



Original Article

Religion Acculturation With Merariq Lombok Traditions, A Study Of The Sorong Serah Aji Krama Procession Symbolic Meaning From A Cultural Communication Perspective

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Abstract:

The blend of cultural and religious values in the Merariq tradition of the Sasak people is closely related to the perspective of artistic communication. Communication and culture have a very close relationship, where one of the main functions of communication is to disseminate culture. The cultural communication process in question encompasses all stages in the Merariq tradition. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive qualitative approach and applies Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework. The study results show that integrating religious and cultural values in the Merariq tradition produces a harmonious blend. This acculturation has elevated the status of both values to a higher level.

Keywords: Acculturation, Philosophy, Communication

Introduction

The influence of Islam on local culture will not eliminate the crucial values of that culture. However, in practice, this culture may experience changes when it is adopted. This happens because Islam can dialogue with local culture and ultimately form distinctive and unique variants of Islam, such as Madurese Islam, Javanese Islam, Sundanese Islam, Malay Islam, Sasak Islam, and others. According to [Suprpto, \(2020\)](#) this variant is not a form of Islam separated from its purity, but rather an Islamic culture that has successfully acculturated with local culture. In simple terms, acculturation means mixing two cultures, which produces a new culture without eliminating the distinctive characteristics of each culture. In other words, there is an inculturation process. In cultural studies, inculturation is accepting and integrating new teachings into an existing culture through adaptation or accommodation. This process aims to maintain the



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authenticity of identity. Therefore, Islam remains ideologically linked to its roots, while local culture remains even though Islam is present in it ([Muqoyyidin, 2013](#)). In everyday life, regardless of ethnic background, region, or religious authority, humans constantly communicate with people from different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. Interacting or communicating with people from other cultures is a new experience that will always be encountered. The principle of communication states that humans always communicate and cannot avoid communication ([Liliweri, 2000](#)). In other words, humans communicate daily because this communication has become a part of human life from birth to death. In terminology, culture is the totality of beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artificial artifacts that characterize a human population. So, culture consists of learned patterns of general behavior for members of a particular society, namely the unique lifestyle of a specific group or person. Culture is a collection of values, beliefs, behaviors, habits, and attitudes that differentiate one society. The culture of a society determines the rules that govern how companies are run in that society ([Gunanto 2014 in Suhairi et al., 2023](#)). According to [Paganini et al., \(2023\)](#) Sorong Serah Aji Krama is one of a series of traditional Sasak wedding ceremonies that are still maintained today. This tradition has been going on for quite a long time. It isn't easy involving male and female family members, traditional leaders, and the community around the event's location. The Sasak people believe this ritual is considered sacred because it is used as a benchmark for whether a marriage is valid in the eyes of custom. A person will be recognized as part of the Sasak community if he has carried out these traditions to obtain his rights and obligations as a relative or community member.

Communication is related to human behavior and the satisfaction of the need to interact with other humans. Everyone needs social relationships with other people, and this need can be fulfilled by exchanging messages, which functions as a bridge to unite people who, without communication, would be isolated ([Syarifah, 2016](#)). According to Edward T. Hall's intercultural communication theory, communication and culture have a close relationship. According to him, communication is culture, and culture is communication. Hall first differentiated high-context culture from low-context culture. Low-context communication, such as verbal and explicit messages and a direct and frank speaking style, characterizes low-context culture. Adherents of this culture say that what they mean is what they say. On the other hand, in high context culture, like most implicit, indirect, and not straightforward messages, the actual message may be hidden behind nonverbal behavior, voice intonation, hand movements, more contextual understanding, more friendly and tolerant of the community's culture. Sometimes, verbal statements can conflict with non-verbal messages. Humans who are accustomed to high-context cultures are more skilled at reading non-verbal behavior and will also be able to do the same. The characteristics of high-context communication are that it is long-lasting, slow to change, and binds groups of users ([Aripudin, 2011](#)).

