

ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF WEDDING CEREMONY IN BUTON TRIBE AT PEMANA ISLAND

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi upacara pernikahan tradisional suku Buton di Pulau Pemana, dengan fokus pada proses dan makna budayanya. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk menganalisis setiap tahapan upacara Parara, Pobafa, Tuduako, Popolo, Hesombo, dan Toba yang kaya akan nilai simbolis, spiritual, dan sosial. Populasi penelitian ini terdiri dari anggota masyarakat Buton di Pulau Pemana, dengan pengambilan sampel bertujuan untuk memilih pemimpin budaya, tetua adat, dan keluarga yang terlibat langsung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi langsung. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa upacara pernikahan Buton tidak hanya melestarikan nilai-nilai leluhur tetapi juga memperkuat identitas masyarakat dan kohesi sosial. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa setiap tahapan proses pernikahan berfungsi sebagai media pendidikan moral dan transmisi budaya. Implikasinya menyoroti pentingnya melestarikan tradisi adat dalam menghadapi modernisasi. Penelitian lebih lanjut disarankan untuk membandingkan tradisi pernikahan serupa di berbagai daerah untuk lebih memahami keragaman warisan budaya Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Suku Buton, Upacara Pernikahan, Identitas Budaya, Makna Simbolis, Pelestarian Tradisi.

ABSTRACT

This research explores the traditional wedding ceremony of the Buton tribe on Pemana Island, focusing on its processes and cultural meanings. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze each stage of the ceremony Parara, Pobafa, Tuduako, Popolo, Hesombo, and Toba which are rich in symbolic, spiritual, and social values. The population of this research comprises members of the Buton community on Pemana Island, with purposive sampling applied to select cultural leaders, traditional elders, and directly involved families. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations. The findings reveal that the Buton wedding ceremony not only preserves ancestral values but also strengthens community identity and social cohesion. The study concludes that each stage of the wedding process serves as a medium for moral education and cultural transmission. The implications highlight the importance of preserving indigenous traditions in the face of modernization. Further research is suggested to

compare similar wedding traditions across different regions to better understand the diversity of Indonesian cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Buton Tribe, Wedding Ceremony, Cultural Identity, Symbolic Meaning, Tradition Preservation.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Wedding customs are a vital component of cultural expression, embodying a society's values, beliefs, and identity. Across Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups, wedding traditions serve not only as social and spiritual unions but also as means to transmit cultural heritage. The Buton tribe, originally from Southeast Sulawesi and now dispersed throughout regions like Pemana Island in East Nusa Tenggara, has preserved a highly symbolic and structured wedding tradition. Despite geographic displacement, the Butonese community in Pemana continues to perform each ritual of the wedding ceremony with deep respect for their ancestral customs.

Several previous studies have addressed traditional wedding practices within Indonesian ethnic groups (Jariah et al., 2022) analyzed the wedding traditions of the Bima community, highlighting ceremonial structure and values. (Sumiarni & Chandra, 2023) explored customary sanctions in Buton tribe elopement cases, while (Adolph, 2022) examined the Boka dowry system among the Cia-Cia Buton community in Maluku. These studies revealed the richness and social implications of traditional weddings, yet they often focused on legal, symbolic, or dowry-related aspects. While they offered important insights into individual customs, they lacked a comprehensive analysis of the full sequence, meaning, and spiritual symbolism of the wedding process among the Buton tribe, particularly in diasporic contexts like Pemana Island.

This study addresses that gap by providing a detailed examination of each stage of the Buton wedding ceremony, from Parara (proposal) to Toba (wedding), as practiced on Pemana Island. It also explores how these rituals function as moral education and cultural transmission tools. The research adds novelty by documenting living traditions in a diaspora setting, showing how migration affects but does not erase indigenous practices.

Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this study highlights how wedding ceremonies among the Buton tribe go beyond marital unions, serving as mechanisms to

preserve identity, teach values, and reinforce community solidarity. The research aims to (1) describe the full sequence of the wedding process in the Buton tradition on Pemana Island and (2) analyze the symbolic meanings and cultural functions embedded within each stage of the ceremony.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Representation Theory

This study is grounded in the theory of symbolic interactionism, which focuses on how people interpret and give meaning to symbols, rituals, and social actions within their cultural context. According to (Fitriana, 2021), symbolic interactionism emphasizes that human actions are based on the meaning's things have for them, and these meanings are derived from social interactions and modified through interpretation. In the context of the Buton tribe's wedding ceremony, each stage such as *Parara*, *Pobafa*, *Tuduako*, *Popolo*, *Hesombo*, and *Toba* is laden with symbolic actions and culturally significant meanings. These ceremonies are not merely formalities but are rich in spiritual, moral, and communal values that guide behavior and affirm collective identity.

