



THE SASAK PEPAOSAN TRADITION AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

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Abstract: One local tradition of the Sasak people that has been maintained is concerned with *pepaosan*. This study explores the meaning of symbols and cultural values in the *pepaosan* tradition amongst the Sasak in West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, in eastern Indonesia. It employed ethnography with a phenomenological approach. All data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. These data were further analyzed qualitatively in four steps: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, component analysis, and determining themes. This study argues that *pepaosan* tradition and other instruments serve as a communication medium and a symbol of cultural values, expressing gratitude for all the gifts God has bestowed. It also denotes a request to God to grant the wishes of the Sasak people. The symbols also embody the value of hope and advice for the Sasak people to live a good life, aligning with ancestral teachings and religious guidance.

Keywords: *pepaosan, tradition, Sasak, cultural value, andang-andang*

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Introduction

PEPAOSAN is a tradition of reading *lontar* texts written in Javanese script (*hanacaraka*) and Kawi language,¹ written on palm leaves.² *Pepaosan*, also known as Tembang Sasak, comes from Java since

¹ Jajat Burhanuddin, "The Popularizing of Sunni Doctrine in Southeast Asia: Sifat Dua Puluah in Malay Kitab Jawi of the 19th Century," *ULUMUNA* 26, no. 2 (2022): 269–95, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.518>.

² Fahrurrozi Fahrurrozi, "Tradisi Pengajian Kitab Turats Melayu-Arab di Pulau Lombok Seribu Masjid dan Seribu Pesantren, Lombok, Indonesia," *IBDA` : Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya* 15, no. 2 (March 13, 2018): 235–58, <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v15i2.2017.pp235-258>.

the source of the text confirms it.³ Moreover, the names of the *tembang* are the same. The difference lies only in style (rhythm) as it has been adapted to local influences.⁴ The types of *tembang pesasakan* that are widely used in Lombok are *sinom*, *kumambang*, *asmarandane*, *dang-dang*,⁵ *durme*, and *pangkur*.⁶

In the Sasak people, *pepaosan* is a medium for transmitting and transforming cultural values and, simultaneously, a forum for community learning⁷ about various aspects of life.⁸ The *tembang pepaosan* tradition is usually coupled with certain rituals or traditions,⁹ such as *begawe* or wedding parties, circumcisions,¹⁰ death rituals,¹¹ lowering rice seeds, rituals of repelling

³ Muh Syahrul Qadri et al., "Belajar Takepan Sasak Bersama Siswa SMK Shofwatul Khaer Desa Biloq Petung, Sembalun, Lombok Timur," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 2, no. 2 (April 25, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppm.v2i2.1150>.

⁴ L. A. Fathurrahman, "Belajar Jejawan Aksara Sasak," *Museum Negeri NTB*, 2013., 9. See also Syaifudin Zuhri, "Sounding Islam in Contemporary Indonesia: The Transformation of Javanese Tembang," *JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAM* 16, no. 1 (June 1, 2022): 197–222, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.197-222>.

⁵ Hary Murcahyanto et al., "Teknik Vokal Tembang Sasak Jati Sware," *Kaganga: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Dan Riset Sosial Humaniora* 4, no. 1 (April 17, 2021): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.31539/kaganga.v4i1.2009>.

⁶ Jamaluddin Jamaluddin, "Kontribusi Naskah Sasak Bagi Pembentukan Karakter Bangsa," *Manuskripta* 7, no. 1 (2017): 97–118.

⁷ Dodik Kariadi and Wasis Suprpto, "Tradisi Memaos Sebagai Media Edukatif Untuk Membangun Jiwa Religius Generasi Muda," *Edudeena: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 2, no. 1 (January 30, 2018): 97–111, <https://doi.org/10.30762/ed.v2i1.560>.

⁸ Baiq Yuliatin Ihsani et al., "Leksikon Yang Digunakan Dalam Ritual Pepaosan Takepan Masyarakat Suku Sasak: Sebuah Kajian Etnolinguistik," *Jurnal Ilmiah Telaah* 6, no. 2 (2021): 169.

⁹ Muhammad Yuslih and Bahroni Zainuri Yulien, "Nilai-Nilai Sosial-Spiritual dalam Tradisi 'Mamaq' Masyarakat Suku Sasak Pulau Lombok di NTB (Social-Spiritual Values in the 'Mamaq' Tradition of the Sasak Community of Lombok Island in NTB)," *Potret Pemikiran* 25, no. 2 (December 27, 2021): 181–91, <https://doi.org/10.30984/pp.v25i2.1654>.

¹⁰ Mohd Arif Najmuddin, Hasan Asy'ari and Nazri, "Sejarah Kedatangan Islam Dan Tradisi Posan (Pesaji) Di Pulau Lombok," *Jurnal Al-Turath* 4, no. 2 (2019): 50–58.

¹¹ On the Javanese death ritual, see Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Revisiting the Javanese Muslim Slametan: Islam, Local Tradition, Honor and Symbolic

reinforcements, treatment, Alip Festival celebrations, and so on.¹² Manuscripts in the *pepaosan* tradition are adapted to the needs or wishes of the host (*hajati*). In the past, *pemaos* or *pepaosan* readers passed on their literacy skills to the community, and some people used the *Hanacaraka* writing tradition to record various activities other than writing. It is often found in the *kropakan* community (notes on palm leaves that are not combined into one *cake pan* or *takepan*), which contain medical ingredients, spells, and important events. The above discussion underlines the need to explore the situation. This present studies asks the following questions: 1) how do the Sasak *pepaosan* instruments look like? 2) what are the cultural and religious meanings of the *pepaosan* instruments? and 3) how do the Sasak people communicate with God through the *pepaosan* instruments?

