

Kolubung Tradition in West Pangian Village In George Herbert Mead's Theory of Symbolic Interactionism

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand how the meaning of this tradition is formed through social interactions, using the symbolic interactionism approach of George Herbert Mead. The main question posed is how individuals and the community of Pangian Barat Village develop shared meaning through participation in the Kolubung tradition. The research methodology employs a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, along with thematic analysis. Data were collected from members of the community involved in the Kolubung tradition and analyzed to identify the social meanings that are formed in the practice. The results of the study indicate that the Kolubung Tradition functions as a symbol of mourning and as a space for building social solidarity and strengthening relationships among community members. This finding highlights the importance of preserving local traditions as part of social identity and community solidarity, even in the face of changing challenges. This research enriches the understanding of the role of symbols in local traditions and can serve as a foundation for further research regarding the role of the younger generation in maintaining these traditions.

Keywords: Interactionism; Kolubung; Relation; Social

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana makna dari tradisi ini terbentuk melalui interaksi sosial, menggunakan pendekatan teori interaksionisme simbolis George Herbert Mead. Pertanyaan utama yang diajukan adalah bagaimana individu dan masyarakat Desa Pangian Barat mengembangkan makna bersama melalui partisipasi dalam tradisi Kolubung. Metodologi penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif dan dokumentasi, dengan analisis tematik. Data dikumpulkan dari masyarakat yang terlibat dalam tradisi Kolubung dan dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi makna sosial yang terbentuk dalam praktik tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tradisi Kolubung berfungsi sebagai simbol berduka dan sebagai ruang untuk membangun solidaritas sosial serta memperkuat hubungan antar anggota Masyarakat. Temuan ini menunjukkan pentingnya melestarikan tradisi lokal sebagai bagian dari identitas sosial dan solidaritas komunitas, meskipun menghadapi tantangan perubahan. Penelitian ini memperkaya pemahaman tentang peran simbol dalam tradisi lokal dan dapat menjadi dasar untuk penelitian lebih lanjut mengenai peran generasi muda dalam menjaga tradisi ini.

Kata Kunci: Interaksionisme; Kolubung; Relasi; Sosial

INTRODUCTION

In the social and religious life of the community, tradition plays a crucial role in the social and religious life of communities and must be preserved to sustain its cultural relevance.¹ Tradition is valued both as a heritage from the past and as a framework for meaningful social interaction. Interaction in community life is formed through continuous activities, making it a distinctive feature. These interactions can be carried out in various ways.² One of the traditions that has among such traditions is the Kolubung Tradition, which embodies profound social and symbolic meaning. This tradition is a social practice that has been inherited in society and has a rich religious and cultural dimension.

The Kolubung tradition involves the use of white cloth as a symbol of mourning for deceased family members. This tradition is generally practiced by women, who wear white cloth draped over their shoulders during the mourning period, which may last seven, fourteen, forty, or even a hundred days after the death of a family member. The white cloth is typically worn by nuclear family members, close relatives, and community leaders as a visible expression of communal grief. The Kolubung tradition also functions as a ritual space where multifaceted social interactions are expressed and reinforced. Viewed through George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, the Kolubung tradition serves as a communicative act involving both verbal and non-verbal symbols³. Verbal cues include expressions of condolence offered by family members, while the white cloth functions as a nonverbal symbol of mourning and solidarity. In line with symbolic interactionist theory, the white cloth gains its meaning through the collective interpretation and social interactions of the West Pangian Village community.

George Herbert Mead, a foundational figure in symbolic interactionism, emphasized that individuals and groups form and interpret symbols through social interaction⁴. Individuals in the West Pangian Village Community engage in symbolic communication during mourning rituals through the Kolubung tradition. Thereby constructing deeper meanings of communal identity and social bonding. Tradition plays a crucial role in forming social identity, functioning as a ritual practice passed down through generations that reflects a society's enduring values, norms, and beliefs.⁵ The Kolubung tradition significantly shapes how individuals and communities understand their identity and relational place within the social and cultural order. The application of symbolic interactionism is essential for understanding the Kolubung tradition within its cultural and relational context. Influenced in part by evolutionary thought,

¹ Nurul Fauzia N dan Arni Arni, "Interaksi Simbolik Kajang Dalam Pada Upacara Kematian Di Kabupaten Bulukumba," *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Organisasi (J-KO)* 4, no. 1 (2022): 13, 1, <https://doi.org/10.26618/jko.v4i1.15831>.

² Nanang Akbar dkk., "Interaksi Simbolik Dalam Penyajian Musik Iringan Tari Rampak Rebana Di Sanggar Andari Pontianak," *Satwika : Kajian Ilmu Budaya Dan Perubahan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2024): 473, 2, Sanggar Andari, Pontianak, <https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v8i2.33930>.

³ Lars Elleström, "Symbolicity, Language, and Mediality," *Semiotica* 2022, no. 247 (2022): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2020-0122>.

⁴ Lawrence Cahoone, "Mead and the Emergence of the Joint Intentional Self," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* XI, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.1683>.

⁵ Kholidi, Ahmad Khaerul, Irwan, and Adi Faizun. "George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism in the Post-COVID-19 New Normal Era in Indonesia." *AT-TA'LIM: Studies of the Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic Education, Education, Social Sciences, and Islamic Law*, vol. 2, no. 1, Dec. 2022, pp. 15. ISSN 2527-3558

Mead viewed social behaviour as a dynamic process of adaptation, in which individuals continuously respond to and reshape their social environment⁶. Symbolic interactionism offers a framework for understanding how individuals construct meaning through everyday social interactions.⁷ Tradition is formed from the adaptation of individuals to their environment, and tradition is a cultural practice that is a reflection of the values and norms embraced by society that have been formed for a long time and continue to be preserved. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore how the Kolubung tradition's meaning is constructed, sustained, and transformed within the lived experiences of the West Pangian community. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, tradition consists not only of ceremonial acts but also of meaning-making processes that emerge through social interaction⁸. George Herbert Mead asserts that individuals and communities construct and interpret symbolic meanings through ongoing and reciprocal social interactions⁹. Therefore, it is important to research how the meaning of the Kolubung Tradition is constructed, maintained, and changed in people's lives.

