

## Nature, human and local beliefs as inspirations for the forms, functions, and meanings of several symbols on traditional houses in Gurusina Adat Village, Ngada Regency

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received September 26, 2023 Received in revised form Oct. 24, 2023 Accepted November 09, 2023 Available online December 01, 2023</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Gurusina Traditional village Human Local beliefs Nature Traditional symbols</p> <p><b>*Corresponding author:</b> Yohanes Djarot Purbadi Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia Email: <a href="mailto:djarot.purbadi@uajy.ac.id">djarot.purbadi@uajy.ac.id</a> ORCID:<a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3398-0730">https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3398-0730</a></p>	<p><i>The traditional village of Gurusina, in Ngada Regency, Flores, is inhabited by three major tribes, namely Ago Ka'e, Ago Azi, and Kabe. The traditional houses in the Gurusina village contain traditional symbols originating from the traditions of its resident tribes. An event of fire in August 2018 led to the destruction of several traditional houses and the disappearance of symbols that had been preserved for generations. The goal of this article is to find inspiration for creating traditional symbols on the traditional houses in Gurusina village. The research method used is Ethnographic Research, where the researcher approaches the subject qualitatively to find inspiration (foundations) for the birth of the forms, functions, and meanings of these symbols. The results show that the symbols on the traditional houses in Gurusina village are inspired by flora, fauna, human nature, and local beliefs. This means that the surrounding nature and local beliefs are the primary inspiration for the function, form, and meaning of the traditional symbols in the Gurusina village.</i></p>

### Introduction

Flores is one of the three main islands in the East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT) and is divided into 8 regencies, namely West Manggarai Regency, Manggarai Regency, East Manggarai Regency, Ngada Regency, Nagekeo Regency, Ende Regency, Sikka Regency, and East Flores Regency (Lake 2015). Within these 8 regencies on Flores, there are 25 traditional villages, each with its own unique characteristics (Purbadi et al. 2016). One of the most intriguing areas is the traditional villages in Ngada Regency. These villages in Ngada Regency include Bena, Bela, Wogo, Bolozi, Langa Gedha, Nage, Gurusina, and Tololela (Susetyoarto 2013).

The Gurusina Traditional Village is located approximately 21 km from Bajawa and 16 km from Aimere, situated on the slopes of Mount Inerie. Uniquely, "The Gurusina Traditional Village is a traditional megalithic settlement with several megalithic structures and its community still follows the philosophy of its ancestors..." explained Mr. Paulus Suri (2023).

The Gurusina Traditional Village fire occurred on the evening of Monday, August 13, 2018. Mr. Ansel (2018) stated that the suspected cause of the fire incident originated from a short circuit. "From the initial investigation, the source of the fire started from Mr. Ode Firdaus Zeneni's house, the traditional house that burned down is called the Sao Tiwi Pau traditional house"



(Rosana 2018). The village fire resulted in the disappearance of traditional symbols in the Gurusina Traditional Village, namely “*exterior symbolism*” and “*interior symbolism*”.

The burned exterior symbolism, according to Hubertus Sary (51), includes *Ngadhu*, *Bhaga*, *Bhuja Kawa* (traditional spears), *Jara* (horses), *Li'e Seko*, *Anaiei*, *Ata*, and *Bhenga* (buffalo horns). On the other hand, the fire has consumed most of the traditional buildings, including their symbols, which are the interior symbolism. Some symbols cannot be replicated, for example, the buffalo horn (*Bhenga*), the jaws of sacrificial animals, and the *Pedho Loda* (gold chains).

The interior symbolism in the *Sa'o Saka Pu'u* and *Sa'o Saka Lobo* traditional houses that burned down include *Bhenga*, *Manu* (chickens), *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* (knives), *Mataraga*, and *Sa'u Bhuja Kawa* (traditional machetes and spears). Some symbols can be replaced with new symbols such as *Bhenga*, *Manu* (chickens), *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* (knives), and *Mataraga*. However, some symbols like *Sa'u Bhuja Kawa* (traditional machetes and spears), *Pedho Loda* (gold chains), *Bhenga* (buffalo horns), and jaws cannot be replaced.

Based on the village fire incident, there are efforts by the community to rebuild the traditional symbols and face various difficulties. There is a significant issue: what is the source of inspiration that forms the basis for the re-creation of the traditional symbols in the Gurusina Traditional Village. Thus, the problem statement of this article is: What is the inspiration that underlies the form of symbols, resulting in the functions, forms, and meanings of the symbols in the Gurusina Traditional Village in accordance with their cultural and traditional characteristics?

