

## Ritual Communication Balian Bawo in Traditional Medicine of the Dusmala Dayak Community of Central Kalimantan

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**Abstract**

*The Balian Bawo ritual is a healing ritual carried out by men and is believed by the Dayak community of Dusun Maanyan and Lawangan (DUSMALA). In ritual processions, it is closely related to asking for help from ancestors to get healing instructions. This research aims to uncover the ritual communication contained in Balian Bawo, which is communication between ancestors and the Balian Bawo. Researchers used hermeneutical phenomenology methodology by taking 6 people as sources. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation.*

*The results of the research show that Balian Bawo ritual communication is seen in three ways, namely 1. Communication is with communicators, namely Balian and ancestors as communicants to convey messages about healing instructions through the intermediary of sowing rice which then includes dance and the sounds of bracelets as a connecting frequency amplifier; 2. Communion in the Balian Bawo Ritual in traditional medicine occurs not because of periodic activities every year, but is present when people need treatment; and 3. Common means that the local community can help the family prepare for the Balian Bawo Ritual activities and the Balian Bawo ritual procession can be followed by the local community as long as they comply with the existing regulations during the activity procession which is a form of community awareness of the existence of the Balian Bawo healing ritual.*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a diverse range of provinces, each of which possesses its own uniqueness, such as traditions, particularly in dance. Central Kalimantan is one of these provinces, known for its rich cultural diversity, especially in traditional dance. Tradition is something that is closely associated with customs, religion, beliefs, and practices passed down through generations from the past to the present day, still preserved and upheld (Widaty, et al. 2021).

Traditional dance activities are also part of ritual communication. According to Setiawan's journal (2018), dance is considered a ritual medium of offerings in animistic beliefs or spirits, dynamism or a force with magical powers, and totemism, animals believed to influence the universe's life. Furthermore, it serves as a belief system for communities, incorporating symbols for human communication with the magical world, reflecting the ethical values and worldview of a region or group (Pratiwi, et al. 2020). Dance falls under nonverbal communication due to its expressive movements. Nonverbal communication refers to communication that occurs without words. It can be seen as a sign language or the "Silent Language" as described by Cangara (2018: 121). Nonverbal communication includes various forms such as

body movements, eye movements, touch, vocal cues, silence, body posture, proximity and space, artifacts and visuals, color, time, sounds, and smells.

Ritual communication activities involve a model of expressing social actions, emphasizing the satisfaction of the communicator or the communicated person, depending on the shared understanding. Symbolic messages are conveyed in ritual views such as sacred activities, where people gather to engage in ritual communication activities, presenting narratives through dance, music, and oral traditions. The conveyed messages can be multi-layered and hidden, depending on the cultural symbols used, as the medium and the message are inseparable in ritual communication, where the medium itself can become the message in these activities (Sopacua, et al. 2022).

Central Kalimantan, particularly the Dayak DUSMALA community, possesses dances that serve as ritual communication. The DUSMALA community (Dusun Maanyan Lawangan) comprises the Maanyan and Lawangan Dayak ethnic groups, commonly found in East Barito Regency. Balian Bawo is one such dance originating from the DUSMALA community, serving as ritual communication. Balian is an activity to communicate with deities or gods using offerings, music, and dance. Typically, Balian dances serve as traditional

treatment alternatives for sick individuals within the Dayak community (Efrata, 2022). Balian or Wadian Bawo is a dance performed by men and belongs to the Wadian Welum group, tasked with praying, healing, or repelling disturbances affecting the living (Mariano, 2020).

In general, the phenomenon in society acknowledges dance as a means of communication. However, besides dance, there are other mediums for communication. Based on initial observations, it is found that the general tendency of people is to perceive Balian Bawo solely as a form of entertainment art, often overlooking its traditional healing aspects (Chrish, Interview, 23/11/2023).

Balian Bawo is commonly known for its dance as a means of connecting Balian with Ancestors, yet there are other mediums for communication between Balian and Ancestors, as will be discussed in this writing. In Balian Bawo, dance serves not only as a means of connection but also includes other elements such as offerings and scattered rice as additional mediums (Kugarelelono, Eberson, and Ahino, Interview, 24/11/2023).

