



The Relevance of Geography Education in the Pamali Manggodo Ritual within Traditional Agricultural Practices of the Indigenous Sambori Community Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the function of the traditional *Pamali Manggodo* ritual in the agricultural activities of the Indigenous Sambori Community in the context of geography education. The method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collected through field observations, open and semi-structured interviews with key and supporting informants. The data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively. The results indicate that the function of the *Pamali Manggodo* ritual is to prevent the threat of disease or pest disturbances in the agricultural activities of the Sambori people. Community belief is reflected in interactions through prayers and chants that convey a reciprocal relationship between the community and the surrounding occult forces. This relationship has implications for harmony with nature; by maintaining it, they feel protected from disasters that may threaten their safety and environment. Based on this, it can be concluded that the ritual acts as a traditional system of action that serves a social function for the Sambori Indigenous Community, helping ensure their survival.

KEYWORDS : traditional ceremony, *Pamali Manggodo* ritual, traditional agriculture, community.



INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, communities engage in a variety of farming activities, often accompanied by customs and traditional rules that are practiced in specific ways. Traditional ceremonies and special rituals play an important role in agricultural traditions, often embedding elements of belief systems. In this context, religion or belief systems manifest in the community's economic activities—or in Eriksen's terms, these religious or belief expressions appear publicly through farming rituals or ceremonies.

Traditional ceremonies not only reflect certain aspects of community life, such as economic intentions, but also encompass various dimensions of social life—social, economic, political, religious, and more. For example, among the Dayak people in Kalimantan, numerous and diverse traditional ceremonies accompany significant life events. Particularly in farming or swidden agriculture, each sub-ethnic group has its own ceremonies and rituals. These rituals, passed down from generation to generation, are deeply infused with belief in the mystical world. In the tradition of land clearing, some Dayak communities even recognize various types of spirits or supernatural beings inhabiting the forest, differing based on the land's characteristics. To gain permission for farming activities, rituals must be conducted and offerings prepared (Kusmiran, 2002).

Similar to the Dayak, the people of Bali also perform many ceremonies closely related to agriculture, one of which is the **Nangluk Merana Ceremony**. This ceremony is intended to prevent various threats or disturbances to farmland or plantations, such as birds, monkeys, bees, rats, rice bugs, wilted young coconut leaves, and other pests. The core of the ceremony is a prayer to God to maintain the balance of nature. Ancient texts describe **Nangluk Merana** as a *niskala* (metaphysical) way to combat pests that attack the crops of farmers.

Culture is not merely what people possess to meet their basic needs. The dynamics of community life generate various forms of action, often unconsciously. It is within these actions that the sustaining power of society resides. Parsons referred to culture as the main force binding various elements of the social world—what he called the **system of action** (Ritzer and Goodman, 2011). Traditional ceremonies and rituals are series of actions governed by specific rules based on customs, religion, and beliefs. A traditional ceremony is a hereditary ritual observed within a community, containing a range of practices with symbolic meaning. According to Wikipedia, "*a ceremony is an event of ritual significance, performed on a special occasion.*" Thus, a ceremony is a meaningful ritual enacted at certain moments. If we define religion as a system of understanding the supernatural and sacred, concerning life after death (with its clear political implications), then **ritual** is the series of social processes that give tangible form to that understanding. Generally speaking, rituals are public events bound by rules that thematize the relationship between the earthly and the spiritual realms (Eriksen, 2009:365).

Rituals are ceremonies connected to religious or spiritual beliefs, characterized by reverence and the sacred experience (O'Dea, 1995). These experiences involve everything created and used by



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International Conference on Social, Science, Technology
and Health

Scope:
✓ Social
✓ Science
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ISSN: 68XX-XX09

Website 
<https://journal.icossth-politeknikmfh.id/>

humans to express their connection to the transcendental realm. Such encounters are not ordinary, but special and exceptional, prompting humans to develop appropriate ways to enact these sacred interactions. Ritual ceremonies are therefore held at specific times and places, involving extraordinary acts and sacred objects. According to Koentjaraningrat (2000), elements involved in traditional ceremonies include: the place of the ceremony, the timing, the objects and tools used, and the people involved—particularly the leaders and knowledgeable elders of the ritual.

