

Shirohige's Leadership Study in *One Piece* Anime: Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the construction of Shirohige's leadership representation in the anime *One Piece*. Specifically, this study aims to identify how this representation is constructed Semiotically, the motives behind its application, and the leadership typology it reflects. This research used a qualitative approach with the main subject was the anime *One Piece*, focusing on the scenes and interactional dialogues between Shirohige and his crew, particularly in the Marineford Arc and flashback scenes. The data were collected through visual recording and transcription of dialog from selected scenes that depicted Shirohige's leadership. The analysis was conducted systematically by using Peirce's triadic model. The results of the study show that Shirohige's leadership through Icons, Indexes, and Symbols collectively produce the Interpretant of affective loyalty and sacrifice-based authority. The motives of Shirohige's leadership centers on identification as a psychological foundation. Functionality as a survival strategy. Symbolism as an ideological justification for group morality. Shirohige's leadership style is hybrid because it combines elements of Paternalistic, Charismatic, Transformational, and Prophetic leadership, ultimately leading to Kinship-Based Leadership with a focus on moral integrity and compassion. This study is expected to contribute to popular literature studies by having another anime as the subject of Semiotic analysis or by investigating leadership in other kinds of literary works. The findings of this study can also be used as a sample of reference for case study material or teaching material in character education and leadership courses to analyze the construction of moral values and effective leadership models.

Keywords: Anime, Leadership, Pierce's Triadic Model, Semiotic Analysis.

Introduction

Literature is a form of human expression that contains values, experiences, and thoughts manifested through language (Wellek & Warren, 2014). The essence of literature lies not only in the beauty of language, but also in its function as a mirror of life and a medium for understanding social, cultural, and psychological realities. In this modern era, technological developments have brought about new forms of literature often referred to as popular literature or new media literature, in which anime and manga are included as forms of modern narrative expression (Napier, 2005). Various literary works including poetry, prose, drama, or even anime can be studied using different approaches, such as Psychology, Marxism, Feminism, or Semiotics. Semiotic approach has been widely used in many fields of research, including literature. One of the commonly used Semiotic analyses is Charles Sanders Peirce's model, which is considered one of the main foundations of modern Semiotics. Peirce developed the Triadic Sign Model (Peirce, 1931-1958), which has three components in the signifying process: Representamen which is the sign itself, such as an image or word, Object which is the real concept referred to by the sign, and Interpretant which is the final meaning formed in the mind of the interpreter. This classification of signs is further divided based on the nature of the relationship between Representamen and Object, divided into icon, index, and symbol. Iconic signs work through physical or visual resemblance, indexical signs work through causal relationships or real physical connections, while symbolic signs work through arbitrary social conventions or agreements. This triadic model is particularly relevant for analyzing visual fiction because it can examine the complexity of the narrative and symbolism that shape representations of leadership.

In addition, topics in literature research that can be investigated can include anything ranging from moral values, social issues, psychological traits, ambition, to leadership. One of the interesting popular literary works to be studied is *One Piece*. Premiered in 1999, this famous Japanese anime was produced by Toei Animation as an adaptation of the manga series by Eiichiro Oda, one of the most influential mangaka in the world. Technically, *One Piece* is an anime that does not use a season system, but rather continues on an episode-by-episode basis, with the average duration of each episode is approximately 24 minutes. To date, the series has aired approximately 1140 episodes, making it one of the longest-running and most commercially successful media in history. Based on the IMDb (2024) website, this anime is not only recognized

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globally by being “the most DVDs released by a serial anime TV program” from the Guinness World Record but also “the highest-rated TV show of 2024.” Despite its pirate theme, One Piece is also considered a unique anime due to its voyage adventures, amazing fight scenes, elements of “magic” and mystery, dramas between characters, political and social intrigues, as well as an eccentric and exaggerated sense of humor (IMDb, 2009). One Piece tells about the adventures of Monkey D. Luffy and the Straw Hat Pirates in their search for legendary treasure, in which Luffy is the main character who aspires to become the Pirate King. Even though the character Luffy has undisputedly become one of the most globally famous anime characters known for his unique ways in leading his crew on his Thousand Sunny ship, there are other outstanding One Piece characters known for their leadership roles as ship captains, including Captain Edward Newgate, famously known as Shirohige. The relationship between Luffy and Shirohige is very significant in the course of the One Piece stories throughout episodes. Shirohige is one of the Four Emperors of the Sea and is known as a role model respected by Luffy, especially because Shirohige acts as a father figure to Ace, Luffy's adoptive brother.

