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A Study of Semiotics in Nyale Falo Laor Tradition by Tobelo Ethnic: Peirce Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The *nyale falo laor* tradition (tradition of *nyale laor*) is a ceremony of catching sea worms (*laor*) that is traditionally preserved by the Tobelo ethnic community on Kakara Island, North Maluku. This research aims to analyze the sign system in the tradition Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic approach, which includes three main categories: icon, index, and symbol. The research method used is qualitative with an ethnolinguistic approach. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the analysis show that this tradition contains a diversity of signs that represent the cultural values, spirituality, and ecological wisdom of the local community. Iconically, the *koworo* tool (triangular net) reflects the function of catching laor through its distinctive shape. Meanwhile, indexical

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signs can be seen in natural phenomena such as lightning and heavy rain mark the temporal appearance of laor. The symbolic aspect is manifested in the use of mantras (*gumatere*) and traditional poetry (*dolabololo*), which are full of messages of unity, gratitude, and respect for ancestors and God. Through semiotic analysis, the *nyale falo laor* tradition is revealed not merely as a practical ritual, but as a communication system that reinforces the cultural identity, religious values, and ecological ethics of the Tobelo people. Thus, Peirce semiotic approach proves effective in unraveling the complexity of meaning in local cultural practices, as well as emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage through understanding the signs that live and develop in it.

Keywords: Peirce Semiotics; Nyale Falo Laor; Tradition; Tobelo Ethnicity

1. Introduction

Nyale falo laor is a traditional ceremony for catching *nyale* (seasonal sea worms), carried out by the Tobelo community on Kakara island, North Halmahera, Indonesia, which reflects a complex socio-spiritual system that transcends maritime economic activities. According to Banari, a local islander who participated in the researchers' interview on February 3, 2025, the appearance of *nyale*, which generally coincides with the full moon, is considered sacred as a moment of celebration in restoring harmony between humans and nature. This wisdom has been passed down across generations and expresses the community's view of the natural cycle and the relationship between land, sea, and sky[1]. The fishing practice still uses traditional tools such as *koworo* (triangular nets) and *derihi* (square containers made of large pandan leaves), as well as poetry, prayers, and customary rules determining the timing, forming a system of signs that embodies the traditional values, spiritual beliefs, and ecological relations of the community with the marine environment[2]. The signs in this tradition are not static, but dynamic, relying on social meanings and ideologies that are inherited and negotiated through local cultural practices.

The semiotic approach through Peirce's triadic model aims to interpret the meaning of these symbols[3]. This triadic model includes representamen, object, and interpretant. Interpretant is the form of a sign that is present in the senses. For example, moonlight, lightning, and singing; the object is the reality referred to by the sign. For example, the appearance of nyale, customary rules, human and natural relations and the interpretant is the idea or interpretation constructed in the mind of the interpreter. Thus, it is said that meaning is present through a process of semiosis that connects the three. In Pierce's typology, icons represent objects, indices indicate causal or essential proximity, and symbols rely on cultural conventions. In this tradition, *pariayama* (the full moon phase) and lightning in the sea are read as indices of the presence of nyale, while prayers, songs, and customary prohibitions function as symbols[3]. Thus, *nyale falo laor* can be understood as a semiotic system that signifies the ecological relations, spirituality, and social structure of the Tobelo community, in addition to being a biological event[3]. Transgenerational knowledge—formed from empirical experience, processed through a cultural lens, and transmitted orally and performatively[4]—continues to renew understanding of nyale's timing, fishing gear, and processing methods, making this tradition not only a preserved practice but also a repository of living knowledge[5]. Therefore, this study aims to: *first*, map the sign system in nyale falo laor; *second*, explain how the community interprets the natural markers that frame the time, rules, and meaning of the ritual; *third*, describe the mechanisms of oral-performative knowledge transfer that support ecological sustainability and social cohesion.

