

Pa'rappo and *Cera Bulu*: The Conservation Traditions at the Karst Area of Maros

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Abstract. *Parappo* and *cera bulu* are conceptual ideas, designed to conserve values held by the people from Salenrang village, Maros regency, South Sulawesi. Those values are related to their existence as an integral aspect of their environment. The data we report here were gathered through interviews and field observations. The study indicates that *pa'rappo* and *simba* are of the objective to conserve familial genealogy; while *cera bulu* is a ritual to pay respect to the nature of impact environmental conservation. *Pa'rappo* and *simba* are of importance to support the sustainable conservation campaign being programmed at karst area of Maros and to be a new center of eco-tourism, resulting in the improved economy of the locals.

Keywords: indigenous rite; conservation; maros

1 Introduction

The karst formations of Maros have three heritage elements. First, cultural heritage, both tangible aspect in the form of pre-historic sites, dating their origins back to 45,500 cal BP [1] and intangible department, manifested in the assimilated culture of Bugis and Makassar. Second, the potential of abundant biodiversity [2], consisting of 709 types of flora and 740 types of fauna, 364 of which are Sulawesi endemic [3]. Third, geo-heritage property, characterized by limestone in an area of 300 km², being a deposit from Eocene time, dated to 57,000,00 – 47,000,000 cal BP [4]. The heritage has been a big draw to all related stakeholders on the one hand, and is crucial for the well-being of the local people on the other hand.

As are many other communities other pre-industrial communities in many parts of the world [5],[6],[7], the Salenrang people are ecologically inseparable from their surrounding environment, these close ties are internalized in the traditions and symbols they inherit. The symbols in the traditions contain religious advice, faith and ethics as well as moral lessons being passed down from a generation to another. Those symbols help people communicate, preserve and develop their knowledge, much less the way of life [8]. The traditional rite called *pa'rappo* and *cera bulu* are of the objectives to transmit preserved social values, wisdom and strong identity. Meanings inserted in symbolic fashion never cease to be topics of discussion, and so are the case for *pa'rappo* and *cera bulu*; those two need studying much further [9].

Since more than two decades ago, scientists have realized the importance of exploring local wisdom as part of a conservation strategy [10]. The current study aims to discuss conserved concepts in the two rituals of the people from Salenrang village (Maros, South Sulawesi), that is *pa'rappo* and *cera bulu*. The *pa'rappo* and the *cera bulu* are important rituals of the people of Salenrang village in the past which were threatened with extinction in cultural practices. Whereas, *pa'rappo* and *cera bulu* are perceived as *sennu-sennuang* (best-practices) that help shape how the society deal one another and with the ecosystem they are part of. It is undeniable that both traditions are wisdom-rich and are vital for genealogical inheritance marker and natural conservations.

The data was collected over the course of six months using two data-collection techniques: deep interview and participatory observation. A deep interview was done through a meeting with six key informants and thirty people in that society to dig into their collective memory, values, acknowledgement, and the meaning of ritual practices. The participatory observation was conducted by participating in some *pa'rappo* and *cera' bulu* rituals. This method includes data context and narrative information about observed situations, actors, and behaviour. Data were noted, recorded and documented for further analysis. The narrative analysis being through, the writers then verified the collected data and later drew conclusions.

2 Methods

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3 Results and discussions

Salenrang village is inhabited by 1,469 families, with the total population of 5,356 people, 2,688 of whom are women, and 2,668 are men. Salenrang village is the traditional center to the surrounding communities. Salenrang means independent, thus making it a safe place for anyone coming in for any reason, like fleeing from an enemy during warfare in the past. Everyone present in Salenrang was considered a free man.

The people from Salenrang applied three main institutions: *dampang* or *gallarang* (administration), *pinati* (the educated and traditional leaders), and *sanro* (fortune teller). Social roles are inherited (*soessorang*) through learning and natural selection in a certain bloodline (*sipammanakang*). The successors will bear and be identified with a title *pa'daengan*, including the family of *dampang* (community leader).

Bulu Barakka site is considered as the mother of forest nearby the karst formation, believed to be the partner of Bulu Sipong to the north. The cosmologic account is crucial in the local people's perception towards the forest, taking it as *anrong lino* (the mother of life); the ritual called *cera' bulu* is held there. They conserve two elements: social inheritance and control of

nature aspects. Identity preservation is manifested in *Pa'rappo* dalam in local marriage, while *cera bulu* is dedicated to sustaining the nature.

