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Moibba' Ritual: A Rite of Passage and Identity Formation for the Boano Indigenous Community

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand the processes, symbols, and meanings embedded in the Moibba' ritual for daughters of the Boano tribe. This research uses an ethnographic analysis. Ethnographic analysis is an approach that begins with field facts, analyzes them based on cultural theories and relevant arguments to explore the cultural situation of the community, and ultimately yields a conclusion. The results show that the Moibba' ritual represents a complex rite of passage rich in symbolism, reflecting social transition and identity formation for the Boano tribe's daughter. This process marks the physical and spiritual transition of the individual undergoing it and communicates the cultural values and spiritual beliefs from the process of womboan (seclusion) until the posugo'an kadera hua'an (sitting on the throne chair). Each specific tool and material, from da'un dauna (betel leaf) to kadera hua'an (throne chair), holds deep symbolic meanings such as protection, cleanliness, honor, and purity, collectively forming a complex tapestry of the Boano tribe's social and cultural identity. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department of Education and Culture of Parigi Moutong Regency, Customary Institutions, Indigenous Elders, and the Boano indigenous community take strategic steps to preserve and promote the Moibba' ritual. This includes developing educational programs aimed at enhancing the awareness and understanding of the younger generation about the values and symbolism contained in the Moibba' ritual, as well as its importance in identity formation and the maintenance of social bonds within the Boano indigenous community. Integrating knowledge about this rite into the local school curriculum is also suggested to ensure the sustainable transmission of cultural knowledge. Developing cultural initiatives such as festivals or exhibitions showcasing the Moibba' ritual can enhance public appreciation of the Boano tribe's cultural heritage while strengthening social networks and solidarity among the indigenous people. With these measures, it is hoped that the Moibba' ritual and the cultural richness of the Boano tribe can be preserved and continue to thrive amidst the challenges of modernity and globalization.

Keywords: Identity Formation; Indigenous Community; Rite of Passage; Ritual.

INTRODUCTION

Culture represents a vast and complex thesis, reflecting evolved human intellect and thought (Rezah & Muzakkir, 2021). Each individual in indigenous communities contributes to cultural richness through the knowledge, beliefs, arts, and moral values they share and practice (Wastap, 2017). Koentjaraningrat (2012) articulated that cultural ideas and philosophies emerge from lifelong learning processes and value internalization, underscoring that culture is not merely an inheritance passed from one generation to the next but also the result of human interactions and adaptations to their environment (Sayful, 2020).

Furthermore, culture develops from ideas and thoughts from human interactions with their surroundings. This variation in thought leads to diverse customs that characterize and identify each region (Akhirun & Septiady, 2022). Sanskrit defines culture as "*budhayyah*," emphasizing the human intellect as the core of all cultural activities (Rony, 2021). It indicates that culture encompasses human achievements and creative and intellectual processes.

The importance of rites of passage in human culture is widely recognized, as Gennep (2019) explained. These critical periods are often accompanied by ceremonies and rites, which hold tangible and mystical potential dangers. Known as "*crisis rites*" or

“rites de passage” in anthropological studies, they mark transitions from one life stage to another, illustrating a deep understanding of how humans navigate significant life changes through established cultural frameworks.

Rites of passage are crucial in the cultures of various tribes, reflecting values and traditions handed down across generations (Sebbeh, 2020). Among these, the *Moibba' ritual* in the Boano tribe's culture stands out as a symbolically rich example. This rite marks a significant passage in an individual's life and serves as a ceremony to integrate daughters into their indigenous communities' social and spiritual structure. Thus, the *Moibba' ritual* bridges past and future, preparing individuals for their roles and responsibilities as daughters in indigenous societies.

Bolano Village, located in Central Sulawesi Province, boasts a rich history as part of the Boano Kingdom. The influence of Islam introduced during the kingdom era remains strong in the *Moibba' ritual*. The presence of this rite in the lives of the Boano indigenous people illustrates a complex interaction between religion, tradition, and social identity. By conducting the *Moibba' ritual*, the indigenous community not only preserves their cultural heritage but also affirms a religious identity that has been part of their history for a long time.

