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Article Title

Beyond Ritual: Socio-Cultural and Economic Significance of the Sipulung Tradition in the Towani Tolotang Indigenous Community

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ABSTRACT

The existence of local belief adherent groups in Indonesia continues to face challenges of marginalization and modernization. Amidst this vulnerability, the Towani Tolotang indigenous community in Sidenreng Rappang Regency demonstrates strong cultural resilience through the execution of the Sipulung tradition. This study aims to explore and analyze in depth the socio-cultural and economic significance of this communal tradition, which is proven to transcend mere dogmatic worship rituals. This study employed a qualitative, reflexive ethnographic approach. Primary data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes at the Perrinyameng ancestral tomb site. The data were subsequently validated through source and methodological triangulation. The results show that the Sipulung tradition operates as a structural ecosystem that supports the community's life sustainability through five main dimensions. First, the spiritual dimension manifests absolute obedience to Dewata Seuwae through the contemplative practice of Molalaleng guarded by the Uwatta figure. Second, the cultural education dimension transmits ancestral values through the habituation of early childhood. Third, the social dimension strengthens mechanical cohesion by regathering the Passompe within an inclusive space. Fourth, the economic dimension deconstructs the idea that ritual expenditure constitutes symbolic capital accumulation driven by the Resopa na temmangingngi hard-work ethos. Fifth, the entertainment dimension through the Massempé' sport functions as a cultural catharsis. In conclusion, Sipulung is not merely a pilgrimage rite but a resolution instrument guaranteeing minority existence. These findings recommend the need for local government policy intervention to protect civil rights. Furthermore, the establishment of spatial protection for the Perrinyameng area is highly required as a bastion of indigenous community resilience.

Keywords: Cultural Resilience; Indigenous Community; Reflexive Ethnography; Sipulung; Towani Tolotang.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Indonesia possesses a highly heterogeneous demographic structure, underpinned by diverse cultural identities and belief systems. This multicultural reality is not merely a historical legacy but a foundational asset for social development that demands a high awareness of difference. Long before the state institutionally recognized official religions, local belief systems or ancestral religions had existed and taken deep root (Mattulada, 1985; Pelras, 1996). The ancestral way of life (*Attoriolong*) of the Bugis exemplifies a guiding principle for indigenous communities across the archipelago. The concept of multiculturalism in Indonesia fundamentally extends beyond ethnic and racial differences; it must inclusively accommodate diverse religious and spiritual beliefs (Hoon, 2017). The presence of these adherents to local beliefs reflects the unique cultural character of a society shaped by prolonged interaction with its natural environment.

Although the state provides absolute constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and belief, empirical reality often reveals a contradictory reality for local believers. Statistically, adherents of local beliefs are classified as highly vulnerable minority entities. They confront various forms of both structural and cultural discrimination. Massive modernization and the influx of dominant-majority values have triggered a significant annual decline in the population of adherents to local

beliefs (Kusnandar, 2021; Permana, 2024). This minority group continuously faces actual marginalization challenges in accessing civil rights and maintaining public spaces for identity expression (Lawelai, 2020). This sociological situation necessitates a robust internal defense mechanism within the community to prevent the extinction of its identity and ancestral heritage.

One indigenous community that demonstrates high resilience against these modernization and marginalization pressures is the Towani Tolotang indigenous community, centered in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi Province. This community shares historical roots and an ecological philosophy that are closely aligned with those of other indigenous groups in Sulawesi. The primary foundation of their teachings centers on a belief system and absolute obedience to the supreme divine entity (*Dewata Seuwae*). Historically, the introduction of *Dewata Seuwae* is believed to have been mediated by the figure La Panaungi. This teaching establishes a moral foundation for life by simultaneously maintaining three dimensions of balance: the relationship between humans and the creator, harmonious relations among humans, and the obligation to preserve the natural environment (Taufik & Hariza, 2023). This cosmic balance serves as the daily ethical guide for community members amidst changing times.

