

Cockfighting: between folk media, ritual communication, and gambling

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Abstract

Cockfighting is an ancestral tradition passed down through generations including the Sabu Raijua community in Indonesia, where it is considered a daily routine. Therefore, this research aimed to ascertain the construction of significance in cockfighting from the participant's perspective and the motives for engaging in the tradition. An interpretive paradigm with a phenomenological method was adopted for this qualitative research. Deep interviews were used to obtain data and subsequently analysed using a six-step method according to the Cresswell model. The results showed that the community viewed the cockfighting ritual significance as a traditional communication tool, a part of cultural rituals, and a symbol of peace. Furthermore, the motives of the community to engage in this tradition included social inheritance, economic purpose, entertainment, building social networks, filling leisure time, the curiosity of losing a fight, and gambling addiction when bets were participatory. The community constructed cockfighting in two dimensions of significance, namely historical and philosophical. The motives of the participants in organizing cockfighting rituals were also grouped into two parts, namely "in-order-to" and "because" categories. The "in-order-to" motives referred to the hopes and fantasies of the participants before engaging in the ritual, while the "because" motives were related to past events that triggered the culmination of cockfighting. The actions of the community in conducting this ritual reflect the results of the significance constructed regarding the essence of cockfighting. This significance arises as a consequence of the social interaction process among community members concerning the symbols associated with the events.

Keywords: Cockfighting, Significance, Motives, Folk media, Ritual communication, Gambling

Introduction

Cockfighting initially originated as a sacred ritual marking ceremonies with magical significance during ancestral times. This tradition serves as a form of entertainment (Adam, 2015) and is commonly found in inland communities such as the regions of Java, Bali, Sulawesi, and Eastern Indonesia (Here & Timo, 2019). The ritual includes pitting two male roosters equipped with small sharp knives and released into an open arena (Firmanto, 2019).

Due to modernization, cockfighting has now become synonymous with a gambling event (Here & Timo, 2019). Many individuals misuse the traditional game as an avenue to engage in gambling activities. Consequently, the government of Indonesia made policies to eradicate the tradition (Supratman, 2023) by prohibiting the practice of cockfighting as well as declaring the activity illegal, violating both laws and animal rights (Novianti et al., 2016).

Cockfighting in society is widely connected to various problems and negative consequences. Gambling associated with cockfighting leads to economic decline, social disturbances due to rising criminal activities, and severe depression among participants who face financial losses (Ruslan et al., 2021). Furthermore, cockfighting which often evolves into a gambling platform has the potential to cause conflicts in the households (Wardhani et al., 2024).

However, Sabu Raijua Regency in East Nusa Tenggara Province still upholds the practice of cockfighting known as *Peiu Manu* (Here & Timo, 2019) as part of the traditional ceremonies in the community. The cockfighting ritual has been a generational tradition within the community, symbolizing the values of peace created by the ancestors (Here & Timo, 2019).

Previous research on cockfighting, such as (Here & Timo, 2019), investigated the Dimension of Peace in the Symbolic Ritual of Cockfighting in Sabu Liae. The findings showed that cockfighting was a part of cultural rituals considered sacred and magical because it carried social messages of peace within the Sabu ethnic community. Another research by (Rebollada-Merino et al., 2022) ascertained that cockfighting was a form of animal cruelty and therefore considered an illegal practice. Furthermore, research conducted in Pakistan by (Arshad et al., 2018) stated that cockfighting in rural communities was viewed as an essential part inseparable from the traditions or culture. Similar research was also conducted in India by (Chakraborty & Chakrabarty, 2017), affirming that cockfighting was perceived as a representation of social status within the community.

Based on these findings, the cockfighting tradition is not only a phenomenon in Indonesia but also in various parts of the world. However, previous research has not shown the motives behind communities engaging in cockfighting, nor has there been a thorough exploration of the significance constructed by communities regarding this tradition. Therefore, this research emphasize on the construction of significance and motives, particularly from the perspective of the participants who conduct the cockfighting ritual. Discovering the construction of significance and motives of cockfighting participants can provide insights into the factors that sustain and perpetuate this ritual across generations. This study adopts a broader framework by examining not only the motives and meanings attached to cockfighting but also the role as a form of traditional media and the ritual communication practices embedded in it. Based on this framework, the questions guiding the study are as follows.

