

## SYMBOLIC MEANING IN *POSAMBUA* THE *MA'ATA'A* TRADITIONAL FEAST, BUTON TRIBE, SORAWOLIO DISTRICT, SOUTHEAST SULAWESI

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini mengkaji makna simbolik dalam tradisi Posambua sebagai puncak Pesta Adat Ma'ata'a pada masyarakat Suku Buton di Kecamatan Sorawolio, Sulawesi Tenggara. Tradisi ini telah diwariskan turun-temurun sejak zaman Kesultanan Buton dan bertujuan untuk memohon keselamatan, kesejahteraan, serta keberkahan bagi masyarakat melalui ritual yang kaya akan nilai religius dan sosial. Tujuan penelitian adalah mengidentifikasi simbol-simbol utama dalam prosesi Posambua dan menjelaskan fungsi simbolik yang dilekatkan masyarakat terhadap tiap tahapan ritual. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik etnografi melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan pencatatan sistematis selama pelaksanaan Ma'ata'a hingga inti upacara Posambua. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap rangkaian acara Ma'ata'a mengandung makna simbolik berupa doa atau mantra, terutama pada inti upacara Posambua. Simbol-simbol ritual seperti Pogau-gaua, Tooa, Pisampea, Bhongkaano Bhaghata, dan Bululiano Galampa melambangkan penghormatan kepada leluhur, permohonan perlindungan, dan harmoni antara manusia, alam, serta Sang Pencipta. Setiap doa dan mantra yang menyertai prosesi berfungsi memperkuat nilai spiritual masyarakat. Tradisi Posambua juga berperan sebagai sarana pengikat sosial yang meningkatkan solidaritas dan kebersamaan antarwarga. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa Posambua merupakan wujud simbolik yang memadukan nilai religius, kultural, dan sosial dalam kehidupan masyarakat Suku Buton di Sorawolio.*

**Kata Kunci:** *posambua, ma'ata'a, makna simbolik, tradisi Buton, Sorawolio*

### Abstract

This study examines the symbolic meaning of the Posambua tradition as the culmination of the Ma'ata'a Traditional Festival in the Buton community in Sorawolio District, Southeast Sulawesi. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation since the Buton Sultanate. It aims to ask for safety, prosperity, and blessings for the community through rituals rich in religious and social values. The purpose of the study is to identify the main symbols in the Posambua procession and explain the symbolic function attached by the community to each stage of the ritual. The research method uses a qualitative approach, employing ethnographic techniques through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and systematic recording, spanning the Ma'ata'a implementation until the core of the Posambua ceremony. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of the study indicate that each series of Ma'ata'a events contains symbolic meaning in the form of prayers or mantras, especially at the core of the Posambua ceremony. Ritual symbols such as Pogau-gaua, Tooa, Pisampea, Bhongkaano Bhaghata, and Bululiano Galampa represent respect for ancestors, requests for protection, and harmony between humans, nature, and the Creator. Each prayer and mantra accompanying the procession strengthens the community's spiritual values. The Posambua tradition also serves as a means of social cohesion, fostering solidarity and togetherness among residents. The research concludes that Posambua is a symbolic manifestation that combines religious, cultural, and social values in the lives of the Buton people in Sorawolio.

**Keywords:** *posambua, ma'ata'a, symbolic meaning, Buton tradition, Sorawolio*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are cultural beings with the ability to create, develop, and pass on life's values. Humans and culture are inseparable; both complement each other in maintaining balance in life. Through culture, humans express their identity, beliefs, and perspectives on nature and the Creator. According to Koentjaraningrat (in Alisaid et al., 2020: 49), culture is the sum of human ideas and works, formed through the learning process and reflecting human reason and creative ability. Therefore, every society has a unique culture shaped by its experiences and historical journey.

Culture is the identity of a region, distinguishing it from other areas. Regional culture can be understood as the cultural traditions that develop in a region and are passed down from one generation to the next within the community (Abdurrohman, 2015). Every existing tradition, value, and custom plays a vital role in regulating various aspects of social life, such as community interactions, religious rituals, belief systems, myths, and customary sanctions (Filiandani, 2019).