The highest form of devotion and expression of obedience (*Molalaleng*) by the Towani Tolotang indigenous community to ancestral balance values is manifested through an annual communal celebration. This communal celebration is widely known as the *Sipulung* tradition. This sacred ritual is centrally conducted through pilgrimage activities (*Mapperinyameng*) at the tomb site of a female ancestor named *I Pabbere* (Wahyuni, 2024). This significant site is located in the *Perrinyameng* area. Etymologically and philosophically, the name *Perrinyameng* represents the unification of the sorrow phase (*perrri*) and the joy phase (*nyameng*). This name refers directly to the historical testament of the communal pilgrimage left by their ancestors. The *Sipulung* tradition functions as a powerful social aggregation platform. This space can attract the return of community members who have migrated or become out-migrants (*Passompe*) to various regions outside their homeland (Fatmawati, 2018). Beyond a mere physical gathering, this traditional space transforms into a primary arena for inheriting collective values and strengthening solidarity.

The existence of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community and the preservation of their cultural practices have received attention in previous academic studies. Several studies have mapped the dynamics of this community's social interaction with external populations. Analyses of specific traditions, such as the harvest festival (*Mappadendang*), have been conducted to observe their function as cultural instruments. This tradition bridges solidarity between local belief adherents and other religious groups in the same region (Junida, 2019). In the domestic sphere,

other studies have also demonstrated the mechanism by which cultural values are transmitted to younger generations within this community. This transformation relies heavily on the intensity of internal communication patterns within the family unit (Bahfiarti et al., 2021). The findings from these studies generally confirm that the Towani Tolotang indigenous community possesses a strong capacity for social adaptation within a pluralistic societal structure.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned literature mapping leaves a highly essential and comprehensively unanswered theoretical gap. Previous studies have tended to partially dissect social tolerance practices and family socialization. These studies have not analyzed how educational elements, social cohesion, and economic ethos crystallize within a single primary sacred arena. Current diversity education policies and practices in formal institutions often fail to reach minority groups. The state has not equally accommodated the value preservation methods of these groups (Raihani, 2018). In fact, integrating religious values and local culture is crucial to establishing a framework for religious moderation. Authentic social resilience must be built from the grassroots level (Setinawati et al., 2025). Therefore, there is an urgent academic need to analyze the *Sipulung* tradition more sharply. This tradition is not merely an ordinary pilgrimage routine but a structural ecosystem that produces cultural resilience.

Based on this theoretical gap, this study aims to explore and analyze in depth the socio-cultural and economic significance of the *Sipulung* tradition within the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. This study specifically aims to deconstruct the meaning of communal rituals that transcend the boundaries of dogmatic worship. This meaning deconstruction is conducted by tracing the integration of spiritual values toward *Dewata Seuwae* maintained by the authority figure (*Uwatta*). Furthermore, this study traces the mechanism of cross-generational cultural education and the strengthening of social cohesion amidst the migration dynamics of the *Passompe*. This study also highlights identity preservation through the traditional entertainment space (*Massempe*). Moreover, this research examines the economic rationality behind the sacred event. The objective is to find the correlation between ritual obedience and the formation of a work ethos rooted in the philosophy of *Resopa na temmangingngi, naletei Dewata SewaE* (only through hard work will the will of the gods be achieved) and the financial resilience of the community. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical benefits by contributing analytical thought to the sociology of religion and cultural anthropology regarding minority group resilience strategies. In practice, these findings are expected to serve as a rational basis for local governments and relevant stakeholders to formulate equitable policies to protect civil rights and preserve indigenous cultural heritage.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design with a reflexive ethnographic approach. This approach was deliberately selected to immerse in the social reality and cultural architecture of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. This understanding was drawn directly from the perspective of the cultural practitioners themselves. In the tradition of reflexive ethnography, the researcher's positionality becomes a primary instrument demanding critical awareness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher positioned themselves objectively yet empathetically within the indigenous community. The researcher assimilated into their daily lives without intervening or altering the established natural order. This direct involvement enabled the researcher to capture the deepest meaning of every ritual action. This approach also functioned as a mitigation of subjectivity bias through continuous methodological reflection while in the field.

The research location was centrally established at the ancestral tomb site of *I Pabbere*. This site is located in the *Perrinyameng* area, Tellu Limpoe Subdistrict, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The determination of this locus was based on the academic argument that *Perrinyameng* is the historical and spiritual epicenter of the entire *Sipulung* tradition. Field data collection was conducted intensively for two months. The data collection focused on the momentum from the preparation to the peak of the sacred celebration. This duration and spatial proximity provided the researcher with sufficient time. Consequently, the researcher could comprehensively record the dynamics of social interaction, the mobility of the *Passompe*, and the escalation of the indigenous community's collective emotions.

