

# Mangrompo Tondok Toraja Traditional Rituals Facing Covid-19 in The Tallu Kalo'na Traditional Region Lembang Gasing Mengkendek District

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to (1) determine the series of ritual processions and (2) find out the symbolic meaning contained in theritual Mangrompo Tondok. Mangrompo Tondok is a ritual of worship or a request for protection to Puang Matua. This research is a descriptive qualitative research. Research informants were determined by non-probability sampling. The primary data is done through observation(observation)and interviews with parties related to the research and secondary data is done through library(libraryresearch)by reviewing some of the literature that is closely related to the issues to be discussed. The data that has been collected is then presented in the form of anarrative realism and analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that (1) the procession of theritual Mangrompo Tondok consisted of the rituals of Ma'kapuran Panggan, Mangkaro Bubun, Ma'bugi, and Mangrompo Tondok (2) the meaning of Mangrompo Tondok for the indigenous peoples of the Tallu Kalo'na Lembang Gasing area is hope for Puang Matua to protect the indigenous people of Tallu Kalo'na Lembang Gasing from the threat of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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## 1. Introduction

Humans as cultural creatures contain the notion that humans create culture and then culture provides direction in human behavior. There is an absolute relationship between humans and their culture so that in essence they can be called cultural creatures. Culture itself is a unity of the ideas of symbols and values that underlie the results of human work and behavior (Rahman & Letlora, 2018), so it is not an exaggeration to continue that culture and symbols created by humans are so closely related that humans are called *Homo Simbolicum*. Thus the use of symbols in culture, is an intermediary tool that comes from ancestors to describe all kinds of messages of knowledge to the community, as the next generation which is manifested in their daily actions as cultural beings, then is expected to be able to provide understanding for the people who use it. In essence, as Geertz said "meaning can only be stored in symbols". Geertz clearly concludes, culture is a pattern of meanings that can be contained in symbols, inherited through history (Lebang, 2015).

Society and culture are a system that cannot be separated from one another and is called a duality, where there is no culture that does not grow and develop from a society. On the other hand, there is no society without culture because without culture it is impossible for society to survive. Society is the container, culture is the content. There is an absolute relationship between humans and culture, namely humans create culture and then culture provides direction in human life and behavior (Rahman, et al., 2019). Culture is the result of the existence of ideas and ideas that ultimately result in activity and produce a work so that it is essentially called a cultural creature.

The Toraja people have many cultures that are still preserved today because they are believed to influence people's lives (Surya, et al., 2017), even though social changes continue to occur. One of those cultures is the "rituals *Mangrompo Tondok*". This is done by the Toraja people who arereligion *Alukta* in the traditional area of Tallu Kalo'na (Pangrorean, Padang, and Alla) Lembang Gasing. *Alukta* is the religion of the ancestors of the Toraja people belief *Todolo Aluk* is the belief and worship of ancestral spirits born of a belief that comes from *Aluk Pitussa'bu Pituratu 'Pitungpulo Pitu*. Most of the Toraja people consider that these rules cover all aspects of human life, including in relation to worshiping ancestral spirits because in principle apart from being a rule that covers aspects of human life as well as a rule of worship to *Puang Matua* (the creator) and rules about how to worship the keeper (to the gods), and even as a rule about how to worship or worship ancestors as overseers and givers of blessings to their descendants.

Based on the belief of *Aluk Todolo*, since the first *Mangrompo Tondok* has been carried out for generations by the Toraja people if suddenly a buffalo dies in its cage, none of the rice plants are successful or everything is damaged and when there is disease (*Malassu-lasu tu tondok*) then an agreement is drafted together between *Toparenggek* and *Ambek Tondok* to carry out the ritual. The *Mangrompo tondok* ritual is a rare ritual and is not carried out arbitrarily because the ritual is only carried out when there is a disease that appears. The ritual should not be carried out because no one wants disease or unwanted events in *Tondok* but it is all the will of Almighty God, therefore every community has their own belief in preventing a disease (Bangun, 2021).