3.1 *Pa'rappo*: inheritance and cosmos harmony

Pa'rappo is a symbol of a clan succession and symbol of continuity of life. A coconut tree is synonymous for *pa'rappo* since no part of it is rendered useless. It holds a great number of benefits: the fruit is of herbal and medicinal properties; the stem is used in the upper structure of a house; the leaves are for wrapping and containing purposes and the sticks are for broom sticks.

In light of the people of Salenrang taking *pa'rappo* for genealogical conservation, Geertz believed that the practice reflects on the bloodline [11]. The family of the groom will get it ready, selecting the best coconut bud. It is chosen from the bud or tree presented at the wedding of the parents, demonstrating the sustainable chain of life. *Pa'rappo* indicates that the family will only deliver their prepared and selected sons.

In the traditional wedding ceremony of the locals, the family of the groom is obliged to provide coconut bud (seed bud) for *pa'rappo*. Until recently, without a *pa'rappo*, anyone coming with the intention of proposing a daughter in Salenrang will be denied approval. It is not a bride price, but is part of it. The bride price covers rice fields or fish pond. *Pa'rappo*, a ready to plant coconut bud, will be held by the newly-wed couple and be planted at the time of the first pregnancy as *simba*. The *Pa'rappo* reflects the conservationist view in that it believes humans are born concurrently with the presence of a plant (*simba*).

It is important for Salenrang village people to maintain and pass on their hereditary markers through the *pa'rappo* and *simba* cycle, as well as to maintain the balance of nature (conservation). *Simba* in turn will serve as *pa'rappo* when a baby boy has come of age. At a time around which a baby has turned into a 15-year old or 17-year old boy, the *pa'rappo* of his parents (predecessor) will have born fruits, ready to be presented to the future wife (successor). The tradition is a way of revisiting the past in the present [12].

In the Salenrang community, social roles are linear and are inherited by descendants (*sossorang*) as in the family tree (*sipammanakang*). Therefore, the *pa'rappo* ritual and *simba* symbol are important for passing on patrilineal social status. Despite not widely practiced currently, the expected baby takes sacred preparation. The new family will start caring for the *simba* since the first month of pregnancy. Into the seventh month, the family carries out *passili* ritual, in which the baby-carrying mother is bathed. Later, when the baby is successfully delivered, the *simba* will be planted along with the baby's placenta, on that very day. Placed near the planting site is a candle or a torch, in the hope that the new born will have a good life ahead. In the seventh mom, the conceived being is considered a creature needing external help and prayers to really come to life.

Simba says a lot about the growth of the conceived child. If *simba* does not survive the seventh month, the conceived is believed to not live long. Proper attention allocated to *simba* reflects on the good quality of upbringing the parents will provide later on. They do believe that a baby's birth should go hand in hand with a new planted tree (*simba*).

The people of Salenrang, as are all aspects of a coconut tree, are likable: lovable and favored thanks to the fine philosophy passed down to them from the early age. A coconut tree is an ultimate analogy, as can be seen in their famous narrative: "*Rampea golla na kurampeki Kaluku*" (meaning: tell good stories about me, I will remember you the best way possible).

It is patrilineal succession that is practiced in most part of karst formations of Maros, including Salenrang. Patrilineality gives priority to men as heirs of property or titles. They always expect their first born to be male, discernable in the preparation of *pa'rappo* as a succession mechanism. *Pa'rappo* concept covers such terms as predecessors, contemporaries, and successors (see figure 1).