Data sources were strictly classified into primary and secondary sources to precisely address the research objectives. Primary data were obtained directly from the center of the event. These data included recordings of the physical activities of cross-generational participants during the ritual and oral transcripts from key informants. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected by examining historical documents and regional demographic archives. Relevant sociological literature on indigenous institutions was also used as support. The integration of empirical field data and secondary sources laid the foundation for constructing solid, measurable arguments.

Data collection techniques were operationalized through three complementary primary instruments. These three instruments were participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes (Spradley, 2016). Participant observation focused on the detailed spatial layout of the tomb area. This observation also highlighted the use of material symbols, such as traditional clothing and jewelry, in the physical expressions in the traditional sport of *Massempé*. In-depth interviews were conducted using an open dialogue method with community members. These interviews aimed to explore the rationality behind their obedience to *Dewata Seuwae's* teachings and their

recognition of the *Uwatta* figure's hierarchy. All social interactions and supplementary transactions that did not involve verbal utterances were recorded in detail in the field notes. The entire data collection process was executed in compliance with social research ethical standards. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants as a manifestation of absolute respect for the authority of the local belief adherent group.

The field findings were validated through a rigorous data triangulation strategy (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This strategy was employed to ensure the credibility of the research results. The researcher used source triangulation to compare and cross-check the consistency of information. Information provided by one informant was compared with that of others from different backgrounds within the community. Furthermore, the researcher applied methodological triangulation to test data alignment. The ideal narratives conveyed by informants during interview sessions were tested against their factual actions recorded during the ritual observations. This triangulation mechanism ensured that all collected empirical data were free of fabrication, manipulation, and information anomalies.

The final stage of this methodological framework was the data analysis technique using an interactive model (Geertz, 1993; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). This model encompassed the processes of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction and condensation were conducted to filter the interview transcripts and observation notes to the most relevant core issues. The filtered data were then presented in a structured analytical narrative. This analytical process was specifically designed to extract and weave together five main discussion pillars. These pillars included the construction of a spiritual cosmology, the transmission mechanism for cultural education, the strengthening of social cohesion amid migration dynamics, economic rationality, and the cathartic function of traditional entertainment spaces. This linear analytical pattern ensured that every field finding would be examined in-depth. The results of this examination will prove the significance of the *Sipulung* tradition in sustaining community resilience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Construction of Cosmology and Sacred Hierarchy: Spiritual Reflection to *Dewata Seuwae* in the *Sipulung* Ritual

The local belief system of *Attoriolong* adhered to by the Towani Tolotang indigenous community centers on absolute obedience to the supreme divine entity, *Dewata Seuwae*. Historically, the introduction of this spiritual teaching is believed to have been mediated by the mythological figure La Panaungi. In practice, the spiritual cosmology of Towani Tolotang does not manifest worship through the construction of enclosed physical religious buildings. Instead, the execution of worship rituals integrates directly with open ecological spaces. This is evidently observable in the execution of the *Sipulung* tradition. This devotion practice affirms

that the divine construction of *Dewata Seuwae* is not limited by architectural boundaries. The worship connects directly to the hierarchy of the universe and the structured consciousness of the indigenous community (Nasruddin, 2019).

The highest achievement of this spiritual obedience materializes in the practice of *Molalaleng*. This practice is a devotion executed through the pilgrimage activity, or *Mapperinyameng*, in the sacred area of *Perrinyameng*. Based on direct field observations, the *Sipulung* ritual series commences at dawn. This ritual reaches the peak of contemplation from sunrise to sunset. Thousands of Towani Tolotang adherents gather to crowd the open area around the tomb of the female ancestor, *I Pabbere*. The primary activity in this procession is not the chanting of responsive prayers, but rather a collective ritual of silence. The ritual anatomy at this tomb site reflects the community's acknowledgment of its historical roots, inherited through ancestral lineage (Taufik & Hariza, 2023). This historical and spiritual consciousness is deeply internalized among community members. This is directly affirmed by Wa Parenrengi, who explained the logical reasoning behind their passive actions in the tomb area:¹

"We are the followers of Towani Tolotang; we understand this as an effort to contemplate and recall past events in our institutional history."