At the beginning of 2020 the world was shocked by the Covid-19 virus that spread throughout the world. Covid-19 is a contagious virus that spreads very quickly through the respiratory system. This virus can attack anyone from the elderly, adults, and children. Fear and worry continue to arise in everyone in this world, with various efforts being made to protect themselves and their families from the dangers of the corona virus. One of the efforts made by the government in dealing with COVID-19 is holding a lockdown. All Indonesian people, including the people of Tana Toraja, have also made efforts to overcome the spread of COVID-19. Mangrompo Tondok is a traditional ritual in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 carried out by the indigenous people of Tallu Kalo'na, Lembang Gasing, Mengkendek District. The ritual is in line with the government's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Theritual Mangrompo Tondok is worship or a request for protection to Puang Matua. The purpose of this ritual is to hope that Puang Matua will be protected from the threat of the COVID-19 outbreak. The prayer for rejecting reinforcements is carried out so that the indigenous people of Tallu Kalo'na are protected from the threat of the Covid-19 virus, both those who live in the village and those who migrate. while the subject of prayer is expressed in the Toraja language literary word with the term Mangimbo. Theritual is Mangrompo Tondokcarried out so that the corona virus does not enter the village, this is done with various rituals[3]. Theritual is Mangrompo Tondokcarried out by some people in Lembang Gasing, especially those who still adhere to the teachings of Aluk Todolo, these people believe that the Mangrompo Tondok that is carried out can protect them from anger or danger.

Mangrompo tondok is a traditional heritage passed down by the ancestors of the Toraja people from generation to generation. In Toraja culture there are many symbolic meanings that even the younger generation of Toraja themselves, do not necessarily know and understand the meaning of all the activities contained in the rituals of traditional ceremonies that are held. The above situation occurs because of the lack of awareness of curiosity by the younger generation towards the cultural heritage they have is a fact that culture is obtained through a learning process from the community and its environment. So, with the holding of the tradition *Mangrompo Tondok*, the younger generation can now know that there is a hereditary tradition owned by our ancestors to ward off or reject a disease, especially during the current covid-19 pandemic and they can know the meaning of eachritual procession *Mangrompo Tondok*. Therefore, this research is expected to be able to give appreciation to the original cultures of our nation as a form of national culture and to avoid misperceptions for the Toraja people, especially on the meaning of *Mangrompo Tondok* which was carried out during the covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the description above, which then becomes the basic assumption of the research to conduct a research on the ritual of *Mangrompo Tondok*. Departing from a concept of meaning for the symbols in the ritual, it is hoped that later it can become a reference in the hope that the Toraja people can know or understand more about the ritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. The meaning in the ritual is considered important because it can give special meaning to this tradition, thus allowing a general picture in perceiving the meaning of the ritual *Mangrompo Tondok* later.

#### 2. Methodology

Location of the research was in the traditional area of Tallu Kalo'na (Pangrorean, Padang, and Alla) Lembang Gasing, Mengkendek District, Tana Toraja Regency. The approach used in this study is a semiotic approach. The semiotic approach is an approach that has its own system, in the form of a sign system. These meaningful signs can be icons, indexes, or symbols.

Based on the type, this research is a qualitative descriptive study, in which researchers will try to provide an overview of the procession and symbolic meaning contained in the ritual process *Mangrompo Tondok*. Qualitative descriptive research aims to reveal various qualitative information with careful descriptions to accurately describe the properties of a thing (individual or group), circumstances, symptoms, or phenomena that are more valuable than just statements in the form of numbers and are not limited to data collection but includes data analysis and interpretation. Subroto (2002) revealed that the qualitative method is an assessment method or research method on a problem that is not stimulated using statistical procedures.

This method is descriptive in nature so that the data is in the form of sentences which are analyzed from a grammatical point of view using certain theories or approaches. The selection of the type of qualitative descriptive research is adjusted to the problems discussed and the research objectives. To discuss problems and achieve research objectives, descriptive qualitative research uses an inductive analysis strategy by placing research data not as a means of proof, but as a basic capital to understand the facts (Sutopo, 2007).

