



The *Besoyong* Mantra in *Ngumo* Activity of The Paser Indigenous People from The Perspective of Literary Archaeomythology

Derri Ris Riana^{1,*}, Ery Agus Kurnianto¹, Rissari Yayuk¹, Jahdiah Jahdiah¹,
Eka Suryatin¹, Dede Hidayatullah¹, Suwardi Endraswara²

¹ National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia

² Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: derririsriana@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

The *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* (farming) activities is a series of ritual activities owned by the Paser indigenous people. This paper aims to describe the *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities that have a significant role or function for the Paser indigenous people. The approach used is literary archaeomythology, an interdisciplinary approach that collaborates elements of archeology, mythology, and literature. This approach is used to explore the cultural heritage and ritual practices that are believed and carried out by the Paser indigenous people. Primary data were inventoried using in-depth interview techniques with *Mulung*, a custom leader, and a cultivator who understands and carries out some activities. Secondary data was obtained through library study techniques. Data analysis was carried out using a literary archaeomythology approach regarding understanding the context of history, culture, and beliefs which are the factors causing the use of the *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities. The results of the study show that the *besoyong* mantra has a significant role in *ngumo* activities. The *besoyong* mantra is believed by the Paser indigenous people as a medium to connect or communicate with the spirits of their ancestors and other supernatural entities. The *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities is now almost extinct. This is because, in the digital era, the development of technology and communication has resulted in social changes, including the lifestyle and entertainment consumption of the Paser indigenous people. This research can be used as a basis for efforts to preserve and develop culture as an ancestral heritage that is full of local wisdom.

Keywords: *Besoyong*, cultural preservation, literary archaeomythology, *ngumo*, Paser indigenous people.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Paser indigenous people in Penajam Paser Utara Regency, East Kalimantan has several oral traditions, such as reciprocal rhymes (*betore*), proverbs (*sempulo*), folklore (*sempuri*), mantra (*besoyong*), verse (*bemelas*); the swinging ritual (*tembot bebe*); opening a field (*mediwa pare*); counting auspicious days (*beketika*); traditional medicine; dance; foot fighting game (*tavi*); iron-throwing game (*nurak*), looking for honey (*ngarak wani*), tradition of processing protected forests, and looking for rattan. An oral tradition still practiced by Paser people is *besoyong* in farming activities (*ngumo*). Mantra is the product of the knowledge of a social community, in which there is assimilation between language and the beliefs of the owner of the spell (Amir, 2013). Danandjaja (1994) states that mantra is still bound by rules that must be obeyed or embedded in a literary work to be able to identify their type.

In general, a mantra is used as a medium to achieve salvation in life (Krijgsman, 2023; Sartini, Supartiningsih, Panani, Damayanti, & Triyoga, 2023; Hao, 2023; Java, 2023). Mantras are used when cultivating agricultural land to obtain blessings and for successful harvests (Rianse, Iswandi, & Arafah, 2023; Allerton, 2009; Kurnianto, Yulianeta, Fikri, & Istiana, 2022; Miharja, Kusnawan, & Mustopa, 2022; Hidrawati, Rianse, Iswandi, & Arafah, 2023; Kahfi, 2020). Mantras have also been used by Paser people. Previous studies about Paser people have studied Pemali

(Macshury, Arifin, & Rijal, 2020), *soyong* mantra in *Nampa Ponta* (Mustikawati, 2020), *tipong tawar* ritual (Istianingrum & Retnowaty, 2018), *besoyong* at the Belian Paser Nondoï (Kristanti, 2019), and *balian* ceremony (Widaty, Apriati, Hudaya, & Kusuma, 2021). This study describes the various mantras and their functions in farming rituals of the Paser people from the perspective of literary archaeomythology. Archaeomythology includes archaeology, comparative mythology, and folklore to reconstruct historical ideologies through the excavation of mythology (Gimbutas, 1989).

This perspective examines the *soyong* mantra as part of the oral literature based on the historical context, artifacts, culture, and beliefs of the local community. Related to this explanation, this study attempted to answer the following research questions: how is the *besoyong* mantra applied in the farming activities of the Paser people? and what cultural meaning is represented in the *besoyong* mantras?