Durkheim defines religious phenomena as consisting of: (1) beliefs concerning a sacred and supernatural realm, and (2) rituals and ceremonies directed toward that realm (Turner & Maryanski, 2010:40). Within each human being, there exists a spiritual atmosphere that underlies religious activities. This spiritual atmosphere refers to religious emotion—a feeling most people have experienced at least once, even if only briefly. Such emotion causes certain objects, actions, or ideas to be perceived as sacred, setting them apart from other objects, actions, or ideas.

Every religious system within a culture always possesses characteristics aimed at preserving this religious emotion among its followers. Thus, religious emotion becomes an essential element of religion, alongside three other components: (a) a belief system, (b) a system of religious ceremonies, and (c) a community of believers (Koentjaraningrat, 2009:295).

Community beliefs may include spirits or animistic elements found in human surroundings. These spiritual beings, believed to live near human dwellings and invisible to the senses, are thought to possess supernatural powers beyond human capability. As a result, they hold an important place in daily life and become objects of veneration and worship, often accompanied by ceremonies such as prayers, offerings, or sacrifices (Koentjaraningrat, 2010:49).

Religious life cannot be separated from worldly life, where humans exist and act, especially when considering humans as economic beings with various needs. Therefore, religious or magical behavior and thinking are never entirely divorced from goal-directed conduct in daily life, particularly when economic motivations influence such actions (Weber, 2012:98).

Agriculture is an activity that is always associated with land and crops. At the very least, the general understanding of agriculture refers to the daily practice of cultivating the land—typically involving rice, corn, vegetables, legumes, and so on. However, agriculture also has a broader scientific definition that includes not only crop cultivation but also fisheries, animal husbandry, plantations, forestry, post-harvest processing, and marketing of agricultural products (Tohir, 1991:1). This broader understanding is the one used in this study.

Originally, human life was nomadic, relying solely on the direct resources provided by nature. Over time, this evolved into a more settled lifestyle. At this stage of development, communities began farming on the land around their dwellings. Shifting cultivation (or slash-and-burn agriculture) involved clearing a piece of land by cutting down shrubs and trees, then burning the dried branches and trunks. The cleared land was then planted with minimal tillage and without irrigation. After two or three harvests, the soil's fertility would be depleted, and the land abandoned. A new field would be cleared in the same way, and the process repeated. After 10



to 12 years, the community might return to the original field, which by then had been overtaken by forest again.

In Bima Regency, located in West Nusa Tenggara Province, a traditional ceremony deeply embedded in the local economy—specifically agriculture—is still practiced. This traditional ceremony is known as the Pamali Manggodo ritual, which marks a special event when the community is about to begin land clearing for farming.

Like other traditional ceremonies, Pamali Manggodo is based on long-standing beliefs and customs held by the people of Sambori Village. Each community has its own reasons for preserving the traditions handed down from their ancestors. Generally, these ceremonies serve specific functions that benefit the community—often meeting collective needs.

Based on the objectives of this study, the expected benefits are twofold: academic and practical. Academically, the results of this study are expected to provide insight and serve as a reference or comparative material for discussions on the relevance of geography education to traditional rituals—especially those linked to agricultural activities. This is particularly valuable for geography education students focusing on cultural and agricultural geography, with a special interest in traditional customs and rituals.

Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference or consideration in decision-making or development policies that may impact local beliefs, norms, customs, and culture.

This research investigates the “Function of the Pamali Manggodo Ceremony in the Traditional Agricultural Activities of the Indigenous Sambori Community of Indonesia.”

