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SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS IN THE PRACTICE OF RITUAL COMMUNICATION *LUMEANO WE'E TRADITIONAL CEREMONY* IN BOLA VILLAGE

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Abstract

This study analyzes the ritual communication practices of the Lumeano We'e Traditional Ceremony in Bola Village, South Buton Regency, using Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic approach. This annual ritual for cleansing the spring is believed to be sacred, it serves not only a practical function but is also rich in symbolic meaning that reflects the community's cultural identity, spirituality, and social cohesion. The research method employed a descriptive qualitative approach through interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Signs analysis was conducted using Peirce's classification: icons, indices, and symbols. The research findings indicate that water functions as an icon of purity and life; incense as an index of human communication with ancestors; drums and gongs as both an index and an icon of natural power, the flow of life, and togetherness;while, prayer acts as a symbol of the spiritual identity of the community. Thus, Lumeano We'e is not only a sacred tradition, but also a ritual communication medium that preserves local cultural heritage in the midst of globalization. This research makes a theoretical contribution to the study of semiotics in communication science as well as practical benefits in the preservation of local culture as an intangible heritage

Keywords: *Charles Sanders Peirce, Cultural Communication, Customary Ceremonies, Lumeano We'e, Semiotics.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is made up of various ethnicities, races, religions, cultures and languages. As cultured creatures, humans always carry out activities from generation to generation and are passed on to the next generation so that it becomes a habit [1]. Indonesia itself is known as a country that will be rich in culture and tradition, especially on the island of Buton.

Buton Island is also known as the island of a thousand fortresses which holds many cultures and customs [2] . One of the existing traditions is a traditional ceremony that describes or reflects the beliefs, values and identity of the people of Buton Island. One of the forms of cultural wealth and tradition is the Lumeano We'e traditional ceremony carried out by the people of Bola Village, Batauga District, South Buton Regency. The traditional ceremony of Lumeano We'e which means the ceremony of cleaning the spring and this ceremony is not only part of the local belief system but has a symbol of communication that has a deep meaning for the community.

Each stage of the *Lumeano We'e* traditional ceremony, there are several things that play an important role such as symbols and signs to convey cultural messages and

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social values in the community, togetherness, respect for ancestors, relationships between humans that have been communicated for generations by the people of Bola Village. Through the symbols and signs used in this traditional ceremony, the people of Bola Village not only carry out a ritual, but also build cultural communication that is full of meaning [3]. In this context, traditional ceremonies become a space for people to affirm their collective identity, maintain emotional attachment to their ancestors, and strengthen social cohesion among community members.

The traditional ceremony of *Lumeano We'e* itself is a ritual of cleaning the spring which is believed to have sacred value. This ceremony is held every year around June or July. This ritual not only serves practically to cleanse water sources, but it also has a strong spiritual dimension. The community believed that the first water to come out of the well had healing powers. This shows that the ritual is not only a physical event, but also a means of symbolic communication that is full of ethics and values.

This kind of practice can be analyzed through a semiotic approach. Semiotics as the science of signs provides space to interpret the hidden meaning behind symbols, language and actions in rituals [4]. Signs such as the order of processions and prohibitions in rituals contain cultural messages that can be interpreted in depth [1]. So semiotics becomes very relevant to study the meaning behind the signs used in traditional rituals.

Theoretically, this study refers to the concept of semiotics proposed by Charles Sanders Pierce because his idea is a comprehensive, structural description of all markings. Charles Sanders Pierce proposed the theory of triangle meaning which consists of three elements, namely signs, objects, and interpretation [5].

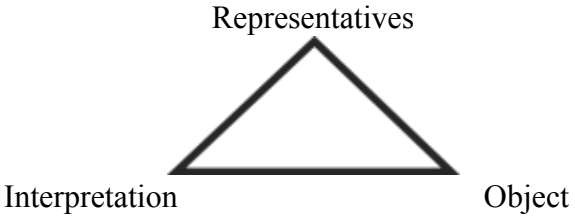

Figure 1.1 Meaning triangle model/Triadic

According to Charles Sanders Pierce, a sign is something that represents something else for someone in a certain context. Pierce divides signs into three types, namely icons, indexes, and symbols based on the relationship between representation and object [5]. This theory provides a systematic analytical framework for understanding how meaning is formed through signs[6]. The classification of the sign is the main analytical tool in interpreting various elements in the Lumeano we'e ritual, such as water, incense, prayer, and traditional tools.

In addition, the concept of ritual communication is also an important foundation in this research. Ritual communication is a form of communication events that are carried out together by a community through various events that take place at various stages of life [7]. Ritual communication is closely related to the elements of tradition and culture that live in society, especially because tradition and culture are universal phenomena [8]. The term ritual communication was first introduced by James W. Carey (1992:18), he said that: : *" in a ritual definition, communication is linked to terms such*

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as "sharing", "participation", "fellowship", and "the possession of a common faith"[9]. Carey then emphasized that in a ritual perspective, communication is not primarily intended to convey a message to a specific space, but rather focuses on efforts to maintain the continuity of the community in a span of time [10]. Thus, the concept of ritual communication practice cannot be separated from the cultural context, because the practice of communication grows, develops, and is interpreted in the value system and symbols that live in society. Culture can be interpreted as a whole of symbols, meanings, representations, rules, habits, values, information processing processes, and the inheritance of thinking, speaking, and acting patterns that are owned and shared by members of a system or social group in society [11].

