

## Identifying Local Knowledge and Meaning of Rural Farming Communities in the Modernization Era

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify local wisdom and the meaning of the rice farming community in the modernization era and to discover the concept of symbolic interactionism in the sense of the local wisdom of the farming community in Wajo Regency, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach and is described through phenomenological studies and interpretation of meaning through symbolic interactionism by taking informants purposively and snowball sampling. Data was collected in three stages: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results showed that local wisdom in paddy rice farming activities in Wajo Regency has begun to be abandoned. However, local wisdom systems such as *Mattanra Ezzo* (Determination of Good Days) and *Mappadendang* (Harvest Festival) are still maintained in the modernization era. The stillborn local wisdom contains a meaning that is very difficult for the farming community to abandon, but several other local wisdoms have begun to be abandoned; this is reflected in the thinking of the farming community, which is increasingly rational. The action of these local values in the meaning of symbolic interactionism theory is essential to be maintained to save weapons and prevent the perpetrators of weapons from exploiting nature. Preserving local cultures prevents the loss of human control over natural resources because it considers the carrying capacity of land against excessive processing capacity, which in the end, maintains fertile land for agricultural use in the future.

### Keywords

Farming Communities, Rice Farming, Rural Areas, Symbolic Interactionism, Modernization

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is known as an agrarian country, which means a country that relies on the agricultural sector both as a source of livelihood and as a support for development. Indonesia is rich in natural resources, and rice fields are one of them. Rice fields are one of the legacies of our ancestors that should be preserved and preserved in order to ensure the continuity of life for future generations and the continuation of social ties (Ikhsani et al., 2020). Agriculture is the result of a culture that has been passed down from generation to generation by ancestors to the next generation. Culture concerning agriculture is all community activities that provide special characteristics regarding people's lives which about how to manage agricultural land, rituals, equipment used to all activities directly related to planting and harvesting agricultural products (Kamaluddin et al., 2012). Humans have a close relationship with culture because everything in society is determined by the culture that belongs to that society. Culture is passed down from generation to generation and continues to live even though the humans who are members of society have changed due to birth and death (Sukesi, et al., 2021). The history of the world of agriculture has experienced enormous changes from traditional methods to more advanced or modern methods, and these changes include several things, including land preparation, the use of superior seeds, the use of fertilizers, and the use of agricultural production facilities. , and setting harvest time. Anjak (2005) explained that the development of agriculture through the green revolution paradigm, which was widely proclaimed by the government in the 1970s for the sake of economic growth under the pretext of increasing production capacity and social welfare, this green revolution entered into agricultural processing patterns (Portes, 2003).

South Sulawesi is a province in Indonesia that has a variety of cultures and is the largest food crop-producing region in Eastern Indonesia, with an agricultural area of 653,950.5 ha (Ramdhani et al., 2015). One of the districts that has rice farming with various wisdoms is Wajo Regency, with a rice field area of 100,991 ha in 2019, and the area of irrigated rice fields by sub-district in Wajo Regency in 2018 is 30,453 ha (Central Bureau of Statistics for Wajo Regency, 2019). Research by Irmayani et al. (2015), states that all living things actually have a close relationship with human life itself, are treated properly, even plants will be upheld, especially if the relationship between humans and other animals requires ethics to be maintained so that continue in the future, involving the meaning of action to maintain the sustainability of rice farming. Another study conducted by (Fatmawati, 2019) explains that local knowledge is an essential element in every activity of human life. In cultivating rice, the community first makes natural signs an inseparable part of themselves. The results of research in Kambata Tana Village state that agricultural modernization can bring changes to the mindset and behavior of people in Kambata Tana Village, and agricultural transformation that occurs is only limited to production methods without changing the social structure of society because the Kambata Tanah community still adhere to the cultural values and local wisdom that are complied with (Djoh, 2018).