Research related to the use of mantras in farming activities in the Paser traditional community reveals the forms of the *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities and its function in the socio-cultural life of the Paser community in East Kalimantan. It is important to consider that mantras are a form of cultural heritage from the Paser people that must be preserved.

2. METHOD

Qualitative research methods are used from a literary archaeomythology perspective. This method aims to collect, classify, and analyze data in order to obtain an overall picture of the function and meaning of the *besoyong* mantra. The study took place in Sepan Village, Penajam District, Penajam Paser Utara Regency. The study was conducted from 1 to 20 June 2023.

The study employed primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained from interviews with informants. Secondary data are in the form of research writing, articles, and reference books. The data collection techniques in this study included taking notes and recording the mantras. The collected data were analysed qualitatively. The analysis uses a literary archaeomythological approach by exploring the archaeological, historical, and mythological aspects of the *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities to explore the identity and characteristics of the farming culture of the Paser people.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Paser people still carry out traditional rituals to communicate with gods or ancestors. There are four gods who are glorified, namely Dewa Tondoï, Dewa Sengiang, Dewa Longai, and Dewa Nayu. One of the media used to interact with ancestors or gods is *besoyong*.

Besoyong comes from the word *soyong* which means ‘mantra or prayer’, so *besoyong* means ‘to speak or sing a mantra’. *Besoyong* is usually used by the Paser tribe as a medium to talk to the spirits of the past and *Sengiang* through their daily lives in the rituals that are held (Umasangaji et al., 2023). *Besoyong* in *ngumo* activities are mantras uttered in farming activities.

The *besoyong* mantra is usually spoken by *mulung*. The utterances of *besoyong* in *ngumo* activities use the Paser language whose meaning can only be understood by *mulung*. This *besoyong* activity is carried out because the Paser people believe that every object around them has a *Sengiang* (guardian spirit).

The stages of opening a new field are as follows:

1. *metilatikalas* activities, conducting surveys.
2. installation of oaks, installing stakes on the boundary of the land.
3. *ngekat bako*, cutting the roots of plants.
4. *napakarong*, preparation of charcoal made from pahlawan wood.
5. Gilding the machete, sharpening the machete.
6. *merebes*, slashing a tree with one slash.
7. *mobas* or pioneering.
8. *notoi*, cutting down trees within the oak boundary.
9. *onjoa*, drying all trees and shrubs.
10. *njotok*, burning dry trees and shrubs.
11. *Manduk*, cleaning the combustion remains.
12. planting plant seeds.
13. *mbayar diek ulang molu*, a customary fine for killing several types of trees, roots, and animals.

After the field-clearing process is complete, the farmers can plant rice. The *besoyong* mantra and cultural meaning of *soyong* are discussed.

1. *Prepare the type of mountain rice (Nyiap Bini Pare Tunden)*

The first process is the preparation of the rice seeds.

2. *Techniques for preparing rice seeds (How to Nyiap Bini Pare)*

The rice used as seed must be carefully and thoroughly selected and placed in the *lanjong/solong* (see Figure 1).



Source: Personal documentation (2023)

Figure 1 *Lanjong and solong.*

The next ritual is *sempuri*, bathing the seeds with flower water, and then telling the origin of rice. The *Soyong* spoken is as follows.

Ente nyedok danum dango, (To take clean water)
Danum dango belo eka', (Clean water will not run out)
Ente nyedok owang lutung, (To take jelutong wood chips)
Owang lutung belo tau eka', (Jelutong wood chips will not run out)
Denge meto tatau ente umpu' ko, (Go to find riches for you)

Niyu binti Daud bin Bulot (based on an interview on June 14, 2023) stated that rice seeds were put into the *lanjong/solong* which is covered with white cloth (representing the male paddy) for the rice paddy and black cloth (representing the female paddy) for the *pulut* paddy.

According to Suwis Santoso (*mulung*, based on an interview on July 13, 2023), *soyong* has the meaning of nature, providing unlimited amounts of wealth for the benefit of humans. Therefore, humans are obliged to protect their natural environment.