There have been many research done on One Piece manga as their subject, Wahyuningtyas (2011) study which focused on the deeply embedded moral values of the Bushidō code of ethics (such as courage, loyalty, and sacrifice), Sasada's (2011) study which discussed shonen heroes as altruistic figures who fight for social responsibility, Kopper's (2020) study which analyzed how the pirates build an alternative system of ethics and justice outside of formal, legitimate law, and Dwipa's (2022) research which used Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey theory to show that the main character experienced stages of sacrifice and moral transformation. Meanwhile, many other researchers investigated the anime from different topics and perspectives. The research that focused on leadership values in the anime was done by Bahari and Sari (2024) who applied the Prophetic Leadership theory, adopted from commonly known leadership attributes of Prophet Muhammad, to analyze the values of integrity, responsibility, and compassion in the One Piece narrative. Haight (2025) examined how emotional expression in One Piece contributed to the formation of a new masculinity and reinforces male leadership figures. Both Ayamiseba (2025) and Arianti, et al. (2025) examined Luffy's Transformational Leadership, where Ayamiseba (2025) focused on Luffy's leadership role in specific episodes while Arianti, et al. (2025) linked this type of leadership to the values of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). None of those who studied the One Piece manga addressed the leadership issue in their research, while the ones who studied the anime, though trying to scrutinize the role of leadership as their object, mainly focused on the character Luffy. All in all, from Bahari's and Sari's, Ayamiseba's and Arianti, et. al's studies, it can be revealed that Luffy's leadership role can be linked to the Prophetic and Transformational types of leadership.

The Prophetic Leadership type, which is widely known as SATF attributes of Prophet Muhammad (Al-Qardhawi, 1997), is divided into four types, namely: *Siddiq* (Honest), *Amanah* (Trustworthy), *Tabligh* (Communicative), and *Fatanah* (Wise) (Bahari & Sari, 2025). Transformational Leadership is a leadership style in which leaders inspire and transform the values of their followers so that they are motivated to go beyond their own interests for the sake of a common goal (Ayamiseba, 2025; Arianti et al., 2025). This type of leadership originated from Bass (1985) theory in which transformational leadership has morals whereby the leader is guided by ethical principles such as respect for human dignity and equality of human rights. The organization's long-term success will be enhanced by moral leadership. That is, the transformations that deal with fulfilment of real needs, proven beneficial to the organization. Meanwhile, other scholars who studied leadership theory have formulated other types of leadership. Pellegrini and Scandura (2008) presented a comprehensive literature review on Paternalistic Leadership and provided some variations into the three-dimensional model called Authoritarianism, Benevolence, and Morality. According to Farh & Cheng (2000), Paternalistic Leadership is a leadership style that combines strong leadership qualities (Authority) with paternal affection (Benevolence), demonstrated within an organizational context. Additionally, van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) conducted a critical review on the theory and the measurement tools of the Charismatic-Transformational Leadership type. Charismatic Leadership itself originated from Weber's (1947) theory in which Charismatic leadership is a type of domination where subordinates (followers) obey because they believe in the extraordinary, heroic, or exemplary qualities possessed by the leader. From these assorted sources, it can be concluded that Charismatic Leadership is a leadership style that relies on the personal charm of the leader and strong emotional influence over their followers, whereas Paternalistic Leadership is a style in which leaders act like protective and caring or benevolent father figures, but still maintain authority. The selection of these four leadership models is not a random combination of theories, but is based on the assumption that Shirohige's leadership is hybrid or layered. These models are compatible because they explain different but mutually supportive aspects of leadership. Paternalistic leadership (Farh & Cheng, 2000) functions as an authority structure that builds affective loyalty through protection (Benevolence). Meanwhile, Charismatic Leadership (Weber, 1947) serves as Shirohige's psychological mechanism for gaining deep loyalty through Idealized Influence. Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985) functions as the behavior that applies this charisma through Inspirational Motivation and Individualized Consideration. The key to compatibility lies in Prophetic Leadership (Al-Qardhawi, 1997), which serves as the moral and ethical foundation (*Amanah* and *Siddiq*) needed to justify Shirohige's Paternalism. This combination is necessary because leadership in visual media must be structurally strong (Paternalistic) while also being emotionally inspiring (Charismatic & Transformational) and morally justified (Prophetic).

In general, leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve common goals. According to Robbins & Judge (2017), leadership is the ability to influence a group of people in achieving a vision or mission. The application of leadership certainly has its own reasons. According to Shamir, et al. (1993) and Northouse (2021), the main reasons a leader chooses

a particular leadership style can be categorized into three motives: (1) Functionality, which is achieving group goals effectively; (2) Identification, which means aligning with group values; and (3) Symbolism, which is becoming a symbol of hope or protection for the group. Although previous studies have identified the presence of leadership in *One Piece*, the novelty of this research lies in its attempt to go beyond mere narrative description. Previous studies have tended to focus on leadership functions or outcomes and have lacked the tools to systematically verify how visual and linguistic signs construct these perceptions in visual media like anime. Specifically, traditional charismatic leadership studies are often criticized as being too idealistic and subjective because they rely on general perceptions. This research aims to address these methodological weaknesses. By using Peirce's Semiotics, this study not only combines theory but also expands and operationalizes leadership theory by making it verifiable using signs. This study broke down the phenomenon of Shirohige's leadership types into concrete representations. Through an analysis of Icons, Indexes, and Symbols, this research demonstrates the specific mechanisms used by manga artist Eiichiro Oda to construct the moral authority and compassion of his leader. Therefore, this study provides a Semiotic verification that expands the understanding of how Shirohige's hybrid leadership is visually and narratively constructed in a way that has not been done before. Based on the reasons mentioned above, the researchers designed the objectives of this study into three points: (1) to how Peirce's classification of Semiotic signs work together to form the Interpretant or final representation of Shirohige's leadership; (2) to analyze the reasons behind Shirohige's leadership model; and (3) to identify and analyze the types of leadership represented by the character Shirohige.

