



Symbolic Meanings in The *Mammatus* Ritual of Bugis Marriage Culture

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of marriage in an area has its traditions and the Bugis tribe's marriage. Some customs are attached to the procession and have good meanings. The meaning of the wedding procession is often only known by traditional leaders or a group of people who are traditional observers. As a result, the older generation fails to transmit these customs effectively to the next generation. This research aims to explore the symbolic meaning of one of the Bugis tribe's wedding processions, which is called the *Mammatus*. The research method uses a descriptive approach with a qualitative research type. The authors collected the research data through observation, documentation, and interviews. We conducted observation and documentation directly at one of the Bugis tribe wedding processes in Baranti District, Sidrap Regency. Informants consisted of traditional leaders and local community members involved in the *Mammatus* procession at one of the weddings. The research information collected was then validated using symbolic validity with the involvement of anthropologists. The validated data was then analyzed using data reduction, presentation, and verification techniques. The study results show that the *Mammatus* is carried out after the wedding reception to ask for blessings from the bride and groom's parents. The procession features the exchange of *lipa sabbe* (silk sarongs) between families as a symbol of mutual respect and familial unity. In contrast, the offering of *penne anreang* (plates containing staple foods, ingredients, and traditional cakes) expresses the hope that the bride and groom will uphold the integrity of their household. These meanings emerge from symbolic interactions that the community has continuously expressed and practiced across generations, eventually becoming embedded beliefs that are actively preserved.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a cultured nation with various types of tribes, languages, races, ethnicities, and religions, as well as diverse forms of life and style. Indonesia is blessed with multiple kinds of unique cultures, a matter of pride for each community that owns it (Anggita, 2018). A diverse culture is an invaluable wealth of a community that has it.

Culture is a pattern of basic assumptions discovered and determined by a particular group as it learns and master's the problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered appropriate and is therefore taught to new members as a way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling correctly with these problems. Culture is a concept that generates interest and is related to the way humans live, learn, think, feel, believe, and strive for what is appropriate according to their culture in the sense of words. It is behavior and social events that describe the identity and image of society (Nahak, 2019); therefore, culture reflects the way of life, values, and traditions of a group of people passed down from generation to generation.

Indonesian society is known to have different cultural diversity, especially customs and habits that are still maintained today, such as the Bugis community in South Sulawesi. Looking at the condition of the Bugis community in general, old traditions seem to be marginalized and have even begun to be abandoned by the owner community due to changes in community behavior patterns that led to the development of science and the times (Hasmawati et al., 2023). If these old traditions become extinct, the nation's cultural values and they will be contained in them will disappear without a deep impression, even though this value has an essential meaning in human life and can be used as an initial capital in the formation of national character (Agus et al., 2021). This contrasts with the Bugis community in the Baranti Sub-district, which still maintains its culture and customs. Baranti sub-district has one of the traditions



and rituals that are still being maintained, one of which is the culture of *Mammatus*, which is one of the processions at the traditional wedding ceremony of the Bugis tribe, which is carried out after the marriage contract.

Culture is believed to be inherited from adults to children. Humans are not born with culture, but culture is learned by humans throughout their lives (Siri et al., [2024](#)). *Mammatus* culture is usually coupled with the *mapparola* tradition. *Mapparola* is a return visit by the bride's family to the groom's house. The bride goes to the groom's parent's house to make introductions and ask for the blessing of both parents and the groom's extended family. *The mapparola* event in the Bugis community is usually held after the marriage ceremony. Both husband and wife are escorted by relatives, family members, and friends to the residence of the groom's parents. When the husband and wife arrive in front of the groom's parent's house, they are sprinkled with rice (Bugis: *berre*) accompanied by *kurru sumange*, which means the same as welcome.