This empirical expression proves that the ritual of silence in the *Sipulung* tradition is not merely physical passivity. The action constitutes a systematically designed instrument of spiritual contemplation to reconstruct collective memory. The process of recalling past events functions as a defense mechanism. The objective is to prevent indigenous institutional values from fading due to external cultural interventions. As the symbolic meaning in the rituals of other indigenous communities is consistently rooted in the search for cosmological harmony (Sasmita et al., 2022), the contemplation in *Sipulung* becomes a medium for the individuals of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. They utilize this medium to realign their souls with the will of *Dewata Seuwae* and the testaments of the ancestors.

The fluency and validity of this entire series of spiritual contemplation depend heavily on the presence of the highest authority, namely the *Uwatta* figure (Wahyuni, 2024). As a spiritual leader whose legitimacy is inherited through bloodline, the *Uwatta* holds absolute control. He has full authority to determine the sequence and lead the core prayers. If the primary figure is indisposed, this central role is delegated to a representative (*Uwa*). According to the study by Anjarsari et al. (2024), the absolute authority of a traditional figure is essential for maintaining sacred status and managing social obedience within the Bugis indigenous community. In the context of the Towani Tolotang indigenous

¹Interview with Wa Parenrengi, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, January 22, 2025.

community, the community's obedience to the *Uwatta* during the execution of *Sipulung* is a direct reflection of their obedience to *Dewata Seuwae*.

The integration among the sacred space dimension in *Perrinyameng*, the contemplative practice of *Molalaleng*, and the structural obedience to the *Uwatta* successfully forms a robust spiritual ecosystem. This cosmological construction effectively binds the loyalty of every individual in the Towani Tolotang indigenous community to their institutional social order. This spiritual obedience is not permitted to cease solely with the older generation currently holding indigenous authority. For this sacred architecture and hierarchy of obedience to endure across changing eras, the noble values of the *Dewata Seuwae* teachings must be precisely transmitted to the succeeding generation. This transmission is conducted through a cultural education mechanism integrated within the same ritual arena.

B. The Transmission of Cultural Capital and Cross-Generational Value Internalization: *Sipulung* as a Cultural Education Arena

The sustainability of the cosmological construction and spiritual obedience of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community does not occur naturally but requires a systematic inheritance mechanism. The *Sipulung* tradition functions not merely as a passive worship space; it transforms into a cultural education arena for the succeeding generation. In the context of minority groups, they are highly vulnerable to the onslaught of modernization and institutional education policies that have not fully accommodated the specific preservation of local wisdom (Raihani, 2018). Therefore, the communal ritual space becomes the most effective alternative educational instrument. Through *Sipulung*, the process of socialization and the internalization of ancestral values is comprehensively carried out to lay the foundation for early childhood cultural identity.

Empirical observation at the *I Pabbere* tomb site demonstrates the massive physical involvement of children throughout the entire *Mapperinyameng* series. Children are not merely present as spectators; they are positioned as integrated subjects within the sacred activity. This phenomenon aligns with the study by Bahfiarti et al. (2021), which demonstrates the central role of parenting. Internal family communication plays a crucial role in transmitting the values of the *Attoriolong* teachings before children enter the public arena. Parents consciously bring their children across domestic spatial boundaries into the communal space. The objective is to directly practice the ecological and social balance dogmas previously taught only within the home.

The involvement of early childhood in this ritual is no coincidence; it is the result of a habituation strategy passed down from generation to generation. This habituation aims to instill collective memory from the early phase of a child's cognitive development. The instillation of this collective memory was empirically

affirmed by Wa Dupe:²

“The children have been involved since the past; even during their toddler years (mabeccu mopi), they are actively included (dipaccio), because if they are included from such an early formative age, they will certainly internalize and understand it later.”