Research Method

This study used a qualitative approach which was appropriate for interpreting symbolic meanings, social representations, and leadership values in fictional media (Creswell, 2009). This approach was relevant because it allowed researchers to analyze textual-visual data in depth and interpretatively. The subject of this research was the anime *One Piece*, focusing on episodes featuring Shirohige and his interactions with the Shirohige Pirates crew. The object of this study was kinship-based leadership, which was depicted visually and narratively through the character of Shirohige. According to Weltek and Warren (2014), the object of literary study was not limited to written texts, but also included all forms of human expression manifested through language and symbols, which justified the selection of anime as the subject. The research data was classified into primary and secondary data. According to Sudaryanto (2015), primary data was data obtained directly from the main source, while secondary data served as supporting data and a theoretical framework. Secondary data included academic literature and other sources that were relevant to this study's subject (*One Piece*), object (Leadership), and Peirce's Semiotic Analysis Models. The main data was taken from episodes covering The Paramount War Saga (Marineford Arc) and related flashback scenes. This arc is a dramatic climax that fully showcases Shirohige's values of leadership, sacrifice, and family bonds. The scene selection prioritizes moments that explicitly represent family values (kinship), leadership functions, and the emotional interactions between Shirohige and his crew members. The selected data must have a high intensity of semiotic signs, meaning scenes that prominently feature visual symbols, indexes, or symbolic dialog, thus facilitating the triadic analysis process. In modern literary and media studies, many previous studies successfully used Semiotic models, and one of the most common Semiotic Analysis Models that had been used was the one developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, with his triadic model to deconstruct complex signs. Therefore, this study also adopted Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis as the main tool to decipher Shirohige's representation of leadership.

Result and Discussion

This chapter presents findings and analysis based on three research questions. It begins by analyzing Shirohige's leadership using Peirce's triadic model of Semiotics. Next, it analyzes the motives for implementing family-based leadership, discussing the motives of functionality, identification, and symbolism. Finally, it analyzes the types of leadership reflected by Shirohige, identifying the Paternalistic, Charismatic, Prophetic, and Transformative styles found in his leadership.

How Shirohige's Leadership is Reflected in One Piece Anime Based on Peirce's Triadic Model of Semiotic Analysis

This subsection is the methodological core of this study, which aims to explain how Shirohige's family-based leadership representation is constructed through a system of signs. Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Semiotics analytical framework will be used to analyze the collected data. The analysis will be grouped based on the classification of signs as Icons (signs based on similarity), Index (signs based on cause-and-effect relationships), and Symbols (signs based on convention) to determine how the three work together in forming the Interpretant or final meaning.

Table 1. Shirohiges Leadership Based on Peirce's Triadic Model of Semiotic

No.	Representant	Object	Interpretant
Sign: Icon			
1.	Eps: 461, Scene: 06:20 	Shirohige's large muscular body and an upright posture.	A leader with a physique like this has the physical strength to protect his crew.
2.	Eps: 461, Scene: 06:04 	Shirohige wearing white robes and his courage in the face of all the enemies who stood in his way	Shirohige always wears a white cloak, which in the anime One Piece signifies high status or leadership. In that scene, Shirohige appears ready to challenge thousands of enemies in front of him to save one of his crew members, Portgas D. Ace who is about to be executed.
3.	Eps: 486, Scene: 04:11  Dialogue: S: Forgive me, my sons. I raised such a ridiculous fool. You guys give me everything. . . . Goodbye my sons! His crews: (cry)	Shirohige apologized to his crews by addressing them as his sons.	In that scene, Shirohige is seen severely injured and about to die protecting his entire crew alone. In his last words, he expresses regret and apologizes to his children (crew) for raising one of his children (crew) who betrayed them and even killed his own father (leader). All of his crew members cry upon learning that their father, who is about to die, is still thinking of them and even apologizing for a mistake that was not his own. This incident shows his warm leadership and how he always prioritizes the interests of his members.
Sign: Index			
4.	Eps: 463, Scene: 04:43  Eps: 316, Scene: 11:01 	Shirohige's numerous scars and medical treatment from the history of his life-long battles.	These two scenes demonstrate the numerous battles, suffering, and sacrifices endured to protect the crew as a captain or leader.
5.	Eps: 461, Scene: 08:29  Dialogue:	Shirohige cracked the air with the Destructive Power from <i>Gura Gura No Mi</i> (Devil fruit with earthquake powers).	His absolute power to cause earthquake at his will represents a leader who possessed such power can be relied upon by his crew. It even makes all of his enemies afraid.