- Q1. What are the primary motives of participants in organizing cockfighting rituals?
- Q2. What meanings do participants attribute to cockfighting?
- Q3. How is cockfighting used as a medium of folk communication?
- Q4. How does the ritual communication process take place within cockfighting?
- Q5. Why has cockfighting evolved into a gambling platform?

Based on these questions, the objectives of the study include the following.

- 1) To map the motives and meanings participants associate with cockfighting.
- 2) To explore the use as a medium of folk media.
- 3) To analyse the ritual communication processes within cockfighting.
- 4) To explain the reasons behind the development into a gambling activity.

Theoretical Framework

Folk media referred to traditional communication tools passed down through generations to convey specific messages to audiences by using various forms of artistic expression, such as folk games, performing arts, folklore, dances, and songs (Andung et al., 2024; Shaika & Mishra, 2020; Tadi & Khan, 2021). Folk media were particularly effective as communication tools within traditional communities as the instruments were deeply rooted in the community's strong cultural values and emotional bonds (Radebe et al., 2020).

The tools also constituted an inseparable component of ritual communication practices where the presence of folk media was a direct reflection of ritual communication (Andung, 2010). By definition, ritual communication referred to the communicative processes that occurred within society with the purpose of gathering, fostering togetherness, maintaining emotional connections, and preserving social cohesion (Jamil et al., 2022; Lei et al., 2023). Through ritual communication, communities constructed both verbal and non-verbal meaning manifested through various ceremonies, performances, traditional games, and customary processions (Tjioe et al., 2023).

The concepts used in this research included the theory of symbolic interactionism as formulated by George Herbert Mead. The essence of symbolic interactionism was the distinctive human activity of communication and the exchange of symbols imbued with significance (Mulyana, 2013). Consequently, the interactions between individuals within society gave rise to the significance. Blumer as the proponent of this theory stated that humans lived in a world of symbols and consistently attributed significance to these figures, serving as a guide for actions. Therefore, the symbolic significance was produced, reproduced, and mediated through social interaction processes (Roth, 2021). Symbolic interactionism deals with the process of significance-making resulting in actions. The essence of symbolic interactionism lay in producing, distributing, or communicating the significance of symbols surrounding objects, individuals, and events, to others (University et al., 2022). The significance obtained through interactions with others was reinforced (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002), and the outcomes of social interactions provided an overview of agreement on specific understanding and symbols (Wirdanengsih & Rahmawati, 2022) (Conner & Baxter, 2022).

George Herbert Mead emphasized the importance of self-concept in discussing symbolic interactionism as the ability to guide an individual both as a subject and object (Rohmawati et al., 2021), leading to the formation of identity (Doğusan & Koçak, 2021). The theory of symbolic interactionism had several premises with the individuals initially responding to a situation. The individuals responded to the environment, including physical (things) and social objects (human behaviour), based on the significance contained in the environmental components. When encountering a situation, the response was neither mechanical nor determined by external factors, but depended on the situation faced in social interaction. Therefore, each individual was considered actively determined in the environment.

Significance, as a product of social interaction, was not inherent in objects but negotiated through the use of language. This negotiation could occur because humans can name everything, not only physical objects, actions, or events but also abstract ideas. Additionally, the significance interpreted by individuals could change over time, corresponding to the changes encountered in social interactions. Changes in interpretation were possible because individuals could engage in mental processes, communicating with each other, and imagining or planning the next action (Mulyana, 2013).

Human actions were fundamentally driven by specific motives. In the framework of Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, these motives were categorized into two principal types namely In-Order-to and Because Motives. In-Order-to Motives referred to the future-oriented objectives or intended outcomes that individuals aimed to achieve through actions. In contrast, Because Motives represented the retrospective reasons behind a particular action, often shaped by past experiences, personal history, or broader historical circumstances that influenced decision-making processes (Schutz, 2011).