## Literatur review

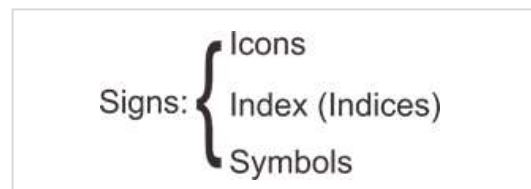
### Symbol

Symbol is an expression of a society's cultural values. The word 'symbol' is derived from the Greek verb 'Symbollein,' which means 'to throw together, with two parts called 'Symbolia.' Initially, a symbol was an object, sign, or word used for mutual recognition and had a pre-understood meaning (Djarot Purbadi, Christophori Lake, and Eddy Arinto 2020; Lake et al. 2019). Symbols play a central role as a means of communication and a foundation for shared understanding (Dillistone 2002).

Every form of communication, whether through language or other media, uses symbols. Ernst and Nugroho (1990) provides guidance to

humans regarding the nature of symbols, which are always connected to (1) symbolic ideas (based on empirical principles for visualizing ideas in the form of symbols), (2) the functional circle of symbols, and (3) the symbol system (as a system that encompasses various threads forming a symbolic network Ernst and Nugroho (1990).

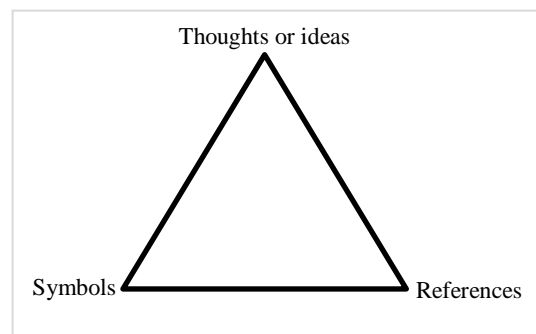
Symbols or symbols are one of the categories of signs. In Peirce's insight (1982), signs consist of icons, indexes, and symbols. In Sobur (2018) it is stated that the relationships between Peirce's concepts are depicted as follows (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Icon, index, and symbol

Source: Peirce (1982) in Sobur (2018) redrawn, 2023

In Peirce's view, the term "symbol" is commonly referred to as "word," "name," and "label" in everyday language. According to Ogden and Richards (Aminuddin 1995), symbols have an associative relationship with ideas or references and the referent or the world of reference. The relationship between the symbol, thought of reference (thought or reference), and the referent (reference) can be seen through the semiotic triangle diagram below (figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Semiotic triangle Ogden and Richards

Source: (Aminuddin 1997) redrawn, 2023

The interpretation of symbols is a form of associative (real-world) events of society with its surrounding environment. Symbols emerge because of ideas (references) from existing objects, which are then used as a reference (referent) in life and transformed into symbols.

This means that the Semiotic Triangle is applied in social life.

#### Symbolic interactionism theory

Geertz (1992) emphasizes the importance of symbols and how humans communicate through symbols. Symbols are formed through dynamic social interactions and constitute empirical realities that are historically inherited with embedded values. On the other hand, symbols also serve as guides for understanding how specific community groups lead their lives. Symbols function as a means of communication and representation of social reality (Sobur 2018).

The symbolic interactionist approach is one of the relevant perspectives in cultural studies. According to Norman Denzin (1992) in his book "Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies," he emphasizes the importance of studying symbolic interaction in the field of cultural studies. His focus lies on three interconnected issues: the production of cultural meaning, the analysis of the textual meanings, and the study of culture and the experiences involved in it. Denzin observes a tendency within symbolic interactionism to overlook ideas that connect "symbol" and "interaction" (Haris and Amalia 2018).

#### Symbols as forms

In Ferdinand de Saussure's perspective, a symbol is considered a type of sign that involves an arbitrary relationship between the signifier (*penanda*) and the signified (*petanda*). As a result, the relationship between these two elements influences human understanding and has consequences for well-being. Saussurean theory explains this as follows Bergerf (2010): "One distinctive feature of symbols is that they are never entirely arbitrary. This is not without reason, as there is an imperfection in the natural connection between the signifier and the signified. For example, the symbol of justice in the form of scales cannot be replaced by another symbol like a vehicle (e.g., a carriage)."

