

## Sorong Serah Aji Krama As a Traditional Communication Media Of Indigenous Tribe Of Sasak

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**ABSTRACT.** The tradition of sorong serah aji krama is the culmination of a series of processions of merarik (wedding) ceremonies conducted by Sasak indigenous peoples. Sasak tribe itself is a native of the island of Lombok in the west Nusa Tenggara region. In essence, each customary procession or tradition contains philosophical values and social values that often represent and are represented by certain symbols. Disclosure of values for Sasak ancestors is often interpreted in depictions through the media both in the form of ceremonial to objects as symbols, including sorong serah aji krama which is traditionally considered to strengthen family relationships while maintaining the existence or purity of dignity and dignity of a Sasak tribal indigenous family. The study used qualitative methods with phenomenological approach and Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann's construction theory of social reality. Sampling is carried out purposively and addressed to the chairman and a number of members of the Sasak Customary Assembly. Primary and secondary data will be collected through in-depth interviews, observations and literature studies. The results showed that the tradition of sorong serah aji krama is interpreted through several points of view, including: 1) The type of tradition; as the highest customary congregation in the Sasak marriage process. 2) The purpose of tradition; customary procession to confirm the existence of a family in indigenous communities. 3) Implications of tradition; If not done will be considered unethical. 4) Message in tradition; declaration of responsibility made by the groom to the bride-to-be, and 5) the function of tradition; as a medium of value transfer, medium of value transformation, traditional media.

**KEYWORDS:** traditional media; ritual communication; sasak tribe; sorong serah aji krama

### INTRODUCTION

Having a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, races, ethnicities, religions, and regional languages is a privilege for Indonesia. According to the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) in 2010, Indonesia was recorded to have 1,340 ethnic groups and more than 300 ethnic groups. This fact makes Indonesia become a pluralistic nation, yet it is still seen as a unified and sovereign nation under the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). As an archipelagic country, the diversity of ethnic groups in Indonesia allows for cultural pluralism. Each tribe has its own culture, customs, and traditions in responding to an event. For example, in the wedding ceremony. The Javanese still preserve the traditions of *siraman* and *midodareni*, while the Sundanese preserve *ngeyeuk seureuh*, where the bride and groom ask for permission and the blessing of their parents is accompanied by a traditional song of *Penguyek*. In Biak Papua, the name of tradition in wedding ceremony is *ararem*, and this tradition includes the process of delivering the dowry from the husband candidate to the family of the future wife. In West Nusa Tenggara, there is also a tradition in wedding ceremony called *Sorong Serah aji krama*.

*Sorong serah aji krama* is the culmination of a series of *merarik* (wedding) ceremony that is carried out by the Sasak—the indigenous people of Lombok. Zakaria (2018) describes *sorong serah aji krama* as one of the traditions that still exist, and this tradition is practiced by the Sasak community. This tradition is part of a series of Sasak wedding processions. The Sasak live on

the island of Lombok which is located in the West Nusa Tenggara region. The total population of the Sasak is 3 million people with 2.5 million inhabitants inhabiting most of the island of Lombok, and the rest are scattered in a number of other areas.

The diversity of Indonesian culture in the implementation of marriage does have its own uniqueness. And this implementation cannot be separated from a touch of religion. Interestingly, every procession in *sorong serah aji krama* also expresses religious values, especially Islam which is manifested in symbolic behaviors. The majority of the Sasak adhere to Islam, and *sorong serah aji krama* is used as a medium of communication that traditionally highlights Islamic values and other values through traditional forms of activity. Not only as a medium for expressing religious ideas, *sorong serah aji krama* also strengthens the Sasak family relations.

Not infrequently *sorong serah aji krama* is often interpreted as an instrument to appreciate the nobility of behavior in living the value of worship which is framed in the form of tradition, as well as being a way to respect cultural values that always need to be preserved. In addition, this tradition is always connected as an effort to maintain the existence or purity of the dignity of the Sasak family.