People who read *tembang* in the *pepaosan* event usually sat on a *paosan* or *berugaq*¹³ (a gazebo-like place) that is higher than the audience. This was to honor the figures involved in the event. The reading of the *tembang* was usually done by two people, namely *pemaos* (experts in reading *tembang*) and *pujangge* (literature experts who can translate and interpret the contents of the text read by *pemaos*). These two people are an essential part of the *pepaosan* tradition. Other parties wanting to attend *Lontar* or *Nembang* are known as *Penyarup*. They read without the intention to be watched but to be heard. The listeners sat under the *paosan*, watching from afar while doing activities or using loudspeakers. All of the audience listened to the reading of the script of the *Kawi* (traditional writers) from the *pemaos* and *pujangge*.¹⁴

In every particular ceremony or ritual, people generally always use various instruments,¹⁵ including *pepaosan*. Before

Communication," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 57, no. 2 (December 24, 2019): 329–58, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2019.572.329-358>.

¹² L. A. Fathurrahman, *Pengantar Bahasa Kawi* (Mataram: Genus, 2015).

¹³ Fahrurrozi, "Tradisi Pengajian Kitab Turats Melayu-Arab," 255.

¹⁴ Atisah, "Teks, Konteks, Dan Fungsi Pepaosan Dalam Tradisi Lisan Lombok," *Sawerigading* 24, no. 1 (2018): 73–84, <https://doi.org/10.26499/sawer.v24i1.465>.

¹⁵ Ihsani et al., "Leksikon Yang Digunakan Dalam Ritual Pepaosan Takepan Masyarakat Suku Sasak: Sebuah Kajian Etnolinguistik," 177.

pemaos read *tembang*, generally there were certain instruments or *andang-andang/hadap-hadap* such as *sirih* (betel), *pinang* (areca nut), *beras* (rice), and *jaje* (snack). In addition, some spells could be recited.¹⁶ The Sasak people use these instruments not only as *pepaosan* decorations but also as a means of communicating the message or meaning of this tradition as homo symbolic creatures, i.e., creatures wanting to use symbols; the presence of symbols is something natural. It is natural because the symbol comes from the human need¹⁷ to convey concepts, ideas, messages, norms, rules, and expectations to others. Regarding symbols, Dillistone states that a symbol is a word, thing, or action that represents or describes something bigger or meaning, an ideal, value, achievement, belief, society, concept, or reality. Things, words, or actions are symbols. Meanwhile, meaning, reality, ideals, values, beliefs, society, and concepts are references.¹⁸

Epistemologically, symbols have several meanings. First, a symbol is usually a visible sign that replaces an idea or object.¹⁹ Second, symbols are words, signs, or gestures representing something else, such as meaning, quality, abstraction, idea,²⁰ and object. Third, a symbol is anything given meaning by general approval, agreement, or custom. Fourth, symbols are often interpreted in a limited way as conventional signs, something built by the community or individuals with specific meanings that are more or less standardized and agreed upon or used by the

¹⁶ Syahroni Hidayat et al., "Wavelet DB44 and MBB Algorithm for Sasak Vowels Recognition," in *2019 Fourth International Conference on Informatics and Computing (ICIC)* (IEEE, 2019), 1–5.

¹⁷ Zainul HD, Dharma Satria and Muttaqin, "Representasi Bangsawan Sasak Dalam Teks Angin Alus Masyarakat Sasak," *LITERA* 17, no. 1 (2018): 107–19, <https://doi.org/10.21831/ltr.v17i1.15291>.

¹⁸ F W Dillistone, "Daya Kekuatan Simbol Terjemahan Widyamartaya," *Yogyakarta: Kanisius*, 2002, 20.

¹⁹ Mahyuni, "Valuing Language and Culture: An Example from Sasak," *Makara, Sosial Humaniora* 11, no. 2 (2007): 79–86, <https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v11i2.117>.

²⁰ Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka, *Words and Meanings: Lexical Semantics Across Domains, Languages, and Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10.

members of the community themselves.²¹ The agreement of the community's people determines the meaning of a symbol. In interacting, the symbols used are not universal. The universality of a symbol depends on the extent to which society agrees with it. The wider the community that agrees with the symbol, the wider the symbol can be used and understood.

The symbol is very prominent in its message in the community's traditions or customs. Symbols are also evident in traditional ceremonies passed down from generation to generation to the next, younger generation. Traditional societies' various forms of symbolic activity²² are human approaches to their rulers. The symbols²³ in traditional ceremonies aim to falsely show the intent and purpose of the ceremony carried out by the supporting community. Symbols have a close relationship with culture. Geertz states that culture is a pattern of meanings in symbols passed down through history. Culture is a system of inherited concepts expressed in symbolic forms through which humans communicate, perpetuate, and develop knowledge about this life and attitudes toward this life.²⁴ The central point of Geertz's cultural formulation lies in how humans communicate through symbols. On the one hand, symbols are formed through the dynamics of social interaction and are empirical realities, which are then inherited historically and are filled with values. On the other hand, symbols are behavioral references and insights that

²¹ Mohamad Jazeri, "Makna Tata Simbol Dalam Upacara Pengantin Jawa" (Akademia Pustaka, 2020). 7. On a similar study of the symbol in the Gayo, Acehese, see Luthfi Auni and Nidawati Nidawati, "The Semiotic Meaning and Philosophy of Symbols in the Gayo Ethnic Marriage Processions in Central Aceh," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, no. 1 (January 30, 2023): 39–58, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i1.811>.