The source of the data in this study was obtained from informants, the authors used a non- *probability* sampling technique, namely each informant who was considered to have mastered the ritual, did not have the same possibility to be selected as an informant. The selected informants are members of the public who are well aware of theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. Informants in this study were traditional and community leaders.

Data collection methods are carried out as follows:

#### a. Primary data

(*Field research*), namely direct research on objects to collect as much information or data as possible related to the problem under study. In this field study, data collection techniques were carried out through: Observation, namely data collection by direct observation of the object under study, and Interviews, namely data collection techniques using interview guidelines conducted in depth (*dept interview*) to respondents or informants regarding matters relating to the problems to be known.

#### b. Secondary data

Literature study (*library research*) is research conducted by reviewing some literature that is closely related to the problems to be discussed. The data analysis technique used is qualitative in nature by presenting data in the form of anarrative *realism* based on information obtained through observation, in-depth interviews and other sources relevant to the research.

#### 3. Result

#### 3.1 Cultural Knowledge

The concept of cultural knowledge as described above departs from experiential experience as a starting point, then moves towards theoretical knowledge, and shuttles. This concept emphasizes the process dimension. However, here we are faced with the question of the meaning of "culture", which also puts forward the process dimension as well as the understanding of "cultural knowledge", as already described. Culture as a cognitive system, symbol system and structural system has an adaptive and evolutive character (Keesing, 2020). It continues to change according to its context and implies a transformation of the meaning it contains. In this sense, the movement of experiential knowledge towards theoretical knowledge and vice versa, is also culture. "Culture" in the context of cultural knowledge refers to a certain metasystem of information structures, which has character and presents a meta-process for the production of material objects about what humans know.

The pattern of "pull and pull" of cultural knowledge in the framework of cultural concepts as an adaptive system of cognitive, symbols and structures confirms what Clifford Geertz calls "*re-externalisation of cultural (or socio-cultural matters*" (Geertz, 2020). "or "ignorance" of certain elements about the pattern of people's lives when there is an attempt to understand other elements. "Culture" at the process level implies a social construction that is filled with "push-pull" various factors. The "middle point" of the tug-of-war process is what we call a "product of culture." The tug of war between experiential knowledge and theoretical knowledge results in a complex product of "culture of knowledge." If you know Geertz's concept of "*re-externalisation*", cultural knowledge involves the "abandonment" or "ignorance" of the concept that culture is purely a material social system. Cultural knowledge may resemble a panic-*melting pot of*various systems (cognitive if, symbols, structures, and social systems).

The "cultural process" of cultural knowledge involves the rejection of synchronic and diachronic interpretations of other systems of culture (cognitive systems, symbol systems, structural systems, and social systems) along with experience and understanding of those experiences. The "product" of cultural knowledge, namely cognitive awareness/categorical understanding of structured information and its meaning is understood as a "compromise" in the tug-of-war between the synchronic and the diachronic, between experience and meaning, between facts and interests, between the experiential and the theoretical. In this sense, "cultural product" is "context". The text refers to the material object as a phenomenon which is then processed, categorized to be understood, and interpreted as a new material object

after the phenomenon. However, the symbolic and structural meaning of "text" depends on the "cultural process", namely how the stages of processing, categorizing, and new meaning take place (Suwignyo, 2020).

#### 3.2 Epidemic in the Frame of Cultural Knowledge

The outbreak of thevirus *Corona* as an epidemic, which has caused a *pageblug* globalin 2020, presents a unique cultural phenomenon. It presents new experiential knowledge that will deconstruct theoretical knowledge about our cultural practices. The new experiential knowledge first covers people's daily habits that have changed due to the corona attack. For example, the so-called "*social distancingpolicy*" as an effort to prevent the spread of the corona virus according to the advice of health experts, has urged us to understand the forms of interaction that are possible during a pandemic.

Likewise, the so-called "*new normal*", "new normal", namely the policy to reopen community activities after social restrictions. As government spokesman Achmad Yurianto said, "The new normal is a culture, for example always applying a clean and healthy lifestyle, wearing a mask when leaving the house, washing hands, and so on. Another example for Toraja culture is the *Mangrompo Tondok*, this ritual is carried out by the Toraja people for the prevention of covid, this ritual most of the Toraja people do not know about it, especially the younger generation today, with this pandemic they immediately know that there is a ritual to prevent disease in Toraja culture. These examples confirm as a "cultural phenomenon", namely the changing practice of our daily lives in the sense that the spread of the corona virus is a "cultural precedent" (Nugroho, 2020).

