

## THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE SAWER TRADITION IN SUNDANESE TRADITIONAL WEDDINGS IN BERINGIN JAYA VILLAGE

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### Abstrak

*Tradisi Sawyer merupakan salah satu tahapan penting dalam upacara perkawinan adat Sunda yang mengandung berbagai simbol verbal dan nonverbal sebagai media penyampaian nasihat, doa, serta nilai-nilai budaya kepada pasangan pengantin. Namun, makna simbolik yang terkandung dalam tradisi tersebut belum sepenuhnya dipahami oleh masyarakat, termasuk oleh sebagian anggota masyarakat Sunda sendiri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis bentuk serta makna simbol verbal dan nonverbal dalam tradisi Sawyer pada upacara perkawinan adat Sunda di Desa Beringin Jaya, Kecamatan Bumi Raya, Kabupaten Morowali. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teori semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa simbol verbal dalam tradisi Sawyer diwujudkan melalui empat kategori tembang, yaitu tembang pembuka, tembang untuk pengantin pria, tembang untuk pengantin wanita, dan tembang penutup. Simbol-simbol tersebut merepresentasikan nilai religiusitas, tanggung jawab, komitmen, kesetiaan, kerja sama, keharmonisan, dan keberkahan. Sementara itu, simbol nonverbal berupa beras kuning, permen, uang dan koin, serta payung melambangkan kemakmuran, keharmonisan, kesejahteraan ekonomi, perlindungan, dan kebahagiaan keluarga. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Sawyer berfungsi sebagai media transmisi nilai budaya, moral, sosial, dan religius yang berperan penting dalam pelestarian identitas budaya masyarakat Sunda perantauan.*

**Kata Kunci:** tradisi Sawyer, semiotika, simbol verbal, simbol nonverbal, perkawinan adat Sunda

### Abstract

The Sawyer tradition is an important stage in Sundanese traditional wedding ceremonies that incorporates various verbal and nonverbal symbols as a medium for conveying advice, prayers, and cultural values to newlywed couples. However, the symbolic meanings embedded in this tradition are not fully understood by the community, including some members of the Sundanese ethnic group themselves. This study aims to describe and analyze the forms and meanings of verbal and nonverbal symbols in the Sawyer tradition of Sundanese wedding ceremonies in Beringin Jaya Village, Bumi Raya District, Morowali Regency. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that verbal symbols in the Sawyer tradition are expressed through four categories of ritual songs: the opening song, the song for the groom, the song for the bride, and the closing song. These symbols represent religiosity, responsibility, commitment, fidelity, cooperation, harmony, and divine blessing. Meanwhile, the nonverbal symbols, including yellow rice, candies, money and coins, and an umbrella, symbolize prosperity, harmony, economic well-being, protection, and family happiness. The findings

indicate that the Sawer tradition functions as a medium for transmitting cultural, moral, social, and religious values and plays a significant role in preserving the cultural identity of Sundanese migrant communities.

**Keywords:** meaning, symbol, sawer tradition, sundanese custom

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia Indonesia is an archipelagic country with rich cultural heritage and diverse traditions. This richness is reflected in the large number of ethnic groups, languages, and customs that extend across the entire territory of Indonesia. Each region in Indonesia has its own unique culture, including traditional dances, traditional houses, regional songs, musical instruments, traditional clothing, and many other cultural expressions (Savira et al., 2024). Each tradition carries a long history of noble values and cultural meanings that form a strong foundation for national identity (Indrawati & Sari, 2024). In general, traditions function not only as inherited cultural practices but also as social mechanisms that regulate and strengthen relationships among individuals and communities (El Lagarensen et al., 2023). Therefore, traditional rituals constitute an important cultural resource through which values, norms, and collective identities are transmitted from one generation to another.

One of the cultural expressions that continues to be preserved by various ethnic communities in Indonesia is the traditional wedding ceremony. Marriage occupies a significant position in Indonesian society because it is not merely a legal union between a man and a woman but also a cultural institution that embodies social, moral, and religious values. According to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage, marriage is defined as a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the purpose of forming a happy and everlasting family based on belief in Almighty God (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara RI, 2019). Consequently, wedding ceremonies in Indonesia are often accompanied by traditional rituals that contain symbolic messages intended

to guide the newlyweds in their future family life (Sari, 2025).

Among the many ethnic groups in Indonesia, the Sundanese community is known for its rich cultural traditions, particularly those associated with marriage customs. One of the communities that continues to preserve Sundanese cultural identity outside its ancestral homeland is the Sundanese community of Beringin Jaya Village, Bumi Raya District, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. Although geographically distant from West Java, members of this community continue to maintain their cultural heritage through the use of the Sundanese language, the preservation of traditional customs, and the implementation of traditional wedding ceremonies. This phenomenon demonstrates the persistence of cultural identity among migrant communities and highlights the importance of traditional practices as a means of cultural preservation.