²² Claire Kramsch, "Language and Culture," *ALLA Review: John Benjamins Publishing Company* 27 (2014): 30–55, <https://doi.org/doi.10.1075/aila.27.02kra>.

²³ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (The Free Press, 1984), 18.

²⁴ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Clifford Geertz and the Strong Program: The Human Sciences and Cultural Sociology," in *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in the Social Sciences*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Philip Smith, and Matthew Norton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), 55–64, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230118980_6.

provide clues on how certain cultural citizens live life, media, messages, communication, and representation of social reality.²⁵ Cultural values are lasting and not easily changed or replaced with other cultural values.²⁶

In line with the continuous movement of civilization towards modernization and globalization, the procedure for implementing the *pepaosan* tradition has also changed, especially in the simplification of instruments. The demand to carry out various activities also causes activities that were previously routinely carried out, gradually reducing the intensity of their implementation. In some instances, traditions are abandoned and not carried out anymore. This condition is also experienced in the *pepaosan* tradition, resulting in implications for many Sasak people who do not know and understand the message's meaning and the meaning contained in each symbol on the *pepaosan* instruments. In such conditions, studying and explaining the symbols and meanings of the *pepaosan* instruments is imperative.

Several studies have been conducted on *papaosan*, one of which is entitled "Text, Context, and Functions of Papaosan in Lombok Oral Tradition".²⁷ In her study, Atisah argued that the *pepaosan* tradition originated from Java brought by the preacher of Islam believed by the Sasak people, namely Sunan Prapen, in the 15th century. *Pepaosan* in Lombok finds its form with several distinctive characteristics. The problem of crookedness and performance structure distinguishes one region from another. Apart from that, Atisah also mentioned that the primary function of *pepaosan* for the Sasak people is to provide a very effective means of education and the spread of Islam by the trustees.

In contrast to the study conducted by Atisah, this study aims to explore the meaning of symbols²⁸ on instruments contained in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak in West Lombok, and the

²⁵ Sobur Alex, "Semiotika Komunikasi," Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2003.

²⁶ Abdul Latif, Akhmad Affandi, and Aep Gunarsa, *Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai Kemasyarakatan* (Refika Aditama, 2007), 95.

²⁷ Atisah, "Teks, Konteks, Dan Fungsi Pepaosan Dalam Tradisi Lisan Lombok," 73–84.

²⁸ Kramsch, "Language and Culture," 47.

cultural values²⁹ contained therein. The symbols in this paper are nonverbal symbols and cultural symbols.³⁰ In comparison, the study focused on denotative and connotative meaning.

This qualitative study with an ethnographic approach³¹ focused on phenomenological studies. According to Sugiyono,³² a qualitative study sees social reality as holistic/whole, complex, dynamic, and meaningful. In implementing the ethnographic approach, participation in the activities carried out by the informants.³³ Meanwhile, phenomenological studies are used to gain empirical experience regarding the *pepaosan* tradition in the Sasak people.

The data in this study are primary data and secondary data.³⁴ Primary data were obtained through direct observation. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from indirect sources, i.e., documentation data and official archives.³⁵ The informants involved community members with sufficient understanding of the *pepaosan* and culture of the Sasak people. Interviews and observations were conducted during the *memaos* event, which was held on January 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th, 2023, in Pelulan, Kuripan, West Lombok. The event was held by the *Pemaos Sabda Jati* (Pesaja) group with members Zul Padli, Haji Safwan, Lalu Abdul Wahid, Ruslan Abdul Gani, and Abdul Majid, who took turns playing the roles of *pemace* (reader), *pujangge* (translator), and *penyarup* (backing vocal). In-depth interviews were also conducted with Kartanah traditional figures to explore the meanings of

²⁹ Ben Rampton, Janet Maybin, and Celia Roberts, "Theory and Method in Linguistic Ethnography," in *Linguistic Ethnography: Interdisciplinary Explorations*, ed. Julia Snell, Sara Shaw, and Fiona Copland (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 14–50, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137035035_2.

³⁰ Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, 18

³¹ Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts, "Theory and Method in Linguistic Ethnography," 17.

³² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R Dan D*, 21st ed. (Bandung: ALFABETA, 2014), 1.

³³ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Revisi (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021), 164–168.

³⁴ Moleong, 157–158

³⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan Campuran*, Cetakan IV (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2019).

symbols in the pepaosan tradition. The analysis followed four stages: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, component analysis, and determining themes.³⁶

Domain analysis is an essential attempt to obtain an overview of the data to answer the study focus by reading the text in general and thoroughly to obtain what domains or realms are in the data. The taxonomic analysis stage³⁷ attempts to understand certain domains according to the focus of the problem or objectives. Each domain is understood in depth and then divided into sub-domains. The sub-domains are further broken down into more specific sections until nothing is left. Next, the elements in the domain obtained are compared. Contrasting elements are sorted, and then the relevant categorization is made. The final stage is an analysis of the typical symptoms³⁸ of the previous analysis. This analysis collects each domain's themes, cultural focus, values, and symbols. In addition, this analysis seeks to find relationships in the analyzed domain to form a holistic whole.

