



The Symbolic Meaning of the Momasoro Traditional Procession in the Lauje Community of Ogoansam Village, Indonesia's Palasa District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the symbolic meaning of the Momasoro tradition practiced by the Lauje tribe in Ogoansam Village. A qualitative descriptive method was employed to conduct the research. Data collection involved multiple techniques, including observation, interviews, documentation, listening, recording, and note-taking. The research utilized two primary data sources: first-hand symbolic meanings of the Momasoro tradition gathered through observations and interviews. The analysis process followed three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed a total of 10 symbolic elements integral to the Momasoro tradition. These include boats, offerings, ketupat (rice cakes), chicken eggs, sticky rice, cucur cakes, gong and drum musical instruments, large knives, mantras, and white chickens. Each element carries specific cultural and spiritual significance within the tradition.

KEYWORDS

Ogoansam Village,
Symbolic Meaning,
Lauje Tribe,
Momasoro Tradition.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna simbolik tradisi momasoro pada suku Lauje di Desa Ogoansam. Jenis penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data teknik observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, teknik simak, teknik rekam, dan teknik catat. Sumber data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini terdiri dari dua sumber data yaitu data primer yang berupa makna simbolik tradisi momasoro yang diperoleh dari hasil observasi dan wawancara. Adapun teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini merupakan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini, peneliti menemukan bahwa dari keseluruhan ada 10 makna simbol yang terdapat dalam tradisi momasoro yang berupa perahu, sesajen, ketupat, telur ayam, ketan, kue cucur, alat musik gong dan gendang, pisau besar, mantra, dan ayam putih.

KATAKUNCI

Desa Ogoansam;
Makna Simbolik;
Suku Lauje;
Tradisi Momasoro.

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1. Introduction

Tradition refers to a set of beliefs or practices carried out repeatedly in the same manner, often because they are considered to have been inherited from ancestors (Lebaka, 2019). One such tradition associated with the Lauje tribe that has been preserved to this day is the “Momasoro tradition”, still practiced by the people of Ogoansam Village, located in the Palasa subdistrict. Palasa is a subdistrict in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, where the community resides near both mountains and the sea. A significant portion of the population in Palasa comes from the Lauje tribe, making the “Momasoro tradition”, or the “boat-releasing” ceremony, a key cultural practice rooted in Lauje heritage.

The Lauje tribe, or Lauje people, are among the ethnic groups predominantly residing in Parigi Moutong Regency, especially in areas such as Palasa, Ulatan, Biga, Bobalo, Tingkulang, and Tinombo. The tribe holds a strong belief in spiritual entities, which they consider essential for aiding their daily lives. Interestingly, the Lauje tribe is part of the larger Tialo (or Tomini) ethnic group. While many Lauje people have converted to Christianity or Islam, their ancestral belief system remains an integral part of their cultural identity and continues to be upheld alongside their adopted religions.

Momasoro is an annual boat-releasing ceremony performed by the Lauje tribe, during which agricultural and marine products harvested over the year are offered as an expression of gratitude to the Creator for blessing their land with fertility. The Lauje people believe that performing the Momasoro tradition brings changes and improvements to their harvests. This traditional ceremony is typically held on the beach, where a decorated boat, draped in white cloth and filled with agricultural products as offerings, is floated out to sea. This practice is a cherished ancestral legacy, firmly upheld by the people of Ogoansam Village.

Beyond its agricultural significance, Momasoro is also believed to serve as a form of healing for the Lauje people. The symbols within the Momasoro tradition carry profound meanings and act as guiding principles for the Lauje tribe in their daily lives, particularly within the community. The Lauje ethnic community holds that the Momasoro tradition embodies numerous noble cultural values, which have been preserved and practiced across generations. The values embedded in this tradition include norms and codes of behavior that are considered virtuous and align with the teachings of Islam. To this day, the Momasoro tradition continues to be a vital cultural practice, reflecting the deep spiritual and communal values of the Lauje people.