An example of a non-arbitrary symbol is the traditional ceremony in the village of Banyubiru called "Gumbrekan Mahesa," which means "the buffalo's birthday" and is celebrated annually (Damayanti et al. 2021). The word "Mahesa" in the local language refers to a buffalo. The local tradition of Gumbrekan Mahesa is considered an expression of gratitude from the villagers for the bountiful harvest provided by the Almighty. The

implementation of the tradition involves several requirements. The Gumbrekan Mahesa tradition consists of three main elements: attributes or equipment, myths, and the actual traditions performed (Damayanti et al. 2021).

#### Symbols as functions

The function of a symbol is not just as a form but also as a means of communication. In other words, one of the elements of communication is the symbol. Symbols do not arise in social voids but in specific contexts or situations (Sobur 2018). In essence, context refers to the situations and conditions physically and emotionally experienced by communication users. There are various forms of context (Liliweli 2001), among others:

1. The physical context includes the place or location where an event takes place.
2. The time context involves the influence of time on an event, including the concept of the right hour, the right day, the right week, the right month, and the right year.
3. The historical context refers to the conditions or events experienced by communication users in history, and these historical experiences impact the current communication situation.
4. The psychological context refers to the emotional state or psychological atmosphere that influences communication.
5. The social and cultural context encompasses the social and cultural conditions that serve as the background for the communicators and message receivers, as well as the environment in which communication occurs.

The human ability to create symbols demonstrates that humans have a highly developed culture of communication, ranging from simple symbols (sounds and gestures) to modified symbols in the form of signals transmitted through airwaves and light (radio, television, telegrams, telex, and satellites) (Sobur 2001). *Language as Symbolic Action*, Kenneth Burke (1966), This makes human's ability to use symbols the foundation for the definition of humans. In other words, "humans are symbol-using animals (symbol-making, symbol-misusing), inventor of the negative (separated from their natural condition by instruments of their own making, goaded by a spirit of hierarchy (or moved by a sense of order), and rotten with perfection)" (Sobur 2001).

In the case of Gurusina Traditional Village, Bhaga serves as a replacement and embodiment of female ancestors. In tradition, there's an expression that says: "*sawa ba'a lau lewa bhaga, sawa da ba'a to'o ngi'i go lobo da milo olo*," which means: descendants sheltered under the female ancestors will rise successfully and enjoy happiness because the female ancestors are sacred and noble. *Bhaga* is shaped like a Sa'o (house), symbolizing the strength of the female ancestral spirits, the origin of the tribe, and the source of life (Djandon 2020).

#### Symbols as meaning

James P. Spradley (1997) states that all cultural meanings are formed and expressed through the use of symbols. He emphasizes, "Meaning can only be realized through symbols," as Geertz put it (Geertz 1992). This means that cultural knowledge goes beyond just a collection of symbols, the terms used by a community, or various types of symbols.

All symbols, whether they are spoken words, objects or items (like a flag), body movements (such as waving), places or buildings (like a mosque or a church), or events (like a wedding), are part of a symbolic system. Symbols are anything that refers to something. Symbols encompass everything that is perceived or experienced by humans (Sobur 2018).

Culture is a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols that are passed down through history. Culture is a system of concepts that is inherited and expressed in symbolic form, through symbols and symbolism, humans communicate, preserve, and develop knowledge about life, as well as their attitudes toward life (Geertz 1992).

The meaning attached to symbols in the Gurusina Traditional Village reflects the distinctive characteristics of a culturally strong community. Their symbols, which take the form of objects, behaviors, places, and events, are a form of communication that carries intention and significance. The meanings of these symbols in the Gurusina Traditional Village are deliberately expressed as a form of communication with a historical context, preserved and passed down to subsequent generations to ensure the endurance and sustainability of the soul of these symbols.

Vianey (2012) in Djokaho et al. (2021) explains that in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), there is a well-known dance called the *Ja'i* dance. This dance originates from the ethnic group in the Ngada Regency, and the word "*Ja'i*" in the local

language means "dance." Initially, the dance belonged to the Ngada ethnic group and was used to celebrate the joy of the greatness of the soul and spiritual freedom. The *Ja'i* dance is performed in the village courtyard (*Wewa Nua/Kisa Nata*), a sacred place for worship. In addition, this space is used by the musicians playing "*gong-gendang*" (*go-laba*), providing traditional musical accompaniment to the *Ja'i* dance.