#### 3.3 Toraja Culture and Belief System

Culture includes ways of thinking and acting. This is a characteristic of certain societies. The way of thinking and the way of acting in question consists of language, science, laws, beliefs, religion, music, habits, work, restrictions, and so on. In general, Toraja culture includes aspects of ideas, concepts, thoughts, language, art, and the results of the culture itself. Thus, culture is knowledge itself that is owned by the community, in this case the Toraja community which is an accumulation of various kinds of experiences. Toraja culture is one of the thousands of cultural treasures owned by the Indonesian people who still maintain the authenticity of their customs and culture. Toraja culture with its authenticity makes the culture unique and not even found in other areas. One of therituals *Aluk Todolo* that is still carried out today is theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*.

The ritual *Mangrompo Tondok* is worship or a request for protection to *Puang Matua* so that disease does not enter the village. Rirual *Mangrompo Tondok was* held in 2020 to deal with covid-19. A series of activities are carried out in this ritual which is believed to expel disease from the village. For humans, belief becomes a guide in believing in something supernatural or supernatural in nature that is different beyond the limits of human thought. *Aluk Todolo* in the Toraja tribe places a belief in the unseen world which is something that is essential (Marama, 2007). The belief of *"Aluk Todolo"* is the belief and worship of ancestral spirits born of a belief originating from *Aluk Pitussa'bu Pituratu' Pitungpulo Pitu*.

Where most of the Toraja people consider that these rules cover all aspects of human life, including in relation to the worship of ancestral spirits, because in principle apart from being a rule that covers aspects of human life, it is also a rule of worshiping *Puang Matua* (the creator). ) as well as the rules on how to worship the preserver (to the gods), and even as a rule on how to worship or worship the ancestors as overseers and givers of blessings to their descendants. In the daily life of the Toraja people in actualizing the beliefs of *Aluk Todolo*, by giving birth to events of safety and human life (Tangdilintin, 1991).

#### 3.4 Ritual

Ritual ceremonies are often called religious ceremonies. According to Bustanuddin, ceremonies whose concrete reasons are not understood are called *rites* in English which means religious acts or ceremonies. Furthermore, according to Koentjaraningrat, a ritual ceremony is an activation system or a series of actions that are regulated by customs or laws that apply in the community related to the kinds of permanent events that usually occur in the community concerned. Ritual ceremonies have rules or procedures that have been determined by the community or group that created the ritual, so that each ritual has differences, both in terms of implementation and equipment.

Ritual is a set of real actions in religion, such as Winnick's opinion, ritual is a set of actions that always involve religion or magic which is strengthened through tradition. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Greetz that the existence of this rite, salvation or ceremony is a human effort to seek safety, peace, and at the same time preserve the cosmos. This salvation is essentially the most common religious ceremony in the world and symbolizes the mystical and social unity of those who participate in it. Through ritual ceremonies or salvation, the community hopes for a sense of

security and no disaster occurs. Rituals are also a form of respect for God, Gods, Ancestors, and Spirits. Ritual ceremony is its form as a system of beliefs and ideas about God, Gods, spirits, Hell, Heaven and so on, but has a form in the form of ceremonies, both seasonal and occasional (Matandung, 2018).

The ritual is carried out by the Toraja people as a form of unification in worshiping God. Through ritual activities, the Toraja people want to know and want to express religion itself, trying to unite themselves with something meaningful behind physical reality, even something transcendent. However, limited humans are unable to achieve it, that's why humans use symbols as cultural media that is the root of symbolism in Toraja culture. Because of the limitations of human strength, creating symbols as an effort to get closer to God.