	Navy: He cracked the air? Coby: Where's that explosion coming from?! Helmeppo: The water surface is getting high! Sengoku: A seaquake! He's distorting the sea!	
6.	Eps: 485, Scene: 08:04  Dialogue: (Shirohige is in pain) Marco: Dad! S: Marco! Stay out of this!	Shirohige sacrificing himself for his crew even though he was dying and facing death. In that scene, it is clear that Shirohige is seriously injured and bleeding badly, even to the point of having holes in his stomach and chest. This shows his desire to save his son, Ace. The battle situation is no longer winnable for Shirohige's side, but he charges alone into the midst of the navy and the pirates led by his former son who betrayed him, so that his children can escape first. He even orders his crew not to help him. From this, it can be concluded that Shirohige's leadership style was one of self-sacrifice for his crew, even at the end of his life.
Sign: Symbol		
7.	Eps: 461, Scene: 19:49  Dialogue: Marco: From now on, Ace will be our 2nd division commanderx!	Shirohige and his crew are performing a <i>sake</i>-drinking ritual. The event is the induction of Ace as the second division commander of the Shirohige Pirates. The Shirohige pirate group has a ritual of drinking sake at every event. This ritual has become a family symbol of his kinship-based leadership.
8.	Eps: 462, Scene: 05:17 	Shirohige's pirate emblem with black flag with smiling skull, a beard, and 2 bones. The flag serves as an organizational symbol representing Shirohige's ideology (family commitment), unlike an icon which only serves as a visual appearance. This emblem is the pride of Shirohige's pirate crew. However, it has also become a symbol feared by all his enemies, even the Navy, due to Shirohige's strength and leadership.
9.	Eps. 468, Scene 07:11 	Ace uses the Shirohige pirate symbol as a tattoo on his back. Declaration of Collective Social Identity and Eternal Commitment. The crew used this symbol or tattoo with the purpose of identified themselves as "children of Shirohige," loyal to the death.
10.	Eps: 461, Scene: 23:17  Dialogue: Ace: Dad! I ignore your advice and took off! Why didn't you give up on me? I'm the one who caused all of this!	Shirohige addressing his crews "Son". A father's gesture and calling his crew "son". Although the war between the pirate group and the navy was caused by Ace, Shirohige still blamed himself for raising his son (his crew). In that scene, it is seen how he calls his crew "Son". This is a symbol of his kinship-based leadership, a symbol that is characteristic of and a source of pride for all members of Shirohige's pirate crew. Shirohige calls his crew "Son", while all of his crew call him "Dad" or "Pops".

Shirohige: No. I'm the one who told you to go, Son.		
11.	Eps: 462, Scene: 14:22  Dialogue: Navy Soilders: It's a giant tsunami. Sengoku: ... We might lose. Because that man has the power to destroy the world.	Shirohige tries to shake the world by cracking the air, even the leader of navy army admit that Shirohige had the power to destroy the world. Shirohige's power is so great that it can shake the world. In that scene, Sengoku, the highest authority in the navy, said that he could destroy the world. It is because of this power that he earned the nickname "the strongest man alive." This power also guarantees the safety of all his crew as a leader.

Shirohige's leadership construction in One Piece is not a random process, but rather the result of using a structured and layered system of signs, in accordance with Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Semiotics analytical framework. This research shows that the representation of the Charismatic Father is constructed through the mutually reinforcing verification of iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. Shirohige's initial representation was built through iconic symbols that worked based on visual similarity. The large, muscular body and upright posture (clearly visible in Episode 461, scene 06:20) visually resemble the concepts of Protective Strength and Paternal Authority. These icons were immediately followed and validated by index signs, which are more crucial because they work through causality, or real physical evidence.

The Index Mark serves to prove that Shirohige is not only a seemingly strong figure, but is indeed strong and tested. The prime example is the demonstration of the Devil Fruit Gura Gura no Mi's power (Episode 461, Scene 08:29), which caused a devastating earthquake. The strength of this earthquake is a direct result of Shirohige's presence, making it an undeniable index of his status as the "Strongest Man in the World." Similarly, the scars on his body, although not specifically recorded by the minute, are narratively tangible evidence (Index) of the sacrifices and battles he has endured. Critical Reflection on Semiotics: The methodological use of this index strengthens the validity of Shirohige's charisma in the visual medium. This is where the superiority of Peirce's model lies compared to Saussure's Dyadic model. If we only rely on Saussure's model, Shirohige's charisma might just become an arbitrary signifier. However, Peirce allows the Representant (the power of the earthquake) to be physically connected (an Index) to the Object (Absolute Power). In other words, the crew and audience believe because there is visible physical evidence (causality) within the narrative, not just because there is agreement (Symbol) or similarity (Icon).

