



Mataano Mambio: Ritual and symbolism of the laporo tribe's harvest

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the Mataano Mambio harvest ritual practiced by the Laporo ethnic community in Kombeli Subdistrict, Buton Regency, focusing on its ritual structure, symbolic meanings, and cultural significance. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive design, employing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation conducted between January and March 2024. A total of 12 informants were selected using snowball sampling. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal that Mataano Mambio unfolds through a structured series of ritual events: beginning with Piharoaano Galampa (customary deliberation), followed by Bata Nda'a and Linda dances, Sungkuano Sadakaa (ritual prayer), Sumbele'a Bembe (goat sacrifice), the central Mataano Mambio ceremony, and concluding with Manca and Panguncei performances. Each element embodies symbolic meanings rooted in Laporo cosmology – such as humility, interdependence, ancestral reverence, and ethical trade. Interpreted through the lenses of cultural resilience theory, symbolic anthropology, and glocalization, the ritual functions as a living system of knowledge transmission and socio-ecological adaptation. The study contributes to cultural studies by demonstrating how indigenous rituals operate not only as cultural heritage but also as dynamic frameworks for sustaining identity, resilience, and collective memory amid social change.

Keywords: *Cultural Resilience; Indigenous Knowledge; Laporo Tribe; Mataano Mambio; Ritual Symbolism.*

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INTRODUCTION

The *Mataano Mambio* harvest ceremony represents a living cultural heritage practiced by the Laporo ethnic group in Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. As an agrarian society, the Laporo community has long depended on seasonal agricultural cycles, particularly maize cultivation, which holds both economic and spiritual significance. The ceremony itself is not merely celebratory but deeply symbolic – embedding notions of reciprocity, sacred ecology, and ancestral continuity. At its core,

Mataano Mambio reinforces collective identity, moral conduct, and the interconnection between human livelihood and natural cycles. This perspective aligns with recent studies emphasizing the embeddedness of spiritual meaning in ecological practice among indigenous communities (Miller et al., 2024; Mukhlis et al., 2025).

Across Indonesia and globally, traditional rituals are recognized as powerful vehicles for transmitting local wisdom and preserving resilience against socio-cultural erosion (Hanif et al., 2024; Abenaitwe, 2025). For instance, research on the Kerinci indigenous people demonstrates how ritual becomes a tool for cultural negotiation amid modernization (Mukhlis et al., 2025). Similar patterns are evident in Sulawesi, where local ceremonies like *Mappogau Sihanua* and *Sere Bissu Maggiriq* carry deep symbolic structures that express philosophical, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Abidin et al., 2023; Azi et al., 2023). These rituals, much like *Mataano Mambio*, serve as pedagogical institutions that reproduce values, affirm communal ties, and align human behavior with ecological rhythms (Kimmerer, 2013; Maulana et al., 2025).

To explore these cultural dimensions, this study employs three theoretical lenses: cultural resilience theory, symbolic anthropology, and glocalization. These frameworks allow for an integrated analysis of *Mataano Mambio* not just as a legacy practice, but as a dynamic system for social regulation and knowledge reproduction. Cultural resilience theory considers rituals as mechanisms that communities use to maintain coherence and adaptability under change (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). In *Mataano Mambio*, symbolic acts such as *pikociapa* (intention), *posambua* (reciprocal exchange), and *Sumbele'a Bembe* (goat sacrifice) exemplify how ritual reinforces both collective identity and ethical reciprocity in resource management (Hanif et al., 2024; Miller et al., 2024).

Symbolic anthropology provides further insight by analyzing ritual as a semiotic system. The roles of the *Bata Nda'a* and *Linda* dances, as well as the martial performance of *Panguncei*, not only convey aesthetics but also encode cultural scripts on bravery, humility, gender, and social responsibility (Handler, 2013; Piazza, 2019). Comparable findings are evident in ritual communication practices among the Bugis Towani Tolotang, where language, movement, and silence construct a deeply spiritual mode of communal interaction (Hadawiah et al., 2024).

The theory of glocalization, meanwhile, helps interpret how *Mataano Mambio* adapts to modern contexts without losing its symbolic integrity. The Laporu people have retained the ritual's ontological essence while integrating practical changes such as formal committee structures or coordination with state institutions. This hybridization mirrors patterns in other Asian rituals, such as the revitalization of batik and puppet traditions in China via immersive and digital methods (Liu et al., 2024; Quan et al., 2024) and reflects the community's agency in managing tradition and innovation simultaneously (Herawati, 2024).