1.1. Symbolic Meaning

Symbolic meaning refers to the significance attributed to symbols, which are representational elements used to convey ideas, concepts, or emotions that extend beyond their literal interpretation (Saussure, 2011). In the fields of linguistics and semiotics, a symbol is defined as a sign that represents an object or concept, with the relationship between the symbol and its meaning being arbitrary yet socially agreed upon. Symbols serve as tools to simplify the representation of complex or abstract concepts through a standardized medium.

Barthes (1967) further elaborates on symbolic meaning by describing it as a secondary layer of meaning, or connotation, which involves the interpretation of cultural values, ideologies, and specific contexts. Essentially, symbolic meaning represents the way humans project cultural values and emotional significance onto particular objects, actions, or events (Burkitt, 2021). This process allows for deeper cultural and emotional connections to be embedded in symbols, enriching their interpretative depth and relevance in society.

Saussure (2011) asserted that symbols consist of two primary components: the *signifier* and the *signified*. The *signifier* refers to the physical form of the symbol, such as a word, image, or sound, while the *signified* is the concept or idea that the symbol represents. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and relies on social conventions. In the context of symbolic meaning, this association is often shaped by cultural and historical factors.

Kilstrup (2015) categorized signs into three types: icons, indices, and symbols. A symbol is a kind of sign whose relationship to the object it represents is established through convention or habitual use. For instance, a national flag serves as a symbol of a specific country, but its meaning is derived solely from collective societal agreement.

Zhao (2023) emphasized that symbols possess meanings rooted in the collective unconscious, reflecting universal archetypes that are intrinsic to human experience. Symbols like circles, water, or trees often hold profound significance, connecting individuals to spiritual, psychological, and cultural values, thereby transcending personal and temporal boundaries (Sonnex et al., 2022).

The symbolic meaning of an element can be shaped by various factors, including cultural context, history and tradition, and social context (Li, 2018). Symbolic meaning is heavily influenced by cultural background. For instance, in many Asian cultures, the color red is often associated with good luck, while in Western cultures, red may symbolize love or danger (Khussainova et al., 2024). A symbol's historical background plays a significant role in how it is interpreted by society. For example, in Christian tradition, the cross represents sacrifice and salvation, a meaning derived from the religion's historical development (Amfotis, 2023). Social norms and situations also affect

the interpretation of symbolic meaning. For example, a handshake can symbolize peace or agreement depending on the social setting in which it occurs (Yuningsih, 2023).

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Moleong (2017), this method seeks to describe and analyze objects, events, and social processes in their natural settings. Sugiyono (2020) explains that data analysis involves systematically searching and organizing data from interviews, field notes, and documentation by selecting key information to study and drawing conclusions that are easy to comprehend. Miles et al. (2014) outlines the following steps in data analysis data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusion. Data reduction involves summarizing and selecting essential data, focusing on the key aspects, and discarding irrelevant information.

The process helps researchers better understand the data and simplifies subsequent data collection. Organizing and presenting data into recognizable patterns or relationships makes it easier for researchers to interpret the information. Presentations can take the form of concise descriptions. Drawing conclusions is aimed at addressing the research problem or answering the research questions.

The data sources for this research include primary data (results from observations and interviews) and secondary data (published journal articles). The data collection techniques utilized in this study are as follows; Observation, Interview, Documentation, Listening Technique, Recording Technique, and Note-Taking Technique. Observation serves as the initial step in gathering data. Interviews involve collecting data through a question-and-answer process. Documentation as a method that complements observation and interviews. Listening technique is applied by listening to language use during data collection. Recording technique involves using a cellphone to record spoken language. Note-taking technique involves documenting the results of interviews. The research instruments included stationery and cellphones. The study involved five informants: the Palasa Subdistrict Head, the Ogoansam Village Secretary, a Traditional Leader, and two community leaders.

3. Results and Discussion

The procession of the momasoro tradition in Ogoansam Village consists of seven stages, beginning with preparation and ending with implementation. The actual procession involves six key steps: sprinkling white and yellow rice on the boat, dancing around the boat, playing musical instruments, reciting mogumbui poetry, singing rhymes in the lauje tribe's regional language, and releasing the boat. Each step is performed sequentially and culminates with the boat's release.

