

## Conference Paper

# Peirce's Semiotics Study of the Chronicle of Devotion Painting of Agus Putu Suyadnya

Anindia Amalia Ulfah, Hadjar Pamadhi, and Martono

Graduate School of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta

**ORCID:**

Anindia Amalia Ulfah: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8807-085X>

**Abstract**

Artworks, especially painting, are the second language or visual language of an artist for expressing their ideas. Therefore, through this paper, the writer tried to examine a painting entitled, "The Chronicle of Devotion" using the Charles Sanders Peirce Semiotics approach (Icons, Indexes and Symbols). The results of this study show that the studied painting is a visual form of artists representing the spirit of heroism and legendary sacrifice originating from Bali known as Kebo Iwa, interpreted as Uncle Buffalo. Through Pierce's semiotics study and approach, the writer described the icons, indexes, and symbols of the painting. The icons describe the visual objects depicted realistically in the painting, such as the buffalo and the bird; the indexes are explained in the object that is outlined as a large and burly male knight; and the symbols are visually explained through colouring, expression, and property portrayed by the main object.

Corresponding Author:

Anindia Amalia Ulfah  
anindiaamalia3@gmail.com

Published: 1 March 2021

Publishing services provided by  
Knowledge E

© Anindia Amalia Ulfah

et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ISOLEC Conference Committee.

**Keywords:** semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce, The Chronicle of Devotion, Kebo Iwa

## 1. Introduction

Art is a form of artist expertise in expressing ideas and ideas into a medium by considering the values of beauty. The form of artistic expression with a touch of beauty values is known as a work of art. Artwork is a language of liaison between the artist and the audience, therefore the meaning or message is implied in it. Artwork is born not only to fulfil the personal needs of the artist, but as a forum for the audience to participate in expressing themselves and living the meaning implied therein. According to Bahari (2008: 45) states, one of the human needs classified as integrative needs is to enjoy beauty, appreciate and express feelings of beauty. Fine art is a part of art whose creation refers to the visual form or can be captured by the sense of sight and is determined by the appearance of the visual elements that compose it. One of the branches of fine art is painting. Painting is a language of expression of artistic experience and artist ideology and as a representation of an artist in responding to the phenomena that occur

 OPEN ACCESS

within him and around him. A painting is a two-dimensional work of art that displays elements of lines, shapes, fields, colours, space and textures. According to Dharsono (2017: 33) explains that painting can be said to be an expression of a person's aesthetic experience which is expressed in a two-dimensional (two-dimensional) field using visual media.

Painting works in particular are works created by artists to express their self-expression in response to all things, of course the goal is for the audience to enjoy or appreciate and try to grasp the meaning that the artist wants to convey through the painting. There are several ways to reveal the meaning or study of painting, one of which is to use the semiotic study of Charles Sanders Pierce (Icons, Indices and Symbols). Through semiotic studies, we can reveal the meaning of a work of art, because visual arts or visual arts generally have the potential for a sign. This is emphasized by Budiman (2011: 117) Colour incisions, line strokes and all other visual elements in a work of art form a cluster of icons that can be recognized as something, whether objects, people, events, geometric shapes and so on. In this paper, the writer tries to study a painting entitled Babad Pengabdian Karya Agus Putu Suyadnya using Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic approach.

Agus Putu Suyadnya is an artist who comes from Denpasar, Bali and now resides on Jl. Mount Sempu Industry No. 16, Rt. 08, Tamantirto, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta. He is a fine arts bachelor graduated from the Indonesian Art Institute in Yogyakarta and is also part of the Sanggar Dewata Indonesia (SDI). This paper will discuss his work entitled "Babad Pengabdian" through Pierce's semiotic study. Babad Pengabdian's painting is one of his paintings in the "*The Guardian Series*" and has also been exhibited in the Duo Art Exhibition with Arya Sucitra at Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta with the theme "Keboiwalogi". The painting series "*The Guardian Series*" is a painting with a concept that elevates heroic souls or the figure of a guard through a perspective which he visualizes in a surreal style. In the selection of visual objects, Suyad chose large and strong animals such as buffalo which he visualized in Babab Pengabdian's painting.

