

Traditional Arts as Pillars of Agrarian Culture in Ethnic Communities in South Sulawesi

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Abstract. This research aims to examine the traditional arts that support the agrarian culture in South Sulawesi. The rice plants for the people of South Sulawesi is a major commodity, it is an integral part that supports the economic cycle, rituals, and community ceremonies. Examination of the evidence using ethnographic methods presented through a qualitative approach resulted in a comprehensive explanation of the components supporting agrarian culture, such as the mappalili, maddoja bine, and harvest thanksgiving ceremonies including appadekko, mappadandang, mabbalendo, maddoa, sere api and gelong pare. The principal thing that embodies the entity of agricultural culture is a constellation of traditional cultural art practices that are communal in South Sulawesi society as a supporter of agrarian culture. The arts that support this agrarian culture are important to preserve amidst the challenges of a futuristic world so that the integrity of tradition remains an integral cultural entity of Indonesian civilization.

Keywords: Ethnographic; Traditional arts; Agrarian culture; South Sulawesi

1 Introduction

The agrarian culture has been a cornerstone of human civilization in the archipelago, with substantial developments in paddy cultivation, both rainfed and wetland. The use of livestock for cultivating fields and subsequently trading the harvested crops has been a recurrent practice [1]. The commodity of rice in the eastern regions of Indonesia became a primary supply, controlling trade connections between the Nusantara market and the international market in the 18th century [2]. The recurrent international trade routes led to a prominent increase in rice trade in the South Sulawesi region, making it a significant export commodity highly sought after by traders passing through the Celebes port [3].

The popular agrarian culture in South Sulawesi is inseparable from the recursive cultural entity preserved by the community. This plant is a manifestation of the identity of the offspring of Batara Guru, transforming into rice, known in South Sulawesi as Sangiang Serri. The embodiment of the rice goddess, Sangiang Serri, bringing prosperity to the people of Celebes, is a manifestation of divine blessings, resulting in abundant rice yields for the community [4]. Various narratives legitimize the influence of Sangiang Serri in the success of rice harvests in South Sulawesi. Legitimization is expressed in manuscripts read before rice planting activities (maddoja bine), for the Bugis community in Wajo, it is commonly referred to as "massure" [5]. Legitimization through myths is further reinforced by findings of rice husks dating back to the 13th century in Wajo. Phytoliths or rice husks from the remains of processed rice pounded by the community to obtain rice were found at the archaeological site of allangkananngnge. This

proves that recursive rice cultivation was practiced by the Bugis community in South Sulawesi [6].

Farming culture becomes an integral part of community life, revealing the social system of the community in terms of subsistence, cultivation, agrarian arts, ceremonies, and marketing [7]. Whitten [8] emphasizes that communities residing on the Sulawesi peninsula (Celebes) have been producing rice for centuries as a life sustainer. The affiliation with this agricultural history manifests in every product supporting agriculture, including artistic products that support the rice cultivation process and harvest festivals.

This research employs ethnographic methods, which serve as a reference for collecting evidence in research, exploring the cultural life of ethnic groups to gather elements in social systems that can be known by researchers. Ethnographic methods are coherent in qualitative research exploration [9]. Ethnography's characteristics involve researchers exploring community cultures and presenting in-depth evidence. Marvasti [10] emphasizes that in social qualitative research, three aspects are crucial: researcher involvement, data analysis in a social context, and presenting text from research results. Harahap [11] also reveals that qualitative studies investigate human behavior, individuals, or social groups, and the analysis of evidence can be described in actual terms. The results of data analysis, interpreted subjectively, represent a form of solving the determinations of the phenomena studied.

Entities in ethnographic studies in the context and field conditions align with what will be presented in the research results. Windian [12] states that ethnographic studies can provide cultural bond theories, discover grounded theories, and understand human behavior and complexity. In line with this understanding, the constellation in ethnographic studies can be used as an approach to understand the ethnic groups inhabiting South Sulawesi regarding artistic activities that support agricultural institutions, including ritual traditions and ceremonies.

2 Result and Discussion

2.1 Ritual Mappalili

Myths, history, or stories with sacred or profane values are continuously passed down from generation to generation. Typically, this serves as a source for recursive traditional arts. Traditional arts undergo development in rural areas and are closely related to the community, culture, and environment where the art flourishes. Individuals living in agricultural environments create and develop various arts related to traditions in farming activities [13]. The farming community culture that accompanies every agricultural cultural institution in South Sulawesi embodies the pattern of activities that support each of its cultural products, and agricultural elements manifest in every ritual, up to harvest thanksgiving ceremonies. This becomes a part of the agrarian life in South Sulawesi.