One of the most important stages in the traditional Sundanese wedding ceremony is the Sawer tradition. Syawalani et al. (2023) explain that the Sundanese wedding ceremony consists of several ritual stages, each carrying specific cultural meanings and functions. Within this sequence, the Sawer ritual occupies a central position because it serves as a medium for conveying advice, prayers, hopes, and moral teachings to the bride and groom. Rosidi (as cited in Muhammad, 2024) defines Sawer as an expression of prayers directed toward the newlywed couple. However, the Sawer tradition is not merely a ritual performance involving the scattering of symbolic objects. Rather, it constitutes a complex cultural text containing verbal and nonverbal symbols that communicate values related to responsibility, harmony,

prosperity, mutual care, and spiritual devotion (Muhammad, 2025).

From a semiotic perspective, symbols function as signs that represent particular concepts, beliefs, and cultural values. In traditional rituals, symbols serve as a medium through which communities communicate meanings that may not be explicitly expressed in ordinary language. Consequently, understanding the symbolic meanings embedded in cultural rituals is essential for revealing the worldview, social norms, and value systems maintained by a community. Nevertheless, observations in the research setting indicate that many participants are familiar with the performance of the Sawer ritual but have limited understanding of the symbolic meanings contained within its verbal expressions and ritual objects. In many cases, the tradition is perceived merely as a ceremonial activity or as a moment of collecting the objects scattered during the ritual, while the cultural messages and moral teachings embedded in the symbols receive little attention.

Several previous studies have examined symbolic meanings in traditional rituals. Agustin (2025) investigated the forms and meanings of symbols in the Temu Manten ceremony among the Javanese community and found that ritual symbols function as representations of cultural values and social expectations. Tomponu (2025) examined the verbal and nonverbal symbols in the Sampapitu tradition of the Pamona ethnic group and demonstrated that ritual symbols play an important role in transmitting moral and social values. Similarly, Jumaria (2025) analyzed the symbolic meanings of ritual objects in the Siompole tradition and revealed the cultural significance of areca nut, tobacco, betel leaf, gambier, and lime within the ceremonial context.

Although previous studies have contributed to the understanding of symbolic meanings in various traditional rituals, most have focused on different ethnic traditions and cultural settings. Research specifically examining the

verbal and nonverbal symbols of the Sawer tradition within a migrant Sundanese community remains limited. Furthermore, previous studies have generally emphasized the identification of symbols without comprehensively exploring the relationship between symbolic forms and the cultural meanings they convey through a semiotic perspective. This gap highlights the need for further investigation of the Sawer tradition, particularly in communities that preserve Sundanese cultural practices outside their original cultural environment.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe and analyze the forms and meanings of verbal and nonverbal symbols in the Sawer tradition of Sundanese wedding ceremonies in Beringin Jaya Village, Bumi Raya District, Morowali Regency. By employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic perspective, this research seeks to reveal how verbal expressions and ritual objects function as signs that communicate cultural values, moral teachings, and social expectations. The findings are expected to contribute to the fields of semiotics, cultural studies, and linguistic anthropology, while also supporting efforts to preserve Sundanese cultural heritage in contemporary society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs. Its primary focus is not only on the signs themselves but also on how signs function within society and generate meaning for humans. In semiotics, signs encompass a very broad scope. A sign is something that, for humans, carries meaning or refers to something else (Golontalo et al., 2023). Simply put, semiotics can be defined as the study of signs in relation to objects, events, and culture. Semiotic theory was initially proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). In this theory, semiotics is divided into two main components: the signifier, which refers to the

recognizable physical form, and the signified, which refers to the meaning or concept contained within it. In the context of architecture, the signifier is the physical appearance of a building, while the signified is the meaning that emerges from the concepts, functions, and values embodied in the building (Sabawana et al., 2023).

### Symbol

The word *symbol* originates from the Greek term *symbolos*, which means a sign or mark that functions to convey information to someone. According to Loren Bagus Ainusyamsi (2025), the term symbol is derived from the English words *symbolon* or *symbollo*, which mean to draw a conclusion or to give an impression. Peirce (as cited in Ainusyamsi & Pauji, 2025:3) states that a symbol is one type of sign. Signs are classified into three types: symbols, icons, and indices. A symbol is the type of sign most frequently used to represent something. Often, the symbols employed by individuals contain certain meanings that are embedded or hidden behind them.

### Forms of Symbols

**Verbal Symbols** Verbal communication refers to forms of communication that use words. Communication is usually carried out directly in face-to-face interactions or through intermediary media such as telephone, social media, or other forms of media (Mustafa et al., 2021). In the context of verbal communication, words and language play a very significant role, as words function as the smallest symbols that represent something, whether people, objects, or events.

Nonverbal communication is a form of communication that does not involve words. According to Blake and Haroldsen Mustafa (2021), the process of conveying information and messages includes facial expressions, body movements, gestures, touch, and modes of dress. In a cultural context, nonverbal symbols are equally important because they are able to convey values, beliefs, and social norms that cannot

always be directly expressed through language. In the *Sawer* tradition, nonverbal symbols are particularly prominent and contain deep meanings, such as the objects used at each stage of the ceremonial process.