After the foundation of physical authority was built by Icons and Indexes, the Symbol mark took on the most important role, namely transforming physical power into emotional and ideological loyalty. Symbols work based on conventions and agreements about value within a group. The most powerful symbol is the call "My son" (Musuko) used by Shirohige (e.g., in Episode 461, scene 23:17). This calling, in its denotative (basic meaning), refers to lineage. However, in the context of Shirohige Pirates, this symbol undergoes a process of meaning transition to the connotative level, a concept developed by Roland Barthes (1967) in Second-Order Semiotics. This call of "My child" transformed into a family identity that transcended blood ties. This ideology was then reinforced by visual symbols such as Shirohige's Jolly Roger and the emblem tattoo on the crew's backs (seen on Ace, Episode 486, scene 07:11). Flags and tattoos serve as a public declaration of Absolute Ideological Commitment. This symbol is no longer just a logo (Icon), but an agreed-upon marker to represent the Family and Ideology of Shirohige (Object). Similarly, the Sake Drinking Ritual (Episode 461, Scene 19:49) serves as a social bonding ritual. Through the process of Unlimited Semiosis (a continuous chain of interpretation), these symbols ensure that the interpretation of Shirohige's leadership is not static. These symbols are constantly producing new meanings (for example, the sacrifice at Marineford gave new meaning to the Flag Symbol). Thus, Shirohige successfully constructed a Family Symbolism that legitimized his authority, demonstrating that the most successful leaders in fictional narratives are those who are adept at using conventional signs to construct emotional meaning.

The Motives of Shirohige's Leadership

Shirohige's implementation of a kinship-based leadership model was not merely a random choice, but rather a strategic move in response to the unstable world of One Piece and the many villains within it. This leadership style was implemented because it served as a value for creating reciprocal relationships based on trust and sacrifice. The reasons for Shirohige's leadership are analyzed using a framework of three main motives: Function, Identification, and Symbolism. This framework is supported by Northouse's (2021) view, which emphasizes the importance of function and symbolism in leadership, and is in line with the mechanisms of identity formation in Shamir et al.'s (1993) study. The following analysis will examine how these three motives are the main reasons for the application of Shirohige's leadership model, where each data finding from the anime will be presented in tabular form.

Table 2. Shirohige's Motives for His Leadership

No.	Implementation Motive	Data	Description
1.	Functionality	Eps: 890, Scene: 12:28  Dialogue: Teach: Long time no see, Pops! Shirohige: You're the only one I refuse to call my son, Teach! You broke the one and only rule on my ship and you killed your brother (crewmate).	The code of ethics or rule that one must not harm one's brothers (crewmates) became Shirohige's motive in implementing his leadership. This rule functions as an internal law that must be obeyed in order to maintain the integrity and comfort of the family (his pirate crew), because Shirohige's main reason for becoming a pirate was "Family".
		Eps: 890, Scene: 17:12 	In the world of One Piece, which is full of injustice and corrupt governments, many citizens on different islands who do not have the power to fight against colonizers or corrupt governments need the strength to fight back. That is why Shirohige claimed many islands and territories in the New World as his domain in order to provide protection. In this scene, Marco is seen helping the people in one of his territories, replacing Shirohige after his death. This leadership style is functional because it achieves the main objectives (survival and stability) by creating a safe zone for those in need (Northouse, 2021).
2.	Identification	Eps: 485, Scene: 21:04  Dialogue: Shirohige's friend: That's odd, what kind of pirate doesn't have interest in treasure? What is it you want? Shirohige: There is something I've wanted since I was a kid. A "Family".	Shirohige is not interested in anything other than having a family. In the pirate crew he started himself, they call each other father and son. This is a linguistic symbol to identify each other as family members and creates a loyalty stronger than military loyalty (navy).
3.	Symbolism	Eps: 486, Scene 07:11 	Many crew members (such as Ace) have Shirohige's flag tattooed on their backs. The tattoo serves as a symbol of their loyalty and commitment to the Shirohige family ideology.

The family-based leadership style implemented by Shirohige proved to be highly functional and worked well in the chaotic world of One Piece. The Functionality motive explains that Shirohige implemented this model because it was the most effective way to achieve stability and the group's survival. Shirohige's Territory Claim, which aimed to provide

protection for civilians in the New World from injustice, is proof of functional action. This role is very much in line with the concept of Functionality supported by Northouse (2021), which emphasizes that leaders must choose a style that is practically effective to ensure survival and the achievement of collective goals.

The Identification motive explains why Shirohige's crew has such strong emotional loyalty. This motive was implemented by Shirohige to meet the psychological needs of his followers for a sense of belonging and self-worth. By calling them "my children" and stating that he only wants "Family" instead of wealth (Episode 485, scene 21:04), he gives them a new collective social identity. This bond is a core mechanism of Shamir, House, & Arthur's (1993) charismatic theory, where leaders transform followers' self-concepts so they identify with the group's mission, creating loyalty driven by values and self-identity. The Shirohige crew's loyalty was driven by self-identification as "Shirohige's children."

The Symbolism Motive focuses on how Shirohige uses visuals and narrative to convey messages about the group's values and ideology. This function is clearly visible in the Shirohige flag tattoos worn on the backs of many crew members (Episode 486, scene 07:11). This tattoo serves as a symbol of their public declaration of commitment to Shirohige's family ideology. This action is fully consistent with Shamir, House, and Arthur's (1993) view that leaders should use symbols and rituals to communicate group ideology. Furthermore, Shirohige's dramatic actions, such as his decision to sacrifice himself at Marineford, were monumental symbolic acts. This action effectively made it a symbol of hope and sacrifice, affirming the group's moral value that family comes above all else.