Given this background, the researcher is interested in understanding the ritual communication of Balian Bawo so that Balian can communicate with Ancestors, hoping to raise awareness among readers about the existence of Balian Bawo, which many perceive solely as an art form, with little knowledge of its traditional healing rituals, especially in today's times where such practices are diminishing.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### Communication

Communication is an interactive process of disseminating information using intermediary media to connect communicators and recipients. Stuart (1983), as cited in Nurudin (2020:8), states that communication has its roots in the word "communico" (to share), which later evolved into the Latin word "communis," meaning to create commonality or build a sense of togetherness between two or more people. Communication involves sharing, commonality, or understanding, and messages. Therefore, communication fundamentally occurs when a message is shared with another party with the aim of achieving mutual understanding. According to Harold D. Laswell, a pioneer of communication, communication is a process that explains: Who? Says what? In

which channel? To whom? With what effect? (Nurudin, 2020:37).

### Ritual Communication

In Hadirman's journal (2016), ritual communication was proposed by James W. Carey, where communication is linked to sharing, participation, and gatherings of those with similar beliefs. Ritual communication involves messages that are not directly disseminated as it is more focused on the preservation of a community over time, usually performed collectively. There is a connection to the religious activities and beliefs of a group, where ritual communication involves interpretations of specific symbols.

Ritual communication consists of three interconnected elements: communication, celebration, and togetherness. Communication is closely directed at communal ceremonies or community activities. These celebrations usually involve active participation from community members done collectively. Rituals are held periodically and involve collective participation, aiming to refresh and reinstate collective knowledge and meanings within the society. Rituals serve as a mediation tool to keep community members connected to the sacred. At certain times, individual consciousness is redirected towards sacred matters, which are generally more easily accepted and unquestioned, especially when elevated into myths containing sacred values and collective meanings (Sopacua, et al. 2022). Ritual activities are said to be conducted collectively to regenerate collective meanings and sacred knowledge within the community.

### Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication, as stated in Nurudin (2020:134), refers to communication other than writing and spoken language; in other words, nonverbal communication refers to various forms of communication that do not involve the use of verbal symbols such as words, whether in conversation or writing. Simply put, nonverbal communication involves symbols such as hand gestures, colors, facial expressions, and the like. Nonverbal communication is divided into several forms, including Kinesics, which involves nonverbal communication through body movements, eye movements, touch, paralanguage, silence, color, time, sound, and smell.

### Levi-Strauss Myth Theory

Myth can be interpreted as a cultural narrative within society that includes religious elements and is orally transmitted, with the potential to influence social life. According to Strauss, the function of myths is to convey concepts not fully understood by society, with cultural messages embedded within them. Myths have meaning as narratives, particularly stories related to reverence for gods and heroes. This perspective aligns with Indrawati's (2018) assertion that myths are sacred stories that support the framework of belief systems or religion. (Shofiani, et al. 2022).

Levi Strauss (Mizrahi et al., 1997) suggests that the function of myths is to provide logical explanations for transforming the impossible into reality. Myths are not just stories but often symbolic expressions of internal conflicts or spiritual conflicts within society. Myths also serve as a means to redirect, distance, and overcome any unresolved contradictions, thereby providing logical explanations and understanding (Aquarini, 2022). In Aquarini (2022), Lévi-Strauss, as explained by Meletinsky (2014), suggests that structural ethnological description is complementary to the description of historical events. Although his analysis is synchronic, or at one point in time, and diachronic, or throughout time, his approach offers greater advantages. Despite ultimately respecting historical aspects, it is evident that Levi-Strauss tends towards a subjective stance because his focus is on individual consciousness and social environment. In the conflict between instinct and consciousness proposed by Jung, Levi-Strauss presents the conflict between nature and culture. He emphasizes the greater role of the environment and symbolism, not just on objects or conditions, but on the relationships established between objects and humans. This approach offers a fundamental proposition and serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding myths.

