



## Instrumental value in the illustration of *urip iku urup*: Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic study

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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

*The illustration "Urip iku Urup," which translates to "life is burning" in Javanese, is a rich tapestry of aesthetic elements that convey the profound meaning of this phrase. This study delves into the cultural significance of mutual cooperation in society, using the Charles Sanders Pierce Semiotics approach to analyze the illustration. Employing a descriptive qualitative research method, this analysis examines the signs and meanings embedded in the artwork to understand how visual elements represent mutual cooperation as a form of goodness and sharing in everyday life. The results demonstrate that "Urip iku Urup" effectively utilizes cultural and social symbols to convey a moral message about the importance of positive individual contributions to the community. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of how visuals can be used to communicate ethical values and strengthen social bonds through artistic representation.*

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## 1. Introduction

In the midst of the dynamics of life that is digital and full of challenges, various phenomena are in the spotlight in various circles of society. In the context of Indonesian culture, the phenomenon of sharing kindness is also seen in local traditions and cultures, namely mutual cooperation. The existence of the mutual cooperation culture has existed for a long time and has become one of the cultural heritages that the Indonesian people are trying to preserve (Pambudi and Utami 2020). With mutual cooperation, people can build strong bonds and mutual trust, making life more meaningful and useful because the culture of mutual cooperation as a moral value has philosophical roots in academic studies (Muh. Zulfikar Ridha 2022). Mutual cooperation is a noble cultural heritage of the nation that is timeless because it has a very important role in facing the era of globalization (Permana and Mursidi 2020). The existence of the mutual cooperation culture emerged based on the encouragement of awareness, consciousness and enthusiasm without thinking about and prioritizing personal gain, but always for the common good (Marhayati 2021). The culture of mutual cooperation is one of the characteristics of Indonesian society that reflects the spirit of togetherness and social solidarity. This spirit of togetherness and helping each other is a solid foundation in building a prosperous life. Mutual cooperation is not just a physical activity, but also reflects the values of solidarity, and responsibility in the midst of globalization and modernization. The



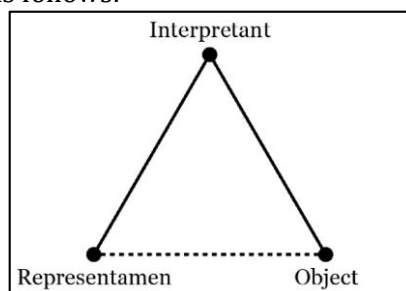
act of mutual cooperation as a form of a symbol of sharing goodness is the philosophical basis of Indonesian culture. When presented as an instrumental value, the culture of mutual cooperation becomes a moral and practical foundation that strengthens community life. Instrumental values in the culture of mutual cooperation become contextual values and come from the basic values in Pancasila (Firdaus and Dewi 2021). Basic values as principles based on culture and values in the Indonesian nation are abstract (Eriani, Susanti, M.Si., and Dr. Meilinda 2023). The values of mutual cooperation culture are expressed in the Javanese philosophy of "Urip iku Urup" which literally means "life is burning." This philosophy reflects the Javanese people's outlook on life which emphasizes the importance of providing benefits to others and the surrounding environment while living in the world.

The importance of the values contained in the meaning of mutual cooperation culture in the philosophy of "Urip iku Urup" is represented in an illustration entitled "Urip iku Urup". Zuna Akhmad is an illustrator or motif designer behind the creation of the urip iku urup illustration that he worked on in 2021. In the illustration "Urip iku Urup" the main message to be conveyed is the values of goodness, togetherness, and mutual cooperation. This illustration serves as a visual reminder of how important it is for each individual to be a source of inspiration and goodness in society in terms of togetherness. Because more than just a picture, illustrations combine elements of design, composition, and artistic expression to convey messages or emotions to a wide audience. However, in its development, illustrations are no longer limited to images that accompany text, but have developed in a broader direction (Ahdiyat 2021). Illustrations are used to attract, motivate, communicate, and make it easier for readers to understand the message (Pratama, Nyoman, and Yasa 2020). With the presence of illustrations, the wider audience becomes more interested in reading the entire contents of the information or story conveyed (Bentri, Noviadj, and Karuna 2022).

