

## Analysis of the Symbolic Meaning and Philosophy Behind the Ritual Stages of Mappogau Sihanua

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**ABSTRACT.** Karampuang Traditional Village is a community of indigenous people that still maintains and preserves its traditions and cultural values. The people in Karampuang Traditional Village still actively carry out ritual ceremonies as a form of respect and gratitude to the spirits of their ancestors, while hoping that their lives will be better. This ritual is considered very sacred and must be carried out. However, there is a different view among some members of the Karampuang Indigenous community who only see this ritual as an expression of gratitude to traditional leaders. This research aims to explore and analyze the hidden symbolic and philosophical meanings behind the stages of the mappogau sihanua ritual which is very meaningful for the Karampuang Indigenous community. The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with the research subjects being people living in the Karampuang Traditional Village, Tompobulu Village, Bulupoddo District, Sinjai Regency. Through analytical steps such as data reduction, data presentation, and data verification through observation, interviews, and documentation, this research reveals information about the existence of the mappogau sihanua ritual as well as its symbolic and philosophical meaning. The research results show that this ritual has experienced significant changes in the perception of the Karampuang traditional community. Even though some still associate it with animist beliefs, the implementation of this ritual actually has a deep and rich meaning in the Islamic context. The mappogau sihanua ritual is carried out in the Karampuang traditional house which has simple architecture but is full of symbolism. In addition, this ritual stage emphasizes the importance of intention in every action, underscoring the spiritual dimension in the implementation of the ritual. This ritual also reflects gratitude for the harvest and contains deep human values.

**KEYWORDS:** symbolic meaning; philosophical meaning; mappogau sihanua; cultural determinism

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society is a diverse society, and one of the impacts of this diversity is the existence of various types of religious ceremonies which are carried out and maintained by their respective followers. These religious ceremonies have various forms, preservation methods, and different goals between various community groups. This is caused by differences in living environments, customs and traditions passed down from generation to generation. This statement is in line with the view of Cultural Determinism expressed by Melville J. Herskovits and Bronislaw Malinowski (Shomad & Adinata, 2020; Kamarudin, 2021), that all aspects of society are influenced by the culture of the society itself. One of the cultural elements that still exists today in Indonesian society is traditional ceremonies. In fact, history shows that traditional ceremonial activities and religious institutions are the aspects most likely to be maintained over time (Thamdzir & Mikasari, 2022).

Culture has a very important role in human life and society (Ergashev & Farxodjonova, 2020). Culture helps humans and society overcome various challenges, including challenges from nature and also from within society which are not always beneficial (Sutrisno, 2023). Apart from that, both spiritually and materially, humans and society need satisfaction. These needs are largely met through culture originating from the community itself (Mali et al., 2022). As happens in various human groups in various regions, the formation of culture by humans produces cultural diversity in each community (society, tribe, or nation). The culture of each community or nation group includes various elements, both large and small scale, to form a unity in the form of important aspects of culture, such as norms that enable cooperation in dealing with the surrounding environment, economic organizations,

educational tools and institutions, and organizations. strength. Each cultural element is explained through various cultural activities (Rafidah, Dewi & Furnamasari, 2021).

Traditional ceremonies are held as a manifestation of human belief in various aspects of spiritual life that are connected to the unseen world which is inhabited by various entities and forces that cannot be overcome by humans with ordinary methods, thus causing fear among humans. Ceremonial culture and traditions are still strong, even though people live in the modern era where technology has penetrated rural areas. In each region there are different traditions and are still adhered to by the local population. One of the traditions that still survives in South Sulawesi is the Karampuang traditional house which is located in Tompobulu Village, Bulupoddo District, Sinjai Regency. Karampuang is the name of a village which is about 31 km to the west from the capital city of Sinjai Regency (Ridwan, Hadawiah & Ahdan, 2022). The name Karampuang comes from the word *karampulue* which means goosebumps or goosebumps, which is a combination of the words *kareang* and *puang*. Karampuang has many traditional rituals which are carried out every year as a form of respect for ancestors, to protect cultural heritage, and to foster a sense of responsibility and solidarity among the Karampuang residents themselves (Togobu, 2019).

