

The History of the Mematua Customary Ceremony among the Kaili People in Palu City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the history, implementation process, and symbolic meaning of the Mematua customary ceremony among the Kaili people in Talise Urban Village, Palu City. The Mematua ceremony is a post-marital inauguration rite that has increasingly been simplified because of modernization and the multicultural character of urban society; therefore, it requires historical documentation to prevent the loss of its cultural values. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with customary leaders selected through purposive sampling, and document analysis. Data analysis followed the stages of data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The findings reveal three main points. First, historically, the Mematua tradition underwent a significant cultural transformation during the 1800s, alongside the introduction of Islamic teachings in the Palu Valley. Practices of animism and dynamism that had previously involved ritual offerings to ancestral spirits were transformed into activities based on the values of tawhid, namely, the recitation of prayers for safety and almsgiving. Second, the ceremony comprises several stages, including a preliminary stage (notification); a welcome at the main entrance involving stepping over an axe, a dull machete, special grass, and scattered yellow rice; the placement of a traditional bracelet (*Botiga*); a mutual feeding ritual (*Mepakoni*); an introduction to the kitchen area as spatial education; and a concluding prayer and sungkeman, a customary gesture of respect. Third, the symbolic meaning of this ceremony encompasses social integration through the introduction of the extended family and the strengthening of kinship ties; resilience and warding off misfortune; the full legitimacy and acceptance of the daughter-in-law by the husband's family; the expression of equal rights and obligations between husband and wife; and the affirmation of a long-term spiritual commitment to God.

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji sejarah, proses pelaksanaan, dan makna simbolis dari upacara adat Mematua pada masyarakat suku Kaili di Kelurahan Talise, Kota Palu. Upacara Mematua merupakan ritual pengukuhan pascamenikah yang kian mengalami penyederhanaan akibat modernisasi dan karakter multikultural masyarakat perkotaan. Oleh karena itu, ritual ini memerlukan dokumentasi historis untuk mencegah hilangnya nilai-nilai budaya yang terkandung di dalamnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam bersama para tokoh adat yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling*, serta analisis dokumen. Analisis data mengikuti tahapan pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan tiga poin utama: **Secara historis**, tradisi Mematua mengalami transformasi budaya yang signifikan pada era 1800-an seiring masuknya ajaran Islam di Lembah Palu. Praktik animisme dan dinamisme yang sebelumnya melibatkan sesajen ritual kepada roh leluhur diubah menjadi kegiatan berbasis nilai-nilai tauhid, yaitu pembacaan doa keselamatan dan bersedekah. **Tahapan upacara** terdiri dari beberapa fase, meliputi tahap persiapan (pemberitahuan); penyambutan di pintu masuk utama yang melibatkan proses melangkahi kapak, parang tumpul, rumput khusus, dan taburan beras kuning; pemasangan gelang adat (*Botiga*); ritual saling menyuapi (*Mepakoni*); pengenalan area dapur sebagai pendidikan spasial; serta diakhiri dengan doa penutup dan sungkeman. **Makna simbolis** dari upacara ini mencakup fungsinya sebagai integrasi sosial melalui pengenalan keluarga besar dan penguatan tali kekerabatan; simbol ketahanan diri dan penolak bala; legitimasi penuh serta penerimaan menantu perempuan oleh keluarga suami; wujud kesetaraan hak dan kewajiban antara suami dan istri; serta penegasan komitmen spiritual jangka panjang kepada Tuhan.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are social beings who continually require interaction and relationships with others. One form of social relationship that occupies an important position in community life is marriage. Marriage is not merely a bond between two individuals; it is also a social and cultural institution that connects two families and embodies values, norms, and traditions passed down from generation to generation. In Indonesia, ethnic diversity has given rise to various forms of customary marriage, each with its own distinctive characteristics and philosophical meanings. One such group is the Kaili community, one of the largest ethnic groups in Central Sulawesi, particularly in Palu City and its surrounding areas. The Kaili community has a customary system that governs various aspects of social life, including marriage. One important component of the Kaili customary marriage sequence is the *Mematua* ceremony. This ceremony constitutes an inauguration stage following earlier processes, such as *no-viata* (*courtship*) and *manta'a* (*proposal*). *Mematua* is understood as a procession of escorting or handing over the bride and groom as a sign that the couple has become husband and wife according to customary tradition. Its implementation involves customary leaders (Totua Nu Ada), as well as various customary implements and symbols with philosophical meanings.