### Traditional Healing

Traditional healing or alternative medicine has become part of Indonesian society's culture and has yielded positive results, with some patients recovering through these methods. The cost of hospital treatment is considered quite high, so many people opt for alternative medicine. Points to note in this context are the backgrounds of individuals providing alternative treatment. Alternative treatment has

become a common choice in maintaining public health today. The practice of alternative medicine has been passed down through generations for a long time. This method involves the use of herbal medicine, consultations with shamans or respected community figures, and is based on religious values. Traditional or alternative medicine is still widely used by most people, not only due to limited access to affordable formal health facilities but also influenced by the strong cultural factors in Indonesia that believe in the effectiveness of alternative medicine (Putriana, 2022).

### DUSMALA

DUSMALA stands for Dusun Maanyan Lawangan, which is a community of Maanyan and Lawangan Dayak tribes originating from East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan province. East Barito is a split from South Barito Regency, officially named through a Regional Regulation in 2002 (Astuti, 2019).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach used is qualitative research with a Communication Phenomenology approach. Phenomenology assumes that individuals actively interpret their experiences and strive to understand the world from their own personal perspectives (Little John & Foss, 2014:57). Stanley Deetz summarized three basic principles of phenomenology found in Littlejohn & Foss (2014:57): "First, knowledge is found directly in conscious experience—we know the world as we engage with it. Second, the meaning of things consists of their effects in people's lives. In other words, how you relate to a thing determines its meaning for you. For example, you will take communication theory seriously as an educational experience when you experience it as something that will positively influence your life. The third assumption is that language is the vehicle of meaning. We experience the world through the language we use to define and express it. We know the keys because of the language we associate with them: 'lock,' 'open,' 'iron,' 'heavy,' and so on."

Interpretation is a critical stage in most phenomenological concepts. In German, the term *Verstehen* (understanding) is used to refer to interpretation, which involves the process of determining meaning through experience. Interpretation is an active process of thought and creative action aimed at clarifying personal experiences. In interpretation, there is a movement back and forth between

the experience of an event or situation and the effort to establish its meaning, involving a movement from the specific to the general and back to the specific. This process is known as the hermeneutic circle. We make interpretations of an event or experience, then test those interpretations and reexamine the details of the event carefully, resulting in an ongoing refinement of our meaning as described in Littlejohn & Foss (2014:57).

The Phenomenology approach in this research leads to Cultural Hermeneutics. Clifford Geertz was a leading ethnographer and cultural interpreter. Geertz defined cultural interpretation as thick description, where the interpreter describes cultural activities "from the natives' point of view." The depth of this interpretation differs from thin description, where people merely present patterns of behavior without a deep understanding of their meaning to the actors. Like hermeneutics in general, cultural interpretation involves the use of a hermeneutic circle. This hermeneutic circle is a process of movement back and forth between specific observations and general interpretations. The importance of this circle in the hermeneutic context is the gradual shift from initially unfamiliar perspectives to broader understandings for us (Little John & Foss, 2014: 458-459).

In the context of cultural interpretation, the hermeneutic circle depicts a shift from concepts of experience close to concepts of experience that are more distant. Experience-near concepts have meaning for individuals within a culture, while experience-distant concepts have meaning for those outside that culture. Cultural interpreters are tasked with translating both these concepts so that observers from the outside can understand the feelings and meanings of cultural members in a situation. Furthermore, the interpretation process involves a back-and-forth movement within the circle, bringing understanding from the outside to the meanings held by people inside. Gradually, appropriate vocabulary will be developed to explain the perspectives of these individuals without neglecting the close experience concepts held by the actors (Little John & Foss, 2014: 458-459). Qualitative research is research that collects descriptive data about behavior and words spoken or written by its subjects according to Tylor and Bogdan (Raco, 2018). Through this research method, the researcher analyzes the messages contained in the Balian Bawo ritual process.