The *Mammatus* is where the bride visits the groom's parents by bringing sarongs for the in-laws and their siblings, which is carried out in the groom's room. Indo Botting escorts the bride to give silk sarongs to the groom's parents and siblings. In the Bugis area, this gift is usually returned with additional gifts from the groom, depending on his ability. At the reception of the new son-in-law, the groom's parents (in-laws) typically give gifts to their son-in-law in the form of clothes or gold jewelry and others (called *padduppa manettu*), followed by gifts from relatives and invitees (called *Passolo*). In addition, there is also a tradition of handing over *penne anreang* with a total of 7 plates consisting of: one large plate as a food plate and six small plates as a place for side dishes, a place to wash hands, glasses and *sung appe* (pieces of the mat). Each plate contains kitchen spices: rice, eggs, green beans, tamarind, sea salt, turmeric, shallots, coffee/tea, and sugar. The number of *penne anreang* symbolizes social strata (Sudirman & Mustaring, [2022](#)).

After the *penne anreang* ceremony, both husband and wife ask to return to the bride's parents' house by handing over an odd number of sarongs to the groom's parents as a symbol of *parillau assimang*. In ancient times, the number 9 was used by nobles, while descendants of nobles used the number 7, and ordinary people used the number 5.

The *Mammatus* cultural procession sometimes uses symbols that are full of meanings that require in-depth understanding to understand, seen in the equipment that is often used in *Mammatus* cultural events at traditional Bugis weddings, such as seven pieces of *penne anreang*, which symbolizes noble descent, *Arung / Puang* and many other symbols contained in the *Mammatus*. Hence, it is necessary to examine the meaning of the symbols in the culture more deeply (Muchsin & Anwar, [2022](#)). Moreover, there have been several symbolic shifts in the way the Bugis tribe practices the *Mammatus*, such as the replacement of the *lipa sabbe* (silk sarong) with a regular sarong equivalent to the nominal price of the *lipa sabbe*, and changes to the contents of the *penne anreang*, particularly the traditional cake, which has been replaced with a dry cake. This poses a challenge in uncovering the original meaning of the *Mammatus*. Some studies have focused on the connection between the *Mammatus* culture and Islamic law, making it necessary to reveal the symbolic meaning of this culture so that it can be preserved, and its norms and values can be maintained.

Symbolic Theory by George Herbert Mead emphasizes two things. First, humans in society can never be separated from social interaction. Second, social interactions manifest in certain symbols whose nature tends to be dynamic (Hasbullah & Ahid, [2022](#)). The mind is a social phenomenon; the mind is not the process of a person's conversation with himself because the mind arises and develops through social processes. The social process precedes the mind, and the social process is not a product of the mind. Jarome Manis and Bernard Meltzer put forward seven fundamental propositions in symbolic interaction (Nihayaty et al., [2021](#)), namely:

- 1) Humans understand things through meanings gained from experience, and human perception always emerges using symbols.
- 2) Meaning is learned through interactions between people, and meaning emerges from the exchange of symbols in social groups.
- 3) All social structures and institutions are based on interactions between people.
- 4) Human behavior is not only influenced by events but also by one's own will.
- 5) The human mind contains internal conversations, which reflect that they have interacted.
- 6) Behavior is created in interaction with social groups.
- 7) A person cannot be understood only from overt behavior.

Culture is humans' thoughts, works, and results that are not rooted in their instincts and can only be triggered by humans after the learning process. The characteristics of culture that become a reference for dissection in research consist of communication and language, clothing and appearance, clothing and eating habits, time and awareness of time, appreciation and recognition, relationships, values and norms, sense of self and space, mental processes and

learning, beliefs, and attitudes. These characteristics become indicators in interpreting the symbols contained in the *Mammatus* procession.

The prevalence of these phenomena indicates that many people, especially millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha, are still unaware of the meanings contained in the symbols used in the *Mammatus* procession (Julianty, [2022](#); Oktaviasary & Sutini, [2024](#); Siregar et al., [2024](#)). Overall, the results of this study suggest that the ease of access to information in the digital age indirectly influences the accuracy of information, raising concerns about a shift in the meanings of symbols inherent in a culture. Valid data is needed to reveal the true meaning of each symbol in a culture, especially in the *Mammatus*. A shift in the sense of cultural rituals can lead to the loss of the primary purpose of the cultural changes in the value system and norms within society. It may result in the commodification of culture.