2. Literature Review

The tradition of *nyale falo laor* in Tobelo society serves as a medium intergenerational communication: the elders knowledge about the natural cycle and the appearance of nyale in relation to the ebb and flow of the tides to the younger generation strengthening social cohesion through joint fishing and celebrations (according to the interview with Banari on February 5, 2025). The complexity of the sign system is evident in rituals that combine *lelehe* (mantras) and *salumbe* (poetry) with traditional instruments such as *koworo* and *derihi*. However, specific studies analyzing the structure of signs and their symbolic meanings from a semiotic perspective

limited[6].

As local wisdom, *nyale falo laor* encompasses a set of knowledge, practices, and values that are adaptive to the environment, determining time based on natural signs (the moon, currents, and lightning), selecting local materials such as *derihi* or *kokowa* that reflect the ethics of sustainability, and reciprocal norms that govern social relations[7,8]. This dimension is relevant to cultural tourism, traditions that have the potential to become intangible heritage attractions that strengthen local identity and economy, as long as they are managed by the community to prevent commodification that reduces the meaning of the ritual. *nyale falo laor* is not merely a cultural economic practice, but also a living archive of ecological knowledge that is vulnerable to modernization[9].

In Peirce's semiotic approach, this tradition is analyzed as an intertwined network of icons, indices, and symbols. Icons are present in the form of *koworo*, which resembles the function of catching as a representamen of the human-sea relationship; symbols are articulated in *lelehe*, which has a spiritual dimension and is conventionally believed to influence the results[10]; while indices are seen in lightning and changes in currents that are causally related to the best time to catch nyale. The triadic relationship of representamen, object, and interpretant affirms that the form of the sign (moonlight, lightning, and singing) refers to realities such as the appearance of nyale and customary rules, while collective interpretation (a time of blessing to be celebrated) generate semiosis meaning and guide action.

This review reveals conceptual gaps that motivate this study. Peirce's semiotic method has been used in other cultural practices, but rarely targets coastal communities in North Maluku. Taha's research[11] on the *leksikon haogumi* (Haogumi lexicon) in Morotai is more linguistic than semiotic, while Putri & Risidin[12] prove the usefulness of Peirce in reading the meaning of religious ritual symbols (Ogoh-ogoh), but the context is non-Muslim. In addition, the weakening of the younger generation's understanding of the ritual philosophy[9], indicates the need for a semiotic analysis embedded in the cultural ecology of Tobelo, while also measuring its implications for the preservation of local wisdom and the development of ethical cultural tourism.

To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative method with a semiotic approach, including participant observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, and a review of literature and ritual artifacts (tools, mantras, and poetry) to classify meanings in icons, indices, and symbols in the socio-cultural context of Tobelo[13]. The findings by Putri & Risidin[12] encourage the formulation of objectives for mapping the sign system. Meanwhile, the limitations of Taha's research[11] lead to the objective of deepening Peirce's framework in maritime culture, and the warning about the erosion of meaning[9] confirms the objective of community-based preservation and relevance to sustainable cultural tourism. Thus, the final results of this study can: *first*, map the elements of icon-index-symbol, and the triadic relationship of representament-object-interpretant in *nyale falo laor*; *second*, explain how the interpretation of natural signs and rituals organizes time, rules, and socio-ecological cohesion; and *third*, formulate practical implications for the preservation of local wisdom and cultural tourism design that maintains the integrity of ritual meaning.

3. Research Method

Research on the sign system in Peirce's semiotic study, in the tradition of *nyale falo laor* by the Tobelo community, was conducted using a qualitative approach, as it effectively reveals the relationship between language, ritual, and environment and explains symbolic meanings in the context of coastal culture in North Maluku[14]. Primary data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted on Kakara Island for six days, from May 17 to 22, 2025, recording the use of signs in ritual practices (social interactions and verbal expressions), as well as the functional forms of tools such as *koworo* as icons, natural phenomena (tides and lightning) as indices, and verbal performances (*salumbe* and *lelehe*) as symbols that carry ecological-spiritual meanings. All findings were recorded on observation sheets, documented through photos and videos, and then cross-checked with the informants' explanations.

