

Massappo Wannua Tradition in Barru Regency: A Semiotic Study

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Abstract: This research analyzes the Massappo Wannua tradition in Lapao Hamlet, Binuang Village, Barru Regency, using a semiotic approach. This tradition, which is performed annually by the Bugis community, aims to protect the village from disasters and maintain the balance between humans and nature. This research explores the symbols used in the ritual as well as the meaning of each symbol related to spiritual, social, and ecological values. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of participatory observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the research using the theory of Charles Sander Peirce's Semiotics show that symbols such as rekkko ota, addupa-dupaang, and benno not only function ritually, but also reflect values such as welfare, honesty, and harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and spirituality. The findings enrich the understanding of Bugis people's cosmological relationship with nature and the ecological relevance of cultural practices that are preserved for generations.

Keywords: Bugis tradition, Charles Sander Peirce's Semiotics, massappo wannua, semiotic, symbols

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics is the study of signs and their meanings, and seeks to uncover the hidden meanings behind text or discourse. Derived from the Greek word semeion which means sign, semiotics views various objects, events and cultures as signs that indicate the existence of something else. Semiotic analysis is paradigmatic, aiming to understand the hidden meaning behind a text or message (Wibowo, 2013). Semiotics, as defined by (Kriyantono, 2020) and (Faruk, 1999), is the science of signs that studies systems, rules, and conventions enabling these signs to have meaning, where everything from words, gestures, literary structures, to bird songs can be considered signs, and as a communication act, semiotics in literature is also viewed as a model that explains the phenomenon of literature as a unique communication tool in society (Teeuw, 1984), with the study of signs being systematically explored in the twentieth century, as seen in Eco's playful yet profound definition (Waskita, 2011), and its development rooted in the works of Saussure (1857-1913) in Europe, who called it semiology, and Peirce (1839-1914) in the United States, who referred to it as semiotics, where Peirce considered reasoning to be always carried out through signs. Although semiotics is commonly applied in text or discourse analysis, it is also relevant for understanding hidden meanings in cultural traditions and rituals, such as those found in Bugis communities in South Sulawesi.

The Bugis community in South Sulawesi upholds strong traditional values inherited from their ancestors, reflected in various ceremonies such as weddings and childbirth,



which are imbued with spiritual meanings and local customs, including praises to the Prophet and the Creator (Dewata). One notable tradition is the *Massappo Wanua*, a village cleansing ritual performed annually in Lapao Hamlet, Binuang Village, Barru Regency, to protect the village and express gratitude to the Creator. The tradition, carried out through rituals and prohibitions such as avoiding cutting animals, nails, hair, grass, trees, or breaking eggs for three Fridays (tellu juma), is believed to prevent disasters (Abala') and maintain the balance between humans and nature. This ritual also serves as a medium for expressing gratitude, strengthening community solidarity, and maintaining cosmological harmony. However, differing perceptions within the community arise, with some viewing the tradition as inconsistent with religious teachings, potentially due to concerns of polytheism. Despite the challenges, *Massappo Wanua* remains a vital part of the Bugis cultural identity, symbolizing resilience and a deep connection with nature and spirituality. This makes the tradition worthy of study from a semiotic perspective to explore its societal meanings, the differences in perspectives, and its limited publication, which has led to a lack of awareness of its existence (Pelras, 2006), (Yahya, 2018)

Widodo (2019) and Wahyu (2016) used a qualitative approach in their research that focused on the meaning of symbols in local traditions. Widodo in his research entitled "The Meaning of the Symbols of the Tungguk Tembakau Tradition" emphasizes the divine values contained in the symbols of the Tungguk Tembakau tradition, as well as how local people understand and interpret these symbols, which also reflect spiritual and religious aspects. In contrast, Wahyu in her research entitled "The Symbolic Meaning of the Earth Legenanan Almsgiving Tradition" explores the symbolic meaning of the earth alms tradition in Kalirejo, which is not only considered a social or religious obligation, but also an expression of cultural identity and local wisdom, with an emphasis on the values of solidarity, cooperation, and respect for nature and ancestors. Thus, the main difference between these two studies lies in the focus of the meaning of the symbols explored; Widodo emphasizes the spiritual values in the tradition, while Wahyu highlights the social aspects and cultural identity expressed through symbols in the earth alms tradition.

