Abstract

This study aims to analyze the meaning of food specialization in the Miare tradition for the people of Makrampai village. The research data were obtained in in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies. Data collection was carried out from September to December 2021. The data analysis found that the two groups gave different meanings regarding the specialization of food for the Makrampai village society. First, for groups which know the Miare tradition, food specialization is interpreted as an effort to remind death. Second, food specialization is interpreted as respect for ancestral cultural heritage and preserving local wisdom for the lay group. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the meaning of the specialization of food in the Miare tradition for the Makrampai village society is closely related to each individual's understanding of the essence of the Miare tradition.

Keywords: Miare Tradition; Malay Society; Specialization of Food; Selamatan Tradition

Introduction

Culture is a wealth that is owned by every society. Culture is the embodiment of human response to the reality of the life they experience. Koentjaraningrat (2005) states that there are four forms of culture. First, culture is an ideological value. Second, culture is a system of ideas. Third,
culture is a patterned behaviour system. Fourth, culture as physical objects (artefacts).

One of the cultural treasures of the society that still survives is the Miare tradition. This tradition is usually carried out in the family home of the deceased. The Miare tradition is a series of traditions carried out by the Makrampai village society until the thousandth day after death. The purpose of this tradition is to pray for the deceased so that his sins are forgiven, and he gets the protection of Allah SWT. This tradition is carried out by reading the Qur'an, tahlilan, which then ends with praying together.

The Miare tradition is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation in the Makrampai village society. The Miare tradition is carried out from the first day down to the seventh day in a row. Then, it continued on the fifteenth day, the twenty-fifth day, the fortieth day and the one-hundredth day. Uniquely, in the Makrampai society, there is a specialization of food dishes daily to implement this tradition. So that the food served every day is different and has been determined according to the day's count. The specialization is because every food served is associated with decomposing the corpse's body in the grave. For example, on the twenty-fifth day of the miare tradition, the cake served is Apam cake. This cake symbolizes that the grave's corpse has swollen and expanded.

The Miare tradition is part of Indonesia's cultural diversity of the death feast. This tradition is similar to the death feast practised by other communities, such as the Javanese and Sundanese. The similarity is mainly related to the time of its implementation, from the first day to the thousandth after the funeral. However, the Miare tradition has its peculiarities in its implementation. For example, in the Miare tradition, a culture of Makan Besaprah can only be found in the Sambas Malay society (Arpan 2009; Lizawati 2017; Mualimin 2020; Syahrin and Nurida 2018). Meanwhile, death feasts in other societies are not found in the culture of Makan Besaprah. This difference shows that the Miare tradition is strongly influenced by the local wisdom of the Sambas Malay society.

The other most striking difference between the death feast tradition elsewhere and the Miare tradition is food specialization. Referring to previous research on the death feast, no research results have been found that
specifically discuss the specialization of food with a specific purpose in the
death feast tradition. Pre-existing research tends to focus, and research findings
on the death feast tradition are related to the dimensions of Islamic law,
syncretism, and acculturation between the death feast tradition and the local
wisdom of a community that carries it out (Busyairy 2018; Delima 2014;
Fadillah, Anwar, and Zainab 2020; Fauzi 2017; Suriani 2018; Virdiani 2008).
Meanwhile, in the Makrampai village society, food specialization is in the
Miare tradition. This specialization is closely related to the symbolization of the
condition of the corpse's body in the grave.

The reality of food specialization in the Miare tradition is exciting to
study. Moreover, previous studies did not find any specific studies on this
reality. In other words, there is a lack of study in the literature on food
specialization and symbolic communication in the death feast tradition in
Indonesia.

Methods
This study is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach.
Hamzah (2020) and Creswell (2013) view that the character of
phenomenological research is to reveal individual experiences and meanings of
the reality that occurs so that it is relevant to the focus of this study. This study
was conducted in Makrampai Village, Tebas District, Sambas Regency. Data
collection was carried out from September to December 2021. Data were
obtained through three ways, namely participant observation, in-depth
interviews, and documentary studies. There were eight informants in this
study. The data obtained were then analyzed using phenomenological analysis
procedures.