The presence of the "Urip iku Urup" illustration is a bridge between words and images to convey a deep understanding to trigger deep reflection on the various mutual cooperation that is part of Indonesia's local wisdom culture. In examining and analyzing an illustration, an approach is needed to examine the object in depth to provide a clear line of thought. The approach that discusses signifiers and signifieds is semiotics. The concept of semiotics is also interpreted as the science of signs and everything related to them, which is also related to their function, the relationship of signs in a whole unit (Hening Laksani and Brillindra Pandanwangi 2023). Semiotics is a branch of science that studies signs and various things related to signs such as the process of using signs and systems in signs (Wiendy RerefDianty, Dea Puspitasari, and Astry Meirantic 2022). The signifier is an aspect that can be observed, heard, and felt in an object, while the signified includes the concept, meaning, essence, and thoughts behind what is observed, heard, and felt in the object. These two elements are closely related and play a key role in semiotic theory (Tanti and Khaerunnisa 2022). The relationship between the signifier and its signified is conventional, and its meaning is created through individual interpretation and cultural context. The existence of a signifier has a signified behind it and vice versa, the existence of a signified because of a signifier (Aldiansyah, Prilosadoso, and Setiaji 2023). Previous research in the article "Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of the Illustration of 'Pandemi vs. Billboard' on Tempo's Instagram Account" has successfully applied a semiotic approach to analyze the interpretation of socio-political messages conveyed through digital illustrations on social media (Fitri Ramadhani, Rasyid, and Ritonga 2023). However, this study focuses more on symbolic analysis in the context of contemporary issues and does not explore how traditional cultural values in Indonesia can be translated through similar visual media. This study offers novelty by combining Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach to explore how Javanese cultural values, especially the concept of "Urip iku Urup," are articulated in the form of visual illustrations. This study not only broadens the understanding of the application of semiotics in the context of local culture but also provides new contributions to the discussion of how traditional values can be adapted and represented in contemporary visual media.

## 2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method, to explore the complex and deep meanings of the work. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe in detail the research that has been carried out without manipulating the variables studied (Hanyfah, Fernandes, and Budiarto 2022). The descriptive qualitative research method is a method that emphasizes the understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, and phenomena that occur in society (Pravitasari 2023). The method used in this study is qualitative content analysis, which discusses in-depth the contents of written or printed information in the mass media (Sitasari 2022). The content of this study is an illustration entitled "Urip iku Urup" by illustrator Zuna Akhmad which was uploaded to the Instagram account @zuna\_akhmad on March 2, 2021. The main data was collected from the upload and supported by a literature study related to the Javanese philosophy of "urip iku urup," which means that humans should benefit others, like a lantern in the darkness. Interactions such as likes, comments, and shares are used as metadata. Through qualitative analysis, this illustration is expected to be able to provide an in-depth context in describing the signs and meanings in it, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. This approach allows researchers to respond deeply to the narratives and symbols that appear in the illustrations, so that they can explore a rich understanding of the moral messages and values of goodness contained therein. In addition, this study also applies Charles Sander Peirce's Semiotic Approach to analyze the various signs and symbols contained in the illustrations. This semiotic approach allows researchers to understand how visual signs, such as color, shape, and spatial arrangement, communicate messages about goodness symbolically. Semiotic analysis attempts to find the meaning of signs, including what meaning is hidden behind them (Putri and Dawami 2024). In his approach, he uses three levels of signs, namely sign, object and interpretant as follows.



**Fig 1.** Charles Sander Peirce's Semiotic Approach Model (Chandler 2022)


According to Charles Sanders Pierce, semiotics is an action, influence, or cooperation of three subjects. A sign is a physical form that can be captured by the five human senses and is something that refers to presents something other than the sign itself. The use of signs (interpretant), is defined as a concept of thought from the person who uses the sign and reduces it to a certain meaning or meaning that appears in someone's mind about the object referred to by a sign. Semiotics is also known as a theory that analyzes each sign and its significance (Yohana 2021). A sign is defined as something that can represent something else based on social conventions (Nurul Musyafa'ah and Aya Mamlu'ah 2022). This study can reveal the complexity of the meaning contained in the illustration and how these meanings contribute to the understanding of mutual cooperation in a broader context. Through descriptive qualitative research methods and a semiotic approach, an analysis was carried out on the relationship between Charles Sander Peirce's theory and the elements of signs consisting of signs, objects, and interpretants contained in the illustration "Urip iku Urup". Using Charles Sander Peirce's theory, this analysis shows how illustrations can communicate cultural values through complex and meaningful visual signs. Signs, objects, and interpretants work together to create a deeper understanding of the illustration's message, which can touch and inspire the audience.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Illustration Part Analysis 1

