
DIGITAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Maintaining Traditional Cultural Communication in Digital Media *(Study on the Maintenance of the Sorong Serah Aji Krama Tradition on Community Social Interaction in Bayan, North Lombok)*

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Abstract

Sorong serah aji krama tradition is one of the wedding ceremonies series by the Sasak tribe that has been preserved to this day. This tradition is a form of traditional cultural expression of society represented through symbols on the means used that can influence the social interaction of the societies in Bayan in daily life, given that the symbols in the tradition are closely linked with how humans should act in society. Therefore, the issue discussed in this research is: (1) how does the process of *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan. (2) how is the symbolic interaction in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan? (3) What are the implications of symbolic interaction in *the Sorong serah* tradition over the social interaction of the societies in Bayan? This research object is a tradition of *solid serah aji krama* in Bayan, north Lombok, that will be researched using qualitative descriptive methods through observations, interviews, and documentation techniques of data collection. This research tries to find the symbolic form of interaction and the implication of symbolic interaction to the social interaction of society by using the symbolic interaction theory. The conclusion is this tradition begins with *memulang, sejati selabar, tekang pengeraos, sorong serah aji krama*, and ends with *tekang pengeraos*. Symbols that appear consist of *gegawan*, language, and behavior. The whole aspect of the symbol in the traditions relating to the godhead, nature, and social relations implicates the social interaction of indigenous societies.

Keywords: Sorong Serah Aji krama, Symbolic Interaction, Social Interaction, Digital Media

Introduction

The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition is one of a series of traditional wedding ceremonies for the Sasak people, which are still maintained today. This tradition lasts quite a long time and is complex, involving male and female family members, traditional leaders, and the community around the event location. The Sasak people believe this ritual is classified as sacred because it is used as a benchmark for whether or not a marriage is legal in the eyes of custom. A person will be recognized as part of the

Sasak community if he has carried out this tradition to obtain his rights and obligations as a relative or a community member.

The existence of this tradition is indeed inseparable from the belief of the Sasak people in the heritage of their ancestors. The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition can still be found in several areas on Lombok Island, one of which is in Bayan District, North Lombok. Therefore, this tradition is not only a traditional wedding ceremony but also an effort by the Sasak people to overcome cultural degradation that continues to occur with the changes and developments of the times.

The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition is a form of traditional cultural expression of the community, which is represented through symbols on the means used. In addition, the process of exchanging symbols in the form of language also occurs between traditional leaders who play a role in this tradition. Traditional cultural expressions allow indigenous peoples to show local wisdom, life values, and knowledge passed on to future generations through various forms, just like this tradition, as it is known that local wisdom is a reflection of the identity of local indigenous peoples, which is part of communication practices. Local wisdom also cannot be separated from an area or community group because it is binding and is a cultural activity (Rasyid & Prihantoro, 2021).

This research also follows previous research conducted by Muskita & Domingus (2022), titled Marinyo's Role in Negeri Hutumuri Ambon City. This study explains that culture is the result of human creativity and part of the social life of indigenous peoples. In Negeri Hutumuri, the indigenous people still hold "Pata Shiva," an essential part of their life cycle. One that is still being found is Marinyo, or an individual assigned by the King to provide information to the public from door to door without using a smartphone or digitalization device of the sort.

Theoretical Framework

The use of symbols in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition is a way for the Sasak people to communicate by agreeing on the use and meaning of these symbols beforehand. The communication process in this phenomenon presupposes that the *sorong serah* tradition is not just a wedding procession. However, it has an assertive cultural communication feel. Every individual treatment and means of tradition is a symbol that has the potential to produce a message that will affect the process of interpreting the meaning of each individual involved.

Communication that occurs in this traditional culture is in line with the theory of symbolic interaction put forward by Ahmadi (2008), which refers to the characteristics of human interaction in which humans interpret and define their actions, both when interacting with others and with themselves. The interaction process involves using symbols in language, customary provisions, religion, and views.