Despite increasing scholarly attention on state-sponsored or urban-centered cultural events, many localized and rural-based rituals remain critically underdocumented (Smith, 2012). Contemporary research further supports this concern by showing how indigenous ceremonies—especially those tied to ecological ethics, social memory, and community resilience—are still marginalized within dominant cultural frameworks (Prasetyo, 2023; Wu et al., 2022; Koodoh et al., 2023). Community-based ceremonies like *Mataano Mambio* offer unique insight into how indigenous societies sustain symbolic knowledge, social resilience, and moral economy in the face

of external change. This research aims to contribute to that discourse by exploring how ritual practice in the Laporo community serves not only as cultural expression but also as a strategic system of survival, ethics, and identity.

In light of these theoretical considerations and the underrepresentation of rural ritual practices in contemporary research, this study is guided by the following question: How does the *Mataano Mambio* ritual encode symbolic meaning and support cultural resilience within the Laporo community amid socio-environmental transformation? Through this inquiry, the research aims to offer a deeper understanding of ritual as an adaptive institution and a reservoir of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the ritual practices and symbolic interpretations of the Mataano Mambio ceremony among the Laporo ethnic group. A qualitative method was chosen to obtain in-depth insights from individuals closely associated with the research problem, allowing for a rich, contextual understanding of the phenomenon.

The research was conducted in Kombeli Subdistrict, Pasarwajo District, Buton Regency, with fieldwork carried out between January and March 2024. The research site was selected using a purposive sampling technique, wherein locations and participants were intentionally chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives.

A total of 12 informants were involved in the study. These individuals were selected through snowball sampling (Silalahi, 2012), a method that begins with a small number of initial participants who then refer the researcher to other individuals who meet the study's criteria. This approach helped to identify key community members and cultural practitioners with direct knowledge and experience of the Mataano Mambio ceremony.

Qualitative research does not aim for generalizability but rather seeks to capture the depth and complexity of a specific social and cultural context. Accordingly, the informants served as primary sources of data, offering detailed narratives and interpretations that informed the study's findings.

Data were analyzed using an interactive model of analysis, which consists of three interconnected components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These processes were conducted continuously—before, during, and after fieldwork—ensuring that analysis remained integrated throughout the research. This iterative approach allowed for the constant refinement of insights as new data emerged.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Laporo are one of the ethnic groups historically linked to the Buton Sultanate, originally settling in the village of Lipungau, now known as Liwungau. Their way of life remains deeply connected to the natural environment, marked by subsistence agriculture, cooperation, and strong religious values. These attributes are emblematic of

what recent scholarship refers to as adaptive community structures – systems that rely on traditional ecological knowledge, social cohesion, and collective values to navigate environmental and cultural uncertainty (Walker et al., 2020; Carrasco, Tang, & Ochiai, 2024). In particular, Laporo's emphasis on communal work and spiritual integration reflects broader patterns of resilience found in rural societies, where social capital and cultural continuity become key resources for long-term sustainability (Sobhaninia, 2024).

The community's reliance on nature has shaped a worldview that intertwines environmental stewardship, spiritual ethics, and collective responsibility. These aspects are not merely lifestyle choices but are embedded in symbolic systems that help the community endure and adapt to changing conditions – demonstrating cultural resilience in action.

One of the most profound expressions of this resilience is the Maataano Mambio harvest ritual. This ancestral ceremony, with origins traced back to the 1560s, continues to be practiced as a symbolic and performative system for managing communal life and sustaining ecological ethics. Rather than functioning merely as tradition, the ritual acts as a living cultural script – where movement, offering, and communal participation embody values of reciprocity, humility, and moral duty. Similar patterns are evident in the *Warung Hupu Liku* ritual of the Sumbanese community, where symbolic practices not only preserve ecological wisdom but also structure social harmony and cultural continuity (Wohangara, Sanjaya, & Setiyanto, 2023). In a broader view, rituals like Maataano Mambio echo the sacred frameworks described by Kealiikanakaoleohaililani et al. (2020), who highlight how ceremonial space and rhythm become portals for ecological awareness and intergenerational ethics. These ritual expressions transform agricultural labor into acts of devotion – where harvest becomes not just sustenance, but a sacred relationship between humans, land, and ancestral spirit.