The *Moibba' ritual* is conducted flexibly, allowing adaptation to individual understandings of good and evil. It reflects an inclusive and adaptive approach to tradition, ensuring the rite remains relevant and meaningful for all indigenous community members, regardless of age (Ahmad et al., 2023). For daughters, the rite is not merely about transitioning age or status but recognizing their ability to comprehend and commit to greater life values. Through the *Moibba' ritual*, the Boano indigenous community preserves its legacy while providing space for the younger generation to grow and develop within a rich and diverse tradition.

Based on the description above, this research aims to understand the processes, symbols, and meanings embedded in the *Moibba' ritual* for daughters of the Boano tribe. By delving into the depth of this tradition, the research hopes to offer insights into how ritual practices shape and reinforce values, beliefs, and identities. The benefits of this research extend beyond enhancing academic understanding of rites of passage in the Boano tribal cultural context to a broader appreciation of the richness and diversity of Indonesian culture. This research also aims to contribute to preserving and promoting cultural heritage, which is crucial amid the challenges of modernization and globalization.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand groups of people, objects, situations, conditions, ongoing events, and even thought systems (Whitney, 1960). This research was conducted in Bolano Village, Parigi Moutong Regency. This research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Data was collected through

interviews with key informants, field observations, literature study techniques, and document analysis concerning various cultural rites' processes, symbols, and meanings. The acquired data was then analyzed using ethnographic analysis. Ethnographic analysis is an approach that begins with field facts, analyzes them based on cultural theories and relevant arguments to explore the cultural situation of the community, and ultimately yields a conclusion (Hicks et al., 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Process of Conducting the Moibba' Ritual

The Moibba' ritual among the Boano tribe is a significant sociocultural phenomenon rooted in the history of ritual performance within the indigenous community. History reveals that the ritual began following a specific event where the daughter of King Kongian Lampasio went missing and was subsequently found. This event marked a crucial moment for the Boano kingdom and initiated a tradition of investiture that has become an integral part of their social and cultural identity. Thus, the ritual serves not just as a formal procession but also as a means of identity renewal and social recognition for the participants (Longchar, 2020).

The Moibba' ritual plays a highly significant role in identity formation and recognition. The verification process conducted by King Kongian Lampasio to confirm that the found girl was indeed his daughter reflects a mechanism of identity verification and validation within the Boano indigenous community. It emphasizes that the Moibba' ritual is not merely a customary ceremony but also a medium for reinforcing social status and reaffirming kinship ties, vital elements in their social structure (Obladen, 2017).

Moreover, King Kongian Lampasio's decision to hold a customary ritual after proving his daughter's identity highlights the crucial role of rites in integrating individuals into the indigenous community. The ritual provides a platform for official recognition from the community and reaffirms the applicable values, norms, and traditions. Thus, the Moibba' ritual bridges the past with the present (Mahmud, 2022), strengthening collective identity (Muis, 2022) while celebrating individuality (Aderibigbe, 2019) within the Boano indigenous community's values and traditions.

The Moibba' ritual, now conducted by the Boano indigenous community, has evolved into a vital rite of passage, especially for the daughters within the community. The ritual becomes an essential symbol in the identity-marking process for members of the Boano indigenous people. Every daughter participating in this rite indirectly receives recognition and affirmation of her identity within the scope of her indigenous community. Thus, the Moibba' ritual is not just a tradition but also a social mechanism aimed at strengthening social bonds and guarding against potential dangers to community members, especially daughters (Kearney, 2018).

Furthermore, the Moibba' ritual serves as a means of educating and transmitting cultural values and religious teachings to the younger generation, particularly daughters. Through this rite, the Boano indigenous community conveys messages about the importance of upholding cherished teachings and values. It demonstrates that the Moibba' ritual plays a multifunctional role in identity formation and as a medium for learning and preserving cultural heritage. It affirms the ritual's position as essential in maintaining the continuity of tradition and local wisdom (Sasmita et al., 2022).

Implementing the Moibba' ritual, which can occur both in individual contexts and as part of wedding ceremonies, shows its flexibility and adaptation to changing social contexts. The procession that starts three days before the marriage vows creates a space for integrating the rite of passage with other significant events in the social life of the Boano indigenous community. This step not only strengthens the meaning of the Moibba' ritual in individual lives but also enriches the social context in which it is performed, making it a crucial aspect of celebration and identity affirmation in the Boano indigenous community. Thus, a detailed description of the procedures conducted during the Moibba' ritual in Bolano Village will follow.