Religion has various social functions: education, salvation, social supervision, fostering brotherhood, and transformative functions ([Hidayah, 2003](#)). The procession of Sorong Serah Aji Krama is a custom that requires symbolic meaning and should be used as a medium to get closer to God. However, the problem currently faced is the need for more public understanding, especially among the younger generation, of the symbolic meaning of the Sorong Serah Aji Krama procession. This is caused by developments over time and the influence of foreign culture that has yet to be filtered. This lack of understanding means that the symbols in the procession cannot be actualized in everyday

life.

Methods

This research is qualitative. It includes essential steps, such as formulating questions and procedures, collecting data from participants, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data ([Creswell, 2019](#)). In other words, qualitative research methods aim to explain a phenomenon through in-depth data collection. The author will apply a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach emphasizes an in-depth description of a phenomenon, such as behavior, attitudes, or experiences, to understand the phenomenon's characteristics, context, and meaning without relying on numbers or statistics ([Moelong, 2008](#)). This means that information is collected through observation, direct interaction, or text evaluation and then analyzed narratively to gain a deeper understanding of the topic being written about. This research was conducted in Darmaji Village, Kopang District, Central Lombok Regency, NTB. It focuses on the impact of acculturation between religious values and the merariq customs of the Sasak Lombok tribe. It examines the meaning of the Sorong Serah Aji Krama procession symbols from a cultural communication perspective.

Results

Religious Acculturation with Merariq Lombok Customs

As a flexible religion, Islam grew and developed into the beliefs of the Lombok people, which then blended into culture and society. Islam, which has blended in and become the belief of the people of Lombok, is better known for its combination of religious and cultural values in its diverse practices ([Fikri, 2023](#)). With the arrival of Islam, there was a unification between pre-Hindu-Buddhist elements and Islamic teachings. This is based on the development of Hindu-Buddhist religion and culture in Indonesia, which is adaptable to local culture ([Afandi, 2018](#)).

From the perspective of a traditional figure in Darmaji Village, [Salamudin, \(2024\)](#) said that there was a mutually accommodating interaction between Islam and local culture. According to him, this is not a mixture but a process of mutual acceptance and giving, which produces the unique characteristics of Sasak Islam. This means that in its aspect of existence, Islam is greatly influenced by the social context in which it grows and develops. This influence is reflected in the various ceremonies and customs carried out by the residents of Darmaji Village. Thus, Islam can be friendly and tolerant towards multiple cultures, including the Merariq tradition. The Merariq tradition, part of the local cultural heritage, has been integrated with Islamic values. This tradition describes Islamic teachings that have been acculturated and passed on from generation to generation ([Al-Amin & Asras, 2020](#)). Apart from simply transmitting culture from one generation to the next to preserve ancestors' heritage, implementing the merariq tradition also has a deep meaning and applies Islamic values in religious, social, and cultural life. The Islamic values in the Merariq traditional procession in the Darmaji Village community include several things. First, the aqidah value applied in the merariq tradition is the people's belief in Allah SWT, which is that human beings are created in pairs ([Asbar & Setiawan, 2022](#)). In Islam, the values of aqidah are a solid foundation for Muslims in understanding their relationship with Allah SWT ([Sarke, 2024a](#)). Second, sharia values (worship values) regulate the relationship between humans and Allah, humans and others, and humans and nature. This sharia value, contained in the Merariq tradition, can be seen in connecting

relationships and forming a family through a sanctioned marriage devoted to Allah SWT ([Asbar & Setiawan, 2022](#)).