This empirical statement was supported by Imari on the same day, affirming that the custom of involving children has occurred in the past.³ Both statements deconstruct the pedagogical thought of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. They realize that the transmission of cultural capital must commence during the toddler years (*mabeccu mopi*). Direct involvement (*dipaccio*) functions as an empirical experience-based learning method. This learning rejects mere oral theoretical doctrine. This practice is relevant to the studies by [Rusman et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Nursaadah et al. \(2025\)](#), which emphasize the importance of identity formation. The cultural identity of local belief adherents depends heavily on the instillation of memory and the preservation of sustainable heritage. Through consistent physical participation, these children gradually internalize their social roles and reconstruct the community identity organically.

The value internalization process in the *Sipulung* tradition is also executed through the use of material cultural attributes, alongside physical participation. Boys are required to wear a black cap (*songkok*) and a woven silk sarong. Conversely, girls wear a traditional blouse (*kebaya*) and a batik sarong. These traditional clothing attributes are not merely aesthetic ornaments. This attire serves as a character-building tool that compels the wearer to uphold bodily decorum and the ethics of politeness in the *Perrinyameng* area. The mechanisms of using physical symbols in celebration rites and of forming cultural identity share a similar pattern. An identical pattern is also found in various life-phase transition methods within other remote indigenous communities across the archipelago ([Maiyo et al., 2023](#)).

The success of this cultural education and the instillation of cultural capital in early childhood creates a highly robust psychological foundation. This foundation is embedded within every individual of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. The emotional bond and identity consciousness sown since childhood through the *Sipulung* tradition remain unbroken. This consciousness persists even as they grow into adulthood and migrate, leaving their region of origin. This deeply rooted cultural understanding instead becomes a magnetic attraction. This attraction triggers a massive wave of return among the *Passompe*. The return of these migrants subsequently opens the way for further analysis of the power of the sacred ritual. This ritual has been proven capable of managing demographic dynamics and re-cementing solidarity within the structure of an indigenous community increasingly blending with the outside world.

²Interview with Wa Dupe, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, January 23, 2025.

³Interview with Imari, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, January 23, 2025.

C. Resolution of Social Cohesion and the Strengthening of Mechanical Solidarity Amidst Diaspora Dynamics (*Passompe*)

The cultural identity foundation firmly embedded since early childhood ultimately becomes the primary driver for the social mobility of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. As these community members grow into adulthood and decide to migrate as *Passompe*, their emotional bond to the ancestral land does not diminish. The *Sipulung* tradition serves as a center of gravity, periodically attracting these migrants to return to *Perrinyameng*. This massive return phenomenon transforms the ritual space into a giant reunion platform, effectively re-binding kinship ties previously separated by geographical distance. As a social instrument, this gathering practice has been academically proven to serve as an integration medium highly effective at bridging the diversity of the Amparita community and its surroundings (Fatmawati, 2018).

The momentum of this communal gathering becomes increasingly complex and holds high sociological value when confronted with the highly heterogeneous current regional demographic reality. The Towani Tolotang indigenous community does not live in isolation; they interact intensively with the majority group and adherents of other religions in the public sphere. Within this pluralistic religious context, the execution of *Sipulung* demonstrates the capacity of local wisdom to serve as a foundation for religious moderation practices directly from the grassroots level (Setinawati et al., 2025). The openness of the indigenous community in organizing their annual ritual carries significant implications, indicating that the understanding of multiculturalism in Indonesia must be applied openly by inclusively incorporating the dimension of interfaith tolerance equally (Hoon, 2017).

This reality of openness was directly validated through empirical field observation during the celebration. Thousands of Towani Tolotang adherents crowding the tomb area and residents' yards appeared to blend harmoniously without triggering social tension with the general public outside the community. This gathering, which was part of the *Sipulung* series, was also attended by various local government officials. The presence of state representation was not merely a ceremonial formality but a structural recognition and active intervention by the local government in protecting the existence of minority groups (Lawelai, 2020). The pattern of social interaction and adaptation demonstrated by the Bugis ethnic adherents of Towani Tolotang shares a similar strategy with the participation of other indigenous groups in maintaining harmony in pluralistic regions (Rahmadani et al., 2024).

