

Symbolic Meaning and Trisilas Values in the Bakti Purnamasari Traditional Ceremony

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The Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony serves as a vessel for the community to engage in spiritual practices that have been passed down through generations, based on references from the Pantun Pajajaran Bogor manuscripts. Additionally, this traditional ceremony serves as a social platform for communal activities. The Bakti Purnamasari Ceremony transcends beyond a mere series of religious rituals; it becomes a manifestation of cultural continuity and social involvement laden with values and meaning. In this context, the ceremony not only embodies spiritual values but also significantly contributes to the formation of community identity and the reinforcement of social solidarity. In the context of this article, the aim is to describe and analyze the research findings related to symbols, subsequently elaborating on their meanings and the trisilas value namely, *silih asih, silih asah, and silih asuh* embedded in the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony in Sukabumi. The research methodology employed is descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach. Participants in the study were selected from cultural figures in the city of Sukabumi, deemed valuable sources of information due to their rich knowledge and experiences associated with the Bakti Purnamasari Ceremony. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentary studies, with data analysis using triangulation. The research results indicate that the symbols in the traditional ceremony are reflected through offerings with intended meanings expressing gratitude for the blessings received. The trisilas values in the Bakti Purnamasari ceremony portray sincere expressions of love and affection, mutual filling or synergy, and a sense of selfless care.

Keywords: Bakti Purnamasari, Tri Silas Value, Symbolic Meaning, Traditional Ceremony

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INTRODUCTION

The Sundanese community is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia with a rich and unique culture. The Sundanese people engage in numerous traditional ceremonies that serve as symbols of survival, blessings, and fertility. The distinctive features of humanity and nationality are constructed through rituals (Subiantoro, 2016). One of the traditional rituals or ceremonies performed by the Sundanese people is the traditional ceremony of *bakti purnamasari*. The *Bakti Purnamasari* Traditional Ceremony is a form of cultural traditional ceremony of the Sundanese community, typically held once a month, as indicated by its name "*Purnamasari*," which stands for "*Purnama Keur Meujueh Di Sarina*" (Hapidzin et al., 2022). In the past, the Sundanese community, especially during the Sundanese Pajajaran era, conducted traditional ceremonial activities in the middle of the brightly lit full moon night. The *Purnamasari* traditional ceremony is one of the ritualistic practices that refer to the literature of the *Pantun Pajajaran Bogor*. It is known that the *Pantun Pajajaran Bogor* manuscript discusses various aspects of Pajajaran society's life, including social, cultural, ideological, political, security defense, and religious or belief systems, along with the continued implementation of rituals (Narawati, 2004; Narawati et al., 2021a).

Ceremonies or ritual implementations are a part of performing arts with various supporting elements that have specific purposes and objectives (Schechner, 2002). The purposes of conducting a traditional ceremony are undoubtedly diverse. In the case of the *Bakti Purnamasari* traditional ceremony, it serves as a general expression of gratitude for all the blessings received from the Almighty Creator. The activity of the ceremony, aimed at expressing gratitude, is a common phenomenon in society, involving offerings of agricultural or natural produce. However, the implementation of the ceremony must adhere to rational and sacred principles.

The implementation of the *Bakti Purnamasari* traditional ceremony implies a pattern that gives rise to symbolic meanings passed down historically. The system of concepts, handed down through symbols, serves as a means through which humans communicate and construct their knowledge about the world (Narawati et al., 2021b; Sumardjo, 2013). Society is a unity of various components, just as with culture. Both are products of events that occur mentally. These events occur repeatedly, allowing humans to recognize and interpret patterns automatically as something meaningful. Meaning is

also formed through naming in society. Naming occurs in accordance with the cultural development within society. For example, the naming of clouds, which are essentially clusters of water in the air. The discussion of meaning begins with a paradigm: sacred symbols play a role in shaping the ethos of society, character, quality of life, morality, aesthetics, emotions, and worldviews.