The buffalo figure he visualizes in the Babad Pengabdian painting is a representation of a legendary figure from the island of Bali who is famous for his sacrifice to unite the archipelago, namely the figure of Kebo Iwa. Kebo Iwa is described as a handsome young man, tall and big and has supernatural powers. Besides being proficient in warfare, he is also a reliable undagi mastering traditional Balinese architecture, so that in his history he has produced architectural works in the form of sacred buildings and other traditional Balinese buildings. His body and strength which are big, strong like a buffalo are believed to be able to lift large stones and move them to the places he wants,

that's why he was given the nickname Kebo Iwa which means "Uncle Buffalo". From the background description above, the author is interested in studying a painting by Agus Putu entitled Babad Pengabdian "*The Guardian Series*" with the semiotic approach of Charles Sanders Peirce. By using Peirce's semiotic study, it is hoped that it will be able to explore the meaning of paintings both visually and verbally.

## 1.1. Charles Sanders Peirce Semiotics Study

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols which are an important tradition in the thought of the communication tradition. The semiotic tradition includes the main theory of how signs represent objects, ideas, situations, conditions, feelings, and so on that are outside the self. The basic concept that unites the semiotic tradition is a 'sign' which is defined as a stimulus designation something other than itself (a stimulus that refers to something that is not itself). Message has a very important position in communication. There are several semiotic approaches that are referred to in a study, one of which is Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach.

Charles Sanders Peirce is an American philosopher who is the most original and understands various aspects of life, he is also a thinker who can prove his words. Peirce is well known for his sign theory. Within the scope of semiotics, he said that in general a sign is what represents something for someone. According to Peirce, "sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity". Something that Peirce uses to make signs work called ground. Consequently, the sign (sign or representamen) is always present in triadic relationships, namely ground, object, and interpretant (Sobur, 2013: 41).

In studying the object, seeing everything from the three trichotomy concepts, however, what the author uses the second trichotomy is as follows: Referring to Peirce's theory, the meaning of the signs in the image can be seen from the types of signs classified and semiotics. Among them are icons, indexes and symbols.

1. Icons are signs that resemble the shape of the original object. Can also be interpreted as a relationship between signs and objects that are similar in nature. That the intent of the icon is to give a message to its original form. The simplest example and many we encounter but are not aware of is a map.

2. Index is a sign related to things that are casual, or cause and effect. In this case the sign has a causal relationship with its object. This sign means the result of a message. A common example is smoke as a sign of fire.

3. Symbol is a sign that is related to the marker as well as the sign. That something is symbolized through a sign agreed upon by the markers as a general reference. For example, a red light means stop, everyone knows and agrees that a red light indicates stop.

## 1.2. Painting

Art Painting is a part of pure art, where its development has been so rapid lately, as well as the limitations of its understanding. In general, painting is defined as a use of colour poured by a brush into the canvas or paper to create a specific purpose from an imagination. Bahari (2008: 82) states that painting is a two-dimensional work of art that displays elements of colour, fields, lines, shapes and textures. As part of a fine artwork, painting is a language of expression of artistic experience and ideology. Another theory about painting according to Dharsono (2017: 33) states that painting can be said to be an expression of a person's aesthetic experience which is expressed in a two-dimensional (two-dimensional) field, using visual media, namely lines, colours, textures, shapes., etc..

From some of the opinions about painting above, it can be concluded that painting is a technical plan that is expressed intellectually, emotions, symbols, feelings, experiences, using lines and colours in a two-dimensional plane by considering the principles arrangement of elements such as rhythm (rhythm), proportion and balance (balance).

## 1.3. Kebo Iwa

Kebo Iwa is the son of Sri Karang Buncing. Kebo Iwa has been able to eat adult food since childhood. Kebo Iwa grew up to be a tall and big adult. His big body made Kebo Iwa easily go to other places in a short time. Kebo Iwa eats and eats greedily. Kebo Iwa's greedy nature resulted in Kebo Iwa's parents no longer able to feed and they asked for village help. Kebo Iwa went to find his own food to satisfy his hunger. One of the most special things about Kebo Iwa is its ability to make spring wells. Kebo Iwa with all his strength thrust his 7 fingers into the ground.