Additionally, the momasoro tradition carries significant symbolic meanings deeply rooted in the beliefs of the Lauje people. This tradition is seen as both a form of protection and an expression of gratitude to the Creator. For example, the act of a boat being washed out to sea symbolizes the hope of the Lauje people that natural disasters and disease outbreaks will be carried away by the currents.

The research identifies ten specific symbolic meanings within the momasoro tradition:

Tabel 1. The Symbolic Meaning of Cultural and Spiritual Significance of the Momasoro Tradition

Symbol	Meaning
The Boat	Represents the removal of disease outbreaks and natural disasters carried away by river currents
Offerings	Symbolize gratitude and respect for the rulers of water and land
Ketupat (rice cakes)	Represents unity and mutual support
Chicken Eggs	Symbolize a king surrounded by his people
Sticky Rice	Represents the origin of human existence
Cucur Cake	Symbolizes the hope that all efforts yield sweet results
Gongs and Drums	Serve as symbols to summon spirits
The Big Knife	Symbolizes protection for the community during their endeavors
Mantras	Reflect the character and identity of the Lauje people
The White Chicken	Symbolizes a vessel for spirits

These elements demonstrate the cultural depth and spiritual significance of the momasoro tradition, reflecting the Lauje tribe’s values and connection to their natural environment.

3.1. Momasoro Tradition: Gratitude and Healing through Ritual Boat Release

The First Stage: Preparing Tools and Materials

The first stage of the Momasoro tradition is preparation, beginning with Mollingsonang, or a deliberation process, which is an essential initial step for the Lauje tribe. This deliberation aims to achieve consensus and common goals within the Lauje community, ensuring the smooth execution of the Momasoro tradition. The deliberation is attended by traditional leaders and community elders.

The next part of the preparation involves crafting the boat (payangan), which serves as the vessel for carrying offerings and agricultural produce. The task of making the payangan is typically entrusted to individuals skilled in creating boats for traditional ceremonies. The boat is usually completed before the day of the Momasoro tradition.

The offerings to be placed in the payangan are collected from the community. These offerings include various items such as food (ketupat), sticky rice (pulut) in four

types: yellow (melili), white (memeas), red (meegang), and black (meitong), as well as eggs (golau), bananas (pensa), cigarettes, old coins, cucur cakes, and other agricultural products.



Figure 1. The Process of Making a Payangan (Boat)



Figure 2. The rice is dyed yellow, and then it is roasted



Figure 3. Areca nuts, coins, tobacco, quicklime, and palm leaves.



Figure 4. Musical instruments (gongs and drums)



Figure 5. Big knife



Figure 6. Bone Grass



Figure 7. Sidaguri leaves



Figure 8. Duck cocor leaves



Figure 9. White-feathered chicken



Figure 10. Areca nut and lime



Figure 11. Ketupat (rice cake)