In connection with this, traditional verses (*pantun*) are considered as the ethos and social exemplars portrayed through the behavior of characters depicted in the *Bogor verses* (Sumardjo, 2013; Sumarjo, 2001). Hence, one of the prevailing worldviews is the value of *Silih Asih, Silih Asah, Silih Asuh*, also known as *trisilas*, which has become deeply ingrained in Sundanese society and is widely used in national idiomatic expressions. The Sundanese ancestors, the local geniuses, had earlier formulated a kind of communal concept to guide their descendants and the natural environment, both on a micro and macro scale (Suryalaga, 2010).

The *trisilas* values have become a local wisdom that deserves preservation because local wisdom encompasses high life values and is worth exploring, developing, and preserving as an antithesis to social-cultural changes and modernization (Frolova, 2008; Levin, 2002). Local wisdom encompasses all forms of knowledge, beliefs, understandings, insights, customs, habits, or ethics that guide the local community and are experienced, practiced, taught, and passed down from generation to generation, shaping human behavior towards fellow humans and nature (Ardiawan, 2018; Riantika & Hastuti, 2019). *Silih Asih, Asah, Asuh* can become values with specific rules applicable in a society believed to be true and serve as a guide for daily behavior, emphasizing harmony in mutually beneficial relationships and reciprocity (N. A. Ridwan, 2007; R. Ridwan, 2020; Sartini, 2004; Susanti & Koswara, 2019).

Previous research, which forms the foundation for this article, includes studies by Narawati (2021), who focused on examining the background of the *Bakti Purnamasari* traditional ceremony. She investigated the *Maras Taun* ceremony and found that each stage in the celebration of *Maras Taun* is rich in symbols, meanings, and values (Dadan Wildan & Dulkihah, 2019). The values of local wisdom in the *Ngikis* Traditional Ceremony, encompassing religious, social, linguistic, artistic, historical, cultural, economic, knowledge and education, ethical, aesthetic, and *Silih Asah, Silih Asih, Silih Asuh* values (Hidayatloh, 2019). Based on the findings of previous research, the current

study aims to assist researchers in analyzing the research focus, providing information on the implementation of traditional ceremonies that contain elements of their respective local wisdom values. In the context of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony, the study will highlight the trisilas values. This research is related to trisilas values because the aspects that serve as the basis for the implementation of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony contain values/norms inherent in trisilas. Therefore, this research is directed towards exploring further how trisilas values are reflected in various aspects of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony. It is hoped that this will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role and significance of these values in the context of local community life. Thus, this research is expected to make a valuable contribution to the preservation and development of local cultural heritage and to strengthen the cultural identity of the community performing these traditional ceremonies.

By delving into the background that reflects the symbolic meaning and trisilas values in the Bakti Purnamasari Traditional Ceremony, the profound significance of this cultural heritage becomes apparent. The continuity of this tradition not only forges strong connections between humans, nature, and diversity but also exemplifies noble values that inspire social harmony. Through a profound understanding of symbolism and trisilas values, we can enrich our cultural experiences and pass on the messages of local wisdom to future generations, ensuring the continuity and preservation of the values embedded in the Bakti Purnamasari Traditional Ceremony as an integral part of a rich and unique cultural heritage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive analysis method with a qualitative approach (Bulmer, 2023; Suryani & Utami, 2020). The study is conducted in Giri Tresna Wangi, Gg. Berdikari, Nyomplong Village, Warudoyong, Sukabumi City. Observation, interviews, and documentation are utilized to collect data, ensuring that the findings align with the actual conditions in the field (Heriyanto, 2018). Data are gathered from cultural figures, community leaders, and local residents participating in the full moon ceremony. The researcher follows three stages in the data analysis process: data reduction is employed to focus the research objectives and minimize irrelevant aspects, data presentation occurs after the reduction process, organizing them into a manuscript for presentation, and conclusions are

drawn to provide novelty to the study (Paul & Arup, 2018; Selvin & Stuart, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The meaning within the Bakti Purnamasari Traditional Ceremony

The implied meaning in the implementation of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony can be identified through the offerings used. In more detail, the offerings in this ritual ceremony contain meanings that can be interpreted positively. Here is an elaboration of the symbolic meanings found in the offerings, and these symbolic meanings are also presented based on various opinions related to the activities of this ritual ceremony.