Results and Discussion
Food Specialization in the Miare Tradition
The food served in the Miare tradition is generally the daily food of the
society. However, particular foods are related to specific counts in the Miare
tradition. This food specialization symbolizes the condition of the corpse's
body in the grave. The particular type of food is in the form of cakes.
According to HL, no one knows the reason for using cake-type food, which
symbolizes the corpse's condition. It is just that, according to him, the cake is a
food that is easy to shape, modify, and adapt to the needs of society (HL, Interview 21 September 2021).

Giving food in the tradition is considered alms by the Makrampai people. In addition, the food served is also a specific symbol. The symbolized food is served on six specific days in the Miare tradition. First, Hari Turun Tanah. The first day after the corpse's funeral is called the Hari Turun Tanah. The day of descent is the first day of the start of a series of activities in the Miare tradition. On this day, family and neighbours gather to deliver and bury the body at the cemetery. Then in the evening, the family and society gather at the deceased's house to read the Qur'an and pray for the deceased. This series of family and society activities aims to facilitate the initial process of the spirit entering the grave.

The society of Makrampai gather at the deceased's house on the night of Hari Turun Tanah. On this night, families and communities gather to read the Qur'an and pray for the souls. The time to read the Qur'an is not specified. Families can read the Qur'an starting in the afternoon, but generally, people come to read the Qur'an together after Maghrib until Isha's prayers. After reading the Qur'an, food is served to be eaten together by the people who participate in reading the Qur'an. The food served is what the people call bubur catok.

Figure 1. Bubur Catok

Source: obtained from primary data
Bubur catok is a symbol of the corpse's condition in the grave. The bubur catok is considered by society to symbolize the land. While the gravy symbolizes water. Thus the bubur catok symbolizes the condition of the corpse soaking in the grave (HL, Interview 22 September 2021). Even specifically, ES explains that:

“... jadi di malam nurun tanah ye kite tahlilan, dan maseh tatap wajib mbuat bubur catok ye. bubur catok iye ibarat tanah galean kubur yang diangkat. Lakak iye kuah santan yang berwarne agak kuning kecoklatan itok ibarat aek yang ade di liang lahat (...so on the night of Turun Tanah (the first night after the funeral) we do tahlilan and still have to make Bubur catok. Bubur catok is like digging a grave. While the brownish yellow coconut milk sauce is like water that floods the grave) (ES, Interview 17 September 2021)

This symbolization is because the society knows that the soil condition in Makrampai is a lowland area, so there may be many springs in the ground. It is not uncommon for the body to be buried in a grave filled with water, so it must be dried first. This condition also causes the funeral in Makrampai to use a crate (keranda).

Second, the second day after the funeral. On the second day, the society continued the tahlilan together at the deceased's residence. On this second night, there is a particular food, the Ukal and the Tungkat Nabi. It is just that related to the specialization of food on the second day, not all of them carry it out. This is as information from ES:

“... nah kemudian pade malam hari kedua itok mbuat ukal dengan tungkat nabi. Cume untuk hari kedua itok daan semue urang ngerajjekannye. Ukal itok dibuat dalam ukurang yang agak besar. Sedangkang tungkat nabi iye bentuknye bulat panjang. Ukal itok diibaratkan perisai. Kemudian tungkat tok e urang nggalareknye tungkat nabi, iye seolah-olah malaikat mungkar dan nakir nantek kan bawak tungkat atan kayu untuk dipukulkan ke mayat kalau mayat itok lebih banyak dose daripade pahale. Namun mun dah dibuatkan tungkat nabi dan dihidangkan ke masyarakat yang ikut tahlilan nanteknye malaikatnye daan agek bise nak mukulkan tungkatnye agek, kame udah dimakan leh urang yang tahlilan ye”. (...then on the second night the cake made is ukal with tungkat nabi. It's just that for this second night's special not everyone does it. Ukal is made with a rather large size. While tungkat nabi is round and long. Ukal is likened to a shield. While tungkat nabi is like a stick that the angels of Munkar and Nakir carry to
beat a corpse if the sin is greater than the reward. But by serving and eating *tungkat nabi* by the people who took part in the tahlilan, the angels Munkar and Nakir could no longer beat their sticks because they had already been eaten) (ES, Interview 17 September 2021).