### Semantics

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of language or examines meaning as conveyed through linguistic media. The English term *semantics* originates from the Greek word *semainein*, which means “to signify” or “to mean.” Its noun form is *sema*, meaning “sign” or “symbol,” while its verb form is *semaino*, meaning “to mark” or “to give meaning (Butar-Butar, 2021:2).

### Symbolic Meaning

Symbolic meaning refers to the hidden meaning behind an object or phenomenon. This meaning is inherently embedded in something, such as images or specific words, and functions as a fundamental foundation that helps us gain deeper understanding (Milasari & Sudrajat, 2022). Symbolic meaning enables us to interpret things from a broader cultural perspective, where symbols are not merely physical forms but also embody underlying emotional values and beliefs..

### Customs and traditions

The term *adat*, commonly referred to as custom or tradition, originates from Arabic and has been translated into Indonesian. According to Jalaludin Tunsam (as cited in Yuliyani, 2023:862), *adat istiadat* derives from the Arabic word “*adah*,” which means habit or practice. Jalaludin explains that *adat istiadat* represents ideas that encompass cultural values, norms, customs, and even laws upheld by a community within a particular region.

### Wedding ceremony

Sundanese Customary Law (Adat Sunda) The customs and traditions practiced by the Sundanese community are specifically known as

*Adat Sunda*. The term *Sunda* refers to everything that embodies the meaning of goodness. This meaning is reflected in the core characteristics upheld by the Sundanese people, namely *singer* (self-awareness), *pinter* (intelligence), *bener* (righteousness), *cageur* (health), and *bageur* (kindness). The Sundanese community is generally known for being religious, gentle, and deeply spiritual. These characteristics are reflected in traditional expressions such as *silih asih* (mutual love and compassion), *silih asah* (mutual learning and self-improvement), and *silih asuh* (mutual care, protection, and guidance) (Syawalani et al., 2023).

### 3. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the forms and meanings of verbal and nonverbal symbols in the Sawer tradition of Sundanese wedding ceremonies. A qualitative approach was selected because the focus of the study was to explore, interpret, and understand symbolic meanings embedded in cultural practices rather than to measure phenomena quantitatively. This approach enables researchers to examine social and cultural realities from the perspectives of the community members who practice and preserve the tradition (Bado, 2022).

The study was conducted in Beringin Jaya Village, Bumi Raya District, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The research site was purposively selected because the Sundanese community in the village continues to practice the Sawer tradition as an integral part of traditional wedding ceremonies despite being geographically distant from their ancestral homeland in West Java. This condition makes the village an appropriate setting for examining the continuity and symbolic meanings of the tradition in a migrant community context.

The data sources consisted of verbal and nonverbal symbols found in the Sawer ritual.

Verbal data were obtained from the lyrics of the ritual songs (*tembang sawer*) performed during the wedding ceremony, while nonverbal data consisted of ritual objects used in the tradition, including yellow rice, candies, money and coins, and an umbrella. Additional data were obtained from informants who possessed knowledge and experience regarding the implementation of the Sawer tradition, such as traditional leaders, ritual performers (*juru sawer*), community elders, and members of the Sundanese community involved in traditional wedding ceremonies.

Informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and active involvement in the Sawer tradition. The selection criteria referred to Mahsun (2005), who emphasizes that informants should possess adequate linguistic and cultural competence, have extensive knowledge of the research subject, and be capable of providing reliable and comprehensive information related to the phenomenon under investigation.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who was directly involved in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. To support the research process, several supporting instruments were employed, including observation sheets, interview guidelines, audio recording devices, field notes, and documentation equipment. These instruments facilitated the systematic collection and organization of research data.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine directly the implementation of the Sawer tradition and to identify the verbal and nonverbal symbols appearing during the ritual. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with selected informants to obtain in-depth explanations regarding the meanings, functions, and cultural significance of the symbols. Documentation techniques were used to collect supporting materials, including photographs, audio

recordings, written texts of the ritual songs, and other documents related to the Sawer tradition.

To ensure data credibility, source triangulation and technique triangulation were applied. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation was achieved by comparing findings derived from observation, interviews, and documentation. These procedures were intended to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the research findings.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Pahleviannur et al., 2022), which consists of four interrelated stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data collection stage, verbal and nonverbal symbols related to the Sawer tradition were identified through observations, interviews, and documentation. Subsequently, data reduction was performed by selecting and categorizing data relevant to the research focus, namely the forms and meanings of symbols in the Sawer tradition. The reduced data were then systematically organized and presented in descriptive form to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified by examining the relationships between the identified symbols and their cultural meanings.

