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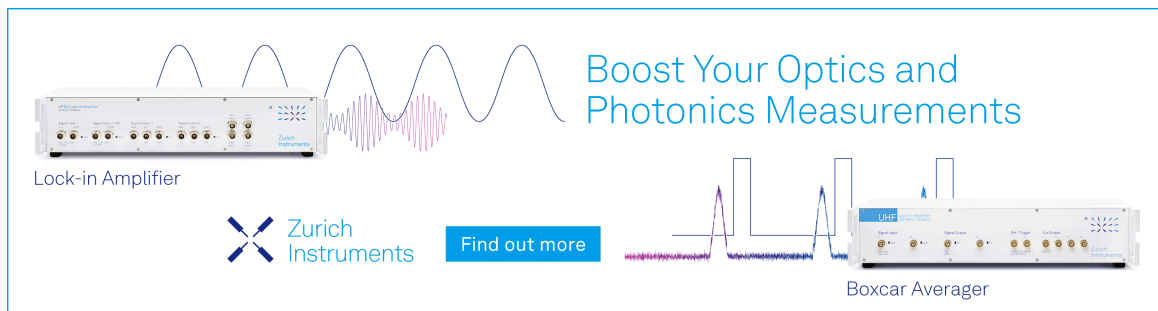
## Equipment system of “Bepapas” tradition in Melayu Sambas community, west Kalimantan: Meaning and relevance to national defense attitudes

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# Equipment System of “Bepapas” Tradition in Melayu Sambas Community, West Kalimantan: Meaning and Relevance to National Defense Attitudes

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**Abstract.** There has been much research on the Bebeapas tradition in the people of Kalimantan, but research has yet to be done that specifically explores the meaning of the equipment and its relevance to the attitude of defending the State. This article aims to describe the sense of equipment and its relevance to the perspective of protecting the State in the Bepapas tradition carried out by the people of Kalimantan. The method used is ethnography with Roland Barthes's theory of Semiotics. The research findings show that the equipment in the Bebeapas tradition has a profound meaning in denotative, connotative, and mythical terms. The equipment in the Bepapas tradition symbolizes self-strength or might, benefit for others, cleanliness of intentions and hearts, struggle, patience, introspection, and love. This meaning is also very relevant to various attitudes to defend the country, namely in the form of obedience to God, cooperation, caring for others, caring for the natural environment, and hard work.

## INTRODUCTION

Therefore, Indonesia has diverse and unique customs and is referred to as a multicultural nation [1]. According to Fauziah et al. [2], this diversity is dominated by traditional elements, leading to exclusive interaction patterns with the surrounding environment [3]. The various ethnic groups that inhabit this territorial area are proportional to the large variety of traditional rituals consistently maintained by every tribe in the country [4]. Customary practices or traditions can be birth, marriage, and death [5],[6].

Maulana [7] defined a ceremony as actions bound by specific rules according to custom or religion. Traditionally, it is an activity carried out in stages arranged according to the event's purpose by a group of people [8],[9]. Rituals and beliefs are perceived as demands that determine the exhibition of specific behavior regarded as part of customs and are entrenched in society [10]. Tradition contains a hidden understanding of the relationship between the past and the present. It refers to something inherited in the past but still exists and functions in the present [11].

Furthermore, this research focuses on the Bepapas ceremony performed by the Kalimantan people. This tradition is a longstanding culture in the Sambas community, carried out for generations [12]. "Bepapas," a convention held to prevent catastrophic disasters, is one of the customs practiced by the people of Parit Setia Village, Jawai Sub-district, Sambas Regency, and West Kalimantan [13]. This tradition contains valuable local wisdom, and according to Ramadhan et al. [14], it teaches cooperation, tolerance, and work ethic.

The Bepapas ceremony is not only performed based on a series of procedures; it is also accompanied by various supporting equipment, which certainly has a deep philosophical meaning. These include *injuang*, *gimbali*, and *mentibar* tied with *ribu* leaves, *Kasai langgir* water, and coconut shell, which serves as the container [13].

Several literature searches discovered that none of the preliminary studies specifically explored the meaning of this equipment using the semiotic approach. Furthermore, research has yet to investigate the development of state

defense attitudes. Several previous studies, such as Madriani [13], explored the definition of Bepapas, the community theology of this tradition, and its values. Berti and Manja [12] analyzed the use of *da'wah* in this tradition. Rino et al. [14] investigated rationalization's meaning, sequence, and function concerning its mythical values in the Sambas Malay community located in Tempapan Hulu Village, Sambas Regency.