#### Method

The research employs the method of Ethnographic Research. Through this method, the researcher has the opportunity to get close to the community and the objects (symbols) under investigation. The researcher has the chance to understand the cultural meanings used by the community in organizing their behaviors and interpreting their experiences and symbols in communication. Primary data collection is obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, while secondary data is gathered by reviewing literature and journal articles. The selection of Gurusina Traditional Village as the research object is based on five reasons. Based on the observations and the study of several journal articles, there are five reasons for selecting Gurusina Traditional Village as the research object:

1. From observations and the study of various journal articles, it is evident that Gurusina Traditional Village exhibits cultural continuity and has not undergone significant cultural changes.
2. The community of Gurusina Traditional Village highly values the traditions of their ancestors as a form of respect and love for the noble values of their forebears.
3. The fire incident on August 13, 2018, which destroyed around 27 traditional houses along with the *Ngadhu* and *Bhaga* and various physical elements of tradition, is a rare case.
4. Gurusina Traditional Village is one of the oldest traditional villages among others on the island of Flores.
5. Gurusina Traditional Village is unique in its arrangement of traditional houses, which are nearly identical to each other. The houses have elevated platforms that are adapted to the topographical conditions of the land with varying levels of elevation.



## Results and discussion

In Gurusina Traditional Village, there are many locally unique symbols. This paper discusses 12 symbols that can be found after the village fire in 2018, along with efforts to rebuild them. The research focuses on the inspiration that serves as the foundation for the symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village.

### a. *Bhenga* symbols (buffalo horns)

The *Bhenga* symbol resembles buffalo horns, with black and white coloring. In the center of the *Bhenga*, there are 5 circles: 2 circles inside a square and 3 circles in the curved part. The material used to make the *Bhenga* symbol is oja wood (surian tree, scientific name: *Toona ciliata*). The size of the *Bhenga* symbol varies according to the size of the wood used for carving. There are 3 *Bhenga* symbols above the entrance to the 'One' house and 3 symbols above the beams inside the 'One' house.

According to Mr. Hubertus Sary (2023), the meaning of the *Bhenga* symbol is grandeur through goodness. In their daily lives, the people of *Sa'o* think and act based on goodness to achieve grandeur. This means that, as humans, they are expected to always act kindly towards themselves and others.

The *bhenga* symbol is synonymous with "wear kindness and shed evil" (*modhe zeta one, da ngesa zale wewa*). *Bhenga* is used when discussing important matters in the customs, such as plans for the next year, evaluating activities from previous years, or resolving specific conflicts in the village.



Figure 3. *Bhenga* symbol

### b. *Manu* (chicken) symbols

The *Manu* (chicken) symbol is shaped like a chicken with a white color and its eyes are the same color as the wood. The head, legs, and tail of the *Manu* (chicken) symbol are curved. The material used to create the *Manu* symbol is oja wood (*Toona ciliata*). The size of the *Manu* symbol varies depending on the size of the wood used. There are 4 *Manu* symbols above the entrance to One and 4 symbols above the beams when entering One.

The meaning of the *Manu* symbol is a reminder of the creature that always wakes people up. In daily life, the *Manu* symbol symbolizes a creature that helps awaken people (the occupants of the house) with its sound. *Manu* is used during customary rituals to offer food to the ancestors and to seek guidance from the ancestors for various matters. The *Manu* symbol signifies that people should follow a chicken, which always wakes up earlier than humans, allowing it to perform activities earlier. The *Manu* symbol also provides guidance and solutions for oneself and others in life.



Figure 4. *Manu* symbol

### c. *Tudhi tuke lizu* symbol (knife)

The *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* (Knife) symbol is shaped like a knife with 3 sharp ends. The symbol is white in color. At the bottom of the symbol, there are 2 curved lines, and at the top, there are 3 sharp blade points. The material used to create the *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* (Knife) symbol is fai wood (*Albizia chinensis*). The size of the *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* symbol varies depending on the size of the wood used. There are 4 *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* symbols located above the beams of One, with one in each corner of One.

The meaning of the *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* symbol is associated with a knife, which represents the sharpness and precision of decisions. In daily life,

it symbolizes the importance of making sharp and accurate choices and decisions. The knife symbol also signifies the necessity of cutting away negative influences and obstacles in life, allowing individuals to move forward with clarity and determination. This symbol has its place in customary rituals related to decision-making and problem-solving.

The meaning of the *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* symbol is associated with strength and resilience in carrying burdens and responsibilities. In everyday life, individuals face various challenges and problems, and this symbol represents the strength and resilience needed to shoulder one's responsibilities and those of others.