Several previous studies have examined communication practices in traditional rituals from various theoretical perspectives. Research by Gobang and Boni (2023) entitled "Ritual Communication in the Lodong Me Tradition" shows that the Lodong Me ritual in Watumilok Village, Sikka, is interpreted as a process of introducing babies to nature and ancestors. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this research identifies symbols such as kitchen ash and bamboo sticks as spiritual signs that represent the baby's relationship with the cycle of life [12].

At the same time, Bestifari et al. (2022) studied the "Haroa Ritual" in Butonese society using Charles S. Peirce's semiotic approach. This research found that symbols such as cutting hair and serving traditional food contain meanings that represent hope for safety and the blessings of life . In contrast to the two previous studies, this study focuses on Peirce's triadic semiotic perspective in interpreting signs as well as on the object of study in this research, where the Lumeano We'e ritual in Bola village has not been widely studied, even though this ritual has symbolic characteristics, especially the use of water as a sacred center that represents the value of life, belief and human relationships with nature.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to understand how local communities communicate their values and beliefs through cultural symbols. In the midst of increasingly strong globalization, understanding ritual practices of this kind is important to maintain local cultural heritage while enriching knowledge, especially in the fields of communication and cultural communication anthropology. The urgency of this study lies in the need to understand how local communities communicate their values and beliefs through cultural symbols. In the midst of increasingly strong globalization, understanding this kind of ritual practice is important to maintain local cultural heritage while enriching knowledge, especially in the fields of communication and cultural communication anthropology.

Thus, this research is here to fill this void by analyzing the meaning of symbols and signs in the Lumeano We'e ritual in more depth using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive research type and a theoretical approach to Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic analysis. In this method, the researcher acts as the main instrument, the data collection technique is carried out through triangulation or the combination of various methods, the data analysis is inductive, and the research results focus more on meaning than generalization [13]. So in this case, the research is carried out by direct observation, interviews, and document

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review. The focus of the research is directed at the meaning of signs (icons, indexes, symbols) in the *Lumeano We'e* traditional ritual procession. The research data sources consist of primary and secondary.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained directly through direct interviews at the research site, while secondary data came from books, journals and theses that build and are related to this research. The determination of informants is carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is a method chosen because it gives flexibility for researchers to assign informants according to certain criteria that are relevant to the purpose of the research[14]. The informants involved in this study are traditional leaders, community leaders, the Bola Village government, and the Bola Village community. By using this technique, the researcher can ensure that the selected informant has knowledge, understanding and experience that is relevant to the topic being researched, so that they can provide in-depth, rich and meaningful data.

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured manner with open-ended questions, recorded, and transcribed for analysis purposes. Participatory observation allows researchers to be directly involved in ritual activities, thereby gaining contextual understanding [15]. Documentation in the form of writings, photographs, and archives is used as supporting data[3]. In interviews, the researcher provides space for informants to explain extensively and in.

Observations were carried out with the active involvement of researchers in ritual processions, so as to capture the social and symbolic dynamics that emerged. The documentation is then analyzed to strengthen the field data while providing historical context to the research. Data analysis is carried out inductively, through the process of grouping, breaking the data into small parts, and rearranging to find patterns. This stage includes identifying important information, determining aspects that need to be deepened, and interpreting the meaning of the signs in the ritual procession.

The focus of analysis is more on understanding meaning than generalization. Thus, the results of the research are expected to be able to reveal cultural symbols that represent the relationship between humans and nature and ancestors, as well as show the role of the *Lumeano We'e* ritual as a cultural communication medium that maintains people's identities in the midst of globalization

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bola Village in Batauga District, South Buton Regency, is one of the areas where the majority of the population comes from the Buton ethnic group with the use of the Cia-Cia language as a colloquial language. The livelihood of the community is dominated by the agriculture and fisheries sectors, while a small number of others work in the formal sector as. The level of education of the community is quite diverse, ranging from those who have not studied to bachelor's degree graduates. In addition, this village is also supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as mosques, schools, village offices, and health centers, which support the social life of the community.

In the context of the community's life, the *Lumeano We'e* ritual is present as one of the annual traditions that has an important role in the life of the people of Bola Village. This ritual aims to clean the springs which are the main source of life for the

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community. Based on the story that developed in the community, the spring was first discovered by a figure named La Awatanjo. This ceremony is usually held in June or July, with the belief that the first water to come out of the well has healing power and brings blessings to the community.