The semiotic science of semiotics originated from linguistics, and it was discovered by Ferdinand de Saussure, who was born in 1857 and died in 1913 [15]. This approach has its sign [16]; however, according to Saussure, cited by Utaridah [17], the perceptions and perspectives about reality are constructed by words and symbols used in social contexts. This implies that signs shape human perception, compared to merely reflecting on the facts. Meanwhile, Barthes, cited by Situmeang [9] stated that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is divided into three categories: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is the meaning of the sign on an object, the intent is its description, while myth is the cultural explanation or understanding of certain aspects of reality or natural phenomena; it is also described as the product of a dominating social class.

Roland Barthes' idea is known as the two orders of signification, which include the meanings of denotation and connotation. Denotation is the level of marking that elaborates on the relationship between the signifier and the signified, producing the actual meaning. Meanwhile, the connotation is a sign that describes the emergent interaction due to emotions and values from cultural and personal experiences [18]. For example, the flower and skull signs connote affection and danger [19]. Myth is encoding social meanings and values regarded or considered natural. Its function is to distort the purpose of the first-level semiotic system, thereby ensuring it no longer refers to reality [20].

Furthermore, state defense is the citizens' attitudes and actions to protect the nation based on a sense of love for their homeland [21]. Its awareness is centered on the willingness to serve and sacrifice to defend the state [22]. Conceptually, state defense is the citizens' attitude, determination, and behavior, exhibited regularly and in an integrated manner and imbued with love for Indonesia [23]. These individuals are inspired by their passion for Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution and are willing to make sacrifices to ensure the state's survival [24].

The form of state defense varies greatly, and every citizen is obligated to defend their nation following their respective professional fields. A military member takes necessary action to protect the state from parties intending to obstruct its security or stability. Those belonging to civil society, such as teachers, need to execute specific actions by working earnestly to educate the younger generation. This is realized by teaching them to be sensitive to their surrounding environment, creating national awareness, and participating in building social solidarity [25]. State defense consists of three stages, including (1) socialization, harmonization, synchronization, coordination, and evaluation, (2) internalization of the fundamental values, and (3) active movement [26].

The Bepapas ceremony is a form of local wisdom used as a contextual medium to develop various state defense attitudes, such as divinity, gratitude to God Almighty, cooperation, caring for others, and the natural environment, including hard work. It is imperative to explore the meaning of the equipment used and its relevance to the development of state defense attitudes in an interesting analysis. Therefore, efforts to preserve and internalize ritual purposes and their meanings tend to be more profound.

The preceding explanation has sparked our curiosity, leading us to delve into the significance of the equipment utilized during the Bepapas ceremony and its profound relevance to shaping attitudes towards state defense. Understanding the cultural and symbolic meanings behind this equipment and how it influences perspectives on national defense is central to our research inquiry.

## METHOD

### Study Design

This qualitative research employed an ethnographic approach, a form of analysis that focuses on the meaning of sociology through field observations and sociocultural phenomena in society [27]. It comprises the following steps: (1) topic determination, (2) question submission, (3) data collection, (4) recording, (5) and analysis, as well as (6) report writing [28]. Data categorization or the meaning of various equipment used in implementing the Bepapas ceremony was performed by referring to Roland Barthes' semiotics theory, shown in Figure 1.