According to Koentjaraningrat (in Haeruddin & Hasriani, 2018:80) affirms that every human culture consists of seven basic, universal elements: language, knowledge, social structure, technology and tools, livelihood, religion, and art. These seven elements are interrelated and reflect how a society lives. Each community has a unique culture shaped by its experiences and historical journey. Traditionally, indigenous communities remain grounded in local values believed to be true and sacred. These values are then passed down as guidelines for life, from generation to generation, and are interconnected within an integrated social system (Muzainah & Faridh, 2017).

One of the regional cultures of the Buton people is *Posambua*, part of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival. The *Ma'ata'a* tradition is passed down orally. This means that everything

related to the *Ma'ata'a* tradition is derived from the memories of the successors, including the timing and implementation rules. Furthermore, prayers or mantras in the *Ma'ata'a* tradition are also passed down through the inheritors. All of these elements are then demonstrated to the community, thus making the *Ma'ata'a* tradition a shared cultural heritage of the Buton people, especially in the Sorawolio District.

From a symbolic perspective, the *Ma'ata'a* tradition contains many values expressed through symbols such as prayers and mantras. Interpreting cultural symbols is an attempt to decipher the meaning of the activities that gave rise to them. As cultural beings, humans shape culture and derive direction and behavioural guidelines from it (Mardotillah & Zein, 2017).

A mantra is an expression in words or sentences that is considered to have magical powers, to function as a medium for healing, and to be a form of cultural expression (Dora et al., 2021). Traditionally, mantras are used in various practices, such as ritual ceremonies, exorcism, ancestor worship, healing, and the attainment of magical powers (Sunliensyar, 2018). In traditional Indonesian culture, mantras are believed to have specific purposes and sacred properties. Therefore, only shamans are considered worthy to recite them in ritual or magical activities, which are supposed to create an atmosphere that allows the mantra's supernatural powers to emerge (Hartanto, 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, the Islamic elements in mantras reflect sacred symbols and supernatural powers. Belief in the paranormal is one of the pillars of faith, consistently manifested through daily religious practice (Hikmawati & Saputra, 2019). Each mantra chanted during the main *Posambua* ceremony serves as a medium of spiritual communication between humans and the Creator, reinforcing the community's prayers and good intentions. Meanwhile, the symbols that appear in the procession, such as *Pogau-gaua*, *Tooa*, *Pisampea*, *Bhongkaano Bhaghata*, and

*Bululiano Galampa*, represent the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and divine power. These symbolic meanings are not merely complementary elements, but rather the core of the *Ma'ata'a* tradition, containing moral, spiritual, and social messages for the Buton people.

Research that highlights the *Ma'ata'a* tradition among the Buton people in the Sorawolio District has so far been conducted. However, previous researchers have conducted other studies on symbolic meaning (Haeruddin & Hasriani, 2018) entitled "*Pesta Adat La Auwa di Kelurahan Wasaga, Kecamatan Pasarwajo, Kabupaten Buton*" that focus on the procession, social, and religious values of the *La Auwa* traditional festival, which is held as a post-harvest ritual and a form of gratitude and respect for ancestors, especially Maligana. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study emphasises the stages of implementation and the descriptive symbolic meanings. In contrast, this study examines the *Posambua* tradition as the culmination of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival, focusing on more complex symbolic and spiritual meanings through an ethnographic approach. Thus, this study complements and deepens the study of Buton culture by providing an in-depth understanding of the meanings of ritual symbols that have not been revealed in previous *La Auwa* studies.

Study (Rahmawati et al., 2017) Entitled "*Makna Simbolik Tradisi Rebo Kasan*", this paper analyses the symbolic meaning of the Rebo Kasan tradition through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Based on the study's results, symbols such as leupeut, white water, dupi, and bugis convey religious and social values. Meanwhile, this study differs in location, approach, and cultural context. With ethnographic qualitative methods, the study focuses on the symbolic meaning of the *Posambua* ritual as the culmination of the *Ma'ata'a* Traditional Festival in the Buton Tribe, which not only displays object

symbols but also mantras and prayers, as well as sacred processions that reflect the harmony of humans, nature, and God.