Thus, *Mematua* is *not* merely ceremonial but also serves as a means of affirming familial relationships and transmitting customary values within the Kaili community. The *Mematua* ceremony faces challenges arising from the increasing modernization and multicultural development of Palu City. Because this tradition has largely been transmitted through intergenerational narratives and practices, some knowledge concerning the stages, implements, and symbolic meanings of *Mematua* may change, be simplified, or even be forgotten. These conditions indicate the importance of examining the history, continuity, and changes in the *Mematua* ceremony, particularly among the Kaili people in Talise Urban Village, Palu City. Previous studies indicate that customary marriage among various communities in Sulawesi and other regions has undergone changes involving both the preservation of tradition and adaptation to contemporary developments. For example, Siti Aisyah (2022) examined the history of the customary marriage tradition of the Bungku people and found that various stages and customary symbols continued to be maintained as ancestral heritage. Syuhada et al. (2019) showed that the Bugis community in Jambi City continued to uphold the values of customary marriage despite adapting to different social and cultural environments. Meanwhile, Irno et al. (2026) found a shift in the meaning of *uang panai* in Bugis marriage due to the influence of modernization. Ramadhani and Syahrir (2026) also showed that several elements of the *mapparola* tradition have begun to be simplified because of considerations related to time, cost, and changing lifestyles. These studies share a concern with the continuity and transformation of marriage traditions; however, this study focuses specifically on the history, continuity, and changes in the *Mematua* ceremony among the Kaili people in Talise Urban Village, Palu City. To analyze the development of the *Mematua* ceremony, this study uses the concept of continuity and sociocultural change developed by Sartono Kartodirdjo (1992). The concept of

continuity is used to examine elements of tradition, values, symbols, and ritual stages that have been preserved across generations. Conversely, the concept of change is used to understand shifts, modifications, and simplifications in traditions that have emerged as a result of changes in technology, lifestyles, demographic conditions, urbanization, and societal development. Through diachronic and synchronic approaches, this theory helps explain the relationship between the continuity of tradition and changes occurring in urban communities. In addition, this study uses the theory of symbolic meaning to understand the values embedded in the various elements of the *Mematua* ceremony. Symbols in culture are not merely objects or actions; rather, they are signs that convey particular messages and values. According to Budiono Herusatoto, symbols in customary ceremonies are used with awareness and appreciation and function as means of socializing and reinforcing both spiritual and social values. In customary marriage, various elements, such as attire, marriage gifts, musical instruments, and ritual movements, may carry meanings related to household life, responsibility, kinship relations, the division of roles between husband and wife, and prayers for safety. Therefore, the theory of symbolic meaning is used to reveal and understand the philosophical values embodied in each element of the *Mematua* ceremony. Based on the above discussion, the *Mematua* customary ceremony may be understood as an important component of the cultural identity of the Kaili community, with social, historical, and symbolic functions. This study examines the history and implementation of *Mematua*, the traditional elements that continue to be preserved, the forms of change that have occurred, the factors influencing these changes, and their symbolic meanings. This study is expected to provide an overview of the continuity of the *Mematua* tradition amid social change and modernization in the Palu City community, while also contributing to efforts to document and preserve Kaili cultural heritage.

2. Methods

Type of Study

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. A qualitative approach refers to a method grounded in postpositivist philosophy and conducted under natural conditions of the phenomenon under study, as opposed to experimental conditions. In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument, and data were collected through triangulation (combination), while data analysis was conducted inductively or qualitatively. Findings from qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2013).

Time and Research Location

The study was conducted in Talise Urban Village, Mantikulore District, Palu City, Central Sulawesi Province. The study was conducted over a four- to five-month period, from March 2026 to August 2026, to obtain and collect all data and information required by the author for the preparation of the research report.

Research Subjects

The research subjects in this qualitative study were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique for selecting data sources based on specific considerations and objectives, whereby researchers deliberately select informants considered the most knowledgeable and competent regarding the phenomenon under investigation. This technique was selected because not all residents of Talise Urban Village possessed an in-depth historical and cultural understanding of Kaili traditions, particularly the Mematua customary ceremony. The researchers selected customary leaders in Talise Urban Village as informants.

Types of Data

Primary Data

Primary data are obtained directly from original sources, such as through interviews, surveys, experiments, and other methods. Primary data sources are generally carefully selected and adapted to meet specific research needs or criteria. Primary data are typically collected directly from their original locations and are considered the highest-quality form of data in research. In this study, primary data were obtained through interviews directly from research participants, including married couples who participated in the customary ceremony and customary leaders in Talise Urban Village.