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Literally, descriptive research is intended to provide a depiction (description) of a situation or events. The qualitative research method is employed here as a method that emphasizes the process of understanding social and cultural phenomena within society, in accordance with the background and focus of the research on “*The Function of the Pamali Manggodo Ceremony in the Traditional Agricultural Activities of the Indigenous Sambori Community in Indonesia.*”

In qualitative research, the term “population” is not used; instead, Spradley refers to it as a “social situation,” which consists of three elements: place, actors, and activity—interacting synergistically. This social situation can be defined as the object of research, which aims to uncover what occurs within it.

This study uses two types of informants: key informants and regular informants. Key informants are individuals who can provide detailed and comprehensive information and possess extensive knowledge and understanding of the issues being studied. Regular informants, on the other hand, are individuals who can provide in-depth information about the research topic, though limited to certain aspects.

fields as well, along with their young children. During these times, women also gather firewood, pound rice, fetch drinking water, and carry out other tasks.

Women also play a role in the rice harvesting process. They cut the rice using sickles and separate the grain from the stalks before placing it in sacks. After finishing work, women usually prepare meals to be shared after work or during breaks. Some parts of the rice fields have natural springs used for cooking, drinking, and other needs.

During harvest, the rice cut with sickles is put into sacks. These sacks, still in the fields, must be carried one by one back home—typically by lifting them onto the shoulders or backs of the farmers. Nowadays, in some field areas, rice can be transported using vehicles due to the opening of access roads. However, these roads do not reach the fields directly, so the sacks must still be carried by hand through winding and uphill paths to the vehicles.

The Sambori community practices the principle of reciprocity, manifested in the traditions of *weha rima* (receiving help) and *mbei rima* (giving help), which mean accepting assistance and offering it in return. This tradition reflects the community's work ethic and spirit of togetherness in farming. When someone helps lighten their workload, they feel obligated to reciprocate. The repayment of such help does not have to happen on the same day, but can occur in the following days—sometimes after a family has completed its own harvest. This principle is not only applied in farming activities but also in other areas of life.

In the rice fields or farms, people build *salaja* (also called *berugak*), which are stilted structures with four or six poles and a roof shaped like a granary. These are built near the rice fields and serve as places for resting or sleeping, as well as for cooking and storing tools and food. Farmers often spend the night in the *salaja* to guard the fields from wild boars. Overnight stays in the *salaja* become more frequent during the harvest season.


A community member explained that the function of the traditional Pamali Manggodo ceremony has a positive and significant impact, especially in protecting rice from pests. This is particularly evident in the *sampuru* process, which is intended to repel pests. MM (40 years old) stated:

"indo wa"u ba sampuru fare ma bou doho aka, ngaha ba sampuru aka na mbora mpa si ma ndede doho re, de lo"i aka watisi na losa wa"u kako aka fare de watipu ngawana made ni, kone ede na loa mpa mai mbali. Nggara sampuru dekam de ti kone wara sisa na"

"Unlike the recent methods of spraying rice crops, when it's done through sampuru, the pests simply disappear. With chemical pesticides, if the larvae inside the rice plants aren't expelled, they won't die—and even then, the pests can still come back. But if sampuru is performed, there won't be any pests left at all—not even a trace." (Interview on 4th March 2018)

Sampuru is also performed when it is known that the planted rice is infested with caterpillars. This is carried out by the *pamali kari'i* (ritual leader) in the mountains using various herbal mixtures prepared from the beginning of the ceremony. The mixture consists of rice, *tawoa* (traditional herb), water, guava leaves, betel leaves, and coconut fruit.

"Ndawi lo'i de aka uma lengge aka wali mpa. Wunga sampuru ede da loa kai lampa rero tudu tolo reni. Warasi dou ma lu'u tolo aip kanta kain de bata kura."