Generally, *sorong serah aji krama* is seen as a form of testimony that is identified with the degree of humanity that a person has. This tradition is seen as a code of behavior for the Sasak people who want to get married. It is said that *sorong serah* means witness, while *aji* refers to degree or value, and *krama* is the word that is used to show dignity. Other sources also mention that *sorong serah* means handing over, while *aji krama* is defined as a custom or tradition. Until now, the valid meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* has not been determined, therefore this study aims to explore the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* through the perception of customary practitioners on the procession that has been carried out for generations and become the hallmark of marriage of the Sasak community.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted qualitatively with the constructivist paradigm of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach that tried to explore the phenomenon of the tradition of the *sorong serah aji krama* through the perspective of indigenous practitioners of the Sasak Indigenous Assembly. Like the typical frame of interpretation of social constructivism (Creswell, 2014: 32), individuals build their sense of the world in which they live and work. They develop meanings towards particular objects. The purpose of the study is certainly to lean as much as possible on the views of the participants about a particular situation. In other words, the subjective meanings that indigenous practitioners have regarding the tradition of socially negotiated *sorong serah aji krama*, not only appear in indigenous practitioners, but are formed through interaction with others.

Table 1: Research informants

Research Subject	Profession	Roles in Sasak Indigenous Assembly
Mamiq Bayu	Sasak tribe activist	Daily Chief Executive
Mamiq Agus	Former Head of Cultural Park;a filologist	Vice for Cultural Field
Mamiq Sadaruddin	Leader of Pembasak (Sasak tribe observer group)	Practitioner
Mamiq Nuruddin	Sasak tribe activist	Practitioner

The study involved five indigenous practitioners of the Sasak Indigenous Assembly. The determination of informants is done by purposive techniques, in which informants have knowledge of the tradition of *sorong serah aji krama*. The use of *purposive sampling* is also considered appropriate to capture the plural reality. The number of informants in phenomenology varies in reference to the dukes' opinion (in Creswell, 2014: 219) which suggests 3 to 10 subjects. Additional criteria for determining

informants are set in order to find a comprehensive conclusion, among others: 1) *key informants* are selected based on the length of joining the Sasak Customary Assembly, which is at least three years, because the Sasak Customary Assembly itself has been established since 1986. Informants who have long been or are said to be pioneers are targeted by researchers because they are considered to struggle the longest to have a lot of experience in the world of customs. 2) *Key informant* was chosen based on willingness, time, opportunity, to physical condition, considering that a number of informants are said to be quite elderly, especially this study was conducted when the pandemic also considered the busyness of other informants who in addition to taking care of the Sasak Customary Assembly had other jobs.

The study was conducted in mataram city of West Nusa Tenggara province and was carried out for six months, from May to November 2021. Data analysis is carried out using Miles and Huberman analysis techniques, namely through participatory observations, in-depth interviews and literature studies or documentation that will be analyzed through a number of stages, among others; a) reduction of data, where at this stage the entire data obtained through observations, literature studies to interviews with indigenous practitioners in the form of behaviors, statements, conversations will be classified based on reference questions made into interview and observation guidelines.

Interview recordings are transcribed and supplemented with observations and literature studies containing information related to informants. Furthermore b) the presentation of data, including data derived from the results of reduction that has been in the form of concepts and classified again based on issues to make it easier for researchers to read patterns or concepts related to the meaning of the tradition of *sorong serah aji krama* from indigenous practitioners. Finally c) the withdrawal of conclusions and verification, in the form of a number of tentative conclusions in the form of propositions or tipifications related to the meaning of the tradition of the *sorong serah aji krama*, where each tipification is formed based on patterns and concepts that refer to the relevant theory and then verified to obtain a valid conclusion related to the grumpy tradition of the *sorong serah aji krama*.

Data collection techniques are carried out through a number of stages, including: a) the pre-research stage, namely making initial observations to open *access* to informants, as well as exploring data to find research focus. b) the stage of preparing proposals, where after finding the focus of research problems researchers begin to compile proposals as research guidelines. c) the stage of research implementation, d) the stage of data processing, up to e) the stage of preparing the report of research results.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Potrayal of Sorong Serah Aji Krama**

The Sasak have a unique culture that upholds the value of human praxis, where they believe that every human being has the same dignity and worth. Regardless of the level of position, every individual has the same rights and obligations. This belief also inspires each person to always remember his origin and not to forget his own identity.

