

# Ukhuala Mahiate

*By* Sulaeman IAIN Ambon

## The Symbolic Communication of the Ukuwala Mahiate Ritual of the Indigenous Peoples of Mamala, Moluccas, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*Ukuwala Mahiate*, an integral part of the rituals of the Indigenous peoples of Mamala, Moluccas, Indonesia, is considered a fusion of Islamic teachings with the local wisdom of Indigenous peoples that comprises ritual elements ranging from tools such as palm sticks and coconut oil to more complex elements. This research is focused on the communication process of the Indigenous peoples who consider *Ukuwala Mahiate* as their ritual. Through a subjective interpretive method with an ethnographic communication approach, the rituals of the Indigenous peoples who undertook the construction of their own symbols against *Ukuwala Mahiate* and are considered to have their own meaning, including the meaning of the offering, appeals, and hope, are investigated. The meaning is generated by a communication process of interpreting the rituals of using palm sugar and medicinal oil to express appeals and hope, communication actions, and the treatment of ritual participants, especially those participating in *Ukuwala Mahiate*.

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**Keywords** Ukuwala Mahiate · Ritual communication · Symbolic interactionist perspective

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## Introduction

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Traditional societies in rural areas always comply with their tradition. As Hadikusuma (2015) stated, traditional society is a unity of human lives interacting with each other according to a particular custom system; its nature is constant and bound by a shared identity. Traditional societies have ancestral origins, inhabit a certain hereditary territory, have a social value system, and have decisive customary laws, and their communities must follow the ethnic wisdom (Table 1).

One of the cultural traditions of *Mamala* society, Leihiu District, Central Moluccas Regency, Moluccas, Indonesia, is the ritual of *Ukuwala Mahiate* (broomstick fight) held on the 8th day of *Shawwal*, which integrates the understanding and knowledge of fasting in Ramadhan, sunnah fasting in the month of *Shawwal*, and the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual, which “shows its own symbolic meaning, more extensively, as a form of ritual communication.”

The communication in the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual is unique; it is a medium of nonverbal communication in which participants beat one other until they get injured

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**Q41** **Table 1** The symbols and meanings of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual procession

No.	Symbols of the <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> ritual procession	Meaning
t1.3	<b>1. Collecting the palm stick</b>	
t1.4	Gather the sticks: Sharpen the machete, Cut the sticks of the palm tree, Soak the sticks in water, Use noneconomical plants, and Dry the palm sticks.	An offering for Allah, Self-identity, Virtuous duties, Building togetherness and harmony, and A source of unity and strength
t1.5	<b>2. Medicinal oil</b>	
t1.6	<i>Marga Mony</i> , Coconut, Peel the coconut, Press the oil, Recite traditional prayers, Read the al-Qur'an, and Stir the coconut oil.	Acceptance of Charity, Healing, The efficacy of <i>Mamala</i> oil, and A sincere togetherness among the people
t1.7	<b>3. Remembrance and hopes</b>	
t1.8	<i>Upu Latu</i> , Gather at the mosque square, Sit on the chair, Offer traditional prayers, and Deliver knowledge and consciousness.	Ethnic dignity, Self-strength, Offering, Prayer, Maintaining ethnic reputation, Respect, Joy, Service, Impression, and The relation of harmonious communication
t1.9	<b>4. “Stick fights” attempts</b>	
t1.10	Actors of communication; The yelling of the ritual's leader; Ritual of facing each other, Whipping and hitting; The reading of <i>shalawat</i> , dhikr, and <i>tahlilan</i> (prayers); Wearing short pants; Wearing red and white headbands; Not wearing clothes to cover the body; Palm sticks; All parts of body are injured and/or bleeding; and Hear a blow of tambourine.	Sharing the commitment and emotion, Tighten, Devotion to the society, The same fate, Place for offerings and praying in Islam, Spiritual strength and patience, Praise and gratefulness, Fulfillment of the ethnic descendant's identity, Blood disease, Spirit of struggling, Solidarity of togetherness, Unity and helping each other, and Build, nurture, maintain, and preserve the spirit of solidarity
t1.11	<b>5. Treatment of participants</b>	
t1.12	<i>Mamala</i> oil, Gather participants with the same headbands, Rub the body, Interaction of rubbing each other's bodies, and Interaction.	The relationship between human and ritual; Self as the creation of Allah; Devotion to Allah; Follower of Allah; Build, foster, and develop harmonious relationships; Offering and praying to Allah; Social solidarity; Overcoming disputes; Protecting the existence of tradition; and Building solidarity

Source: Field observations and interviews

and bleed and then are healed using coconut oil (*Nyuwelain Matehu*). *Nyuwelain Matehu* is an example of why it is necessary to understand the interlinked nature of humans and ritual, beginning with an understanding of the culture. Understanding *Nyuwelain Matehu* as a medium for the ritual, especially in the context of traditional society, is influenced and determined by its potency as a treatment. In line with Suparlan (1998), the importance of tradition and the meaning of symbols are crafted by society.