The symbolic function of mourning traditions has been widely studied, particularly within culturally diverse and symbolically complex societies. Niki Paleg is a prominent mourning tradition among the Dani people of Papua, playing a vital role in their cultural and familial structures. In their article *Makna Di Balik Tradisi Niki Paleg Suku Dani di Papua*, Bagaskoro Bisono Putro dan Ananda Salsabila Nadira examine the meaning and practice of the Niki Paleg tradition¹⁰, which includes finger amputation as a symbolic act of mourning among the Dani people. This ritual expresses deep grief and underscores the central role of family in the Dani tribe's social structure. Finger cutting is regarded both as an expression of grief and a gesture of respect for the deceased. The Niki Paleg tradition functions as both a mourning ritual and a core element of the Dani people's cultural identity, reinforcing internal solidarity. As a mourning symbol, finger amputation is ritually performed by close relatives of the deceased, reflecting their deep sorrow and communal duty. This ritual of finger amputation symbolizes profound grief and serves as a visible expression of solidarity and emotional support within the Dani community.

In their article "Fungsi dan Makna Tradisi Reuhab pada Masyarakat Gampong Kuta Aceh", Fauziah Nurdin and Khairil Fazal examine the Reuhab tradition a death related ritual that also serves to strengthen social solidarity among families and the wider community¹¹. This tradition preserves local cultural values and embodies symbolic, cultural, and spiritual

⁶ Teresia Noiman Derung, "SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IN COMMUNITY LIFE," *GREETING - Journal of Catechetical and Pastoral* 2, no. 1 (May 1, 2017): 118–31, <https://doi.org/10.53544/sapa.v2i1.33>.

⁷ Dr. Sindung Haryanto, M.Si., *SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION FROM CLASSICAL TO POSTMODERN* (AR-RUZZ MEDIA, 2015). 54 The Gospel of Jesus Christ

⁸ Salsabilla Retno Sedah Mirah Murcahyaningrum, Edy Suyanto, and Tri Rini Widyastuti, "The Form of Social Interaction of the Bugis Immigrant Community with the Sasak Community," *Kaganga: Journal of History Education and Social Research in Humanities* 6, no. 2 (October 3, 2023): 373–86, <https://doi.org/10.31539/kaganga.v6i2.6512>.

⁹ Cahoone, "Mead and the Emergence of the Joint Intentional Self."

¹⁰ Bagaskoro Bisono Putro and Ananda Salsabila Nadira, "The Meaning Behind the Tradition of the Niki Paleg of the Dani Tribe in Papua," *Commed: Journal of Communication and Media* 3, no. 2 (February 2019): 159-167.

¹¹ Nurul Fikri, "Analisis Peran Media Sosial dalam Meningkatkan Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat," *Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (2022): 123-135

dimensions, affirming its role as an essential part of Gampong Kuta Aceh's cultural heritage. The study identifies Reuhab as both a religious ritual and a means of reinforcing social relationships. This tradition facilitates communal gatherings, fostering social interaction and reinforcing a sense of togetherness. Beyond its social function, Reuhab carries profound spiritual significance. For the Gampong Kuta Aceh community, Reuhab is regarded as a form of prayer and supplication for divine mercy and blessing. This underscores the intimate connection between local cultural practices and the community's lived religious faith. The Reuhab tradition fulfills several central functions in the community. Reuhab strengthens social solidarity, fostering a shared sense of identity crucial for communal harmony. It serves as a means of spiritual devotion, believed to bring divine blessing and protection to both individuals and the community. Reuhab functions as a medium of cultural education for the younger generation, imparting ancestral identity and values. Although there have been some changes in the implementation of this tradition, essential and moral value contained in it are still preserved. The people of Gampong Kuta Aceh show the ability to adapt to changes without losing their cultural identity. The Reuhab tradition is a real example of how culture can endure and play an important role in the social and spiritual life of the community.

Aurora Indah Oktalia and Rizki Agung Novariyanto¹², in an article titled *Simbol dalam Tradisi Kematian (Geblag) Masyarakat Jawa di Desa Tamankuncaran Kecamatan Tirtoyudo Kabupaten Malang*. This research reveals several main things in the tradition of death in Tamankuncaran Village, namely the Geblag tradition in Javanese culture, with a focus on symbols related to the ritual of death. In this tradition, offerings such as water, flowers, coffee, and the deceased's favorite foods have a deep meaning, both socially and spiritually, especially in the context of purification and soul transition. This research provides an understanding of how this tradition unites Islamic and Javanese values, as well as shows the role of these symbols in helping people face social and spiritual limitations. First, there is a strengthening of cultural identity through the use of symbols in death ceremonies. Second, modernization and globalization have led to changes in traditional practices, so that people face challenges in maintaining the sustainability of these traditions. Third, symbols in the funeral procession act as a means of social communication and become a medium for conveying spiritual and moral values. The Geblag symbol has a deep meaning for the Javanese people. This symbol signifies death and depicts the journey of the soul and the connection between the living and the dead. Some of the main findings in this study include: Geblag as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. People believe that this ritual helps guide the spirits to a better nature. Over time, some traditional elements began to be reduced or eliminated, while modern elements began to be integrated, for example the use of technology in funeral processions. The death procession is a moment for the community to gather, share grief, and provide emotional support to each other.