Interactions throughout the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition can lead to specific behaviors that later form symbolic social interactions between the Sasak people, especially in Bayan District. Based on observations and interviews with several figures, the Bayan community is dominated by adherents of the Sasak tribe who still carry out their ancestral traditions, including *sorong serah aji krama*, to this day. The phenomenon of cultural communication in the form of symbolic interaction that occurs in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition can influence the social interaction of the people in Bayan District in their daily life, considering that the symbols contained in the tradition are very thick on how humans should behave in society. This research is expected to contribute in the form of social interaction guidelines for the Sasak community and society in general. It can be used as material for socializing the meaning of the values of the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition to a broad audience.

Material and Methodology

The method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative method. The data were obtained using observation, interview, and documentation techniques for the research subject, namely the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan District, North Lombok. Sources of data in this study consisted of primary and secondary data sources. The primary data comes from observations of researchers in the field and results of interviews with several traditional leaders in the Bayan District, which are determined based on purposive sampling or samples that are adjusted to the research objectives and provide the required information. Meanwhile, secondary data contains additional data derived from the documentation results. The findings will then be analyzed using interactive model data analysis techniques. This interactive model data analysis includes three parts, namely: (1) data reduction, (2)

data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions or verification. Data reduction is done by focusing on things considered necessary in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan. The presentation of data begins with a description of the results of interviews with informants concerned or involved in the tradition supported by the results of observation and documentation. Furthermore, the conclusions in this study are adjusted to the formulation of the problems that have been designed. Therefore, there are several main things that will emerge in the conclusion, namely the process, the form of symbolic interaction and its meaning in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition, and the implications for social interaction of the community in Bayan District, North Lombok.

Result and Discussion

The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition can be understood as handing over traditional tools and fines that the woman for the man determined. According to the informants, the history of this tradition was passed down orally by the ancestors from generation to generation. Furthermore, Safwan et al. (2013) stated that the beginning of the traditional Bayan marriage tradition was the procession of going home, a shortcut that violated custom. Therefore, the consequence received by the couple is in the form of a fine that must be paid. The fine will later be included in the *aji krama* handed over by the man to the woman during the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition. Therefore, the researcher assumes that the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition originates from the returning marriage system, which violates customary provisions because the male party is punished in the form of a customary fine called *bayah dedosan*.

The Process of the Sorong serah aji krama Tradition in Bayan

From the results of interviews with several informants, it can be explained that the traditional Bayan marriage begins with the process of returning, in which a man brings the woman's party at a predetermined time according to the calendar of auspicious days (adults). Before this process, the two parties agree to continue the relationship to a higher stage, namely, getting married. Safwan et al. (2013) mentioned that in the process of returning home, the man would take the woman to *Bale Penyeboq'an*, which means a house to hide at night.

If going home has been carried out, the next stage is *benar-sebar* which is interpreted as the process of giving news that the process of going home has taken place. The news will first be conveyed to the male defender, who will then convey a message to the female defender. Furthermore, when both families have received the news, approximately three days after returning home, the women will begin to prepare to hold a *pengeraos* pressure or deliberation to discuss the continuation of the traditional marriage and the *aji krama* that will be given to the men. According to Safwan et al. (2013), *aji krama* is the traditional value of a community which is expressed in the form of a *keeping* perforated or a number of objects that must be handed over by the man to the woman. The number of *aji krama* varies in each region in Bayan and is also determined by the social strata of the prospective partner who will carry out the traditional marriage. The Bayan people are divided into two social strata, namely the aristocrats and the non-aristocrats, in which the descendants of the nobility in Bayan usually have the title of *raden*. Meanwhile, the non-noble people are traditional officials, *toaq locals*, and their descendants.