The symbol of *Tudhi Tuke Lizu* signifies that when a person is strong and resilient, they can ensure the safety and well-being of themselves and others for whom they are responsible. Conversely, if an individual is weak or lacking in strength, those under their care are at risk. This symbol conveys the importance of being a robust and dependable individual in various life situations (Hubertus Sary and Kletus 2023).



Figure 5. *Tudhi tuke lizu* symbol

d. *Bhuja kawa* (traditional spear) symbol

The *Bhuja kawa* symbol, as described by Mr. Hubertus Sary (2023), takes the form of a traditional black spear. At the top of the *Bhuja Kawa*, there is a brown wooden circle, in accordance with the material used, which is oja wood (*Toona ciliata*). The size of the *Bhuja Kawa* symbol varies depending on the size of the wood used. There are 2 *Bhuja Kawa* symbols at the bottom of the entrance stairs to One, 3 symbols at the front of *Padha*, and 1 symbol at the bottom and behind One, which is located outside.

The meaning of the *Bhuja Kawa* symbol might be associated with its resemblance to a traditional

spear, which could symbolize strength, protection, or readiness for defense. However, for the specific cultural context and significance of this symbol in Gurusina Traditional Village, it would be best to refer to Mr. Hubertus Sary's explanation or local sources, as symbolism can vary between cultures and regions.

The symbol of *Bhuja Kawa* represents bravery, strength, and courage. It is used during the thanksgiving ceremony for the construction of the traditional house (*Ka Sa'o*) and is held by the chosen man from the traditional house. The *Bhuja Kawa* symbol also serves as a powerful weapon to repel any disruptive threats to the house. This symbol carries deep cultural and practical significance in Gurusina Traditional Village, reflecting the community's values of bravery and protection.

The symbol of *Bhuja Kawa* holds the meaning that, in everyday life, men should be reliable within their families. They should be brave, possess strength, and overcome challenges, obstacles, and disturbances. Men are expected to courageously strive to achieve their desired goals. This symbol emphasizes the role of men as protectors and providers for their families in the Gurusina Traditional Village culture.



Figure 6. *Bhuja kawa* symbol

e. *Jara* (horse) symbol

The symbol *Jara* resembles a black horse with a brown circle representing its eye. It is made from kayu oja (*Toona ciliata* wood) and its size varies depending on the wood used. There are two *Jara* symbols located at the bottom of the steps leading into One and two symbols at the front of

*Padha*. This symbol has a deep cultural significance and is an integral part of the culture of Gurusina Traditional Village. It's essential in preserving the cultural identity and values of the community.

The symbol *Jara* represents maturity, a means of transportation, and hard work. It is crafted during the *Weti* ritual, which involves carving and sculpting all the symbols, including *Jara*. This symbol embodies the strength of the ancestors, who continuously guide the members of the community or the members of the house of tradition. It reflects the importance of maturity, dedication, and the tireless effort in their way of life.

The symbol *Jara* holds the meaning of unison, which continually drives the members of the community towards collective success, referred to as "*Le Moe Jara Ngai*." In the concept of honesty, the *Jara* symbol always faces inward towards *Sa'o* to signify that everything negative (dishonesty) disrupts the unity within the community. It emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity within the community, as these values are essential for maintaining their unity and strength.



**Figure 7.** *Jara* (horse) symbol

f. *Riti* Symbol

The symbol *Riti* takes the form of a rectangular shape with white color and a black square inside. It is crafted from kayu oja (Toona ciliata), and the size of the symbol can vary according to the size of the wood used. *Riti* symbols are always found in pairs, flanking the *Bhenga* symbols. The specific meaning and significance of the *Riti* symbols would be tied to

their use in specific rituals and ceremonies within the cultural context of Gurusina Traditional Village.

The meaning of the *Riti* symbol is to serve as a supporter and reinforcement for greatness and goodness. In everyday life, it emphasizes the need for people to support and strengthen each other to achieve common goals for the greater good. It signifies that individuals cannot rely solely on their own strength and abilities; cooperation and support from others are essential for achieving success and goodness.

Mr. Kletus (2023) explains that the *Riti* symbol symbolizes the idea that greatness or goodness cannot be achieved without the support of others. Humans are social beings who are always there to help each other. By assisting one another, humans can attain greatness or goodness. Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to maintain harmony together, even if they have different life circumstances.