¹² Aurora Indah Oktalia dan Rizki Agung Novariyanto, "Simbol dalam Tradisi Kematian (Geblag) Masyarakat Jawa di Desa Tamankuncaran Kecamatan Tirtoyudo Kabupaten Malang," *Ideas: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Budaya* 10, no. 3 (Agustus 2024): 629-636

While giving high appreciation to Bagaskoro Bisono Putro and Ananda Salsabila Nadira who have provided valuable insights into the tradition of Niki Paleg which highlights the cutting of fingers as a tangible symbol of grief and loss in the Dani Tribe community. The uniqueness of this ritual lies in the way individuals and communities express grief directly, which has a strong symbolic meaning to maintain a relationship with the departed. The focus on the role of family and community in this ritual reflects the very important value of solidarity in the society. Also to Fauziah Nurdin and Khairil Fazal, for their significant contribution to the understanding of how the Reuhab tradition functions as a binder of social solidarity in the people of Kuta Aceh. This ritual is not only a way to honor those who have passed away, but also serves to build a sense of togetherness among family members and the community. This focus on the social aspect emphasizes the importance of tradition in strengthening the social fish in the wider community. As well as to Aurora Indah Oktalia and Rizki Agung Novariyanto who made significant contributions to anthropological studies and cultural studies and paid attention to symbolism in the Geblag tradition which highlighted how the Geblag tradition helped to strengthen respect for the ancestors and also as a way to remember and maintain social and spiritual relationships that combined the religious and cultural aspects of the local Javanese culture. The main focus on symbols such as offerings and tomb pilgrimage rituals shows how Javanese people view the process of death as a moment of mourning, as well as an opportunity to strengthen social and spiritual ties through the symbols used in this tradition.

Evaluating the views of the experts above, Bagaskoro Bisono Putro and Ananda Salsabila Nadira emphasized the importance of Niki Paleg in the social, cultural, and identity context of tribal communities, even though using the theory of symbolic interactionism, the symbol raised is physical, namely the cutting of the finger. Fauziah Nurdin and Khairil Fazal emphasized Tradition as a means to strengthen social relationships among citizens, create spaces for interaction, and strengthen a sense of togetherness in the community, using the theory of social solidarity from Emile Durkheim. And Aurora Indah Oktalia and Rizki Agung Novariyanto emphasized that symbols in funeral processions function as a means of social communication, as a means of conveying spiritual and moral values, this tradition also depicts the relationship between the living and the dead, with an emphasis on symbols that have spiritual and social significance but do not associate them with the theory of symbolic interactionism. In the three studies above, no study of the Kolubung tradition has been found in the approach of George Herbert Mead's interactional theory. The research in this article wants to fill that gap by offering a theoretical symbolic interactionism approach from George Herbert Mead to understand the Kolubung Tradition in the West Pangian Village community. The problem raised in this study is how the meaning of the Kolubung Tradition in West Pangian Village is formed in the Study of George Herbert Mead's Theory of Symbolic Interactionism. Through tracing how individuals and communities of West Pangian Village develop a common meaning through social interaction in the practice of the kolubung tradition. This research also has the potential to help understand the challenges faced in maintaining traditions in the midst of changing times, as well as how the younger generation can be involved in efforts to preserve traditions that remain relevant in social life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach because the Kolubung tradition is related to human behavior. One of the advantages of qualitative research is its ability to deconstruct patterns and processes of human behavior that are difficult to quantitatively measure.¹³ This approach also allows researchers to dig deep into information about the kulung tradition and its impact on social dynamics in West Pangian Village. According to Creswell, qualitative research is very useful for exploring and understanding symptoms that are not in the form of numbers¹⁴. The location of this study is West Pangian Village, which is located in Bolaang Mongondow Regency, North Sulawesi Province. This village was chosen because it still carries out a strong and active tradition of kolubung in the life of the community. The criteria for selecting informants include members of the community who are involved in the tradition of the kolubung, both as implementers and as participants. The data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, documentation and observation.¹⁵ In-depth interviews were conducted with community members involved in the kolubung to get more personalized information about the experiences and views of community members. Participatory observation is carried out during the kolubung tradition to understand the dynamics of direct social interaction. In addition, secondary data such as documents and archives related to the kolubung tradition were also collected to complete the analysis. The data analysis process uses a thematic analysis approach, where information from interviews and observations is organized into themes relevant to the research question. To validate the data, triangulation is carried out, which is comparing information from various sources to ensure accuracy and consistency. This step is important to increase the credibility of the research and ensure that the results obtained can be accounted for.

RESULTS

Kolubung Tradition in West Pangian Village

Based on the results of data collection, it was found that; The Kolubung tradition in West Pangian Village is a grieving ritual that has a strong social and emotional meaning that shows how the community supports the grieving family. This tradition begins when a family member dies, where the nuclear family will wear Kolubung, which is a white cloth worn by the person who has bathed the body. On the 7th or 14th day, a thanksgiving ceremony is held to mark the completion of the tombstone. The cloth was then distributed by the nuclear family to other related family relatives. Family relatives who receive Kolubung will usually bring chickens or give money as an expression of a sense of togetherness in carrying burdens. Kolubung was also given to religious leaders and village governments.

¹³ Moser and Korsrjens (2017), seperti dikutip [Josephine Oranga](#), [Audrey Matere](#), Qualitative Research: Essence, Types and Advantages, [Open Access Library Journal Vol.10 No.12, December 2023](#). diakses 22 Maret 2025

¹⁴ John W. Creswell, *RESEARCH DESIGN Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches*, 3 (Yogyakarta: PUSTAKA SISWA, 2017), 4–5.

¹⁵ Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, *Quantitative, Qualitative and R&D Research Methods* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2020), 105.

Based on interviews and observations and documentation, regarding the Kolubung tradition in West Pangian Village, it was found that this tradition has a very important role in the social life of the community. Here are the key findings of the study: The Kolubung tradition serves as a space to increase social solidarity in society. When the community implements the Kolubung tradition, there will be a deep sense of empathy between community members. Feelings of mutual support and sharing of burdens with grieving families arise naturally. This shows that social solidarity is strongly established through active participation in this Kolubung tradition, where each individual has a role in caring for togetherness and strengthening social relationships.