The ritual ceremony of the Toraja people is a ritual performed by the Toraja people who are *Aluk Todolo* as a form of respect for their ancestors and the spirits of their ancestors who are believed to bring blessings and dangers. Ritual ceremonies for the Toraja people are sacred and have mystical values. If the ritual ceremony is carried out, it is believed that it will get protection from *Puang Matua*.

## **3.5 Semiotics Roland Barthes**

Semiotics is the study of signs. The concept of this sign sees that meaning arises when there is an associational relationship between the *signified* and the *signifier*. Sign is the unity of a form of marker (*signifier*) with an idea or signified (*signified*). In other words, a signifier is a "meaningful sound" or a "meaningful scribble". Semiotics is the study of signs, the function of signs, the use of signs and everything related to signs. In other words, the notion of semiotics (signs, meanings, denotatums and interpretants) can be applied to all areas of life as long as there are requirements that are met, namely that there is meaning given, there is meaning and there is interpretation (Kurniawan, 2001).

Roland Barthes' semiotics describes the meaning of signs with a first level meaning system or denotation, and a second level system or connotation. The interpretation of meaning between denotation and connotation occurs because of a myth. Roland Barthes' semiotics uses denotation, connotation, and myth as the key to his analysis. Through this theory, a culture can not only be studied in terms of what is written, but also what can come to the myth behind it (Barthes, 2012).

#### 4. Discussion

Based on the teachings of *Aluk Todolo*, the Toraja people have a number of ritual treasures. Even though they have embraced a new religion, the ancestral rituals of the Toraja people are not abandoned. Toraja people remain faithful to carry out the unique traditions that become the identity of Toraja. One of the rituals that is still carried out today is theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. *Mangrompo Tondok* is an ancestral tradition of the Toraja people which used to be aimed at askinghope to *Puang Matua* forprotect the community from the threat of a disease.

In this section, the results of the research will be described in the form of the results of interviews conducted by researchers with resource persons who have described several things that are considered necessary and related to this research. The informant in this case is someone who is considered capable of providing all correct information in accordance with the rules that apply to the customs of the Toraja community which consists of traditional leaders, and people who have sufficient knowledge related to the procession *Mangrompo Tondok* in Tana Toraja. The responses of the informants in this study will be described according to the category of the problem to be studied. The first category is a series ofritual processions *Mangrompo Tondok* and the second category is the symbolic meaning contained in theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. The results of this study will be described successively based on the problem categories described above.

#### 4.1 A series of Ritual Processions Mangrompo Tondok

Based on the belief of *Aluk Todolo* from the start, if there is a disease (*malassu-lassu tu Tondok*) then a mutual agreement will be drafted between *To Parenggek* and *Ambek Tondok* to carry out the ritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. Especially now that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world, each region has its own beliefs and efforts in preventing the corona virus. For this reason, the Toraja people, especially the traditional area of Tallu Kalo'na (Pangrorean, Padang, and Alla') Lembang Gasing carry out theritual *Mangrompo Tondok* which is in line with the government's efforts to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. The ritual is led by *Tekken Biang* orleaders *Aluk Todolo* and the *To Parenggeks* of the eight Tongkonans (*Tongkonan Karua*). The series of rituals of *Mangrompo Tondok are* as follows:

a. Ritual Ma'kapuran Panggan

- b. Ritual Mangkaro Bubun
- c. Ritual Ma'bugi
- d. The Ritual Mangrompo Tondok (Bangun, 2021)

#### 4.2. The Symbolic Meaning of the Ritual Tondok Mangrompo

Toraja is known for its unique traditions that contain certain meanings, such as theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. To find out the meaning implied in theritual, *Mangrompo Tondok* it will be described in stages according to the sequence of the ritual series.

a. Ritual Ma'kapuran Panggan

Ritual *Ma'kapuran Panggan* implemented in Tongkonan Sassa. In this ritual, namely asking permission from *Todolo* called *Sumeu' Aluk. Sumeu' Aluk* was the first to make *Aluk* the first to be fed. In this ritual, the chicken will be burned as the medium. The significance of the ritual *Ma'kapuran Panggan* is according to the trust *Aluk Todolo* in carrying out any activity must request permission in advance to *Todolo* that in the conduct of the ritual can proceed smoothly (Bangun, 2021).