Most people who know the meaning and significance of symbols in *Mammatus* are elders, such as ancestors. Hence, most children today only follow customs passed down from generation to generation. It is also known that each region has different cultural customs, including their meanings and how they are carried out, so it is necessary to research *Mammatus*, especially the customs of the Bugis people in Baranti District, using cultural studies. Moreover, a connection between one symbol and another holds positive meanings in communal life.

METHOD

Qualitative is the approach to research using descriptive types. The approach was used because the study aims to describe the *Mammatus* cultural procession carried out by the Bugis tribe community in Baranti District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. An anthropological perspective is used in observing the procession of cultural implementation (Hennink et al., [2020](#)). Research data was collected using observation techniques based on observation guidelines conducted over two weeks at the bride and groom's homes. During the first week until the wedding day, the observation focused on the preparation process for the *seserahan* (wedding gift exchange) in the *Mammatus* ceremony, while on the wedding day, the focus was on each process of the *Mammatus* ceremony. Documentation techniques were used to collect documentation of the *Mammatus* cultural practice, which could be used to support the research data obtained from observation and interviews. Two traditional leaders, three community members involved in the *Mammatus* cultural practice, and one couple were selected as informants for the study. The researcher interviewed the informants using a semi-structured interview instrument prepared in advance.

All collected research data then entered the triangulation stage to ensure the validity of the information by analyzing and comparing the information obtained from the three data analysis techniques. Data triangulation involved anthropology experts to examine the results of interpreting symbolic meanings in the *Mammatus*. Symbolic validation was carried out through member checking: informants were allowed to review the researcher's interpretation of the symbols described. In addition, semiotic analysis is also carried out to interpret the signs and symbols in the ritual. This approach is used to describe normatively and explore the symbolic meaning in depth and contextually from each *Mammatus* cultural procession. After the information has been tested for data validity, it is analyzed using data analysis techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. After the information has been tested for data validity, it is analyzed using data analysis techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Dodgson, [2017](#)).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Culture implementation process

The *Mammatus* among the Bugis tribe, especially in the Baranti District, is carried out after the marriage contract. The groom does not carry out the *mammatus*, but only the bride and those involved in this tradition are the closest families to the male party, namely the parents and their closest relatives. Several family members accompany the bride to hand over her belongings to the male party (e.g., aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmothers, siblings, and friends) (Saleh, [2019](#)). The stages carried out when performing this *Mammatus* include the bride returning to the groom's house and her convoy. The bride brings a woven sarong to the husband's family as a wedding gift. The bride also brings offerings such as personal equipment and cakes for the groom. This visit is essential to the Bugis community because it signifies that the bride is well-received by the groom's family. In this *Mammatus* procession, the bride returns to bow to the parents and elders of the groom, and the bride will be given gifts or souvenirs in the form of rings, bracelets, and necklaces made of gold or precious stones. After the *Mammatus* ceremony, the bride and groom return to the bride's house.

From the various processes carried out when this culture takes place, there are positive impacts, namely establishing *silaturahmi* between male and female parents and avoiding unfamiliarity between sons-in-law and in-laws or avoiding meetings that do not recognize the family (Suparman & Tsamratul'aeni, [2024](#)).

Based on the results of documentation, observations, and interviews, it was found that the process of implementing the *Mammatus* was carried out in the following stages:

- a) Preparation: communicating intentions, gathering materials or equipment
- b) Performance of the ritual: prayers and wishes, offerings.
- c) Parents' message: coaching and teaching.
- d) Closing: prayer.

The bride and groom carry out the *Mammatus* in the sense that it is carried out at the residence of the bride and the groom; it's just that at the bride's house, it is just *ma'jama* or asking for blessing, and at the groom's house it is the real custom. Usually, this custom involves some of the closest people to the bride and groom, including the father of the man, the mother of the man, the mother of the woman, the woman's father, and the two brides. *Mammatus* is usually carried out in a certain way where the male family gives *anreang* to the female party. Then, the bride provides an exchange by handing over a sarong, one pair, and two cookie jars to the male family. *Mammatus* is very good to continue and finish. Still, the habits carried out by the Bugis community of Baranti District also have a positive impact, namely, to establish *silaturahmi* between the parents of the groom and the bride and avoid non-acquaintance in the sense that it is feared that the bride and groom do not know each other between the extended families of their partners.