Based on the results of this study, through in-depth interviews, it is known that the Sasak have a strong socio-cultural character. Judging from the history related to its socio-cultural characteristics, the life of the Sasak is still natural and authentic. Its character is consistent and local values and wisdom are still attached to every aspect of its life. Some forms of beliefs that are still preserved of the Sasak among others are *Bau Nyale*, *Peresean*, *Rebo Bontong*, to *Perang Topat* (the Topat War). The many prevailing traditions emphasize how strong the social character of the Sasak is in holding local cultural values. Including maintaining the tradition of *sorong serah aji krama* as a form of cultural heritage that is passed down from generation to generation. *Sorong serah aji krama* is known to be the culmination of a series of *merarik* (wedding) ceremony that is carried out by the Sasak community.



Figure 1: The Sorong Serah Aji Krame *Pembayun*

In essence, every procession of custom or tradition contains meaning, philosophical values, and social values which are often represented by certain symbols. The symbols themselves are the basis of culture in society. Humans create a shared culture and view of reality through communication to be able to understand the meaning behind each symbol that is built.

*Sorong serah aji krama* implicitly communicates many things. Among them are divine values, humanity, kinship, especially in relation to certain position, and it is also determining values or showing the social strata of society, to married life through a series of processions.

Disclosure of values for the ancestors of the Sasak is often carried out in depictions through the media, both ceremonial and symbolic. A number of symbolic objects that are often carried in the process of *sorong serah aji krama* are called *Arta Gegawan* which means luggage. Waluyan and Milandari (2020) explain that there is also a symbolic object carried in the process of *sorong serah aji krama* named *salin dede*. The word *salin* means to replace, while *dede* means to foster. *Salin dede* itself consists of a number of objects. All of them are interpreted as the mother's efforts since giving birth, nurturing, feeding, clothing, teaching various life knowledge, and sacrificially loving their children. Then all the responsibilities shift from the mother or the girl family to her husband.

Rahmasari and Hidajat (2017) mention that one of the stages in the process of implementing the Sasak wedding tradition, namely, *sejati* or *masejati*, is the stage of notification from the prospective groom's family to the bride's family that their daughter has been taken (*mbait*). There are at least two *masejati* who will be sent to the bride's family, and they will use traditional clothes. But the higher the social status, the higher the number of *masejati* will be sent.

The existence of the Sasak is recognized with all their traditional property rights. Thus, to ensure the sustainability of the Sasak, a forum is formed to manage and develop the existence of them. For example, in the city of Mataram, a regional regulation concerning the Sasak traditional manners (*Krama Adat Sasak*) was enacted, which was jointly approved by the Mataram City Regional Representative Council and ratified by the mayor. *Krama Adat Sasak* generally includes the *Krama Gubuk*, *Krama Desa* and *Krama Paer*. *Krama Adat Sasak* has an area in accordance with the administrative boundaries of the city of Mataram; however, traditional institutions generally also exist in every district to the village level. Meanwhile, the Sasak Customary Council is an institution formed by a number of Sasak leaders in 1986 for the purpose of uniting the perspective of the Sasak people through conservation; nursering and developing Sasak cultural traditions. Its existence is part of *Krama Adat Sasak* at the *Paer Bawaq* level which functions as an advisor (*Perdaksa*).

### **Sorong Serah Aji Krama as a Traditional Media**

Tradition is one of the cultural products with a high context which can also be media or medium in which the message is conveyed. Once a culture is close to the media, the mass media creates rituals that people follow in their daily lives. This is one way in which the media can contribute to social stability. The media encourage socialization into adulthood, contribute to social cohesion by affirming beliefs and values, and help reconcile inconsistent values and bridge discrepancies between private behavior and public morality (Vivian, 2008: 509).

