

THE SACREDNESS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE NGASUH GUMI TRADITION OF THE NORTH LOMBOK: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The criticality of Ngasuh Gumi ceremonial communication practices for the Tanjung people in North Lombok. The purpose of this study is to comprehend the significance and steps of the Ngasuh Gumi ceremonial procedure. An ethnographic design is a component of the qualitative research methodology. The findings demonstrated the significance of ritual communication in the Ngasuh Gumi tradition for the local population. Ritual communication is symbolic rather than information-focused. Confirmation, breaking, notification, matur penguningan, and burial of the buffalo head are among the processes. The Ngasuh Gumi ritual serves as a way of warding off danger in human life as well as a symbol of the "tri-relation" of human life, upholding and caring for the preservation of nature and ecology.

Keywords: *The Sacredness of Communication, Ritual, Ethnography, Ngasuh Gumi*

Abstrak

Urgensi praktik komunikasi ritual dalam tradisi *Ngasuh Gumi* bagi masyarakat Tanjung, Lombok Utara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami makna dan tahapan-tahapan proses ritual *Ngasuh Gumi*. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan rancangan etnografi. Hasil penelitian bahwa komunikasi ritual dalam tradisi *Ngasuh Gumi* memiliki makna yang mendalam bagi masyarakat. Komunikasi ritual dilakukan secara simbolik dan bukan berfokus pada transmisi informasi. Tahapannya terdiri dari konfirmasi, membangun, pemberitahuan, matur penguningan, dan penguburan kepala kerbau. Makna dari ritual *Ngasuh Gumi* adalah sebagai lambang "tri-relasi" kehidupan manusia, menjaga dan merawat kelestarian alam serta ekologi, dan sebagai bentuk penangkal bahaya dalam kehidupan manusia.

Kata Kunci: Sakralitas Komunikasi, Ritual, Etnografi, *Ngasuh Gumi*.



Lisensi

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A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a wide variety of ethnic groups, which contributes to its rich cultural diversity. This cultural diversity becomes local knowledge for the groups of people that cling to it. A series of physical acts or symbolic behaviors that are carried out with the intention of achieving a particular objective or goal can be referred to as ritual in some contexts. Additionally, in actuality, rituals might also include the recitation of particular mantras or words. Winnick defines ritual as "a set or series of acts, typically involving religion or magic, with the sequence defined by custom... they often spring from daily life." Ritual is a set of activities that invariably contains religion or magic and is disciplined via tradition.

Because rituals are daily behaviors, they are not exactly the same as worship. Thohir, on the other hand, defines ritual as a process of establishing or planning ties between people and the supernatural, people with one another, and people with their surroundings. In this view, a ritual is a method of communication that aims to express certain messages, packaged as symbols and accompanied by the cultural norms of the linked community.¹

Ritual processions have a tight relationship to symbolic communication since many of them employ symbols to reflect the desired outcome. There is undoubtedly a message that is intended to be transmitted to others or the environment by the symbolism used. A ritual's symbolic actions, which also serve to transmit intentions, wishes, requests, or prayers, can have a mystical or otherworldly scent. This might be a reference to a particular thing (in the animism notion) or to God Almighty, namely Allah SWT.

The expression or action form of communication, which typically takes place in unison by a particular society, is closely related to rituals or ritual communication in the context of communication. The community regularly engages in a variety of "rites of passage," both naturally occurring

¹ Ismail Arifuddin, *Agama Nelayan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

(condemnation of nature) and artificially created (artificial), in celebration and prevention (tolak bala).²

Selamet segara, pegawe gumi, selamat asuh, ngasuh gunung, gawe urip, sedekah turun ton (tek daya dan tek lauk), gawe pati, bisoq menik, and other ceremonies are just a few examples of the various rituals (ceremonies) that are present in the daily lives of the people of North Lombok. Other kinds of rituals, like safar bathing rituals, nyunatang rituals, puja taon and puja balit rituals, ngaponin (heirloom cleaning rituals), and muja wali rituals are also forms of ritual communication.

In the procession of these events, people utter words or perform symbolic behaviors. People participating in such forms of ritual communication reaffirm their commitment to the traditions of their family, community, tribe, nation, country, ideology or religion.³ Rituals can occasionally appear magical and be challenging to comprehend for those outside of a particular society or group of individuals. This makes sense given that the socio-cultural framework of the individuals or human society who perform the ritual determines its significance. Rituals are carried out in accordance with the community's understanding and in light of particular interests. Participants can convey their emotional commitments through ritual practices.