In addition, there are other benefits from the implementation of the *Mammatus*, which consist of strengthening the relationship between the two prominent families of the bride and groom, preservation of cultural values, and religious and life spirits that prioritize mutual respect and expand the ties (Juwaini, [2018](#)). Implementing *Mammatus* aims to maintain and honor ancestors, strengthen social relations between community members, and preserve Bugis traditions rich in moral and spiritual values.

The symbolic meaning of *Mammatus*

Mammatus is one of the requirements and complementary elements in the wedding party among the Bugis tribe of the Baranti District. This ceremony symbolically uses *lipa sabbe* (silk sarong), symbolizing faithfulness and perseverance. The presence of the bride and groom is sprinkled with rice (Bugis: *benno*) accompanied by *kurru sumānge*, which means welcome. The delivery of 7 pieces of penne *anreang* symbolizes the descendants of nobles, *arung/puang*, while those who deliver five pieces are ordinary people. Along with the times and material factors, most of the Bugis people of Baranti Sub-district use the number 7 as a symbol of *parillau assimang*. In ancient times, the number 9 was used by nobles, descendants of nobles used the number 7, and ordinary people used the number 5.

Another meaning that can be learned from the tradition of handing over *penne anreang* is that a husband has handed over with an open heart with complete sincerity in the sense that the husband has an obligation with full responsibility to provide for his wife. All that her husband produces is left to the wife, while the wife is expected to be able to process the material with her concoction according to her husband's taste. Therefore, there is an expression *lamappurepō asenna buranewe lamapparāka asenna makkunraiye*, which means that the husband is responsible for making a living to meet the needs of his household while the wife is in charge of managing and organizing what her husband has produced.

The following is the philosophical meaning of the tradition of handing over *penne anreang* with a total of 7 plates, with the contents of each plate obtained during interviews with traditional leaders:

- 1) Rice that comes from rice has a symbol that the fuller the rice is, the more downward. Therefore, the message that can be taken later is that this married couple should not be arrogant with what they have.
- 2) Egg. The philosophy of the egg can be seen if an egg is broken by force from outside. The life in the egg will end, but if an egg is broken by force from within, then a new life will begin, as will human life. The enthusiasm and motivation within us primarily determine the success of our lives. That way, it is hoped that husband and wife will remain enthusiastic in living their lives and not give up on facing every challenge. Apart from that, the egg consists of 3 components related to humans: the eggshell symbolizes the human body, the white skin symbolizes the soul in humans, and the yolk represents the power of reason in humans, which in the Qoran is *qalbu*. These three aspects exist in humans, namely the body, soul, and spirit.

- 3) Green beans. The meaning conveyed to the bride and groom is that in the future, they can be like green beans that always gather a lot, meaning that the fortune of this married couple in building a household can be much more prosperous, a lot of fortune (*si enrekeng dalle*) and have offspring. So, two things are expected from the green bean symbol, namely that it is expected to get a lot of fortune and can have a baby as the perfection of love.
- 4) Shallots. It is one of the kitchen spices that have a significant role in flavoring side dishes. It is common knowledge that if you peel the shallots, tears will come out, and if the shallots are peeled continuously until the skin runs out, we don't find anything as the core of the shallots and only tears that drip as a side effect. That is the picture of life in the world; we must continue to search until this body can no longer search, but nothing is brought when we face the power. Searching while still alive, looking for money, looking for a position, looking for a wife or husband, and many others, like strands of shallots skin. Only the taste that we can enjoy in the search. Like the taste when we peel the shallots skin, which causes our tears to fall, that is also the taste of life. Tears will fall when we feel happy and when we feel sad. The taste of life is reflected through the outpouring of the heart through tears.
- 5) Turmeric. The philosophy of turmeric as an antidote to cooking would not be beautiful fish dishes without turmeric, and in living our lives, we are expected to remain an antidote in dealing with a problem.
- 6) Tamarind and sea salt. Kitchen spices are needed in cooking because the dish feels bland without the taste of tamarind and sea salt. Likewise, life is interpreted as the spice of life because in living a household life, many life problems are felt, so we are expected to accept existing issues with a spacious heart so that no matter how big the problem is faced, it can be resolved wisely.
- 7) A cake that resembles the number 7 or a cake of 7 seeds. *Patuju* means that the couple is always proper and successful in every endeavor and step taken later.