1. *Tumpeng*



Figure 1. Tumpeng

The cone-shaped tumpeng, narrowing as it goes upward and reaching its highest point in the Sundanese language, is referred to as "siloka nyungcung." This symbolizes that we should seek and pray to the one and only who is positioned at the highest level, above the majestic Creator. In addition to its form, the food inside the tumpeng is also a gift presented in the form of natural produce that can be utilized by all humans. Furthermore, the tumpeng also symbolizes a mountain, which is one of the sources of all-natural resources, ranging from springs to agricultural products (Iktarastiwi & Marwanti, 2022; Pertiwi, 2023)

2. *Flowers of seven colors and hanjuang*

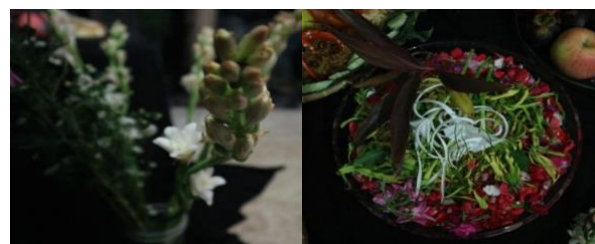


Figure 2. Flowers of seven colors and hanjuang

The fragrant aroma of flowers symbolizes the memories of our ancestors or predecessors who have passed away but have proven and left valuable works for future generations. The bouquet, consisting of seven types of flowers, includes red roses, white roses, jasmine, night-blooming jasmine, gambir jasmine, kenanga, and kantil. In essence, all the flowers present in this ritual ceremony emit fragrances, which can be interpreted as beneficial for the surrounding environment. This is interpreted as a reminder that in life, one should be mutually beneficial to the surrounding environment. Additionally, there is the presence of the hanjuang tree, symbolizing something that is not yet complete. This is because hanjuan is identified as *hanca garapeun* which means the legacy left by ancestors passed down from generation to generation. When related to the structure of the ceremonial procession, where the Resi sprinkles water from the hanjuang tree, it signifies cleansing oneself through *ngaruat*, and what the Resi does seems to be entrusting the participants with the responsibility to preserve Sundanese cultural heritage, particularly in conducting the Purnamasari ceremony (Hapidzin, 2023; Sari & Fitriyana, 2021).

3. Frankincense



Figure 3. Frankincense

The fragrance of frankincense smoke symbolizes the unity of determination and steps that manifest into something that can bring goodness or benefit (fragrance) to oneself and others. The burning of frankincense clearly produces aromatic smoke, signifying the sensory medium connecting the human world with the cosmology of the higher world in contemporary belief systems (Sumardjo, 2013). Moreover, incense indirectly symbolizes through black-colored charcoal, when burned it produces red flames, followed by yellowish incense, then white-colored smoke emerges, and finally, a pleasant aroma is perceived. The cycle of burning charcoal and incense is laden with meaning in the journey of life, where in facing challenges, one

strives to transform into something good. At the end of the incense burning cycle, a fragrant (useful) aroma is perceived. Similarly, humans, no matter the challenges faced, should strive to become useful, do good to fellow humans, and the surrounding environment (Han et al., 2015).

4. Fruits, Legumes, Rice, Cake



Figure 4. Fruits, Legumes, Rice, Cake

Fruits, legumes, Rice and cakes from the traditional market are all products of nature and human efforts that can be enjoyed by everyone. They can be symbolized as follows: rice and legumes symbolize seeds, fruits symbolize a fruitful outcome, and cakes represent a processed form. This explanation can be summarized as seeds (rice and legumes), outcomes (fruits), and processed products (cakes). It can be interpreted as a reflection of the human learning cycle, where humans are the main seeds. These seeds of knowledge are nurtured from childhood through education by parents. Subsequently, the knowledge gained is processed by sharing the goodness of that knowledge, even if it's just a single sentence of kindness (West & Budgen, 2020)

5. Roasted bakakak chicken



Figure 5. Roasted bakakak chicken

Roasted bakakak chicken, cooked whole, symbolizes sincerity towards the Almighty or surrendering both soul and body in the journey of life while being on His path. Regardless of the challenges given, one remains grateful for what has been bestowed (Guo et al., 2018; Jayasena et al., 2013; Shubar et al., 2019)