Figure 2. Ukal

![Pasung](source: obtained from primary data)

Third, six days after the funeral. On the sixth night after the body was buried, the society still read the Qur'an together after the Maghrib prayer at the deceased's house. In the Makrampai society, the exceptional food served on the sixth day is pasung. The Makrampai people interpret pasung as a sign that reading the Qur'an together at the deceased's house will end and soon be finished.

This meaning is associated with the Nujjuh Likur tradition carried out by the Makrampai society during Ramadan. On the 27th night of Ramadan, the Makrampai people gather in the mosque to recite Surah Yaasin. On the 27th night of Ramadan, people bring pasung. To the Makrampai society, this tradition is a sign that the month of Ramadan is ending (ES, Interview 17 September 2021).

Figure 3. Pasung
Fourth, fifteen daily events are held on the fifteenth day after the body is buried. In this tradition, people read tahlil together (tahlilan), which is continued by praying for the deceased. There are particular foods served in this fifteen daily event. The food is Serabi cake.

Figure 4. Serabi cake

Source: obtained from primary data

The condition of the corpse's body is considered to have begun to rot, swell, and have holes on the fifteenth day after burial. The Makrampai people refer to the term condition of the body with holes as ngereweng. This is symbolized by the Serabi cake, where the texture of this cake is hollow and slightly fluffy (SO, Interview 19 September 2021).

Fifth, a twenty-five-daily event is held on the twenty-fifth day after the body is buried. In this tradition, people read tahlil together (tahlilan), which is continued by praying for the soul. In the Makrampai society, the food mainly served on the twenty-fifth day is Apam cake.
The condition of the corpse's body is considered to have rotted, swollen, and hollow on the twenty-fifth day after burial. The Apam cake symbolizes this condition. Apam cake symbolizes the body's rotted and swelled condition (HL, Interview 22 September 2021).

Sixth, a forty-daily event is held on the fortieth day after the body is buried. In this tradition, people read tahlil together (tahlilan), which is continued by praying for the soul. In the Makrampai society, the exceptional food served on the fortieth day is Cincin cake.

The condition of the corpse's body is considered to have been damaged and almost to the bones after forty days of burial. A ring cake symbolizes this condition. The Cincin cake is a symbol of bones. This is because the shape of this cake is like a bone (ES, Interview 17 September 2021; HL, Interview 22 September 2021).

The reality related to the symbolization of food in the Miare tradition is a form of imagination of the Malay society in Makrampai regarding the process of decaying corpses. This imagination is undoubtedly based on people's life experiences, both individual experiences and collective experiences. In line
with that, Zittoun and Cerchia (2013) and Dor (2017) view that life experiences contribute to human imagination and projection of something, which is then reflected in various realities. In addition, the symbolization of food in the Miare tradition shows an effort to interact between experience and imagination that is transcendental by humans. This is because the Miare tradition is not only part of the local wisdom of the Malay society in Makrampai but also part of the religious culture of the society. Handayani and Ali (2020), in that context, view that religious practice cannot be separated from the role of imagination, especially those that are transcendent.

The symbolization of food in the Miare tradition can be explained by Mead, who views that everyone uses a language and symbol in interacting. The symbol is given a meaning which will then cause a response between interacting individuals. Therefore, the symbols or symbols used to allow interaction to occur. A symbol or symbol is used to designate something else based on the agreement of a group of people. Symbols include words or verbal messages, non-verbal behaviour, and objects whose meanings are mutually agreed upon. In Mulyana’s (2007) view, humans can use symbols to interact. The human ability to use verbal symbols allows language development and to handle relationships between humans and objects (both natural and abstract) without the presence of humans and objects.

Ritzer (2004) views that the process of symbolization emphasizes the process of translating between humans. This process is based on understanding the meaning given to human actions through symbols and interpretation processes. In turn, each individual will try to understand the intentions and actions of each to reach a mutual agreement.