Ahearn[15] explains that semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling were conducted with two key informants: Mr. Baniru, a 63-year-old traditional elder or expert on *lelehe* and mantras, and Mrs. Pere, an 87-year-old traditional elder or expert on salumbe. The interview sample size was n = 2 (one male and one female). Meanwhile, there were

three male accompanying informants, Mr. Ridonis Lutunani, aged 30; Mr. Matias Banari, aged 73; and Mr. Theoseplianus Sosebeko, aged 65. The questions focused on the interpretation of ritual tools, the connection between nyale and natural phenomena, and the implied meanings in lelehe, salumbe, dolabololo, and mantras. Each session was recorded and transcribed. Document analysis included previous research on *salumbe, dolabololo*, and *lelehe*, oral information about the mythology of *nyale falo laor*, and literature on semiotics and coastal culture. The oral-written corpus of this tradition is used to enrich the reading of cultural, religious, and ecological meanings for the Tobelo community. With reference to Robert's statement in the Rudnick article [10], *lelehe* is necessary as a symbol of spiritual breathing that is conventionally believed to influence the catch.

Data coding and thematic analysis were conducted manually by the researcher, with the following stages: *first*, familiarization, which involved rereading field notes, transcripts, and documents; *second*, initial coding using an inductive-deductive approach. This concept is in line with Peirce's categories (icon-index-symbol) and three contextual domains (cultural-religious-ecological); *third*, compiling a code book and analytical memos to organize code definitions; *fourth*, grouping patterns into themes; *fifth*, reviewing and naming themes with supporting quotations; *sixth*, thematic mapping that links themes with social dynamics, collective beliefs, and knowledge transmission. Specifically, the stages of semiotic analysis follow three steps [13]: identification of signs (classifying *koworo*—icons; lightning or tidal waves—indexes; *lehehe* or *salumbe*—symbols), contextuality (cultural, religious, ecological), and interpretation of Peirce's triadic model, namely representaments (in the form of: moonlight, lightning, songs, and mantras), object (events or realities referred to: the appearance of nyale, and customary rules), interpretant (collective interpretation: sacred momentum for gratitude rituals)—to show how signs direct communal actions and knowledge.

Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources, namely by comparing interviews, document observations, and informing informants of preliminary findings. Ethical considerations involve respecting the sanctity of rituals, complying with customary norms during interview observations, obtaining written permission from customary authorities, and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of informants who request it. In the field, researchers act as participant-observers: participating in non-sacred supporting activities. For example, preparing tools and arranging locations with customary consent, not performing core ritual actions, maintaining analytical distance through reflective notes, and minimizing intervention so that practices remain authentic. The main instruments include observation sheets, interview guides, cameras, and voice recorders. This approach is expected to produce a deeper understanding of how to interpret cultural, spiritual, and ecological dimensions in society.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Social, Ecological, and Spiritual Meanings as Interpretant

Further analysis shows that symbols in the *nyale falo laor* tradition not only function as aesthetic or ritualistic cultural elements, but also produce a series of interpretants-that is, meanings that are understood and comprehended by the Tobelo community socially, ecologically, and spiritually. Socially, representations in the form of *dolabololo* poems, *koworo* fishing gear, and collective processions in catching nyale produce interpretants that affirm the values of solidarity, communal cohesion, and reproduction of ethnic collective identity. Ecologically, natural phenomena such as lightning, wind direction, moon phase, and the appearance of nyale are interpreted as indicators that convey local ecological knowledge and the close relationship between humans and the rhythms of nature. Spiritually, representations such as *kawaha* (mantra), *niata* (prayer), and cardinal directions in the nyale retrieval rite produce interpretants that articulate belief in supernatural powers, harmonious relationships with ancestors, and cosmological beliefs that form the basis of collective survival. Therefore, symbols in the *nyale falo laor* tradition do not just represent objects statically, but rather create layers of meaning that continue to evolve and are actively bestowed by cultural communities in their daily practices (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Peirce Semiotics Table in the Nyale Falo Laor Tradition.