From interviews with traditional leaders and participants³⁹ of the *pepaosan* event, *pepoasan* is seen as a purely cultural or artistic activity unrelated to religious aspects. For *pepaosan* activists, *memaos* is not just an artistic activity steeped in culture. However, cooking for them is a necessary activity. From these palm leaflets, they studied the philosophy of life, which is in harmony with the values found in religion. *Memaos* and other accessories in *pepaosan* become a medium that connects him with God. This makes this study important because it reveals the precious religious side of *pepaosan*. The symbols of the instruments used in the *pepaosan* tradition could be classified into five parts: decorative instruments, plant accessories, flower instruments, food instruments, and object instruments.

³⁶ James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Reissued (Ilionis: Waveland Press, 2016).

³⁷ Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, 305.

³⁸ Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts, "Theory and Method in Linguistic Ethnography," 15–16.

³⁹ Lalu Abdul Wahid (leaders), Zulpadli and Kartanah (participants)

The Meaning of Decorative Symbols in the *Pepaosan* Tradition

The decorative instrument symbols⁴⁰ in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe that are commonly used are *lelangit atau langit-langit* (ceiling), *telage ngembeng* (lake), *bukal ngelampung* (hanging bat), *anak iwoq durus pesisi* (orphans along the coast), *teken emas* (gold pole), *teken selake/teken besi* (iron pole), *bintang kesauh* (star), *awun-awun perang gunung* (fog of mountain war), *kebun odeq* (small garden), *sekar mayang* (sweetheart), *daun beringin* (banyan leaves), and *kepeng bolong* (perforated money). Each decoration is used as a symbol and has a different meaning.



Picture 1: *Pepaosan* with various devices (source of private collection)

Lelangit or *langit-langit* is made of white cloth stretched to cover the *beruqaq* roof to add a sacred impression and function as a cover and protector. The ceiling symbolizes purity and sincerity in living everyday life. The decoration, called *telage ngembeng*, is a rectangular lake decorated with colorful cloth or *songket* surrounding the rectangular shape, resembling the shape of a lake. *Telage ngembeng* means a calm lake. A lake is a significant depression on the surface of the earth that contains fresh or salt water, and the entire basin is surrounded by land. *Telage* in which there is water symbolizes the source of life for all creatures.

The *bukal ngelampung* decoration is a cone-shaped decoration of banana leaves filled with flowers. The decoration is hung in the middle of the *telage ngembeng*, resembling a hanging bat. This aligns with the meaning of *bukal ngelampung* which means a

⁴⁰ Alexander, "Clifford Geertz and the Strong Program."

dependent bat. Behind their unusual shape plus their nocturnal lifestyle, which sleeps during the day and looks for food at night, bats have benefits and functions for nature conservation, namely (1) controlling the number of insects and predators of harmful insects, (2) the best pollinating agent, (3) afforestation agent, and (4) soil fertilizer. According to the informant, *bukal ngelampung* for the Sasak people symbolizes vigilance and a sharp mind because *bukal* (bat) is the only mammal that can fly and is active at night.

Table 1. Nonverbal Symbols in the Pepaosan Tradition of the Sasak Tribe

Decorative instruments	Plant accessories	Flower instrument	Food instrument	Object instrument
<i>lelangit</i>	<i>bunut</i>	<i>sekar</i>	<i>jaje mako</i>	<i>andang-</i>
<i>telage</i>	<i>kebun</i>	<i>mayang</i>	<i>ore</i>	<i>andang</i>
<i>ngembeng</i>	<i>odeq</i>	<i>marwar</i>	<i>jaje opak-</i>	<i>telur</i>
<i>bukal</i>	<i>sedah</i>	<i>melati</i>	<i>opak</i>	<i>beras</i>
<i>ngelampung</i>		<i>kantil</i>	<i>jaje renggi</i>	<i>benang</i>
<i>g</i>		<i>kamboja</i>	<i>jaje tujaq</i>	<i>kapas</i>
<i>anak iwoq</i>			<i>jaje pangan</i>	<i>air</i>
<i>durus pesisi</i>			<i>jaje abuk</i>	<i>buah</i>
<i>teken</i>			<i>jaje cerorot</i>	<i>pinang</i>
<i>kencane</i>				<i>sedah</i>
<i>/teken emas</i>				<i>lenjaran</i>
<i>teken selake</i>				<i>uang receh</i>
<i>/teken besi</i>				<i>kumkuman</i>
<i>bintang</i>				<i>keris</i>
<i>kesauh</i>				<i>kemenyan</i>
<i>awun-awun</i>				
<i>perang</i>				
<i>gunung</i>				
<i>kebun odeq</i>				
<i>sekar</i>				
<i>mayang</i>				
<i>daun</i>				

Decorative instruments	Plant accessorie s	Flower instrument s	Food instrument s	Object instrument s
<i>beringin</i>				
<i>kepeng</i>				
<i>bolong</i>				