## Research Location

The research on Balian Bawo Ritual Communication in Traditional Healing of the Dayak DUSMALA Community in Central Kalimantan was conducted in East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. Central Kalimantan is one of the provinces in Indonesia's Kalimantan island. In this province, the Dayak community is dominant, including Ngaju, Siang, Ot Danum, Bakumpai, Murung, Taboyan, Dusun, Maanyan, and Lawangan. This research focuses more on East Barito Regency (abbreviated as BarTim), where the majority of the population belongs to the Dayak DUSMALA (Dusun, Maanyan, and Lawangan) ethnic group. From this ethnic group comes one of the traditions called Balian, especially Balian Bawo. Balian Bawo is a hereditary tradition in the DUSMALA community, performed only by men, and can be found at ceremonies, customary events, or weddings, but the most phenomenal aspect is that Balian Bawo can perform Traditional Healing.

## Research Informants

Information in this research was obtained through interviews and recordings of Balian Bawo ritual activities. The informants in this research are Drs. Chris H. Leiden, Kugarelelono S.H, Eberson T.Tayun, Ahino Rajalaki, and Sumarno, SP, who are Mantir-Mantir from the DUSMALA (Dusun Maanyan and Lawangan) group, and the last one is Rory, who is an Original Balian Bawo.

## Data Collection Methods

### 1. Observation

Observation conducted by the researcher involves directly witnessing the Balian Bawo process and watching recordings of the ritual activities, then analyzing the ritual process.

### 2. Interview

Interviews involve meeting with various individuals, including traditional leaders or mantir from DUSMALA, families who have undergone traditional healing by Balian Bawo, and the original Balian Bawo.

### 3. Documentation

Documentation involves recordings made by the researcher of the Balian Bawo ritual process and obtaining video recordings from the original Balian Bawo.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Process of Balian Bawo Ritual

The Balian Bawo ritual, from ancient times to the present, is closely related to traditional healing. This healing is performed by men, with a group of 3-5 or more than 7 individuals. Balian Bawo should not be performed by exactly 7 people due to taboos. The activity takes place at night, avoiding ritual healing on Tuesday nights. Rory mentioned that the Balian Bawo ritual process involves several steps. First, detecting whether the illness can be cured or not, seen from the direction of the elongated egg pointing towards or away from the house. If it can be cured, the ritual proceeds to the next step: the Balian sits on a mat and recites a *serere*, then performs *ngiluk* to awaken objects, followed by the *ntak-ntuk* ritual to scatter rice, during which the rice spirit is thrown upwards to meet the ancestors. Then comes the dancing, followed by hosting the ancestors with offerings. After the offering, the Balian sits on the mat and asks whether the illness can be cured and how to deal with it when the Balian is possessed by ancestral spirits (Interview 23/11/2023). Before performing the ritual procession, the attributes and offerings for the ritual are prepared. The following are the steps of the Balian Bawo ritual:

- a. First, preparing the complete attributes such as Lawung Bulang, Samang Sawit, Getang, Sansipung, Siek, and white lines (*tanrek*) drawn on the body. These signify identification or identity markers to the ancestors to show that we are the Balian, then there is samang sawit as a repellent from evil spirits (Rory, Interview 09/09/2021).
- b. Second, preparing offerings which typically include rice (two types usually and glutinous rice), chicken blood which can be from white or black chicken depending on request, 41 types of cakes with *susur*, bamboo leman called *pakinking*, *ketupat*, *keluwit* (a type of *pais*), whole round palm sugar in packaging, and intact coconut (round coconut). These offerings symbolize the feast and tribute to the ancestors during the Balian procession (Kugarelelono, Eberson, and Ahino, Interview 24/11/2023).
- c. Third, after everything is prepared, the Balian sits on a mat, then performs *Serere*, which is a mantra that cannot be mentioned or explained due to the Balian's privacy. *Serere* is a mantra that tells the story of the origins and existence of Balian Bawo (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).
- d. Fourth, the Balian performs *Ngiluk*, which means awakening all the objects used for the ritual procession. This involves waking up the mat and reciting the origin mantra of the mat, where it comes from, what tree it is from, who made it, including fire, rice, water, eggs, bay leaves, and others, explaining their origins and how they were created using specific mantras. After waking up all these objects, the origin of Balian Bawo is narrated, followed by; (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023)
- e. Fifth, performing the *Ntak-Ntuk* ritual after the fourth step. *Ntak-Ntuk* is done while the Balian is still sitting, then the Balian scatters rice upwards (*Nyawis Behas* from the bowl), which symbolizes Dewi Sri or the Rice Goddess. In the Balian Bawo ritual language, it means the spirit of rice rises upward to communicate with the ancestors. The rice that falls indicates that the rice spirit has ascended, and when the rice falls, it means the spirit has left. Then, after the rice spirit ascends, it communicates with other ancestors by asking for the help of a boat (*banawa*) as a means to meet the Balian's ancestors. In this process, the Balian borrows a boat from other ancestors (the boat referred to in this stage is like the Balian's imagination to pick up the ancestors).
- f. Then, after the rice spirit picks up the ancestors, it guides them onto the boat, then the rice spirit brings the ancestors down to where the Balian is while reciting a mantra for them to come down to the Balian, after they descend, the Balian greets the ancestors with respect like a bow (a bow position while holding coconut leaf weavings) while telling the condition of the sick patient, at this point, the Balian is generally possessed by the spirit of the ancestor, entering the Balian's body to inform about the patient's illness (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).
- g. Sixth, after the bowing session and welcoming the ancestor's spirit, then inviting the ancestor's spirit to dance together enthusiastically with the Balias. (Why do people dance and why are there bracelets