**Figure 8.** *Riti* (chess) symbol

g. *Li'e seko* symbol

Simbol *Li'e Seko* resembles a chess piece, with black and white colors. At the top of *Li'e Seko*, there is a black circle. The material used for the *Li'e Seko* symbol is the oja wood (Toona ciliata tree). The size of the *Li'e Seko* symbol varies depending on the size of the wood used. The location of the *Li'e Seko* symbol is usually alongside the *Bhuja Kawa* (Traditional Spear) symbol. There are three *Li'e Seko* symbols in the front of *Padha*, two symbols at the bottom of the One's entrance stairs, and one symbol outside, precisely at the bottom of the One.

The meaning of the *Li'e Seko* symbol is a companion or escort. The symbol is commonly used during the *Weti* (carving). In daily life, to

achieve the desired goals, the starting point is crucial.

According to Mr. Hubertus Sary (2023), the *Li'e Seko* symbol represents the meaning of escorting the ancestors, helping people determine a good starting point. The *Li'e Seko* symbol also signifies a companion, indicating that when someone is striving to achieve something, good support from others is essential to ensure that what is achieved benefits both oneself and others.



Figure 9. *Li'e Seko* symbol

#### h. *Anaie* symbol

The symbol of *Anaie* resembles the core space of the One house, colored brown to match the wood's color. The central part of *Anaie* contains a square shape similar to an entrance. The top of *Anaie* is made of thatch, and the wood used for the *Anaie* symbol itself is from the *Toona ciliata* tree. The size of the *Anaie* symbol is 25 cm x 25 cm, and it is situated on the roof ridge of the *Sa'o Saka Pu'u* house.

The meaning of the *Anaie* symbol is that it represents women. In the customs of the Ngadha region, their cultural system is matrilineal (female-oriented). Therefore, the women's traditional house or *Sa'o Saka Pu'u* has larger dimensions than the men's traditional house or *Sa'o Saka Lobo*.

The *Sa'o Saka Pu'u* carries the meaning of the original house, believed to be the root of the *Sa'o Ngaza* entity (the named house). It has a distinct form compared to other traditional houses, being the largest in size among traditional houses. On the roof, there is the *Anaie* symbol, signifying women who always watch over every individual and protect them from any threats to life (Mr. Kletus 2023).



Figure 10. *Anaie* symbol

#### i. *Ata* symbol

The *Ata* symbol has a shape resembling someone holding a machete or machete and a spear. The body of *Ata* is wrapped in *Ijuk*, the upper part or the head is carved to resemble a male face. The material used to create the *Ata* symbol is *oja* wood (*Toona ciliata* tree). There is one *Ata* symbol at the top of the *Sa'o Saka Lobo's* roof.

The meaning of the *Ata* symbol is that of a strong and powerful man. The placement of both symbols, *Anaie* and *Ata*, is done after the entire traditional house is completed. The *Sa'o Saka Lobo* is smaller than the *Sa'o Saka Pu'u*, reflecting the matrilineal system adhered to by the people of the Ngadha regency.

The *Ata* symbol has a sacred meaning. It signifies a courageous and responsible man in Gurusina Traditional Village, one who is ready to protect, lead, and take responsibility for their family, clan, and village. The *Ata* symbol is also interpreted as the male ancestor, who guides the members of the tribe to always walk the right and honest path. For this reason, this symbol is considered highly sacred, according to Mr. Kletus (2023).





**Figure 11.** *Ata* (human) symbol

j. *Bhenga* (buffalo horn) symbol

Mr. Paulus (2023) explained that the *Bhenga* symbol is in the physical form of a buffalo horn. The central part of the *Bhenga* is tied using bamboo and ijuk. The size of the *Bhenga* symbol varies according to the size of the buffalo that is sacrificed. The *Bhenga* symbol is located in the front part of the *Padha* (terrace) and is wrapped with ijuk around bamboo before being hung on the side of the *Padha*.

The *Bengha* symbol signifies remembrance and dignity (self-esteem). This symbol has a physical form and is hung in front of the traditional house as a reminder of the generosity of the family who provided the buffalo. It's also interpreted as a reflection of the dignity of the traditional house owner. The more horns obtained; the higher the owner's dignity is considered to be.

The *Bhenga* symbol is commonly used in the *Ka Sa'o* ritual or the ritual of feeding the ancestors. This means that the owner of the traditional house invites every family in the village to participate in the ritual as an expression of gratitude for the completion of the traditional house or *Sa'o*. Thus, it serves as proof of economic capability, fulfilling one's hajad (cultural obligations), and providing food to many people. It also serves as a reminder to the family that provided the buffalo.