1. *Womboan* (Seclusion)

The *womboan* (seclusion) process is the crucial initial stage of the Moibba' ritual, during which the daughter undergoes a seclusion period in a room for three days, abstaining from daily activities and avoiding direct contact with the ground, signaling a separation from her previous life. In the seclusion process, the daughter receives in-depth instruction about the teachings of Islam from the religious teacher, covering values such as honesty, obedience to parents, discipline in prayer, and the importance of fasting. This spiritual and moral preparation not only readies the daughter for her social roles but also instills an ethical and religious foundation that will guide her in all aspects of life within the Boano indigenous community.

2. *Mongense* (Tooth Filing)

The seclusion process includes *mongense* (tooth filing), and the daughter must apply marks on the palms. The tooth filing process must utilize natural materials such as betel leaf, whole areca nut, and limestone. Following the tooth filing, the process continues with applying marks on the daughter's palms using henna leaves.

3. *Odungkatan* (Emergence)

After completing the seclusion process series for three days, the daughter enters the *odungkatan* (emergence) process. In this process, the daughter

leaves the room, marking the end of the seclusion period. The emergence process confirms that she can step on the ground for the first time, symbolizing her readiness to stand, walk, and re-engage in daily activities.

4. *Ondu'i* (Traditional Bathing)

Following the emergence process, the next step is *ondu'i* (traditional bathing). In this process, the indigenous Elder splits a coconut over the daughter's head, allowing the water to flow from the top of her head down her body. This step is followed by pouring fresh water sourced from a new wellspring to ensure the purity and freshness of the water.

5. *Su'un* (Carry-Aloft)

After the traditional bathing process, the following procedure is *su'un* (carry-aloft), where the daughter is lifted and carried aloft by parents or adults while circling the house. During the carry-aloft process, the daughter wears traditional clothing: a white outfit with an umbrella, hood, and sarong. The accompaniment of music involving drumbeats and gongs adds a sacred and festive atmosphere to the Moibba' ritual. The presence of musical elements enriches the ritual aesthetically and strengthens the communal bonds and participation in the Moibba' ritual.

6. *Mogupu Da'un Olontigi* (Picking Henna Leaves)

The procession of the *mogupu da'un olontigi* (picking henna leaves) occurs in the carry-aloft process. The daughter is directed to pick henna leaves placed on a plate. The process of picking henna leaves demonstrates a connection with nature and reflects the cultural and spiritual aspects of the Moibba' ritual.

7. *Pake'i Pasanga* (Wearing Pasanga Traditional Attire)

After completing the carry-aloft process series, the daughter participates in the *pake'i Pasanga* (wearing *Pasanga* traditional attire) typical of the Boano tribe. In this process, the daughter is adorned with *Pasanga* traditional attire, enhanced with additional accessories such as necklaces and bracelets, adding elegance and richness to her appearance. The application of traditional jewelry also forms a sacred part of this process. Traditional jewelry is applied to the daughter's face, adding aesthetic beauty and symbolic meaning to the Moibba' ritual.

8. *Posugo'an Kadera Hua'an* (Sitting on the Throne Chair)

The *posugo'an kadera hua'an* (sitting on the throne chair) process is the climax of the Moibba' ritual, where the daughter sits on a decorated chair. The throne chair, termed the golden chair, symbolizes the completion of all

Moibba' ritual processes. The daughter's position on the throne chair marks her official recognition and acceptance by the Boano indigenous community as a member who has undergone investiture. The chair is not just a seat but represents the new status and identity gained through the ritual processes. The throne chair, resembling a bridal chair, displays splendor and honor within the Moibba' ritual context. This visual appearance reaffirms the importance of this process not only for the Boano tribe daughter who undergoes it but also for the entire indigenous community as a celebration of cultural identity and inherited traditions. Thus, the throne chair sitting process is not merely the conclusion of the Moibba' ritual but also a transformative moment for the daughter involved. Becoming "*a daughter of the Boano tribe*" after this rite marks a significant transition in her life, symbolically reinforced through the use of Boano tribe cultural symbols. Through this stage, the Moibba' ritual further affirms the values, traditions, and social bonds that shape the order of the Boano indigenous community.

