culture inherited from ancestors since ancient times. The following are the signs found in Keda; Signs in the form of animals; fish have the meaning of a source of life. Birds have the meaning of beauty. Snakes have the meaning of authoritative power. Buffalo, horses, chickens, ducks, dogs have the meaning of sacrificial offerings and pets. Signs in the form of objects; the sun has the meaning of a time marker. Boats have the meaning of a means of transportation and relics. Stars have the meaning of direction indicators. Signs in the form of plants; flowers have the meaning of beauty and natural wealth.

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