Rahmadani, et al. (2020) examined the existence of local knowledge of the farming community in the green revolution era and explained that eight forms of local knowledge were carried out by the farming community in Carebbu Village for generations in managing paddy rice farming, but in the midst of the green revolution, it can be seen that the local knowledge of the farming community has begun to be abandoned, namely two of the eight existing forms of local knowledge have begun to be abandoned. (Irmayani et al. 2017) indicated that this was due to the thinking of the farming community, which started to be instrumentally rational. Ujung Pero Village is one of the villages in Sabbangparu District, some still apply their local knowledge in lowland rice farming with a plantation area of 4,990 ha (Sudarmo et al., 2021). In rice cultivation, there is still a lot of local knowledge that is unknown to many people, both local knowledge that once existed and local knowledge that is currently being lost due to the rise of the green revolution (Djoh, 2018). During the green revolution, there has indeed been a contestation of knowledge between indigenous knowledge in farmer culture and modern knowledge that comes from outside (Gizaw, 2020).

At this juncture, it is important to scrutinize how technology and knowledge from a different culture may harm the entire local agricultural production system. In his *Planet Dialectics* (1999), Wolfgang Sachs discusses in great detail how embracing foreign technology that follows foreign development aid given to developing countries by developed countries can be like demolishing the local fortresses to admit a Trojan Horse into the country. Local technology evolves to suit the local culture, climate and all other background conditions. Modern technology is invented in foreign countries, usually the developed nations, and is thrust on the developing nations. This is what happened during the Green Revolution. Alien technology thus introduced was, on many occasions, not only culturally but also environmentally incompatible or destructive (Carson, 1962). Governments of developing nations still embraced the Green Revolution because they simply wanted to hop onto the bandwagon and run the race toward economic growth. The Green Revolution promised accelerated production, seemingly favorable for economic growth.

For rural dwellers, agriculture is not only about money. The land is not about money. Labor is not about money. They are symbols of kinship, faith, religion, family ties and a host of other bonds that could not be reduced to economic factors. This is the reason why locals often reject new or foreign technology. For the same reason, new knowledge or technology may take a long time to be accepted by the locals. Nature is no longer seen as a machine but as a network of relationships, physical, chemical, mental and communicative. The relationships between the parts constitute the whole. The connectedness of all manifestations of life, bacteria, chimpanzees and human consciousness alike, is emphasized by science and the encyclical (Wolfgang, 2017). As a unit that strengthens each other but in certain conditions, it even becomes a threat that will be detrimental. So that local rural values are needed, this is a farmer entity that is very much needed in its agricultural activities. Therefore, this research explains

local knowledge that is still maintained in the modernization era and still supports rural farmers in their farming activities and explains the meaning behind maintaining these local values based on the concept of symbolic interactionism theory.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The research was conducted in Sabbangparu District, Wajo Regency, Indonesia. The selection of research locations was carried out purposively because, in this village, there was a contestation between local knowledge and modern knowledge in agricultural practices. The research employed a qualitative approach as a basis for explaining phenomena (Nasriah et al., 2019). This research was described through phenomenological studies and interpretation of meaning through the concept of the meaning of symbolic interactionism. According to George Herbert Mead, the theory of symbolic interactionism is the social interaction that occurs due to the use of symbols that have meaning. These symbols can create meanings that can trigger social interactions among individuals.

The determination of informants was carried out purposively, namely key informants were considered to have extensive knowledge and could communicate well (Prabowo and Sudrajat, 2021), while further informants were determined using the snowball sampling technique to show the level of information saturation. Data collection techniques in this study were participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used is data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The stages of interpreting the actions that are the object of research are: A person's behavior or actions will appear in the eyes of other people, someone will know how other people will judge the action, Someone builds a conception of meaning about his activities based on the judgments of others (Barnet et al., 2009).

## **3. Results and Discussions**

### **3.1. Local Knowledge and Meaning of Rice Farming Communities**

Local knowledge possessed by farmer groups in community life is a cultural process. Group culture certain community is a unit that has symbols and is full of meaning contained therein. There are farmer procedures in determining auspicious days, choosing a type of superior seeds, and seeing signs of nature others are also cultural processes that unite and become considerations for farmers in making decisions on their agricultural actions (Sukesi, 2021). The existence of various kinds of natural signs that exist around it becomes something that cannot be separated from the daily activities of a community region. This happens because of habits that have been patterned and internalized well in everyday life. Local knowledge and meaning of Rice Farming Communities are farming practices carried out by the people which have become a hereditary habit for a long time.