It is very visible in the implementation of the Kolubung tradition, the community shows high concern for grieving families by being directly involved in activities related to this Kolubung tradition. This empathy occurs in the family environment and extends to relatives and the surrounding community. Thus, the Kolubung tradition strengthens family relationships and strengthens social ties between individuals in the community. Along with the times, although the Kolubung tradition has a very important role in strengthening social values, the community is also responsible for maintaining a balance between preserving the Kolubung tradition and being open to positive changes that can lead to progress. This reflects the importance of maintaining tradition without making it an obstacle to the social and economic development of the community.

It can be seen that the community, especially the younger generation, is so strong in carrying out the Kolubung tradition. Although most of the younger generation still lacks understanding of the history, stages, or order of implementation of this Kolubung tradition, they still have a desire to maintain the tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. This shows that despite the challenges in maintaining the understanding and implementation of traditions, the younger generation still plays an active role in preserving this Kolubung tradition.

In society, cooperation formed through the Kolubung tradition is very important to achieve common goals. Attention to social relations in the community during the implementation of this tradition shows how the Kolubung tradition encourages the creation of effective cooperation for the common good, both in the family, relatives, and wider community.

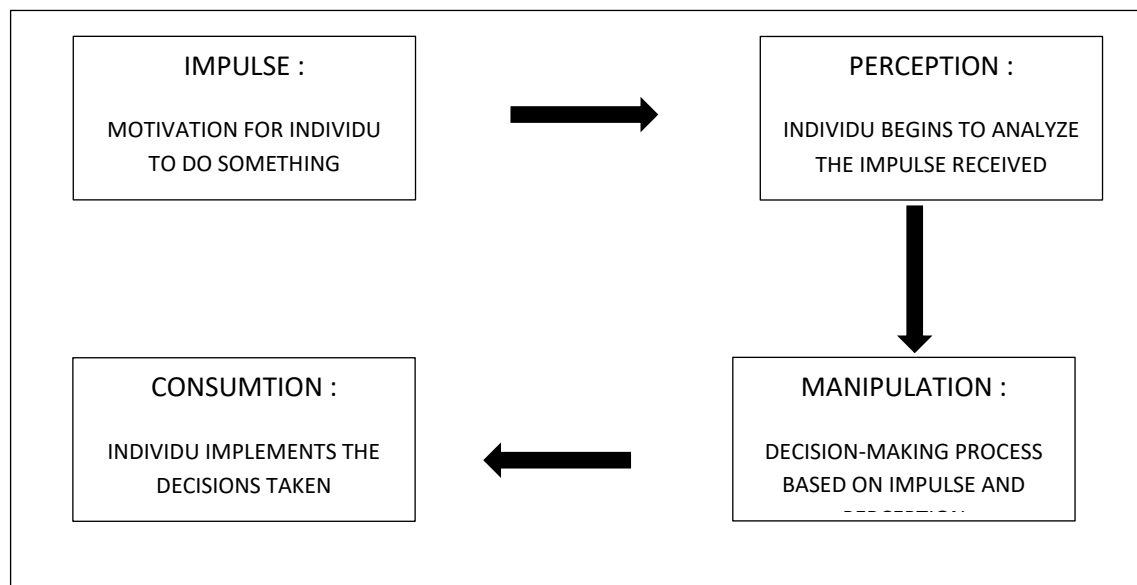
George Herbert Mead's theory of social interactionism.

The theory of Symbolic Interactionism developed by George Herbert Mead emphasizes how individuals form identities through social interactions with others¹⁶. Mead argues that self-understanding, or *self*, does not arise naturally, but rather is formed through social processes that involve symbols and communication with others¹⁷. In society, there is a process called a social process in which there is symbolic communication, and this also affects individuals. Mead developed key concepts such as *mind*, *self*, and *society* to explain how these processes

¹⁶ Nina Siti Salmaniah Siregar, "A STUDY ON SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM," *PERSPECTIVE* 1, no. 2 (February 3, 2016): 100, <https://doi.org/10.31289/perspektif.v1i2.86>.

¹⁷ Cahoon, "Mead and the Emergence of the Joint Intentional Self."

of social interaction work.¹⁸ Here is a further explanation of the three concepts: First, the concept of *mind* in George Herbert Mead's theory, *mind* has an important meaning in understanding how individuals develop as individuals and how they interact with others. Based on the view of symbolic interactionism, *mind* is the ability to think, to communicate with symbols and to understand social meaning captured from interactions with others¹⁹. In other words, *the mind* is formed through relationships and conversations with others, which helps individuals understand themselves and their social environment. *Mind* as a reaction to a symbol or situation, is also the result of broader and deeper thinking. In everyday life, *the mind* serves as a guide that helps individuals make decisions that conform to social norms and expectations. It arises from interaction with others in society. So, *mind* is a personal thought process and also part of a social phenomenon that is formed through relationships between individuals. *Mind* is a thought process that individuals do before taking social action. The *Mind*²⁰ process consists of four steps, namely: *impulse*, *perception*, *manipulation*, and *consumption*. *Impulse* is the initial impulse for a person to act or consider a situation. *Perception* is the phase in which the individual evaluates the stimuli at hand and looks for the most appropriate response. *Manipulation* refers to the process of making decisions based on those impulses and perceptions. Lastly, *Consumption* is the stage in which the individual implements a premeditated decision or action. Each stage in this process is interconnected and influential, forming a cycle that is interconnected with one another.



Second, *the Self*, according to George Herbert Mead, is the way individuals perceive themselves, both as objects and subjects, which are formed through social interaction. Mead emphasized that the *self* is not something static from birth, but rather a dynamic process that

¹⁸ Fabricio Cardoso De Mello, "The social as intersubjectivity: George Herbert Mead and the sociology of individual multitudes," *Sociologias* 25 (2023): e-soc126344, <https://doi.org/10.1590/18070337-126344>.