Meanwhile, culture is something that is passed down from generation to generation. In other words, culture is a common thread between generations that contributes to shaping behavior and ideas to

achieve social change. This is also in line with what was expressed by Rakhmat and Fatimah (2016): Culture becomes part of communication behavior and in turn communication determines, maintains, develops or inherits its culture. Humans as cultural beings means that humans create culture and then culture provides direction in human life and behavior. Culture is the result of ideas which then lead to activities, and this activities then are developed to produce a work.

In the process of *sorong serah aji krama*, there are two groups: the giver (*pembayun penyorong*) and the receiver (*pembayun penerima*) representing the groom's family and the bride's family to communicate conveying "messages" from each family using the formal Sasak language. These groups were previously appointed by family agreement of people they trusted to represent their families, who generally came from the family and the surrounding environment. However, over time, traditions have also experienced a number of shifts, for example: now, groups representing a family can come from invited traditional groups and are not infrequently paid after the process is complete. However, this does not change the value or the essence of this procession.

The result of interview with Miq Sadaruddin explained in detail the items that were brought during the *Sorong Serah Aji Krama* procession. Each item is a symbol full of messages that are trying to be shown, which seems to say directly that this tradition is a container of meanings represented by symbolic objects during the procession. In particular, the number of religious values represented in these objects and the relationship between the sums of "krama" values: 200, 100, 66, and 33 are identical to the existence of a family, responsibility, ability of a man which is calculated based on the social status in the traditional Sasak system.

Miq Nuruddin, on a different occasion also revealed the tools that were brought during *sorong serah aji krama* full of philosophical meanings, the meanings of which were generally agreed upon in the community or traditional system. What he said then was supported by the opinion of Clifford Geertz as quoted by Martin and Nakayama in Sudarmika (2020), culture is defined as a value that historically has its own characteristics and can be seen from the symbols that appear. The symbol is meaningful for a system of the concept of expression of communication between humans that contains meaning and continues to grow along with human knowledge in living their lives.

### **The Meaning of Sorong Serah Aji Krama**

Different people's knowledge and experiences can make different meanings. The customary practitioners of the Sasak Customary Council also have their own judgments and perceptions in interpreting the concept of *sorong serah aji krama*, and they carry out their professional roles based on the perspectives they have. Referring to the results of interviews, there are several points of view held by customary practitioners when interpreting *sorong serah aji krama*. This point of view is subjective and obtained based on the experiences they have constructed so far.

The meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* as tradition is seen from a number of points of view, including; through the type of tradition, the purpose of the tradition, the implications of the tradition, and from the message conveyed in the tradition. As for the aspects behind the reference to the meaning, for example; 1) The type of tradition; as the highest traditional procession in the Sasak marriage process. 2) The aim of tradition; traditional procession to confirm the existence of a family in the traditional community. 3) Tradition implications; if it is not done, the marriage process will be considered less good/inethical. 4) Message in tradition; declaration of responsibility by the groom to the bride, and 5) the function of tradition; as a value transfer media, a value transformation media, and a traditional media. The meanings of these various points of view became the concept of the informants in carrying out their role as customary practitioners in interpreting *sorong serah aji krama*. For example, from the point of view of the type of tradition, the meaning is obtained by Miq Bayu, who explains that *sorong serah aji krama* is part of the type of wedding tradition, and it is related to three aspects: the first is the aspects related to spirituality; the second is the aspects related to patterned community activities, customs, traditions, where there are similar patterns in the procedures for marriage, circumcision, aqiqah, and others in every society; the third is the aspects related to the work, creativity, and taste.

Related to the patterns that exist in society, Miq Bayu's statement is also supported by Rom Harre (in Morissan, 2013: 114) where according to him humans are creatures that are involved or publicly known and have a number of attributes and traits that are formed within cultural and social groups. While the self is an idea or personal view that is concerned as a human being. Thus, there are two ideas in this case, namely the idea of "I as a human being" which is public, and the idea of "self" which is private. According to this view, human nature is governed by culture while self-nature is governed by the theory that the

person has about himself as a member of the culture. Thus, humans as personal beings have two sides, which are the side as social beings and the personal beings (self).