Secondary Data

Secondary data refer to previously available information collected by researchers and subsequently reused as supplementary information. Secondary data may include journals, articles, books, and other literature sources. In this study, secondary data were derived from the findings of previous research.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviews

According to Sugiyono (2023), an interview is a meeting in which two individuals exchange ideas and information through questions and answers, thereby generating meaning. Interviews are used as a data collection method when researchers seek to conduct a preliminary study to identify problems requiring investigation or to obtain more information about respondents. This data collection method largely relies on self-reports or, at a minimum, on personal knowledge and beliefs. Interviews facilitate the collection of accurate and in-depth data and enable researchers to clarify information directly with informants.

Observation

Observation is a method of data collection that involves directly observing participants and situations related to the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative observation may be conducted in natural settings or in settings specifically designed for research purposes. This method provides researchers with opportunities to observe social interactions, behaviors, and contexts related to the phenomenon being explored.

Documentation

Documentation involves collecting data from documents,

archives, or other written materials related to the research phenomenon. The documents used may include records, reports, letters, books, or other official documents. Document analysis provides insights into historical contexts, policies, events, and developments relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data Collection (Pengumpulan Data)

According to Sugiyono (2023), the principal task in every study is data collection. Data may be collected through various methods, such as observation, interviews, or documentation. Researchers may use the collected data to conduct more in-depth analyses of the information. However, researchers have the flexibility to adapt and modify data collection methods according to their needs so that the information produced is more complete and accurate. Subsequently, the collected data are analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the research object.

Data Reduction (Reduksi Data)

After data collection, the next stage was data reduction. Data reduction is an analytical process that requires sensitivity, as well as broad and in-depth insight. Rather than merely simplifying data, data reduction enables researchers to prioritize relevant information, remove unnecessary data, and organize data systematically. The results of this process facilitate thematic analysis and the presentation of findings, thereby enabling researchers to achieve a deeper understanding.

Data Display (Penyajian Data)

After the data reduction process was completed, the next step was data display. Data display at this stage of the research involved organizing and presenting the collected and summarized data in a structured manner that was easy to understand. Data may be displayed as narrative text or in other visual and thematic forms that assist researchers and readers in identifying patterns, relationships, and research findings.

Drawing Conclusions/Verification (Drawing Conclusions)

After the data were displayed, the next steps were drawing conclusions and verification. At this stage, the researchers interpreted the presented data, related the findings to the research questions, and ensured that the conclusions drawn were supported by the available evidence. Verification was conducted to ensure that the conclusions were consistent and credible so that the research findings could be considered trustworthy and reflective of the actual phenomenon.

3. DISCUSSION:

History of the Mematua Customary Ceremony

The Mematua ceremony constitutes the final stage in the series of customary marriage processions among the Kaili people. This ritual is marked by the bride's visit to the residence of the groom's parents. The visit serves as an expression of respect and filial devotion by the daughter-in-law toward her in-laws while also signifying that the woman has fully become part of her husband's family. The most fundamental procession in this ceremony is *motataka botiga ri pale*, namely, the placement of a Botiga (traditional bracelet) by the mother-in-law on her daughter-in-law's wrist. The placement of this bracelet symbolizes acceptance into the family and affirms that the daughter-in-law holds a status equal to that of a biological child. If the family's economic circumstances permit, the in-laws may also provide other gifts, such as jewelry or a parcel of land, as an expression of affection, although this is not an absolute requirement for conducting the ceremony. Given the importance and sacredness of marriage, the Mematua procession is generally conducted solemnly and festively, with customary leaders and religious figures in attendance. The presence of these community figures underscores that the Mematua customary ceremony is a cultural institution closely embedded in the marriage traditions of the Kaili community, particularly in Talise Urban Village, Palu City. The Kaili people are an ethnic group in Indonesia that has inhabited the Palu Valley, Parigi, Tomini Bay, and the coastal areas of Tojo, Ampana, and Poso for generations. The Kaili people, also known as To-Kaili, constitute the largest ethnic group in Central Sulawesi (45%). The dispersal of this group is associated with a customary tradition of the past, in which nobles spread their descendants to other regions through marriage or the *ada nasibolai* tradition (Raden, 2011). In the stages of marriage, the Kaili people view marriage as a process of entering a highly sacred life. Marriage is regarded as a process involving both physical and spiritual activities for the husband and wife. Accordingly, the marriage process is carried out through customary traditions. One customary tradition that continues to be preserved to this day is the Mematua customary tradition for the bride and groom. Regarding the history of its implementation, Dr. Ubay Harun, S.Ag., M.Si., an informant (interview on July 21, 2026, at 19:17 WITA), stated that there is no definitive record of the year in which this tradition began. Based on oral accounts passed down through generations, the Mematua ceremony has become deeply rooted alongside the formation of Kaili community civilization in Talise Urban Village. Historically, the procedures for conducting this ceremony underwent significant transformation during the 1800s, when Islamic teachings began to enter and develop in the Palu Valley through the religious propagator Dato Karama, whose arrival was subsequently followed by that of Habib Idrus bin Salim Al-Jufri. Before the introduction of Islamic teachings, the Mematua ritual remained strongly imbued with elements of animism and dynamism, such as the practice of presenting ritual offerings beneath trees to seek ancestral spirits' support for the smooth conduct of the event. However, as acculturation occurred between local culture and religious values, elements that conflicted with Sharia were gradually eliminated. The practice of presenting ritual offerings was transformed into the recitation of prayers for safety and almsgiving in the form of communal meals. This change was based solely on the value of *tawhid*,