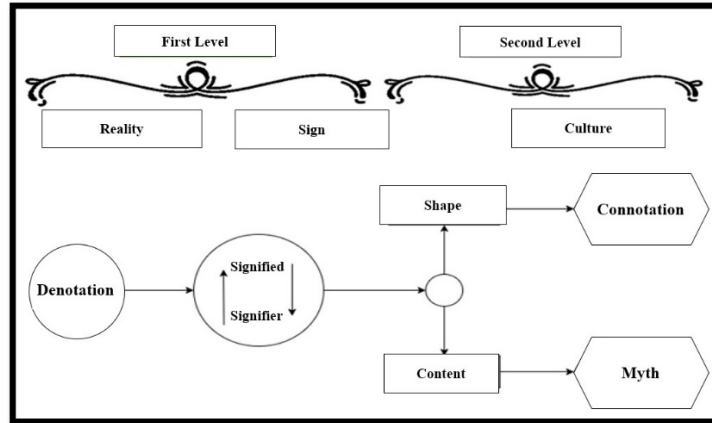


FIGURE 1. Two orders of signification from Roland Barthes

### Study Context

This research is related to three main aspects: the equipment used in the Bepapas ceremony, its meaning, and its relevance. Interestingly, this study was conducted in Sambas, Bengkayang, and Sanggau Regencies. The informants include religious, cultural, and community leaders residing in the border area and the Head of the West Kalimantan Provincial Culture Office.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data on religious rites and tools were identified based on three categories. These include traditions about the Creator, the universe, and fellow human beings. Furthermore, its relevance to the state defense attitudes is identified by linking it to the values contained in Pancasila, such as 1) Belief in the one and only God, 2) Just and civilized humanity, 3) The unity of Indonesia, 4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, and 5) Social justice for all Indonesians. This comprehensive analysis underscores the intricate interplay between religious traditions and national values in shaping attitudes towards state defense, highlighting the profound impact of these rituals on the broader societal ethos.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 below is the result of an analysis on the equipment used in the bepapas tradition in relation to the philosophical meanings and their relevance to the attitude of national defense. Each type of equipment, ranging from coconut shells as water containers to ribu leaves as tools for absorbing rice flour water, has specific denotations and connotations that reflect values and attitudes considered important in national defense. For example, the use of coconut shells symbolizes self-strength and perseverance in facing trials, while injuang leaves signify the spirit of struggle and readiness to sacrifice for the nation. Additionally, the use of mentibar and gimballi leaves also emphasizes values such as patience, introspection, and protection from danger, all of which contribute to awareness of the importance of the nation and national unity. Through a deep understanding of the meanings and relevance of equipment in the bepapas ceremony, society can strengthen attitudes and values essential in maintaining national integrity and security.

TABLE 1. Equipment, meaning, and its relevance to state defense

Types of Equipment	Meaning			Its Relevance to the State Defense Attitudes
	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	
coconut shell	As a water container	It means self-strength and usefulness	The use of a coconut shell is believed to portray an attitude of not giving up during trials.	Willingness to sacrifice for the nation and state

TABLE 1. Continued

Types of Equipment	Meaning			Its Relevance to the State Defense Attitudes
	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	
rice flour	Rice flour water is contained in a coconut shell	This depicts the sincere intentions of the heart	The use of rice flour water ( <i>kasain langgir</i> ) signifies relying only on Almighty God with righteous intentions.	Belief in Pancasila as the State ideology (Divinity)
<i>injuang</i> leaves	Tool for absorbing rice flour water (brush)	Indicates struggle	The use of <i>injuang</i> leaves is believed to instill the spirit of struggle.	Willingness to sacrifice for the nation and state
<i>mentibar</i> leaves	Tool for absorbing rice flour water (brush)	Depicts patience	The use of <i>mentibar</i> leaves is believed to bring about patience and sincerity in the face of trials.	Belief in Pancasila as the State ideology (Divinity)
<i>gimbali</i> leaves	Tool for absorbing rice flour water (brush)	It means introspection	The use of <i>gimbali</i> leaves is believed to be a reminder of oneself, introspection, and protection from all forms of dangers.	Awareness of the nation and state
<i>ribu</i> leaves	Tool for absorbing rice flour water (brush)	Implies friendship bond	The use of <i>ribu</i> leaves is believed to boost friendship and bring about sustenance.	Unity and integrity of the nation

Source: The research analysis results

The Bepapas ceremony is usually organized by the Sambas Malay community on particular anniversaries such as housewarming, thanksgiving for buying new luxury items like motorized vehicles, the birth of children, weddings, and before the planting season. It is held by inviting one's closest friends, relatives, and neighbors. The Sambas Malay community organizes the Bepapas ceremony as an antidote to danger and calamity with prayers based on Islamic law. This community is dominated by Muslims; therefore, the tradition has a strong Islamic nuance. During its execution, the host or celebrant collects the equipment, such as rice flour water, coconut shell, *injuang*, *mentibar*, *gimbali*, and *ribu* leaves. Rice flour water (*Kasai langgir*) is presumably a rejected catastrophe, and the fluid is placed in a coconut shell. Meanwhile, the *injuang*, *mentibar*, and *gimbali* leaves are tied together using the *ribu*. The illustration of traditional bepapas equipment can be seen in Figure 2 below.



FIGURE 2. Bepapas Ceremony Equipment

According to Rino et al [14] regarding the bepapas ceremony procession, after preparing the Bepapas ceremonial equipment as shown in Figure 2 above, a *labay* (shaman or traditional leader) beats the bundle of leaves initially dipped in the water (*kasir langgir*). For example, a newlywed sits with his partner in a cross-legged position. After

the *labay* must have read the prayers and letters from the Qur'an, the bundle of leaves that had been earlier dipped in a coconut shell on the newlywed's bodies from their foreheads, shoulders, and palms, to the toes [14].

Based on the connotative meaning of the Bepapas equipment, it was interpreted that the celebrant is being prayed for to be strengthened and valuable to others (symbolized by the coconut shell), have a pure heart and intentions (symbolized with the rice flour water), a courageous spirit (symbolized with *injuang* leaves), great patience (symbolized with *mentibar* leaves), always engage in self-introspection (symbolized with *gimbali* leaves), and strengthen the ties of friendship (symbolized with *ribu* leaves as a binder). This meaning is by Rohmaniah [18], that connotation signifies interaction due to feelings or emotions and values from cultural and personal experiences. It is identical to the ideological operation, called a 'myth,' which is applicable to a certain period [18].