**Figure 12.** *Bhenga* (buffalo horn) symbol

k. *Leke weti* or *neka weti* symbol

The *Leke Weti* or *Neka Weti* symbol is in the form of jewelry or beads that encircle the *Ngadhu* pole. The symbol's color matches the color of the wood, and it can vary. The size of the symbol is not fixed and varies due to its circular pattern. The symbol is made from *sebu* wood, obtained through a traditional ceremony.

The *Leke Weti* or *Neka Weti* symbol represents wealth and pride. In the past, the *Ngadha* region had a custom of using pure gold as a dowry, making it a symbol of the wealth and pride of both men and women.

The *Leke Weti* or *Neka Weti* symbol is used in traditional ceremonies, such as the beginning of the construction of a traditional house and thanksgiving ceremonies. In everyday life, it symbolizes the connection of people to their ancestral heritage and a constant sense of gratitude for this heritage. The people of *Ngadha* continue to work hard to acquire wealth, which they pass down to their descendants.



**Figure 13.** *Leke weti* or *neka weti* symbol

l. *Lege wa'i*, *woe soza* and *lege penu tengu* symbol

The symbols *Lege Wa'i*, *Woe Soza*, and *Penu Tengu* are circular in shape and follow the form of

the *Ngadhu* pole. The interior of these symbols contains smaller circles. They are made from sebu wood, just like the *Leke Weti* symbol. The three carvings have a diameter that matches the diameter of the *Ngadhu* pole since their pattern is circular. These symbols are located at the base, in the middle, and at the top of the pole, near its foundation.

The three symbols have different meanings despite having the same shape. The first symbol (*Lege Wa'i*) represents foundational strength, the second symbol (*Woe Soza*) symbolizes inspiration or solutions, and the third symbol (*Lege Penu Tengu*) represents relief.

The meanings of the symbols *Lege Wa'i* (first), *Woe Soza* (second), and *Lege Penu Tengu* (third) are as follows: *Lege Wa'i*: It represents the idea that every individual, especially men, should have a fundamental strength within themselves to help both themselves and others. Men are seen as leaders in their families and communities. *Woe Soza*: This symbol signifies that in community life, a man should be able to solve problems with the best solutions to avoid division and differences of opinion. *Lege Penu Tengu*: When a man experiences inner turmoil that weighs on his mind, he should take slow, deep breaths to find relief or inner freshness. These symbols carry important cultural and ethical messages, guiding the behavior and responsibilities of men in the community.



**Figure 14.** *Lege wa'i, woe Soza and lege penu tengu*

*Tengu* symbol

The traditional symbols in Gurusina Customary Village are evidently drawn from the knowledge and context of the surrounding environment. The source of ideas for these symbols is rooted in the knowledge existing in the

living environment, serving as inspiration and material to express these symbols. The research analysis results indicate that the references for these symbols point towards local beliefs, human beings, flora, and fauna. The overall perspective is succinctly presented in the following [table 1](#) below.

**Table 1.** Reference of traditional symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village

Traditional Symbol	Local beliefs	Human	Fauna
<i>Bhenga</i>			✓
<i>Manu</i>			✓
<i>Tudhi</i>		✓	
<i>Bhuja</i>	✓		
<i>Kawa</i>			
<i>Jara</i>			✓
<i>Riti</i>	✓		
<i>Li'e Seko</i>	✓		
<i>Anaie</i>		✓	
<i>Ata</i>		✓	
<i>Zegu Kaba</i>			✓
<i>Neka Weti</i>		✓	
<i>Lele Telu</i>		✓	

Local beliefs, as an inspiration for the creation of customary symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village, have also occurred elsewhere. Local beliefs in several regions are interpreted and used as inspiration for customary symbols. For instance, the meaning of the Arajang Spear symbol in Parigi Moutong Regency is a symbol or emblem of the Bolano kingdom. The meaning of Arajang serves as a sign of brotherhood or a sign of friendship between the Bone kingdom and the Bolano kingdom ([Fikrah and Efendi 2018](#)).

Comparatively, when looking at the symbols in Sukabumi Regency, the '*Leuit*' function is also considered a symbol of prosperity, meaning the number of *Leuit* owned by each family symbolizes prosperity for the family. The more *Leuit* structures that are built, the greater the symbol of a family's abundant and plentiful blessings ([Prabowo and Sudrajat 2021](#)).