B. Symbols and Meanings in the Moibba' Ritual

In the Moibba' ritual performed by the daughter of the Boano tribe, the use of tools and materials transcends mere procedural necessity, embodying significant symbolic meanings instead (Michaels, 2018). Each element in this process serves a ceremonial function and carries layers of deep meaning, reflecting the values, beliefs, and traditions the Boano indigenous people revered. Understanding the meanings behind each tool and material in the Moibba' ritual reveals the cultural richness and philosophical depth passed down from generation to generation. It reflects how rites, through their symbolism, act as mediums for cultural transmission, communicating and preserving critical social values essential for the continuity and identity of the Boano indigenous community. Furthermore, the selection and use of specific tools and materials in the rites reaffirm the indigenous community's connection with their natural environment and demonstrate respect and wisdom in utilizing available natural resources (Chakim, 2022). Thus, an analysis will be conducted on each symbol and meaning associated with the tools and materials used in the Moibba' ritual.

1. *Da'un Dauna, Lugus and Tilon* (Betel Leaf, Whole Areca Nut, and Limestone)

The use of *da'un dauna* (betel leaf), *lugus* (whole areca nut), and *tilon* (limestone) carries profound and layered meanings in the tooth filing procession. The tradition of using these three materials is linked to traditional medical practices for curing diseases. It is symbolically regarded as a protective agent safeguarding the daughter from various diseases and misfortunes. This concept can be explained through symbolic theory, who argued that symbols in rites serve as means of communication bearing cultural and spiritual meanings

(Seli, 2021). In the Moibba' ritual, the combination of betel leaf, whole areca nut, and limestone illustrates traditional herbal knowledge. It reinforces the concepts of protection and health within the context of the indigenous community's continuity.

Furthermore, the symbolism of the combination of betel leaf, whole areca nut, and limestone also embodies the meanings of family unity, affection, and harmony. This aspect aligns with the structural functionalism theory, highlighting how ceremonies and rites play a role in strengthening social coherence and group solidarity (Mentel, 2022). In this context, the use of betel leaf, whole areca nut, and limestone serves as a medium of protection and a symbol that binds family members and the indigenous community in affection and harmony. Therefore, in the Moibba' ritual, each element carries its significance and interconnects in building and communicating values cherished by the Boano indigenous people.

2. *Da'un Olontigi* (Henna Leaves)

The use of *da'un olontigi* (henna leaves) plays a crucial role and carries profound symbolic meanings when marking the palms. These leaves are not only used as aesthetic markers but are also considered to possess magical powers as protectors, serving to shield the daughter performing the rite. This significance aligns with symbolic theory in anthropology, who emphasized how symbols in a rite communicate and reflect an indigenous community's social structure and spiritual beliefs (Zarzycki, 2018). In the context of the Moibba' ritual, henna leaves symbolize the hopes and prayers of the indigenous community for the daughter's protection from all dangers and for her to lead a safe and prosperous life.

3. *Piging* (Machete)

The *piging* (machete) carries rich and significant layers of meaning in the Moibba' ritual. On the one hand, the machete is recognized as an essential tool for basic needs and self-defense, reflecting the intrinsic relationship between the tool and human survival. On the other hand, the machete also symbolizes leadership and power, where the *To Siaange* (indigenous Elder) is expected to bring prosperity to his indigenous community. This concept is closely related to the theory of social functions in anthropology, which emphasizes the role of symbols in reinforcing social structure and roles within the community (Maulana et al., 2022). On the other hand, the concept of cultural interpretation underscores the importance of symbols in conveying and preserving social values, where in this context, the machete is not just a tool but also a representation of an Elder's responsibilities and duties to his indigenous community (Rahman, 2023).