Communication within the traditional society regarding the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual is focused on how individuals interpret and act on ritual symbols communicated among themselves and their descendants as offerings and prayers to Allah. Through an ethnographic approach using the perspective of ethnography communication, comprehensive analysis of the ritual will be provided.

This condition is an important reason to conduct this research. Furthermore, the purpose of the explanation and the focus of discussion are based on the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1986), with an emphasis on the meaning of the ritual process and symbols of *Ukuwala Mahiate*.

## Theoretical Perspective

To explore the process of individuals creating their own symbolic construction of *Ukuwala Mahiate*, the researcher used an “interpretative” perspective (Denzin and Lincoln 2005), more specifically, the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1986), which emphasizes the occurrence of symbols in the construction of meaning during the ritual of *Ukuwala Mahiate*. This approach shows how these symbolic actions are performed by traditional societies. These societies are active, creative, and innovative while communicating meaning in *Ukuwala Mahiate* rituals. Individual actions occur as the result of the participants’ understanding of the internal factors within the ritual, not as a result of external factors. In this context, reality is considered to be intersubjective, shared, and negotiated. Merely by communicating, the actors are able to adjust their actions to adapt to the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual procession.

The results of research by several experts strongly indicate the importance of communication, mostly in the fields of culture, ethnographic communication, and the communication of ritual, such as studies by Carey (1999) and Hymes (1962). Carey (1999) explores the communication of ritual in terms of communication, celebration, and togetherness. Rituals are carried out collectively and regularly, so society is reinforced and collective knowledge and meanings are recalled. Hymes (1962) states that ethnographic communication is inseparable from the concepts of language, communication, and culture. Communication is the core of human interactions; the use of language in a particular culture relies on symbols that convey specific meanings. The symbolic meaning created by human beings within traditional societies is the focus of the communication of ritual.

Some characteristics of this communication of ritual from Hammad (2016) include (1) sharing, participating, and gathering with friends in a community that has the same belief system; (2) communication that is built from the unity of society and represents mutual trust; and (3) symbols that represent ideas and values relating to hospitality, celebrations, or ceremonies of worship and fellowship.



In the communication process, language comprises verbal symbols. These symbols are the most widely used symbols in language because they are able to convey thoughts and feelings as communication occurs, and communication uses language as the medium to express individual or group ideas.

There have been many studies of communication of ritual for the perspectives of ethnographic theory and symbolic interactions, such as a study by Foni (2004) on *Atoni Pah Meto* farming culture: the cycle of dry-land rites *Atoni Pah Meto*, *Tunbaba Timor*, East *Nusa Tenggara*; Robot's (2008) study on the construction of harmony between crosses and crescent moons in an ethnographic interreligious communication of Panggol (Catholic) and Wuni (Moslem) communities in Natram Manggarai, West Flores, East *Nusa Tenggara*; Marzuki's (2009) research on *Bathok Bulu* and the traditions of Sambiroto Purwomartani Kalasan Sleman, Yogyakarta, society through religious and cultural perspectives; and Yenrizal's (2010) study on communication of ritual in Meny an chief tradition regarding adherence to local traditions and Islamic values in Keruh Village and Sukarami Village, Rambang District, Muara Enim Regency.

Based on the perspective of symbolic interactionism, traditional societies craft their own symbolic construction process of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* procession and then give meaning to *Ukuwala Mahiate*, which is considered a component of communication of ritual process performed by an ethnic group.

## Method

This research aims to illustrate how traditional society performs its own symbolic construction process in *Ukuwala Mahiate* and so gives meaning to *Ukuwala Mahiate*, which is considered part of the communication of ritual process performed by people in a traditional culture.

This study involves traditional society comprising religious leaders, ethnicity leaders, youth leaders, mosque customary boards, village administrators, and the performers of ritual activities, as they are considered to have important characteristics and both know the necessary information about and have strong interactions in *Ukuwala Mahiate*.

The researcher's experience in *Mamala* includes various data collection activities, such as interview techniques, especially in-depth interviews and models, even though they have various risks, such as long nostalgic responses of joy and sorrow. This technique allows the researcher to observe the respondent's activities and to listen or ask questions of the respondents and the people around them in an actual situation that is not systematically controlled or regulated by study parameters.