Saka year 1185/1263 AD, Kebo Iwa founded Taruna Watu which has 33 members. Kebo Iwa succeeded in establishing Pura Dalem Maya in a short time, namely in the Saka year 1198/1275 AD. Because the greedy nature of Kebo Iwa makes the people miserable and confused. Information about the construction of the temple was heard up to the king of Bali. Ida Dalem Batu Ireng (Astasura Ratna Bumi Banten, Sri Gajah Wahana, Sri Tapa Hulung, Dalem Bedahul) who was the King of Bali at that time sent his

patih to test the strength of Kebo Iwa. When on the right day the battle was held, Ida Sang Prabu Batu Ireng, accompanied by the Gudug Basur Mantri, had climbed to the place that had been prepared, then the sound of the kentongan sounded hammering, the sound of gamelan, the roar of the people incessantly. Pasung Grigis then ordered the governor all over to fight I Kebo Iwa to complain about kewisesan (fighting war). All the patih and the people lost in competing the match. The result of the fight made King Batu Ireng amazed at the strength of I Kebo Iwa, then I Kebo Iwa was appointed as the mainstay of patih. The strength of Ida I Kebo Iwa is very well known outside the island of Bali. (Bawa, 2013) Gajah Mada, who was then Majapahit's governor, could not carry out the Palapa Oath if Bali had not been controlled. Gajah Mada viewed Kebo Iwa as the more senior Balinese commander and military strategist. He tricked by facing the king of Bali and offered peace. He invited Kebo Iwa to come to Majapahit and married a daughter from Lemah Tulis as a sign of friendship between the two kingdoms. Arriving in Java, Kebo Iwa was killed by burying Kebo Iwa's body in a large well.

## 2. Method

The type of research is descriptive qualitative research. Moleong (2012: 6), states that "qualitative research is research whose data is in the form of words, holistic and complex descriptions". Meanwhile, according to Nazir, the descriptive method itself is a method used to examine the status of a group of humans, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present (Prastowo, 2012). This research also uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach to study his Babad Pengabdian painting by Agus Putu Suyadnya.

## 3. Finding and Discussion

### 3.1. The sacrifice of Kebo Iwa as the theme of Babad Pengabdian painting

For most Balinese people, the name Kebo Iwa may not sound strange anymore and is even very well known, not only as a street name, temple name or other building but has become a legend that has been passed down regularly, hereditary. The figure of Kebo Iwa is often equated and equated with Mahapatih Gajah Mada from the Majapahit kingdom. Kebo Iwa was a governor and warlord of the Bedahul kingdom during the reign of Sri Gajah Wactera, whose title was Sri Astasura Ratna Bumi Banten, who ruled

Bali in the early fourteenth century. Kebo Iwa is the son of Panglima Rakyan Buncing who was also a former royal governor. Kebo Iwa is described as a handsome young man, tall and big and has supernatural powers. Besides being proficient in warfare, he is also a reliable undagi mastering traditional Balinese architecture, so that in his history he has produced architectural works in the form of sacred buildings and other traditional Balinese buildings. His body and strength were big, strong like a buffalo, believed to be able to lift large stones and move them to the places he wanted, that's why he was given the nickname Kebo Iwa which can be interpreted as "Uncle Buffalo".

The ability and supernatural powers of a Kebo Iwa are also supported by high religious knowledge, so that he also has linuwih power. This made him seen as a powerful Mahapatih and respected by everyone. His name was so famous that it was finally heard in the Majapahit kingdom in Java. The very high strength and knowledge possessed by Kebo Iwa made him count on the Mahapatih Gadjah Mada. In fact, the relations between the kingdoms in Bali and in

Java had a very close relationship, because the kingdoms in Bali also came from the descendants of the great kingdoms in East Java. But the consequence was the Palapa Oath uttered by Mahapatih Gadjah Mada, so Majapahit had to get recognition from all other kingdoms throughout the archipelago. This can be seen at a glance in the Pararaton book which states that Bali, Dampo and other islands must be united under Majapahit rule.

Various stories have stated that when the Majapahit kingdom was led by Queen Tri Bhuwana Tungga Dewi, an attempt was made to conquer the Bedahul kingdom in Bali. However, this effort received resistance from the Balinese kingdom so that it always failed or was not conquered. This was caused by the intelligence of Patih Kebo Iwa who was always able to keep up with the strength of the Majapahit troops. Because of his failures, a strategy was arranged to defeat Kebo Iwa, namely by inviting him to come to Majapahit and promising him a gift of a very beautiful royal princess. Finally, the offer was accepted by Kebo Iwa.