namely, seeking blessings and safety for the household solely from Allah SWT. Ultimately, in addition to functioning as a religious ritual and a means of preserving customary tradition, Mematua is also important for the groom's family in introducing their daughter-in-law to their extended family.

Procession of the Mematua Customary Ceremony

The Mematua customary ceremony is generally conducted after the entire series of core marriage ceremonies has been completed. The time and place of its implementation are not rigidly prescribed but depend largely on deliberation and agreement between the families of both spouses. Based on an interview with Ms. Asni, the second informant in this study, the entire Mematua procession consists of several stages rich in philosophical meaning.

Chronologically, the stages of the Mematua customary ceremony may be outlined as follows:

Preparation and Notification Stage (Precondition)

Before the bride's family delegation arrives at the groom's residence, the procession begins with customary communication. The Totua Nu Ada (customary leader) from the bride's side formally notifies the groom's family of the delegation's planned arrival. This initial communication demonstrates the high degree of etiquette and respect between the families in this tradition, enabling the groom's family to prepare the welcome as fully as possible.

Welcoming Ritual at the Main Entrance

Upon arriving at the groom's residence, the entourage does not enter immediately but is formally welcomed by the mother-in-law at the entrance. At this stage, various items serving as symbolic media have been prepared, including Babe nggulu (a blunt machete) and Vase (an axe); Ovo silaguri and Ovo panumanu (specific types of grass); and Ose ngguni (yellow rice). These objects symbolize strength, resilience, and blessings for the husband and wife as they face various obstacles throughout married life. As a form of welcome and blessing, the mother-in-law or customary mother scatters yellow rice (Ose ngguni) toward the bride and groom. The couple is then invited to enter the house by stepping over the axe and machete placed at the threshold.

Presentation and Placement of the Botiga Traditional Bracelet

After entering the house, the bride and groom are directed to sit facing the customary leaders from both sides. This stage constitutes a crucial moment in which customary responsibility for the bride is transferred to the groom's family, guided directly by a local community leader. As a sign of the validity of this transfer and acceptance, the procession continues with the placement of the traditional bracelet, Botiga, on the bride's right wrist.

The Mepakoni Procession (Sacred Feeding Ritual)

The sequence then proceeds to Mepakoni, a feeding ritual. This stage begins with the groom's mother feeding the bride and groom alternately three times. This is followed by the bride and groom feeding each other, also three times. The equipment and dishes required for the Mepakoni procession

are highly specific: the main dish consists of cassava leaf vegetables accompanied by side dishes; the dining utensils consist of two plates, two spoons, and two glasses; and the cleaning equipment consists of a handwashing container and one tray. All dishes are arranged neatly on a tray and covered with a food cover. This ritual symbolizes an abundance of sustenance, the equitable affection of the in-laws, and the couple's commitment to caring for one another.

- **Introduction to the Domestic Sphere (Kitchen Education)**

Immediately after the Mepakoni procession concludes, the groom's mother directly leads her daughter-in-law to the kitchen area without allowing her to sit first. In the kitchen, the bride is introduced to and asked to touch essential utensils and food ingredients, such as a frying pan, chilies, tomatoes, and the rice supply. The primary purpose of this tradition is to familiarize the daughter-in-law with the space so that, once she resides in the house, she knows the location of kitchen ingredients and utensils. This symbolizes her readiness to assume a domestic role and manage household affairs.