In the illustration, it shows a dark atmosphere like night, a hand is visible holding a brightly lit torch. The hand holding the torch looks firm and steady as if it is the only guide in the surrounding darkness. The light emitted by the torch becomes a light in the silence of the night, creating a dramatic contrast with the pitch-black background. The shape of the hand holding the torch tightly gives the impression that our own life is a guide in facing the darkness. The torch that is emitted symbolizes the spirit and courage to continue moving forward even though faced with difficulties. The light emitted from the torch not only illuminates the road ahead but also illuminates our souls and spirits to continue fighting. The use of color combinations in design plays an important role in creating atmosphere and influencing audience perception. By applying warm colors to the torch flame, the audience's attention will naturally be drawn to the main focal point, creating a sense of intensity and burning passion. On the other hand, the use of cool colors in the surrounding environmental elements provides a balanced contrast, creating a calm and peaceful atmosphere. This combination is not only visually appealing but also combines dynamics and calmness in one composition, creating a deep and harmonious experience for the audience. Through this illustration, we are invited to reflect on the deep meaning of courage and belief in facing various challenges in life. The hand that firmly holds the torch is not only a symbol but a representation of the strength that exists within each individual. The torch burns brightly, suggesting that even in the darkness and difficulties, it can have the ability to ignite the fire of hope within oneself. This fire is a symbol of spirit, courage, and belief that never goes out, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In the journey of life full of twists and turns, this light of life becomes a guide that directs us towards a brighter path. This illustration reminds us that behind every challenge, there is always an opportunity to grow and learn, and that the light of hope will always be present, providing guidance and enthusiasm to achieve better life goals.


Table 1. Illustration Part Analysis 1

<div>Sign</div> <div></div>	
<div>In the illustration, can see the shape of a torch burning inside the glass cover of a teplok lamp in a dark situation like at night. As well as the selection of color combinations between hot and cold colors.</div>	
Object	<div>Torch flame and hand</div> <div>Teplok lamp cover glass</div> <div>Rope</div>
Interpretant	<div>The burning torch is a symbol of life or in Javanese means urip while the shape of a hand holding a burning torch adds a dramatic and symbolic touch, representing the burning spirit and inspiration in the journey of life. The darkness of the night that is the background depicts a quiet and lonely atmosphere, can be interpreted as a symbol of the various difficulties and obstacles that humans may face in life. The combination of the burning torch and the darkness of the night creates an interesting color contrast in terms of aesthetics. The use of a combination of colors between the hot colors of the torch flame provides a focal point for the audience and the use of cool colors in the surrounding atmosphere adds a sense of peace.</div>

3.2. Illustration Part Analysis 2

In the illustration of this scene, a group of people are seen working together with full cooperation. They are seen trying to light the torch, and some people help by holding ropes and ladders. Each individual in the image appears focused and committed to achieving a common goal, regardless of the difficulties they may face. This scene creates an inspiring collaborative atmosphere, highlighting the importance of cooperation and solidarity in facing challenges. Each person in the image appears to be playing an active role according to their respective abilities and roles, reflecting a strong spirit of mutual cooperation. Thus, through this design, aesthetics become a strong medium to convey a message about togetherness, enthusiasm, and mutual cooperation in living life. Through the scene of working together, they not only achieve the goal of lighting the torch but also illustrate that when we unite, nothing is impossible to achieve. This illustration conveys a profound message about the power that comes from cooperation and helping each other. When working together in harmony, we can overcome obstacles that would seem impossible to face alone. This illustration serves as a reminder of the importance of always prioritizing cooperation and solidarity in every aspect of life, because by uniting, we can transcend individual boundaries and create a more significant impact. In the illustration "*Urip iku Urup*," the instrumental value of the mutual cooperation culture is present as a very valuable moral and social foundation. This value not only helps individuals and communities to survive the challenges of life but also contributes to building a solid foundation for sustainable and inclusive development. The mutual cooperation culture teaches us that togetherness and helping each other are the keys to creating a better future, where everyone can participate and benefit from shared progress.