Based on this description, this study expands on previous research by focusing on the *Posambua* Tradition in the *Ma'ata'a* Traditional Festival of the Buton Tribe. This tradition is seen as the culmination of a series of traditional ceremonies rich in spiritual and symbolic values. Through an ethnographic approach, this study seeks to interpret the meanings of symbols, prayers, and mantras, as well as sacred processions that reflect the harmonious relationship among humans, nature, and God. Furthermore, this study examines the social function of each ritual element, which serves as a glue for community solidarity.

The purpose of this study is to describe the symbolic meaning of the *Posambua* tradition during the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival held by the Buton people in Sorawolio District, Southeast Sulawesi. Therefore, this study is expected to complement and deepen the understanding of the Buton culture, a topic that has not been widely explored in previous research.

## 2. METHODS

This study applies a qualitative, ethnographic approach to uncover the symbolic meanings in the *Ma'ata'a* tradition, particularly at the core of the *Posambua* procession. The qualitative approach is deemed appropriate because it focuses on real-world conditions, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument for understanding the meaning of symbols through informants' experiences, speech, and behaviour (Sugiyono, 2020). The ethnographic method was chosen to understand the symbolic meaning of the *Posambua* tradition in the *Ma'ata'a* Traditional Festival. Ethnography is an in-depth study of cultural behaviour within a specific social context (Kamarusdiana, 2019). In the process, the researcher was not fully involved in the entire

procession, but had the opportunity to witness some of the activities directly.

This study uses two types of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with traditional and religious leaders, and members of the Buton community in Sorawolio District, Southeast Sulawesi, who understand and are involved in the *Ma'ata'a* tradition. Secondary data, meanwhile, came from various literature, archives, and documents related to the traditions and culture of the Buton people. Data collection techniques included non-participatory observation of parts of the *Ma'ata'a* procession, interviews with community leaders and young people, and documentation in the form of field notes, photographs, and videos of the activities.

Data is analysed through an interactive model Miles and Huberman (in Arliwan & Alan, 2021:591), consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and focused on information deemed relevant to the symbolic meaning of the *Posambua* procession. The results were then compiled into a coherent descriptive analysis to facilitate interpretation of the symbols' meanings within the cultural context of the Buton Tribe. Conclusions were drawn repeatedly and confirmed through triangulation to ensure the validity of the research results.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Symbolic Meaning of the *Ma'ata'a* Tradition Procession

Traditions and customs reflect human behaviour that has evolved over a long period and been passed down from generation to generation since the time of our ancestors. Traditions deeply embedded in community life serve as the foundation for a person's morals and character (Yani, 2022). Meaning is not simply the agreed meaning of a word or sign, but depends on how a person interprets it (Endraswara, 2013). A

meaning can be realised through symbols. Cultural meaning is always constructed using symbols, and that meaning can only be contained within symbols (Ansar, 2015).

In Buton society, customs form the basis of all aspects of life, including the implementation of traditional festivals. These traditions are essentially expressions of gratitude and respect to God for the natural gifts that support human life (Saafi & Emin, 2024). The *Posambua* tradition is one of the main components of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival of the Buton people in Sorawolio District. According to an interview with Muhammad Kalamullah (30), this tradition is a ritual held twice a year, in October (planting season) and March (harvest season). Its implementation symbolises gratitude to the Creator for the blessings of health and prosperity.

Meanwhile, informant Rahman (38 years old) explained that the *Ma'ata'a* tradition is a hereditary tradition of the Buton Tribe in the Sorawolio District, guided by traditional practices as a form of respect and gratitude to God. This view aligns with Amsy's (59 years old) opinion, who emphasised that *Ma'ata'a* is a means of praying for safety throughout the year and for a better life in the future. In its implementation, there are four things prayed for: life, longevity, sustenance, and work.