Arriving at the Majapahit kingdom, he met the royal princess, but before the princess was granted, there was a request from Mahapatih Gadjah Mada so that Kebo Iwa was willing to make a well to overcome the people's water problems near the royal capital. He agreed and immediately dug the well, but after the well was deep and while Kebo Iwa was still in it, the royal troops were ordered to cover the well with large rocks so that Kebo Iwa would be buried and die in it. After a while it turned out that with the power of Kebo Iwa he managed to get out of the well and threw the stones at the troops around him so that many troops perished.

After he was able to get out of the well, he came face to face with Mahapatih Gadjah Mada, there was a heated dialogue and debate. In the debate, Mahapatih Gadjah Mada revealed the great intention of the conquest of the surrounding kingdoms, namely, to unite them into one archipelago. Including also conquering the kingdom of Bedahul in Bali and defeat Kebo Iwa. After hearing and understanding the purpose of the conquest of the kingdom from Mahapatih Gadjah Mada, he actually agreed and supported this good intention, and he was willing to sacrifice for it. Kebo Iwa, with his awareness and determination, chose to die so that the unification of the archipelago could be achieved. Kebo Iwa gave the secret of his death to Gadjah Mada, namely by pouring it white powdered lime (limestone). After that he experienced moksa as a sign of his sincerity in supporting the unification of the archipelago.

Although various literatures state that in order to conquer the Bedahul kingdom, several attacks have been carried out, there is another perspective which states that in fact there was never a war between the Majapahit kingdom and the Bedahul kingdom in Bali. This is closely related to the kinship relationship between the kingdoms in East Java and the kingdoms in Bali. The royal ancestors in Bali came from the kingdom of East Java, including the Majapahit kingdom which is still tied to the kingdom in Bali. Therefore, the conquest did not actually take place by force, but was carried out persuasively by promoting deliberation. Kebo Iwa is a warlord who also has a high level of understanding of spirituality, likewise Gadjah Mada who is a Mahapatih who is not only strong and a war strategist, but also has a high level of spirituality. His surrender before the Almighty and the kingdom was so total that he was considered a Mahapatih who was thirsty and drunk on spiritual attainment. Kebo Iwa is also very deep and has a high level of spirituality, therefore it is on their shoulders that the sovereignty of their respective countries is guarded.

As people who have a high level of spirituality, the war between them is not a physical war, but through spiritual debates. From the above story, we can get philosophical values in life, such as the gift of a beautiful royal princess to Kebo Iwa, in this story it is related to the symbolization for spirituality practitioners, for men, women are one of the taboos for someone who practices the practice. spirituality. Women symbolize worldly desires, where for a practitioner of spirituality, the journey and process being undertaken is to distance oneself from worldly interests and always directs to spiritual interests. When Kebo Iwa was still attracted by the temptation of the royal lady's gift, it meant that he was still tempted by worldly lust and his spiritual level had not yet reached perfection.

In a long debate, Kebo Iwa's awareness began to emerge when he learned of Gadjah Mada's good intentions to unite the archipelago. He fully supports Gadjah Mada's lofty

ideals and is even willing to die to achieve the unification of the archipelago. When he does not die, he will live and defend his kingdom because he also swears to be a warlord to protect his kingdom in Bali, but he is willing to sacrifice for the unity of the archipelago. Because of this sacrifice after his death his body experiences perfection or moksa. While the white chalk used to perfect Kebo Iwa symbolizes knowledge and a symbol of high spirituality because it means light or enlightenment. Those who are at a lower level of spirituality will give up and are willing to sacrifice when they are given the light of awareness in the form of profound knowledge, this is symbolized by white chalk. In Balinese belief, until now the crossed chalk (tapak dara) is a symbol of repelling reinforcements and has a very high magical power.