Rituals are a series of activities traditionally associated with religion. This ritual symbolically reflects humans' efforts to communicate with transcendent forces, including ancestors, spiritual entities, gods, God, or other magical forces (Novitasari et al., 2019). A religious ritual or ceremony usually consists of a combination of actions such as praying, prostrating, offering offerings, making sacrifices, eating together, dancing, and singing. Therefore, religious rituals are a form of worship that involves symbolic expression through body and mind movements (Over, Eggleston & Cook, 2020).

As time goes by, traditions in the form of traditional ceremonies are also experiencing increasingly rapid development. One ceremony that emphasizes the spirit of mutual cooperation is the existing Karampuang traditional ceremony known as the *mappogau sihanua* ritual. The *mappogau sihanua* ritual or village party is one of the largest traditional ceremonies held every year by people who maintain Karampuang culture. This event takes place one week after harvest in November (Mustamin, 2023). The implementation of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual in Karampuang is a form of gratitude for successful agricultural or plantation harvests, so this event is lively and takes quite a long time. Although this event requires huge resources and costs, over the centuries this has never been an obstacle. All Karampuang residents are ready to provide assistance in carrying out this event with mutual patience to support the costs and energy required. Willingness to help in carrying out this ritual is known as *lilacca makkitomatoa*, which means understanding the burden borne by parents as those responsible for the event (Nirwana & Muhlis, 2023).

Most of the residents of Tompobulu Village, especially in Karampuang, have converted to Islam, but there are still people who maintain a belief system that is similar to animism, especially people who live within customary areas (Mustamin et al., 2023). These rituals are carried out as a sign of respect for the spirits of ancestors, as an expression of gratitude, and as a request for a better life in the future. For the community there is a certain fear when they do not follow the process of carrying out this ritual, so the people in the Karampuang traditional area are very loyal to this belief. According to the beliefs of the Karampuang indigenous people, if the *mappogau sihanua* ritual is not carried out, a very serious disaster will arise. To express their gratitude for the abundance of good fortune they receive, the community expresses it through traditional rituals such as bringing offerings to the mountain and holding a series of traditional *mappogau sihanua* ceremonies.

This belief is that if this ceremony is not carried out, the ancestors known as *To Matoa* will be rebuked with disasters such as famine, failed rice harvests, long dry seasons, or disease outbreaks (Mukhlis & Haris, 2021). This statement is the basis for why the Karampuang indigenous people continue to carry out the *mappogau sihanua* ritual to this day. However, as times change, some Karampuang indigenous people are starting to doubt that not carrying out this ceremony will have a disastrous impact. This reflects changes in views among society which are increasingly open and have a broader understanding. Apart from that, changes in society's views also influence the meaning of traditional ceremonies in the *mappogau sihanua* ritual, because today's society has a different way of thinking. Therefore, research regarding the analysis of the symbolic meaning and philosophy behind the stages of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual is very important to study in order to support the cultural resilience of the Karampuang indigenous community.

## 2 METHOD

This research was conducted for four months in Tompobulu Village, Bulupoddo District, Sinjai Regency with informants, namely the Bugis community group who live in the Karampuang Traditional Village, including traditional leaders, village officials and the local community. The type of research used is qualitative research according to Creswell (2016). This research aims to provide a description of phenomena/events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, as well as perceptions or thoughts of individuals and groups of the Karampuang indigenous community regarding the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual. The data sources used in this research consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through observation and in-depth interviews, while secondary data was collected through tracking textual documents, such as local manuscripts, historical records, news articles and scientific journals. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research focus on in-depth understanding and interpretation of the data collected.