"The medicine is prepared in a special place called uma lengge. During the sampuru process, people are strictly prohibited from visiting the rice fields. If this rule is violated, the ceremony is considered void and must be repeated." (Interview, April 20, 2018)

Putnam (in Field, 2005:45) claims that communities with strong social ties are more capable of managing their economy as a whole than communities lacking such connections. In other words, good social relationships within a community enhance work motivation and help tasks get completed more efficiently. These relationships allow people to help one another without jealousy or social arrogance, which might otherwise hinder mutual care.

It is evident that social relationships can ease or facilitate efforts to complete agricultural processes—from planting to harvesting—both in terms of production and distribution. The Sambori community, which consists predominantly of farmers, possesses adaptive capabilities shaped by their interaction with the environment to meet their basic needs. To achieve what they require for sustaining their livelihoods, the community forms structured patterns of action that institutionalize efforts to fulfill those needs. The *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony is one example that illustrates this reality. The agricultural system of the Sambori people would be incomplete without the *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony. Within this institutionalized structure of action, adaptation is formed as part of "economic work," specifically in agriculture.

The needs of individuals and groups within a society cannot be fulfilled without institutions that regulate relationships within the social system. The more frequently people interact within a society, the stronger their social solidarity becomes. These shared values are nurtured and expressed through the *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony. Certain aspects of life can only be experienced through shared participation, and there are events (such as public rituals) that become meaningless unless conducted collectively. Therefore, culture may be understood as a medium that enables two or more actors to understand each other (Eriksen, 2009:130).

This ceremony involves all levels of the Sambori community, fostering a deep and continuous mutual dependency. The continuity within the community is maintained through values instilled by families, who allow their children to participate in the *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony. Additionally, the community shares its knowledge about customary laws that must be upheld.

The *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony carries a social function that binds the community in unity. Several aspects of the ceremony clearly serve a social role for the Sambori people. One element that strongly reflects this social dimension is the *nggalo* process. *Nggalo* is a ritual in which the community collectively goes hunting in the forest for three consecutive days. It is also believed to be a form of pest control, referred to by the locals as *lao wa'a paki hama* (driving pests away). In a narrative shared by MM (40 years old), the *nggalo* process is remembered as a meaningful expression of togetherness among the Sambori people:

"Nggori ba pamali kari'i kalampa rawi na re, lao sama menara nggalo wa'a katupa labo lako ra sarente, de di nggalo kai maju. Raka si re de ngaha sama mena rani."

"After the pamali kari'i completes his duties, we go together on a nggalo hunt, bringing along rice cakes (ketupat), dogs, and iron hooks (sarente). Our usual game is deer, and the catch is cooked and eaten together." (Interview, March 9, 2018).



The community places the *Pamali Manggado* ceremony in a position of great importance for their livelihood. The potential vulnerabilities in their agricultural system make them fearful of disregarding the rules associated with the ceremony. This establishes a functional bond among the people, expressed in their obedience to customary laws, which also play a major role in fostering social integration.

The *Pamali Manggado* ceremony is rooted in belief systems and religion, both of which are key to establishing social solidarity. The general function of religion is believed to lie in its ability to foster solidarity, a sense of unity, and to legitimize differences in power (Eriksen, 2009:126).

The community's belief is reflected in occurrences where spiritual entities possess members of the community to deliver messages urging them to conduct the *Pamali Manggado* ceremony. This indicates a reciprocal relationship between the people and the supernatural realm around them. Such a relationship fosters harmony with nature. By maintaining this connection, they believe they are protected from various natural disasters that could threaten both the environment and their own safety.

The community's awareness of customary rules and taboos requiring them to perform the *Pamali Manggado* ritual ultimately strengthens their communal identity. Whether consciously or not, this tradition builds a collective awareness of their existence as a unified group—signifying that the traditional ceremony is inseparable from their cultural identity.