## Results and Discussion

The *Mamala* Indigenous peoples annually carry out cultural traditions to commemorate Islamic religious holidays, such as the celebration of the eighth day of the month of Shawwal by performing the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual. *Ukuwala Mahiate* embodies the relationship between Islam and the Indigenous peoples of *Mamala*. The ritual is held on the eighth day of the month of Shawwal. It unites the understanding and knowledge

about fasting in Ramadan, sunnah fasting in the month of Shawwal, and ritual communication of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> . Therefore, it is the interaction of the <i>Mamala</i> people with Islam within the ritual of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> .	129 130 131
<b>The Principles of Mamala Ukuwala Mahiate</b>	132
Generally speaking, key <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> beliefs and values include:	133
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The people of <i>Mamala</i> who are obedient, diligent, and responsible for maintaining the culture of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i>. Other village communities have claimed <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> as their own, and need to be preserved.</li> <li>• Building a relationship between Allah and the Individual.</li> <li>• Unifying the harmonization of the community.</li> <li>• Individual identity.</li> <li>• This fusion often involves supernatural power.</li> </ul>	134 135 136 137 138 139 140
The central principle of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> is Allah supreme authority over human affairs in culture. The people of <i>Mamala</i> strive to find the compatibility of individuals and groups with the teachings of Islam and pursue both cultural purity and Islamic purity. Belief in harmony distinguishes the people of <i>Mamala</i> from the not people of <i>Mamala</i> .	141 142 143 144
Maintaining the <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> ritual as social solidarity creates unity and religious value and creates stability in the social life of the community. Unity and religion as a process of collective communication for the community in creating social situations in the form of togetherness among people create harmonious cooperation. Ritual as a collective communication for the community also creates social meaning in the form of values that are held in high esteem by the community in the form of unity, religious values, and cultural values. These values create peace and stability in the social life of the community.	145Q8 146 147 148Q9 149 150 151
For the people of <i>Mamala</i> , belief in <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> and participation in the sacrament cannot alone fulfill one's harmony; one cannot choose harmony, because that is Allah only privilege. All harmony features are determined by Allah sovereignty, including those who will be harmonized and those who will receive Allah grace and <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> .	152 153 154 155 156
For the people of <i>Mamala</i> , <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> is self-identity and only obeys, is diligent, and is responsible for maintaining the ritual of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> . Everyone must be constantly reformed by Allah gifts and rituals to fight "those who claim this culture" and offer worship, prayer, and hope to Allah. As such, they consider obedience, hard work, and responsibility as an obligation of the Islamic religion and emphasize the constant self-examination and self-discipline. They believe that human beings are bound to do the will of Allah through <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> rituals so that they can best understand by studying the teachings of Islam and the universe that Allah has created and is controlling.	157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164
The people of <i>Mamala</i> advocate a harmonious life with humility and obedience. They also emphasize personal study as self-identity through the ritual of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> . They believe that every <i>Mamala</i> community is a society that respects others and builds a relationship between Allah and the individual for offerings, prayers, and hopes to Allah.	165 166 167 168
For the people of <i>Mamala</i> , they performed the <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> ritual as a way of communicating with Allah, and their ancestors who subsequently viewed <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> as a model of the knowledge system that presented the cognitive aspects.	169 170 171



<i>Mamala</i> makes the ritual as a model for identity to build, foster, and preserve the spirit of solidarity, togetherness, and unity among fellow the people of <i>Mamala</i> .	172
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The <i>Mamala</i> community is aware of its existence and has the specialty <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> related to the beliefs and or teachings of Islam. Community trust through Priest <i>Tunny</i> uses the often involved supernatural power of his ancestors to make <i>Mamala</i> oil, physical strength, and treatment of ritual performers who have struck each other's limbs and bleeding.	174
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This fusion often involves supernatural power of the ancestors which was then accompanied by prayers and hope to Allah as the gratitude of the <i>Mamala</i> people after the fasting in Ramadan and sunnah fasting in the month of Shawwal. Gratitude is manifested by the participation in performing the ritual which contains the values of unity and awakens a very strong sense of social solidarity among the people of <i>Mamala</i> . The value of unity is related to ancestral offerings, prayers, and hope to Allah by performing the ritual of <i>Ukuwala Mahiate</i> . This ritual has a sacred and noble purpose, namely to increase and encourage awareness to continue to build and maintain social solidarity among the community and at the same time guarantee and maintain the security of the people of <i>Mamala</i> village.	179
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Communication of the ritual emphasizes the process of the meaning of ritual symbols. Five conclusions of this paper are reached through interviews and observations, and symbols are interpreted as a distinct phenomenon for traditional society through the process of collecting palm sticks, applying medicinal oil, reminder and hopes, communication, and the treatment of communication actions.	190
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1. The Symbolism of Collecting Palm Sticks	195



The ritual of collecting palm sticks ( <i>Kana Gamutu Hee Wasi</i> ) involves the process of identifying symbols, starting from the preparation for communication, sharpening the machete, cutting the palm tree, and soaking the palm sticks in water. This activity is interpreted as “an offering to Allah”; it is a means of asking the creator of the earth for permission. For traditional society, the collection of palm sticks signifies “self-identity”; it is a form of reflecting on the consciousness, which leads every member of society to realize who they are, their position within society, how to behave and interact with others, and how to behave appropriately within their own culture.	196
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Through the communication approach, by using the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1986), reality is seen as a process of maintaining common meaning within society via the ritual of collecting palm sticks. As also explained by Mulyana (2017), communication is symbolic and occurs in a space in which meaning is shared by participants. Participants are bound to the various ritual components of collecting palm sticks, which informs their behavior, as can be seen from how traditional society interprets the collection of palm sticks in three ways.