6. Coconut



Figure 6. Coconut

The coconut symbolizes countless benefits for life. Here, the coconut is just its result/fruit, but if we look at the entire coconut tree, everything from the roots to the fruit has its own benefits. Additionally, the coconut tree is a metaphor for the sun, with its leaves as the radiating light and the coconut fruit as a symbol of the arrangement of planets orbiting around it. The presence of coconut in offerings symbolizes the Earth. Coconut holds the meaning of *kala* (time) and *pa*(space), hence 'kalapa' means space and time (Akmal et al., 2020; Miyaura et al., 2015).

Besides the coconut, there is also *cai leueuteun* (Drinking Water), consisting of Clear Water, Sweet Tea, and Bitter Tea, Bitter Coffee, and Sweet Coffee. Clear Water signifies that when we are born, we bring no knowledge or a figure uncolored by the tempering of life, still a person innocent of various sciences. Sweet Tea and Bitter Tea signify that as we mature, we begin to learn and understand the various flavors of life and incidents in life, some pleasant (sweet) and some unpleasant (bitter). Bitter Coffee and Sweet Coffee signify that as we enter old age, having experienced the bitterness and sweetness of life, it naturally leads someone to become dense with experience and knowledge, and thus, they should have formed into a wise person (Hendrawan et al., 2015a, 2015b)

The Value of Trisilas in the Customary Ceremony of Bakti Purnamasari

The Sundanese traditional society is undoubtedly familiar with the terms *Silih Asih*, *Silih Asah*, *Silih Asuh*, or collectively known as *Trisilas*. These terms have become a life guide for the Sundanese people today, enriched with meaning in navigating Sundanese life. One notable context is in the implementation of the traditional ceremony of *Bakti Purnamasari*. From the preparation stage to the execution and even after the completion of the ritual,

it portrays a harmony woven among individuals and their environment, particularly through the offerings presented. Harmonious living fundamentally involves an awareness of mutual interdependence all while not forgetting one's identity and respective habitat. The process of realizing a harmonious life holistically is the optimum result of the communication system of "*Silih Asih-Silih Asah-Silih Asuh*" (Suryalaga, 2010).

Silih Asih

Silih Asih, in the context of the *Bakti Purnamasari* traditional ceremony, encompasses various aspects that depict genuine compassion. Firstly, *Silih Asih* is manifested through work, both physical and non-physical, carried out from the preparation phase until the conclusion of the ceremony. Dedication also plays a crucial role in *Silih Asih*, particularly in the effort to preserve Sundanese customs and culture, referring to the Bogor pantun manuscripts. This is done with the hope that this cultural heritage remains intact for future generations. Furthermore, *Silih Asih* is reflected in the distribution of responsibilities, where the *Resi* (spiritual leader) and *Parawari* (assistants) bear greater responsibilities compared to other ceremony participants. As the ceremonial leader, a *Resi* holds the primary responsibility for the ceremony's execution. Patience is also an integral part of *Silih Asih*, especially during the process of self-purification, where each individual must concentrate fully. Moreover, *Silih Asih* encompasses values and objectives, evident in every prayer offered during collective and individual prayer sessions, as well as the incantations spoken by the *Resi*. Each holds its own purpose and value.

Silih Asah

In the context of the *Bakti Purnamasari* traditional ceremony, the concept of *Silih Asah* encompasses several aspects that provide structure and profound meaning to this ritual. Firstly, *Asah* is interpreted as a method and system of orderliness, clearly evident in this ceremony. The highly organized structure reflects the societal ties of the Sundanese people, as mirrored in the Bogor Pantun Pajajaran, serving as a social guide directing the meaningful execution of the ceremony. Furthermore, *Asah* also involves the ability to communicate and synergize, particularly in the process of conducting the ceremony. Communication woven through incantations and prayers creates a synergistic relationship between humans, ancestors, and the Almighty. *Asah* is also viewed as a quality of self, strengthened by gratitude for the blessings received. This ritual, with its goal of expressing gratitude through the offerings presented, serves as a means to enhance one's self-quality.