In general, to describe existing phenomena, the data in research first goes through several stages of analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation and data verification. Data reduction includes the selection process, focusing on simplifying, abstracting and transforming rough data that emerges from field notes related to the scientific value of the mappogau sihanua ritual. Data presentation includes the process of reconstructing the resource person's sentences into sentences that are well written and easy to understand the meaning of the narrative. Data verification includes the correctness of the theoretical basis with facts in the field using the double entry method and comparing two types of data to serve as a guide for drawing conclusions.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mappogau sihanua ritual is one of the important traditional rituals in the culture of the Karampuang indigenous people. This ritual is usually carried out every year as a form of celebration and expression of gratitude for the success of the agricultural or plantation harvest. In the mappogau sihanua ritual, the Karampuang Indigenous community holds a lively village party. This event is a moment to gather all members of indigenous communities from various generations, both young and old. Community members together participate in various series of activities which include religious processions, traditional dances, traditional music, and the presentation of various regional specialties (Eril & Wahid, 2020). One of the main focuses of this ritual is offerings to the spirits of ancestors. The Karampuang indigenous people believe that the spirits of their ancestors play an important role in providing prosperity and good luck to the Karampuang people. Therefore, people provide offerings as a sign of respect and gratitude to the spirits of their ancestors. The mappogau sihanua ritual is not only a ceremonial event, but also has deep social and cultural meaning. This ritual is considered a tool of social control that regulates behavior and social interactions in the Karampuang traditional community. The presence of this ritual helps strengthen a sense of cultural identity and preserve ancestral traditions in the community (Lismawati & Mustafa, 2021).

Even though there are people who consider the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual to be a sacred traditional ceremony, its implementation still exists among the Karampuang traditional community. One informant from the local community who lives in the Karampuang Traditional Village said:

*“This ritual has become an obligation that must be obeyed by all members of the Karampuang traditional community, which has special regulations. If there are community members in the area who do not take part in the ritual procession, the consequence is that they may be subject to sanctions, such as being expelled from the community or losing their customary rights for generations to come. In addition, non-compliance with rituals is considered an insult to the ancestral spirits who have provided abundance, and this is believed to have a negative impact on the environment, with the potential for disasters such as drought or incurable diseases, which can be felt throughout the region. Karampuang Traditional Village”.*

Based on the informant's statement, it appears that the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual is much feared by the Karampuang indigenous people. This has been considered cultural determinism which needs to be implemented because there is a necessity that has been believed from generation to generation. Cultural determinism is a theory that focuses on the influence of culture and the social environment on the behavior, beliefs and thought patterns of individuals or groups of people.

This theory states that cultural aspects, norms, values and traditions in a society have a dominant role in shaping individual behavior and outlook on life. In other words, culture and social environment determine most of the choices and actions taken by individuals or groups (Opurum & Dibia, 2022). This theory emphasizes that human thought patterns and behavior are greatly influenced by the surrounding cultural environment, and sometimes individuals or groups of people are considered to be products of their culture. However, cultural determinism also recognizes that the interaction between individuals and culture is complex, and there is room for cultural variation and adaptation (Hidayana & Swaradesy, 2021).

From the perspective of cultural determinism, the mappogau sihanua ritual is a necessity because of people's fear of disaster, and this belief has been believed from generation to generation. In fact, the Karampuang indigenous people have adhered to the Islamic religion which spread in the area since 1907. The initial conversion to Islam in Karampuang was generally carried out by the datu daeng tiro who at first strongly believed in animism. The arrival of a figure from the sky who people believe to be To Manurung has changed people's beliefs over time. The spread of the mappogau sihanua ritual tradition has become increasingly widespread in recent years. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with informants in Tompobulu Village, Bulupoddo District, Sinjai Regency, several information was obtained related to the factors that encouraged the spread of the mappogau sihanua ritual tradition. The first factor includes increasing public awareness regarding the importance of cultural preservation. People living in the Karampuang traditional village area are increasingly aware that culture is a national wealth that must be preserved. This is in line with the facts that occur in the field, where the mappogau sihanua ritual is a tradition that is carried out every year when the harvest season arrives or before the planting season. This ritual is becoming increasingly known as a village party to welcome better days regardless of the animist beliefs in it. This statement was made by the Head of Tompobulu Village, who took part in the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual, that he only took part in the activity as a form of appreciation for achieving a bountiful harvest. In fact, he just accompanied the Regent who participated in enlivening this traditional event.