Shirohige's motivational model contradicts the traditional view of transactional (reward-based) leadership. Shirohige didn't lead through material rewards, but rather through investing in identity and moral commitment. This has theoretical implications that the most effective leadership in a world as chaotic as the world of One Piece must use symbolism as the primary tool to motivate self-sacrifice. This finding also aligns with Kopper's (2020) argument that leadership in One Piece serves to create an alternative moral ethical system outside of formal law. The symbolism of Shirohige's motive becomes an expression of the formation of this ethical and moral order.

Although the leadership of Shirohige and Luffy both have charismatic and transformative aspects (Ayamiseba, 2025) (Arianti et al., 2025), their fundamental motives are very different. The Shirohige Motive is rooted in Internal Identification (creating and protecting Family), which is a survival and settlement strategy. Meanwhile, Luffy's motivation is driven by External Vision (freedom and adventure). This difference in motivation explains why the Shirohige crew's loyalty is affective and fatalistic (fighting to the death for their father), while the Luffy crew's loyalty is more instrumental in achieving a shared vision. Thus, this analysis of the Functionality, Identification, and Symbolism motives provides a deep understanding of the psychological and sociological roots of unwavering loyalty.

After dissecting the implementation of Shirohige's Leadership through Functionality, Identification, and Symbolism, it can be concluded that these three motives form an integrated reinforcing cycle. The Functionalism (territorial protection and code of ethics) creates a physically stable environment; this stability allows the Identification (Father-Son bond) to grow psychologically, which in turn is reinforced by Symbolism (tattoos and sacrifices) that validates the family ideology to the outside world.

The Types of Shirohige's Leadership

This subsection aims to identify and classify Shirohige leadership into several established theoretical typologies. Based on narrative and visual data analysis, it was found that Shirohige's leadership was not a single model, but rather an effective hybrid typology. Adopted from some scholars mentioned previously, his leadership combined elements of Paternalistic (fatherly authority), Charismatic (inspiring appeal and sacrifice), Transformative (individual attention), and even showed dimensions of Prophetic (morality and integrity). The following discussion will detail how each leadership type is manifested through Shirohige's actions and interactions with his crew, as presented in the table below, to show the unique blend of affection and absolute authority in his leadership.

Table 3. Types of Shirohige’s Leadership

No.	Leadership Type	Data	Description
1.	Paternalistic Leadership	a. Benevolence: Eps: 461, Scene: 23:17	Shirohige accepted and loved Ace, the son of his sworn enemy, Gold D. Roger. This action demonstrates paternal affection and a willingness to overlook past conflicts for the personal benefit of the members. This behavior specifically demonstrates the core of the Benevolence aspect in Paternalistic Leadership, where the leader prioritizes the emotional well-being of their followers over personal matters.
			
		b. Authoritarianism: Eps: 462, Scene: 06:11	

	 Dialogue: Ace: You lie! You told me not to go. S: I'm the one who told you to go. Isn't that right marco? Marco: Yes, that's what I heard.	This action is the use of Shirohige's Absolute Authority (Authoritarianism), the purpose of which is to protect self-esteem and reputation. This proves that Shirohige's authoritarianism was directed toward the benefit and protection of the group, not for oppression.
	c. Morality: Eps: 890, Scene: 12:28  Dialogue: S: No one is allowed to harm a fellow crew member	The strict enforcement of a single rule, "No one is allowed to harm a fellow crew member," serves as an unbreakable code of ethics. This rule enforces the highest moral integrity within the group. Shirohige's decision to condemn Teach for violating this rule demonstrates that adherence to group morality is a prerequisite for existence under his leadership.
2. Charismatic Leadership	Eps: 461, Scene: 07:59 	Shirohige's decision to fight the entire Navy at Marineford alone to save one of his sons (Ace) demonstrates extreme commitment and sacrifice. This courageous action serves as Idealized Influence, sparking a very high level of admiration, respect, and motivation from his crew. This proves that his charisma stems from exemplary actions, not just words.
3. Prophetic Leadership	a. <i>Siddiq</i> (Honest) Eps: 485, Scene: 18:57  Dialogue: Shirohige: When someone finds the treasure, the world will turn upside down. ... and that day will come. The One Piece is real!	The word "One Piece" is a great treasure that is difficult to find, so much so that most people call it a myth. In that scene, his honesty (<i>Siddiq</i>) in his statement about One Piece moved many people. Not only his crew, but also people all over the world were moved to search for the treasure. Even though all this time, the facts about One Piece had been hidden by the government.
	b. <i>Amanah</i> (Trustworthy) Eps: 461, Scene: 06:18  Dialogue: S: You better tell me that my beloved son (Ace) is all right.	The arrival of Shirohige at Marineford to save Ace (a "child") is a physical manifestation of a father's (leader's) promise of loyalty and moral responsibility. This risky action demonstrates that Shirohige is keeping his commitment to protect his crew, proving his absolute trustworthiness (<i>Amanah</i>), which is not dependent on the level of danger threatening them.