Third, moral values. Moral values are the implementation of humankind's attitudes and actions toward God and human attitudes toward each other ([Asbar & Setiawan, 2022](#)). By applying moral values, a person can strengthen social relationships, create a harmonious environment, and create a better society ([Jeumpa, 2017](#)). Religion symbolizes the value of obedience to God, while culture reflects how humans survive and interact in their social environment. This means that both religion and culture provide a deep perspective and understanding of facing life by God's will and human values ([Kuntowijoyo, 2001](#)). In line with the explanation above, Nurcholis Madjid in Faisol Rizal emphasized that religion and culture can be distinguished but cannot be separated (Faisol, 2019). Religion is final, universal, eternal (perennial), and knows no change (absolute). Meanwhile, culture is particular, relative, and temporary. Religion without culture can indeed develop as an individual religion, but without culture, religion as a collectivity will not have a place in society ([Johairi & Suparman, 2014](#)). Religion has an active role in every procession. This is because the Islamic faith is a belief that contains the principles of religious law, also known as Islamic sharia. One of these laws discusses the marriage process in Islamic teachings. The Merariq tradition, as a local cultural heritage that is closely related to Islamic values, is a tradition that contains Islamic religious teachings that have become an inseparable part of the lives of the people of Lombok. In practice, the merariq tradition is not just a form of cultural transfer from generation to generation to maintain the ancestors' heritage but also includes deep meanings and the application of Islamic values. This involves religious, social, and cultural experiences that occur in society ([Saidun & Encung, 2023](#)).

The Meaning of the Symbol of the Sorong Serah Aji Krama Procession from a Cultural Communication Perspective

The phrase "Sorong Serah Aji Krama" consists of two parts, namely "Sorong Serah," which means handover, and "Aji Krama," which consists of "Aji," which means value, and "Krama," which means custom ([Sarke, 2024](#)). Thus, Sorong Serah Aji Krama can be interpreted as handing over and accepting traditional values that have become a tradition. In this case, [Zakaria, \(2018\)](#) in the Law and Sharia Journal also explained that Sorong Serah comes from two words, "Sorong" which means to give, and "Serah," which means to hand over. Sorong Serah is integral to the Sasak tribe's traditional wedding ceremony. The Sorong Serah tradition is used to hand over Aji Krama, a payment agreed upon before the marriage, and customary fines. The handover of the Aji Krama symbolizes the social status of the bride and groom, especially the bride and their children ([Sarke, 2024](#)). A prospective bride from a noble family will have higher Aji Krama values than a bride from a Jajar Karang family. Each Aji Krama according to social status is as follows: Raden scored Aji Krama (100), Permenak (99), Perwangse (66), and Jajar Karang (33) ([Salamudin, 2024](#)). Cultural communication reflects how humans live their lives in their environment. In this environment, habits will emerge, which become the basis for forming traditions or culture. Cultural communication patterns, such as language, social actions, and practices in wedding ceremonies, are all rooted in cultural communication ([Hamsun & Aminulloh, 2017](#)). From a cultural communication perspective, the traditional procession "Sorong Serah Aji Krama" can be categorized as a cultural communication situation. The cultural problem in implementing a ritual ceremony is a provision that arises from the culture itself. The creation that arises from the ritual reflects a complex communication

situation that originates from the community itself because traditions result from the community's creativity ([Hamsun & Aminulloh, 2017](#)).

The cultural communication situation describes the implementation of a ceremony ([Hamsun & Aminulloh, 2017](#)). This includes the entire series of rituals in the traditional Sasak marriage process, from the initial to final stages, including the conventional Sorong Serah Aji Krama ritual. The Sorong Serah Aji Krama procession will go through a series of stages, namely, starting from gegawan preparation, winnowing preparation, the arrival of the pisolo, arrival of the pusher, song process, handing over and receiving the Aji Krama, menggali tali jinnah, and beselawat (distribution of witness money) ([Fitriyani et al., 2018](#)). Sorong Serah Aji Kramagame a sacred traditional symbol. The view held by the Sasak tribe is as follows: "Aji" means "Datu" (king) in Islam, who is called caliph. "Krama" means law or regulations. "Game Suci" means Islamic religion. "Lambang Adat" means the social and moral ethical rules that have developed and are collectively accepted by the Sasak tribe ([Fitriyani et al., 2018](#)). In his understanding, what is "Sorong Serahkan" is a symbol realized in the form of an object rich in philosophical meaning contained therein. These objects consist of; dismissal, copy dede, peleng, weak and olen-olen soles, declaration, speech breakers ([Sulkhad, 2013](#)). The meaning of Sorong Serah Aji Krama is a sacred symbol from the beginning to the end of a wedding or inauguration ceremony, and it determines the social status of the bride and groom ([Rahmasari & Hidajat, 2017](#)).