Apart from the meaning of the symbols used in the tradition of handing over *penne anreang*, the core message is that if one day the husband gets a blessing in the form of food ingredients as symbolized, mix the ingredients according to the husband's taste. Symbolic meaning refers to the values or messages contained in each element of the culture, both rituals, symbols, and objects used during the marriage process (Jusman, [2022](#)).



Figure 1. Wedding gift from the bride's family to the groom's family



Figure 2. Wedding gift from the groom's family to the bride's family

The *Mammatus* ritual in Bugis wedding culture is a sacred event with high symbolism and is not merely a traditional ceremony but a space for social communication rich in meaning. Symbols such as *penne anreang* and *lipa sabbe* are not just decorative elements or traditions but part of a symbolic language that shapes and reflects social identity, hopes, and relationships between individuals in Bugis society.

1. Symbols as products of social interaction

Within George H. Mead's symbolic interactionism framework, meaning is not inherent in objects but is formed through social interaction. This is the case in the *Mammatus*, as follows:

- a) *Penne anreang* symbolizes a woman's readiness to manage a household. Still, this meaning emerges and is internalized through repeated social practices, such as the advice given by parents to the bride or the social assessment of the 'ideal' woman in the local context.
- b) *Lipa sabbe* symbolizes honor, social status, and the suitability of the bride. This value is not absolute but rather arises from a negotiation of meaning within the Bugis community itself—a meaning reinforced in every wedding ceremony.

In Mead's view, meaning is formed when individuals respond to social gestures in interactions, so when a mother gives *lipa sabbe* to the bride's family in the *Mammatus*, the action is not only symbolic but also performative, affirming the position of the daughter-in-law in the social order and the union between the two families.

2. Philosophical reflection: relationships, honor, and value transmission

The *Mammatus* is a medium for transmitting values and norms that are passed down symbolically. The Bugis philosophy of *siri* (self-respect) and *pesse* (social empathy) is expressed through the symbols used. For example, the choice of motifs and colors on the *lipa sabbe* reflects the social status of the family and the form of respect for the bride and groom's families.

In *Mammatus*, marriage is not just a legal or administrative process but also a sacred ceremony closely related to symbolism. Every action or object involved, such as bridal attire, traditional processions, speeches, and offerings, has a deep meaning with the following explanation:

- a) Bridal attire symbolizes good luck, honor, and social status.
- b) Traditional rituals such as the act of sprinkling water on each other, the giving of offerings, or the use of specific tools in the procession show the seriousness and hope for the married life that the bride and groom go through.
- c) Family symbols mean that extended families are often involved as symbols of social support and networks that strengthen the bond between two married individuals.

The symbolic meaning in the *Mammatus* is also related to the ethnic and cultural identity of the Bugis people, where marriage is not only about uniting two individuals but two extended families who have a relationship in various social, economic, and cultural aspects (Salida, 2023). Marriage is a significant event in human life. The basics of marriage are formed by the natural elements of human life, which include biological needs and functions, giving birth to offspring, the need for love and brotherhood, and nurturing these children into perfect members of society. For religious believers, marriage is sacred and contains religious teachings for its adherents. The marriage ritual is not only seen as a holy event because there is a marital bond between husband and wife after that.