¹⁹ Derung, "SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IN SOCIAL LIFE." 122-123

²⁰ Putri Prima Tiara, "THE MEANING OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM THEORY" 1, no. 11 (2022).

develops with time and experience, in other words, the *self* is a result that is constantly influenced by the individual and his social environment.²¹ *The self* is formed in a social context, meaning that it is influenced by others, which in turn influences the way individuals see themselves. This process involves the influence and feedback of social interactions. The stages of self-development, i.e. the stage of *play* taking on the role of another person, is the ability of the individual to imagine himself in the position of another, and to see the world from that perspective. In this way, the individual can understand how others might rate or respond to his or her actions.²² This process is important in self-formation because it helps individuals see themselves as objects of other people's views, as subjects in action. Then the individual *game*²³ stage will focus on one specific role without considering the larger social context. At this stage, the individual will focus on just one role, and this is the first step in understanding social roles through imitation and learning. This is the initial step in which individuals begin to understand broader social roles through imitation and learning. Furthermore, the individual stage begins to develop a deeper understanding of social roles. By starting to recognize the concept of *generalized other*, which is the views and norms that apply in society as a whole. It is the view of a particular individual as well as a broader social perspective, which allows the individual to function in the context of society as a whole²⁴, that when the individual understands *the generalized other*, then the individual can conform to larger social expectations, with a collective view that reflects the norms and values of society as a whole. Mead divides *the self* into two main components²⁵, i.e. *I*, which is part of the spontaneous and creative self, acting without much consideration. Aspect *I* is more personal and unstructured. Whereas *Me* is a more organized part of the self, influenced by other people's views and social norms. *I* and *Me* interact with each other to form a whole self, in which *I* act in situations, while *Me* directs individuals on how they should behave in a social context.

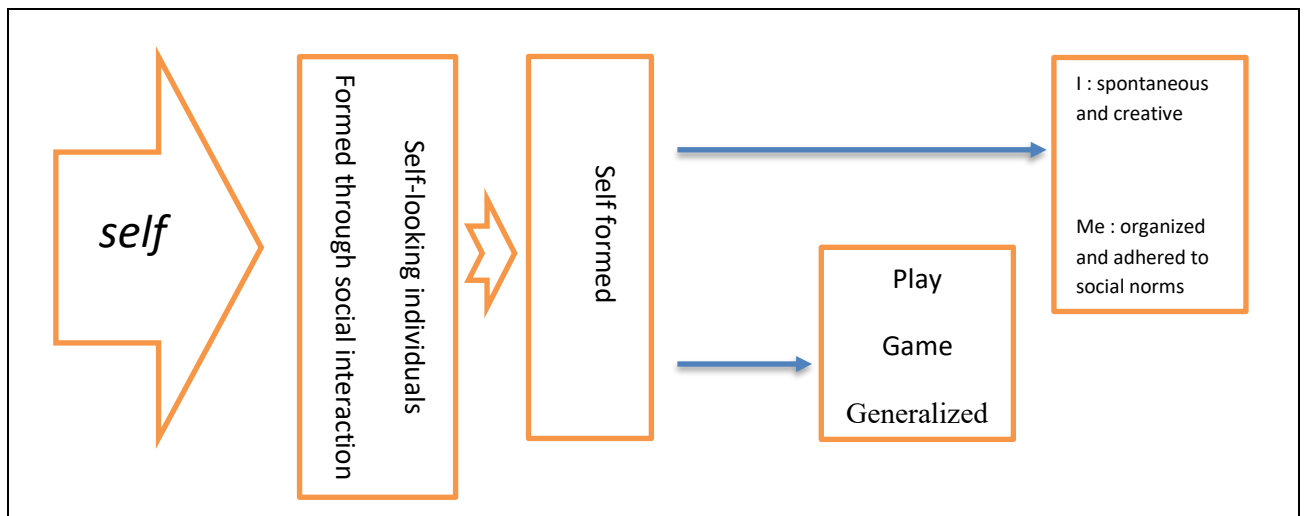
²¹ Derung, "SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IN SOCIAL LIFE." 123-124

²² "Introduction to Sociology #8- George Herbert Mead UNIJA Fakhruddin Muchtar," n.d.

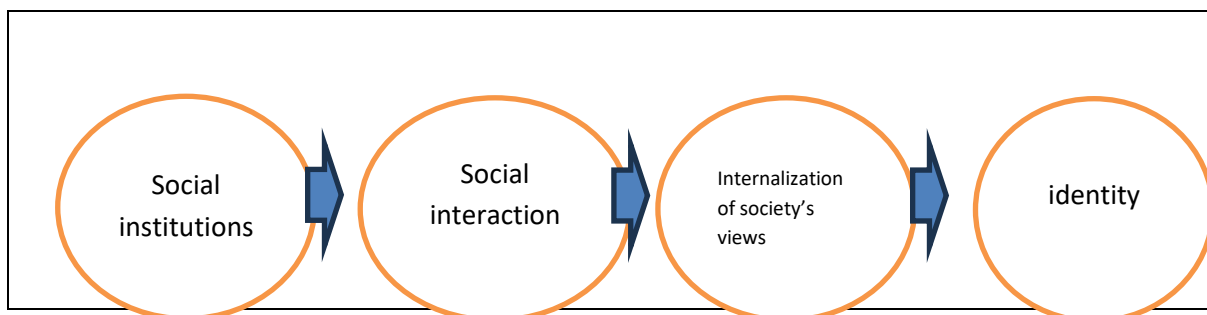
²³ Ari Rohmawati dkk., "Potrait of Social Interaction among the Vilagers in the Perspective of George Herbet Mead's Symbolic Interactionism Theory," *International Journal on Advanced Science, Education, and Religion* 4, no. 1 (2021): 41–49, <https://doi.org/10.33648/ijoaser.v4i1.94>.