The ritual's endurance over centuries is also a testament to its adaptive function. Rather than being eroded by external pressures or modernization, it continues to evolve while preserving its symbolic core. This dynamic illustrates what scholars describe as *glocalized tradition* – a process in which cultural practices adapt cognitively and structurally while safeguarding their original meanings (Sun & Wang, 2022). Such evolution reflects broader global patterns in which communities strategically integrate external influences without compromising cultural integrity, a phenomenon increasingly recognized in applied psychology and indigenous contexts (Heidelberg et al., 2025; Livingstone et al., 2023).

Moreover, the community's sustained participation in Maataano Mambio affirms the role of ritual in transmitting indigenous ecological knowledge and moral economy across generations. It cultivates social bonds, reinforces ethical exchange through acts like posambua, and aligns agricultural practices with spiritual cosmology – functions that are central to both symbolic anthropology and cultural resilience.

In this way, Laporo's continued observance of the Maataano Mambio ceremony is not only an act of cultural preservation but also a lived example of how rituals can serve as strategic responses to environmental and social shifts – bridging tradition and adaptation through meaningful symbols.

The Implementation of the Mataano Mambio Cultural Ceremony

This cultural tradition takes place over the span of one month, with ritual activities conducted over four consecutive Saturday nights. It begins with *Pihaaroano Galampa* (customary deliberation) and culminates in the *Maataano Mambio* (harvest ceremony), which features a series of ritual dances symbolizing renewed spirit and optimism for the coming year. The customary deliberation is held in the *Galampa*, the community's traditional house that serves as a venue for cultural and communal decision-making.

The ceremonial procession of the *Mataano Mambio* (harvest ritual) unfolds as follows:

1. *Piharoaano Galampa* (Traditional Deliberation); Preparation Phase

The traditional deliberation, known as *Piharoaano Galampa*, is conducted two months after the planting season. Its main objective is to discuss the implementation of traditional dances as a form of community entertainment and to designate the participants for *kalemba-lemba*. This period of preparation takes place while waiting for the harvest season and the subsequent *mataano mambio* (harvest ceremony).

From the first night to the third, the event is filled with traditional dances that serve as communal entertainment while awaiting the harvest. These dances are accompanied by the rhythmic sound of traditional drums. In addition, discussions are held during this period to address matters related to the main ceremonial event, including budget planning. A separate committee meeting focuses specifically on the selection of the *kalemba-lemba* pairs.

Kalemba-lemba refers to a couple consisting of a young man and woman. The individuals selected must have reached puberty, and both must not belong to families currently holding customary leadership positions. Violation of this rule, known as *polemba*, is believed to invite misfortune or calamity.

Once the *kalemba-lemba* pair has been confirmed, customary leaders instruct the *sarano kalemba-lemba ana mohane* (*kalemba-lemba* committee) to meet with the parents and the designated individuals to confirm their readiness. If both the parents and the individuals give their consent, the *pounta lima* ritual is performed on the same day. This involves a ceremonial handshake between the *sarano kalemba-lemba ana mohane* and the parents of the selected participants, followed by a handshake with the individuals themselves. This act signifies their formal induction and legitimizes their status as *kalemba-lemba* participants according to traditional law.

2. The Implementation Phase of the Ceremony

a) The Performance of *Bata Nda'a* and *Linda* Dance

Bata Nda'a dance is a traditional dance performed at night, typically beginning at 21:00 and continuing until 05:00 Central Indonesia Time. This dance is held when the corn has reached two months of growth, serving as both a ritual and entertainment while waiting for the main harvest season. The performance concludes with the call to the dawn prayer, marking its ceremonial end. Throughout the event, key customary figures, such as the *moji*, *parabela*, *waci*, *pandesuka*, and other traditional authorities, preside over and guide the flow of the ceremony, embodying the cultural and spiritual significance of the *Bata Nda'a* dance.

b) *Sungkuano Sadakaa*

Sungkuano Sadakaa refers to the recitation of prayers or offerings to God as an expression of gratitude for a successful harvest. This ritual is led by religious leaders, blending spiritual reverence with agrarian celebration.

c) *Sumbele'a Bembe* (Goat Sacrifice)

Sumbele'a Bembe involves the ritual slaughtering of a goat as part of the ceremonial offerings, symbolizing thanksgiving and purification within the harvest celebration.

d) *Mataano Mambio* (Harvest Ceremony)

The *Mataano Mambio*, or harvest ceremony, serves as the central event and is conducted during the *musino bara* (west monsoon season). The ceremony begins with the *pikociapa* (intention) for *posambua*, a traditional system of exchanging agricultural produce among community members, initiated by elder custodians of tradition. It opens with an expression of sincere intent and ends with mutual exchange of harvest goods. This sincere intent imbues the activity with spiritual value, elevating it as an act of worship (*ibadah*).