The decoration of *anaq iwoq durus pesisi* is an ornament made of colorful cloth or woven cloth placed around a *berugaq* roof or a place to put it on. If translated literally, *anaq iwoq durus pesisi* (orphans along the coast) means orphans walking along the beach. The reason for the naming was that these decorations were placed in a row around the *berugaq* roof, like children marching along the beach. The next decoration is *teken kencana* or *teken emas* (gold pole). This decoration is a *berugaq* pole covered with golden yellow cloth and decorated with coins, *sekar mayang*, and *daun beringin*. *Teken* or pole serves as a support. According to the informant, the *teken* is symbolized by the letter *alif wahdaniyyah*. This means that humans must be able to hold fast to *wahdaniyatullah*, or the oneness⁴¹ of Allah. Meanwhile, the yellow cloth, a symbol of the precious gold metal, means that humans are the noblest creatures equipped with reason. For this reason, humans must have noble qualities and deeds in life.

Teken selaka is a *berugaq* pole covered with white cloth and decorated with coins, *sekar mayang*, and banyan leaves. Gold and silver are precious metals that have the meaning of human glory compared to other creatures. The *teken besi* is a *berugaq* pole covered with black cloth and decorated with coins, *sekar mayang*, and banyan leaves. In addition to gold and silver, iron is also a precious metal with a high value. This also illustrates the meaning of the value of human glory compared to other creatures.

The *bintang kesauh* is a decoration of various colorful flowers pinned to the sky. As the literal meaning, *bintang kesauh* can be

⁴¹ Mohamad Iwan Fitriani, "The Oneness of God behind the Local Tradition of Nusantara Islam: Theo-Anthropological Perspective with Interpretive Paradigm on Nusantara Islam Sasak Lombok," *Ulumuna* 19, no. 2 (December 29, 2015): 413–36, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v19i2.334>.

translated as the scattered stars. The star-studded shape is shown with flowers of various types and colors. The types of flowers used as *bintang kesauh* are frangipani flower, shoe flower, *kantil/cempaka*, ylang, yellow trumpet, and so on. It is known that flowers are a symbol of nobility and fragrance.

The following decoration is *awun-awun perang gunung*, a decoration in the form of a cloth stretched behind the *pemaos* as a barrier between the place where the *memaos* is and the *odeq* garden. The *awun-awun perang gunung*, literally translated, means the fog of mountain war. The fog represents life's obstacles, while the mountain war represents a situation and a place that is too difficult and not easy to reach. This word reinforces the meaning of the previous word, *awun-awun*. The Sasak people interpret the symbol of the mountain war as a hope for God Almighty to avoid all obstacles in life.⁴²

Furthermore, the *kepeng bolong* is a coin with a hole in the middle used to decorate gold poles, *selake* poles, and iron poles by tying them with thread. *Kepeng bolong* was a means of payment in the era of the Majapahit Kingdom until the beginning of the Republic of Indonesia. However, until now, money has still been used as an instrument in traditional ceremonies. The meaning contained in the symbol of ancient money is its very high historical value as a medium of exchange in the past.

The Meaning of Plant Symbols in the *Pepaosan* Tradition

Among the plants often used as decoration in the *pepaosan* tradition is the banyan tree or *bunut* (banyan). The part used as decoration is the banyan leaves. The leaves of this tree are used to decorate gold poles and iron poles. Banyan is a type of tree with large trunks and dense leaves. This tree does not shed leaves because it can store water in the dry season. Denotatively, banyan leaves are leaves from trees with large, tall, and shady trunks. Connotatively, the use of banyan leaves is a symbol of keeping and protection.

Other plants used are called *kebun odeq* (small garden). *Kebun odeq*, which means small garden, is a symbol depicting the world

⁴² Fitriani, 423.

and its contents. It is called the *odeq* garden because it consists of various plantation crops commonly grown by the Sasak people, such as banana trees, coconut trees, fruits, vegetables, medicinal plants, etc. The green *odeq* garden is a symbol of fertility and growth. The meaning of the existence of the *odeq* garden is the hope and prayer that God will always bless the Sasak people as a fertile and prosperous country. In addition, the Sasak people are expected to become individuals who create fertility for the natural surroundings and harmonization among living things⁴³.

Next, the plant used as a tool in *pepaosan* is *sedah* (betel leaf). Betel leaves, usually rolled up and tied with thread, are leaves from plants with small, elongated vine stems. The slightly bitter taste of the leaves makes betel leaves commonly used as an ingredient for betel nut (*mamaq*)⁴⁴. Even though the two sides of the betel leaf have different colors, the taste is the same, not as different as the color on each side of one leaf. Thus, circumstance symbolizes that differences in origin, gender, education, economy, and so on do not prevent a single creation, taste, intention, and work. So, the meaning of using betel leaves in the *pepaosan* tradition is a prayer that the Sasak people will always unite in creativity, taste, initiative, and work. In addition, *sedah* is also symbolized as a door opener, replacing the opening greeting, *assalamualaikum*.

The Meaning of Flower Symbols in the *Pepaosan* Tradition

Flowers are one of the instrument symbols⁴⁵ in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe. In general, flowers mean that people always get the fragrance of abundant blessings from their ancestors as well as symbols between creators, creatures, and the universe. The flowers commonly used in the *pepaosan* tradition are *sekar mayang* (sweetheart), *mawar* (rose), *melati* (jasmine), *kantil* (magnolia), dan *kamboja* (frangipani).