- **Closing (Prayers and Sungkeman)**

The entire sequence of the Mematua customary ceremony concludes with collective prayers for safety and the endurance of the marriage. The event then closes with a sungkeman procession, in which the bride and groom kneel to ask forgiveness and receive blessings directly from their parents and the elders present.

The Symbolic Meaning of the Mematua Customary Ceremony

Based on the explanation provided by Mr. Ubay Harun, S.Ag., M.Si., an informant, the symbolic meanings of the Mematua customary ceremony are as follows:

- a. **The Mematua Ceremony as a Means of Introducing the Groom's Family**

Based on interviews and field data collection concerning the symbolic meaning of the Mematua customary ceremony, one essential function of this procession was identified as its role in the bride's social integration. This is represented by Mr. Ubay Harun's statement: "The symbolic meaning is, first, um, how to make sure that the prospective—uh, not prospective—so that the bride knows everyone... who the family of... what... of... of her husband is... she knows all of his family." Based on the informant's statement, the Mematua customary ceremony may be interpreted as having a profound symbolic meaning: it serves as a bridge that formally connects the bride with her husband's extended family. In the context of local customary tradition and culture, marriage is understood not merely as a bond between two individuals but as a process of merging two kinship groups into a new social unit. Through the Mematua ceremony, the bride is formally introduced not only to her in-laws but also to the entire kinship hierarchy on the groom's side, including senior figures, uncles, aunts, and other relatives. This introduction has several crucial implications for the continuity of married life, as outlined below:

- **Understanding Family Structure and Values**

Through this procession, the bride is invited to recognize and understand the genealogical structure of her husband's family. Beyond merely knowing names or lineage, this process requires an understanding of the etiquette, propriety, and customs upheld by the extended family. Its purpose is to enable the wife to position herself appropriately within the dynamics of everyday family interactions.

- **Providing Psychological Safety.**

Entering a new family environment often creates a sense of awkwardness for a woman. The Mematua ceremony serves as a form of welcome and open acceptance from the groom's family. Psychologically, this acceptance may reduce emotional distance and provide the bride with a sense of security, assuring her that she has been fully accepted as part of the family.

- **A Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Harmony**

By gaining a comprehensive understanding of her husband's character and all members of his family, the wife can establish emotional closeness from the outset. If dynamics or problems arise in the household in the future, she will already understand her husband's family structure, including the respected figures from whom advice may be sought. The closeness established through this tradition will serve as a strong bond of family solidarity. The Mematua customary ceremony is not merely a customary formality but a form of local wisdom that functions as a post-marital educational system. By understanding the roots of her husband's family identity, the bride is expected to build strong kinship ties and cultivate a deeper sense of devotion, ultimately contributing to harmony in married life.

- **The Mematua Customary Ceremony as a Means of Fostering Kinship Ties Between the Two Families**

More than merely a stage in the marriage ritual, the Mematua customary ceremony has profound social significance as an essential means of fostering kinship ties between the families of both spouses. Within the cultural context of the community, marriage is understood not only as the union of two individuals but also as the joining of two extended families. Through the Mematua ceremony, opportunities for communication and interaction between the families are created, enabling them to become better acquainted and develop familiarity. The significance of this social value is consistent with the explanation offered by Mr. Ubay Harun, who stated: "Then, subsequently, of course, it will strengthen kinship ties... there is value in kinship ties there." This statement underscores that the essential strengthening of familial bonds lies behind every customary stage performed and is expected to become a solid foundation for the couple's future married life.

- **The Doorstep Welcome as a Rite of Passage and Resilience**

The mother-in-law's welcoming of the couple at the threshold of the house is not merely an ordinary arrival ceremony but a highly significant rite of passage. Philosophically, the threshold symbolizes a boundary or transitional gateway from the past to a new chapter of

married life. The use of various symbolic media at this stage is imbued with moral messages and blessings, whose meanings may be explained as follows:

- **The Symbolic Meaning of Ose Ngguni (Yellow Rice)**
The mother-in-law's act of scattering yellow rice toward the couple visually embodies prayers and the warding off of misfortune. In Nusantara traditions, rice symbolizes prosperity, abundant sustenance, and the source of life. Meanwhile, the color yellow, which is generally derived from turmeric, represents glory, purity, and an antidote to negative energy. By scattering ose ngguni, the mother-in-law symbolically clears the path for her child and daughter-in-law of both supernatural obstacles and social barriers, while also praying that they will always have sufficient material and spiritual provision.
- **The Symbolic Meaning of Babe Nggulu (Blunt Machete) and Vase (Axe)**
Machetes and axes are essentially work tools that represent the hardships of life's struggles. Their presence symbolizes "strength and protection."
- **Axe (Vase)**
They symbolize decisiveness, strength, and the ability of husband and wife to "break through" major problems or impasses in married life.
- **Blunt Machete (Babe Nggulu)**
The blunt edge of the machete embodies a profound philosophy. It suggests that strength must always be balanced with gentleness, patience, and the ability to restrain anger. Husband and wife must be able to control intense emotions so as not to hurt one another when conflict occurs.
- **The Symbolic Meaning of Ovo Silaguri and Ovo Panumanu**
The use of these particular botanical elements in the form of grasses symbolizes "flexibility and endurance" (resilience). The philosophy of grass is that it can survive in various soil conditions and remains highly flexible when struck by strong winds; it bends without breaking and stands upright again after the storm has passed. This symbol conveys the message that the couple should possess flexibility, adaptability, and mental fortitude in facing the storms of marital trials without breaking their marital bond.
- **The Meaning of "Stepping Over" Heirloom Objects**
The instruction for the couple to step over the axe and machete placed at the threshold constitutes a symbolic act of "conquest and courage." By stepping over these objects, which represent life's obstacles, the couple is believed to acquire the mental readiness and courage to overcome every challenge. This act also serves as a pledge that they will continue moving forward together, leaving all negativity outside and bringing positive energy into the home. In conclusion, the welcome involving babe nggulu, vase, ovo silaguri, ovo panumanu, and ose ngguni constitutes an integrated set of prayers and protection. Through this procession, parents instill in their children the values of resilience, perseverance, prosperity, and prudence before they truly embark on the dynamic journey of married life.
- d. **The Presentation of the Botiga Bracelet as a Symbol of Legitimacy and Family Acceptance**

In addition to introducing family members and lineage, another crucial and meaningful stage of the Mematua customary ceremony is the presentation of the Botiga bracelet. This procession is conducted directly by the mother-in-law for the bride. The meaning of this stage was explained by Mr. Ubay Harun, an informant, who stated: "That Botiga earlier... Why is it done that way... It is a sign that the bride has entered the groom's extended family."

Referring to Mr. Ubay Harun's explanation above, the presentation of the Botiga bracelet in the Mematua customary ceremony carries a highly important philosophical meaning: it serves as a marker or seal of validation (legitimacy) that the bride has been formally accepted and recognized as part of the groom's extended family. Furthermore, this procession may be elaborated through the following aspects of symbolic meaning:

a. **A Symbol of Bonding and Unity.**

The selection of a bracelet as an object carries a distinctive philosophical meaning. A bracelet, which forms a circle with neither beginning nor end, symbolizes a complete, continuous, and unbroken family relationship. When the Botiga bracelet is placed on the daughter-in-law's wrist, it signifies that she has become customarily and emotionally connected to her husband's family.

b. **A Representation of the Mother-in-Law's Affection and Blessing**

The fact that the bracelet is presented directly by the mother-in-law conveys a profound psychological meaning. As the woman who gave birth to and raised the husband, the mother-in-law symbolically transfers her blessing, affection, and protection to her daughter-in-law. This act constitutes a nonverbal expression meaning "you are now my daughter" and is therefore expected to eliminate distance or potential conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the future.

c. **Recognition of Social Status Within Customary Tradition**

Within customary communities, the presentation of the Botiga bracelet functions as a social announcement or declaration. The bracelet becomes a physical marker, observable to those present, that the bride no longer has the status of an outsider but has fully transitioned to insider status as a core member of the groom's family.

d. **Mepakoni as an Expression of Equality and Balance in Roles**

In addition to the presentation of jewelry, another stage of substantial philosophical significance in the Mematua customary ceremony is Mepakoni, a ritual in which the bride and groom feed one another. The symbolic meaning underlying this ritual was explained in depth by Mr. Ubay Harun, who stated:

"When they give something to each other... when they feed each other... it symbolizes mutual care... that it is not only the husband, not only the husband who must do everything in the family... no... the wife also has her respective obligations. What is the husband's obligation is the wife's right, and what is the wife's obligation is the husband's right... that is why they feed each other."