The symbolic meaning of *Mataano Mambio* is to mark the arrival of the west monsoon (*noratomo musino bara*), encouraging honest and wholehearted exchange practices so that the blessings of the current harvest may extend into the next season (east monsoon). Within this worldview, every worldly endeavor begins with noble intentions, aligning moral conduct with divine favor. A good intention during this season is believed to lead to righteous outcomes, including an abundant harvest in the next cycle.

e) The Performance of *Manca* and *Panguncei* dance

These two dances, *Manca* and *Panguncei*, are performed at the close of the *Mataano Mambio* ceremony. Executed in the late afternoon following the main event, these dances are traditionally performed by men, both young and old. Their performance signifies the ceremonial conclusion of the harvest rites, wrapping up the spiritual and communal celebration with a festive and respectful farewell.

Symbolic Meaning and Cultural Values

The *Mataano Mambio* harvest ceremony is a longstanding tradition deeply embedded in the agrarian lifestyle of the Laporo ethnic community in Buton Regency. Originating from early communal interactions tied to the agricultural cycle, this ritual has evolved into a culturally rich and symbolically complex practice. It reinforces collective identity, social cohesion, and spiritual connection to both land and ancestors. At its core, the ritual highlights maize as both a staple food and a sacred resource – reflecting the Laporo community's holistic worldview, where ecological, economic, and ethical values are interwoven.

To frame this study, three intersecting theoretical lenses are employed: cultural resilience theory, symbolic anthropology, and the concept of glocalization. These frameworks enable a nuanced analysis of how the *Mataano Mambio* ritual functions not only as a cultural tradition but also as a dynamic mechanism of adaptation, knowledge transmission, and identity expression.

Cultural resilience theory views such rituals as adaptive systems that help communities respond to environmental and social transformations. By continuing to observe Mataano Mambio, the Laporo people demonstrate their ability to maintain and reconfigure cultural practices in the face of change – preserving community stability and ecological ethics (Folke, 2016). The rituals encode practical strategies for survival and foster cohesion, particularly through communal decision-making, reciprocity, and spiritual devotion (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Marschke & Berkes, 2006).

Symbolic anthropology helps decode the deeper meanings embedded within ritual acts – dances, sacrifices, offerings, and exchanges – each carrying layers of status, intention, and belief (Handler, 2013; Piazza, 2019). From this perspective, Mataano Mambio is not just performance but a semiotic system that actively constructs and communicates cultural values. Its form and sequence preserve indigenous moral systems and assert spiritual meaning in daily life. These ritual symbols also express a collective identity and sustain social memory across generations.

In parallel, the theory of glocalization frames how Mataano Mambio has adapted within contemporary contexts. Rather than being diluted by modernization, the ritual integrates new elements while preserving its spiritual and cultural essence. This hybridization reflects a strategic response by the Laporo community to global cultural shifts, demonstrating that tradition and change are not mutually exclusive but coexisting forces (Ritzer, 2014; Ayaz, 2021).

Despite growing scholarship on Indonesia's more prominent cultural festivals, there remains a gap in documenting rural, community-based rituals like Mataano Mambio. This study addresses that gap by examining how such traditions maintain ecological integrity, express symbolic meaning, and serve as tools of community resilience.

Theoretically, this research contributes to cultural studies by showing how Mataano Mambio embodies adaptive strategies and symbolic systems that sustain social-ecological values. It advances understanding of rituals not merely as heritage expressions but as living institutions – capable of guiding behavior, managing resources, and preserving indigenous knowledge systems.

Ultimately, preserving rituals like Mataano Mambio is vital for protecting intangible cultural heritage and understanding how indigenous communities maintain coherence and continuity in a rapidly changing world.

a) *Bata Nda'a* and *Linda* dance

The performance of *Bata Nda'a* and *Linda* dance holds symbolic value as a medium of entertainment and social bonding. *Bata Nda'a*, typically performed by a single male dancer, reflects the cultural philosophy that Laporo men are courageous, unashamed in standing for truth, and possess a chivalrous spirit capable of defending themselves and others.

When performed by women, *Bata Nda'a* requires a group rather than an individual. This formation signifies the traditional perception of women as modest and reliant on mutual support, especially in times of adversity or threat.