⁴³ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 14-15.

⁴⁴ Yuslih and Yulien, "Nilai-Nilai Sosial-Spiritual dalam Tradisi 'Mamaq' Masyarakat Suku Sasak Pulau Lombok di NTB (Social-Spiritual Values in the 'Mamaq' Tradition of the Sasak Community of Lombok Island in NTB)," 190.

⁴⁵ Alexander, "Clifford Geertz and the Strong Program," 61-62.

Sekar Mayang is the flower of the areca palm tree used to decorate gold, *selake*, and iron poles. Areca nut has an essential meaning in the life of the Sasak people (especially in the past). Areca nut is used as a mixture of betel leaves when betelling (*mamaq*), and flower and areca fruit are also widely used during traditional rituals of the Sasak people. In this context, *sekar mayang* symbolizes strength, hope, and beauty. The next type of flower is a rose. This flower has thorny but beautiful flowers. The color varies and smells good. In general, a rose is a symbol of love. The myth says that the rose is the name of a queen who was beautiful but arrogant and evil queen.

Apart from the rose, another flower used in *pepaosan* is jasmine. This flower gives a gentle fragrance that gives the impression of being soft, comfortable, and calm. This flower often symbolizes chastity, purity, and beauty of mind. Jasmine symbolizes simplicity because it is easy to grow without complicated care and can bloom throughout the year. Meanwhile, another flower is *kantil* (*cempaka*). *Kantil*, which means sticky or attached, is advice and hope that the Sasak people will always be united in joy and sorrow, live in harmony, and help each other in wading through life.

The Meaning of Food Symbols in the *Pepaosan* Tradition

In the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe, several foods are commonly used as ritual instruments. The instrument in the form of food by the Sasak people is called *penamat* (finishing). The ending functions as a guest treat and is a meaningful symbol. The finish is in the form of *jaje* (snacks) typical of Sasak, for example *jaje ore* or *jaje mako* (*mako/ore* snack), *jaje opak* (*opak-opak* snack), *jaje renggi* (*renggi* snack), *jaje banget* or *jaje tujaq* (*tujak* snack), *jaje pangan* (*pangan* snack), *jaje abuk* (*abuk* snack), and *jaje cerorot* (*cerorot* snack).

Jaje ore or *jaje mako* is made from a dough of glutinous rice flour and brown sugar, which is fried using a coconut shell mold to form fibers like *mako*. *Jaje ore* is usually triangular, while *jaje mako* is usually rectangular. *Jaje ore* or *jaje mako*, apart from being used at the traditional *pepaosan* event, is also commonly used by

members of the Sasak tribe for *begawe* or celebration events, both *begawe merariq* (wedding), *begawe nyunatan* (circumcision) or *begawe mate* (death).

In contrast to *jaje ore*, *jaje opak-opak* is made from glutinous rice steamed in a boiler (*saucepan*) then *tujaq* (mashed), and formed into a rectangle on a banana leaf. After that, it is dried and then fried. *Jaje opak-opak* is also made with a team of brown sugar on top. Apart from being used at the traditional *pepaosan* event, *jaje opak-opak* is also used by the Sasak people for *begawe*, circumcision, or *mulud* events (receptions, circumcision, or birthdays of prophet Muhammad). Next is *jaje renggi*, a snack made from sticky steamed rice; some are sweet with brown sugar or salty with salt. *Renggi* is made in a round or rectangular shape, dried in the sun, and then fried. The Sasak people use *jaje renggi* for the *begawe*, *nyunatan*, *mulud* (receptions, circumcision, *maulid*) events, and the *pepaosan* tradition.

Another food is *jaje tujaq* or *jaje banget*. This food is made from sticky rice mixed with coconut milk, which is steamed and mashed. After the texture becomes smooth, the rice dough is formed and cut into rectangles. The Sasak people make *jaje tujaq* or *jaje banget* used for traditional *pepaosan* events and *begawe beselam*, *begawe mate nyirwaq* and *nyatus*⁴⁶ (circumcision receptions, nine days of event, and one hundred days of death) and Eid (Idul Fitri holiday). Next is *jaje pangan*, a rectangular *jaje* made from glutinous rice flour, rice flour, coconut milk, and brown sugar. The Sasak people make *jaje pangan* not only for the traditional *pepaosan* event but also for the *begawe beselam* and *begawe mate nyirwaq* and *nyatus* events (circumcision receptions, nine days and one hundred days event). According to the Sasak people, *jaje pangan* symbolizes family safety. Sticky food is a symbol of bonding or strengthening brotherhood.

Jaje abuk is a rectangular *jaje* made from glutinous rice, brown sugar, and grated coconut. The Sasak people make *jaje abuk* not only for traditional *pepaosan* events but also for *begawe beselam* and *begawe mate nyirwaq* and *nyatus* (circumcision receptions, nine days

⁴⁶ Fitriani, "The Oneness of God behind the Local Tradition of Nusantara Islam," 429–30.

and one hundred days event). The last is *jaje cerorot*. This *jaje* is made from rice flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, coconut milk, and trumpet-shaped coconut leaves as a container for the dough. In addition to its distinctive taste, the way to eat this cake is also unique. People consume it by pressing the bottom or edge of the cake so that the contents of the cake are pushed out. This is where the term *cerorot* was attached to the cake's name.