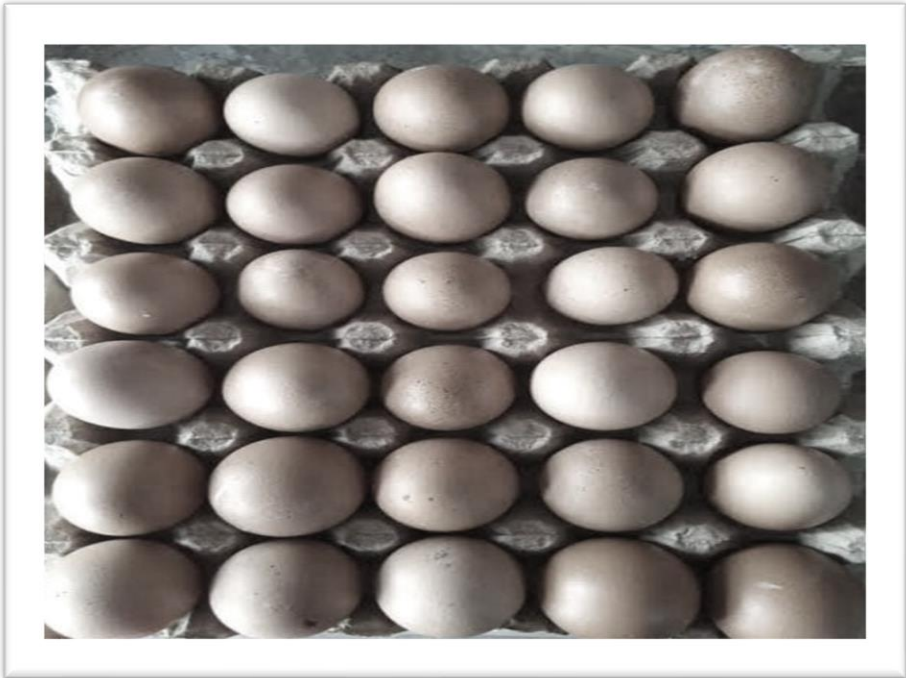


Figure 12. Chicken eggs



Figure 13. Sugarcane



Figure 14. Bowknot cake



Figure 15. Sweet potato



Figure 16. White sticky rice and yellow sticky rice



Figure 17. Banana

Momasoro Tradition Procession

After all the materials and equipment are prepared, the Momasoro tradition is carried out as follows:

- 1) First Stage: At the beginning of the tradition, all traditional leaders, community leaders, and representatives from the Ogoansam Village government gather at the traditional house to witness the Momasoro ceremony. Around 3:00 PM (WIT), the ritual begins with the traditional leader sprinkling white and yellow rice around the boat while reciting prayers for safety.

Prayer for Safety

“Allahumma inna nas-aluka salamatan fiddin waafiyatan fil-jasadi wa ziyadatan fil-ilmi wa barakatn firrizqi, wa taubatan qablal-maut wa rahmatan indal-maut, wa maghfiratan ba'dal maut.”

Translation

“O Allah, we ask You for safety in religion, health in the body, an increase in knowledge, blessings in sustenance, repentance before death, mercy at death, and forgiveness after death.”



Figure 18. The traditional leader sprinkles yellow and white rice on the boat

- 2) Second Stage: After the traditional leader completes the ritual of sprinkling rice on the boat, the ceremonial dance continues around the boat. The Lauje tribe believes that this act summons the spirits of their ancestors. During the dance, performers encircle the boat to the accompaniment of drum and gong music played by two individuals. A spell is chanted by the traditional leader to induce a state of possession among the dancers. The incantation is as follows:

mohule liame li siyoputo alata ala,
mohule liame ansi kangkai penyekitye,
u pomomgi sau siyoputo alata ala,
be eni liame greetings,
no popomoyang kangkai umomame.

Meaning

“We are weak servants and fear Allah. Additionally, we fear the illnesses that Allah has sent upon us. We ask Allah to grant us health and place us in goodness.”



Figure 19. Momasoro Traditional Dancers

- 3) Third Stage: Traditional musical instruments, such as gongs and drums, are played to accompany the dancers. As the dancers begin circling the boat, they enter a state of unconsciousness or trance



Figure 20. Traditional Musical Instrument Players

- 4) Fourth Stage: After completing the dance, the Momasoro tradition continues with the singing of “mogumbui” poetry. This poetry, performed by the traditional leaders of Ogoansam Village, is sung in the Lauje language and symbolizes the act of putting a baby to sleep with a lullaby. The *mogumbui* poetry is as follows:

Mo Mongi Do'a (Asking for Prayer)

O siyoputo wa'allah ta'allah Ponyambambangame
Na jagaima hua nu nyae sau u'asayani
Kana u parentai du'ute me bali pailaye
Bengi eleo limae tulu-tulu pale-pale

Meaning

"You are the Lord, Allah SWT, whom we worship.
You are the guardian of my baby, whom I deeply love.
I will care for my beloved baby until they are born.

Good people,
Day and night I raise my hands, begging for safety for all of us."