Aspects	Representamen	Object	Interpretant
Social	*Dolabololo*, *lalayon*, and *koworo*	Community and cultural heritage	Solidarity, mutual aid and collective identity
Ecology	Kilta, *pariayama* (full moon), and fishing gear	Ecosystems and natural cycles	Local knowledge and harmony with nature
Spiritual	*Niata* and *kawaha*	God, ancestors, and the forces of nature	Gratitude, spiritual protection, and comms connection

4.1.1. Social Value as Interpretant

This tradition strengthens the collective identity of the Tobelo people by creating space for intensive social interaction. Active participation in rituals strengthens the sense of community and teaches the younger generation about ancestral cultural values. The *dolabololo* poem, *lalayon* dance and gotong royong activities act as representations that refer to objects in the form of values, community, collective identity and social cooperation as a medium of knowledge transfer that maintains cultural continuity. Thus, the resulting interpretant, namely: gotong royong; in the traditional feast shows social solidarity and the formation of communal identity; the *dolabololo* poem for example, in the sentence "I know so I will come here..." signifies that every member of the community has cultural responsibility, which means that there is active involvement and social harmony; and *the koworo* (triangular net) shared in the traditional ceremony is a symbol of social heritage which means intergenerational knowledge management. Thus, the social sign in this tradition indexes collective participation and becomes an interpretant for social values and responsibilities.

The *nyale falo laor* tradition contains a number of prominent social values, especially the value of cooperation and community spirit, which has become a hereditary convention in welcoming the appearance of nyale in May or June, precisely on the fifth or sixth night after the full moon, the Tagala island community collectively makes various preparations according to tradition, by displaying the practice of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) which can be seen in cooking together for the purposes of parties and traditional ceremonies held at night. This traditional feast is characterized by local art performances, such as *dolabololo* poems and *lalayon* dances, which depict collective joy while waiting for the appearance of nyale, usually occurring between 6 a.m. and 7:30 a.m., marked by the reflection of sunlight on the coast (according to the interview with Banari on February 04, 2025).

Dolabololo is delivered in the context of traditional harvest parties, both related to marine and terrestrial products, and the poems contained therein represent the value of caring for one another and reflect the spirit of mutual cooperation within the community, especially in preparing and enlivening the implementation of traditional parties and ceremonies. Knowledge of the *nyale falo laor* tradition appears to be inherently embedded in community members. The phrase "...following the same rhythm..." illustrates cohesiveness and harmony in collective participation in customary activities, while the phrase "...and my heart follows it too" shows involvement not only physically, but also internally, thus reflecting full participation. Thus, the *nyale falo laor* tradition contains social values in the form of community cooperation, as in line with Soekanto et al.'s[16] view that social values are abstract conceptions within individuals about what is considered good or bad, and serve as guidelines in judging something as valuable or not in social life[16].

The principles or standards that exist in society are social values that are used to direct, regulate, and control individual behavior in social interactions[17]. These values are usually related to aspects of life, such as ethics, morals, and prevailing customs. Conceptions that explicitly or implicitly differ in various cultures that influence human actions in a society are also social values, so that individuals can determine what is considered appropriate and inappropriate in acting[18]. Social values are all non-material things that are valued and considered important by a society and used as guidelines for life to achieve mutual happiness[19].

Thus, the *nyale falo laor* tradition on Kakara island contains essential social principles, particularly the principles of cooperation and togetherness. These values are reflected in various forms of cultural practices, such as traditional feasts and ceremonies carried out in mutual cooperation, as well

as local artistic expressions such as *dolabololo* poems and lalayon dances that strengthen community social solidarity. The *dolabololo* poem, for example, represents the integration of the *nyale falo laor* tradition into people's daily lives, as well as illustrating the spirit of care and togetherness between individuals. In this context, social values function as guidelines that guide the community in assessing and regulating behavior, as well as in realizing collective welfare.