Local knowledge is carried out because there is a meaning behind this activity (Rahmadani et al., 2020), so there is still a tradition carried out to manage farming, especially rice, in the farming community in Wajo Regency. Several farming practices are carried out in paddy rice farming, from planting preparation to post-harvest, with the following description: Deliberations in Wajo Regency are routinely held to discuss what steps need to be taken before going down to the fields to carry out the planting process. Usually, the Bugis people called *tudang sipulung* (Portes, 2003). This deliberation also means strengthening the ties between the farming community and the leadership, solving problems faced by farmers from planting to harvesting, determining rice planting days, and strengthening relations of brotherhood. With guidance from FAE (Field Agricultural Extension), their planting system becomes more organized, and the farmers also carry out the planting process simultaneously.

Land preparation is essential to clean rice fields by cleaning waterways, clearing weeds and plowing fields. Before the farmers carry out activities in the fields, the straw is first separated and collected on the edge of the plot, then the waterways are cleaned first. They do it together to make the work easier and build a sense of kinship because good cooperation is created. If the drains have been cleaned, a water pump will be run to inundate the fields before plowing. Ramdhani et al. (2015) found that the fields need to be flooded with a bit of water so that the soil texture becomes soft and avoids soil sticking to the plowshare. Plowing rice fields means reversing the composition of the soil in paddy fields. Leveling the surface of the paddy fields by raking, the flat surface of the land can be seen on the surface of the water in the paddy fields, which looks evenly distributed. *Mattanra Ezzo* (determination of good days), as Irmayani et al. (2018) pointed out that strengthening this activity is the beginning of all local knowledge systems carried out in paddy rice farming. In the past, *Mattanra Ezzo's* actions were led by a village spiritual leader who was trusted by the community and came from the original lineage of an area called *Sanro Wanua*. *Sanro Wanua* has a spiritual understanding or monotheism called *Pappijepu* (Rahmadani, 2020).

However, at present, in Wajo Regency, there are no longer elders, they only form a farmer group so that their farming activities can run well. The time intervals that are usually used to determine a good day (*Pannessangi Ompona Ulengnge*) are:

- a. *Siwenni ompona ulengnge esso anynyarang asenna, tenriappanore bine tenri saretenu teriyabala. Najajiyange ana matinului atinna makesiwiya Ri Ala Taala. Malampe' sungei, masempodallei, customers Iyanaritu essona jajiange Ada, toneserie asalamakeng makessitoy rienreki ribola, makessitoy riyala wasompe, makessitoy riyala mulana taneng. Narekko napolei lasa masipui table agi-agi rilolongeng manengnge masijipalana ripigau.* Meaning: One night, when the moon rises, the day of the horse is called, if you plant rice, you will get reinforcements from weaving. Born diligent children have an excellent heart for Allah (God in Islamic terms), long life, and lots of fortune. Because this is our grandmother's birthday, "Adam" we are given safety, good for going home, good for



wandering, good for starting planting. If someone gets sick, they get well quickly, whatever they get, all work is done quickly.

- b. *Duampenni ompona ulengnge esso jongai asenna, najjjangnge ana makunrai wawijai nasaba iyanaritu essona jajiange neneta Siti Hawa agi-agi ripigau madeceng manengngi makesitoi ritaneng-tanenge makessitoi rilao malale majepu lolongengi dalle egana, reko rilaowangi mamusu risau balina narakana Alaataala.*

Meaning: Two nights when the moon rises, the day of the deer is named, it is good for a healthy daughter to be born because this is the birthday of our grandmother Siti Hawa, whatever work you do is good. Good for growing crops, good for going abroad, getting a lot of fortune, if you are hostile, the enemy will lose because of Allah.

- c. *Aruwa ompona ulengnge esso sapi asenna, iyanaritu esso jajjngengna Nabi Nuh. Narekko najjjangnge ana majepu rila mase' I RiAla Taala iya kiya. Malomoi nakenna lasa, iya kiya masempo dalle i. makessitoi riyapatetongeng bola, enrenge' riya panore ase, enrenge' riya kaburi agi-agi riyatu akessing manengngi. Narekko attanangngi rilongemui masiga.*

Meaning: Eight nights when the month of the cow day rises, it is the birthday of Prophet Noah. If a child is born, they get strength from Allah, they easily get sick, they get cheap sustenance, it is also good for building a house, planting rice, whatever is made is all good, if you plant it, it will grow fast.