The food served in the Miare tradition are symbols that are already known to the public. This symbolic process influences humans to regulate their environment by building relationships between people. The relationship is through the exchange of information that serves to strengthen the attitudes and behaviour of others and try to change those attitudes and behaviour (Del Casino and Thien 2020; Zittoun 2015). At this level, this symbolic process can influence some Makrampai people. For the Makrampai people who still believe in this symbolism, there is a belief that this symbolization will positively impact
them. On that basis, people who still believe in this symbolism make the symbolization of food in this tradition a must.

Humans or individuals live in an environment filled with symbols (Prasanti and Sjafirah 2017). Each living individual will respond to existing symbols, such as individual judgments responding to a stimulus from something physical. Individual understanding of symbols results from learning to interact with their environment by trying to understand the symbols around them, both verbally and non-verbally (Umar 2018). In the end, learning and understanding the meaning behind existing symbols becomes a unique feature for humans.

The Meaning of Specializing Food in the Miare Tradition

Food specialization is not just a complement to the series of Miare traditions in Makrampai, but this specialization has its meaning. This meaning then causes food specialization in the miare tradition, which persists. The meaning of the food specialization as stated by ES:

“... kebanyakakan yak iye memang dah jadi keseluruhan iye. Banyak dari masyarakat yang daan juak ngeratti maksud pengkhususan iye terutame yang mudak-mudak lah. Tapi iye seragam urang kerajjekan. Cume mun jinye urang tue gek dolok kenape makanan iye dikhhusukan supaye kitte ingat dengan kematian dan kite tau ndak ade yang bise dibanggekan dari tampang atau harte dunie. Mun waktu idup kite sombong daan maok ngalleh urang kallak dah mati muke kitte ye akan burok dan dimakan ulat. Mun waktu idup daan maok nak nullong urang kalak dalam kubor sean yang bise nullong kite dari kannak makan ulat dan cacing. Mun waktu idup daan maok nak begaol, kallak dah mati badan kitte abis burok dan ulatan. Iyelah kenape pengkhususan makanan ye maseh tatap urang kerajjekan sampai kinitok supaye passan kematian ye labbeh sampai dengan mengingatkan kitte kepade bagaimane kondisi tubuh dari utuh sampai burok di dalam kubor (...most people are used to specialize in food in Miare. Many people do not understand the purpose of the specialization, especially the young people. Even so, the specialization agreed that people did it. If we refer to the explanation of our parents in the past, the purpose of this specialization of food is to remember death and we realize that there is nothing to be proud of in terms of looks and worldly possessions. If in life we are arrogant, don't want to help people in need, later there will be no one to help us when we are buried. That is why specialization of food is still carried out until now so that the message of death is more accurate in describing the condition of the
body from whole to rotting in the grave)” (ES, Interview 17 September 2021).

The statement from ES is in line with the information presented by SO:

“... gek dolok suah ade urang yang meninggal tapi daan dimandekkan sehingga terpakse kuburannya dibongkar lagi. Waktu dibongkar ye memang dah ngampau inyan same dengan yang digambarkan dengan kue dihari iye. Rattinye urang daan juak sembarang hubung-hubungkan kondisi jenazah dengan kue. Justru labbeh berdasarkan pengalaman. Jadi mun tambol yang dikaikkkan dengan kondisi jenazah di kubur ye sebanarnye yang untuk ngingatkan dengan alam kubur. Supaye ingat juak dengan mati. Jadi mun dah ingat e harus banyak sedakkah agek idup (...once upon a time there was a person who died but forgot to be buried without being bathed first, so the grave had to be re-discovered. When it was dismantled, it was seen that the corpse was indeed expanding, exactly the same as the one described with the cake. This means that people do not carelessly associate the condition of the corpse with certain cakes. Rather, it is based on experience. So if the cake is associated with the condition of the corpse in the grave, it is actually a reminder of the nature of the grave. So that you also remember death. So if you remember, then you have to give a lot of charity while you are still alive)” (SO, Interview 19 September 2021).