**Figure 1. The *Ma'ata'a* procession. The community is seen praying, led by traditional teachings, to express their gratitude to the Creator** (Source: personal documentation, October 5, 2025)

Based on these perspectives, it can be concluded that the *Ma'ata'a* tradition is an annual activity of the Buton people in the Sorawolio

District. It aims to express gratitude for the harvest and safety of the past year, while also asking for blessings for the following year. This tradition embodies the spiritual connection between humans and the Creator and reflects the community's shared values in upholding ancestral traditions.

This activity is not only ritualistic but also serves as a folk festival that strengthens social ties among residents. During its implementation, various traditional processes are carried out sequentially: *Pogau-gaua*, *Tooa*, *Pisampea*, *Bhongkaano Bhaghata*, and *Bululiano Galampa*. Each stage has profound symbolic meaning and social function for the community.

### ***Pogau Adati* (Customary Deliberation)**

*Pogau adati* is a traditional deliberation aimed at discussing various vital decisions for the implementation of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival. Topics discussed include agriculture, security, education, governance, and preparations and equipment for the *Ma'ata'a* tradition. While the timing is not strictly fixed, the activity is always conducted in a solemn and meaningful atmosphere. *Pogau adati* serves as a primary symbol in regulating the lives of indigenous communities, reflecting the fusion of practical needs and traditional values. Decisions arising from this process gain social power because they are discussed in a formal and respectful atmosphere.



**Figure 2. *Pogau Adati* (Traditional Deliberation) Procession** (Source: personal documentation, September 20, 2025)

### ***Tooa* (Determining Time)**

*Tooa* is a traditional ritual that determines an auspicious day for the *Ma'ata'a* ceremony. The ceremony begins with the summoning of the *parabela*, *waci*, *moji*, and *pandesuka*, as well as community leaders, to gather in the *baruga* or *galampa* (traditional house). The meeting takes place at midnight, when the atmosphere is quiet, and the community has rested. During this ritual, the community leaders pray to God for guidance regarding the appropriate time to perform *Ma'ata'a*. According to traditional law, the ceremony takes place twelve days after the *Tooa* ceremony.



**Figure 3. *Tooa* Procession.** It appears that the community determines the implementation of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional party (Source: personal documentation, 20 September 2025)

The symbolic meaning of the twelve days represents the passage of time in a year consisting of twelve months, and illustrates the order of human life under the will of the Creator. According to the views of the Buton people in the Sorawolio District, twelve days are interpreted as a symbol of the origin of human life. The Buton people recognise that the nine months of pregnancy are part of "human rights" because they involve biological processes within humans. The following three months are considered "God's rights," indicating that the final stage of the life process is entirely under Divine control. This division shows that human birth results from a combination of natural processes and God's provision. (Results of an interview with Muhammad Kalamullah, 30 years old).

In this context, *Tooa* is not only used as a ritual time marker but is also understood as a symbol of the balance between human endeavour and God's will. *Tooa* emphasises that humans may plan their lives, but the outcome remains in God's hands. Therefore, *Tooa* serves as a reminder of humanity's origins, of spiritual closeness to the Creator, and of the need to maintain a balance between the mundane and the divine aspects of everyday life.

### ***Pisampea* (Remembering Ancestors)**

When the appointed time arrives, the Buton people of Sorawolio District gather in the pavilion located in the courtyard of the *baruga* to perform the *pisampea* ritual. Each family arrives carrying a tray filled with offerings brought by relatives or younger generations. After all participants and guests have taken their seats, the *Pisampea* procession begins at the rear of the *baruga*, at a place called the *Ombo*.

The initial stage of the *Pisampea* ritual is marked by the escort of the *liwo-liwo* by the *pandesuka*, on the orders of the *parabela*, accompanied by traditional leaders, to the *ombo*, a sacred place behind the *baruga*. During this procession, the *pandesuka* leads a solemn prayer, asking that the ancestors of the Buton people in Sorawolio District rest in peace before God, and that the living community be blessed with health and safety, and be kept from all calamities.