4.1.2. Ecological Value as Interpretant

In the context of Tobelo culture, the tradition of *nyale falo laor* has an ecological interpretation that stems from a collective reading of natural signs in ritual practices. Nyale generally appear after rain and coincide with the *pariyama* (full moon) phase, so they are understood as a natural sign of the sea harvest season. Lightning and thunder at night are interpreted as ecological indicators that show the community's sensitivity to environmental rhythms. This interpretation forms traditional ecological knowledge that is passed down across generations through practices, oral stories, and customary rules.

The use of fishing tools such as *koworo* and derihi, as well as the technique of cooking *lau* (bamboo), is interpreted as local technology that is in harmony with nature and reflects the principles of local wisdom and environmental ethics. Within Peirce's framework, signs function as representamen that refer to ecological objects through indexical relations, then produce interpretants in the form of collective ecological awareness[20]. Semiosis is boundless because signs continually refer to other signs, and meaning is always constructed within a cultural context[21]. Meaning is not attached to signs, but is formed from the interaction between the sign system, the sign user, and the social context[13]. Therefore, *nyale falo laor* reinforces the view that the sea is not just a resource, but a living entity that gives and protects, and must therefore be respected.

The practice of nyale fishing reflects strong conservation values. This can be seen in the fishing season, which is determined by natural indicators (*pariyama*), thunderstorms in the evening until nightfall, and changes in weather, and is limited by customary rules to prevent over-exploitation and maintain long-term ecological balance[22]. Traditional tools such as *koworo*, *derihi*, *kokowa*, and the *lau* technique demonstrate local technological adaptations that preserve the ecosystem[11]. The interpretation of natural phenomena as biological-ecological indicators is in line with Peirce's semiotics, where weather and lunar cycles function as historical-cultural indexical objects[23]. Thus, the implications of sustainable ecological knowledge include: *first*, strengthening customary-based co-management and low-impact closures and catch size restrictions; *second*, participatory monitoring and weather literacy as a basis for early warning; and *third*, intergenerational education to keep the ecological-spiritual values of this tradition alive and relevant in the future.

4.1.3. Spiritual Value as Interpretant

The *gumatere* mantra plays an important role in the ritual. Tobelo people believe that the abundance of nyale is a gift from the ancestors and the guardian spirits of the sea. Mantra recitation serves as a means of communication with the spiritual world, strengthening the belief in a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Verbal signs such as mantras consisting of *niata* (prayer) and *kawaha* (celebrating) *gogarao* (thanksgiving), which are verses of praise to God are representations that point to spiritual objects such as the supernatural powers of *Giki Rimoi* (God) and ancestors. Thus the resulting spiritual interpretant is as follows: *niata* (prayer), which is a collective prayer to God is an interpretant of gratitude and dependence on the transcendent; *bobita* and *kawaha*, representing the spiritual community between humans and nature or ancestors, can mean a bridge between the human world and metaphysics; and the *four cardinal directions* (in *kawaha*) have the interpretant of symbolizing the unity of cosmic power and spiritual protection. So the spiritual sign works as a symbol, and produces an interpretant in the form of a collective belief in the connectedness of humans, ancestors, and the universe.

The *nyale falo laor* tradition not only represents cultural values, but also contains a strong spiritual dimension. These values are reflected in various practices carried out by the people of Kakara Island, one of which is through the recitation of prayers. The prayers are offered hopefully to God, as a form of request that they be blessed with abundant nyale catches.

> *Ino ho'maniata... Hioko Gikiri Moi, ma dekana de magurutu, mia dimo-dimoninohi always yo'dodiai yo buhuku o pariama. Orahi nenanga o'danongo, o'ngohaka de o'danongonguku mia diai oli, tanu hioko orahi ne-*

nanga Ama Gikiri Moi, mi mahigahoko Ngona Ika, tanu nohi hupu orahi nenanga, na mata-mata ino. La o'kawaha mi boa-boa ino ga, can mi'makomodumu.
Hioko Jou, orahi nenanga mia guguiti nenanga mia tono o'gahi oko... Tanu no'boa no mamata-mata ino... Nenanga mia guguiti.
'Let us pray. Have mercy on us, O Lord, for so long our predecessors have always celebrated the blessing of the *laor*. And now we, your children, are again performing the ceremony of gratitude as our elders once did. Have mercy on us, may this night, O Lord, we ask you, so that the *laor* that we welcome for a while can come out and flow a lot and can be sufficient for us who live on this island.'
'Have mercy on us Lord, right now the tool (*koworo*) we use to collect *laor* is dipped in the sea. May it flow as much as possible. This is our laor retrieval tool'.