The cultural rotation in the era of a futuristic world poses a challenge in maintaining the integrity of traditions. Traditional practices are entities that can be embraced within agrarian culture [14]; [15]. The constellation in agricultural rituals among communities in South Sulawesi, particularly the Bugis ethnic group, involves the mappalili ritual [16]; [17]. This ritual is performed to determine the timing of rice cultivation, prepare agricultural tools, and all these rituals are carried out collectively through the "gotong royong" or communal culture as a consensus in farming [19]. The mappalili ritual is a communal expression of the Bugis community, serving as a symbolic entity [20]. It is conducted before rice planting, with prayers for rain to facilitate the cultivation of the rice field. Additionally, the mappalili ritual aims to

pay homage to the ancestors, especially Sangiang Serri, for the rice plants. This ritual is legitimized through Bissu as a mediator in the sacred procession [21].



Fig. 1. The mappalili procession carried out by the Bissu as the ritual leader [22]

2.2 Ritual Maddoja Bine

Maddoja bine [23] is a recurring agricultural ritual tradition practiced by the community in South Sulawesi to honor the rice seeds that will be cultivated during the agreed-upon planting season. This ritual is a manifestation of respect for the rice goddess (Sangiang Serri) among the farming communities of the Bugis in South Sulawesi. The communal spirit and noble values embedded in this ritual practice serve as hope and prayers for a bountiful harvest of rice.



Fig. 2. The maddoja bine ritual procession performed by Sandro as the ritual leader in praying for rice seeds [24]

2.3 Harvest Thanksgiving Ceremony Tradition in Agrarian Society

For the people of South Sulawesi, the tradition of expressing gratitude for the harvest is a communal expression that is part of the agrarian culture among the various ethnic groups inhabiting the region. Harvest festival ceremonies exhibit constellations in different areas of South Sulawesi. The traditions have specific names, for instance, in the western part of South Sulawesi predominantly inhabited by the Makassar ethnic group, it is known as appadekko. Meanwhile, in the central to northern regions of South Sulawesi, it is recognized as mappadandang, sere api, maddoa, ma'balendo, and gelong pare in the northern Toraja region.



Fig. 3. Mappadendang, the community collectively pounds to produce sound using the mortar and pestle [25]

Appadekko [26] is a societal entity representing the process of expressing gratitude for the abundant rice harvest. This ceremony is conducted to embody the spirit of the community through collective efforts. Similarly, practices like mappadendang, maddoa, and sere api [24] are recurrent among the Bugis ethnic group as part of their rice barn traditions. The communal act of pounding rice together in a mortar reflects solidarity, entertainment, harmony, and empathy among the community towards the bountiful harvest.



Fig. 4. Ma'balendo activity, where mothers collectively pound together to produce sound using the mortar and pestle [27]

The agrarian culture practiced by the rural community in the Luwu region, such as ma'balendo [28], is also an entity embraced within rice harvest ceremonies that harmonize the various genders in the community. Additionally, the comprehensive harvest festival ceremonies in the communities residing in the northern mountainous regions of South Sulawesi manifest in gelong pare (rice songs). This ceremony is part of the aluk pare [29], which signifies agricultural institutions in the society of the Toraja land. The expression of gratitude for the collective effort and unity of the community is an entity achieved in these rice harvest festivals.

3 Conclusion

The cultivation of rice as a staple crop has been practiced by the people of South Sulawesi for centuries, serving not only as a staple food but also as a means of livelihood. This agricultural tradition has contributed to the development of substantial farming systems, including rainfed and irrigated rice cultivation. Rice production in South Sulawesi has also become a major commodity for trade, connecting local markets with the international market. This agrarian culture has exerted a significant influence, shaping the traditions ingrained in society. Rituals and ceremonies associated with farming practices, communal values, and traditions embedded in agricultural activities have formed the cultural identity and social system of the community in South Sulawesi. Manifestations in practices such as the mappalili ritual, maddoja bine, and harvest thanksgiving ceremonies reflect a rooted affiliation between agriculture, spirituality, and communal values in the region. Preserving these cultural practices is crucial for maintaining the integrity of traditions amidst the challenges of a futuristic world. The agricultural culture in South Sulawesi not only supports the livelihoods of the local community but also plays a significant role in influencing the civilization of life in the archipelago.

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