Based on the informant's explanation, the Mepakoni procession may be interpreted not merely as the physical act of sharing food but as a manifestation of the principles of balance and reciprocal relations in married life. The symbolic meaning of this food-feeding ritual may be elaborated through the following three essential dimensions:

a. A Symbol of Mutual Affection and Care

The act of feeding one another represents a nonverbal expression of affection and care that both husband and wife must continuously nurture. Through this procession, the couple symbolically pledges to care for one another, attend to each other's needs, and ensure that neither party feels neglected within the marriage.

b. Transactional Awareness of Rights and Obligations

Mr. Ubay Harun's explanation highlights a compelling concept of justice in customary marriage: "what is the husband's obligation is the wife's right, and vice versa." The food being fed symbolizes the fulfillment of these rights. When the husband feeds his wife, he symbolizes his commitment to provide for and protect her (the husband's obligation/the wife's right). Conversely, when the wife feeds her husband, she symbolizes her commitment to care for, support, and respect him (the wife's obligation/the husband's right).

c. Synergy and the Deconstruction of Role Dominance

The informant's statement that "it is not only the husband who must give his utmost within the family" indicates that this tradition places husbands and wives in an equal partnership. This ritual challenges the assumption that domestic responsibilities rest solely on one party. Both spouses are expected to work in synergy and contribute to the fullest extent in accordance with their respective capacities and roles to preserve family integrity. In conclusion, the Mepakoni procession in the Mematua customary ceremony conveys a powerful moral message and premarital education. Through the act of feeding one another, customary tradition communicates that the bride and groom should prioritize mutual cooperation, complement one another's shortcomings, and act fairly in fulfilling their rights and obligations as a married couple.

e. Prayer Recitation as an Affirmation of Spiritual Commitment

As the conclusion of the entire Mematua customary ceremony, the prayer recitation serves as the final stage integrating cultural and religious values. The profound meaning of this spiritual procession was emphasized by Mr. Ubay Harun, who stated: "Marriage... must be intended... not for a short period... but for a lifetime..."

According to the informant's statement, the recitation of prayers in the Mematua tradition is not merely a complement or ceremonial formality marking the end of the event. Rather, this procession constitutes an affirmation of spiritual commitment with several dimensions of meaning, as follows:

a. Affirmation of Intention and Long-Term Commitment

The informant's statement emphasizing the word "intended" highlights the importance of a psychological foundation when beginning a marriage. Prayer serves as a medium through which sincere and firm intentions are instilled in the hearts of both spouses. Marriage is pledged not as a temporary phase or a "short period" but as a lifelong journey that requires resilience, patience, and unwavering commitment in facing the various dynamics of married life.

b. The Expression of Parental Hopes and Blessings

Prayer recitation is essentially a spiritual bridge between parents and their children. Through the prayers offered, both parents and customary leaders entrust their greatest hopes that the couple's married life will always be surrounded by blessings. These prayers represent the wholehearted blessing of the extended family that the marriage may attain Sakinah (tranquility), Mawaddah (sincere love), and Warahmah (God's love and mercy).

c. Surrender to the Creator (Transcendental Aspect)

This procession reminds the bride and groom and the entire family that, regardless of how strong a bond humans establish through customary tradition and culture, its continuation remains subject to the will of Allah SWT. The prayer recitation symbolizes complete surrender (tawakal). It instills the profound religious principle that this sacred marital bond may be separated only by Allah SWT's ordained destiny, namely death. The prayer recitation procession in the Mematua customary ceremony serves to complete the marital bond. Whereas the preceding processions, such as the presentation of Botiga and Mepakoni, serve to strengthen horizontal social bonds among people (habluminannas), the prayer recitation serves to affirm the vertical bond with the Creator (habluminallah), ensuring that the household thus established remains under His protection and favor. According to Mr. Armin, an informant in this study, the Mematua tradition is understood not only as the concluding sequence of the Kaili customary marriage ceremony but also as a foundation for a continuous customary cycle. Although its specific historical roots rely substantially on oral tradition, this ceremony has continued to be strongly maintained by the community to the present day. In practice, this tradition is dynamic and adapts to local customs. This has given rise to variations in ceremonial procedures and components across different regions, as reflected in the differences in practice between Kampung Baru and Parigi. Furthermore, the kinship ties established through the meeting of the parents of both parties during the Mematua procession become the starting point for the subsequent implementation of the family's life-cycle rituals, from pregnancy ceremonies to the birth of a child.

Discussion

Based on the presentation of the field research findings, a common thread can be identified, indicating strong continuity and relevance between the empirical findings and the theoretical frameworks employed in this study, namely the Theory of Continuity and Sociocultural Change and the Theory of Symbolic Meaning.