- Palm sticks are a symbol of noneconomic plants considered in the context of *Ukuwala Mahiate* communication media, in which the initial assumption is that this work performed by the group is done on behalf of members of the traditional society. This work is interpreted as a form of “virtuous duty,” devotion to the society, and must be carried out with full sincerity and without damaging the environment.
- Collecting palm sticks is a symbol of “building togetherness and harmony” with each other and with relatives from outside the village who visit and or return to the village, as well as tightening the relationship of the natives of this society.
- Through the collection of palm sticks, this society’s strength is united as a symbol of the “source of unity and strength” for traditional society.



The ritual of taking palm sugar sticks as a symbol of people’s daily life in *Mamala* is taken very sincerely and must be carried out in a transparent or open manner in the eyes of fellow Indigenous peoples. This means that the smoothness and success of the work involved in this ritual are not due to the actors and/or performers of the ritual but to the prayers of the Indigenous peoples as a whole in the *Mamala* village.

We should not be careless here. We cannot make it by ourselves. We must follow the customary rules. Every eighth of Shawwal, together with the children of the village, we go to another village to get a palm stick for a beating tool for the ritual performers as a symbol of pride for the country’s children. The ritual is always celebrated in the village as a tribute after completing Ramadan fasting (Ali Malawat).

Traditional society interprets the effort of everyone who collects the palm sticks to have “self-introspection” in this world. The attitude and manner of each participant’s devotion are observed within the context of how far the individuals are able to build harmonious



relationships not only with Allah but also with others and even with the natural environment and their surroundings, as exemplified by not damaging the natural environment. 236  
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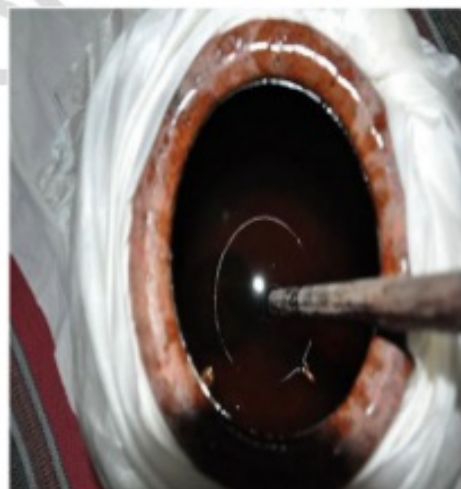
## 2. The Symbolism of Medicinal Oil 238

Oil (*Nyuwelain Matehu*), as a medium of communication ritual in *Ukuwala Mahiate*, is made from coconut oil by members of the traditional society. Old coconut flesh is peeled from the coconut shell and then grated using a “*Parudang*” (traditional grater). This coconut oil is used as a symbol of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual. Making the medicinal oil can be performed by anyone whose surname is *Mony*. 239  
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This oil is smeared on the body of a *Ukuwala Mahiate* participant who has been reciting the prayer of Priest *Tunny* or who represents Priest *Tunny* after getting the blessing of *Upu Latu* (the king) on the night before the ritual takes place (Salma *Mony*). 244  
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The medicinal oil ritual is an ethnic prayer ritual performed in a traditional house at night after the *Isha* prayer, the ceremony of Priest *Tunny*, *Parenta Syara'*, and *Upu Latu* and five other people as ceremonial witnesses to the ritual: *Pisehena*, *Sutela*, *Mahuwa*, *Tepae*, *Temmulukau*, *Temmuluputih*, *Ukubuah*, and *Lebea*. 250  
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After obtaining the blessing from *Upu Latu*, Priest *Tunny* commenced the ritual, reading the verses of Al-Qur'an together with *Parenta Syara'*. Reading *al-Fatihah* (*hadrat fatihah*), as Priest *Tunny* explained, “*al-Fatihah ila hadratin nabi sayyidina Muhammadin salallahu 'alaihi wasalam al-Fatihah*.” Before reading *al-Fatihah*, Priest *Tunny* took nutmeg and cloves from a plate and placed them in a clay jug with coconut oil in it. Then, he proceeded to read *al-Fatihah* for Prophet Muhammad SAW, the companions, the family, and all Muslims. Finally, Priest *Tunny* blew three times into the jar (*Salau*) while stirring the coconut oil in *Salau*. 254  
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The symbolic meaning of the medicinal oil ritual is illustrated in symbolic actions that cannot be separated from the role of Priest *Tunny* and his descendants so that Allah accepts the offerings and puts them by His side. The interaction and communication of Priest *Tunny* are reenacted through the use of symbols. This ceremony emphasizes the way humans use symbols to convey meaning and communicate with each other, which 263  
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is an orthodox interpretive practice in adherence to official rules and teachings. The interpretation of the symbols is expressed in the behavior of the actors who are involved in social interaction (Jones, 2003). The symbolic action is used as a means to heal broken legs, broken bones, coughs, and skin diseases such as itching and burns.