Linda dance serves as a social platform for young people in the village to express themselves artistically, showcase dancing skills, and foster interpersonal relationships.

It facilitates social gatherings, often leading to deeper bonds and, in some cases, marriage.

b) *Sungkuano Sadakaa*

Sungkuano Sadakaa serves as a spiritual reminder for individuals within the community that, beyond human cooperation and mutual aid, there is a divine provider, Allah SWT, who grants sustenance, health, longevity, and other blessings in life.

c) *Sumbele'a Bembe* (Goat Sacrifice)

Sumbele'a Bembe involves the ritual slaughtering of a goat as an offering to honor ancestral spirits. Among sacrificial animals, the goat holds the highest symbolic value and also serves as the main dish during the *Bata Nda'a* ceremony. The slaughtered goat is cooked and shared communally. The blood of the animal is buried in front of the *baruga* (ceremonial hall) as a ritual to ward off calamities, particularly war or internal conflict.

d) *Mataano Mambio* (Harvest Ceremony)

Mataano Mambio is the core ceremony of this cultural practice, held during the *musino bara* (west monsoon season). It begins with the declaration of intention (*pikociapa*) to engage in *posambua*, the traditional exchange of agricultural goods. This exchange must be driven by sincerity to ensure that the act retains spiritual merit.

The ritual symbolizes the beginning of the west monsoon and serves as a moral and spiritual preparation for the upcoming season. A sincere intention not only sanctifies the activity as worship but also paves the way for a prosperous east monsoon harvest. Honesty in trade and social harmony are emphasized, and these values are believed to result in continued blessings and material well-being.

e) *e. Manca and Panguncei*

Manca is a traditional martial art performed by young men in Kombeli, Buton Regency. Although graceful and dance-like, its movements are potent and capable of neutralizing or even defeating opponents. *Manca* embodies humility and the ethical use of strength—never to harm but to protect the oppressed and uphold dignity.

The dance conveys a welcoming message to guests and symbolizes preparedness for external threats. It is a discipline requiring intense focus and physical control, representing the communal values of solidarity, protection, and resilience.

Panguncei is not merely a dance but a ritual of bravery, masculinity, and spiritual gratitude. Performed by valiant men, it involves a test of fearlessness and bodily invulnerability, using a *tobo* (dagger) as the central prop. It is believed that if participants remain unharmed during the performance, it signals a bountiful harvest. Conversely, if injuries occur, it is taken as an omen of misfortune or failed crops.

The dance symbolizes the fierce spirit and agility of a warrior who, through mental clarity and emotional discipline, can deflect enemy strength. The performance begins with a *wore*, a chant to ignite passion and loyalty toward ancestral heritage. Held during harvest time, this dance reaffirms collective gratitude to God for the bounty received and serves as both spiritual reflection and physical trial.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Mataano Mambio harvest ceremony comprises a series of ritual stages that reflect the cultural identity and spiritual beliefs of the Laporo community. The process begins with Piharoaano Galampa (traditional deliberation), which serves as the preparation phase involving discussions about the ritual's execution and participant selection. The implementation stage includes several key rituals: the performances of Bata Nda'a and Linda as social and cultural entertainment; Sungkuano Sadakaa, a ritual prayer symbolizing communal solidarity and the hope for abundant blessings; Sumbele'a Bembe (goat sacrifice), an offering to honor ancestral spirits; the core ritual of Mataano Mambio, which emphasizes the ethical principle of sincere intention in the exchange of harvest goods; and finally, Tari Manca and Tari Panguncei, which express values of humility, gratitude, and bravery. Collectively, these rituals embody profound symbolic meanings and cultural values that continue to guide and shape the moral and spiritual life of the community.

This study highlights how traditional rituals function as systems of cultural resilience and symbolic meaning, sustaining both ecological knowledge and social cohesion. As a living tradition, Mataano Mambio reflects the Laporo community's ability to adapt, preserve identity, and maintain intergenerational continuity in a changing world.

Future research could build on this study by exploring comparative analyses of similar harvest rituals among other indigenous or agrarian communities in Indonesia or Southeast Asia. Such studies would help assess the shared and divergent symbolic systems across cultures. Additionally, scholars could investigate the effects of climate change, migration, or modernization on the continuity and transformation of rituals like Mataano Mambio. Ethnographic studies involving younger generations could also shed light on how ritual knowledge is transmitted – or challenged – across age groups in the context of digital and global influences.

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