b. Ritual Mangkaro Bubun

Ritual *Mangkaro Bubun* that purifies water resources consumed by all the creatures that exist especially indigenous Tallu Kalo'na. In theritual, the *Mangkaro Bubun* materials used are 2 kinds of rice and one Sellak chicken. The meaning of theritual *Mangkaro Bubun* is according to the belief of *Aluk Todolo that* water (*kalimbuang*) is a direct gift from *Puang Matua*. Whatever you do if there is no water, then the *Tallu Lolona* (*katuan, tananan, and form tau*) cannot live without water, so it is necessary to purify water sources or clean water sources (Bangun, 2021).

c. Ritual Ma'bugi

Ritual Ma'bugi is a complementary ritual Mangrompo Tondok, Ma'bugi is the cultural art of Allo Tuka'. The kinds of Ma'bugi are Ma'bugi Denak, Ma'bugi Mangrompo Tondok, Ma'bugi Harvest Party, Ma'bugi Lompo/big party, and Ma'bugi Gandangi. The Ma'bugi Mangrompo Tondok was held for three nights and was held at Tongkonan To' Kaluku which was attended by Tekken Biang and To Parenggek. During this ritual, people are strictly prohibited from cutting down trees and not turning on the lights and there may be commotion for three days. The purpose of not turning on the lights for three nights is to frighten the carrier of the disease and not make a fuss so that he doesn't come again. The trick is don't make a fuss and don't play with the door, when you open the door say hello (Ma'tabek). The material used in the ritual Ma'bugi is to burn chicken. The meaning of burning chicken in the ritual Ma'bugi is for the gods to protect the community and so that disease does not enter the area of Tallu Kalo'na, Lembang Gasing.

#### d. Ritual Mangrompo Tondok

Ritual Mangrompo Tondok the top event and a closing ritual for pandemic problem covid-19 in this period. The ritual is Mangrompo Tondok carried out three days after the completion of the ritual Ma'bugi, offerings in this case the burning of chickens will be carried out in border areas with other customary areas. The material used in the ritual Mangrompo Tondok is to burn five types of chicken, namely Manuk Sellak (the goal is for Puang Matua Tanggana langi'), Manuk Kallunik (the goal is for Puang Randanna Langi'' which will guard against disease), Manuk Bolong, Manuk Karurung, and Manuk Lotong Lentek. The meaning of the ritual Mangrompo Tondok is the hope for Puang Matua to protect the indigenous people of Tallu Kalo'na, Lembang Gasing from the threat of the covid-19 outbreak (Bangun, 2021).

#### 5. Conclusion

Based on the belief of *Aluk Todolo* from the beginning, if there is a disease (*malassu-lassu tu Tondok*) then a mutual agreement will be designed between *Toparenggek* and *Ambek Tondok* to carry out theritual *Mangrompo Tondok*. Especially at this time there has been a covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world, so the Toraja people, especially the Tallu Kalo'na (Pangrorean, Padang, and Alla') Lembang Gasing customary area carry out the Mangrompo Tondok ritual which is in line with the government's efforts to prevent transmission. covid-19. The ritual is led by *Tekken Biang* orleaders *Aluk Todolo* and the *Toparenggeks*. The series of *Mangrompo Tondok* rituals are the *Ma'kapuran Panggan* ritual, the *Mangkaro Bubun* ritual, the *Ma'bugi*' Ritual, and the ritual *Tondok Mangrompo*. The meaning of *Mangrompo Tondok* for the people of the Tallu Kalo'na Lembang Gasing customary area is the hope for *Puang Matua* to protect the Tallu Kalo'na Lembang Gasing indigenous people from the threat of the COVID-19 outbreak.

With the implementation of the ritual *Mangrompo Tondok*, it is hoped that this tradition will continue to be preserved and not be slowly eroded by modernization. It is imperative that the symbolic meanings contained in the ritual *Mangrompo Tondok* can be understood by all parties, especially the younger generation today to maintain and preserve the ritual so that it can continue to run without losing its meaning, especially in the face of the current covid-19 pandemic situation.

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