that produce sounds and why are there musical instruments? Because they serve as frequency signals to accelerate meeting the ancestors (accelerate the journey of the boat meeting the ancestors) and can also clarify communication with the ancestors as a communication signal to the ancestors).

- h. Balian Bawo does not have specific movements or specific patterns; they dance as comfortably as the ancestors when they inhabit the Balian's body, but there are usually three typical movements in Balian, namely Konyiw Nokiwi, the movement of an eagle from above to prey on chicks while circling with the sound of kiw, Keser Pune, the movement of a bird walking sideways from right to left like a pune bird walking sideways on a branch, and Piak Dangep, the movement of a chicken jumping to move to another place (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).
- i. After dancing, then feasting the ancestors who are present among the Balias. Then, when the ancestors are satisfied with the feast provided, people engage in conversation or communicate with the ancestors. This activity has undergone the Nyituk process, where the ancestors have borrowed the Balian's body and placed the Balian's body in a boat as the place to pick up the ancestors earlier. The ancestors use this activity to communicate to people about the patient's illness and provide solutions for healing, for example, taking oil roots then explaining its usage, then the ancestors exit the body when their task is done, and the Balian's soul returns to its original body (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).
- j. At the end of the ritual, asking the rice/paddy spirit Bawe Ayang Luing Putri Inai Bunge to escort the ancestors again using the boat to the top using rice which is then scattered upwards again, after the ancestors are taken back to their original place, and the rice spirit descends again, the ritual is complete, then there are taboos given for the patient to face in the future (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).

## DISCUSSION

The Balian Bawo ritual is a healing ritual for people who are sick, whether it's due to medical reasons or magical

ones. Balian Bawo is performed by men and is characterized by wearing bracelets as a sign that they are a Balian. Balian Bawo originates from the Dayak Dusun Maanyan and Lawangan communities in the Barito region of Central Kalimantan. Communication is the process of interaction between a communicator and a communicant to disseminate information through intermediary media as a connector. Balian Bawo is a ritual aimed at healing families, whether they are suffering from medical illnesses or those affected by unseen forces such as magic. The Balian Bawo involves a communication process. The communication that occurs in Balian Bawo is the communication process between ancestors and the Balian, through media such as sounds from musical instruments, offerings, and body movements such as dance, which are performed at night for healing purposes. Balian Bawo falls under nonverbal communication because it involves elements of sound, movement, and time, as in Cangara (2018), nonverbal communication involves Kinesics or body movements, eye movements, touch, paralanguage, silence, color, time, sound, and smell.

From Harold D. Laswell's perspective, a communication pioneer, communication is a process that explains: Who? Says what? Through which channel? To whom? And what is its effect?