The Head of Tompobulu Village, Bulupoddo District, Sinjai Regency, said that the mappogau sihanua ritual has become an icon for the Karampuang community throughout the Sinjai Regency area. The implementation continues to exist from year to year and continues to grow in terms of participation.

*“The implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual in 2022 was attended by hundreds of people from various circles. This ritual does not have certain rules for anyone who wants to participate, so that all groups can take part, both men and women, the Karampuang community and from various regions, and can be followed by children to the elderly, provided that participation. This does not interfere with the implementation of the ritual and does not damage any attributes of the implementation in Karampuang,”* said Anwar as a local community member in the Karampuang Traditional Area.

One of the grounds that shows that the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual among the Karampuang indigenous people is no longer related to animist beliefs is the symbolic and philosophical meaning contained in each step of the ritual. This ceremony was also held at the Karampuang traditional house, which is believed to have Islamic philosophical values. Over time, the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual has undergone changes in the view of cultural determinism. Local residents make this tradition an integral part of their lives, considering it an expression of gratitude for the harvest they have obtained. Although some people may still see it as a form of animism, the unconscious implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual has significant meaning and symbolism from an Islamic perspective. The mappogau sihanua ritual begins with a preparation stage, emphasizing the importance of intention in every action. These preparations were carried out at the Karampuang traditional house which is located at the top of the Karampuang forest. Even though it is architecturally similar to other traditional houses, the Karampuang traditional house has deep meaning in the context of Islamic society. The Karampuang traditional house is built with 30 pillars, symbolizing the amount of juice in the Koran. These pillars are installed from east to west, with one row consisting of six pillars, depicting the six pillars of faith. There are also five plots which symbolize the five pillars of Islam. Apart from that, the stages of implementing the mappogau sihanua ritual also contain their own human values. The stages consist of mabbahang, mappota, mabbaja-baja, and menre' ri bulu. These stages have been maintained over time even though the era of modernization continues (Darnayanti et al., 2022).

#### a. Mabbahang

Mabbahang or traditional deliberation involving all components of society. The essence of this mabahang activity is *mattanra esso* or determining a good day. Mabbahang is carried out when all community harvest activities have been completed. After an agreement has been made on the day of the party, the women then prepare the glutinous rice which is pounded manually with good treatment according to the teachings of their ancestors which they understand, this activity is called *mallampu*.

b. Mappaota

Mappaota or asking for blessings for holding a traditional party. In carrying out the procession, all traditional stakeholders are assisted by the community to visit places they consider sacred by carrying plates, a type of small basket containing betel material. Apart from asking for blessings, *mappaota* has another value, namely remembering ancestors who are believed to have provided fertile agricultural land and a decent life. The plates have six betel leaves which symbolize that the Karampuang Indigenous people recognize six types of human burial, namely, *mallajang* or floating, *digattung* or hanging, then *diwae* or carried away, *ditunu* or burned, *dibalaburu'* or piled up, and *masseddi-seddi* or one by one. These six parts are the basis for implementing the *mappogau sihanua* ritual.

c. Mabbaja-baja

Mabbaja-baja or cleaning has become an obligation for members of the Karampuang indigenous community to clean a village, be it home yards, public places and around traditional houses. This is done so that the *mappogau sihanua* party is not just a ritual but also shows that the entire Karampuang Traditional area is clean and neatly arranged.

d. Menre' ri bulu

Menre' ri bulu or the procession up the mountain is the peak event of *mappogau sihanua*. Menre' ri bulu is carried out intermittently after three days of *mabbaja-baja* implementation. The menre' ri bulu event begins with the preparation of all the equipment and supplies needed including the food that will be eaten by the guests present. While the others were making preparations, Sanro as the traditional leader and his helpers held a *mattuli* ritual. This *mattuli* procession is carried out to the accompaniment of Sanro drums, *gamuru*, *jong-jong* and several other accompanying instruments.