### 3.2. Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic Study, Babad Pengabdian Painting by Agus Putu Suyadnya



**Figure 1:** Babad Pengabdian Painting by Agus Putu Suyad in 200 x 200 cm made using acrylic paint in 2017.

Through the table scheme above the writer tries to interpret or interpret the painting entitled Babad Pengabdian by Agus Putu Suyadnya. Can be explained that the buffalo object is a representation of the Kebo Iwa legend, by Suyadnya visualized it as a handsome young man, tall and very powerful. Body and strength strong like a buffalo was believed to be able to lift large stones and move them to the places he wanted. The figure of kebo iwa refers to the characteristics possessed by The buffalo is big, strong, tough, and never gives up. According to belief Balinese society the figure of kebo iwa is equated with Maha Patih Gajah Mada from the Kingdom Majapahit. The devotion of a Kebo Iwa is to defend his kerajaanya from other kingdoms, because in its history he was a patih of the kingdom Go ahead. On the other hand, the dedication of Kebo Iwa's figure can also be seen from his sacrifice for the sake of the united archipelago. As a knight, Kebo Iwa was willing to sacrifice his sacred promise as a warlord and his life for the oath of a Mahapatih Gadjah Mada to unite the archipelago. Even though in various stories it is stated that Kebo Iwa was defeated and succumbed to Gadjah Mada from the Majapahit kingdom, it turns out that this did not create any wounds and even grudges



TABLE 1: Semiotic Element

Elements	Colour	Shape	Properties	Situation
Icon	Skin colour on Kebo Iwa	Skin colour on Kebo Iwa resembling colour buffalo skin on generally.	Described as a Knight /guardian who gallant and alert with wearing clothes war and gripping the sword that plugs in soil.	War clothes, sword, robe, head protector, gloves, gaiters (that is everything is made of iron)
Index	Sky Color bright accompanied with white clouds thick ones and surrounded with green nature.	Judging from the shape her body, Kebo Iwa male gender	Property that is used shows that he is a knight /guardian.	A sense of courage and pride as that expression described Kebo Iwa
Symbol	Brown colour on the body and colour silver on her clothes dreamed as the figure of the guardian	The clothes used Kebo Iwa indicates self-status symbol, as well power for maintain	War clothes, robes and that sword grasped as symbols and emblems self-status Kebo Iwa which is often equated Maha Patih Gajah Mada.	Brown colour on the body and colour silver on her clothes dreamed as the figure of the guardian

in the consciousness of the Balinese people from ancient times until now. Even the feeling of losing Patih Kebo Iwa is seen as a form of sacrifice by the Balinese people for the formation of the archipelago as we feel today. The Balinese do not consider it a defeat that scratches their cultural memory, but instead they feel that it is a form of the sacred sacrifice of Kebo Iwa for the archipelago. The form of respect for Kebo Iwa is not by way of regretting it but by giving respect in various forms such as by respecting and maintaining objects that are considered to be his heritage. In addition, because Kebo Iwa is considered Moksa and has become a god, so the honour is to perform worship.

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Agus Putu Suyadnya through the painting Babad Pengabdian represents the figure of Kebo Iwa who was willing to sacrifice his life to unite the archipelago (Bali). This painting is a form of representation and cultural efforts to strengthen and strengthen kinship and network in building *partner spirit of Nusantara*. Suyadnya too represents his love for his homeland (Bali) which is manifested in a manner artistically in the form of painting *The Guardian Series* with buffalo, elephant and bird as the object is a symbol of Balinese belief.

Surrealism style can be seen from the work where Suyadnya depicting animal figures that seem to represent and represent the form, nature, habits and behaviours that are owned by humans, in this case are Kebo Iwa equated and aligned with Maha Patih Gajah Mada of the Majapahit kingdom. Kebo Iwa is described as a figure of a handsome young man, tall and very powerful. The image of Kebo Iwa in the form of a buffalo can be interpreted as a symbol of strength and dexterity of the *guardian* (guard) in unifying the archipelago.

## References

- [1] Bahari, N. (2008). *Kritik Seni: Wacana, Apresiasi, Dan Kreasi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [2] Budiman, K. (2011). *Semiotika Visual*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- [3] Dharsono, S. K. (2017). *Seni Rupa Modern*. Bandung: Rekayasa Sains.
- [4] Miles, M. B. and Huberman, M. (1992). *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia.
- [5] Moleong, L. J. (2000). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- [6] Pamadhi, H. (2012). *Pendidikan Seni*. Yogyakarta: UNY Press.
- [7] Shaman, H. (1993). *Mengenal Dunia Seni Rupa Tentang Seni, Karya Seni, Aktivitas Seni, Apresiasi, Kritik Dan Estetika*. Semarang: IKIP Semarang Press.
- [8] Suradjjo, S. (2000). *Filsafat Seni*. Surakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia UNS.
- [9] Susanto, M. (2011). *Diksi Rupa: Kumpulan Istilah Dan Gerakan Seni Rupa*. Yogyakarta: Dicti Art Lab dan Djagad Art House.