²⁴ Irfan Sabarilah Hasim, Indah Widiastuti, and Iwan Sudradjat, "Symbolic Interactionism in Vernacular Cultural Landscape Research," *ARTEKS : Journal of Architectural Engineering* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2023): 135–44, <https://doi.org/10.30822/arteks.v8i1.2080>.

²⁵ Hasim dkk., "Symbolic interactionism in vernacular cultural landscape research."



Third, *Society* is something that is constantly changing and evolving, through social interaction and symbols. *Society* provides the context that shapes social interactions and individual identities. With the social structure in place, individuals learn how to behave in certain situations. George Herbert Mead²⁶ saw society as the result of symbolic interactions between individuals. He identifies six major institutions in society: language, family, economy, religion, politics, and science. Each of these institutions plays an important role in shaping the social norms, values, and structures that influence our daily behavior. *Society* creates norms and values that influence individual behavior as well as provide an environment in which individuals can develop identity. In *Society*, individuals learn to understand themselves through interactions with others and through social symbols used in communication²⁷. Through this understanding, individuals begin to internalize the view of *Society*, which further shapes self-identity. *Society* creates norms and values that influence individual behavior as well as provide an environment in which individuals can develop identity. Based on the theory of symbolic interactionism, symbols in this communication are essential to shaping the way individuals perceive themselves. Thus, individuals learn and grow in society, internalize social norms, and build identities based on the influences they receive. This is in line with the view that *Society*. provides a social environment that supports self-development through shared symbols, values, and norms.



²⁶ Lonnie Athens, “Mead’s Lost Conception of Society,” *Symbolic Interaction* 28, no. 3 (2005): 305–25, <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2005.28.3.305>.

²⁷ Hasim dkk., “Symbolic interactionism in vernacular cultural landscape research.”

Theory of Social Interactionism and the Kolubung Tradition.

Research on the tradition of mourning, as explained above in the introduction, namely; Niki Paleg in the Dani Tribe, Reuhab in Kuta Aceh, and Geblag in Java, revealed that these traditions have an emotional dimension for the grieving person and serve as a symbol of social solidarity in the community. Although each tradition has its own characteristics, there are also similarities in the use of symbols that shape and strengthen social relationships and community identity. In the Kolubung tradition, white cloth is used as a symbol of grief to function as a powerful social communication tool, conveying individual grief and solidarity with grieving families. This is similar to the tradition of Niki Paleg in the Dani Tribe, which involves the practice of cutting off fingers as a sign of mourning. This act depicts grief and reflects deep social solidarity, where grieving family members show grief physically and emotionally. The main difference between the Kolubung tradition and the Niki Paleg tradition lies in its physical symbolism; The Niki Paleg tradition involves direct action as a symbol of sacrifice and grief, while the Kolubung tradition uses the symbol of white cloth to express solidarity in a more non-physical way. Nonetheless, both emphasize the importance of community participation in sharing emotional burdens, while also showing that the grieving process is a collective social experience that strengthens bonds between individuals.

In the Reuhab tradition in Gampong Kuta Aceh, like the Kolubung tradition, it also has a very significant spiritual and social dimension. Reuhab provides an opportunity for people to gather, strengthen social relationships, and get closer to God. A similar thing can be found in Kolubung, where the presence of religious leaders and village governments adds a spiritual dimension and authority in the grieving process. Both traditions emphasize the importance of broader social support, go beyond just grieving families, and show how the community as a whole plays a role in providing a sense of security and recovery for individuals experiencing loss. However, Reuhab emphasizes the spiritual aspects related to prayer and hope, while Kolubung focuses more on social solidarity shown through the symbol of the white cloth and the act of sharing the burden with grieving families. Both use symbols to convey social and religious values, as well as show how grieving rituals serve as a collective space to strengthen social solidarity.

As in the Reuhab tradition in Gampong Kuta Aceh, Kolubung has a very important spiritual and social dimension. In Reuhab, this tradition becomes a space for the community to gather and strengthen social relationships and get closer to God. The same can also be found in Kolubung, where the presence of religious leaders and the village government strengthens the spiritual and moral dimensions of mourning. Both traditions underscore the importance of greater social support, beyond the grieving family, and show how the community as a whole is involved in providing a sense of security and recovery to the bereaved individual. However, Reuhab emphasizes the spiritual dimension connected to prayer and hope, while Kolubung focuses more on social solidarity through the symbolism of white cloth and the act of sharing the burden with grieving families. Both rely on symbols to communicate social and religious values, and show how mourning rituals become a collective space to affirm social solidarity.

The Geblag tradition in Java, which emphasizes symbols such as water, flowers, coffee, and the deceased's favorite food, has similarities with Kolubung in terms of symbolic functions

that connect individuals with social and spiritual values. Just as Geblag uses symbols to convey mutual respect and soul-switching, Kolubung wears white cloth to express solidarity, albeit with more social influence in the context of grieving in the community. However, there is a striking difference in the focus of these two traditions: Geblag places more emphasis on the process of purification and the journey of the soul, while Kolubung is more oriented towards social aspects that strengthen relationships between individuals and show empathy for bereaved families. Both show that the symbol of grief as a tool to express grief, also strengthens social relationships through participation in broader rituals.

The Kolubung tradition in West Pangian Village illustrates how symbolic communication through white cloth, chicken, and money is part of the process of emotional and social recovery. The community grieves together and actively participates in feeling the emotional burden and providing assistance to bereaved families. This is in line with George Herbert Mead's view that *the self* is formed through social interaction and symbolic communication. So that collaboration in the Kolubung tradition strengthens the social identity of individuals as part of the wider community.

A comparison between the Kolubung tradition and other mourning traditions shows that despite the differences in the methods and symbols used, the basic principles of social solidarity built through symbolic interaction are very similar. Kolubung, like Niki Paleg, Reuhab, and Geblag, have a deep meaning that leads to a broader social understanding, namely how people interact with each other and support each other in facing death. In this context, the identity formed through social interaction reflects how strong social bonds are in building solidarity in everyday life.