The interpretation of symbolic meanings was guided by Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, particularly the concepts of signifier and signified. Through this framework, verbal expressions and ritual objects were analyzed as signs that represent broader cultural concepts, values, and beliefs within the Sundanese community. This analytical approach enabled the researcher to uncover the deeper meanings embedded in the Sawer tradition and to explain their significance in the context of Sundanese cultural preservation.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal four major categories of verbal symbols in the Sawer tradition: (1) opening songs, (2) songs addressed to the groom, (3) songs addressed to the bride, and (4) closing songs. These verbal expressions are delivered through ritual songs containing cultural, moral, and religious messages for the newlywed couple.

The analysis demonstrates that verbal symbols function not merely as aesthetic components of the ceremony but also as mechanisms for transmitting cultural values across generations. Through symbolic language, the Sundanese community communicates social norms, moral expectations, and religious teachings that shape the ideal concept of married life. Three dominant dimensions emerged from the data: religiosity, family responsibility, and social harmony.

##### Opening Song

The opening song serves as the ceremonial introduction to the Sawer ritual. It contains praises to God, blessings upon Prophet Muhammad, and greetings to family members and guests. Consequently, this category reflects both religious and social functions.

##### Data 01

*Hamdalillah 'alā dawām,  
Ṣumma ṣolātu wasalām,  
Alā nabiyy khoiril anam,  
Wa 'alā ālihī wa ṣoḥbiḥī kirām*  
Praise be to Allah, the Eternal,  
Then peace and blessings,  
To the best Prophet of mankind,  
As well as his noble family and friends

Data 01 presents verbal symbols in the form of praises to Allah and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad, which are positioned at the opening stage of the Sawer tradition. The presence of these religious expressions indicates that the Sawer ritual is not merely understood as a component of a traditional marriage ceremony

but also as a form of spiritual expression that connects human beings with the divine. From a semiotic perspective, these verbal symbols function as signifiers that direct collective understanding toward concepts of religiosity, sacredness, blessings, and moral legitimacy in family life (Sabawana et al., 2023).

The relationship between the linguistic form and its constructed meaning demonstrates that symbols function not only as communicative devices but also as instruments through which social and cultural realities are produced and maintained. As argued by Ainusyamsi and Pauji (2025), symbols possess the capacity to represent values embedded within a community, allowing meanings to extend beyond denotative interpretations and encompass broader cultural and ideological dimensions. Consequently, the praises to Allah and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad in the opening song can be understood as representations of religious values deeply embedded within Sundanese cultural life.

Furthermore, the placement of religious symbols at the beginning of the ritual reflects the community's effort to establish a spiritual foundation before presenting subsequent advice and guidance to the bride and groom. These symbols serve as an interpretive framework through which later messages are understood and legitimized. As a result, teachings concerning marital responsibility, loyalty, and family harmony derive their symbolic authority from the prior establishment of a relationship between humans and God.

This finding supports the study of Sari (2025), which emphasizes that the Saweran tradition in Sundanese weddings embodies religious values that function as guidelines for family life. Such values are expressed not only through prayers and praises to God but also through collective expectations that newlyweds will conduct their married life according to religious teachings. The present finding is also consistent with Muhammad (2024; 2025), who

argues that the Sawer tradition serves as a medium for transmitting moral and religious values across generations.

Beyond its religious significance, the verbal symbol in Data V1 also reflects the cultural function of the Sawer tradition as a mechanism for reproducing social values. According to Golontalo et al. (2023), symbols embedded in traditional rituals function not merely as ceremonial elements but also as vehicles for transmitting worldviews, social norms, and cultural identities. In this context, the opening song constitutes a symbolic space through which the Sundanese community communicates the belief that an ideal family life should be grounded in faith, moral responsibility, and spiritual awareness.

Therefore, the verbal symbol contained in Data V1 should not be interpreted merely as a ritual opening expression. Rather, it functions as an ideological foundation that reinforces the sacredness of marriage, strengthens the moral legitimacy of family life, reproduces religious values within the community, and connects Sundanese cultural traditions with Islamic teachings that have become an integral part of the community's social life.

#### **Data 02**

*Salam takdim ka sadaya,  
Para wargi jeung baraya,  
Para kanca nu marulya,  
Nu sami di dieu aya.*

Data 02 presents verbal symbols in the form of greetings and expressions of respect addressed to relatives, family members, friends, and guests attending the Sawer ceremony. At the textual level, these utterances function as expressions of courtesy and acknowledgment toward ritual participants. However, from a semiotic perspective, the symbols convey broader meanings related to social solidarity, communal participation, and kinship relations within Sundanese society.

The references to *wargi jeung baraya* (family and relatives) and *kanca nu marulya* (honored friends) function as signifiers that point to signified concepts of social respect, togetherness, and recognition of the community's role in individual life (Sabawana et al., 2023). Therefore, the verbal symbols do not merely serve as greetings but also construct a collective understanding that marriage is a social institution requiring the participation and support of the wider community.