In the last stage, the mantra is recited by one of the elders as follows:

***Bobita* (inform)**
Dotumu, Tohera, Ete, iutu
Ngone uku hidayo
Nanga ngohaka ngana donongo uku
'Ancestors, grandfathers, fathers, children and grandchildren
Passed down to me
to our children and grandchildren'

***Niata* (Prayer)**
Giki rimoi nomi higuti
Hababu nena duo wowango madodaya
'God the ruler of nature
What we do is for our lives
Make this (*laor*) for your continued benefit'

***Kawaha* (celebrating/grateful)**
Ino libuku iyata
Kore noodles, kore hara, wange
Mohiwara wange madumunu
Imataomu nira gogere
'The power of the four corners
North, south, east, and west forces
Already united as a force
Become our strength'

The *nyale falo laor* tradition begins with a prayer to God as a form of acknowledgment of the existence of a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation and is always carried out when nyale season arrives. In the prayer, a request is made for the next generation to maintain and preserve this tradition, as well as the hope that the nyale will appear on the surface of the sea on the night of the event, so that the catch can fulfill the needs of the community. Repeated phrases such as ”have mercy on us, God” represent the religious values that are an essential element in the local culture. In addition to God, prayers are also offered to the ancestors as a form of respect and an effort to maintain the continuity of traditions from the past to the present [24]. Religious values reflected in this tradition include the spirit of togetherness and social solidarity, as evidenced by the involvement of interfaith communities-both Christians and Muslims-collaborating to prepare the entire series of activities up to the process of catching nyale [25].

Religion is closely related to the traditional culture itself because in culture there are elements, one of which is religion. Religious values in culture can be realized through the culture itself. Religion and culture are inseparable elements in people's lives. Religion relates to culture in the sense of managing and articulating the potential of human nature, so that religion can realize culture (civilization) for the happiness of mankind on earth [26,27]. The relationship between custom and religion is often complex and mutually influential. The *nyale falo laor* tradition is one form of human relationship in sustaining life through God's provision. It shows how adat can serve as a means to fulfill spiritual needs and remind individuals of the Creator that everything on earth is His gift [28].

Religious values generally refer to the principles and teachings that form the basis of religious life, including aspects of morality, ethics and spirituality, which function as life guidelines for individuals and groups. In the context of the *nyale falo laor* tradition, religious values are reflected in the community's expression of gratitude for the sustenance bestowed by God through seasonal marine products. This value is inseparable from cultural values, both comple-

menting each other like two sides of a coin. The practice of keeping the sea clean and sustainable, for example, reflects religious teachings that emphasize responsibility for the environment. The habit develops into a tradition that is passed down from generation to generation and becomes the foundation of religious life in the community [29]. Therefore, religion and culture not only reflect each other, but also influence each other in shaping good values in a common life.

4.1.4. Sign Representation in the Nyale Falo Laor Tradition

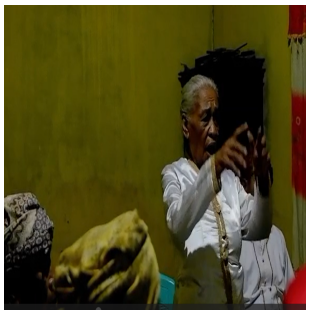
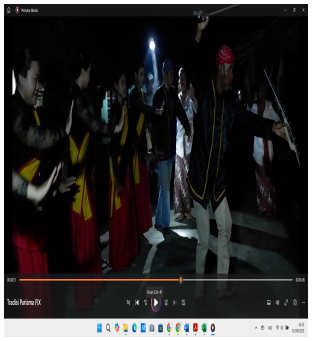
The *nyale falo laor* tradition of the Tobelo people, especially on Kakara island, is a collective custom to protect the marine environment. It is also a symbolic representation tool with a complex system of signs. This tradition can be seen from a semiotic point of view as a cultural text showing the relationship between humans and nature through a complex system of signs. According to Peirce, there are three main categories of signs: icons, indices, and symbols [13]. In the tradition, these three signs have interrelated cultural meanings.