- a. Who is the communicator, the main actor in communication referring to Balian Bawo, as they initiate the Balian Bawo ritual process.
- b. Says what is the message that the communicator wants to convey to the communicant. In this case, the Balian asks for guidance from the Ancestors to provide healing guidance to the family being treated (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).
- c. The channel or medium used to connect Balian Bawo and the Ancestors is the ritual of scattering rice upwards, called Bawe Ayang Luing Putri Inai Bunge, which represents the spirit of rice or rice. It is what enables the Balian and ancestors to meet and communicate. In media, a signal is required to prevent communication from being interrupted, and the frequency signal in this ritual takes the form of dances and sounds from bracelets and musical instruments, with louder sounds indicating a stronger connection between the Balian and ancestors (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).

- d. To whom (the communicant) receiving the message in the Balian Bawo ritual regarding healing guidance are the ancestors.
- e. What is its effect. Successful communication occurs when receiving feedback, or a response. In the Balian Bawo ritual process, the feedback or reciprocal effect given by the communicant to the communicator is an indication of whether the family can be healed or not in the Balian process. If healing is possible, what medicine is given, and if healing is not possible, then the family and the Balian can stop the ritual and pray to God (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).

Ritual communication is a form of communication in which all forms of ritual are considered symbolic actions within specific social contexts. In ritual communication, there are three interconnected elements: communication, celebration, and togetherness. This emphasizes that people living in a community collectively possess something, and communication is a way to collectively own these things. (Sopacua, et al. 2022). As in Hadirman's journal (2016), ritual communication was proposed by James W. Carey, in which communication is related to sharing, participating, and gathering with common beliefs. Therefore, Ritual Communication in the Balian Bawo ritual in traditional healing can be seen in three aspects, namely communication, communion, and commonality, as follows:

#### a. Communication

Communication in a ritual perspective is likened to a sacred ceremony that requires active participation from the communicants, similar to playing a role in a sacred drama (Hadirman, 2016). Communication is the process by which the Balian Bawo Ritual can be conducted. The organization occurs due to communication between the Balian and Ancestors. Communication in this case occurs due to interaction between the communicator and the communicant. In ritual communication, as in Sopacua, et al. (2022), media and messages are somewhat difficult to separate because the media itself can be the message.

In the Balian Bawo Ritual, the communicator is the Balian, who serves as the intermediary between humans and ancestors. The communicant is the Ancestors. There is a communication process because the Balian sends a

message to the ancestors to ask for guidance on healing for the treated family (Rory, Interview 23/11/2023).

As a communication medium for Balian Bawo Ritual to connect with ancestors, rice is used. As in the interview with Rory (23/11/2023), to communicate with ancestors is during the Ntak-Ntuk Ritual. Ntak-Ntuk is performed when the Balian is still seated, then the Balian scatters rice upwards (Nyawis Behas from the bowl) which symbolizes Dewi Sri or Dewi Padi, or in the language of the Balian Bawo Ayang Luang Putri Inai Bunge ritual, the spirit of rice/paddy rises upward with the intention as a spirit guide to communicate with ancestors. When the rice falls, it means the rice spirit has risen upward, and when the rice falls, there is no more rice spirit. Then, the rice spirit goes to pick up the ancestors to attend the Balian Bawo healing ritual. This process is where the Balian borrows another ancestor's boat (the boat referred to in this stage is like the Balian's imagination to fetch the ancestors).

Then, after the rice spirit fetches the ancestors, it brings the ancestors into the boat, and then the rice spirit brings the ancestors down to where the Balian is while chanting for the ancestors to come down to the Balian, after that, they descend, the Balian greets the ancestors respectfully like bowing (bowing while holding a woven coconut leaf), after the bowing session and greeting the spirit of the ancestors, then they invite the spirit of the ancestors to dance together enthusiastically with the Balias (Why people dance and the presence of bracelets producing sounds and musical instruments serve as frequency signals to expedite meeting the ancestors (speeding up the boat's journey to meet the ancestors) and can also clarify communication with the ancestors as communication signals to the ancestors). Dance along with bracelets in Balian Bawo communication only serves as frequency signals and clarifies communication for the Balian to connect with the ancestors.