The ritual use of medicinal oil as a component of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual is historically connected to medicinal purposes and portrayed on pillars of mosques. This *Mamala* oil is understood to have efficacy. *Mamala* oil is made by girls who have not experienced menstruation and are considered sacred and clean. The symbolism of the clean heart of the person who makes the oil is important, as she “blows the prayer” on the oil. *Mamala* oil cannot be traded, and it is forbidden to charge money for it because *Mamala* oil-making is used as medication for the society. Traditional society has attached cultural attitudes and values to *Mamala* oil-making that are demonstrated as “sincerity without asking anything in return for oil-making.”

The meaning of medicinal oil for traditional society is providing “unity among nonprofit oriented people” by healing broken legs, broken bones, coughs, and skin diseases such as hives and burns.



The process of making *Nyuwelain Matehu* begins with *Upu Latu* interacting and communicating with Priest *Tunny*. Communication and interaction are performed using verbal messages that are not understood by those around them. Verbal messages do not include the *Mamala* or Indonesian languages. *Upu Latu* and Priest *Tunny* used intrapersonal supernatural power communication by channeling ancestral spirits in the form of inspirational communication during the making of *Nyuwelain Matehu*.

Communication between *Upu Latu* and Priest *Tunny* uses the language of intrapersonal supernatural powers to make requests for approval from the ancestors in the form of inspirational communication (Imam Tunny).

For each connection, a white cloth is attached, and the *Nyuwelain Matehu* is given, which serves to strengthen and maintain the connection of the wooden beams of the mosque (Abdul Latif Malawat).

Times ten centimeters at each end of the block of wood, the connection between the frameworks of the mosque (Abdullah Mony).



The ritual of making *Nyuwelain Matehu* is a ritual communication medium used by the *Mamala* Indigenous peoples to influence and determine the treatment ability of the medicinal oil. Medicinal oil rituals are historically used to show that Indigenous peoples are sensitive to the construction of mosques and used to connect broken wooden beams during mosque construction.

The local meaning or logic behind the *Mamala* oil-making ritual conveys the aims and objectives of the Indigenous peoples regarding the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual, which they carry out as a fulfillment of their identity as children of the *Mamala* country and to introspectively examine themselves and pray to Allah to request His guidance, which is invoked by the *Mamala* Indigenous peoples via the prayers of Priest *Tunny, Parenta Syara'*, and *Upu Latu*. Mulyana (2016) said that the core of the communication process is perception, which is an internal process by which humans choose, evaluate, organize, and interpret meaning from their surroundings.

### 3. Symbols of Reminder and Hope



The procession of the rituals as the reminder and the hopes of *Upu Latu* takes place in a calm, peaceful area that is free from noise. *Upu Latu* plays an active role in the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual and of aspects of the sociocultural life of traditional society as a symbol of authority and dignity in society. Traditional society sees *Ukuwala Mahiate* as a source of their self-power in the form of offerings and prayers to Allah.

This ritual is performed as a means of communication between *Upu Latu* and traditional society. Communication of *Upu Latu* presents a communication message of "knowledge and awareness" for traditional society. The meaning of a symbol is not merely its physical characteristics but what people are able to do with the symbol. According to Susanne K. Langer, quoted in Mulyana (2016), one of the basic human needs is the need for symbolization or use of symbols. Communication of *Upu Latu* as a symbol of the hope of *Upu Latu* that people are able to protect the reputation of the community and respect the guests who come from outside *Mamala* so that they can feel happy about the service and the safety of the community and that they can return home with of the knowledge that traditional society is secure.

In daily life, every member of the traditional society always listens to his advice and always tries to maintain good relations and harmonious communication among the people. At the time when the reminder and hopes of *Upu Latu* are conducted at the Mosque *al-Muhibbin* square, *Mamala*, people gather to listen to the remembrances and



hopes. The role of *Latuliu* provides the knowledge and awareness to maintain ethnic traditions by referring to the religious system and the traditional society and by the participants expressing their respect to the various spirits outside of themselves by preserving their culture as a representation of Allah in the form of offerings and prayer.