Every group has culturally specific beliefs and a system of ceremonies or rituals. Each stage of the ritual has a distinct meaning that may be challenging for outsiders to comprehend. This is so because customs and rituals that are part of a group are frequently associated with ceremonies. Couldry in Sri Handayani⁴ views ritual as an action that is repeated and passed down from

² Deddy Mulyana, *Ilmu Komunikasi Suatu Pengantar* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2001).

³ *Ibid*, 27.

⁴ Sri Handayani, 'Agriculture and Ritual: Pola Komunikasi Ritual Slametan Musim Taman Padi Di Ngemplak, Sambikerep, Surabaya', *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi (J-IKA)*, 5.1 (2018).

one generation to the next with values that are beyond earthly concerns. Customary aspects found in ritual practices occasionally make no sense.⁵

The Sokong indigenous community in Tanjung sub-district uses the term *Ngasuh Gumi*, which derives from the root word *Ngasuh*, which means to love. *Gumi*, on the other hand, is the Sasak word for the earth, which the Sokong people use to refer to nature itself. The *Ngasuh Gumi* ceremony is thus a manifestation of love for the natural world and everything within it, both visible and invisible to the naked eye.

The native inhabitants of Sokong, Tanjung Subdistrict, and North Lombok as a whole see the natural world and woods as a source of sustenance that must be protected for people and other living things. In order to raise people's awareness of the importance of preserving nature and its ecology, religious rites like *Ngasuh Gumi* are also a part of nature preservation. The conservation of nature (ecology) has a significant impact on people's lives on North Lombok and Lombok Island in general since it protects a variety of vital sources of livelihood for the local population. Because of this, the ancestors treated and saw nature as though it could converse and interact with people.

The physical and social context in which indigenous peoples currently reside is something they are quite familiar with. Because they uphold cultural traditions and local knowledge, they play a crucial role as a government partner in the region's advancement. Indigenous peoples' ritual practices ought to be preserved so that future generations can learn the significance of the universe's and humans' mutually reinforcing relationship. The idea of environmentally responsible sustainable development is also reflected in these ceremonies.

Similarly, the inhabitants of Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency, who are grouped in the traditional community, have a unique heritage of maintaining harmony with the cosmos and its contents through protecting nature. The *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition is the name given to the long-running

⁵ K.S. Maifianti, S. Sarwoprasodjo, and D. Susanto, 'Komunikasi Ritual Kanuri Blang Sebagai Bentuk Kebersamaan Masyarakat Tani Kecamatan Samatiga Kabupaten Aceh Barat Provinsi Aceh', *Jurnal Komunikasi Pembangunan*, 12.2 (2014).

ancestral heritage rite. The indigenous population of North Lombok continues to practice this custom in a few of locations, one of which is Sokong Village in Tanjung District. This ceremony is one of the community's sacred ceremonies, and it is distinguished by the sacrifice of cows or buffaloes. The meat is prepared and consumed all at once after being slaughtered.

Rituals performed in response to the community's condition as a result of natural disasters or human acts (artificial or otherwise) that disrupt the peace of everyday life in the community. The indigenous people of Sokong Tanjung Subdistrict attempt to balance their relationships with God, the natural world, their fellow humans, and lower-level species by performing this ceremony. The *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual is an example of a sort of rite that demands excellent communication during its execution in order to develop a shared understanding of the ritual's meaning in terms of both morals and events. Residents pray in unison while being led by kiyai and traditional elders in the traditional bale during the event's parade. They express gratitude and prayers to Allah SWT, the world's creator. In addition, the community traveled by foot to the site of the *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual under the leadership of the elders out of respect for the environment.

Based on the aforementioned primary themes, the issues examined in this study are communication methods, stages of the *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual tradition, and the significance of the *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition among the Sokong Indigenous People of Tanjung District. While determining the communication procedures and stages of the ritual process in the *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition, as well as determining the significance of the *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual in the Tanjung District Community, are the goals of this research.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a communicative ethnography method of qualitative research. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative approaches emphasize an event's dynamic process and describe cultural reality to expose its

significance.⁶ In keeping with the goals of the research, which included understanding the *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition's ritual procedure as well as the structure and significance of ritual communication practices among the indigenous Sokong people of Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency.