This finding indicates that, within Sundanese culture, marriage is not perceived as a private relationship between two individuals alone. Instead, it is understood as a social institution that connects extended families and strengthens social networks within the community. Consequently, expressions of respect toward family members and guests become essential elements of the ritual because their presence represents moral, social, and symbolic support for the newlyweds.

Furthermore, these symbols reflect the Sundanese cultural principles of *silih asah* (mutual learning), *silih asih* (mutual affection), and *silih asuh* (mutual care), which constitute the foundation of social relationships within the community. In this context, the opening song reminds the bride and groom that family life cannot be separated from broader social relations. Family harmony depends not only on the relationship between husband and wife but also on their ability to maintain positive relationships with extended family members and the surrounding community.

This finding is consistent with Golontalo et al. (2023), who argue that symbols in traditional ceremonies function as vehicles for transmitting social values and cultural identity. It also supports Tomponu (2025), who emphasizes that symbols in traditional marriage rituals play an important role in strengthening social solidarity and preserving kinship ties within the community. Therefore, the verbal symbol

contained in Data V2 should be understood not merely as an expression of respect toward guests but as a cultural instrument that reinforces social cohesion, communal participation, and the continuity of kinship relations in married life.

### **Song for the Groom**

The song for the groom contains advice and moral guidance directed specifically toward the male partner. The findings reveal that this category is dominated by symbols associated with commitment, responsibility, leadership, and marital obligations. These symbols function as cultural mechanisms through which social expectations concerning the role of a husband are transmitted.

#### **Data 03**

*Anaking cik keneh pisan,  
Ku panaib dirapalan,  
Ijab kabul pernikahan,  
Jeung ikdalkan palalekan*

Data 03 contains verbal symbols associated with the marriage contract (*ijab kabul*) and the promises established through the marital vow. In semiotic terms, the expressions *ijab kabul pernikahan* and *ikdalkan palalekan* function as signifiers that refer to broader signified concepts, including commitment, responsibility, moral accountability, and the sacred nature of marriage (Sabawana et al., 2023). The lyrics emphasize that marriage is not merely a ceremonial event but a binding commitment that carries long-term obligations.

The reference to the marriage contract symbolizes the formal transition of the groom into a new social and moral status. Through the pronouncement of *ijab kabul*, the groom is no longer viewed solely as an individual but as a husband who is entrusted with responsibilities toward his wife, future children, and the wider family network. Therefore, the marriage vow functions not only as a legal or religious

requirement but also as a symbolic declaration of readiness to assume adult responsibilities.

From a cultural perspective, the song reflects the Sundanese understanding that marriage constitutes a lifelong commitment rather than a temporary social arrangement. The symbolic emphasis on marital promises demonstrates that the success of a household depends upon the ability of both partners, particularly the husband as family leader, to uphold the commitments made during the marriage ceremony. In this regard, commitment is interpreted not only as emotional attachment but also as consistency in fulfilling obligations, maintaining loyalty, and safeguarding family welfare.

Furthermore, the symbolic meaning of the marriage vow extends beyond the relationship between husband and wife. The vow also represents an ethical commitment before God, family members, and society. This finding indicates that marriage in the Sawer tradition is understood as a multidimensional institution encompassing religious, social, and moral dimensions simultaneously. Such an interpretation supports Muhammad (2024; 2025), who argues that the Sawer tradition functions as a medium for transmitting moral values and guiding newlyweds toward responsible family life.

The findings are also consistent with Golontalo et al. (2023) and Tomponu (2025), who emphasize that symbolic expressions in traditional marriage rituals function as mechanisms for transmitting social norms and cultural expectations across generations. Through the symbolic representation of the marriage contract, the Sawer tradition reinforces collective beliefs regarding responsibility, fidelity, and moral integrity as fundamental principles of married life.

Therefore, Data V3 demonstrates that the symbol of *ijab kabul* should not be interpreted merely as a procedural component of marriage.

Rather, it functions as a cultural symbol that legitimizes the groom's new social role, reinforces moral responsibility, and establishes commitment as the foundational value upon which family life should be built.

#### **Data 04**

*Ti waktu ayeuna pisan,  
Hidep boga pamajikan,  
Sarta boga kawajiban,  
Anu kudu ditalingan.*

This fragment symbolically represents the transition of a man into a new social identity as a husband and future head of a family. The emphasis on *kawajiban* (obligation) signifies that marriage is understood not merely as a change in personal status but as the assumption of moral, social, and familial responsibilities. In semiotic terms, the expression functions as a signifier that points to broader signified concepts, including responsibility, leadership, commitment, and accountability within family life.

The reference to obligation reflects the cultural expectation that a husband should serve as a guide, protector, and provider for his family. These responsibilities extend beyond material support and encompass emotional guidance, ethical leadership, and the maintenance of family harmony. Consequently, the symbol conveys the idea that becoming a husband requires maturity, self-discipline, and the ability to prioritize collective family welfare over individual interests.