Budiman (2016), Kusuma and Nurhayati (2017), and Gunawan, Nugraheni, and Roysa (2023) applied Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the meaning of symbols in local traditions, although with different focuses. In Budiman's research on the betimpas tradition in Selanglet Village, he found that the symbols not only have literal meanings as part of traditional rituals, but also imply cultural values, norms, and community identity, as well as relating to social, spiritual, and natural balance aspects. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these symbols influence and shape the identity and

social life of local communities. On the other hand, Kusuma & Nurhayati focused their research on the Otonan ritual in Bali, where they explored Barthes' three stages of analysis-inferential, significant, and intentional meanings-to understand how the symbols in this ritual reflect the values and beliefs of the Balinese people, as well as the way they interact with their traditions and environment. Meanwhile, Gunawan in his research on the Lempogan tradition in Kutuk Village highlights the symbolic meaning of the ritual as a method of controlling rat pests, which serves as a disaster mitigation process to prevent rat pests from becoming a significant problem in agriculture. This research also shows the importance of maintaining ecosystem balance through rituals that respect natural habitats. Thus, although these three studies both use semiotic theory to analyze cultural symbols, they differ in their focus of study: Budiman emphasized cultural identity and social relations, Kusuma & Nurhayati explored the complexity of ritual meanings and beliefs, and Gunawan highlighted practical functions in the context of environment and sustainability.

Sari (2019) in her research titled "Cultural Meanings in the Maddojabine Ritual in Kampiri, Congko Village, Soppeng Regency (Semiotic Analysis)," explores the process of performing the ritual, the types of signs present in it, and the cultural meanings contained in the Maddojabine ritual. The study aims to identify and analyze the cultural meanings implicit in the performance of the ritual as well as understand how this ritual expresses the cultural values of the local community. Using a qualitative approach and semiotic analysis as the main theoretical framework, it was found that the Maddojabine ritual is not only a series of ritualistic actions, but also contains profound symbols that reflect the values of togetherness, harmony, and interconnectedness between community members in a spiritual and social context. These symbols also show the relationship between humans and nature and ancestors.

Ainun and Irnawati (2022) in her research entitled *Maccellecelleng Tradition in the Marriage Process of the Bugis Community in Pangkep Regency* discusses the symbols found in the Maccellecelleng tradition and their meanings. This research aims to deeply understand the Maccellecelleng tradition as an integral part of the marriage process in Bugis culture in Pangkep Regency. The main focus is to reveal the meaning, value and social function of the tradition. Using a qualitative approach, the data collection techniques used include participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key informants such as traditional leaders and tradition participants, and documentation studies related to the Maccellecelleng tradition. The results show that this tradition has many symbolic meanings and functions in the context of Bugis marriage, not only as part of a traditional ceremony that defines social status and family relationships, but also reflects values such as

family harmony, respect for ancestors, and symbols of solidarity and togetherness in the community. This research emphasizes the importance of preserving the Maccelleccelleng tradition as a rich and valuable cultural heritage, and highlights the significance of culture and tradition as crucial elements in strengthening cultural identity and social continuity among Bugis communities.

in a study entitled *Love, Sea, and Power in the La Galigo Epic (Episode of Sawerigading's Voyage to China: Philological and Semiotic Perspectives)* conducted by (Pancana, 2017) shows that love is a mystery that cannot be predicted when to come and when to leave. Love is a gift from God when used in accordance with the intention and trust given by the Creator. However, on the other hand, love can also be a weapon that destroys the order of life, especially when it transcends human cultural and social norms.

Research conducted by (Sulastri, 2018) entitled *Semiotics in the Massuro Mabbaca Tradition of the Community in Sawaru Village, Camba District, Maros Regency* focuses on semiotic analysis that examines the signs and meanings embedded in the Massuro Mabbaca tradition. Using a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of participatory observation and in-depth interviews, this study reveals that the Massuro Mabbaca tradition represents a cultural heritage rich in signs and symbols that have important meanings for the Sawaru Village community. Semiotic analysis shows that each element of this ritual not only functions practically, but also conveys deep meanings related to the identity, social relations and spirituality of the local community. This research contributes to the preservation and development of local culture and enriches the understanding of how local communities communicate and interpret their spiritual experiences through symbols and ritual actions.