The extraordinary escalation in mass numbers generates new demands. The wave of return among the *Passompe* and broader community participation necessitates organized social engineering management. The attendance schedule

is managed directly by indigenous authority figures to ensure the spatial capacity in *Perrinyameng* remains controlled and conducive. The dynamics of this time management and the extraordinary enthusiasm of these migrants were detailed by Wa Sari:⁴

“Because there are so many people wanting to come, it is divided; some come on the first day and so on. The date is determined by Uwa’s decision, so everyone has the opportunity to attend. It also depends on the person, because those who have already attended will usually join again on the following date. Moreover, the out-migrants (Passompe) indeed arrive long before going to Perrinyameng; all their extended families gather because this is what is highly anticipated every year.”

This description was later reinforced by Wa Parenrengi, stating that the *Sipulung* tradition is a mandatory event for him to attend.⁵ The narratives from both key informants deconstruct the density-resolution mechanism, effectively driven by hierarchical obedience. The *Uwa’s* decision to divide the arrival schedule is obeyed collectively without any resistance from the adherents, proving that mechanical solidarity within this community operates at a high level of efficiency. This celebration functions as a communal thanksgiving rite that not only binds the spiritual dimension but also cements the social and kinship dimensions, akin to the symbolic function in the traditional celebration dances of the Pamona tribe (Patonga et al., 2024). The longing accumulated while at the migration destination is ultimately fulfilled when the *Passompe* can reunite with their extended families in the ancestral land.

The massive scale of the mass gathering and the status of *Sipulung* as a mandatory annual agenda logically bring logistical consequences. Preparations for this grand event are not simple; every individual and family unit must manage finances well in advance to undertake the journey back to *Perrinyameng*. The physical mobility of thousands of migrants and the provision of these ritual fulfillment attributes ultimately open a new analytical dimension, shifting from mere matters of fraternal togetherness. The subsequent analytical focus is directed toward tracing the economic rationality and capital accumulation within the structure of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community.

D. Economic Rationality and Symbolic Capital Accumulation: The Correlation between Ritual Obedience and Work Ethos

The logical consequence of the massive movement of the *Passompe* and the execution of the annual tradition involving thousands of adherents culminates in the need for strong material support. Large-scale financial expenditures to participate in the *Sipulung* tradition are often assessed by outsiders as consumptive behavior that burdens the agrarian society. However, Damirah et al. (2022) refute

⁴Interview with Wa Sari, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, December 28, 2024.

⁵Interview with Wa Sari, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, December 28, 2024.

this assumption. They assert that resource allocation within the Towani Tolotang indigenous community operates according to a cyclical relationship model. This model naturally integrates social and economic aspects. Material expenditure for ritual purposes is essentially a long-term cultural investment. This investment functions to maintain social networks and secure the position of every family within the indigenous institutional structure.

This economic rationality is driven by a theological engine in the form of a hard work ethos. This work ethos is deeply rooted in the philosophy of *Resopana temmangingngi, naletei Dewata SewaE* (only through hard work will the will of the gods be achieved). For these adherents of local beliefs, the pursuit of material welfare in the world is not presented as a secular ambition separate from matters of the divine. The accumulation of financial wealth is instead interpreted as a vital instrument to fulfill their highest spiritual obligations. Relentless dedication to work is an absolute prerequisite. This diligence ensures that every individual has adequate economic capacity to attend and fully participate in the communal celebration at the ancestral tomb site.

The economic capacity successfully accumulated from this hard work ethos is subsequently converted into symbolic capital. This social capital is displayed openly in the ritual arena. Empirical field observation clearly recorded how the *Sipulung* arena transforms into a space for showcasing material welfare. Adult women and children were seen wearing their best *kebaya* paired with a batik sarong. They conspicuously displayed various gold jewelry. Conversely, men highlighted their status by wearing high-quality woven silk sarongs. This appearance was paired with a *songkok*, which symbolizes the masculinity and honor of the Bugis society.

This luxurious material appearance amidst the sacred area is not a form of social-class arrogance. It is an expression of total respect for the traditional heritage. The sociological motivation for using these welfare attributes was articulated straightforwardly by two female informants from the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. Wa Sari detailed the meticulousness of their clothing preparation:⁶

"We always prepare our best clothes and jewelry when we are going to Perrinyameng, because that means we appreciate and respect our culture."