From a sociocultural perspective, this finding illustrates how the Sawer tradition functions as a medium for transmitting cultural norms regarding masculinity and family leadership. The advice directed toward the groom reflects the Sundanese belief that a successful household depends largely on the husband's capacity to fulfill his responsibilities with wisdom, integrity, and dedication. Such expectations are embedded within the broader cultural values of mutual care, respect, and social

responsibility that characterize family life in Sundanese society.

Furthermore, the symbolic message highlights that leadership within marriage is not interpreted as domination but as a form of service and responsibility toward family members. The husband is expected to become a source of protection, guidance, and stability while maintaining harmonious relationships with his spouse and extended family. Therefore, the symbol communicates an ideal model of husbandhood grounded in commitment, responsibility, and moral integrity.

This finding supports Muhammad (2024; 2025), who argues that the *Sawer* tradition serves as a medium for transmitting moral values and social responsibilities to newlyweds. It also aligns with Golontalo et al. (2023) and Tomponu (2025), who emphasize that symbolic expressions in traditional marriage rituals function as mechanisms for educating individuals about their social roles and obligations within the community. Thus, the symbol contained in this fragment not only marks a change in marital status but also legitimizes the groom's new role as a responsible family leader within the Sundanese cultural framework.

### Song for the Bride

The song for the bride contains advice concerning attitudes, behavior, and responsibilities after marriage. The findings indicate that the symbols in this category emphasize harmony, loyalty, cooperation, and family management.

#### Data 05

*Nyai kudu age-age,  
Ngaladenan ka carogé,  
Budi parangi sing hade,  
Sing tiasa ngalép hate.*

Data 05 contains verbal symbols associated with good character, devotion, emotional sensitivity, and harmonious

interpersonal relationships within marriage. In semiotic terms, the expressions *budi parangi sing hade* (possessing good character) and *sing tiasa ngalép hate* (being able to comfort the heart) function as signifiers that refer to broader signified concepts, including moral virtue, empathy, emotional intelligence, and family harmony. These symbols suggest that the success of married life depends not only on fulfilling practical responsibilities but also on cultivating positive interpersonal relationships grounded in mutual understanding and respect.

The phrase *ngaladenan ka carogé* is symbolically significant because it reflects cultural expectations regarding the role of a wife in maintaining household harmony. However, within the broader context of Sundanese cultural values, this expression should not be interpreted solely as a form of submission or obedience. Rather, it represents an ethic of care, attentiveness, and commitment to nurturing harmonious family relationships. The emphasis is placed on the ability to create emotional balance, mutual support, and a peaceful domestic environment.

Furthermore, the symbol of good character highlights the importance of moral integrity as a foundation for family life. The advice directed toward the bride emphasizes that harmonious relationships are built through patience, kindness, self-control, and respect for others. These qualities are considered essential for managing conflicts, strengthening emotional bonds, and sustaining long-term marital stability. Consequently, the song conveys the message that family harmony is achieved not merely through social roles but through the cultivation of ethical behavior and emotional maturity.

From a sociocultural perspective, this finding reflects the Sundanese understanding of marriage as a cooperative partnership in which both husband and wife contribute to the well-being of the family. The bride is portrayed not only as a spouse but also as an important agent in

creating emotional comfort and maintaining social cohesion within the household. Such a role requires interpersonal competence, empathy, and the ability to foster positive relationships among family members.

This finding supports Muhammad (2024; 2025), who argues that the *Sawer* tradition functions as a medium for transmitting moral values and behavioral guidance to newlyweds. It is also consistent with Sari (2025), who highlights the role of religious and ethical values in shaping harmonious family relationships within Sundanese marriage traditions. Therefore, the symbols contained in Data 05 represent not merely expectations regarding the role of a wife but also broader cultural ideals concerning harmony, compassion, and moral responsibility in family life.

#### **Data 06**

*Ari ceuk jaman kiwari,  
Carogé perdana dina nagri,  
Nyai menteri dalam nagri,  
Nu ngaheyek jero paw.*

Data 06 contains verbal symbols that employ political metaphors to describe the roles of husband and wife within family life. The expressions *carogé perdana dina nagri* (the husband as the leader of the state) and *nyai menteri dalam nagri* (the wife as the minister of domestic affairs) function as signifiers that refer to broader concepts of leadership, responsibility, cooperation, and family management. Through these metaphors, the song symbolically portrays marriage as a social institution that requires coordination and collaboration between two individuals who hold distinct yet interconnected responsibilities.

The use of governmental imagery is particularly significant because it elevates family life from a private relationship to a structured social unit governed by shared responsibilities. The husband is symbolically associated with leadership and external responsibilities, while the

wife is associated with the management of internal family affairs. However, these symbolic representations should not be interpreted solely in hierarchical terms. Rather, they emphasize functional complementarity, suggesting that both roles are equally important for maintaining household stability and achieving collective family goals.