This is also reflected in the expression of the Makassar people who say *Tenapa nagarna se're tau punna nasi tutu ulunna salangganna* (a person is not perfect if his head is not connected to his shoulders). This saying means that a human being can only become an ideal human being, which in Makassarese is called *tau* when he is married. A person who has not married is likened to having an incomplete body because the head and steps are unrelated. A husband and wife are likened to the head and body, which must be connected to become a perfect human being.

Marriage in the Bugis-Makassar tribe is still very thick with their cultures, which are full of meaning from the rituals carried out. They strongly believe and trust in the meaning contained in their traditions, starting from the planning stage to the wedding, which will be carried out with caution and fear of violating what they believe (Khatima & Amin, 2022). The *Mammatus*, as part of the Bugis tribe's wedding ceremony, has similar rituals to those found in other regions, such as in Javanese weddings, where the symbol of *sidomukti* batik represents prosperity and longevity, identical to *lipa sabbe* in the Bugis context. Both fabrics represent social status and expectations but are formed from different cultural narratives. The Minangkabau wedding custom of presenting betel leaves in a *carano* symbolizes respect and readiness to interact according to tradition and shares a similar meaning with the *penne anreang*, which signifies the readiness of the bride and groom to start their married life. This comparison shows that marriage symbols in various Southeast Asian cultures have similar social functions to communicate values but are constructed from unique social experiences and value structures.

Baranti District in Sidenreng Rappang Regency is an area that still maintains many local cultural traditions, one of which is the culture of *Mammatus* in marriage. The analysis of the marriage includes the following aspects:

- a) The process and stages of marriage: this tradition is practiced in the Bugis community in Baranti District. The stages that a married couple will go through. Then, rituals or customs that are still prominent in the community environment.
- b) The influence of modernization: along with the times, modernization affects the implementation of *Mammatus* in marriage. Changes in the way symbolic meanings are viewed in this culture.
- c) Gender and family roles: We need to observe the roles of men and women in marriage, which are understood through a *Mammatus* cultural perspective. Specific stages of the role of each party in building a household. The role of the extended family in supporting or organizing the marriage.
- d) Symbolic in social life: the symbols present in the wedding ceremony implementing the *Mammatus* can be an essential link for social relations between community members. This can be seen from the participation of residents in the wedding ceremony, where the wedding process is a moment that strengthens the bonds of brotherhood in the community.

Marriage in *Mammatus* is ceremonial and has an essential symbolic dimension. The rituals in this marriage carry a deep meaning of unity, honor, and cultural identity (Hartini et al., 2022). This symbolic meaning emphasizes that marriage unites two individuals and two large families that must establish social harmony.

CONCLUSION

The *Mammatus* needs to be preserved because it has a positive impact on maintaining good relations between the parents of the bride and groom and avoiding unfamiliarity, in the sense that there is a concern that the bride and groom will not know each other's extended families. The *Mammatus* cultural procession has begun to undergo simplification and even a shift in meaning due to the influence of modernization. The younger generation tends to view this culture as a formality without understanding the philosophical values it embodies. Therefore, it is essential to reflect on how the symbolic values of the *Mammatus* can be communicated in a way that remains relevant and acceptable to the younger generation. One of the preservation efforts that can be undertaken is through local cultural education in schools, strengthening traditional communities, and audiovisual documentation that explains the meaning behind the rituals. The positive impact of understanding the symbolic meaning of *Mammatus* for the younger generation is an appreciation of their ancestral cultural heritage and creative adaptation in a contemporary context without losing the essence of cultural values.

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Personal Communication:*

- 1) Hj. Hafsa, local figure, personal communication, Tonronge, January 10, 2022.
- 2) Suderi, bride, personal communication, Baranti, January 5, 2022.
- 3) Mustari, groom, personal communication, Baranti, January 5, 2022.
- 4) Abdul Rahing, traditional leader, personal communication, Tonronge, December 30, 2021.
- 5) H. Abdul Fattah, local figure, personal communication, Manisa, January 2, 2022.
- 6) Lasunre, local figure, personal communication, Baranti, January 7, 2022.
- 7) Muh. Jufri, traditional leader, personal communication, Simpo, December 22, 2021.

*All interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent, ensuring the data collection's ethical integrity