Apart from the accompanying instruments mentioned above, *mappaddekko* or pounding mortars with a beautiful sounding rhythm is also performed. *Mappaddekko* is a means of conveying information that the main event of *mappogau sihanua* will begin, namely *menre ri' bulu*. When the food ingredients that have been processed and prepared since the evening are ready, the food is paraded up the mountain to a place at the top of the mountain known as *Embae*, where there is a circular stone bracelet. At this place, the main ritual procession of the *mappogau sihanua* party is carried out.

Before *mappogau sihanua* closes with *mabahang*, in this case an evaluation of the traditional party, a *malling* procession is first carried out. This procession lasts for 5 days at the *Tomatoa* traditional house, three days at the *Gella* traditional house, and one day at the house of a member of the Karampuang community. *Malling* is a day that has taboos, the taboos include *temma paccera'* or not being allowed to slaughter livestock, *temma rau kaju'* or not being allowed to cook vegetables from leaves, *temmaparumpu'* or not being able to hold rituals at home, and *massanraseng alu'* or Husband and wife cannot have sex. Mabbahang as the opening and closing, if at the beginning of the preparations for *Mappogau Sihanua* the *mabbahang* was carried out, then at the closing procession it was also carried out as part of the evaluation of the entire series that had been carried out.

From a series of stages of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual, the transformation that occurs also shows progress in its implementation. This continues because of the values contained in each stage of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual. The philosophical values contained in each stage of the implementation of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual in the Karampuang Traditional Village community consist of solidarity, philosophical or religious values, nature conservation, and artistic values. The value of solidarity can be seen in the implementation of the *mappogau sihanua* ritual tradition (village party) involving all the people of *Tompobulu Village* who are ready to help in making the activity a success so that it is very lively and not only in *Tompobulu Village* and *Karampuang Hamlet*. The Regent of *Sinjai* helped implement this tradition so that the Karampuang culture was preserved.

As a Karampuang custom, the To Manurung heritage must be preserved, and likewise its traditional activities cannot be separated from its religious value in the form of whatever is used or the offering materials are inseparable from philosophical or meaningful symbols. Meanwhile, in terms of nature conservation values, implementing the mappogau sihanua ritual tradition remains friendly to the natural surroundings, where if the entire traditional area has not been cleaned of dirt, then the series of events cannot be carried out. The materials used come from the forest and before they are used they are requested first by the forest ruler called Dewata ri toli. The artistic value in the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual can be seen in every stage, which really requires entertainment such as singing and reflection and study, so that this tradition is preserved and does not become extinct, and is enjoyed by everyone as a glory for the nation. The mappogau sihanua ritual tradition is a worship of their ancestors because they were given fertile land so that rice plants became fertile.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of the symbolic meaning and philosophy behind the stages of the mappogau sihanua ritual, it can be concluded that this ritual has undergone a deep transformation in the views of the Karampuang indigenous people. Even though some parties still associate it with animist beliefs, the implementation of this ritual actually has a very deep and rich meaning from an Islamic perspective. The mappogau sihanua ritual is held in the Karampuang traditional house, which has a simple architectural form but is full of symbolism. This house has 30 pillars, which symbolize the number of verses in the Koran, and the placement of these pillars illustrates the principles of the pillars of faith in Islam. In addition, this ritual stage emphasizes the importance of intention in every action, underlining the spiritual aspect of carrying out the ritual. This ritual also reflects gratitude for the harvest and has deep human values. Even though times continue to change and modernization continues to develop, the stages of the mappogau sihanua ritual are still maintained, showing how strong the ties are between this tradition and the identity and life of the Karampuang indigenous people. Thus, this analysis highlights how culture and religion can come together in ritual practices that are rich in meaning and philosophy.

#### 5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team would like to thank the Muhammadiyah University of Bone and all informants from the Karampuang indigenous community who have supported and assisted in carrying out research on the implementation of the mappogau sihanua ritual.

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