For the community, the ritual is a source of strength flowing in themselves in the form of offerings and requests to Allah. *Upu Latu* is the leader of the country, highly respected and respected in social life. Therefore, in everyday life, every member of the Indigenous community always hears his appeal, always tries to foster good relations or establish harmonious communication between people. *Upu Latu* is the representation of the customary head or the holder of the *Mamala* State authority, whose role determines the success or failure of the activities of the community; the ritual is an expressive act of the Indigenous peoples to give a special place or express their respectful attitude to *Upu Latu*.



#### 4. Communication Symbol of the Broomstick Fight

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The broomstick fight performers are selected by fulfilling the following requirements: They must (1) be descendants of *Mamala* ethnicity and/or other Moluccas ethnicity and ethnicities outside Moluccas, (2) have an emotional commitment to tighten the sense of belonging, (3) be physically and mentally healthy, and (4) have an ability to follow the endure facing each other for approximately two hours while being whipped and beaten with palm sticks.

The selection process is followed by the recitation of *shalawat*, dhikr, and prayer (*tahlilan*) addressed to the Prophet Muhammad, family, friends, and all Muslims; these prayers are especially addressed to the spirits of the elderly and/or people who have died, as they are the people who founded the *Mamala* and established the mosque.

The performers of the ritual begin by entering the mosque square in a procession of forty-four people divided into twenty-two couples. Nonverbal communication symbols are displayed by ritual actors, such as wearing shorts and red and white headbands and not wearing clothes that protect their bodies from the palm sticks. According to Mulyana (2016), “ritual attempt allows participants to share their commitments, emotional and strengthen their connection, as well as dedication to the group.” Furthermore, Mulyana (2017) asserts that the importance is not the physicality of the ritual but the feeling of having the same fate and same spirit. This ritual is believed to be a site of offering and praying of Islamic teachings in the construction of mosques, of spiritual strength, and of patience to pray for Allah to help with problems such as broken beams in the mosque and to offer praise and gratitude after completing the fast in Ramadan and the fast of Sunnah in the sixth day of *Shawwal*.



During the ritual process, the bodies of all members are injured and/or bleeding from being whipped and beaten with palm sticks. While the ritual performers hold a symbolic artificial flower, the ritual leader calls out loudly “*Ayooooo, ... rapikan barisan, pegangan lidi dan cambuk*” (meaning “Let us go, ... tidy the rows, hold the sticks and whips”) as a symbol of “togetherness.” In this context, the phrase “tidy the rows” is shouted by the ritual leader while the ritual is going on to build the sense of belonging within the ethnic people.





Through this ritual, the fulfillment of self-identity as a son of *Mamala*, this traditional society realizes again its existence in the world, both in the contexts of how to interact with Allah and with others and how to maintain the culture from being claimed by other cultures.

The ritual communication of *Ukuwala Mahiate*, the chosen culprit, is conveyed by the implementing committee using symbols and is carried out for approximately two hours through ritual practices.

- Early pain during caning. Self-feeling is symbolized by the activities of whipping and/or beating each other with palm sugar sticks; initially, it is sickening.
- Bloody body. Bloody sores openly flow throughout the limbs.
- Caning is not a persecution. Flogging and/or beating each other with palm sugar sticks is done with compassion. It is not a means of persecuting the performers of the ritual.
- Physical appearance. Showing limbs reveals different degrees of physical strength among participants.
- Dirty blood. Participants do not feel the slightest pain because the blood that issues forth is the blood of disease.
- Self-comfort. After performing the ritual, the participants take comfort in knowing that they are children of *Mamala*.
- Male identity. Involvement in the rituals reinforces the masculine identity of a man who has a strong physique.
- Belief in *Mamala* oil. *Mamala* oil is used to cleanse limbs that are injured and to treat broken legs, broken bones, coughs, and skin diseases such as itching and bums.

After the participants perform the ritual communication act, all parts of their bodies are wounded and/or bleeding due to lashes and/or beatings with palm sugar sticks. Participants do not feel the slightest pain because the blood that issues forth is the blood of disease.

At the end of the ritual communication activities, all the participants rub their limbs with *Nyuwelain Matehu*, as medicinal oil is believed to be able to heal wounds. Actors performing in ritual communication acts are motivated by various aspects of experience:

- Self-pride. The rituals generate feelings of pleasure, relief, and satisfaction in his intrapranity.
- Self-calling. The ritual is a noble sacred duty for service to the country and must be carried out with full sincerity and in keeping with the natural environment.
- Self-testing. Restoring the relationship with the ability to perform rituals.
- Self-verification. Presentation of the self with the closeness of fellow participant of the ritual.
- Attention. Self-recognition in the face of the actions and stimuli of others.
- Self-status. The self is differentiated from people who have never been involved in the ritual.
- Self-expression. Self-expression invites and persuades others to recognize the ritual of ownership of the *Mamala* community.