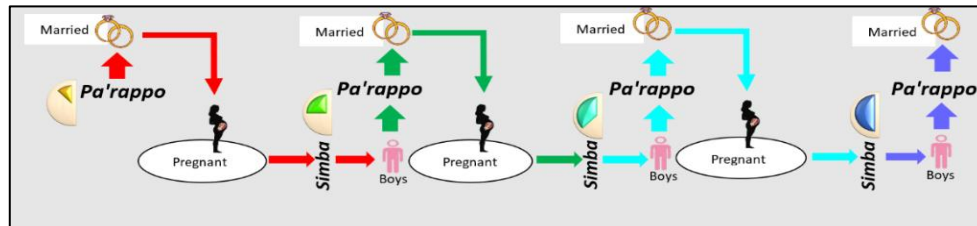


Fig. 1. The chart of inheritance and nature harmony concept based on *pa'rappo* and *simba* practiced at Salenrang village, Bontoa District, Maros Regency

Pa'rappo was widely practiced until 1980s in Maros, particularly in Salenrang village. However, the tradition is now in the verge of extinction. On September 20, 2020, we managed to get to see the historic ritual in the wedding of Mita and Muhammad Basir at Bontopuru' settlement. Muhammad Basir is a committee member at *Komunitas Hutan Batu* (see, figure 2). Syahrir, the village head told us that *pa'rappo* was originally presented in a mature coconut seed bud, not the one with long leaves. In spite of the shift, the vital part is that the community members do not capitalize the difference; they carry on with a focus on the essence behind the practice.

In modern time, the local people have not really shifted from the traditional values. They will grapple with pain when they find their first born to be a girl, as opposed to a great joy when it is a baby boy. They believe that the genealogical identity stops when they fail to have a boy, forcing them to labor over time to get one. *Pa'rappo* is not only a symbol of genealogy, but it is also seen as a way of sustaining a familial identity. It reflects an effort to construct a family tree, spanning from the past to the future [13].



Fig. 2. The presentation of *pa'rappo* in the wedding of Muhammad Basir at Bontopuru' settlement, Salenrang village, Maros regency, September 20, 2020 (personal collection)

3.2 *Cera bulu'*: nature protection rites

Apart from *pa'rappo*, the people of Salenrang also practice another ritual called *cera' bulu'*. They have been given an advice that goes: “*teako panraki bulu'ka*” (take care of the mountain). *Cera' bulu'* takes place at Bulu Barakka site as the center of the world, and some-times at Leang Karama site (see figure 3), a vast savannah that has gone unoccupied lately (see map, figure. 4).

Cera' bulu' is performed by community members for two purposes or intentions: (1) to obtain permission (*mappatabe'*) and (2) to release vows (promises). It is a ritual meant to control and to honor the mountain and its ecosystem.

According to their oral history, the *cera' bulu'* ritual originated during the reign of Dampang Salenrang, a wise and just king who appointed a *pinati* (shaman) to guard and control forest encroachment. Locally, it is known as *pinati romang*. Traditionally, every member of the community must obtain permission from the *pinati romang* before utilizing forest resources. To obtain permission, one must perform a *cera' bulu'* ritual.

The tradition dates its origin back to the administration under Dampang Salenrang. It is not yet clear when exactly *pinati romang* (the keeper of the forest) lost the role; however, the real thing is the post *pinati* was divided into two categories: (i) *pinati galung*, tasked to take care of the rice fields and (ii) *pinati romang*, tasked to care for the forest. The former handled the agricultural domain, while the latter, the occupation of the forest.

In Dampang Salenrang's reign, a green light from *pinati romang* was a must in order to get an access to the forest. Besides, *pinati romang* determined the trees to be cut down, and the locations to do so. Furthermore, *pinati romang* also controlled the utilization of guano fertilizer. The *cera bulu'* was the prerequisite of them all.

The ritual was initiated by asking the permission of *pinati romang*. In a meeting with *pinati romang*, all the requirements were informed and the date was determined. It would only take a rooster for someone wishing to look for food or fertilizer. The cockscomb being sliced a little, *pinati romang* would then apply the blood to all the tools needed for the purposes and later informed the time and place to execute the plan. The visitors would be given some advice and were required to pay attention to the natural signs (*rapang-rapang lino*) encountered throughout their activities.

Cera' bulu' was a medium to deliver their promise (vow) or ask permission of the nature (*mappatabe'*). *Cera' bulu'* for the latter purpose is performed in the event of building a few houses. The ritual being through at daytime, the stakes would be stuck into the ground at night. When those stakes were gone in the following day, it is a sign of denial to go on with the plan. It being carefully observed, the ritual is actually a way of refraining someone of imposing his ambitious plan. The practice integrates work ethics, character and life style in the context of well-run setting [14].



Fig. 3. Ancient handprint at the *cera bulu'* rite area, Leang Karama site, Salenrang village.

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