The studies discussed above emphasize an in-depth understanding of the symbolic meanings in various local and cultural traditions. However, this research distinguishes itself by focusing on the Massappo Wannua Tradition in Barru Regency through a semiotic analysis approach. This research aims to explore the symbolic meaning and function of the Massappo Wannua tradition which is known as a ceremony to celebrate the harvest and honor the relationship between humans and nature with used Charles sunder Peirce's Semiotic Theory. Unlike previous studies that focused more on cultural and spiritual aspects, this research will investigate how the symbols in this tradition reflect social values. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the social and spiritual dynamics intertwined in the Massappo Wannua tradition and its relevance. herefore, to focus on completing this research, the researcher follows questions namely what symbols are used in the Massappo Wanua Tradition and what are the meanings of

each symbol in the Massappo Wanua Tradition.

METHOD

This research utilizes qualitative methods to delve into the profound meanings and contexts of symbols within the *Massappo Wanua Tradition*. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the subjective elements that cannot be quantified, thereby allowing researchers to investigate the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the Bugis community in depth. By employing qualitative methods, the researchers can explore how these symbols operate in everyday life and contribute to shaping the identity of the community. Moreover, qualitative research emphasizes direct interaction between researchers and participants, facilitating a nuanced understanding of social dynamics and complexities that may elude quantitative approaches. Through interviews and observations, researchers capture the essence of how the Bugis people interpret their traditions and navigate the challenges and transformations in preserving their cultural heritage (Danial & Wasriah, 2009).

The population for this study comprises individuals involved in the *Massappo Wanua Tradition* in Binuang Village, Balusu District, Barru Regency. This includes traditional leaders, ritual participants, and individuals involved in the tradition's preparation and execution. The selected samples will provide insights into the interpretation and translation of symbols and meanings by the local community. The sampling process will involve interviewing four key informants: a traditional leader with extensive knowledge of the tradition, ritual participants from diverse societal levels, and members involved in the organization of the rituals. Data will be collected through interviews, direct observations of the ritual process over a week, and documentation of relevant manuscripts, historical records, and government reports. The data analysis will follow Miles and Huberman's descriptive method, emphasizing the identification of themes and patterns that emerge from the respondents' insights (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

1. Symbols in *massappo wanua tradition*

Table 1. symbol massappo wanua

Symbols	Context	Co-text
Rekkko Ota	Use as an offering in ceremonies	Represents the five elements associated with the pillars of Islam, emphasizing teachings.
Addupa-dupaang	Used as an offering in ceremonies	Serves as a medium for delivering messages, highlighting the importance of communication and good intentions in the

		ceremony
Benno	Include in food offering	Symbolizes prosperity and the hope for abundance in the community
Pesse pelling	Used to create lamps in ritual	Symbolizes the light of blessing that illuminates in the community
Ape'	Part of the lamp in rituals	Symbolizes the softness of the heart and a kind demeanor
Daun waru	Container for rekkko ota	Symbolizes hope and aspirations for the future
Alosi	Used in ceremonial offerings	Signifies honesty and integrity in social interactions
Daun ota	Included in offerings	Represent humility and respect in cultural practices
Leppe-leppe	Served during rituals	Symbolizes respect towards elders and fellow community members
Gendrang	Accompanies the ritual process	Functions as a symbol of encouragement and motivation during the ceremony
Awo ridi	Used in ritual contexts	Represents steadfastness of heart and singular faith
padumpu	Burned in the addupa for communication	Serves as a symbol for message delivery and intention in the ritual

Source: Data processing result, 2024

2. Meaning of the symbols in *massappo wanua* tradition

- a. Rekkko Ota: A betel leaf containing rice, areca nut, lime, and hibiscus leaves, folded into a shape resembling the Arabic letter "lam alif" with five elements. It symbolizes the Five Pillars of Islam, representing how this tradition helps in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings.
- b. Addupa-dupaang: A container used to burn aromatic substances. It symbolizes a medium for conveying messages, particularly prayers and hopes from the community to Allah, asking for protection from *bala*.
- c. Benno: Toasted rice that symbolizes prosperity and well-being. It reflects the hope for good results from crops regardless of the weather.
- d. Pesse Pelling: Ground candlenuts mixed with ape' (a type of oil lamp) symbolize the light of blessings. It represents the hope that the village and its land receive blessings from the Creator and are protected from *bala* (darkness) that may come at any time.
- e. Ape': Cotton, symbolizing the softness of the heart and demeanor.
- f. Daun Waru: A leaf used as a container for rekkko ota, symbolizing hope.
- g. Alosi: Areca nut, symbolizing honesty. Honesty is viewed as an essential principle in life.