At the *pengeraos* pressure, the women will invite traditional officials in their area, sometimes heirs or heirs, and the surrounding community to negotiate what will later be included in the *aji krama* list. After the value of *aji krama* has been decided, the female defender will notify the male party and question the ability and time to deliver *aji krama*. If the male party has agreed upon the *aji krama*, it is continued with the *sorong serah aji krama* procession.

The *Sorong serah aji krama* procession will be carried out according to the time agreed by both parties. The male family, led by the *Bayyun*, brings a getaway or complete *aji krama* to the residence of the female family. Meanwhile, the woman's family, along with traditional officials, sometimes heirs, and the community, have prepared to welcome the arrival of the men. One by one, the *gegawan* is brought by the men to form a line and is accompanied by traditional Sasak music. The Bayan people usually refer to this procession as shoving.

When arriving at the women's yard, the babysitter will ask permission from the women to enter the yard. After that, the complete *aji krama* will be submitted and checked first by the woman to ensure that the man has complied with the list of *aji krama* that was previously agreed upon. When the *aji*

krama is complete, the *pet-keeping* procession is carried out, namely the breaking of the rope that binds the *keeping* perforated to the ulun deposit. The *peat-keeping* procession is a sign that the shove of *aji krama* has ended.

Based on the results of researchers' observations of the implementation of the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan, differences were found with the results of interviews with informants where this tradition is sometimes not carried out in its entirety or instead is flexible according to conditions (determination of auspicious days and does not coincide with other significant traditions) and the economic capacity of the implementers of the tradition. The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan can be divided into several small processions at different times if it is not possible to carry them out at the same time. The small procession separates the time for several traditional wedding processions, such as the *young* tradition, which is carried out every time *aji krama* is handed over. Therefore, the man is given the opportunity to repay the *aji krama* until it is finally fulfilled according to the initial agreement with the woman. The activity of repaying *aji krama* can be done at any time as long as the man pays it off.

As described above, one of the factors for this occurrence is inadequate economic conditions. The high cost of carrying out the traditional Bayan wedding procession is sometimes an obstacle for the community. Therefore, families with middle to upper-economic conditions usually hold complex and continuous traditional marriage processions. In addition, this tradition is sometimes coupled with the *Tampa wiring* tradition, namely the handover of a cow or buffalo to the woman, which is then processed and enjoyed together after the traditional wedding procession. In this procession, the community originating from the women's side will be divided into several parts and led by the family members described above.

The form of symbolic interaction that occurs in the Sorong serah aji krama Tradition in Bayan

The symbols that appear in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition are included in the category of cultural symbols because they are motivated by the culture of the Sasak tribe in Bayan. Cultural communication in this study views communication as a medium for conveying the meaning of symbols in traditional community activities and for understanding their influence on social interaction. The most distinctive forms of this cultural communication are symbols, language, social actions, and practices within traditions.

Based on the results of the interviews, the researcher found that the symbols used in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition can be categorized into three types, namely based on *gegawan* or the completeness of *aji krama*, language, and actions where the relationship between the symbols in the tradition and the reference to the symbol itself has a strong association. close enough. The three kinds of symbols will be described as follows.

1. *Gegawan* or complete of *aji krama*

Gegawan or complete *aji krama* includes all kinds of goods handed over to the woman. Complete *aji krama* which has an important role is *rombong dedosan* or also called *ulun dedosan*. *Ulung dedosan* consists of objects required in every *sorong serah aji krama* tradition. Therefore, one of the objects of this tradition is referred to as the "head" of all objects to be handed over. In addition, *upon deposit* represents a form of acknowledgment and atonement from the man for the mistakes he made while dating until the return procession is carried out. *Ulung deposit* consists of several parts: *keeping* perforated as many as 244 pieces, white thread, *lekoq* back, petal or white cloth, *ancak*, and rice.