These two theories serve not only as conceptual foundations

but also as analytical tools for examining the historical and cultural structure of the Mematua customary ceremony among the Kaili people in Talise Urban Village.

a. The Relevance of the Theory of Continuity and Change to the Historical Dynamics of the Mematua Ceremony

With regard to its historical development, the findings of this study are highly consistent with Sartono Kartodirdjo's (1992) theory of continuity and change in history. The Mematua ceremony has not existed in a vacuum; rather, it has undergone a process of structural adaptation. The theory of change is empirically supported by historical findings indicating that the arrival of Islamic teachings in the Palu Valley in the 1800s, through figures such as Dato Karama and Habib Idrus bin Salim Al-Jufri, triggered fundamental cultural transformation. Mematua ritual practices, initially strongly characterized by animism and dynamism, such as the placement of ritual offerings for ancestral spirits, shifted and were reoriented toward activities aligned with the values of tawhid, namely the recitation of prayers for safety and almsgiving through communal meals. This demonstrates the theory that communities adjust their values so that traditions remain relevant to new socioreligious circumstances. The theory of continuity is also strongly substantiated. Although Talise Urban Village has been transformed into a multicultural urban area and its rites have been influenced by Islamic values, the Kaili community continues to preserve the essence of the Mematua ceremony. This continuity is evidenced by the retention of the ceremony's core stages as a medium of social integration, introducing the daughter-in-law, and as a life-cycle rite inseparable from the institution of marriage.

b. The Relevance of Symbolic Meaning Theory to the Mematua Procession

In analyzing the implementation process, Symbolic Meaning Theory, which draws on Budiono Herusatoto's ideas regarding the structural function of cultural symbols, was validated by the field data. The entire sequence of the Mematua ceremony demonstrates that humans are homo symbolicus; no ritual element is arbitrary or devoid of meaning. The use of symbols in this ceremony functions as a means of socializing and reinforcing abstract spiritual values so that they can be readily internalized by both spouses.

The relevance of this theory is clearly evident in two symbolic dimensions: material symbols and symbols of action:

- The use of items at the threshold before entering the house, such as ose ngguni (yellow rice), vase (an axe), babe nggulu (a blunt machete), and ovo silaguri and ovo panumanu grasses, is not merely decorative. These objects embody prayers for warding off misfortune, decisiveness in resolving problems, the obligation to control sharp emotions (represented by the blunt machete), and adaptability and mental resilience (represented by the grasses) in facing the challenges of married life.
- Symbolic theory is also evident in the act of motataka botiga (placing the traditional bracelet), which symbolizes an unbreakable bond and the full acceptance of the daughter-in-law into the groom's immediate family. In addition, the

Mepakoni ritual (feeding one another) constitutes a concrete representation of the theory of value internalization, through which customary tradition deconstructs the dominance of a single role and teaches the principle of reciprocal equality: what is the wife's right is the husband's obligation, and vice versa. Overall, the field analysis indicates that the Mematua customary ceremony of the Kaili people is not merely a historical remnant of the past performed mechanically. In accordance with the proposed theoretical framework, this ceremony is a dynamic cultural institution that can absorb changes over time (Islamic acculturation and modernity) without losing its primary function of ensuring continuity as a vehicle for transmitting philosophical values, premarital education, and reinforcing spiritual commitment through sacred symbols.

4. Conclusion

The Mematua customary ceremony is a Kaili customary marriage tradition that has been deeply rooted across generations. In the 1800s, this tradition underwent cultural transformation alongside the arrival of Islamic teachings in the Palu Valley. The practices of animism and dynamism that previously involved ritual offerings for ancestral spirits were gradually abandoned and replaced by activities grounded in the values of tawhid, namely, the recitation of prayers for safety and communal almsgiving meals. As the culmination of the customary marriage sequence, this procession begins with customary notification to the groom's family. Upon arriving at the in-laws' residence, the couple is welcomed at the threshold with yellow rice, an axe, a blunt machete, and special grasses. After stepping over these objects, the event continues with the placement of the Botiga bracelet by the mother-in-law, the ritual of feeding one another (Mepakoni), an introduction to the domestic sphere (the kitchen area), and concludes solemnly with communal prayers and sungkeman. This ceremony serves essential functions by introducing the family, strengthening kinship ties, and providing a sense of security for the bride. Each stage has its own philosophy: yellow rice symbolizes prosperity and warding off misfortune, sharp objects symbolize decisiveness as well as emotional control, and special grasses signify mental resilience. Furthermore, the Botiga bracelet symbolizes full acceptance into the immediate family, Mepakoni reflects the equality of marital rights and obligations, while the closing prayer reinforces spiritual commitment so that the household may always remain under the pleasure of Allah SWT.

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