3. *Bringing rice seeds to the rice field in the middle of the fields (Moit Bini Pare Po Tenian)*

After the *sempuri* ritual is carried out all night long, the rice seeds inside the *lanjong/solong* are placed into the *tenian bini* (rice seed altar) (see Figure 2). According to Niyu binti Daud bin Bulot (based on an interview on June 14, 2023) when placing the *lanjong/solong*, the face must be face outside the *tenian bini* door. Paddy *kopas* (rice) were placed on the right and covered with a white cloth. The *pulut* rice (glutinous rice) is placed on the left and covered with a black cloth.



Source: Paidah Riansyah Documentation (2023)

Figure 2 *Tenian Bini Pare* (Photo is personal collection of Mr. Suwis).

4. *Choosing rice and glutinous rice seeds in ovals (Mili Bini Pare Suang Lonjong)*

The fourth stage is rice selection. According to Niyu binti Daud bin Bulot (based on an interview on June 14, 2023), to select rice or pulut rice seeds, the palm of the right hand was placed on a *lanjong* and pressed. Rice seeds that stick to the palm of the hand and are not traversed by the hand line are used as rice seeds. The number of rice seeds is odd.

Soyong was said three times: According to Suwis Santoso (based on interview on July 13, 2023), *soyong* was first spoken to call the spirit names of rice. The mention of the four spirit names of rice as a medium of negotiation in the form of respect.

Noor marta putih, (Light like the white Lady)
Noor sari wangsa, (The next-generation core light)
Petri merimbun daon, (Merimbun Daun Princess)
Petri mayang merumbai, (Mayang Merumbai Princess)

The *Noor Marta Putih* can be interpreted as a symbol of sunlight. In agriculture, sunlight plays an important role in the sustainability of plant life. *Noor Sari Wangsa* can be interpreted as giving life to the next rice plant. Core light is the source of light provided by nature to all living organisms in the world. In this case, the core light source is the sun. *Petri Merimbun Daon* and *Petri Mayang Merumbai* are spirit names for rice, which can be interpreted as the abundant yield of rice plants.

After the first *soyong* is said, the rice seeds are put into holes using *asok*. The second *soyong* that was spoken was as follows.

Nang iko ngalek menta lipis, (Do not you take a thin white cloth)
Iko ngandek Aji Raja, (You take the knowledge of the King)
Iko ngandek desan samei, (You take the big ones and lots of them)
Iko ngandek ulun deo, (You take a lot of friends/people)
Iko denge....., (You go ...)
Iko denge po tunden tana sisa, (You go to the mountain of land left)
Sisa kompe, sisa Samir, Sisa lowu awa', (Exceeding the sack/kompe, exceeding the granary, exceeding the residential house)

The cultural meaning of *soyong* is simple, enthusiasm for learning and achieving abundant results. The thin white cloth symbolizes simplicity. This shows that if the rice harvest is abundant, the Paser people must continue to live in simplicity.

Daro ngako daro kokas, (Go steal, go let go)
Totou ombo belo kito, (Fly high invisible)
Totou iwa' simpong kas, (Fly low deaf vanish)

Farming ethics and teaching are about being sincere in providing assistance to others. In farming, stealing is forbidden. However, the attitude of letting go, which can be interpreted as providing assistance to others, is mandatory for cultivators.

The three *soyong* are said three times and then blown into the two holes. The hole was covered with a living leaf supported by a small piece of wood stuck crosswise. After seven days, when the rice seeds started to grow, the live leaves were opened. Rice seeds were then planted.

5. *Raising rice (Ngawa pare)*

Rice seeds planted in fields must be cared for and protected. To overcome the disturbances, they used the traditional way by the ritual of smoking rice every morning and evening by burning live plants.

Aku neket utut dupa, (I burn incense smoke)
Ente ngebus sengiang pare, (To shake off the *Sengiang* almighty paddy)
Ampa' pare buen bolum, (So that the rice lives well)
Ampa' pare ku lio (So that my rice is clean/full)

The cultural meaning from *soyong* is the belief in a supernatural power that protects rice plants. The Paser people believe that there is *Sengiang*. The offering of incense smoke will make the rice *Sengiang* dispel all forms of threats or disruption to the growth and development of rice plants.