Ponyalamate (Savior)

Oo ina liondonge, unjunge li dodobe
Laume osa puang owe, boi u'sabarope
Outi darling, Lioye Harapanowe
Neilongo neteilu, bamabali pailaye
Onjo lioye basagome inya boi mongevae,
mebali to pailaye injoe Harapanowe
Onjo neduae watunye, liowe ponyalamate
Ondonga lalapaselabai o sait tonye

Meaning

Oh mother, in my sorrow, it feels as though a sharp object has pierced my chest.

I cannot push it away or fight it, but I endure patiently.

Oh Uti, my child, you are my hope.

Listen to your parents' advice and grow to be a good person.

When you grow older, do not oppose your parents.

Being a good person is my greatest hope.

If, one day, you become a savior,
our path will be clear and free from obstacles.



Figure 21. Mogumbui Poetry Singer

- 5) Fifth Stage: The Momasoro tradition continues into the evening, attended by the people of Ogoansam Village and the inland Lauje tribe community. During this stage, traditional leaders from the inland Lauje tribe recite pantun (poetry) in their regional language. The pantun is sung as follows:

Peace be upon you, and Allah's mercy and blessings,
Uatabeme Jojo, Palu Province, Central Sulawesi Regency,
Parigi Moutong, Tinombo Tomini Subdistrict in 2008.
Bia Elung nu one jopa nombuang pu nuada Li mata nu,
Au ii kosini Sinabeyang Nge police profite ne esili lema i nubapa.
Lajim parateni father regent Labong nuaada pelilisonani,
Asauu notalkii notalkii pu nuada no ito maii.
Lemaii Kapala nu tanki parente ni papa regent bitch sehuyulang,
Nebali Bali, father of sub-district head of sub-district no. Asayani podukung,
Kapala Mami Rayat no Asayani.



Figure 22. Momasoro Traditional Atmosphere at Night

Next, offerings are brought to the river's mouth, where the boat carrying these items will be set adrift. The offerings and agricultural products delivered are as follows: Ketupat (traditional rice cakes) placed in the boat, yellow sticky rice and white sticky rice, chicken eggs, and sugarcane, bananas, tubers, and other agricultural produce

- 6) Sixth Stage: After completing the earlier stages, the Momasoro tradition concludes with the final stage: releasing the boat into the sea. Before the boat is released, it is first filled with all the offerings and agricultural products. Once prepared, the traditional boat is set adrift in the sea as part of the closing ritual.



Figure 23. Process of Filling Offerings and Agricultural Products

Next, the release of the boat is conducted on the shore of Ogoansam Village. Before the boat is released, a traditional ancestral dance of the Lauje tribe is performed, with participants circling the boat as an expression of gratitude to the water master (Togu Ogo). During this ritual, the Olongiyan (traditional leader) recites the following incantation:

Incantation

Mohule liame ansi li siyopate alata ala,
Mohule liame ansi kangkai diseaseonye,
u pomongi sau siyoputo alata ala,
Be eni liame selamat,
Nya no popomoyang kangkai umomame.

Meaning

“We are weak servants and fear Allah.
In addition, we also fear the diseases that Allah has sent us.
We ask Allah to grant health
and place us on the path of goodness.”



Figure 24. Dance Around the Boat

After completing the dance around the boat, the traditional leader instructs the community to prepare for the final step—releasing the boat, now filled with offerings, into the sea.



Figure 25. Release of the Traditional Momasoro Boat

After the traditional boat carrying agricultural products is set adrift, the ceremony continues with the recitation of a prayer to ward off evil and protect the Lauje tribe from disease outbreaks. This prayer is delivered by the traditional leader of Ogoansam Village. The recitation of the prayer marks the conclusion of the Momasoro tradition.



Figure 26. Prayer Recitation

From the series of events in the Momasoro tradition, the author concludes that it serves as a medium for the Lauje community to express gratitude to the Creator for the blessings of their harvest.