The ritual uses several pieces of equipment, including *ketupat* (rice cakes), *santa* (wild yam), *dhupa* (incense), a *kabuluno dhupa* (a place for burning incense), and *kaughu* (a large *ketupat* made from four coconut leaves). The procession is carried out carefully, with the *pandesuka* and traditional assistants carrying the equipment to the *ombo* (a place for burning incense), placing it in the designated position, and then lighting the *dhupa*, which has been doused in kerosene. The incense is burned three times as a form of spiritual respect, and each burning is accompanied by the recitation of the *salawat* (prayer) :

“*Allahumma Sholli ‘Aala Sayyidinaa Muhammad wa‘alaa Aali sayyidinaa Muhammadin*”

Symbolically, the burning of incense represents communication between the human world and the spiritual realm. The smoke rising into the sky is interpreted as prayers and hopes conveyed to God through the intercession of ancestors. The three burnings symbolise the balance of the three elements of life: humans, nature, and the Creator. Meanwhile, the *kaughu* and *liwo-liwo* represent gratitude for the earth's bounty and prayers for the continuation of life. Thus, *pisampea* serves as a symbol of respect for ancestors and an acknowledgement of humanity's connection to the spiritual forces that maintain the balance of life for the Buton people of Sorawolio District.



**Figure 4. The *Pisampea* ritual procession. The Buton people in Sorawolio District are seen gathering in the front hall of the *baruga* (Source: personal documentation, October 5, 2025)**

### ***Posambua* (Ritual of Mutual Bribery)**

*Posambua* implies mutual bribery, reflecting a reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving. This ritual is the most essential part of the *Ma'ata'a* ceremony, beginning with the *pikucipaa* procession ritual or contemplation between the *parabela* and *moji*. In the beliefs of the Buton people, especially in Sorawolio District, the *parabela* plays the role of father (*La Ama*), *moji* as mother (*Wa Ina*), the community is seen as their children, and the region is placed as a single household unit. The harmony of these two stakeholders is believed to bring peace and

prosperity and support the achievement of the community's life goals.

During the *pikucipaa* ceremony, traditional leaders scatter the contents of the *kaughu* in the four cardinal directions and upwards (*kondocua*). A prayer or mantra with symbolic meaning accompanies each scattering. This stage reflects respect for the balance of the universe and humanity's connection with the Creator. The first scattering is done westward while reciting:

*“Wa nurullah la nurullah”*

It symbolises purification and a request for God's light (guidance) for women and men. The west is also often associated with the setting sun, signifying the end of bad luck and a request for protection.

Sowing to the east with reading:

*“Wa inuru Muhammad la inuru  
Muhammad”*.

A symbol of asking for goodness, blessings, and a bright start for all society (women and men), by imitating the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad.

The words accompany the south direction:

*“Usman Abubakar”*

The symbol calls for steadfastness in faith, wisdom, and guidance from significant Islamic figures. The south direction is often associated with heat/passion, asking for strength and steadfastness.

North direction with reading:

*“Laendadaali waindadaali”*.

It symbolises the balance between men and women as a unified society.

Each direction has its own spiritual significance, reflecting elements of balance, protection, and prayers for safety. Finally, the sowing is done upwards, reciting the mantra three times.

*“Solobha cupasiko isoo nabi sungkua”*

This part marks the ritual's culmination, honouring the Prophet and seeking blessings from heaven. The recitation of these prayers is a crucial part of maintaining the sacredness of the

*pikucipaa*, followed by the recitation of mantras (*bhatata*) by traditional leaders.

The mantra (*bhatata*) recited during the *pikucipaa* is as follows:

*Nalumonto iumuruano sorawolio isimiu  
pamatee lalono, pamatee dhadhino,  
pamatee kabughino, ambali namoghonto  
niatino katamo nalumonto ipiliwuano  
sorawolio.*

*Bhaho waiamo isontamagha, bhaho  
minano i matano holeo, minano kapoaka,  
minano inapa, sempano amalano, sempano  
sakadhino. Paghato isie amalano niatino, i  
haghoano Allahu Ta'ala isimiu malaikati  
patopuluno, mena aso dhadhino, umughuno,  
pagha dhadhino, penembulano, nahumende  
ahendea dhadhino mancariano,  
ghahasio, ghajaki, kolinatompagha,  
nabhasaghapu, nabhotogho, namanaughulal  
ono akampo. Pakanasimumu katotoangi  
miu, koli kabhaghaisie koli kapeenciisie,  
nakeenomo kakanuno akakaluluno  
piliwuano sorawolio.*