Kepeng perforated or perforated money in the Bayan community has a reasonably high rupiah exchange rate and is one of the assets that everyone must own because it will always be used in traditional traditions, including in traditional marriages. The number of *keeping* perforated as many as 244 is a definite number that cannot be changed in any form. The value of 244 has various interpretations of meaning from informants, including the minor 244 chips covering the maximum amount that the Bayan community can fulfill according to history passed down by the Bayan elders by considering the limits of the community's ability in general. In addition, if observed numerically, 44 out of 244 are allegedly related to the number of traditional officials who have responsibility for implementing *game alif*. A total of 44 traditional officials with different tasks are included in the *keeping* perforated symbol as a form of respect for indigenous peoples towards their leaders.

The repertoire of meanings for the number 4 in the 244 number of *keeping* perforated is also expanding by adopting the number of cardinal directions, namely north, south, east, and west. The

number 4 also represents the four essential elements of the universe and humans: earth, water, fire, and air. This interpretation shows that the 244 *kepeng* bolong used in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition go back to respect for the Bayan people towards God and self-reflection. In practice, the number of *keeping* perforated handed over by the men to the women adjusts the results of the grinding pressure. However, the *keeping* perforated number of 244 pieces remains a mandatory symbol that must be fulfilled.

The *keeping* perforated in *ulun deposit* is tied with white thread, which symbolizes a bond between the child and his parents along with social boundaries in the community. The bond is stated to have been severed during the *peat-keeping* procession, where the *keeping* perforated will be separated from the white thread with the kyai penghulu as a witness.

The breaking of the bond shows that the man and woman have been freed from parental responsibilities as well as the social rules in society that previously applied when they were dating so that they are now allowed to make their own decisions as husband and wife to carry out joint activities if related with the number 4 in the number of *keeping* perforated which was previously interpreted as the elements that make up the universe and humans. In addition, white threads are likened to veins that we can find in the bodies of living things, including humans, so a connection can be found between *keeping* perforated and white threads.

Facilities that are also included in the *run deposit* are *lekoq back*. *Lekoq back* comes from the Sasak language, where *lekoq* means betel nut while *back* means areca nut. The use of betel and areca nuts in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition functions as an intermediary for conveying prayers to God so that the relationship between the two partners is blessed and always lasting, as well as witness the implementation of the tradition. In addition, there are two *pancakes*. The *pancake* is made of 12 bamboo slats arranged in such a way as to form 9 holes. The two *pancakes*, composed of 24 bamboo blades, symbolize the 24-hour rotation of time in a day. Meanwhile, the nine holes in the *ancak* symbolize the nine holes in the human body, which are called *leang-leang swag*. The nine holes include two eye holes, two nostrils, two ear holes, a mouth, a genital opening, and an anal opening.

The white cloth is also part of the *ulun deposit*. White cloth, in general, is often interpreted as something that is holy and sacred. Likewise, the use of white cloth in this tradition symbolizes the purity and purity of the hearts of both partners. Furthermore, the spear, according to some informants, symbolizes a man's protection and hard work for a woman. The last ingredient in *Ulun deposit* is trombone rice, a symbol of a man's responsibility to fulfill his family's needs.

2. Language

The Sasak language has various languages and dialects in each region on the island of Lombok, one of which is based on the flexible nature of the language. The Sasak people have a story or proverb about language, namely "Another *gerupuk*, another taste. Another hut, another language" which means that every village in Lombok has its own language characteristics, both in terms of accent and dialect. Likewise, the Bayan people use the typical Bayan Sasak language. In the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition, there are two languages that are often used in its implementation, namely Old Javanese or Kawi and Sasak Bayan.