d. *Fatanah* (Wise):
Eps: 485, Scene: 08:04



Dialogue:
(Shirohige is in pain)
Marco: Dad!
S: Marco! Stay out of this

Shirohige's ability to read and predict the Navy's plans, as well as his calculated risk-taking in the midst of a crisis (such as when positioning his crew in battle), demonstrates tactical intelligence and wisdom (*Fatanah*). This proves that Shirohige's leadership was not only emotional but also based on intelligent and measured decisions.

a.
Eps: 461, Scene: 17:23



Dialogue:
Ace: Why do you people call him "Pops" (Dad)?
Marco: Because he calls us "Sons". We are all hated by the world. So, it makes us happy. I know its just a word but it still makes us happy.

In that flashback scene, Marco's conversation with Ace shows Shirohige's leadership, which can change and inspire (Transformational) his members. Shirohige's crew members were originally criminals and outcasts who were hated by the whole world, but since they met Shirohige, they felt loved and happy, inspiring them to follow Shirohige until the end of their lives.

b.
Eps: 472, Scene: 18:14



Dialogue:
Squard: (Stabbed his own father). You guys made me do it. I know about your deal with the Navy. You have their assurance that you and Ace will remain safe except the rest of the other crews. That's your deal with the Navy, right? I'm prepared for it, kill me!
Shirohige: You thrust a sword into your father's body. You're such a stupid son! (Hugged Squard). But I love you son, even if you're a fool. Who pulled your loyal heart into the darkness? Tell me.
Squard: He's an insurgent in the Navy.
Shirohige: So that's what Akainu told you. I feel your pain. I don't love him (Ace) more than any other. You're all family to me.

After being stabbed by Squard, Shirohige responded with a hug and affection instead of punishment or anger. This attitude demonstrates Individualized Consideration because Shirohige chooses to see Squard's inner wounds and suffering as an individual who was deceived, not just a traitor.

c.
Eps: 481, Scene: 15:04

After stabbing his father (Shirohige), Squard felt very guilty and must do something to make up for it because Shirohige's reaction wasn't anger; instead,

4. Transformational Leadership



his reaction was warm, like a father's. This treatment successfully transformed Squard from regretful to a front-line warrior, proving Shirohige's focus on individual moral development. (Transformational).

Dialogue:

Squard: Everyone, run! Leave the war to us!

Shirohige's leadership is based on a Paternalistic model, which includes aspects of Virtue (Benevolence), Authoritarianism, and Morality. The benevolent side of Shirohige is the most prominent. He accepts and loves every member of his crew, as evidenced by his decision to accept Ace, even though Ace is the son of his archenemy, Gold D. Roger (Episode 461 scene 23:17). This action by Shirohige also demonstrates Paternal Love, which is the core of the Benevolence dimension in Pellegrini & Scandura's (2008) Paternalistic theory, where the leader prioritizes compassion over revenge. However, this affection is implemented alongside authoritarianism. Shirohige used this authority not to oppress, but to protect. For example, in Episode 462 at 06:11, Shirohige chooses to lie and admit that he was the one who sent Ace away (and asks Marco to support his lie). The use of this Absolute Authority aligns with the dimension of Authoritarianism according to Farh & Cheng (2000), where leaders wield unquestionable authority for the collective good of the group. This authoritarianism was then reinforced by the dimension of Morality, namely through the strict application of a single rule: "No one is allowed to harm their fellow crew members" (Episode 890 scene 12:28).

Shirohige's charisma stems from strong emotional attachment. He not only ordered his crew to fight, but also showed them how to sacrifice. His determination to fight the entire Navy at Marineford alone, in order to save Ace (Episode 461 scene 07:59), is the pinnacle of this charisma. This heroic act by Shirohige is a perfect manifestation of Idealized Influence, which is at the core of Charismatic Leadership (House, 1977), where followers are inspired and loyal because they admire the leader's dramatic sacrifice.

Shirohige's leadership also contains a Transformative element, particularly in the form of Individualized Consideration, where the leader's focus is on the unique needs, development, and aspirations of each follower or subordinate. The data from episode 461 scene 17:23 explains Shirohige's leadership, which can transform and inspire his members. Shirohige's crew members were originally criminals and outcasts who were hated by the entire world, but since they met Shirohige, they felt loved and happy. This is also evident in the Squard incident, one of his "children" stabbed him (Episode 472, scene 18:14). Despite being betrayed, Shirohige responded with a hug and affection, and continued to call him "foolish son." This compassionate response from Shirohige is a classic example of Individualized Consideration in Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985), which aims to heal followers' emotional wounds and promote moral transformation. This action successfully transformed Squard from a traitor into a leading warrior (Episode 481, scene 15:04). Amidst the complexity between the protagonist and antagonist characters in this anime, Shirohige stands out as the character with his distinct family-based leadership, also known as kinship-based leadership, by treating his crew as an extended family rather than just a military unit. Shirohige's Transformative and Prophetic analysis expands the concept of his significant leadership. Shirohige's actions of forgiving Squard and embracing him (Individualized Consideration) not only demonstrate Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985) but also challenge other One Piece Transformational Leadership findings (e.g., Ayamiseba, 2025), which often focus on Luffy's strategic vision. Shirohige applies transformation through moral healing.