## The Relevance of The Bepapas Ceremony with The State Defense Spirit

A form of state defense is love for one's homeland by embracing the indigenous Indonesian culture. The Bepapas tradition is a form of noble culture that is meaningful and, if interpreted in depth, is bound to be relevant to the state defense spirit.

Using coconut shells symbolizes strength, usefulness, and willingness to make sacrifices for one's nation and state. When people are passionate about being helpful to others, they are willing to sacrifice for the things they love, including family, friends, and the nation. The symbol of the coconut shell in the Bepapas ceremony is meaningful to the state's defense. This Aligns with Rino et al. [14] that the coconut shell depicts self-strength and several others. This meaning is slightly different from its use in the bridal *Siraman* ritual in Java. Meanwhile, in the *Siraman* tradition, a coconut shell is used as a dipper, which implies the determination of parents to release their son or daughter for marriage [29].

The use of rice flour, later referred to as *kasir langgir* (water as an antidote to disaster), depicts the pure intentions of the heart and absolute reliance on God Almighty. This is related to the concept of divinity, which is the 1st point of Pancasila, namely "Belief in the one and only God." Another element of state defense is upholding the spirit of Pancasila and believing in it as the state ideology. This implies that using rice flour in the Bepapas ceremony has a relevant impact on the state defense spirit [12]. The belief in the one and only God is also applicable to the values of monotheism, such as realizing that there is a single power that controls life and is the goal of human existence. In various aspects, monotheism or the wholeness of God can prove one's spiritual strength. A faithful and pious person is a manifestation of obedience to God Almighty [30][35].

The use of *injuang* leaves depicts a courageous spirit, never giving up attitude, and daring to take risks based on the elements of state defense, such as the willingness to make sacrifices for the nation and state. This needs to be embraced by Indonesians to maintain the nation's sovereignty from various external threats. This courageous spirit and the willingness to make sacrifices are necessary for the sovereignty of a country to get a good signal. The use of *injuang* leaves in the Bepapas ceremony intends to instill this attitude in the people, thereby boosting their willingness to sacrifice their loved ones and the nation. It simply means that life is full of struggles [14].

Moreover, a dedicated person is bound to bring about optimal success. A highly reliable individual will continue to be thoughtful when faced with various life challenges. The optimal level of creativity from each individual indirectly contributes to the progress of the nation and state. This is in line with Herlambang [31] that invention has a significant influence on various aspects of life. Its impact on the younger generation needs to be emphasized because it is one of the forces that optimizes the entire potential of the nation.

The use of *mentibar* leaves is believed to bring about patience and sincerity when faced with trials from God. This is relevant to the first principle of the Pancasila, namely "Belief in the one and only God." A sincere person is bound to have a patient attitude even when experiencing failure and does not give up when faced with all kinds of trials. The correlation between the symbolization of the *mentibar* leaves and the Pancasila shows its relevance to the state defense spirit. Berti and Manja [12] stated that the Bepapas tradition has several moral messages, including piety and sincerity to the provisions of Allah SWT, as well as a noble character in society, such as mutual assistance and politeness.

*Gimbali* leaves are a reminder of oneself, introspection, and protection from all forms of dangers to maintain sovereignty. Lack of self-awareness and anticipation of danger exposes a state to being easily attacked by outsiders both physically and socio-culturally. The meaning of introspection is relevant to national awareness of the state defense value. This aligns with Rino et al. [14] that *gimbali* leaves signify introspection. Pratisti and Prihartanti [32] stated that it is similar to the emotional regulation concept. Introspection includes an attitude of not feeling self-righteous [33].



Furthermore, using *ribu* leaves simply implies boosting friendship and ensuring its sustenance, which is relevant to the state defense value of "Unity and Integrity of Nation." Unity (fellowship) is an important foundation in maintaining the state's integrity; without it, a nation would be divided. This attribute is essential in uniting the various tribes, cultures, and languages in Indonesia to ensure integrity, which is a fundamental point in the state defense attitudes. This is in line with Rino et al. [14] that the *ribu* leaves symbolize the strengthening of friendship ties and hope. This led to mutually beneficial cooperative attitudes and other conveniences [34].

## CONCLUSION

The ability to analyze the meaning of various equipment used during the Bepapas ceremony is an attempt to understand the philosophy. This aids in ensuring that the values of local wisdom are comprehensively internalized for the people of Kalimantan in particular and Indonesia in general. This process also helps to reinforce the state defense attitudes, such as divinity, unity, cooperation, and care.

However, this study is limited to the meaning of all dimensions related to the Bepapas ceremony. Furthermore, exploration of interpretation from several other sources must also be pursued. It is paramount to carry out future analyses of the meaning of the various dimensions of this tradition. The revitalization of valuable local wisdom and their use to instill a state defense attitude in the younger generations from Kalimantan as the Indonesian State Border can be realized.

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