According to Zuhdi (2012), there are some cultural similarities, such as language and writing, between Java, Bali, and Lombok. The language referred to in this case is the message conveyed by the guardian as guardian from the male side to the female while handing over *the gegawan* in Sorong serah *aji krama*. Several informants stated that the language used during this process differed in each region but had the same meaning. According to Remadi (Interview Results, 19 May 2022), one of the tutors from Suka Dana Village said that the language he used when singing was a blend of Kawi, Balinese, and Sasak languages. The use of this language is in accordance with the concept that there is acculturation between Javanese, Balinese, and Lombok cultures in the culture that lives in the Sasak community, especially in Bayan. Although the language is challenging to learn now, only some speakers use it. In addition, the language used by the Bayan Bayan is Sasak Bayan. In simple terms, the text of the greeting can be divided into several parts, namely: (1) Greetings, (2) Readiness for the presence of an application for permission to enter the yard, (3) Apologies if there are things that are not pleasing, (4) Conveying the purpose of the visit, (5) Checking manners, (6) Inviting all invitees to occupy the sequence.

3. Behavior

In the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan, symbols also appear in the behavior of the people involved in the tradition. Some of them are the spontaneous responses of each individual in capturing particular messages that existed during the tradition. This response is formed by itself because this tradition has become a culture continuously carried out in Bayan. The behavioral response shown by the Bayan people when carrying out the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition holds a philosophical meaning which ultimately leads to religious and social values. These behaviors include forming a line during the wrong procession. Unlike the procession in general, the shape of the line for the Bayan people in various traditions usually forms a straight line backward. In the *wrong* procession, all male family members will line up according to the order of their respective duties and functions. The *Bayyun* fills the leading position, followed by other traditional officials, the groom, and continued by the community, whose job is carrying the complete *aji krama*.

For women who take part in the *wrong* procession, they will carry *gegawan* in a *suwun* way or by placing their luggage on their heads. *Suwun* symbolizes the wholeness of a woman who always remembers "the one above," namely God. The sun position is also identified with the shape of the number 1, which has the same meaning as Lombok or straight, which means that women will always obey and be loyal to their husbands and parents. Meanwhile, the men who participate in this procession usually carry their belongings by *tegen* or *melembah*, carrying them on their shoulders. It symbolizes the duty of men as bearers of household burdens. *Tegen* in men is also interpreted as a male character that can still be shaken if one cannot control himself against worldly temptations.

The implications of symbolic interaction in the Sorong serah aji krama Tradition for the social interaction of the people in Bayan

The symbols contained in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition give specific experiences to the individuals involved. Each of them will be a process of interpreting the meaning of the symbols received. Each of these individuals will then intersect in society through social interaction so that, in the end, it produces or perfects the meaning of the tradition itself. Based on the results of observations, the researchers found that the intensity of social interaction among the Bayan people was still very high every day, especially when there was tradition. Therefore, the influence of symbolic interaction on the social interaction of the people in Bayan is likely to occur.

According to the explanation from the informant, the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition has various influences on social interaction in society. Moreover, this tradition involves the community in its implementation. The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan becomes a *game* hut or village event for community members in a region who will perform traditional marriages. Therefore, if the *bekel* has announced that there has been a procession to go home, the community will automatically translate the message as an invitation to participate in preparing all the traditional needs.

One form of associative process seen in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan is cooperation. Cooperation is a joint effort between individuals or groups to achieve common goals. This process occurs when individuals or groups realize they have the same interests. This process gave rise to joint activities among indigenous peoples. The forms of cooperation that occur in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition are cooperation and bargaining. In the *wrong* procession, the men will bring raw materials, such as food ingredients such as rice, traditional snacks, coconut, bananas, and cows or buffalo. These raw materials are included in *gegawan*, which the women will process as a shared dish.

The *Sorong serah aji krama* tradition can create social interaction on a small and large scale. Small-scale social interaction refers to the purpose of the traditional marriage tradition, which is to unite two families. If the two partners come from different family tree backgrounds, then the social interaction will bind the relationship between the two families. The same applies to traditional marriages for couples with adjacent family tree backgrounds. In addition to binding family relationships, this relationship can also strengthen the kinship of the two partners. The large-scale social interaction in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition can also bind the relations between the two communities from different regions or strengthen the kinship relations of the people from the same area.