- d. *Duapulo tellu ompona ulengnge esso ule'i asenna, makesiriya panoreng bola, narekko nakennai lasa masiga'i majapa, maketoi riyangelliyangeng tau mawajai, makessitoi riyapacake bele, maja riyapanoreng bine, makesi riyange pakuya marede usilayatoi.*

Meaning: Twelve nights when the month of the month of the horse is named, it is good if you go to talk about raising money, it is good to build a house, it is good to start selling, it is good to plant rice.

- e. *Duapulo tellu ompona ulengnge esso ule'i asenna, makesiriya panoreng bola, narekko nakennai lasa masiga'i majapa, maketoi riyangelliyangeng tau mawajai, makessitoi riyapacake bele, maja riyapanoreng bine, makesi riyange kukuya marede usilayatoi.*

Meaning: Twenty-three nights when the moon rises, the day of the caterpillar's name is good for bringing down the house, if you get sick, you recover quickly, as well as buying people something, it's good to hang fish, it's bad to plant rice.

- f. *Duapulo pitu ompona ulengnge esso ula asenna, najjjangngi ana madecenge pogau pasunowa RiAlaa Taala riduwae pajajianna. Makessitoi erilaowa mabicara enrenge riyappanori bine, enrenge rilaowa mabela, enrenge riyapinrenge masiga riwaja.*

Meaning: Twenty-seven nights when the month of the snake's name rises, the birth of a child who obeys Allah's commands. and to his parents. It's good to go out to talk, when planting rice, when going far away, if you owe a debt, it's quickly paid.

- g. *Tellupulo ompona ulengnge esso manu asenna. Essona makessi rilaowa makara-kara, erenge riappamula mattane, agi-agi ripogau makessi maneng sininna decenge enngkamanengi turu rilalenna siesso siwennie narekko rilaowangngi ritunri napa asara ai*

*napa makesi. Najjiani ana rilampe risungena RiAla Taala risompetoi dallena, pogautoi pasurowa Riala Taala enrenge riduwae pajajianna.*

Meaning: Thirty nights the month of the month of the rooster rises, a good day goes to make things, starts planting, everything that is done is all good, all the goodness is in him one day and one night if he misses it then until the new ashar is good, the birth of a child who has long life from Allah, cheap sustenance, carries out orders from Allah and also to his parents (Erdiana, 2019).

The *Pannessangi Ompona Ulengnge* timeline above is a *lontara* to see good days when you want to plant rice (Sari et al., 2017), while the *Appammulang Ezzo* timeline shows there are five symbols, each of which has a meaning. The symbols consist of *mallise* (filled) time, *lobbang* (empty) time, *maddara* (bleeding) time, *polebola* (coming home), and *uju'* (corpse) time. *Mallise* time is a good time because if we do activities at that time, the results will be full and profitable. *Lobbang* time is a bad time because we will not get good results and give us losses. *Maddara* time is a bad time because if we carry out activities at that time it will bring reinforcements such as parts of our body that will be injured and bleed from being hit by sharp objects. *Polebola* time is a time that has the meaning of a draw, neither giving profit nor giving loss, this time is usually used in trading activities. The *uju'* time is a time that is highly avoided because this time signifies the time of death. If we do activities at this time, it will pose a fatal risk because it has a corpse symbol (Appammulang et al., 2022).

The seeds were taken for 2 days and 2 nights in a large basin. This is done so that the seeds can germinate quickly and separate the quality seeds from the less quality seeds. After the seeds are soaked, the next step is selecting the seeds, which means selecting the seeds to be cultivated in the fields because the yield of rice production depends on the quality of the seeds planted. In the past, people still performed actions such as *Maddoja Bine* (Staying up late for Seeds), where this action was accompanied by 4 other activities as *Mappalece Bine* (Seducing Seeds), *Mappangolo* (Praying), *Massure'* (Reading Letters), *Mappasili* (Purification). However, in Wajo Regency, they no longer carry out this action because there has been a change in the mindset of the farming community, and there is no longer an elder to lead in carrying out this tradition.