This description was subsequently validated and reinforced by Moni's statement in the regional language, asserting that:⁷

"Everyone wears their clothes and gold jewelry (ulawenna) when they want to go to Perrinyameng (napake manenni yaro wajunna sibawa ulawenna tau e ko eloni maperrinyameng)."

⁶Interview with Wa Sari, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, December 28, 2024.

⁷Interview with Moni, Towani Tolotang indigenous community, December 23, 2024.

The empirical statements from both key informants deconstruct the notion of an absolute correlation between ritual obedience and the accumulation of symbolic capital. The use of the best clothing and gold jewelry (*ulawenna*) functions as a metric for social evaluation. This metric indicates the extent to which a family has successfully practiced the *Resopa* philosophy in their daily lives. The better the material attributes worn in *Perrinyameng*, the greater the recognition of their spiritual worthiness from fellow community members. Thus, this pilgrimage tradition indirectly creates a strong motivational climate. The adherents are continuously driven to work productively throughout the year to prepare for the subsequent sacred event.

The success in achieving economic stability, as presented in this material luxury, yields a positive outcome. This stability culminates in psychological satisfaction and a profound sense of collective pride. Once all logistical preparation obligations and material standards are met, the overflowing energy of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community requires a release channel. This channeling must be conducted before they enter the highly tranquil phase of spiritual contemplation. The transitional momentum from the joy of work achievement to the solemnity of the core prayer is accommodated through a cultural cathartic space. This cultural emotional release space takes the form of a physical agility performance in the traditional sport of *Massempe'*.

E. *Massempe'* as an Arena for Identity Reproduction and Cultural Catharsis

The achievement of economic stability and the accumulation of collective emotions from thousands of *Passompe* gathered in *Perrinyameng* bring natural consequences. This giant-scale gathering generates a highly massive accumulation of social energy. Before the Towani Tolotang indigenous community enters the silent ritual phase, which demands the highest level of spiritual solemnity, this social energy requires a channeling space. This space is necessary to prevent internal friction among adherents. The need to release this tension is facilitated through the execution of a communal entertainment tradition laden with philosophical meaning. The transitional space from the celebration of worldly joy to sacred submission is tangibly manifested. This tangible manifestation is channeled through a traditional physical agility performance known as *Massempe'*.

Based on empirical observation at the celebration site, *Massempe'* is a physical agility attraction. This attraction brings two individuals together in an open arena. The rules of this traditional sport are highly strict and specific. The match only permits leg kicks. Hand touches or punches are strictly prohibited and completely unjustified. This physical combat performance is organized exclusively. Involvement in the arena is restricted solely to male participants of various ages. This communal attraction is conducted as an opening activity. *Massempe'* warms

up the atmosphere before the entire congregation is instructed by the indigenous authority to conduct the communal meal and commence the core prayer.

The exclusivity of male involvement in the *Massempe'* arena indicates a profound sociological function. This function transcends mere physical recreation and helps you work up a sweat. The kicking combat performance becomes the primary arena for reproducing cultural identity. This arena also functions as an affirmation of Bugis male masculinity authority within the structure of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. The courage to enter the center of the ring and receive physical impact is interpreted as a mental proof of chivalry inherited from the ancestors. The transmission mechanism of identity and preservation of communal cultural heritage through the medium of physical movement or traditional martial arts possesses a measurable pattern of rationality. This pattern aligns with the cultural defense strategies of other indigenous communities across the archipelago (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the physical impact occurring within the *Massempe'* arena operates as a highly crucial cultural cathartic instrument. Throughout the year, every individual in the Towani Tolotang community has exerted their energy and mind. This exertion is conducted under the pressure of the *Resopa na temmangingngi* hard work ethos. Psychological tension resulting from workloads and the harsh dynamics of life in the migration land is totally released. This release occurs amid the audience's cheers and the agility combat in the ancestral land. Indigenous regulations strictly prohibit any lingering grudges after the match concludes. This strictness proves that physical violence in this arena has been tamed. The physical combat arena becomes a potent mechanism for resolving conflicts to suppress uncontrolled aggressive impulses in the future.