Translation: Convey his deeds and intentions before Allah SWT with forty angels, from his life, age, and everything related to his life and his crops; everything will be lifted along with human life, sustenance, work, and all his affairs without any disturbance in this village. Whether obstacles from the west, east, north, south, or from anyone with bad intentions; if they enter or are in the town of Sorawolio, then all those bad intentions will disappear, and only good intentions will remain conscious. We have prepared for your needs. Do not be surprised, because this is the need of the village of Sorawolio. (Results of interview with La Sinara, 59 years old).



**Figure 5. The atmosphere of the posambua in the ma'ata'a tradition. A Buton traditional figure is seen performing the pikuciapaa ritual in Sorawolio** (Source: personal documentation, October 5, 2025)

This ritual is performed before the land-clearing season, when the Buton people, particularly those in Sorawolio District, realise that food supplies are scarce. *Parabela* and *Moji* are the first to symbolise sharing food, before other figures follow suit. This act symbolises the beginning of a tradition of mutual assistance that is expected to continue after the *pidhaoa* ritual, mainly so that those with more can share with those in need.

### **Bhongkaano Bhaghata (Land Inauguration)**

The term *Bhongkaano Bhaghata* is derived from the words *bhongkaano*, meaning "to open" or "to inaugurate," and *bhaghata*, meaning "area" or "land." Thus, *Bhongkaano Bhaghata* can be interpreted as a ceremony to open or inaugurate agricultural land. The ritual concludes with a dance featuring the supernatural powers of two figures known as *panguncei (mangaru)*. This performance is intended to ward off evil spirits from the newly opened agricultural area.



**Figure 6. Mangaru dance after the Bhongkaano Bhaghata ritual, two influential figures showing keris** (Source: personal documentation, 5 October 2025)

### **Bululiano Galampa (Surrounding the Traditional House)**

As the final stage of the *Ma'ata'a* traditional celebration, the *Bululiano Galampa* is performed by circling the *galampa* (traditional house) while carrying a food container, accompanied by the beat of a drum. The food symbolises peace, while the drumbeats symbolise joy. The container is known as *wowonii*, a large, round, diamond-shaped ketupat made from four coconut leaves. This ritual is typically performed one to two days before *Ma'ata'a* or one day after the *posambua* ceremony begins.



**Figure 7. Final procession of Ma'ata'a. Namely, Bululiano Galampa** (Source: personal documentation, 6 October 2025)

### **Religious and Social Values of the Posambua Tradition, Ma'ata'a Traditional Festival**

The *Posambua* tradition in the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival among the Buton people demonstrates that it embodies several values. Values are something humans deem necessary, reflecting views of good and evil, and are formed through experience and reflection, which serve as the basis for determining behaviour (Nicodemus et al., 2023). The *Posambua* ritual in the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival of the Buton people embodies traditional values, namely religious and social ones. For the Butonese, these two values are interconnected, creating a unified meaning that illustrates how humans interact with nature and the Creator.

## Religious Values

Religious values are a foundation and a guideline that govern how humans live a life oriented toward God. These values help people maintain and develop their faith through various means and goals, aiming to achieve a good, balanced life (Costa, 2023). Religious values are understood as spiritual values that arise from human belief and trust in God. Religious values are concepts that, both explicitly and implicitly, can shape human behaviour through their religious nature (Rifa'i, 2016). The primary purpose of these values is to guide people to live in accordance with religious teachings, thereby cultivating good character.

The religious value of the *Posambua* tradition at the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival lies in its core stage, the *Posambua* procession, which begins with a prayer, or *Pikuciapaa* (contemplation). It symbolises humanity's relationship with the Creator and expresses respect for ancestral spirits. In the *Ma'ata'a* tradition, several chants are recited during and after the ritual. During the *Posambua* ritual, incense is burned and accompanied by the recitation of salawat (prayer offerings).