Taba taba Ikam Nang ganggu umo taun bok belako, (Excuse me, don't disturb my farm))

Bosing beleso memai Marau empit bentian tendango bitik damar, (Rats, squirrels, sparrows, stink bugs)

Posa Mato ena Meti umotaun boto boa ena kuman nyingkap bias pare ku Endo, (If you see or disturb, your eyes will blind, if you eat or damage, your mouth will rot)

According to Paidah Riansyah (based on an interview on July 13, 2023), recognition and intimidation (punishment from *Sengiang*) of animals that are plant pests need to be done to protect plants.

6. *First rice harvest (Ngani Pare Temba)*

The first harvest must be presented to *Sengiang*. The offerings are called *ponta* or *opes*, which are a kind of *emping* food made from plain rice and roasted, half-aged glutinous rice.

Paidah (based on an interview on Juli 13, 2023) stated that the traditional rituals of harvesting and making *ponta* or *opes* are carried out in several stages: 1) cutting one stalk of *kopas* rice (rice paddy) and one stalk of pulut rice (glutinous rice).

Sengiang olo ulet, (The almighty day arrives)

Sengiang bulan timbul, (The almighty moon rises)

Sengiang bung langit, (The Almighty above the sky)

Sengiang diwan tana', (The Almighty under the ground)

Aning kelessan undus karulio, (The purity of the spirit bath in clean water)

The cultural meaning represented in the *soyong* utterance is praise or an expression of the acknowledgment of the forces of nature, spirits, and spiritual elements related to the process of harvesting rice. 1) *Kopas* and pulut rice are only harvested by a handful of *menangan*. The first harvest must be performed using a *renggapan* or *anai-anai*. The myth that appears is that sickles will cause pain to *Sengiang* rice and this will have bad effects or consequences, such as sickness or even death; 2) the hand-held rice is put into the *lanjong/solong* and taken home to make *ponta* or *opes*; 3) the handful of rice is then placed in the *nyiru* and the grains of rice are released from the stalks; 4) the rice grains are then roasted in a large *kawa* until completely cooked; 5) after cooling, the rice and sticky rice are pounded in a mortar until they become flat; and 6) *ponta* or *opes* are then used as offerings addressed to the *Sengiang*.

The following is *soyong*, which is said to be when *ponta* or *opes* are presented.

Ede ikam Sengiang Pare, (You are God of rice)

Kuman ono nyingkap ono, (Eat first, feed first)

Pengentaun taun endo, (Food this year)

Tindu ene kopas lio, (Ask for clean plain rice)

Tindu ene pulut lio, (Ask for clean glutinous rice)

Tindu kain bolum buen, (Ask for prosperous live)

Tindu jum laut nunuk, (Ask for as thick as a banyan tree)

Tindu roni damuroe, (Ask for coolness, safety, and peace)

Tindu rompai rompayon, (Ask for safety and peace)

Tindu ene nang kendulu utok, (Ask for not headache)

Tindu ene nang beleleng wae, (Ask for not dizzy in the face)

Tindu turi buen nupi, (Ask to sleep with sweet dreams)

Tindu denge buen baya, (Ask to go without illness)

Sundok Soyong tangai ku endo, (After I splash this)

The *soyong* has a cultural meaning related to the beliefs or spiritual issues of the Paser people. Gratitude, respect, and requests for safety and health were addressed to the *Sengiang*.

7. *Harvest Pare Tuo (Great Harvest)*

The ritual consisted of cutting three stalks of rice, which was considered the best rice because the rice grains were many, dense, and filled. Three stalks of rice were cut facing the hut or house. The myth that is believed from this

activity is that the rice that is harvested is very large and can enter the hut or house without any disturbance or obstacles.

The following is the *soyong* that the *mulung* recites when performing the ritual.

Ketak ketok piyak tino, (Tap knock knock hen)
Serendete batang ayo, (Go past the trunk road, come on)
Aku ngutik batang kerio, (I plucked the ends of the rice grains)
Puting kerio murek sayo, (The tip of the rice grain goes upstream)

Soyong has the cultural meaning of appreciation and careful treatment in harvesting rice. All rice stalks were taken in a good way so that no rice stalks were wasted.