a. **Penginang Kuning (Declaration)**

Penginang Kuning represents the universe, within which are two folded pieces of cloth, black cloth below and white cloth above, tied with raw thread. This symbolizes two people who have been united through a legal marriage bond ([Zuhdi, 2012](#)). The difference between besejati and beselabar is using a black cloth on top and a white cloth on the bottom. This shows that the marriage is not yet valid because the marriage contract (betikah) still needs to be carried out ([Bardiman, 2024](#)).

b. **Tapak-Lemah and Olen-Olen**

Etymologically, "Tapak- Lemah" means stepping on the ground, while "olen-olen" refers to increasingly weaving ([Zuhdi, 2012](#)). In the context of Sasak tribal wedding customs, "tapak lemah" and "olen-olen" refer to several woven cloths brought during the Sorong Serah ceremony, which are adapted to the social status of the bride and groom as part of the Aji Krama ([Sulkhad, 2013](#)). In this connection, Lalu Salamudin explained, "tapak lemah" or "nampak lemah" consists of two words; "nampak," which means visible, precise, or touchable, and "lemah" which means land or earth ([Salamudin, 2024](#)). This implies that all humans live and grow from the land or earth and will return to the land. This philosophy aims to remind humans that birth is through a sacred process.

c. **Salin Dede (Substitute For Ai' Susu Inaq)**

Linguistically, salin dede means replacement of maintenance and replacement of breast milk. In Sasak tribal tradition, this refers to a set of possessions (arte gegawan) brought by the man during the Sorong Serah event to the woman's family ([Zuhdi, 2012](#)). This symbolizes the transfer of care duties and responsibilities from the mother or the woman's family to the husband or the man's family so that the woman's family no longer has responsibility for her child. Items that become Salin Dede include ([Sarke, 2024](#)): 1) Ceraken (a container for storing kitchen spices and family medicines made from lontar leaves). 2) Semprong (bamboo/reed). 3) Kedongan (women's belt in the form of a long woven cloth). 4) Sarong. 5) Plain white cloth. 6) Raw thread. All these possessions are combined and tied with raw thread.

d. **Pemecat Senggang**

Linguistically, Pemecat Sengkang means removing earrings. In the context of Sasak weddings, Pemecat Sengkang refers to a set of 'arte Begawan' that must be brought during the Sorong Serah ceremony in gold jewelry, which symbolizes that the bride is no longer a virgin (Zuhdi, 2012). The Sasak people habitually pay little attention to their appearance after marriage (don't dress up). If a woman dresses up after marriage, she will be considered a flirt or naughty woman (Wiranata, 2024). From this perspective, if they dress up, they will do it naturally and not excessively.

e. **Pelengkak**

Pelengkak is several arte gegawan (possessions) carried during the traditional Sorong Serah procession as a sign of redemption for shame. This Pelengkak is required if the woman who is Merariq predeceases her brother or if there are unmarried brothers (Zuhdi, 2012). The amount of property for this Pelengkak varies in each hamlet, but it usually ranges from IDR 1,000 to IDR 5,000.

f. **Pemutus Wicara**

Pemutus Wicara symbolized by a certain amount of money based on the social caste of the bride and groom. The money which is a symbol of this traditional procession is part of the arte gegawan which must be prepared. Usually it is in the form of coins wrapped in plastic and carried by the men during the Sorong Serah ceremony (Zuhdi, 2012). This Pemutus Wicara money is considered a pillar of order. Marriage is considered important and should not be abandoned because this money is testimony money (Wiranata, 2024).

Conclusion

In the Merariq tradition in Darmaji Village, cultural and religious elements are contained in each stage of the procession, from the beginning to the end. These values become guidelines for people in their social lives. Religious and cultural values are practiced according to the provisions passed down from generation to generation, reflecting harmony in cultural and religious acculturation. This procession combines traditional Sasak elements with Islamic values, creating harmony between religion and culture. Communication during the Sasak Merariq traditional procession describes three types of cultural communication: cultural communication events, situations, and actions. This cultural communication shows how humans live in their social environment, forming habits and traditions in the existing culture.

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