Food specialization is not only interpreted as a reminder of death but also has other meanings for the people of Makrampai village. This is as stated by YM:

“.....mun di tanyak ape untuk nyimbolkan ape dari tambol-tambol iye, tantu daan bise nak njalaskannye yang sebatolnye. Bagus tanya ajak ke pak labai untuk iye. Tapi mun ditanya ngape kamek tang masih mbuat tambol iye untuk miare tantu kamek ngikut kebiasaan urang tue ajak. Paling indak ngargaek ape yang udah urnag tue ajarkan. Yak daan juak ngabisek duit banyak ye beh (...if asked what the symbols of the cakes mean, of course I can't explain it. Better to just ask Mr. Labai. But if we ask why we still make the cake in miare, of course it is because we follow the habits of our parents. At least appreciate what parents have taught. After all, it doesn’t cost a lot of money either)” (YM, Interview 22 September 2021).

YM’s statement is in line with the information submitted by SO, which is as follows:
...seindaknye mengharga ek tradisi yang dah urang gek dolok ajarkan. Jadi bagi kitte yang mudak-mudak itok e melestarikan warisan budaye nek datok. Supaye nantek anak cucok kite daan lupa asal usulnye (...at least respect the traditions previously taught. So we young people are preserving the cultural heritage of our grandparents. So that later, our children and grandchildren will not forget their origins) (SO, Interview 19 September 2021).

Information from YM and SO shows that many Makrampai societies do not know precisely the symbolic message of specialization in food in the Miare tradition. This ignorance also causes many who provide exceptional food to go along. However, for people who do not know the essence of the symbol, food specialization is interpreted as a form of appreciation for ancestral heritage. Therefore, this ignorance does not cause food specialization in the Miare tradition to be abolished. The interview data is in line with the results of the observations made. The observation found that food specialization can be found in almost every implementation of Miare. The provision of exceptional food is not only done by the deceased's family but is often assisted and even initiated by society. This reality shows that this tradition has meaning in the Makrampai Village society.

The Makrampai society still maintains the Society tradition. Likewise, the specialization of food in the Miare tradition in the Makrampai society is not just a culture passed down from generation to generation. However, it has specific values and meanings in people's lives. The existence of the Miare tradition in terms of the functionalism theory proposed by Malinowski and Redcliffe Brown is natural. In the view of Malinowski (1939) and Brown (1952) a culture survives because it has specific functions and values for the society concerned. These functions and values have a crucial role in the survival of the people who carry out the culture (Pringgawigdada 2010).

The Makrampai society has carried out food specialization in the Miare tradition for generations. Based on interviews with several sources, the researcher found that the miare tradition is significant and is considered necessary in the life of the Makrampai people. In terms of functional theory, it is stated that if a tradition is not helpful and contributes to society, it will not
be able to survive. In addition, tradition is said to have usefulness (contribute) if a goal is to be achieved.

The data obtained show that the meaning of food specialization is divided into two major groups. First, the group that knows the essence of specialization in food in the Miare tradition. This group tends to interpret the specialization of food in the aspect of religiosity, especially related to the message of death. Second, community groups do not know precisely the essence of specialization in food in the Miare tradition. In this group, specializing in food on certain days in the Miare tradition is more motivated by joining in. This second group interprets food specialization as an effort to appreciate the habits passed down from generation to generation.

Differences in the meaning of food specialization in the Miare tradition show that an individual's experience of something has implications for how it is interpreted. At this level, the experience can be in the form of knowledge and everyday interactions. This reality is in line with Habermas's view that the meaning of something is closely related to each individual's experience of it (Karman 2015). Likewise, differences in meaning are caused by the level of knowledge of an interpreted reality. In this context, Hall (2003) views that the meaning of reality is strongly influenced by the background knowledge and level of one's understanding of that reality. This view is in line with Berger's that the meaning of reality can be divided into two points of view, namely the lay point of view and the point of view based on knowledge of reality (Karman 2015).

Conclusion

This study found that in the Makrampai village society, death does not necessarily end the relationship between living and dead individuals. However, there is a process of sending dead humans to another dimension called the grave. The delivery process is carried out through the miare tradition. In addition, this study found two meanings of the specialization of food in the Miare tradition for the people of Makrampai village. First, for society leaders who understand the essence of the Miare tradition, food specialization is interpreted as a message of death. Second, ordinary people specializing in certain foods in the miare tradition are interpreted as a form of appreciation and preserving local wisdom passed down by predecessors.
Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the meaning of food specialization in the Miare tradition in the Makrampai village society is strongly influenced by society's understanding of the essence of food specialization.

References