After *soyong* is said, the soil is taken at the base of the rice tree and inserted into the hole of the rice stalk that was cut earlier. After that, cut the nails of the 3 fingers on the right hand and plug them into the rice stalk holes. The following is spoken in *Soyong*.

Tau lo tana tau abis, (If the land can run out)
Moko abis pare ku ente okan, (Then my rice will not run out to eat)
Tau lou lilip tau abis, (If *kuju* can run out)
Moko abis pare ku ente okan, (Then my rice will not run out to eat)

The cultural meaning in *soyong* is protecting and caring for nature—in this case, land and water. Human awareness is needed to maintain the preservation of water and soil so that these two natural elements can provide benefits to humans in living life.

The next ritual involves inserting three stalks of rice into the *lanjong/solong*. The following is the *soyong* that was read during the activity:

La mendo iko' tilo' lang suang tambun tembuyan, (Here you live in a large, magnificent room)

The cultural meaning in *soyong* protects natural ecosystems in the farming process. Fertile soil is needed for rice seeds to grow and develop properly.

8. *Nape Pare Mo Suang Kuang (saving paddy to the barn)*

To be stored in the barn, rice must be completely dry. The following is *spoken soyong*.

Tilo mendo iko bigimanikam, (Stay here you bigimanikam)
Tambun Tembuyan mitek lintor benuo, (Inside a large, magnificent room heading across the country)
Ente kain bolum kolat, (For us to be life)
Tahan bias pare ente okan, (Hold rice, rice to eat)

The cultural meaning represented in *soyong* is that rice as a result of the hard work that is done must be maintained properly. One way that can be done by storing it in the barn.

Mantras support agricultural activities which aim to invoke protective blessings during the farming process and the success of abundant harvests (Rianse et al., 2023; Allerton, 2009; Kurnianto et al., 2022; Miharja et al., 2022; Hidrawati et al., 2023; Kahfi, 2020).

The existence of *besoyong* in *ngumo* activities in the traditional Paser community is still ongoing. *Besoyong* is used in various rituals within the Paser community according to its purpose, including the *Belian Nondo* (Kristanti, 2019), *Balian* ceremonies in healing rituals (Widaty et al., 2021), *Nampa Ponta* ceremonies (Mustikawati, 2020), and farming activities (Sari et al., 2022).

The study of *besoyong* in *ngumo* activities in the Paser people from archaeological, historical, and mythological aspects with a literary archaeomythological perspective aims to reveal the identity and characteristics of the farming culture of the Paser traditional community, which still relies on the *besoyong* mantra to ask for blessings from the ancestral spirits.

4. CONCLUSION

Soyong is one of the media used by the Paser people in communicating and negotiating with ancestral spirits. The belief that exists and continues to survive and develop among the older generation makes them not dare to violate or challenge the traditional rituals inherited from their ancestors which are full of life values in interacting with the universe.

The *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities in the Paser people has cultural meaning, including protecting and caring for nature; diligent, tenacious, and hardworking; simplicity and adequacy; having a passion for learning and struggle in acquiring knowledge; maintaining a harmonious relationship between God, humans, and nature; sincere in assisting others; and respect and belief in *Sengiang* in the farming process.

This research will contribute to save cultural remains, especially the *besoyong* mantra in *ngumo* activities, which are rarely carried out by the Paser people because of limited land, regulations, and modernization. Therefore, research related to archaeological, historical and mythological aspects containing literature, in the IKN area needs to be carried out because the richness of cultural remains needs to be identified, documented and inventoried amidst the massive development of IKN.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Ery Agus Kurnianto, Derri Ris Riana, Suwardi Endraswara; data collection: Ery Agus Kurnianto, Jahdiah; analysis and interpretation of results: Ery Agus Kurnianto, Derri Ris Riana, Rissari Yayuk, Dede Hidayatullah; draft manuscript preparation: Derri Ris Riana, Eka Suryatin. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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