In planting application of the *tabela* (direct planting) system, can be done manually or by using a tool with a spacing that can be determined by spacing tiles of 20 x 20 cm, 25 x 25 cm. Usually, it will be 8 to 12 rows. Before planting rice seeds, seed selection should be carried out first and given seed treatment to ensure that the seeds sown can grow well and anticipate rice OPT (Plant Disturbing Organisms) attacks. The traditional method in ancient times still used the *tapin* (replanting) system so that there were actions such as *Mangampo Bine* (Sowing Seeds) and *Massisi Bine* (Planting Seeds).

Maintenance of rice plants is by applying fertilizers and also controlling pests and diseases. In Wajo Regency, farmers use inorganic fertilizers such as Urea, Phonska (NPK), and ZA. They prefer urea fertilizer because it works well for rice plants in this village and has a large paddy field area. Fertilization is usually done 2-3 times. Farmers in Wajo Regency rarely use organic fertilizers because their work is not optimal for large rice fields. Pest control carried out uses pesticides and insecticides. Bug Bau, Stem Borer, and Rats are the most common pests that attack rice plants. Harvesting the rice farming community has used more sophisticated agricultural machinery to harvest rice. The farming community in this village uses a blender machine (4-wheel tractor) to harvest their rice. In the past, during their harvest, farmers still used the traditional method, namely *massangki*. *Massangki* means pulling out yellowed rice using a sickle, if all the rice plants have been harvested using a sickle tool. The following process is *massampa'*. *Massampa'* is usually done using a traditional tool made of wood and shaped like a ladder, then the harvested rice is beaten into the wood until the grains of rice fall off the stem (Minah, et al., 2019).

The grain of rice is then put into the bucket. When farmers still used the traditional *massampa* method, if the land area was around 1 hectare, around 30 to 40 farmers did the work. Then as time went on, farmers switched to the *madderos* method. *Madderos* was fast enough compared to *massampa'*. Then the farmers switched back to using auto *fassangki* (people who pull out yellowed rice using a machine). By using auto *fassangki*, harvesting is faster, plus the rice field owner feels more profitable because the rice field owner no longer has to pay to buy a sack. Fatmawati (2019) explains that when using the traditional *madderos* method, the owner of the rice fields pays to buy sacks. However, since using auto *fassangki*, he no longer buys sacks. When using the *madderos* method, only 7 to 8 sacks of grain are produced, and even then, 1 sack of grain belongs to the person doing the *deros*. While *fassangki* system can produce 12 sacks of grain, 11 belonging to the owner of the field, 1 belonging to the worker. In the past, there was also something called *matteke* (carrying grain from the fields to his house) using animal labor such as horses, but now farmers are using motorbikes which work faster. Farmers in Wajo Regency, after harvesting rice that has turned yellow and drooped, and has gone through the threshing process, then dry it on the asphalt using mats or tarpaulin.

### 3.2. The Meaning of Peasant Actions in Symbolic Interactionism

The concept of Symbolic Interactionism put forward by George Herbert Blummer is that a person takes action because the action has meaning. While the assumptions conveyed by George Herbert Mead, namely: Mind, Self, and Society. In the concept of mind, Mead believes that humans develop minds through interactions with others. In the Mind concept, the thinking of the farming community regarding *Mattanra Ezzo's* local knowledge. They still believe that this action will lead their farming to farming which is kept away from disaster or disaster compared to those who do not take this action.



Whereas the *Maddoja Bine* tradition (staying up late for seeds), in which the action is accompanied by 4 other actions such as *Mappalece Bine* (Seering Seeds), *Mappangolo* (Praying), *Massure'* (Reading Letters), *Mappasili* (Purification) is no longer carried out by the people due to their thinking has been heavily influenced by the development of the modernization era where people feel or get better benefits if they do modern methods rather than old traditions (Wardhiani 2019). Meanwhile, the *Mappadendang* tradition also has the meaning of expressing gratitude to the creator for bestowing His grace by providing good results for the farming of the people. In the concept of Self, Mead calls the subject or self that acts as "I", while the object or self that observes is "Me". The farming community of Wajo Regency has observed what the ancients did, with their observations the farming community is also involved in the activities carried out.