Furthermore, the metaphor highlights the principle of interdependence within marriage. Just as a government cannot function effectively without cooperation between its leaders and administrators, a family requires mutual support and coordinated efforts between husband and wife. The symbolic message therefore promotes a model of marriage based on partnership rather than individual dominance. Family harmony is portrayed as the result of cooperation, communication, and shared commitment rather than the authority of a single family member.

From a sociocultural perspective, this finding reflects the Sundanese understanding of marriage as a collaborative institution in which each partner contributes according to their respective capacities and responsibilities. The wife is represented not merely as a domestic caretaker but as a key figure in organizing family life, maintaining emotional stability, and supporting the overall functioning of the household. Such a representation acknowledges the strategic role of women in sustaining family well-being and social continuity.

The findings support Golontalo et al. (2023), who argue that symbolic expressions in traditional rituals function as mechanisms for transmitting cultural norms and social expectations. They also align with Tomponu (2025), who emphasizes that marriage symbols often communicate ideals concerning cooperation, responsibility, and social order. Therefore, the symbols contained in Data V6 illustrate that family stability is achieved through mutual responsibility, complementary roles, and

collaborative partnership between husband and wife rather than through unilateral authority.

### Closing Song

The closing song represents the final stage of the verbal sequence in the Sawer tradition and serves as a symbolic conclusion to the ritual. Unlike the preceding songs, which primarily focus on transmitting advice and defining the social responsibilities of the bride and groom, the closing song emphasizes collective prayers, hopes, and ethical principles intended to guide the couple throughout their married life. The findings indicate that this category is dominated by symbols associated with harmony, forgiveness, mutual understanding, emotional maturity, and social cohesion. These symbols function not only as expressions of goodwill but also as cultural mechanisms for reinforcing the values considered essential for maintaining a stable and harmonious family.

#### Data 07

*Sing rukun salamina jalan,  
Boga rasa silih hampuran,  
Mun aya lepat dina caritaan,  
Kuring nutup ieu pupujian.*

Data 07 contains verbal symbols that emphasize harmony, forgiveness, and mutual understanding as fundamental principles of married life. In semiotic terms, the expressions *sing rukun salamina jalan* (may you live in everlasting harmony) and *boga rasa silih hampuran* (possessing mutual forgiveness) function as signifiers that refer to broader signified concepts, including reconciliation, tolerance, emotional maturity, and the preservation of social relationships. These symbols suggest that marital stability is not achieved through the absence of conflict but through the ability of individuals to manage differences constructively and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Among the symbols presented in this fragment, the concept of *silih hampura* occupies a particularly significant position within Sundanese cultural philosophy. The phrase embodies the principle of mutual forgiveness, which encourages individuals to acknowledge mistakes, exercise empathy, and restore social harmony after disagreements. Rather than viewing conflict as a threat to relationships, the concept emphasizes reconciliation as a necessary process for sustaining long-term interpersonal bonds. Consequently, the symbol communicates the idea that forgiveness is not merely a personal virtue but a social mechanism that strengthens family resilience and cohesion.

The symbolic emphasis on harmony further reflects the Sundanese worldview that places great importance on maintaining balanced and peaceful relationships. Within this cultural framework, family harmony is understood as the outcome of continuous efforts to cultivate respect, patience, and understanding among family members. Therefore, the advice contained in the closing song serves as a reminder that successful married life requires not only affection and commitment but also the capacity to navigate misunderstandings and resolve conflicts in constructive ways.

From a sociocultural perspective, the inclusion of these symbols at the end of the ritual is highly meaningful. As the final message delivered to the newlyweds, the song reinforces the notion that marriage is a lifelong process requiring cooperation, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. The symbolic transition from ritual performance to everyday family life is marked by a collective hope that the couple will embody the values of harmony and forgiveness in their future interactions.

This finding supports Golontalo et al. (2023), who argue that symbolic expressions in traditional rituals function as vehicles for transmitting social values and cultural norms. It also aligns with Muhammad (2024; 2025), who

emphasizes that the Sawer tradition serves as a medium for conveying moral teachings and behavioral guidance to newly married couples. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with Sari (2025), who highlights the role of ethical and religious values in fostering harmonious family relationships within traditional marriage practices.

Therefore, the symbols contained in Data 07 should not be interpreted merely as expressions of goodwill or ritual closure. Rather, they represent a cultural ideal of married life grounded in harmony, mutual forgiveness, emotional maturity, and social responsibility. Through these symbols, the Sawer tradition reinforces the belief that enduring family relationships are sustained by the ability to forgive, understand, and support one another despite inevitable challenges and differences.

#### **Data 08**

*Mugia imah pinuh kabagjaan,  
Carogé–nyai silih piaraan,  
Mugi Gusti maparin kaayaan,  
Rampung tembang minangk panutupan.*

Data 08 contains verbal symbols that express prayers, collective aspirations, mutual care, and divine blessing for the newlywed couple. In semiotic terms, the expressions *imah pinuh kabagjaan* (a home filled with happiness), *silih piaraan* (mutual care and support), and *Mugi Gusti maparin kaayaan* (may God grant favorable circumstances) function as signifiers that refer to broader signified concepts, including family well-being, emotional harmony, social responsibility, and spiritual dependence on divine guidance. These symbols collectively represent an ideal vision of married life characterized by happiness, mutual support, and divine blessing.