The community also understands that aside from pests, natural disasters pose threats to their agricultural activities. In the final stage of the *Pamali Manggado* ceremony, when the community descends for the first planting, there is a ritual aimed at self-protection from natural disasters such as lightning. SD (54 years old) shared the following:

"Katu"u de kamu acara aka ka, ti kone wara maina si karece ai doho ka. Pala watisi katu"umu, na wara ku maina karece ai ka. Bune ainare hina lalo na sabua dou ara ake made lalo kaina ba da katu"u mena acara ma ndede reni".

"If we perform the ceremony, there will be no lightning strikes. However, if it is not carried out, lightning will strike. Once, someone here was struck by lightning and died because the ceremony had not been performed." (Interview, March 10, 2018)

Based on the interviews with several informants above, it can be seen that aside from belief, another element embedded in the *Pamali Manggado* ceremony is art. This artistic element is evident in the chanting of *belaleha* verses. The *belaleha* chants carry a social function that cannot be overlooked. These communal songs, sung together by the people, evoke a profound spiritual and social atmosphere. The *Pamali Manggado* ceremony in Sambori holds deep meaning for the community, especially for the elders who have long experienced and felt the emotional resonance of the ritual. These feelings have grown from the real-life experiences and events they have encountered in relation to the ceremony, strengthening their faith and belief in its importance.

CONCLUSION

The *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony is a traditional ritual deeply embedded in the lives of the Sambori people, particularly in the domain of agriculture. It is a customary practice passed down through generations, becoming a tradition inherited from their ancestors. Within this ceremony, elements of the community's indigenous beliefs are still present, although they have undergone syncretism with Islamic beliefs that arrived later. The components of traditional ceremonies can be said to share commonalities across various communities. Many ritual practices tend to have religious dimensions. However, in reality, such religious elements are not necessarily the foundation for the continuation of a system. Belief systems in society cannot always be positioned as the basis of every pattern of action. Nevertheless, these patterns of action tend to have a relatively stronger influence when they are grounded in the community's belief system.

In the *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony, this belief system exists. The belief elements, which are manifested in the community's structured actions, are reflected in the ceremony itself. The patterns of action that arise within this traditional ritual contribute in ways that are often unrecognized by the community members themselves. The intensity of social relationships, sensitivity, solidarity, and pest control all serve as evidence that the *Pamali Manggodo* ceremony holds significant functional value for the Sambori people. Thus, it can be concluded that the *Pamali Manggodo* traditional ceremony exists because it is needed by the community. It fulfills essential functions for the continuation of life in Sambori. One of the most important roles of this ceremony is the preservation of social patterns. The structure of community actions, which leads to social stability and unity, is established as an institution capable of fulfilling the Sambori people's essential needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah SWT. We praise Him, seek His help, and ask for His forgiveness. He has perfected His religion and, with it, completed His blessings upon us, and is pleased with Islam as our way of life. May peace and blessings be upon our noble Prophet Muhammad SAW, as well as upon his family, companions, and all of his followers who remain steadfast until the Day of Judgment.

Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Alamin, with the help and strength granted by Allah SWT, this research article entitled "*The Relevance of Geography Education to the Function of the Pamali Manggodo Ceremony in the Traditional Agricultural Activities of the Indigenous Sambori Community in Indonesia*" has finally been completed.

The implementation of this research would not have been possible without the guidance and assistance of various individuals. On this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and respect to:

1. **Muhtar, M.Si**, Cultural Figure of Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, for his invaluable guidance and direction throughout the research process.



2. **Sutarto, M.Si**, Head of the Agricultural Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) in Lambitu Subdistrict, Bima Regency, for his thoughtful input, guidance, and support.
3. **H. Mansyur**, Traditional Leader (Head of the Mbojo Tribe), for sharing valuable information regarding the history of the Mbojo people of Bima.
4. All parties who have provided generous support and assistance in the completion of this research.

In writing and finalizing this research article, we are aware that there may still be shortcomings and limitations. Therefore, we hope that future revisions can bring further improvements. May the contents of this article be beneficial to the readers.

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ISSN: 68XX-XX09



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