After dancing and bowing to the ancestors, they proceed with a feast, then the ancestors tell about the condition of the sick patient, at this point, the Balian is generally possessed by the ancestor's spirit, the function of the ancestor entering the Balian's body is to inform about the patient's illness, and this is called the Nyituk process, where the ancestor has borrowed the Balian's

body. The Nyituk process is where the ancestor communicates to people about the illness of the patient and provides solutions for healing.

b. Communion

Celebration in ritual communication involves active participation from members of the community carried out collectively. Rituals are held periodically and involve collective participation, aimed at refreshing and restoring collective knowledge and meanings in society. Rituals serve as a means of mediation to maintain community members' connection to the sacred (Sopacua, et al. 2022).

However, celebration in the Balian Bawo Ritual in traditional healing occurs not because of periodic activities every year, but occurs when the community needs treatment. This activity can be found in the Barito area, but in the city it is very rare, and may not even exist. Balian Bawo can also appear during events such as celebrations, weddings, and art performances (Chrish, Interview 23/11/2023). Kugareleluno, Eberson, and Ahino (Interview, 24/11/2023) said that generally, the Balian Bawo ritual for traditional healing is carried out by people who adhere to Kaharingan beliefs, but it is not impossible for other beliefs to also perform the ritual as long as they believe in the process and results of the Balian Bawo Ritual.

Rory said that the Balian Bawo ritual is only performed by men and must not be performed by exactly 7 people, if performed by 7 people it can bring disaster or taboo, it can be performed by 3-5 people and can be performed by more than 7 people (Interview, 09/09/2021). Sumarno said that performing the Balian Bawo ritual should be avoided on Tuesday nights and Tuesday because it can bring disaster or taboo. The Balian Bawo activity is never done during the day, always at night, so people often mention the first night, the second night, and so on according to the Balian's time needs for healing (Interview, 25/11/2023). Active participation in Balian Bawo is more directed at the Balian and the family being treated. The presence of Balian Bawo in the community serves to raise awareness that the DUSMALA community has Balian Bawo as a traditional ritual passed down from ancestors in terms of traditional healing and not just as entertainment for

weddings or customs but can perform traditional healing rituals through Balian Bawo.

c. Commonality

Commonality in the context of ritual communication is a communication pattern built like a sacred-sacred ceremony where everyone joins together and gathers then Ritual communication is closely related to activities of sharing, participating, gathering, and being friends in a community that shares the same belief as quoted in Sopacua, et al. (2022). This emphasizes that people living in a community collectively possess something, and communication is a way to collectively own these things. Ritual communication can be found in sacred ceremonies where there is a collection of every believer in that thing. Communication activities carried out are not only the communicator sending messages to the communicant but a group of people who participate in ceremonial activities that are sacred or holy (Sopacua, et al. 2022).

The Balian Bawo Ritual in terms of togetherness is the surrounding community in Balian Bawo activities helping the treated family and collaborating well, as Sumarno said, in the Balian Bawo process, there should be no activity around the Balian, no wandering around because it can transfer the disease to the person who is wandering (Interview, 25/11/2023).

The togetherness referred to is their assistance in preparing for Balian Bawo Ritual activities, and the Balian Bawo ritual procession can be followed by the surrounding community as long as they adhere to the rules during the activity (Kugarelelono, Eberson, and Ahino, Interview, 24/11/2023). This activity aims not only for the healing of the treated family but also as a reminder to the community that the Balian Bawo Ritual is not only for art or wedding events but can perform traditional healing.

Balian Bawo in terms of myth. Myths are supernatural things that tell about gods or ancestors as the main characters (Aquarini, 2022). According to Strauss, the function of myths is to convey concepts that are not fully understood by society, with cultural messages embedded within. Myths have meaning as a narrative, especially stories related to worship of gods and heroes.