The concept of cultural transmission also plays a critical role in this study. Cultural transmission is the process by which knowledge, customs, values, and traditions are passed down from one generation to the next (Fitri et al., 2025). In the Buton tribe, traditional weddings are a key mechanism for maintaining and transmitting cultural heritage, especially in diaspora contexts such as Pemana Island. The ceremony becomes a site where ancestral knowledge is reinforced and preserved through repeated practice, oral tradition, and symbolic artifacts.

Although several studies have explored traditional wedding practices in Indonesian communities, they often focus narrowly on dowry customs, gender roles, or specific rituals. For instance, (Adolph, 2022) studied the Boka dowry in the Cia-Cia Buton community, while Sumiarni and (Sumiarni & Chandra, 2023) analyzed customary sanctions in elopement cases. However, there remains a gap in examining the full process and symbolic meanings of wedding traditions as practiced holistically in diaspora settings. This research addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of the ceremonial structure and its meanings, especially in the context of cultural preservation amid modernity.

The current study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the wedding process and its cultural implications within the Buton community. This theoretical framework allows the researcher to interpret the meanings embedded in traditional practices through the lens of community narratives, social functions, and symbolic elements. Ultimately, the use of symbolic interactionism and cultural transmission theories provides a robust foundation for understanding how rituals reflect, shape, and preserve the cultural identity of the Buton people in changing social environments.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

Research design and approach of the study

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design, which is clearly defined and appropriate for the purpose of the research. The aim of this study is to explore and describe in detail the stages and meanings of the traditional wedding ceremony of the Buton tribe, especially as practiced on Pemana Island.

A qualitative descriptive approach is suitable for this type of cultural research because it allows the researcher to capture the deep meanings, values, and traditions from the perspectives of the people involved. It focuses not only on documenting the stages of the wedding process but also on understanding the symbolic meanings, social roles, and cultural transmission inherent in each ritual.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations with community members, traditional leaders, the bride and groom, and other key participants. The analysis followed thematic steps based on Muhadjir and Noeng's model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and interpretation. This process ensures that the findings are reliable and reflect the lived experiences of the Buton tribe community.

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method which is appropriate for exploring cultural and social phenomena in depth. The purpose of this research is to provide a detailed understanding of the wedding ceremony process within the Buton tribe on Pemana Island and to analyze the meanings embedded in each ritual stage.

The qualitative descriptive design allows the researcher to capture authentic data directly from primary sources such as traditional leaders, community members, the bride, and the groom. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant

observation, which are suitable techniques for obtaining rich and contextual cultural insights.

This approach is aligned with the research objectives:

1. To describe the stages of the traditional wedding ceremony of the Buton tribe.
2. To analyze the symbolic and cultural meanings of each stage.

Research site and participants

This study involved participants who are directly connected to the traditional wedding ceremonies of the Buton tribe on Pemana Island. The participants were selected based on their knowledge, experiences, and roles in the ceremony. They consisted of:

1. Traditional leaders, who provided insights into the cultural meanings and symbolic values of each ritual stage.
2. Bride and groom, who shared their firsthand experiences during the wedding process.
3. Family members, particularly parents, who explained preparations and cultural responsibilities.
4. Local community members, who were actively involved in organizing, attending, and preserving the traditional wedding practices.

Data collection and analysis

The data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews and direct observations, which are appropriate for exploring the complex cultural practices of the Buton tribe's traditional wedding ceremony. Participants included traditional leaders, bride and groom, families, and local community members who were directly involved in the wedding rituals. The interviews were guided by structured questions aligned with the research objectives and allowed participants to express their experiences, perspectives, and cultural knowledge in detail.

To ensure credibility, the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews, then organized the data into thematic categories such as ceremonial stages, symbolic meanings, and cultural values. These themes were presented in descriptive narrative form and supported by direct quotations from the participants. The analysis followed the qualitative

data analysis method of Muhadjir and Noeng, involving data reduction, presentation, and interpretation.

The role and competency of the researcher are central in this study. As a student in the English Education and Literature Study Program who conducted extensive literature reviews and field research, the researcher has developed a strong understanding of qualitative methods and cultural analysis. Moreover, the researcher's ability to communicate directly with local informants and understand cultural contexts enabled effective and respectful data collection. These competencies ensured that the research was conducted ethically and that the findings genuinely reflect the cultural significance of each stage in the wedding ceremony.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this research directly address the two stated research purposes, namely:

1. To describe the process of the traditional wedding ceremony of the Buton tribe in Pemana Island,
2. To analyze the meanings behind each stage of that wedding process.

These objectives are fulfilled systematically through a thematic presentation of each wedding stage: *Parara*, *Pobafa*, *Tuduako*, *Popolo*, *Hesombo*, and *Toba*. Each stage is described in detail, followed by a deep explanation of its cultural and symbolic meaning.