The preservation of *Massempe'* as an integral element of the *Sipulung* celebration also reflects a cultural sustainability strategy. The indigenous community implements this strategy to maintain the relevance of their tradition amidst the current of modernization. This attractive entertainment element acts as a balancing magnet. Its presence ensures that the younger generation does not feel bored with the sacred ritual series, which tend to be dogmatic and passive. The cultural flexibility in combining silent worship rites with dynamic folk entertainment instruments is a hallmark of the agrarian Bugis society. They combine these in celebrating their manifestation of gratitude. This type of cultural strategy is proven successful in maintaining communal enthusiasm. This strategy also weaves vertical social integration bonds across generations and horizontal bonds across beliefs in a pluralistic region (Junida, 2019; Khairul et al., 2024).

The constellation of the five pillars that compose the overall *Sipulung* tradition demonstrates the depth of the social architecture of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community. This series of pillars begins with spiritual obedience to

Dewata Seuwae. This pillar is subsequently connected to value inheritance through early childhood cultural education and migrant solidarity. These entire stages are colored by tangible manifestations of economic accumulation, ultimately culminating in the channeling of cultural relief through *Massempe'*. All these aspects intertwine to form a single, robust defense ecosystem unity. The execution of this annual ritual can no longer be interpreted merely as an effort to care for the remnants of history. This communal ritual has proven to be the primary driving instrument. This instrument guarantees the existence, continuity, and identity of the minority community in facing the reality of a continuously moving era.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The existence of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community amidst the challenges of modernization and marginalization is not maintained through social isolation. This group sustains its life through cultural resilience centered on the *Sipulung* tradition. This communal practice transcends the boundaries of dogmatic worship and becomes a tiered ecosystem that supports the community's sustainability. This conclusion directly answers the primary research objective by proving the power of *Sipulung*. This tradition is a mass gathering space that integrates the dimensions of spirituality, education, social ties, economic rationality, and conflict resolution within a single sacred unity of time and space.

In the spiritual and cultural transmission dimension, the community's absolute obedience to the *Dewata Seuwae* entity is uniquely constructed. This system stands without requiring physical religious buildings. Its execution is materialized through the contemplation practice of *Molalaleng* at the *I Pabbere* tomb site. This sacred architecture, guarded by the *Uwatta* authority hierarchy, is guaranteed sustainability through a systematic non-formal education mechanism. The active involvement of early childhood in the *Mapperinyameng* pilgrimage, along with the obligation to wear traditional clothing attributes, constitutes irrefutable empirical evidence. This affirms that the instillation of collective memory and the habituation of ancestral values operate highly effectively within the ritual arena.

In the social and economic dimension, the magnetic attraction of the ancestral land of *Perrinyameng* can manage demographic dynamics. This area successfully attracts the return of thousands of *Passompe*. The obligation to attend this ritual triggers an economic rationality driven by the *Resopa na temmangingngi* hard-work ethos. Based on this ethos, financial achievement is converted into symbolic capital displayed as a manifestation of cultural respect. The accumulation of energy from economic achievements and the joy of social encounters is subsequently managed wisely through the *Massempe'* performance. This agility sport functions not merely as a physical recreation spectacle. This performance occupies a crucial position as a cultural space for emotional release and a binding instrument of mechanical solidarity.

Based on the conclusions, this study formulates academic recommendations for the future development of the sociology of religion and cultural anthropology. Further studies are urgently needed to map the vulnerability level of the younger generation of local belief adherents. This vulnerability is specifically examined in the context of the threat of digital culture influx and global information exchange. Furthermore, future research should specifically investigate the sociological dynamics within the educated group. Studies are required to observe how students from local belief adherent groups construct their identity and adaptation strategies. They must sustain themselves amidst the implementation of diversity education policies applied in state-owned formal schools.

At the practical level, the findings of this study carry highly urgent policy implications. These findings demand concrete follow-up from the local government and relevant stakeholders. The government is obligated to formulate regulatory instruments that side with social justice. These instruments must explicitly provide guarantees of civil rights protection and equal access to public services for all members of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community without the slightest discrimination. Furthermore, the local government needs to immediately establish legally binding spatial planning instruments. This regulation must protect the *Perrinyameng* site area from potential commercial land conversion. Securing this territory is a guarantee that the resilience ecosystem of this indigenous community can continue to operate harmoniously amidst the nation's plurality.

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