*Mappadendang* is a thanksgiving ceremony for the rice harvest and is a tradition of the Bugis people since ancient times. Usually, people will gather in a place (usually in the middle of a rice field) to pound grain together. *Mappadendang* is generally done after the main harvest when entering the dry season at night during the full moon. Basically, *Mappadendang* is the sound of alternating pounding of a pestle into a mortar when pounding rice. The *Mappadendang* event will begin with the appearance of the *Mappadendang* dance, in which the men pound an empty pestle with a certain rhythm (Prabowo and Sudrajat, 2021). After that, the women will dance to the accompaniment of music or harps. The male dancer will wear a wrap around his head and wear a black knee-length dress, then wrap a patterned black *sarong*. Meanwhile, women are required to wear traditional clothes (called *bodo* clothes), both when dancing and when pounding the pestle.

The main components in this *Mappadendang* tradition are 6 women, 3 men, *baruga* booth, mortar, pestle, and *bodo* clothes. The tool used in *Mappadendang* is a mortar with a length of 1.5 meters and a maximum of 3 meters. The width is 50 cm, the shape of the mortar is similar to a small boat but is rectangular in shape. The six sticks of the pounder are usually made of hardwood or bamboo, which are as tall as a person, and there are two types of pounders that are short, about half a meter in length. This action is carried out to take advantage of all the natural potential owned so that all components participate. This *Mappadendang* event was carried out by calling the mothers from the neighbors to pound rice together. When the mothers pound the grain, their children will gather and play together (Irmayani, et al, 2022). After that, people will continue the event by eating together. Usually the food from this harvest is accompanied by *beppa pitung* (seven types of cake). The people takes this action because it has a meaning, namely to show that this tradition shows the character of Bugis ethnic farmers and to express gratitude to the Creator and strengthen social relations with other communities as well as purification of grain which in the sense is still tied to the stem and connected to the land to become rice, which will later unite with the human (symbolic tradition) as Study of Symbolic Interactionism Theory of Herbert Blumer et al. (2022).

In the concept of Society, Mead defines society as a network of social relations created by humans. This society is a continuation of mind and self, where society influences mind and self (Bernert et al., 2009). Because as a whole many have abandoned old actions and only maintain a few actions which they think cannot be eliminated because they refer to spiritual matters, people have the belief that these natural processes have mythological meanings that affect all human activities and are even believed to be and used as a way of life, then it also influences the minds and self of other people. This is what has made the *mattanra esso* and *Mappadendang* traditions still blend into their farming system and align with modernization (Knickel et al., 2017). This modernization stream wants acceleration in production activities to achieve goals effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

Local knowledge of rice farming activities in Wajo Regency has begun to be abandoned. However, two local knowledge systems are still maintained in modern modernization, including *Mattanra Ezzo* (Determination of Good Days) and *Mappadendang* (Harvest Feast). Many time series are used in the *Mattanra Ezzo* action, including the *Appammulang Ezzo*. Five symbols have meaning, including *mallise'* (filled), *lobbang* (empty), *maddara* (bloody), *polebola* (coming home), *uju'* (corpse). The introduction of modern technology such as tractors, blenders (4-wheeled tractors), and other modern agricultural machinery has changed how farmers manage their farms, which used animal labor such as buffalo and horses, but now they no longer use it. Local knowledge that is still maintained contains a meaning that is very difficult to be abandoned by the farming community in Wajo Regency, this is supported by the theory of Symbolic Interactionism by George Herbert Blummer and George Herbert Mead, but some other local knowledge has begun to be abandoned, this is based on community thinking more rational farmers. Local knowledge of the actions of *Mattanra Ezzo* and *Mappadendang*, which is still firmly attached to farmers, are steps taken to support sustainable agriculture by synergizing well with all the resources owned by farmers. These local resources and knowledge are a source of strength for farmers in building social interactions to support economic activities in rural agricultural areas.

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