4. *Niug* (Coconut)

Using *niug* (coconut) as a cleansing element demonstrates profound and multifaceted symbolism in the traditional bathing procession. The coconut water poured over the daughter's head is a physical means of cleansing and carries spiritual significance for purification. This concept aligns with the purification theories extensively discussed in anthropological studies of rituals, where water is often seen as a symbol of cleansing and renewal (Xygalatas & Maño, 2022). The coconut tree, the source of the coconut water, is valued for its multifunctionality in daily life. In this context, the coconut tree becomes a metaphor for the hopes placed on the daughter undergoing the rite to be an individual who brings numerous benefits to the Boano indigenous community, just as the coconut tree does for its environment.

5. *Ogo* (Water)

Using *ogo* (water) is crucial in the traditional bathing procession. The specificity of this water, which must come from a newly sourced wellspring, underscores the importance of purity and freshness as part of the renewal and purification process. Water, a symbol of cleanliness, tranquility, and purity, is a vital element in this rite and reflects universal values about water as a source of life and purification. About symbolic anthropological theory, the use of water in such rites can be viewed as both a 'model-of' and 'model-for' social and spiritual realities, where water not only reflects the desire for physical purity but also serves as a medium to convey hopes for internal peace and tranquility for the individual undergoing the ritual (Setiawan, 2020).

6. *Umbrella, Toolung, and Uoos* (Umbrella, Hood, and Sarong)

Using an umbrella, *toolung* (hood) and *uoos* (sarong) serve as tools and embody rich symbolic meanings that reflect the values and beliefs in the carry-aloft procession. The umbrella, interpreted as a symbol of protection for the daughter from external negative influences and internal misconduct, reflects the Boano indigenous people's belief in safeguarding the purity and goodness of individuals undergoing significant life transitions. The theory of protection and purification within the context of rites can be explained through symbolic anthropology, which emphasizes how objects in rites are often imbued with meanings and functions that transcend their everyday use, becoming symbols that communicate and reinforce the values of the indigenous community (Benjamin, 2023).

Meanwhile, the hood, which is cone-shaped and placed on the daughter's head, carries a deep spiritual meaning as a reminder that each individual will face God, reflecting the Boano indigenous community's worldview on life after death and moral accountability. The sarong symbolizes hopes for the

daughter to have a harmonious household life, smooth fulfillment of her goals, and be blessed with morally upright offspring. These meanings illustrate how elements in the Moibba' ritual orient not only toward the daughter but also toward the broader welfare of the indigenous community. Theory of liminality provides additional insights into how rites like the Moibba' ritual play a role in social status transitions (Coombes, 2020), where symbols such as the umbrella, hood, and sarong serve as tools to mark and facilitate changes in the daughter's life and to reinforce the social structure and values of the Boano indigenous community.

7. *Go'ong* and *Jumba* (Gongs and Drums)

The use of *go'ong* (gongs) and *jumba* (drums) in the Moibba' ritual extends beyond their roles as musical accompaniments during the carry-aloft procession, carrying profound and multifaceted meanings. The Boano indigenous people regard gongs as guides and symbols of divine majesty and greatness, reflecting their cosmological view of the relationship between humans and spiritual forces. The sound of gongs in the Moibba' ritual is believed to act as a medium connecting human activities with divine intervention, reminding us that humans are always under the protection and guidance of God. This concept closely relates to symbolic theory in anthropology, where symbols in rites play roles in conveying and reinforcing the belief structures and values of the indigenous community (Czimbalmos, 2021).

On the other hand, drums communicate the conduct of the Moibba' ritual to the Boano indigenous community, serving as tools for announcements and unification. The communicative function of drums during the carry-aloft procession illustrates the role of music and rhythm in building collective awareness and social solidarity (Ridwan et al., 2020). By playing the drums, the Boano indigenous people not only announce the execution of the Moibba' ritual but also call community members to gather, participate, and unite in honoring the tribe's traditions and cultural values. Thus, gongs and drums in the Moibba' ritual are more than just musical instruments; they are mediums that unite the spiritual and social dimensions, reaffirming the beliefs, identity, and cohesion of the Boano indigenous community through the harmony and rhythm they create.