The Kolubung Tradition as a Social Communication Space

In the context of social interactionism, the Kolubung tradition in West Pangian Village is a religious ritual as well as a cultural custom. The Kolubung tradition functions as a process of forming meaning that occurs in social interaction between individuals in the community in West Pangian Village. Mead said that individual identity is formed through social communication involving symbols, such as the use of white cloth in the Kolubung tradition. White cloth in the Kolubung tradition functions as a physical object that has a symbolic meaning, shows feelings of grief, and is a sign of solidarity and empathy between the bereaved family and other members of the community. As part of the Kolubung tradition, other related families who receive Kolubung cloth from the nuclear family usually bring chickens or give money. This chicken or money symbolizes a sense of togetherness and solidarity in supporting a grieving family. This action shows that other related families share grief and share the emotional burden with the grieving family. This reflects the social solidarity in this tradition, where individuals and families are connected to each other through symbolic actions in the Kolubung tradition. On the 7th or 14th day after death, a thanksgiving ceremony is held to mark the completion of the making of the tombstone. The tombstone serves as a marker of the grave and as a symbol of emotional and social recovery for the family left behind. This event signifies that the grieving period has reached a certain stage, where the family begins to accept the reality of loss. It also symbolizes the recognition of the cycle of life and death that all members of society must accept. The tombstone acts as a marker of emotional recovery,

meaning that the family has gone through the stages of the grieving process. It provides visual symbols that remind the family of a deep sense of loss, and provides an opportunity for the family to accept reality and move on with life. Tombstones also have a social function, signifying the role of deceased individuals to remain remembered and respected in society. In the Kolubung tradition, religious leaders and the village government also have an important role. The involvement of religious and government figures adds a spiritual dimension and authority, as well as providing moral support for bereaved families. Religious and government figures became symbols of social authority that helped maintain emotional and social stability in society when facing times of grief. The presence of religious and government leaders strengthens the message of solidarity and togetherness, showing that this Kolubung tradition involves the attention of the entire community. In this case, Kolubung describes how individuals form social identities in the context of local traditions through symbolic communication.

Social Solidarity in the Kolubung Tradition.

As part of the grieving tradition, the Kolubung tradition shows how symbols play a role in social interaction to create meaning. According to Mead, symbols in social interactions are very important in shaping self-understanding. In the context of Kolubung, the white cloth serves as a physical sign that someone is grieving and symbolizes solidarity, empathy, and support from other members of society. By wearing a white cloth in the Kolubung tradition, it can be seen that individuals communicate non-verbally, convey feelings of grief to others, and show participation in larger social processes, namely; share emotional burdens with grieving families. The Kolubung tradition is a symbol that connects one individual with another in a broader social bond. Each individual has an active role in maintaining the social network that has been formed. In addition, in Mead's view, this symbolic communication includes non-verbal cues such as white cloth and verbal cues. The expressions of sympathy conveyed by relatives and neighbors who were present further strengthened the symbolic meaning in the Kolubung tradition. Therefore, in social interactions in this tradition, both verbal and non-verbal symbols complement each other to strengthen social bonds and create a deep sense of solidarity within society.

Kolubung Tradition and Identity Formation.

According to Mead, as explained in the first concept, namely *mind*, which is not only an individual's thinking ability, but also a form of symbolic communication formed through social interaction. In this context, the concept *of mind* is used to explain how individuals shape meaning and reactions to social situations over symbolic communication with others. In the Kolubung tradition, individuals wear white cloth as a physical act and as an act that is interpreted through social interaction. The white cloth becomes a symbol that the individual is grieving and actively participates in the broader grieving process. This suggests that *the mind* It is a response to a single symbol or situation, as well as the result of broader social thinking, which is influenced by norms, values, and expectations in society. Mead emphasizes that *the Mind* develops through four interrelated stages: Drive, perception, manipulation, and execution. In the Kolubung tradition, the first step (encouragement) is the emotional impulse

that arises after the loss of a family member. This encouragement encourages individuals to wear white cloth as a sign. The second step (perception) is the understanding that wearing white cloth is a personal act and to show social solidarity. Manipulation occurs when the individual considers how an action will be perceived by others in a larger social context, whereas execution is the stage where the decision to wear the white cloth and participate in the tradition is made by the individual.

In the second concept, the *self* is the result of social interaction and develops in a larger social context. Mead emphasizes that *the self* is not something that has existed since birth, but rather a *dynamic process* that forms and develops over time. In this case, *the self* is formed through two important elements in social interaction, namely *I* and *Me*. *I* is a spontaneous and creative part of the self, acting without much consideration, while *Me* is an organized part, influenced by other people's views and social norms. In the Kolubung tradition, individuals who participate in this tradition, will form a personal identity and strengthen the collective identity of the community. Individuals who wear white cloth as a symbol of mourning, will serve as grieving individuals, and also express deep social solidarity towards the grieving family. The white cloth here serves as a symbol with a clearer social meaning, more than just a marker of grief, and also as a form of symbolic communication that reflects a sense of empathy and concern for others.

One of the important concepts in Mead's theory is taking *the role of the other*. This process explains how individuals can imagine themselves in someone else's position, see the world from someone else's perspective, and understand how others judge or respond to the actions of others in the position of others. In the context of the Kolubung tradition, wearing a white cloth and participating in a grieving ritual can be understood as an act that reflects the individual's ability to take on the role of others, that is, understanding the perspective of the grieving family and the community that provides support. Through taking on this role, individuals learn to understand how feelings of grief are perceived by others in society. In other words, individuals learn to see themselves personally as grieving individuals and as part of a larger community, showing solidarity with families who are experiencing the loss of a family member. This reflects how *the self* is formed through social interaction, with the influence and feedback from others shaping the individual's actions and feelings.