This research is based on four ethnographic assumptions of communication.⁷ First, In a culture, its members create shared meanings by using a common code. Second, Communicators in a cultural community need to coordinate their actions and are organized with a specific communication system. In addition, meanings and actions are specific to each community. Fourth, it has specificity in terms of meaning and action. In addition, it has specificity in how to understand the codes of meaning and action.

The research's ethnographic communication study, in this case focused on the Sokong Indigenous People of Tanjung Sub-district, aims to portray indigenous cultures. According to Neuman, ethnography is a sort of empirical research that provides a thorough explanation of all the components of a culture based on a local paradigm to aid in comprehending the issue being researched. The Indigenous Community of Sokong Village, Tanjung Subdistrict, is the focus of this study.

The stages in this research refer to Jerome Kerk and Marc L. Miller's perspectives.⁸ First, choose the community that will be the focus of your study; in this case, it will be the Indigenous Community of Tanjung Subdistrict's Sokong Village. Interviews are the second method of gathering research data. Making a research plan, which includes deciding what needs to be prioritized and creating a research schedule, is the first step in the stages that will be carried out while starting research (field work). The legitimacy of the research data will also be confirmed by other sources, and this will allow for a scientific justification of its validity.

⁶ Sri Handayani, *Agriculture and Ritual*,..., 43.

⁷ Kiki Zakiah, *Penelitian Etnografi Komunikasi: Tipe dan Metode*, *Jurnal Mediator*, Vol. 9, No.1, Juni 2008, 186.

⁸ Syamsul Dwi Maarif dalam <https://tirto.id/apa-saja-tahapan-tahapan-dalam-penelitian-etnografi-gb2L>, diunduh 12 Maret 2022

The third step is data interpretation, which entails sorting and interpreting the data that has been collected. This stage involves methodically organizing the already-existing data and validating it. Fourth, researchers will bid the field farewell. The manner in which one bids farewell to those present at the study site is respectful, upholding the previous rapport. Finally, researchers will handle the data by doing analyses on the results based on the theoretical framework

Include a description of the procedures followed to conduct the study. This research method's substance can take the shape of a research methodology, a research kind, or a research scope.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a process of conveying ideas from one person to another using particular medium, communication either directly seeks to explain the message that generates feedback. In order to convey the benefits of the message, communication from an Islamic perspective can be done with anyone. In order to maintain a healthy social life, communication is essential.⁹ This can be discovered in cultural communication.

Ritual communication plays a significant cultural significance, making them inseparable components of culture. The purpose of ritual communication is to satisfy individual identity, thus anyone engaging in ritual communication will undoubtedly demonstrate loyalty to their tribe, family, community, and worldview. Ritual communication places more importance on initiatives to realize knowledge with local diversity than on pursuits that center on centralized interaction.¹⁰

Ritual communication always considers the formal guidelines established in the everyday lives of language, aesthetics, and the relationship between leaders and citizens. The agreement on these criteria dates back a long

⁹ Kurniawan, A., Yumna, N., & Tantri, E. (2020). Resistensi Ruang Publik di Tengah Covid-19 Perspektif Islam dan Komunikasi Multikultural. *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, 12(1), 24–40. <https://doi.org/10.20414/jurkom.v12i1.2253>

¹⁰ Yohanes Ari Kuncoroyakti, 'Komunikasi Ritual Garebeg Di Keraton Yogyakarta', *Jurnal ASPIKOM*, 3.4 (2018).

time, just as language used in ritual communication differs from language used in ordinary communication.¹¹

Yenrizal came to the conclusion that ritual communication is intimately tied to the community's belief structure. The essence is that the community has a holistic understanding of the neighborhood, which is then actualized through a space for open communication about the circumstances that arise. It is vital to create areas for interaction with nature since the community has a stronger propensity to interpret the supernatural dominance that governs the world and its inhabitants.¹²

People who take part in altering the meaning of structured ceremonies are thought to be doing so in an effort to highlight their membership in the community at issue. Additionally, one can communicate their emotions through other forms of art, including music, dancing, romance, and written or verbal writings. ¹³ people can exchange emotional commitments during ritual activities, which also operate as a glue for the group's cohesion and a way for people to show their devotion to the group. In a world that would otherwise be chaotic, it establishes a sense of order. Rituals offer a cozy sense of predictability (*a sense of predictability*).