The Meaning of Symbols of Objects in the *Pepaosan* Tradition

Objects in the *pepaosan* tradition are grouped into two parts: objects as instruments in the *teparan* (giving name) ritual and instruments during the *pepaosan*.⁴⁷ The objects as instruments in each of these sections will be described below.

After finishing decorating the place for *memaos* (*paosan*), the traditional leaders perform the *teparan* ritual, which is the ritual of naming the decorations that have been installed. The instruments needed are *andang-andang* (offerings), *dedungke*, and *soksokan* (bowl). The *andang-andang* is filled with (*telur*) eggs, (*beras*) rice, (*benang*) string, (*kapas*) cotton, (*air*) water, (*buah pinang*) areca nut, (*betel leaf*) *sedah lanjaran*, and (*uang receh*) coins, (*kumkuman*) flower water, (*keris*) keris, and (*kemenyan*) incense. These objects each have a meaning.

Eggs are one source or medium for the birth of living things. In that context, the egg is the origin of living things. The egg symbolizes the process of breaking physical consciousness into spiritual consciousness. The two consciousnesses will deliver an actual human being. *Beras* is rice that has been peeled. One of the contents of this *andang-andang* symbolizes food. The existence of food is, without a doubt, a crucial subject for creatures, especially humans. Living a life on top of the world, of course, must be supported by food. In addition to eggs and rice, other contents of the *andang-andang* are water. In its clear form, white water symbolizes purity. Water is a symbol of being physically and

⁴⁷ Georgia Warnke, "Geertzian Irony," in *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in the Social Sciences*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Philip Smith, and Matthew Norton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), 45–54, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230118980_5.

spiritually clean. After the ceremony, the water over which the prayer has been recited functions as a healer by sprinkling it on the head, drinking it, and wiping it on the face as a symbol of cleansing the soul.

The next item in the *ending-andang*⁴⁸ is the thread. This object symbolizes a bond or agreement when a person is newly born. The agreement must be held tightly until the end of life or until death. Another instrument is *sedah lanjaran*. *Sedah* is betel leaf rolled up and tied with thread, while *lanjaran* is hand-rolled tobacco and cloves. *Sedah lanjaran* symbolizes the birth of beings in a world in pairs. *Sedah* represents women, and *lanjaran* represents men. Every life must be in pairs with each other. Cotton is the primary material used to make cloth. Its pure white color symbolizes a white and clean heart, prosperity, purity, and truth to keep away from natural disturbances. The next object is betel nuts. Areca nut symbolizes the descendants of people who have good character, are honest, have a high degree, and are willing to work with an open and severe heart. This meaning is drawn from the nature of the areca tree, which is tall, straight up, and has dense fruit in bunches. Last is pennies. The existence of this object serves as a means of substitution and redemption of all existing deficiencies. The money can be used as a substitute or complement if an instrument is lacking. In addition, money is a symbol of social welfare.

During the implementation of *pepaosan*, the instruments needed are *kumkuman*, *keris*, incense, and water. Each of these objects is a symbol that has a meaning. *Kumkuman* is water that is placed in a copper or brass container. Inside is the *setaman* flower, which is a variety of flowers that are common in gardens. The *setaman* flower usually used is jasmine, a symbol of purity; the yellow *kantil* flower is a symbol of life; and the rose is a human symbol that comes from a combination of red blood and white blood. The *setaman* flower symbolizes the trinity between the creator, creatures, and the universe or between God, humans, and life.

⁴⁸ Fitriani, "The Oneness of God behind the Local Tradition of Nusantara Islam," 429–30.

In addition to these meanings, the flower of the *setaman* flower symbolizes the water of life. In appearance, the *setaman* flower has red, white, and yellow flowers above the water's surface. The red and white flowers symbolize father and mother, while the water represents livelihood. Life would not be possible without water. Altogether, *setaman* flowers and water symbolize an excellent and fragrant life. Aside from being a source of life, water from *kumkuman* also serves to clarify the writing on the palm leaves by smearing it over the palm writing.

Another instrument used to implement *pepaosan* is a *keris* (dagger). For the Sasak people, *keris* is not only a decoration but also a weapon. There are even weapons that contain supernatural powers. *Keris* has a dual function: as a tool for self-defense in everyday life and as a source of spiritual strength. The Sasak people believe that a *keris* contains a spirit, or in the Sasak language, it is called *bebadong*, which can influence or prevent its owner from danger. Next is frankincense, incense from the styrax benzoin plant that smells good when burned. The burning of incense is carried out during the *pepaosan* procession that will take place. Frankincense has a meaning as a link between humans and God⁴⁹. Frankincense is an embodiment of offerings to God. With the intermediary of incense, it is hoped that the implementation of the *pepaosan* tradition can run smoothly and that God can grant the request.

The instrument is water in a bottle closed with a *kuncung* (spit) (made from a cone-shaped banana leaf). Water signifies life and serenity. Before the ritual begins, it must be started by opening the *kuncung*, the water cover of a cone-shaped banana leaf. The oversized shape at the bottom and sharp at the top means a form of prayer and conditions in this world. All kinds and varieties that exist in this world originate from the One. Another meaning is that all kinds of prayers are an effort to synergize with God Almighty. Therefore, at the bottom of the lid, the shape is comprehensive and extensive; the higher it is, the more conical it is so that it meets at

⁴⁹ Fitriani, 423.

one point. One point becomes the top or cause of all that exists, namely God as the center of all life centers.