The generalized concept of *other* in Mead's theory refers to the views and norms that prevail in society as a whole. This *generalized other* includes the views of a particular individual as well as a broader social perspective, which allows the individual to function in the context of society at large. In the Kolubung tradition, *this generalized other* reflects the community's expectation that individuals should show a sense of empathy and solidarity through participation in grieving rituals. It is an act that involves the individual personally, but it is also a social process in which the individual conforms to the collective view of society that emphasizes the importance of supporting each other in the face of death. By understanding *the generalized other*, the individual plays the role of the grieving person and as part of a larger society that shares the emotional burden. Individuals adjust to greater social expectations, where grieving involves personal feelings as well as the social role taken to maintain social relationships and solidarity with the community. In this case, *the self* is not Formed in the personal space and in the broader social space, which allows the individual to see himself as

part of a larger community. The social solidarity created through participation in the Kolubung tradition is essential in the formation of *the self* in a social context. When individuals participate in these traditions, it forms a personal identity and strengthens the collective identity of the community. The Kolubung tradition creates a social space that allows individuals to interact, share emotional burdens, and strengthen social relationships. This process shows how *the self* develops in social interactions, where individuals form identities based on personal views and broader social expectations.

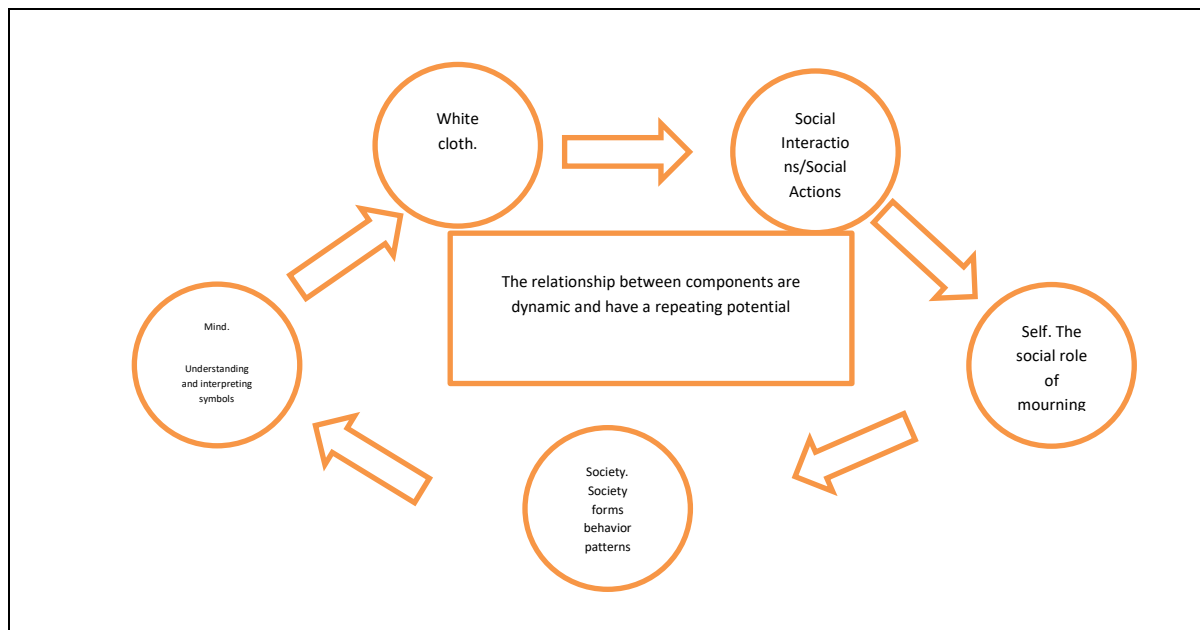
Through participation in the Kolubung tradition, the people in West Pangian Village show that social solidarity is an important part of daily life. This solidarity occurs in the grieving nuclear family and extends to relatives and the surrounding community who also feel the emotional burden and provide support. This shows that *the self* in the social context, personal identity is related to the social role taken in maintaining harmonious and mutually supportive social relationships.

The Young Generation-Tradition Sustainability and Adaptation to Social Change

Although the Kolubung tradition has a very important role in strengthening social values in West Pangian Village, there are challenges in maintaining the understanding and practice of this tradition, especially among the younger generation. Most of the younger generation do not fully understand the meaning and procedures of implementing this Kolubung tradition, but still play an active role in preserving it. This phenomenon reflects the challenges faced by many traditional societies in maintaining a balance between preserving cultural heritage with the ever-evolving social and modernization developments.

However, despite changes in the way traditions are carried out, the core values contained in Kolubung such as solidarity, empathy, and social support remain relevant and continue to be maintained. This shows that traditions can adapt to the changing times without losing their deep social and cultural essence. This process reflects the cultural dynamics described by Mead, in which individuals and groups are constantly adapting to the social environment, without sacrificing existing values.

The Process of Symbolic Interactionism in the Kulung Tradition



CONCLUSION

This study found that the meaning of the Kolubung Tradition with the symbol of white cloth in West Pangian Village was formed through social interaction that occurred between individuals and the community. Based on the theory of symbolic interactionism from George Herbert Mead, the people of West Pangian Village jointly create the meaning of this tradition through symbolic communication, both verbal and non-verbal. The white cloth, worn by grieving families, is a way for people to support each other and show solidarity. Through participation in this tradition, Community members show empathy for grieving families and strengthen social bonds. This means that the Kolubung Tradition is an expression of individuals who are grieving, as well as how the entire community builds a common meaning and maintains close social relationships. This research provides new insights into understanding that symbols in local traditions can shape social meaning, in line with George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in shaping individual and collective identities. The main implication of this research is the importance of preserving the Kolubung tradition as part of the social identity and solidarity of the community, despite the challenges that come with the changing times and modernization. This research contributes to the study of the role of symbols in local traditions, as well as how social solidarity is formed in cultural contexts. Further research can be carried out to dig deeper into how the younger generation understands and maintains the Kolubung tradition.

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