The phrase *imah pinuh kabagjaan* symbolizes the aspiration for a prosperous and harmonious household. However, happiness in this context is not limited to material prosperity or personal satisfaction. Rather, it encompasses

emotional stability, harmonious interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and the overall well-being of family members. The symbol reflects the Sundanese belief that a successful family is one that achieves balance between material needs, emotional fulfillment, and social harmony.

The expression *carogé–nyai silih piaraan* further emphasizes the principle of reciprocity within marriage. The phrase suggests that family life should be built upon mutual care, protection, and support between husband and wife. Significantly, the symbol portrays marriage as a partnership in which both individuals share responsibility for maintaining family stability and well-being. This finding reinforces the idea that harmonious relationships emerge through cooperation, empathy, and shared commitment rather than through individual effort alone.

Furthermore, the invocation *Mugi Gusti maparin kaayaan* reflects the spiritual dimension of marriage within Sundanese culture. The expression signifies an acknowledgment that human effort alone is insufficient to guarantee family happiness and prosperity. Instead, success in family life is perceived as the result of an interaction between personal responsibility and divine blessing. This symbolic relationship illustrates the integration of cultural and religious values within the Sawer tradition, where marital well-being is understood as both a social achievement and a gift from God.

From a sociocultural perspective, the placement of these symbols in the final stage of the ritual carries particular significance. As the concluding message of the Sawer ceremony, the song summarizes the fundamental values transmitted throughout the ritual, namely harmony, mutual responsibility, emotional support, and spiritual devotion. The closing prayer thus serves as a symbolic bridge between the ceremonial sphere and the realities of married life, reminding the couple that their future happiness depends upon maintaining balanced

relationships with one another, with their community, and with God.

This finding supports Sari (2025), who emphasizes that religious values within traditional marriage rituals function as a source of moral guidance and spiritual strength for newlyweds. The finding is also consistent with Muhammad (2024; 2025), who argues that the Sawer tradition serves as a medium for transmitting moral teachings and collective hopes regarding family life. Furthermore, it aligns with Golontalo et al. (2023), who explain that symbolic expressions in traditional ceremonies often function as cultural instruments for reinforcing social cohesion and communal values.

Therefore, the symbols contained in Data 08 should not be interpreted merely as a closing prayer or ceremonial blessing. Rather, they represent a cultural ideal of marriage that integrates emotional harmony, mutual care, social responsibility, and divine guidance. Through these symbols, the Sawer tradition communicates the belief that enduring family happiness is achieved through the combination of human effort, mutual commitment, and spiritual blessing.

## 5. CONCLUSION

District, Morowali Regency. The findings demonstrate that the Sawer tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial performance accompanying a wedding celebration, but as a cultural communication system through which religious values, social norms, moral teachings, and collective expectations are transmitted to newly married couples.

The analysis identified two major categories of symbols. First, the verbal symbols are conveyed through four ritual songs: the opening song, the song for the groom, the song for the bride, and the closing song. Collectively, these songs communicate symbolic messages

concerning religiosity, commitment, responsibility, family leadership, mutual care, harmony, forgiveness, and divine blessing. The verbal symbols serve as cultural instruments that guide the bride and groom in understanding their respective roles, responsibilities, and moral obligations within married life. Second, the non-verbal symbols consist of yellow rice, candies, money and coins, and an umbrella. These ritual objects symbolically represent prosperity, sweetness and harmony, economic stability, protection, and family well-being. Together, they embody the community's aspirations for a successful and harmonious household.

From a semiotic perspective, the findings reveal that the meanings of the Sawer symbols extend beyond their literal forms and are deeply rooted in the cultural worldview of the Sundanese community. The symbols function as signifiers that convey broader signified concepts related to social responsibility, emotional maturity, family cohesion, spiritual devotion, and communal solidarity. Consequently, the Sawer tradition serves not only as a ritual practice but also as a mechanism for preserving and reproducing cultural knowledge across generations.

This study contributes to the understanding of traditional wedding rituals by demonstrating how symbolic expressions operate as cultural resources for maintaining social values and cultural identity within migrant Sundanese communities outside their ancestral homeland. The persistence of the Sawer tradition in Beringin Jaya Village illustrates the community's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage while adapting to a multicultural social environment.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Sawer tradition represents a holistic cultural model of marriage in which family happiness is understood as the result of the integration of religious devotion, mutual responsibility, harmonious relationships, economic well-being, and divine blessing. Therefore, preserving and

transmitting the symbolic meanings embedded in the Sawer tradition is essential not only for safeguarding Sundanese cultural heritage but also for sustaining the moral and social values that underpin family and community life.

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