- h. Daun Ota: Betel leaf symbolizing humility. It teaches that people should avoid arrogance and be grateful for what they have.
- i. Leppe-leppe: Glutinous rice wrapped in young coconut leaves and steamed with coconut milk. It symbolizes respect for traditions, others, and nature, promoting harmonious relationships.
- j. Genrang: A drum used in rituals, symbolizing encouragement and motivation.
- k. Awo Ridi: Yellow bamboo, symbolizing steadfastness in heart and faith.
- l. Padumpu: Incense or brown sugar burned in addupa, symbolizing the conveyance of messages.

3. The process of implementing in *massappo wanua* tradition

According to participants, the implementation process of the Massappo Wanua tradition involves several preparatory steps that are crucial for its success. The initial stage, known as Mappassedi' Wanua, entails gathering the community for deliberation to build consensus on the ritual's implementation, ensuring that everyone pauses their daily routines to participate. On the designated day, the community assembles at the adat house (Bola Ad'e) to prepare for the ritual (makkasara), which is led by the adat leader (pabbanua'e). The next phase, termed 'Aggaukeng, involves executing the Massappo Wanua tradition, beginning with role assignments: men slaughter chickens while women cook the food and arrange it according to adat rules for communal consumption post-ritual. The ritual commences with prayers to the heavens for protection and blessings, including offerings to ancestors and nature at various sacred locations, such as the nearest water source and the roof of the house. Finally, the Paccappureng stage sees the community carrying food to the highest mountain nearby (mappaenre ri annggologe) as a form of self-purification from negative elements. This act symbolizes the establishment of a cosmological relationship with nature, reinforcing harmony within the life chain as ordained by the Creator.

Discussion

The Massappo Wanua tradition has been practiced for generations by the people of Binuang Village, particularly by those in the agricultural sector. This Bugis custom is upheld as a form of respect for ancestors and a plea for protection from the Almighty. Traditionally, the Massappo Wanua is performed once a year during the rainy season when rice cultivation begins, and it is typically carried out at night, although it can also be held during the day upon government invitation. The purpose of the tradition is to ward off harmful influences,

both supernatural and tangible, such as extreme weather or pest infestations, that could lead to crop failure. Ma Pattawe, a community leader in Dusun Lapao, emphasizes the tradition's role in protecting the crops and ensuring a good harvest by invoking a sense of communal solidarity and respect for traditional customs.

In comparison with earlier literature, this research highlights a distinction between Massappo Wanua and other Bugis traditions such as the Mappacci wedding custom for instance, (Pardah, 2022), study on the symbolic meanings in the Mappacci tradition of Bugis weddings identifies various symbols tied to moral and social values, including purity, mutual respect, and perseverance. While Mappacci emphasizes personal and social values, Massappo Wanua goes beyond cultural symbolism and addresses ecological resilience and disaster mitigation. The Massappo Wanua tradition reflects the community's collective awareness of environmental challenges and their cosmic relationship with nature, making it a vital practice for maintaining ecological balance and agricultural success. This comparison underlines the added dimension of ecological and environmental relevance in the Massappo Wanua tradition, which distinguishes it from other Bugis customs focused on social and moral values.

CONCLUSION

The Massappo Wanua tradition, practiced by the Dusun Lapao community in Binuang Village, is a ritual rich in symbolic meaning, rooted in the spirituality and ecological wisdom of the Bugis people. Various symbols and tools used in the ritual carry deep significance related to spirituality, life, social relationships, and natural harmony. These symbols are not mere accessories but serve as a way for the community to express their faith, interpret natural signs, and promote values such as food security, gender equality, and ecological resilience. The ritual, performed annually to protect crops from threats like adverse weather and pests, begins with the community pausing daily activities to collectively decide on the timing and preparations. Men are responsible for slaughtering chickens, while women cook and prepare food in accordance with tradition. Prayers and offerings are made to natural and spiritual elements, such as water, the house, the land, and the sky, culminating in a pilgrimage to the highest local mountain for self-purification and harmonization with nature. This tradition reflects the community's belief in maintaining a balanced relationship with nature and adhering to divine laws to prevent disasters and ensure survival.

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