- Personal identity. This form of reflection on self-awareness is used a sacred duty for participants to conduct themselves properly and correctly. 425  
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The daily life of the *Mamala* community requires solidarity. This solidarity gives rise to a symbol of unity and mutual assistance to help one another. By carrying out these rituals, the people of *Mamala* build, foster, maintain, and preserve the spirit of solidarity, togetherness, cohesiveness, and unity among the *Mamala* people. Thus, their daily life is always oriented towards fulfilling their identity as Indigenous peoples. The *Mamala* people are always aware of their existence in the world, both in the context of how to interact with Allah and with others by maintaining a culture of ownership that separates them from other villages' claims on their culture. 427  
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##### 5. Symbolism of Treatment in the Broomstick Fight 435



The treatment of the performers of the broomstick fight, the last ritual of the whole cycle in *Ukuwala Mahiate*, is held in the Mosque *al-Muhibbin* square. Usually, after the broomstick fight, the performers rub their bodies with *Nyuwelain Matehu*, the medicinal oil, which is believed to heal their wounds. 439  
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The ritual is very helpful for every *Mamala* community both antarpersona and in groups to see themselves as Allah creatures and to serve Him. Having local awareness 443  
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and knowledge about their existence as humans and as servants of Allah is also important for the community to build, foster, and develop harmonious relationships or patterns of interaction with each other in the form of offerings, prayers, and petitions to Allah.

The symbolization of the ritual oil of medicine is inseparable from the role of Priest *Tummy* and his descendants performing customary prayers to Allah so that coconut oil can be used as a treatment. The *Mamala* people have attitudes and cultural values of sincerity and forbid any monetary compensation for making *Mamala* oil. The oil cannot be traded, and it is forbidden for the possessor to ask for payment if the community uses it as medicine.

This ritual is aimed at fulfilling identity in the form of reflecting on one's own consciousness, leading all members of the community to realize well and truly who they are, where they are, how they should behave and interact with each other, and how they should behave within their culture. However, the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual, which is celebrated every year, becomes the claim of ownership of the State of *Mamala*. Every year, the week before the ritual celebration, an internal conflict of ownership is triggered between *Mamala* and *Morela*, which causes casualties due to mutual claims of ownership of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual.

### The Impact upon Mamala Values

The *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual not only is a customary belief but also symbolizes ancestor respect, solidarity, and a plea to Allah. Individuals and community groups make their meaning by performing rituals that show their respect for traditional values and Islamic teachings. They interpret the rituals in daily life with harmony and practice the teachings of Islam through Ramadan fasting and fasting as a goal of life as Muslims.

For the people of *Mamala*, the ritual process is a process that takes place because of the relationship of kinship ties with fellow solidarity between people. Ritual performers interact with one another and are bound to a sense of shared identity that has developed to strengthen relations between communities by following traditional values taught in Islam to fulfill one's identity by doing self-introspection, praying by pleading and obtaining pleasure through the guidance of Allah which can guarantee the sustainability of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* order.

Cultural order as a symbolic process mutually interprets the symbol; the relationship to the symbol continues and is intended for the continuity of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* record process. This ritual arrangement in the form of petition, respect, and solidarity is the attitude of the people of *Mamala* about how they should behave towards the struggle of the ancestors that are believed and trusted. Prayer, respect, and solidarity in the ritual are basically to maintain a harmonious relationship with Allah and with fellow human beings and even maintain the cultural existence expressed through ritual as a celebration.

The community is aware of its existence which has the uniqueness of *Ukuwala Mahiate* which is related to the beliefs and teachings of Islam. Its existence contains the values of unity which generates a very strong sense of social solidarity among the people. The value of unity contained in the ritual is related to the sacred event. *Ukuwala Mahiate* has a sacred and noble goal, namely to increase and encourage awareness to continue to build and maintain social solidarity among people.



Social solidarity creates the value of unity and religious value and creates stability in social life. Unity and religion as a collective process for the community in creating social situations in the form of community relations among people create harmonious cooperation. *Ukuwala Mahiate* as a collective communication for the community also creates social meaning in the form of values that are held high by the community in the form of unity, religious values, and cultural values. These values create peace and stability in the social life of the community.

### **The Symbolic Ritual Communication Affects the Mamala Life** 497Q14

The *Mamala* community does not associate material wealth with the symbolic communication of *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual. They believe that the symbolic ritual is identity as a surrender by self-introspection, praying by asking and obtaining pleasure through Allah guidance that can guarantee the continuity of *Ukuwala Mahiate* order. Rituals emphasize more on values that must be obeyed and followed, not leading to material wealth on material success. The dimension of surrendering oneself to Allah appears to be stronger and more obvious than mere personal ambition of human being to have more successful life.