*"Allahumma Sholli 'Aala Sayyidinaa  
Muhammad wa'ala Aali sayyidinaa  
Muhammadin"*

The narratives in the *Ma'ata'a* tradition convey religious values that teach the Buton people to be honest, generous, and to respect their ancestors and warriors. "*Wainurullah lainurullah*" symbolises faith in Allah, whereas "*Wainuru Muhammad lainuru Muhammad*" signifies recognition of the Prophet Muhammad's apostleship. "*Usman Abubakar*" depicts an honest, wise and patient attitude; "*Laendaali waindaali*" emphasises the importance of science in solving problems; and "*Silobha cupasiko isoo nabi sungkua*" shows the belief that every creature has its own spiritual guide.

## Social Values

From a sociological perspective, culture is understood as the totality of human life that reflects human nature as social beings (Rahmah & Anshori, 2023). This opinion is strengthened by (Kaswadi et al., 2018) which emphasises that human life cannot be separated from the process of communication, because humans, as social beings, constantly require interaction and interdependence with others. The social meanings and values embodied in community life are believed to give life to the community itself. This view is referred to as a cultural system. The manifestation of social systems is evident in physical and non-physical culture, such as human activities, actions, and works within society.

Values are a fundamental element in shaping a society's cultural orientation. Values are related to cultural concepts that assess various aspects of life, such as right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, just or unfair, appropriate or inappropriate, and clean or dirty (Fitri dan Susanto, 2021). The existence of this value system contributes to shaping social values.

Social values are benchmarks that assess the appropriateness of attitudes in social life. These values describe how relationships between individuals are built within a social environment. Thus, social values can be defined as a set of guidelines that guide human behaviour, enabling people to live in an orderly, ethical manner and to possess a noble personality (Setyawan & Nuro'in, 2021). Through these social values, culture is born in the form of rituals and customs that are continuously carried out.

The *Ma'ata'a* tradition embodies social values through the metaphor of a household: when a father and mother eat, they do not eat alone, but together with their children. This demonstrates that *parabela* and *moji* always eat with their people because they are the protectors of the community.

Based on the explanation above, the community views togetherness as a primary

principle that must be upheld by both traditional leaders and community members. The Buton people, particularly those in Sorawolio District, highly value togetherness. Community leaders consistently prioritise the well-being of their people. For example, when a village performs the *Ma'ata'a* tradition, all family and relatives are invited, both those living nearby and those living far beyond the town, including those who have migrated.

In this context, the *Ma'ata'a* tradition serves as a unifying force, both among individuals and within the Buton community. The values of togetherness it embodies shape the community's social fabric, creating a harmonious, peaceful life free of hostility.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the symbols in the *Ma'ata'a* traditional festival, particularly the *Posambua* procession, represent the local wisdom of the Butonese people, combining spiritual, social, and cultural values. Each stage of the *Pogau-gaua*, *Tooa*, *Pisampea*, *Posambua*, *Bhongkaano Bhaghata*, and *Bululiano Galampa* rituals serves a symbolic function that emphasises the harmonious relationship among humans, nature, and God. Through these symbols, the community expresses gratitude, respect for ancestors, and a commitment to maintaining traditional order in harmony with religious beliefs.

The symbolism in *Ma'ata'a* not only serves a spiritual purpose but also strengthens social bonds and helps internalise cultural values. This tradition fosters solidarity, cooperation, and humility, while demonstrating the integration of Islamic teachings with local Butonese beliefs. However, the shift in values due to modernisation has led to a diminished understanding among the younger generation of the philosophical meanings contained in these processions, making preservation efforts through documentation and cultural education crucial.

Amid the current of modernisation, the symbolic values of *Ma'ata'a* face the challenge of a diminishing understanding among the younger generation of the philosophical meaning behind each procession. Therefore, planned preservation efforts are needed through documentation, cultural education, and the active involvement of young people in every traditional ceremony. Thus, the symbols in the *Ma'ata'a* Traditional Festival, especially in the *Posambua* procession, not only reflect the cultural heritage of their ancestors but also serve as ethical and spiritual guidelines for the Butonese people in maintaining balance in life, social harmony, and a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator in the midst of the era of globalisation.

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