8. *Pasanga* Traditional Attire

The use of *Pasanga* traditional attire by the daughter is a critical element laden with symbolic meaning in the Moibba' ritual. This tradition is rooted in history, where during the era of the Boano Kingdom, this attire was worn by Princess Kongian Lampasio as part of her investiture ceremony, signifying status and honor. In the context of the Moibba' ritual, the selection of white

and red in the *Pasanga* traditional attire carries deep symbolism. The color white, represented through the fabric of the attire and the hood over the head, symbolizes goodness, purity, and clarity, reflecting the hope that the daughter will lead a life with a pure and clean heart. Meanwhile, the color red on the *surbani* (sash) and *sarong* represent courage and greatness, illustrating the desire for the daughter to possess self-confidence and character strength when facing life's challenges. This concept resonates with the theory of color psychology, which explores how colors can influence human perception and behavior (Syahrial & Anjarsari, 2023), and with symbolic anthropology, which highlights how symbols in rites function to transmit social and cultural values (Huang, 2018).

9. *Botte* (Traditional Jewelry)

Botte (traditional jewelry) plays a significant symbolic role in wearing *Pasanga* traditional attire procession. Traditionally, traditional jewelry was made from roasted rice, and now it is crafted from cut and patterned paper. The application of traditional jewelry on the daughter's face serves an aesthetic function and embodies profound symbolic meaning, representing honor and purity. In this context, semiotic theory can provide insight into how traditional jewelry functions as a constructed symbol to communicate specific values and ideas related to social status, honor, and purity in the culture (Burad, 2023) of the Boano tribe.

10. *Kadera Hua'an* (Throne Chair)

The *kadera hua'an* (throne chair) plays a crucial role as the final symbol in the sequence of processes in the *Moibba'* ritual. This ornately decorated chair, resembling a bridal throne, is not just a seat but represents the golden chair, signaling high status and great honor for the Boano tribe's daughter. In this context, the throne chair is more than just a physical object; it becomes a symbolic vessel expressing the social and spiritual transformation undergone by the Boano tribe's daughter. Structuralism theory explains how symbols in culture, like the throne chair, encompass a deep collective thought system, where objects and ritual practices convey the indigenous community's social structure and values (Sundari et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the use of the throne chair as a symbol of distinction and honor for the daughter illustrates the significant roles of gender and status within the social structure of the Boano indigenous community. As a symbol of honor, the throne chair emphasizes recognition of the transition and new achievements in the life of the daughter who has undergone the *Moibba'* ritual. Performance theory on the liminality process in rites provides additional insights into the function of the throne chair (Sonnex et al., 2022). In the

liminal phase, the ritual subject is between the previous and forthcoming phases, where symbols like the throne chair play a key role in marking the transition to a new status, here recognizing and celebrating the maturity and new standing of the daughter in the Boano indigenous community.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the Moibba' ritual represents a complex rite of passage rich in symbolism, reflecting social transition and identity formation for the Boano tribe's daughter. This process marks the physical and spiritual transition of the individual undergoing it and communicates the cultural values and spiritual beliefs from the process of *womboan* (seclusion) until the *posugo'an kadera hua'an* (sitting on the throne chair). Each specific tool and material, from *da'un dauna* (betel leaf) to *kadera hua'an* (throne chair) in the Moibba' ritual, holds deep symbolic meanings such as protection, cleanliness, honor, and purity, collectively forming a complex tapestry of the Boano tribe's social and cultural identity. Thus, the Moibba' ritual is crucial in maintaining and transmitting traditional values and strengthening social and spiritual bonds within the Boano indigenous community.

Based on the above conclusion, it is recommended that the Department of Education and Culture of Parigi Moutong Regency, Customary Institutions, Indigenous Elders, and the Boano indigenous community take strategic steps to preserve and promote the Moibba' ritual. This includes developing educational programs aimed at enhancing the awareness and understanding of the younger generation about the values and symbolism contained in the Moibba' ritual, as well as its importance in identity formation and the maintenance of social bonds within the Boano indigenous community. Integrating knowledge about this rite into the local school curriculum is also suggested to ensure the sustainable transmission of cultural knowledge. Developing cultural initiatives such as festivals or exhibitions showcasing the Moibba' ritual can enhance public appreciation of the Boano tribe's cultural heritage while strengthening social networks and solidarity among the indigenous people. With these measures, it is hoped that the Moibba' ritual and the cultural richness of the Boano tribe can be preserved and continue to thrive amidst the challenges of modernity and globalization.

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