When compared with some rituals performed by the people of Java in Indonesia, their intention is more to have successful life in terms of wealth and career. They perform rituals with a traditional healer who uses verbal communication symbols to achieve the desire to gain successful life in terms of wealth and career. The ritual is done not through surrender to Allah, but the magical power of the shaman. Some of them even worked hard to find material wealth with the help of shamans. They are controlled by shamans to search for material wealth in any way that is outside the teachings of Islam. They understand that what has been done is Allah's will. Material wealth and career success need not be blessed by Allah. The ethics of hard work, not the people of *Mamala*, is the belief that hard work is an honor for a shaman who will produce material wealth and career success. They believe that what has been done is considered not a deviation from the norms of life and will be very rejected and not under the beliefs and values of the daily life of the people of *Mamala*.

For the people of *Mamala*, to have successful life in terms of wealth and career must be done by trying to work hard to do a better job under the values and beliefs of the teachings of Islam in Allah's blessing. They try to work hard by relying on themselves based on Allah guidance. For most people of *Mamala*, achieving material wealth is not a symbol of success, but a symbol of one's trials and trials from Allah.

### **The Ritual Communication Has Transformed into Tourist Attraction** 524

*Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual communication became a tourist attraction that affected the economy of the *Mamala* people. There was an increase in welfare because of the ritual. However, the increase in welfare was not stable because the management of resources owned by the community was devoted to ongoing ritual implementation rather than social welfare. Because *Mamala* oil cannot be traded, it is forbidden to ask for payment for the work involved in making *Mamala* oil, which is used by the community for treatment. The *Mamala* people have cultural attitudes and values showing "sincerity without mentioning it as a reward for working on oil." *Nyuwelain Matehu* for the



*Mamala* people means “togetherness of fellow humans without profit” to heal broken legs, broken bones, coughs, and skin diseases such as itching and burns. 533

Thus, the specific purpose of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual is interrelated with the interaction and communication between the *Mamala* people and Allah based on the values that remain intact and inseparable from each other. 535

- Interesting. This ritual has norms that reinforce Islamic values. The rituals and the nature of their actions are sacred with the use of palm sugar and *Nyuwelain Matehu* as communication media and medical oils. 538
- Whipping each other. This ritual expression arouses a sense of social solidarity and a fighting spirit in the unity of life of the *Mamala* people. 539
- Offerings. This ritual is believed to be a means of making offerings and requests to petition Allah when a mosque beam is broken. 540
- Request. Offering praise and thanksgiving for fulfilling one’s identity as a *Mamala* community. 541
- Hope in Allah. Having hope in Allah as the creator of the earth to obtain permission from Him to perform ritual actions properly, without any obstacles to build solidarity among fellow practitioners of the ritual. 542
- Social solidarity. The people of *Mamala*, as children of the country, build social solidarity with harmonious relationships that unify and strengthen the *Mamala* village. 543

The awareness and the traditional knowledge about the existence of their community and their existence as followers of Allah as well as the right guidance are important for traditional society to build, foster, and develop harmonious relationships with each other in the form of offerings and praying to Allah. Rituals in this case are traditional media in the form of traditional practices to overcome disputes, preserve the ethnicity’s existence from other ethnicities, and build social solidarity among the traditional society. 544

## Conclusion 559

Traditional *Mamala* society has constructed the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual as a practice of offerings, prayers, and hopes. This meaning does not happen by itself but is a communication of ritual process of interpreting the ritual processes of collecting palm sticks, making medicinal oil, offering remembrance and hopes, performing the broomstick fight, and administering medicinal oil after the broomstick fight. 560

The symbolism of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual is defined as the fulfillment of self-identity as an effort to produce togetherness through the power of offertory prayer; prayer and hope in Allah in the building, preservation, and development of harmonious relationships within interactions among ethnic people; and protecting the culture from being claimed by other ethnic cultures. 561

The meaning of the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual as a symbol for traditional society is considered an inheritance from previous generations. This symbol is believed to be related to logical aspects. 562

The use of symbolic interaction theory is useful in exploring the ritual symbols of *Ukuwala Mahiate*, especially the meaning of the treatment rituals of the performers 563

during the broomstick fight and of *Nyuwelain Matehu* as a healing medium that connects humans with Allah. 575  
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This research has discussed some aspects of the meaning of symbols in the *Ukuwala Mahiate* ritual. Many other aspects still need to be researched, such as the life experiences of ritual performers. It has been found, for example, that those who have performed the broomstick fight have scars that will not disappear. Therefore, by using a phenomenological perspective, we can explore the communication experience of the broomstick fight. Of course, this topic is beyond our current discussion. 577  
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