The myth present in the Balian Bawo ritual is the Rice Goddess or known as Bawe Ayang Luang Putri Inai Bunge,



who is the Spirit of Rice, depicted as a beautiful woman (Rory, Interview 09/09/2021). In this Balian Bawo, the Rice Goddess is believed to be the intermediary between the Balian and the ancestors. The way to connect between the Balian and Ancestors is by scattering rice upwards by taking rice from a bowl (Nyawis Behas from the bowl), which means there is a rice spirit or rice goddess in the rice, so when the rice is scattered upwards, that is the main key to connect the Balian and the ancestors. The process of scattering rice upwards means the rice spirit rises to meet the ancestors and fetches the ancestors to participate in the Balian Bawo ritual procession. This Balian Bawo is in accordance with Indrawati's view (2018), which states that myths are sacred stories that support the framework of belief systems or religions. (Shofiani, et al. 2022). This Rice Goddess in Balian Bawo is a very important role because she is present in the ritual procession to assist the Balian in communicating and meeting with the ancestors, who serve as communication media.

From the above two theories, it can be concluded that Balian Bawo ritual communication occurs because of the connecting medium, thus creating a communication process between the Balian and the ancestors. Their connecting medium is the Rice Goddess, who is Bawe Ayang Luing Putri Inai Bunge, communication occurs because of rice, rice contains the rice spirit or rice goddess, so when the rice is scattered upwards, that is the main key to connect the Balian and the ancestors. The process of scattering rice upwards means the rice spirit rises to meet the ancestors and fetches the ancestors to participate in the Balian Bawo ritual procession. After the ancestors are present in the ritual, from there, we can ask about the illness suffered and find out what is used for the healing process so that the affected family can recover.

## CONCLUSION

Balian Bawo is a cultural tradition ingrained in the Dayak DUSMALA (Maanyan and Lawangan tribes). The ritual of Balian Bawo is closely associated with traditional healing. Healing using Balian Bawo has been practiced since ancient times, but nowadays, it is difficult to find Balian Bawo healers, and they are almost nonexistent in urban areas. However, in the Barito region and its surrounding hinterlands, these healers are still active. Balian or wadian serves as the intermediary between humans and ancestors to seek help or guidance. In Balian Bawo, this ritual is performed by men and

should not be performed by exactly 7 people due to taboo beliefs. The ritual procession of Balian Bawo is conducted at night and rarely during the day, and in fact, never.

The research results above indicate that there are three aspects of ritual communication in the Balian Bawo Ritual, namely:

First, communication, which involves the Balian as the communicator, serving as the intermediary between humans and ancestors. The communication occurs because the Balian sends a message to the ancestors to ask for guidance in healing the treated family. The medium used for ritual communication to connect with the ancestors is rice, by scattering rice upwards (Nyawis Behas from the bowl), symbolizing Dewi Sri or the Rice Goddess.

Second, Communion, which involves celebration in the Balian Bawo Ritual in traditional healing, occurs not on a periodic basis every year, but arises when the community needs treatment. This activity can be found in the Barito region, but it is very rare in urban areas, and may even be absent. Generally, the Balian Bawo ritual for traditional healing is performed by people who adhere to Kaharingan beliefs, but those outside of this belief can also perform the ritual as long as they believe in the healing process.

Thirdly, Commonality refers to the cooperation of the community in preparing for the Balian Bawo Ritual activities, and the participation of the surrounding community in the ritual procession, as long as they adhere to the rules during the processions. Additionally, it aims to raise awareness among the community about the existence of traditional healing through Balian Bawo.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and discussions on the Balian Bawo Ritual, the following recommendations are provided:

- I. To the DUSMALA communities: When researchers seek informants regarding the Balian Bawo ritual to expand research references, many are unaware that Balian Bawo is used for healing purposes; they only know it as an art form, not as a healing ritual. Therefore, it is recommended to raise awareness within the DUSMALA communities about the medicinal aspect of Balian Bawo.

2. To relevant academic institutions: It is suggested to create specialized literature explaining Balian Bawo to provide better understanding and awareness of its cultural and healing significance.
3. To the government: It is recommended to support DUSMALA communities in promoting Balian Bawo to ensure its existence within society. This can be achieved through initiatives aimed at raising awareness and preserving cultural heritage.

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