Shirohige's leadership demonstrates a strong manifestation of the Prophetic dimension, grounded in moral ethics. Shirohige's trustworthy nature, demonstrated through his embrace and forgiveness of Squard despite being betrayed, affirms his extraordinary moral responsibility. Shirohige's steadfastness in upholding his promise of compassion as a father even after being wounded affirms the qualities of *Amanah* and *Siddiq*, which are the foundation of Prophetic Leadership (Bahari & Sari, 2024). Additionally, Shirohige demonstrates the quality of *Fatanah* (Intelligence/Wisdom) in making difficult strategic decisions, such as predicting the Navy's plans or leading in the midst of a crisis. However, in his internal communication, Shirohige tends to rely more on actions, so the nature of *Tabligh* (Communicative) does not become a dominant aspect in Shirohige's daily communication. Furthermore, Prophetic Analysis (Trustworthiness, Truthfulness, Intelligence) is the most novel contribution to the Paternalistic framework. Shirohige's trustworthiness (moral responsibility), upheld even after being betrayed, critically serves as the ethical foundation that makes his Paternalistic Leadership authentic and uncorrupted by power. This aligns with the findings of Bahari & Sari (2024) regarding the importance of prophetic integrity. This research concludes that Shirohige's Hybrid Leadership was successful because it combined authority structure with moral and compassionate foundations. Paternalistic leadership provides the family structure and virtues needed by castaway members; charismatic leadership offers an ideal influence that inspires absolute loyalty thru dramatic sacrifice; transformational leadership ensures development and healing within the crew; and prophetic leadership serves as an ethical foundation that validates the authenticity of its authority. In conclusion, the success of this hybrid lies in its ability to construct loyalty to identity and moral values, not just strength and obedience.

Conclusion

The representation of Shirohige's leadership is constructed in layers through Peirce's semiotic system of signs. The icon (body posture, giant stature, and robe) serves as a sign resembling Protective Power and Authority. The index (scars, the power of the Gura Gura no Mi that caused the earthquake) provides evidence of causality and verifies the authority and sacrifice of Shirohige. Meanwhile, the Symbols (the call "My son," the crew's code of ethics, and the sake ritual) are conventional signs that transform physical authority into affective loyalty, collectively producing a single Interpretant: Shirohige is a symbol of effective leadership because it is based on emotional bonds and sacrifice.

Shirohige's leadership model is implemented based on three main implementation motives. The theme of functionality is realized through the establishment of a code of ethics and territorial claims to ensure the survival of the crew in an anarchic world. The Identification motive is fulfilled because Shirohige provides a collective identity of "Family" to outcasts, resulting in strong affective loyalty. Finally, the theme of Symbolism is reinforced through the dramatic sacrifice at Marineford, making Shirohige an emblem of hope and moral justification for his group. These motives reinforce each other, proving that Shirohige's loyalty was built through identity investment, not just military strength.

Shirohige's leadership typology is classified as a unique Hybrid model. This leadership combines Paternalistic elements (Virtue, Authoritarianism, Morality), Charismatic elements (Ideal Influence), and Transformational elements (Individual Consideration). The most crucial aspect is the Prophetic dimension (Trustworthiness, Truthfulness, and Wisdom), which serves as the ethical foundation validating the authenticity of Shirohige's authority. This combination of typologies successfully constructs loyalty based on moral commitment and affection, rather than mere hierarchical obedience.

This study makes a significant theoretical and methodological contribution to the development of leadership and popular literature studies. Theoretically, this research provides empirical validation for the Paternalistic-Prophetic Hybrid Leadership model within the context of fictional narratives, expanding traditional Paternalistic Leadership theory by proving that the Benevolence dimension requires a strong foundation of Moral Integrity (Prophetic) to produce absolute affective loyalty and distinguishing it from exploitative authoritarianism. Methodologically, this study offers novelty by demonstrating how Peircean Semiotics can be used operationally to verify aspects of leadership often considered subjective, such as Charisma. By breaking down the abstract concept of charisma into concrete Representant (visual/linguistic signs), this research effectively addresses the methodological criticism that charismatic leadership is too idealistic to measure, providing an objective framework for future character studies.

Overall, this study concludes that the anime One Piece successfully constructs an effective hybrid leadership model through the use of complex Semiotic signs. This approach suggests that the ideal Paternalistic Leadership in popular media is a combination of physical strength/charisma with moral integrity and compassion. This research is expected to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary studies between leadership theory, Semiotics, and popular culture. It is recommended that future research analyze the leadership models of other Yonko (e.g., Shanks or Big Mom) for a Semiotic contrast. Additionally, the findings regarding Paternalistic Leadership and sacrificial values can be used as case study material or teaching material in character education in schools or leadership courses. This allows students to analyze how moral values and effective leadership models are constructed and effectively communicated through the popular visual media they consume.

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