Table 2. Illustration Part Analysis 2

Sign		
	The scene shows a group of men working together to help each other by holding ropes and ladders and there is a cat watching along.	
Object	A group of men	
	Cat	
Interpretant	Rope and ladder	
	Featuring a symbol of people working together to light a torch with a happy atmosphere, it presents an evocative and captivating aesthetic. Through this image, the message of the power of solidarity and cooperation in lighting the path of life is strongly expressed. The happy expressions on their faces add a nuance of joy and happiness.	

3.3. Illustration Part Analysis 3

The presence of traditional houses typical of Kalimantan and Jakarta in this illustration illustrates the cultural diversity that is one of Indonesia's main strengths. The traditional house of Kalimantan, with its sturdy architecture and harmony with the surrounding nature, reflects the local wisdom inherited from the ancestors of the tribes in Kalimantan. so that it not only shows adaptation to geographical conditions but also symbolizes the close relationship between humans and nature in everyday life. On the other hand, the traditional house of Jakarta, or better known as the Betawi house, shows a unique cultural identity amidst the rapid development of the capital city. The design of the Betawi house which combines local



architectural elements with foreign cultural influences reflects the long history of the city of Jakarta as a center of trade and meeting of various cultures. The distinctive ornaments and open layout of the house create a warm and friendly atmosphere, in line with the character of the Betawi people who are known for their friendliness and family. This illustration is a deep reflection of how important it is to preserve and maintain the cultural heritage that has shaped the identity of the Indonesian nation. In every stroke and color, this illustration embeds invaluable cultural wealth, such as the philosophy of *"Urip iku Urup"* which teaches that life must benefit others. This philosophy is not just an expression but has become an ethical foundation that binds Indonesian society in the spirit of mutual cooperation and togetherness. This illustration successfully captures the essence of Indonesia's cultural diversity, which consists of various tribes, religions, and ethnicities that live side by side in harmony. Through carefully selected visual elements, this illustration is not only a work of art, but also a call to maintain and preserve the noble values inherited from our ancestors. By combining various cultural elements in one work, this illustration reminds us of the strength that lies in diversity. In every detail, this illustration contains a deep message about the importance of appreciating, celebrating, and caring for Indonesia's cultural heritage as an identity that must continue to be maintained. The existence of the illustration is not only an appreciation of the past but also a call to play an active role in preserving the cultural heritage that is a pillar of the nation's sustainability.

Table 3. Illustration Part Analysis 3

Sign			
	Showcasing the local wisdom of Indonesian culture, namely in the form of monuments and traditional houses typical of Kalimantan and Jakarta.		
Object	1. Traditional House of Kalimantan		
	2. Tugu Monument		
Interpretant	3. Traditional House of Betawi Jakarta		
	This illustration presents a captivating view of Indonesia's cultural diversity. With the presence of a monument that may represent the spirit of national unity, this illustration emphasizes national values that are important to Indonesia.		

4. Conclusion

Through Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic approach, the Illustration of Urip iku Urup is revealed as a symbol of mutual cooperation culture which is used as a basic or instrumental value implemented in daily life such as Community Service in the Environment, Helping Each Other in Events and Donations and Helping in Emergencies. The burning torch represents a sign that radiates the meaning of goodness and self-sacrifice. This fire is connected to its signifier, namely the act of mutual cooperation and mutual assistance embedded in Javanese culture. Furthermore, this signifier refers to its signifier, namely the universal values of humanity and brotherhood. Thus, the Illustration of Urip iku Urup represents the identity and life of the Indonesian people who always prioritize the values of togetherness, solidarity, and helping each other. By presenting the spirit of Urip iku Urup into the illustration, it shows that life is not only about one's own existence but also about contributing positively to the environment as a reflection of a culture that is inherent and deeply rooted in everyday life.

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