The other meaning of *sorong serah aji krama*, which is from the point of view of the purpose of the tradition is revealed by Miq Agus, where he expresses that *sorong serah aji krama* when it is seen from the purpose of doing the tradition, it is one of the traditional processions which in principle is intended to strengthen the existence of a family in its community. In other words, the term *aji krama* refers to the ability to take part in a traditional system.

There is also the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* by Miq Sadaruddin who is responsible for the Customs and Traditions section of the Sasak Customary Council, from the point of view of the message contained and the effort conveyed in the tradition, where *sorong serah aji krama* is mentioned as the declaration from the bridegroom, and this *aji krama* actually comes from the groom side. All of this was conveyed by the side of *pembayun*, both from the groom as *pembayun penyorong* and the bride as *pembayun penerima*.

Furthermore, the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* is based on the point of view of the function of the tradition itself. customary practitioners almost gave a similar statement in which they interpreted *sorong serah aji krama* as a medium that communicates values, religious symbols, philosophical messages that are embodied in objects or tools that are carried during the traditional procession.

For example, what is mandated in *sorong serah* does not mean the handover of the family, but what is mandated is the submission of a child to his parents, one being the child and the other being the son-in-law and both have the same position, both in the male and female families. In addition, the mandate also means that the family is ready to serve their parents with the symbol "*Sirah Aji*". This *sirah aji* contains a black cloth and white cloth and a kris which means life and death I leave it to this family. So, if something is wrong, the kris can be used to kill and the cloth is for shrouding the body. Then the second mandate, "*Napak Lemah*" means that it is upright on the ground, meaning that the husband should provide welfare to his new wife or family. Usually symbolized by the ordinary material of money, it can be gold. Third, "*Olen*" means cloth, meaning that a husband is ready to clothe his wife and his family or is able to maintain the honor of his wife. That is the essence of what is called "*Aji*" which is the readiness to provide physical and spiritual support and maintain inner and outer honor, while "*sirah aji*" is outside the context of "*Aji*", but it is a precursor that is ready to live and die in the family.

Religious values, especially Islam, are deeply rooted in every tradition of the Sasak, this is in line with the statement of Lalu Ari Irawan (in Fathurrahman, 2017: xix), where the basic style of the Sasak culture is closely attached to the teachings of Islam, a religion that has been passed down from generation to generation for over a long period of time. The Sasak people from the beginning have shown worship of the One Supreme Being or in Islam known as the concept of monotheism, indicated by the absence of the concept of idol worship or polytheism in their lives. This understanding makes it easier for them to welcome the teachings of Islam in a kaffah manner brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

There are also other aspects that also influence the construction of the meaning of *Sorong Serah Aji krama* for customary practitioners, namely the awareness aspect: (1) the awareness can grow from a supportive environment; (2) the awareness arises from things that create interest in tradition and cultural traditions; (3) the awareness arises due to having knowledge and experience related to the concept of tradition and culture; (4) the awareness that wants to reconstruct or clarify wrong perceptions related to the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition, (5) the awareness that arises because they want to maintain the tradition, until the awareness because of the responsibility for the trust given.

This awareness is considered important in directing behavior in this case customary practitioners, because according to Ellen Langer (in DeVito, 1997:478) when you are in a mindless state, you act with assumptions that are usually not intellectually appropriate. The following summarizes excerpts of interviews that researchers obtained from informants, for example from Miq Agus who is also the former Head of the NTB Museum, he was raised from generation to generation in a family environment that is thick with customs, so that awareness has lived in his mind for a long time.

A supportive environment also helps a person get to know the world. From what was initially ordinary, gradually became accustomed, the experience would be more and more. The more experienced a person is, the more knowledge he/she has, especially regarding the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama*. As the essence of the phenomenological view, this view uses direct experience as a way of understanding the world. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (in Morrisson, 2015:39) said, "All my knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world." Not only that, but awareness can also arise because of interest and admiration for customs and culture, even though they are not based on or related to the traditional activist service, but they are often involved whenever there are traditional

activities.