The traditional Bayan marriage tradition is a medium for publicizing the status of the man and the woman to the general public as partners recognized by tradition. Social status is often used as material for community judgment based on the size of the event, the number of people involved, and the completeness of the rituals brought. Social status is also related to improving the quality of life of partners and families carrying out this tradition.

Changes and developments have also touched the Bayan people. Based on observations and interviews with researchers, many community members need to learn or understand the use and meanings of symbols contained in the traditional Bayan marriage tradition, including *sorong serah aji krama*. The people who adhere to the culture in Bayan still carry out the tradition. However, the maintenance of tradition is not accompanied by understanding the meaning of symbols from tradition. Therefore, many indigenous peoples only participate in carrying out the tradition without knowing the meaning or essence of the tradition. This problem occurs not only in the Bayan indigenous people but also in other indigenous peoples in Indonesia. Then, a question arises: "Why do the Bayan people still carry out the tradition, especially *Sorong serah aji krama*, while many of them do not know the meaning of the symbols in the tradition?"

Based on observations made by researchers, the symbols in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition have been simplified due to their dynamic nature so that three main symbols have been constructed in the Bayan community, which have become the basis for carrying out the tradition so that *sorong serah aji krama* is still being carried out today, namely:

1. Seeing the tradition of *Sorong serah aji krama* as an ancestral heritage
2. Compliance with applicable customary laws
3. Traditional officials as symbols of traditional community leaders

Strong belief in ancestors who pass down all traditions in Bayan causes people to be reluctant to abandon traditions because they are believed to cause calamities and taboos or *pemlik*. In addition, the system of reciprocation that applies between communities indirectly commits to helping each other every time one of the indigenous peoples holds a *game* or event. Because every tradition involves all levels of society, it is seen as a medium of hospitality to hold social interactions.

Based on the results of an interview with Raden Sawinggih (14 June 2022), the Bayan people believe that customary law is equivalent to positive law. So, these two laws must be addressed. Customary law also regulates the implementation of the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition by classifying it into three types.

1. *Aji krama*, consisting of *gegawan*.
2. *Aji aran*, consisting of fines imposed for violating community norms for both spouses, fines that must be paid if the woman marries before her brother or older brother (*pelengkaq*), and other additional fines according to customary law in certain areas (*Asuka*).
3. *Aji hut* is a form of respect for the man to the people in the neighborhood where the woman lives.

Bayan customary law binds the community through forms of value that must be paid by a man when carrying out the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition. It is an obligation that must be completed so indigenous peoples can accept both partners. If they do not follow the traditional marriage tradition, they cannot follow other traditions and get recognition from the indigenous people.

Some traditional officials regulate and direct the prevailing customary system in the Bayan customary community. One is in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition; traditional officials act as leaders and witnesses. Meanwhile, the community acts as part of the tradition. Traditional officials are believed to be elected people who are believed to have the ability to guide the community in achieving the goals of an ancestral tradition according to their respective duties to carry out this tradition jointly.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research that has been described in the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the traditional Bayan marriage begins with the procession of returning, followed by the procession of *Sebar*, which is carried out by the *bekel* from the man to the woman. Next, a procession of *pengeraos* will be carried out to determine the *aji krama*, which the man will hand over at the time of shoving the handover of *aji krama*. If *gegawan* has been declared complete, the next procession is *begat keeping* as a marker of the end of the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition. Symbolic interaction in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan uses symbols on *gegawan* or the completeness of *aji krama*, language, and behavior. The meaning of symbols in the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition is closely related to divine and natural relations and social relations. The main symbols that form the basis for carrying out the *sorong serah aji krama* tradition in Bayan today are viewing traditions as ancestral heritage, obedience to apply customary law, and traditional officials as symbols of traditional community leaders. This has implications for the social interaction of the Bayan community in the form of cooperation, the exchange of goods or services between communities, the union of two families and

communities, strengthening kinship ties, and changes in the social status of both families who carry out the tradition.

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