3.2. Symbolic Meaning of the Momasoro Tradition

Based on the research findings, the tools and materials used in the Momasoro tradition carry symbolic meanings that are deeply significant to the Lauje ethnic community. These symbols can be interpreted as follows:

The Meaning of the Boat Symbol

The boat is the most crucial element in carrying out the Momasoro tradition. It is crafted in a small size so it can be easily carried by water currents. The boat symbolizes a vessel for offerings and agricultural products. The Lauje people believe it guides the community of Ogoansam Village toward prosperity and peace. Thus, the act of releasing the boat represents hope for the Lauje people, as its journey down the river symbolizes the removal of natural disasters and the spread of disease, carried away by the current.

The Meaning of the Offering Symbol

Offerings are symbolic gifts to ancestral spirits, gods, or unseen entities. Their purpose is to maintain harmony by ensuring that these entities do not interfere beyond human capability (Hanifah et al., 2019). The offerings placed on traditional boats symbolize respect and gratitude to the rulers of water and land, emphasizing the community's dependence on rivers and land for their livelihood (Chu & Karr, 2016). In the Momasoro tradition, specific foods are always prepared as they are essential components of the ritual. These foods hold symbolic significance and are consistently included whenever the tradition is performed. The offerings and other complementary items required for the Momasoro tradition include the following:

- 1) Ketupat is a dish made from rice wrapped in woven young coconut leaves. It symbolizes interconnectedness and mutual support among people.
- 2) Yellow sticky rice topped with eggs symbolizes a king surrounded by his loyal subjects.
- 3) Sticky rice is one of the most essential components of the Momasoro tradition. Two types of sticky rice are used: yellow sticky rice and white sticky rice. White sticky rice symbolizes the origin of human creation, while yellow sticky rice represents the element of wind. Together, these types of sticky rice serve as offerings to the rulers of the land and wind. Additionally, the community believes that sticky rice acts as a protective medium against disease outbreaks.
- 4) Bowknot cake (Cucur Cake) is a traditional delicacy from Sulawesi, made from a mixture of rice flour and brown sugar, then fried. In the Momasoro tradition, the bowknot cake is prepared in a flat, round shape, symbolizing sweetness and the hope that every effort will yield sweet and fruitful results.

The Meaning of Drum and Gong Symbols

In the momasoro tradition, drums and gongs play a crucial role as they accompany the dancers. These instruments are symbolic tools for summoning spirits.

The Meaning of the Big Knife Symbol

The large knife, or machete, used in the momasoro tradition symbolizes the protection of the community during their work.

The Meaning of Spell Symbols

The mantras chanted in the Lauje language are cultural expressions that reflect the character and identity of the Lauje people when invoking Allah. Additionally, these mantras serve as a representation of the Lauje tribe's heritage and are believed to have the power to summon spirits. Complementary materials and tools also play a significant

role in the momasoro tradition. These include areca nut and betel and yellow rice, white rice, roasted rice, and coins. Areca nut and betel are complementary materials used by dancers before and after performing. It serves as part of the ritual offering. These ingredients are used as complementary offerings in the momasoro tradition to pray for the community's safety and well-being.

The Meaning of the White Chicken Symbol

In the momasoro tradition, the white chicken placed in the boat symbolizes the spirits that inhabit it.

3. Conclusion

The momasoro tradition procession in Ogoansam Village consists of seven stages, including preparation and implementation. The implementation stage comprises six key steps: sprinkling white and yellow rice on the boat, dancing around the boat, playing musical instruments, singing Mogumbui poetry, reciting rhymes in the regional language of the Lauje tribe, and finally releasing the boat onto the beach. Each stage is performed systematically, culminating in the boat being carried away by the sea. The Momasoro tradition holds deep symbolic meanings for the Lauje tribe, reflecting their gratitude to the Creator and their hope for protection. For example, the act of releasing the boat into the sea symbolizes the wish that natural disasters and disease outbreaks will be swept away by the current. This research identifies ten key symbolic elements in the Momasoro tradition: boats, offerings, ketupat (rice cakes), chicken eggs, sticky rice, cucur cakes, drums and gongs, large knives, mantras, and white chickens. Each symbol carries unique cultural and spiritual significance.

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