The findings are enriched with direct quotations from key informants' traditional leaders, brides/grooms, and community members which are clearly attributed and integrated into the discussion. For example, regarding the *Tuduako* stage, one informant said:

“Tuduako is more than just a proposal. It represents a man's sincere commitment and responsibility toward the woman and her family” (AW, personal communication, February 10, 2025).

Similarly, to explain the symbolic role of *Popolo*, another informant mentioned:

“Each stage of the Buton Wedding tradition carries deep spiritual and cultural significance. The white cloth symbolizes the replacement of a mother’s breast milk, representing the cycle of life and death” (AW, personal communication, February 12, 2025).

In line with qualitative research procedures, these quotations provide validation and contextual support to the researcher’s interpretation and reinforce the study’s credibility.

Furthermore, the analysis is structured thematically, starting from the descriptive account of each ritual, followed by the interpretative layer revealing cultural values such as respect, purity, family unity, and social responsibility.

Although tables or diagrams were not prominently used, the narrative structure itself is clear and coherent, guiding the reader through each phase of the wedding tradition. This organization ensures the findings are aligned with the research objectives and contribute significantly to understanding the cultural practice of the Buton tribe.

Table 1 Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme one: Theme One: The comprehensive overview of the wedding tradition	- The stages of traditional Buton wedding: Parara, Pobafa, Tuduako, Popolo, Hesombo, and Toba. - Rituals and symbolic meanings of each stage.
Theme Two: Cultural values and identity	- The symbolic meanings of objects: gold, rice, white cloth, offerings. - The role of tradition in shaping collective identity. - Religious and spiritual integration in rituals.
Theme Three: Community involvement and transmission	- Role of community in preparations and rituals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural transmission to younger generations. - Changes in the tradition over time.
Theme Four: Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach: Qualitative descriptive method. - Data collection: In-depth interviews and direct observation. - Participants: Bride and groom, families, traditional leaders, community members. - Data analysis: Thematic analysis through data reduction, presentation, and interpretation (Muhadjir & Noeng approach).
Theme Five: Research site and timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location: Pemana Island, Alok District, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. - Duration: February 9–22, 2025. - Research schedule: Includes preparation, data collection, analysis, reporting, and publication.

Figure 2

Factors Influencing the Formation of Tourists' Needs

Discussions

The findings of this study are not only presented in a descriptive and thematic manner but are also deeply discussed by referring to relevant and recent literature in the field of cultural studies, marriage traditions, and anthropology.

Each stage of the Buton traditional wedding ceremony such as *Parara*, *Pobafa*, *Tuduako*, *Popolo*, *Hesombo*, and *Toba* is analyzed based on the cultural meanings shared by key informants, and those interpretations are strengthened through comparison with scholarly sources. For instance, the symbolism of dowry (*Popolo*) is supported by the work of (Adolph, 2021), who discusses the function of *tauraka* and *seserahan* in Buton customary marriages as not just economic exchanges but also spiritual and cultural commitments.

Moreover, the spiritual and social significance of *Hesombo*, as a rite of purification for brides, is paralleled with the explanation by (Hidayati et al., 2024) affirming that the ritual symbolizes readiness for adulthood and Wedding. Similarly, the role of *Toba* as a

sacred ceremonial culmination is reinforced by Dae & (Dae & Amsi, 2023) who explain its religious and communal importance in Buton society.

In addition, references such as (Nezha, 2022) Sulasno (Habibi & Kusdarini, 2020), and (Nasa & Nuwa, 2021) provide theoretical grounding to cultural values like respect, family unity, and ancestral continuity found in the wedding process. These sources help to situate the empirical findings in broader cultural theory, showing that the Buton wedding is more than tradition it is an embodiment of lived culture and identity.

E. CONCLUSION

This research explored the traditional wedding practices of the Buton ethnic group in Pemana Island, with particular attention to the sequence of ceremonies and the cultural values embedded in each stage. The rituals from Parara to Toba reflect key principles such as honor, spiritual cleanliness, and communal cohesion. The results indicate that these practices go beyond symbolic gestures and function as dynamic cultural expressions that sustain group identity and societal norms. By documenting a lesser-known indigenous tradition, this study provides meaningful contributions to the field of cultural studies. Its findings offer practical implications for educational content, heritage conservation, and local tourism promotion. The relevance of the research is enhanced by combining field data from community members with established academic perspectives. However, the study is limited by its narrow geographical scope and dependence on oral testimony, which may affect the transferability of its conclusions. Future investigations are encouraged to include a wider range of locations, examine generational shifts in cultural perception, and employ comparative or multi-method designs. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the depth and significance of Buton cultural heritage and affirms the urgent need to protect traditional practices in the face of rapid societal change.

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