The following is their explanation and classification based on analysis of documentation and traditional practices in the field (**Table 2**):

Table 2. Three Main Categories of Signs by Pierce in the Nyale Falo Laor Tradition.

Photo	Icon	Index	Symbol
	The luminous shape and color of nyale, resembling moonlight on the surface of the water	The appearance of nyale follows the cycle of the moon and tides	Nyale is considered a sustenance from ancestors and a sign of blessing wrapped in rituals
	The shape of *the koworo* as a traditional fishing gear that resembles a natural trap	Used only at specific times based on marine environmental conditions	Symbol of cooperation and sea hunting skills passed down through generations
	Lightning as a marker of time that shows the best moments in activities as a fisherman	The occurrence of lightning and thunder in the afternoon is followed by drizzling rain as a sign that nyale will emerge tomorrow	It is believed to be a sign of ancestral blessing and cosmic energy that guides the community
	*Niata* and *kawaha* (mantra/prayer)	Niata (Prayer) *Giki rimoi nomi higuti* *Hababu nena duo wowango madodaya* 'God the ruler of nature What we do is for our lives Make this (*laor*) for your continued benefit'	Mantra as a means of spiritual communication with ancestors and a request for safety

Table 2. *Cont.*

Photo	Icon	Index	Symbol
		Kawaha (celebrating/grateful) *Ino libuku iyata* *Kore noodles, kore hara, wange* *Mohiwara wange madumunu* *Imataomu nira gogere* 'The power of the four corners the northern, southern, eastern, and western powers have been united into strength becomes our strength'	
	*Dolabololo* (unity verse)	*De tanako de tahino si, de tosi mote de to'sari to si ngale-ngale de ka to'nyinga se'mangale.* 'I knew so I came here, to follow the same beat, and my heart follows it too'	Symbol of unity and cultural expression through poetry passed down from generation to generation
	*Derihi* (large pandanus leaf)	Used as a tool in rituals to keep nyale fresh	Symbolizes human balance with nature and environmentally friendly practices

4.2. Semiotic Analysis: Icon, Index, and Symbol

In Peirce semiotic analysis, signs in the *nyale falo laor* tradition are classified as follows:

4.2.1. Icons

Icons are traditional visual representations of reality, including objects that visually resemble the reality they represent. For example, the luminous shape of the nyale resembles moonlight in seawater, providing a direct visual association with nature; the *koworo*, a nyale-catching tool, is also an icon because its shape resembles a natural trap used to catch marine products; *lightning* and *thunder* as natural cycles that signal the next morning that the nyale will emerge; Meanwhile, the *kawaha* (mantra) chanted by the elders is a visualization of the relationship between man and God; the *dolabololo* (verse of unity) chanted by the drummers is proof that this social activity still exists; and *the derihi* is a container provided by nature used to process nyale [30,31].

4.2.2. Index

An index refers to a sign that has a causal relationship with the object it represents. For example, the appearance of nyale following the lunar cycle indicates a causal relationship between environmental conditions and the behavior of marine organisms. Lightning in the night sky is also an index because it marks the exact time of the nyale's appearance on the shoreline, indicating a correlation between natural phenomena and cultural practices. Meanwhile, the materials or tools used to catch and manage nyale are *koworo* and *derihi*. *Koworo* is a three-square fine mesh used to catch nyale sized 5–8 cm, indicating a causal relationship with a net marked by the process of catching or netting marine products [32]. Furthermore, the *kawaha* (mantra) and *dolabololo* (poem) are instructions that describe current conditions. Indices that can be seen in mantras or prayers, such as “God is the

ruler of nature," function as an index of the Creator, that everything in this universe is control or control "What we do is for our lives," which is a natural index, every living creature (human) seeks a living physically and mentally, and "Make this (*laor*) for the next benefit" as an index of concrete objects, namely *this* word refers to nyale which marks a physical or existential relationship between the utterance and its referent[33].