The strength of belief that a person internalizes during the ritual process, not the substance, is what is standard. ¹⁴ Thus, religious identity and shared values are directly tied to ritual communication. In order to establish its own institutions, a society will be able to develop symbols that everyone agrees upon. There are components of belief in this symbol that raise a symbol's sacred

¹¹ Yohanes Ari Kuncoroyakti, *Komunikasi Ritual*...., 624.

¹² K.S. Maifianti, dkk, *Komunikasi Ritual Kanuri Blang sebagai Bentuk Kebersamaan Masyarakat Tani Kecamatan Samatig Kabupaten Aceh Barat Provinsi Aceh*, *Jurnal Komunikasi Pembangunan*, Vol.12, No.2, Juli 2014, 1-2.

¹³ I Dewa Ayu Hendrawathy Putri, *Komunikasi Budaya, Pariwisata dan Religi: Komunikasi Ritual dalam Kearifan Lokal Pelestarian "Subak" di Bali*, (Surabaya: ASPIKOM, 2014), 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

value. To lead a community to have these things together, communication serves as a tool (method) in this regard.¹⁵

Communication will be designed in reference to the *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual organized by the Sokong indigenous community to be closely tied to the rites or festive activities of the nearby indigenous community. While the community will participate in the celebration as a whole. Collective rituals are performed to renew the community's collective wisdom and meanings. The rituals performed will mediate for community members (adat) so that they can keep their roots in the sacred. It is necessary to retouch the sacred nerves of consciousness since they contain sacred values and collective meanings.¹⁶

Ritual communication techniques will be centered on the celebration of ceremonies that are more sacred and holy in character, which calls for people to come together in their communities and fellowship as a group. Language is used within a community in both literal and symbolic ways, which are frequently observed in songs, games, stories, and oral histories. The goal of language use, however, is to confirm shared understandings within the community rather than to spread new knowledge. The goal is to explain issues that the community finds essential rather than trying to alter certain attitudes or beliefs.

Ritual communication is the same as transcendental communication in *Ngasuh Gumi* activities since it involves praying to Allah SWT, even exalting him, and acknowledging his presence in daily life.¹⁷ In light of this, it follows that humans unquestionably develop both a vertical relationship with the deity or mystical force they venerate and a horizontal relationship with other people.¹⁸ According to Effendy, who believes that God and human beings can

¹⁵ Sulaeman dan Mahdi Malawat, *Bakupukul Manyapu: Komunikasi Ritual Masyarakat Adat Mamala*, (Ambon: LP2M IAIN Ambon, 2018), Cetakan Pertama, 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁷ Nina Winangsih Syam, *Komunikasi Transendental: Perspektif Sains Terpadu*, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2015), xiii- xvi.

¹⁸ Abdul Rasyid Ridho, *Komunikasi Profetik Qur'ani: Konsep dan Strategi Mambangun Masyarakat Madani*, (Mataram: Sanabil, 2021), 281-282.

communicate in a transcendent way. Communication is implemented by the use of supernatural forces.¹⁹

On the one hand, Ibrahim claims that transcendental communication (ritual-pen) is one of the tenets of prophetic communication since, when combined with prophetic, it implies that the Prophet Muhammad Saw is responsible for information and value transformation operations.²⁰ Local cultural communication has influenced Islam's use of communication throughout its history, from its inception until the Qur'anic text. The Qur'an, the sunnah, and the hadith are the strongest examples of oral communication in Islamic civilization.

The study of cultural communication includes ritual communication as well, and the two are hard to distinguish from one another. A person's use of language, gesture, dress, and accessories might provide information about their cultural background. Maintaining a group's culture will be easier with effective prophetic communication between generations.²¹

This leads to the conclusion that ritual communication in the *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition refers to the process of transforming messages from communicators using verbal and non-verbal language (symbols, symbols, signs, and other signs) to communicants (the community), who tend to believe in the existence of a supernatural power that governs the universe through dialogue. Here, the communicator can be from the followers (the traditional community in general) or the opinion leaders (traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders). The Sokong indigenous community's *Ngasuh Gumi* tradition of ritual communication carries the values of prophetic communication. Maintaining culture with those from the same culture as well as those from other cultures even becomes a new step.

¹⁹ Onong Uchjana Effendy, *Ilmu, Teori dan Filsafat Komunikasi*, (Bandung: PT. Citra Aditya Bakti, 2003), 342.

²⁰ Idy Subandi Ibrahim, Media dan Citra Muslim, dalam Abdul Rasyid Ridho, *Komunikasi Profetik Qur'ani,...*, 40.

²¹ *Ibid*, 283.