Silih Asuh

In the context of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony, the concept of *Silih Asuh* encompasses dimensions of sincerity of heart, generational readiness, honor, and togetherness. Firstly, *Asuh* is interpreted as the sincerity of heart and clarity of heart, reflected in the preparation phase, especially during the *ngalokat*. The *Resi*, as the ceremony leader, undergoes a purification bath and a 24-hour fast to cleanse oneself physically and spiritually, creating a sincere and pure state of heart in offering prayers and incantations. Furthermore, *Asuh* becomes a symbol of the readiness of the coming generations to preserve and uphold the authenticity of the traditional ceremony process. This symbolism is evident in the act of creating the *hanjuang* tree, visualizing the preparedness of generations to engage in cultural heritage and traditions. Then, *Asuh* also carries the meaning of honor, permeating through the vibrations of kinship after the completion of the ceremony. All elements involved in the ceremony share kinship, creating strong bonds and maintaining harmony among the community. Lastly, *Silih Asuh* demonstrates togetherness, illustrated through the collective prayers offered. This togetherness forms the basis for solidarity and unity in carrying out the traditional ceremony, creating a deep and meaningful atmosphere.

DISCUSSION

Bakti Purnamasari ritual ceremony, which yields exemplary social values and ethics, there is an interpretation within it to understand the ritual ceremony expressed through symbols. The objects seen in the ceremony, commonly referred to as *sesajen*, represent the societal ties. If associated with the philosophical or actual meaning, it is merely an interpretation. This interpretation is done to establish a positive connection between the ceremony and daily life. When interpreting a cultural philosophy, different opinions may arise as cultural philosophies can be represented in both visual and verbal forms (Dwiyani et al., 2022; Masunah & Narawati, 2003). This philosophy or meaning can help individuals relate or interpret what cannot be conveyed by an object, thus translating the objects in the ceremony for life interpretation based on local wisdom (Indraningsih Jeno et al., 2023). to be passed down to the next generation. The value orientation, philosophy, and meaning found in the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony essentially aim to enhance the quality of human resources in social life, serving as a method for empowering people in community life and forming the foundation for community education, including

family, formal and non-formal education, within the community environment.

The Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony is one of the essential ceremonies in Sundanese culture. In this ceremony, there are many symbols and profound meanings, along with the high regard for *trisilas* values. The symbols in the Bakti Purnamasari ceremony hold rich philosophical and spiritual meanings. Through the interpretation of symbolic meanings derived from objects found in nature and applied according to their specific functions, these symbolic meanings generally point towards efforts to create cultural values towards perfection (J. Jamaludin et al., 2024). Moreover, the Bakti Purnamasari ceremony also contains *trisilas* values, the fundamental values in Sundanese community life. In the execution of this ceremony, *trisilas* values are reflected in the interaction among community members, respect for ancestors, and the preservation of traditions. By understanding the symbolism and *trisilas* values in the Bakti Purnamasari ceremony, the community can better comprehend and appreciate their cultural heritage while safeguarding the continuity of this tradition for future generations.

CONCLUSION

The symbols present in the execution of this traditional ceremony interpret a meaning, thus representing a symbolic significance. In broad terms, these symbols emerge due to a set of guidelines or societal ties. The symbolic meanings include spirituality, gratitude, happiness, the hope for a connection between God and humans, goodness in living life, and a responsibility that must be carried out from generation to generation. The harmony among human beings during the implementation of the Bakti Purnamasari traditional ceremony proves that Sundanese society will not abandon its communal life philosophy, namely *Silih Asih*, *Silih Asah*, and *Silih Asuh*. Hence, this philosophy can serve as a life guide. *Trisilas*, rooted in Sundanese philosophy, enhances the symbolic significance of the Bakti Purnamasari ceremony by embodying the principles of *Silih Asih* (Love), *Silih Asah* (Knowledge), and *Silih Asuh* (Care). Through *Trisilas*, love is expressed through dedication, sharing responsibilities, and patience, while knowledge is applied methodically, fostering communication and personal growth. Care is exemplified by sincerity, readiness for generational duties, and the preservation of honor, all of which underscore the harmony and interconnectedness within Sundanese society across generations.

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