Symbol of Communication with God

Instrument symbols in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe can be divided into symbols of decorations, plants, flowers, food, and objects. These symbols express gratitude for all the gifts God Almighty has bestowed. These symbols⁵⁰ are also a request to God Almighty so that the wishes carried out will be granted. In addition, the symbols used also have the value of hope and advice so that all Sasak people can lead a good life. The values contained in the instrument are symbols in the *pepaosan* tradition, namely gratitude, requests, hopes, and advice.

The value of expressions of gratitude in the *pepaosan* tradition can be found in the symbols of decorations, flowers, food, and objects. The expression of gratitude to God Almighty by the Sasak people⁵¹ who have been blessed with natural wealth, protection, and happiness is symbolized by the *odeq* garden, banyan leaves, and *sekar mayang*. The flower symbol expresses gratitude for the family's good name. The food symbol expresses gratitude for the gift of love and peace of mind. This gratitude is symbolized by *jaje mako*, *banget*, *renggi*, *abuk*, *opak-opak*, *cerorot*, and *pangan*.

The symbols in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe also contain the cultural value of supplication or prayer.⁵² The decorative symbols of *paosan*, *odeq* garden, banyan leaves, *sekar mayang*, flowers, and *jaje* contain the value of a wish that the owner of the event and the people who attend are given the gift of happiness. These become protectors of the family and community, provide good fortune, and make one's name proud.

⁵⁰ Alexander, "Clifford Geertz and the Strong Program," 61–62.

⁵¹ Muhamad Iwan Fitriani, "The Oneness of God within the Local Traditions of Nusantara Islam: The Theo-Anthropological-Interpretative Research on Sasak Muslims in Lombok," *ULUMUNA* 19, no. 2 (2015): 413–36, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v19i2.334>.

⁵² Mutawali, "Moderate Islam in Lombok: The Dialectic between Islam and Local Culture," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2016): 309–34, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.309-334>.

The symbols in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe also contain the cultural value of hope. Decorations, plants, flowers, *jaje*, and other objects contain the value of hope that the owner⁵³ of the event, the attendees can become protectors, get happiness and safety, maintain the family's good name, and get *halal* sustenance.

The *pepaosan* tradition uses many *ubo rampe* symbols that advise the host (*hajat*) and the people who attend. Decorations of banyan leaves, *odeq* garden, *sekar mayang*, flowers, *jaje*, and other objects have an advisory value so that the Sasak people can become protectors, work hard to find *halal* sustenance, strive earnestly to seek happiness, glory, and the authority of the world hereafter, always guarding and upholding the good name symbolized by flowers, and always glorifying God Almighty.

The Sasak people believe that *pepaosan* is a tradition with a spiritual dimension, so there are rules that cannot be violated when reading it. These rules include, among others, the provision of offerings and utensils, as previously explained. Each *sesaji* (offering) and *pepaosan* instrument has its meaning, intended to be a prayer to the creator. The phenomenon of offerings and instruments in *pepaosan* gives rise to many interpretations⁵⁴ in certain circles. The core view is that offerings and instruments offered to ask for something other than Allah are unlawful or prohibited. Even so, most of the Sasak people believe this is done as a mere tradition and the intention of a permanent request to God. Moreover, this *pepaosan* is similar to a recitation conducted by Muslims. The only difference is that *pepaosan* uses a palm-leaf book in old Javanese, written in Jejawan letters and uses rhythm and *tembang*. Apart from that, the contents of the lontar texts in the *pepaosan* are entirely of Islamic *da'wah* (preaching) values, usually telling stories that mix and match religious tradition, arts, and religion; for example, the *Jatisware lontar*⁵⁵ contains religious values, telling stories of Sufism religious journeys. In the context of

⁵³ Fahrurrozi, "Tradisi Pengajian Kitab Turats Melayu-Arab," 255.

⁵⁴ Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts, "Theory and Method in Linguistic Ethnography," 14–15.

⁵⁵ Murcahyanto et al., "Teknik Vokal Tembang Sasak Jati Sware," 44.

the Sasak (Islamic) community⁵⁶, *memaos* is closely related to Islam, especially in terms of preaching in the early phases⁵⁷ of the spread of Islam in Lombok Island.

Conclusion

Nonverbal symbols in the *pepaosan* tradition of the Sasak tribe can be classified into five parts: decorative instruments, plant accessories, flower accessories, food items, and objects. These symbols have four cultural values of the Sasak tribe, which are used to communicate with God. They are (1) an expression of gratitude for all the gifts that God Almighty has bestowed, (2) a request to God Almighty so that the wish carried out will be granted, (3) hope, and (4) advice. The *pepaosan* tradition's symbolism based on the instrument's meaning shows moral and spiritual values, which are the philosophy of life for the Sasak people. All materials and instruments used in the *pepaosan* tradition are not merely decorations or food to give to others. They also contain symbols and noble values, references to behavior, and insights that explain how the Sasak people live their lives. In addition, *pepaosan* is an attempt to build harmony and communication between humans and humans, humans and God, and humans and nature.

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⁵⁶ Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Marocco and Indonesia*, 11.

⁵⁷ Geertz, 11–12.

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