Furthermore, there is also an awareness that arises because they want to maintain the tradition. Actually, almost all practitioners expressed the same thing, especially the number of customary practitioners is very limited. Tradition and culture both nationally and locally are increasingly being eroded by modernity and globalization. Today's younger generation is also more likely to be apathetic, not too interested in matters of tradition and culture. The modernization of the moral values of society is one of the negative impacts in the new media era, the internet which facilitates access to information that is not necessarily true, presents things that are less educative, less embedded in cultural values, lack social control, and this has negative implications to local cultural values in the Sasak community. In addition, there is also an awareness that appears as a form of responsibility because they have been given the trust to maintain the tradition.

Experience is also one of the aspects that shape the meaning of customary practitioners in interpreting *sorong serah aji krama*. As stated by Miq Bayu, where he sees how a tradition and the length of time he has struggled to highlight the world of art and culture create a special experience for him. What he said is in line with the opinion of Creswell (2014), where human experience is examined through a detailed picture of the person being studied. They develop subjective meanings for their experiences—meanings are directed at certain objects or objects. In other words, experience is something that has been experienced. Through experience individuals have knowledge. This is also in accordance with the statement of Moustakas in Permana and Suzan (2018), “All objects of knowledge must conform to experience.” Knowledge underlies awareness that shapes meaning. This awareness and meaning then encourage individuals to take certain actions or behaviors by referring to Schutz's understanding, “... behavior is an experience of consciousness that bestows meaning through spontaneous activity.” Thus, the experience can be said to be the foundation for individuals to act.

Another factor that also helps to shape the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* for customary practitioners is the government's treatment of the Sasak Customary Council itself. These practitioners revealed that the government's participation in developing tradition and cultural sustainability was still lacking.

The process of constructing the meaning of *sorong serah aji krama* is always seen based on the stage of the emergence of an awareness of the role it plays. While this awareness itself encourages every customary practitioner to follow up on something they receive, something they believe in and they think is right, and what they have to do with it. A number of the knowledge possessed and the experience experienced by customary practitioners raise awareness that underlies all their meanings in interpreting *sorong serah aji krama* according to the roles they carry out. Experience will continue to be formed as long as the individual is still alive, in other words the meaning of customary practitioners regarding the tradition of *sorong serah aji krama* can develop and even change according to the stock of knowledge they have from time to time as long as the tradition occurs or the patterns changes.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the study can be drawn: indigenous practitioners interpret the tradition of *sorong serah aji krama* through several points of view, such as: through the point of view of the type of tradition, the purpose of tradition, the implications of tradition, the message conveyed when the tradition takes place, and the function of tradition as a medium. Suggestions related to the results contain: indigenous practitioners may need to focus on the establishment, licensing and inauguration of MAS as the highest assembly that facilitates all forms of responsible activities related to Sasak customs. MAS also needs to commit to more intensive in socializing its role to the community so that the community realizes the existence of MAS in the midst of society, especially Sasak tribal communities. MAS needs to embrace all cultural activists, indigenous officials, indigenous leaders, indigenous stakeholders, and other Sasak tribal indigenous practitioners to sit together and join the MAS so that the existence of these figures is not separated by different interests or districts as so far. Universities in NTB are also expected to form a faculty of Humanities with the aim of knowledge related to culture and customs introduced to each generation to maintain local cultural values. In addition, the NTB provincial government is required to make MAS as an estuary, a container and even an official organization to explore sasak indigenous breed and cultural issues to remain sustainable, not eroded amid modernization that has the potential to eliminate the indigenous values and origin culture of the Sasak tribe. The NTB provincial government also needs to cooperate with other ntb city and district governments to synergize to make clear regulations against sasak indigenous krama and jointly support and appreciate the role of each cultural activist, indigenous officials,

indigenous leaders, indigenous stakeholders to sasak indigenous practitioners.

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