In his theory, Mead sees the mind and self as part of human behavior, which is part of his interaction with others. This interaction makes him recognize the world and himself.²² Mead says that, mind and self come from society or social action.²³

- a. *Mind* is a process of thinking through situations and planning an action towards an object through symbolic thinking. According to Mead, the mind emerges along with the communication process involving language and gestures. Mind emerges and develops in the social process and is part of the social process.
- b. *Self* is a function of language because it can respond to oneself as an object. Self is a human characteristic. Self is the ability to accept oneself as an object from a perspective that comes from other people or society. Self emerges and develops through social interaction activities and language also allows people to play a role in conversations with others because of symbols.
- c. *Society* is an interaction that occurs in every individual whose process involves the use of language (signs), also related to social processes that exist in society.²⁴

Due to the fact that culture derives its meaning from its symbols, the meaning of symbols in rituals has a tight relationship to the meaning of culture itself when seen in the framework of tradition. Therefore, a culture's meaning is more than merely an assortment of indicators, such as emic terminology or other signs. Elements of the symbol construction include all symbols, whether they take the form of verbal language, specific items, gestures, a locus, or live reality.²⁵

²² George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self dan Society*, The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

²³ Ari Murti Ani, 'Memahami Komunikasi Antarpribadi Dalam Perkawinan Campuran Pasangan Suami Istri Beda Negara Indonesia - Italia', *Jurnal The Messenger*, 7.1 (2016), 35 <<https://doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v7i1.287>>.

²⁴ Muhammad Hamam Alfajari, 'Interaksionisme Simbolik Santri Terhadap Kiai Melalui Komunikasi Di Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir Krapyak Yogyakarta', *Informasi*, 46.2 (2016) <<https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v46i2.11800>>.

²⁵ Spradley James P., *Metode Etnografi*, (Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana Yogya, tt), 134.

One must comprehend the signs employed in the ritual in order to do study on rituals. This is due to the fact that rituals are more about actions, frequently magical actions that allude to well-planned and tidy ceremonies. Rituals frequently involve the use of signs. Winangun²⁶ quoted Victor Turner as saying that it will be challenging to interpret the ritual and the group that celebrates it if one does not learn to recognize the indicators that are frequently utilized in ritual activities.²⁷

Due to the fact that humans and nature are, in principle, one, the Sokong indigenous community's *Ngasuh Gumi* ceremony has a relationship between humans and the universe (a relationship of unity), in reference to the explanation above. This suggests that neither nature nor people can exist in harmony without the other, and that only harmonious and symbolic approaches can bring about this unification. Human consciousness is necessary in order to understand how the spiritualized human soul's condition affects the ecological soul.²⁸

The native inhabitants of Sokong, Tanjung Subdistrict, North Lombok, who still uphold many of their ancient rituals, are appreciative of how their predecessors formerly thought of the universe as a part of the divine realm. This appreciation then affects how they perceive the necessity of ecosystem for life. As a result, when we see nature as sacred, it becomes our responsibility to take care of it, keep it in good condition, and guard it from harm. positioning nature as a natural component with a pressing significance for people's existence. This implies that whatever occurs in nature and ecosystem is a result of what we, as occupants, do.

²⁶ Wartaya Winangun, *Masyarakat Bebas Struktur: Liminalitas dan Komunitas Menurut Victor Turner*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990), 18-20.

²⁷ Sri Handayani, *Agriculture and Ritual*, 42.

²⁸ Yustinus Suhardi Ruman, <https://binus.ac.id/character-building/2019/06/alam-sebagai-entitas-spiritual>, diunduh pada 1 Desember 2021.

D. CONCLUSION

They saw *Ngasuh Gumi* as a duty that must be fulfilled. The *Ngasuh Gumi* ritual is significant because of the significance and purpose it serves, which implies that if it is not performed it may result in "soul" upheaval. They see the *Ngasuh Gumi* rite as a manifestation of hope and appreciation for the blessings bestowed by Allah SWT. The entire *Ngasuh Gumi* ceremony has symbolic significance since it represents the "tri-relation of life" of people. *Ngasuh Gumi* thus has a philosophical significance in the Sasak culture as a whole since it depicts how people interact with God, one another, and the environment. Symbols are signs that expose something to humans so that they can know about and understand it. These signs are typically based on beliefs, customs, and habits. There is room for more research on how indigenous peoples in North Lombok Regency and the larger world engage and communicate as a means of negotiation.

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