Historically, the existence of the *Lumeano We'e* ritual cannot be separated from the early story of the discovery of the spring source. Based on the results of interviews with traditional leaders, it is said that La Awatanjo found the spring by accident while in the forest, which then became the starting point of life for the people of Bola Village. Since then, spring water has been seen not only as a source of physical needs, but also as a gift that has sacred value. Therefore, the community has carried out the Lumeano We'e ritual for generations as a form of respect, gratitude, and an effort to maintain the sustainability of this source of life.

Analysis Results

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, signs (representations) function to point to an object and produce an understanding (interpretation) for the recipient. Representation is a physical form of a sign that can be captured by the five senses, an object is a thing that is referred to or represented by the sign, while interpretation is a meaning or concept that arises from the process of interpreting the sign (semiosis). Based on this triadic framework, Peirce groups signs into three main categories: icons, indexes, and symbols.

Ikon

1. Water



Gambar 1.2 Springs in the ritual of Lumeano We'e
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

Water in the Lumeano We'e ritual became an icon of life. Physically, water is indeed synonymous with the source of life, purity, and healing. The community interprets the first water that comes out of the spring as a symbol of blessing and health.

2. Traditional clothing



Figure 1.3 Clothes used during rituals
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

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The shape of traditional clothing reflects the cultural identity of the Buton people. The distinctive physical shape of clothing became an instantly recognizable icon as a representation of local culture.

Meaning: Icons in this ritual affirm the real relationship between the symbol and the object it represents, so that people can immediately understand the meaning without the need for additional explanation.

Index

1. Incense



Figure 1.4 Burning of incense in rituals
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

Incense is a sign of spiritual communication that indicates a connection with the ancestral world or supernatural powers.

2. Springs

The location of the cleaned spring is an index of people's lives. The existence of springs clearly marks a source of well-being and survival.

3. Cleaning Process



Figure 1.5 The process of cleaning the springs in the *luemano we'e* ritual
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

The act of cleaning springs is an index of people's attachment to nature, because this activity shows the direct relationship between humans and the source of life and indicates the ecological awareness of the community.

4. Drums and gongs



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Figure 1.6 drums and gongs to accompany silat dance (foreign)
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

The sound of drums and gongs is a sign that the ritual procession is completed and indicates that the stronger the sound emitted, the stronger the water flows.

Meaning: The index in this ritual shows a real connection between the sign and the object, so that the community understands that the ritual is not only symbolic, but also has a practical and spiritual function.

Symbol

1. Prayer

   The words of the prayer have no physical relationship with the object, but through cultural agreement it is interpreted as communication with God and ancestors. In this case, the prayer that is recited before the start of the ritual is the "name of the parsley of the inventor of the spring", where the name is only known by the next generation of traditional leaders who lead the *Lumeano we'e* ritual.

2. Prohibitions in rituals

   The rules that must be obeyed during the procession have no direct relationship with the object, but through tradition are interpreted as a form of respect for the sacred, such as the prohibition of saying words that are insulting and degrading to the sacred place.

3. Silat (foreign)



Figure 1.7 Traditional Silat Dance (foreign)
(source: screenshot of the video "*Pilumeano We'e* traditional party" by Chanel La Dayati, 2019, YouTube)

The traditional silat (foreign) dance movement accompanied by drums and gongs is carried out at the end of the cleaning process in the *Lumeano We'e* ritual and this is a symbol of strength that symbolizes energy, courage, and life force.

Meaning: The symbols in this ritual serve to maintain social cohesion, strengthen collective identity, and preserve cultural values through mutual agreement.

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The *Lumeano We'e* ritual is not only a physical activity, but also a process of cultural communication because the Lumeano We'e ritual is a medium for conveying the value of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and the relationship between humans and God, the ancestors of nature. This ritual also maintains cultural identity, the sustainability of traditions, and social solidarity. Based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis, the Lumeano We'e ritual contains various signs consisting of icons, indexes, and interconnected symbols. These signs not only have a practical function, but also contain a deep philosophical meaning about life, holiness, togetherness, and human relationships with God and ancestors. This ritual is proof that local culture is a complex and meaningful communication system, which continues to live through the process of inheritance from generation to generation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the practice of communication in the Lumeano We'e traditional ceremony ritual in Bola Village is not just a traditional activity, but a cultural communication system that is full of symbolic meaning. Through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach, it was found that each element in the ritual contains signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols that are interrelated in forming the collective meaning of society. Water as the center of ritual serves as an icon of life, purity, and a source of blessings. Incense, springs, and the cleaning process are indices that show the real relationship between humans and nature and the spiritual world. Meanwhile, prayers, ritual prohibitions, and silat (foreign) movements act as symbols that are interpreted through cultural agreements as a form of communication with God and ancestors.

The Lumeano We'e ritual also functions as a ritual communication medium that strengthens social cohesion, maintains cultural identity, and preserves traditional values in the midst of globalization. Thus, this ritual not only has a practical function in maintaining water sources, but also as a means of inheriting local values, beliefs, and wisdom that continue to live in the lives of the people of Bola Village.

The implications of this study confirm the importance of preserving local culture as part of cultural and education policies. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine similar rituals with a broader or cross-disciplinary approach, as well as explore their potential use in the development of culture and tourism based on local wisdom.

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