Local beliefs in wayang, for example. Javanese people use their knowledge of *wayang* as inspiration for symbols. The image of a tree in the *gunungan* symbolizes human life in the world, with Allah providing comfort and protection to His people living in the world ([Loita 2018](#)). In conclusion, local beliefs in Gurusina are reinforced by the customs of people in various places, whose symbols refer to an understanding of local beliefs.

Human beings as a source of inspiration for symbols in Gurusina are also found in other places. Javanese culture has a traditional head covering called "*blangkon*" which is an essential part of Javanese traditional attire for men. Some people may have the perception that the *blangkon* serves only as a head covering. Additionally, there are beliefs that the *blangkon* functions as protection from the sun's rays (Dwijonagoro et al. 2022).

The symbolic meaning of traditional attire in the village of Kubalahin is reflected in every aspect of the adornments and materials, emphasizing the cultural values of the village. These values include kinship, social system values, and the sense of family, which are evident in the white-colored fabric (Umanailo 2020).

*Cumpe*, a traditional ceremony in Buton, is a mandatory rite for a woman who has her first child. *Cumpe* is an ancestral heritage of the Buton people, still preserved and practiced by the community. Both Butonese women and men who marry into other ethnic groups also perform the *Cumpe* ceremony. The *Cumpe* ceremony begins with a sense of gratitude for having given birth to a child, and its purpose is to protect the child from illnesses (Wanulu 2016).

In conclusion, the human qualities depicted in the traditional symbols of Gurusina Traditional Village are similar to traditions in other places. While there may be differences in traditional attire between villages, they generally share similar symbolic meanings.

The use of elements from the surrounding natural environment, such as flora and fauna, as sources of inspiration, materials, and means to create symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village is not unique and can be found in various cultures. In Javanese culture, for example, there is the symbolic figure of *Wayang*, which features a snake coiled around the tree of life. This snake symbolizes the ladder-like ascent and descent of humans between the human world and the spiritual realm. The direction of the coiling in the symbolism, as seen in the Mahayana Buddhism tradition, can also indicate Pradaksina, signifying a clockwise motion towards the center, representing an ascent (Loita 2018).

In Toraja society, initially, buffalo were ordinary animals used for plowing fields and as a means of transportation for the common people. However, over time, buffaloes gained increased value and became a form of exchange for other

goods. Even a single buffalo had a high market value and was almost unattainable for those in lower socioeconomic strata. In terms of symbolism, the more sacrificial animals a family had, the wealthier they appeared, often signifying noble status (Embon and Ketut 2018).

The Chinese believe in the existence of dragons. The dragon is a complex mythological creature in Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of goodness and fortune. This differs from the perceptions of European and Christian cultures, which often see dragons as malevolent and evil creatures. For the Chinese, dragons are a symbol of their ethnicity. Chinese communities around the world proudly acknowledge themselves as descendants of the 'descendants of the dragon' or '*long de chuan ren*' (Yoswara, Santosa, and Haswanto 2015).

In conclusion, the use of fauna in the traditional symbols of Gurusina Traditional Village aligns with similar traditions. This means that the residents of Gurusina Traditional Village, especially their ancestors, viewed the surrounding nature (flora and fauna), human characteristics, and local beliefs as sources of ideas, materials, and forms that were incorporated to create these symbols. In the perspective of van Peursen (1988), the surrounding environment is intimately connected to human beings and is believed to bring about safety.

## Conclusions

The form of symbols in the traditional houses of Gurusina Traditional Village is derived from the experiences of the ancestors who observed specific functional objects in the village, which were then imbued with meaning to become symbols. Objects that have been given meaning are then communicated as signs that are respected by the village residents. The symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village are not entirely arbitrary because they carry specific meanings. For example, the symbol of a chicken is not replaced by another symbol, like a spear.

The functions of traditional symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village are understood by the community and have become important symbolic communication tools. These traditional symbols have become part of the 'vocabulary' in both customary and daily life, creating strong social and customary bonds within the community. In other words, local symbolism

forms the essence and the binding force of the strong customary life passed down from generation to generation.

The meanings of the symbols created in Gurusina Traditional Village reflect a community deeply rooted in its culture. Symbols, which encompass objects, behaviors, places, and events, serve as a form of communication laden with intent and significance. The meanings of these symbols in Gurusina Traditional Village are deliberately expressed as a historical form of communication, safeguarded, and passed down from one generation to the next to ensure that the soul of these symbols does not fade or vanish.

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#### Author(s) contribution

**Petrus Vincentius Parera** contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

**Yohanes Djarot Purbadi** contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