4.2.3. Symbol

A symbol is a meaning shaped by social convention. In the Tobelo tradition, symbols are signs that acquire meaning through social agreement. Nyale, as a symbol, is not just a sea organism, but a symbol of sustenance and fertility. Nyale is believed to appear by the will of nature and ancestors. The Tobelo community believes that catching nyale is not merely an economic necessity, but a ritual. The meaning of nyale as a symbol arises not from its biological form, but rather the cultural interpretation given by the Tobelo community. *Koworo is* a symbol of cooperation and sea hunting skills passed down from generation to generation. *Koworo* is also a symbol of the distinctive call delivered during the nyale catching ceremony, as well as a symbolic form of communication between the sea or nature. It represents the presence of spirituality in entering the sacred territory of the sea. Therefore, in addition to the literal symbol, the three-square net, also referred to as a request or greeting to the power of nature; lightning and thunder: believed to be a sign of ancestral blessing and cosmic energy that guides the community[34]. Lightning and thunder in local mythology are believed to be divine signs or messages, even warnings from the ancestors or nature indicating that nyale will soon appear. Therefore, they are symbolic of the time when nyale will appear. Meanwhile, although indexically lightning is a result of geography, in the Tobelo tradition it is a symbol because it is interpreted within a particular belief system; *kawaha* and *niata* (mantras and prayers): mantras as a means of spiritual communication with ancestors and requests for salvation, in addition to having spiritual meanings that are passed down from generation to generation and can only be understood by the community that carries out this tradition[35]. As a symbol, ritual language is used in *kawaha* and *intentions*.

In the symbolic meaning, there is a communication link between humans and the spirits of the ancestors, the universe, and the ocean. This is termed a symbol by Peirce because the structure and meaning of the mantra are not inherent, but born out of hereditary beliefs and practices. *Dolabololo* (unity poem) is a symbol of unity and cultural expression through poetry passed down from generation to generation. It also serves as a symbol of unity and cultural expression that contains the values of collectivity reflected in the lives of local people. The poem sung at the traditional feast to welcome the nyale in the morning has a symbolic meaning, symbolizing social solidarity, strengthening ethnic identity, and affirming customary solidarity[36]. Peirce's symbol type can be seen in the strength of its meaning, which lies in musical and social conventions rather than in its literal sound form. *Derihi* (large pandanus leaf) symbolizes the balance between humans and environmentally friendly practices in the nature. *Derihi* is also a traditional object that is carried during traditional feasts and ceremonies. There is a symbolic meaning showing ritual authority and spiritual protection for menaru nyale. It is said to be a symbol by Peirce because the object has no natural connection to its spiritual meaning; instead, its meaning is determined by local cultural structures[37].

5. Conclusions

The tradition of *nyale falo laor* is understood as a practice that unites social, environmental, and spiritual values. Signs from nature, such as the full moon, lightning, and traditional prayers and songs, are used by residents to determine the time of the sea harvest, to strengthen community spirit, and to express gratitude. Knowing how to interpret these signs keeps traditional knowledge alive and helps to regulate the wise use of the sea. However, there are limitations to this study: the research location was only on Kakara Island, the observation period was very short, the number of informants was limited, and there was no detailed environmental data. As a result, the results are more qualitative in nature. In the future, it will be necessary to conduct longer studies across seasons and villages, combining field notes with weather and sea data, and reviewing language, sounds, movements, and ritual objects together. Tourism and cultural tourism programs should also be designed in collaboration with the community so that the meaning of the rituals is preserved. Cultural development requires collaboration among

traditional leaders, local artists, fishermen, women's groups, youth groups, schools, religious leaders, and village and district governments so that the benefits are equitable and the traditions remain alive and authentic, ensuring their sustainability in line with the times.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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