Methodology

The research adhered to the interpretive paradigm with a qualitative design using the phenomenology method. The developer of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, emphasized that the phenomenological method studied the significance of various evolving phenomena experienced by humans globally (Nyberg, 2023). This research was conducted in Sabu Raijua Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, with 12 participants engaging in cockfighting. The selection of participants was based on the following considerations. Three individuals were identified as community leaders of the Sabu ethnic group, while another three served as initiators of cockfighting events. Additionally, three others were youth figures actively encouraging their peers to participate in cockfighting activities, and three were customary leaders. All nine were experienced cockfighting practitioners, each with over 15 years of participation. Accordingly, a purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants who were most relevant to the study objectives. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interview techniques along with prepared guides to facilitate collection. Due to accessibility reasons, some participants were interviewed using technology (handphones), while others were engaged face-to-face.

Participants were de-briefed on the research objectives and obtained verbal consent before being interviewed to maintain ethical standards. To ensure confidentiality, all informant identities were not disclosed in this research and the interview quotes included in this article were abbreviated and assigned distinctive variables from P1 to P12.

The data analysis technique adopted the six-step process introduced by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The first step was to process and prepare the data for analysis while the second stage was to read through the entire dataset. In the second step, general ideas were identified from the participants to measure the depth of the available information. The third step included the analysis of the data in more detail through coding, which was conducted based on the research topics. Creating themes based on the categorized outcomes of the research objectives was the fourth step in the process. The coding outcome from the third step assisted in identifying and categorizing the data into specific themes according to the research objectives. The fifth step was to present the report in a qualitative description/narrative form, while the final stage included the interpretation or construction of significance to the available data serving as a reference for the conclusion.

Results/ Results discussion

Glance at Cockfighting and ritual communication practices

The practice of cockfighting was commonly referred to as *Pe'iu Manu* in the Sabu Raijua community. According to the accounts of P1 and P8, who were community figures, the tradition of cockfighting was an essential part of the customary ceremonies within the Sabu Raijua tribe's tradition historically. The staging of cockfights was an inseparable component of the ancestral spirit worship ceremony, which was conducted by individuals with traditional *Jingitiu* religion and beliefs. Furthermore, both P1 and P8 divided the tradition of cockfighting in the Sabu Raijua community into four categories. The first group called *Pe'iu Manu Daba* served as an activity conducted as part of the *Daba* traditional ceremony during the *Daba* month (corresponding to the community calendar). The ritual was a form of welcoming and dedicating children to the god or deity believed by the Sabu Raijua community. The cockfighting performance in the *Daba* ritual was the climax of the celebration, which was only performed once a year. The celebration took place in an open field in front of the traditional house. Before starting the cockfighting ritual, two elders will begin with prayers to ancestors or deities and conclude by releasing the two roosters into the arena.

Pe'iu Manu Banga Liu was the second category which included a type of cockfighting ritual performed after the sowing season. The ritual was to be conducted as part of the series of events in the Banga Liu traditional ceremony, aimed at offering prayers for a fruitful and abundant harvest from the fields. The execution of this type of cockfighting was allowed only within the premises of the traditional house.

The third category of cockfighting tradition was referred to as *Pe'iu Manu Hole* which typically occurred in April annually. This tradition was to be carried out as a form of respect and simultaneously a thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest obtained by the Sabu Raijua community during the month. The cockfighting performance took place after the conclusion of the ceremony which was also referred to as the *Hole* ritual. Monetary betting was not allowed in the three categories of cockfighting because the activities were part of traditional rituals and held a strong as well as high level of sacred and magical significance. The three cockfighting rituals were to be conducted in traditional houses and were not permitted in arbitrary locations as the tradition served as an essential part of the ceremonies. Additionally, the fighting roosters were not to use additional tools such as knives or any other objects during the fights.

Pe'iu Manu Lala was the fourth category which referred to cockfighting activities conducted outside the other traditions related to the sowing and harvesting seasons. This ceremony was known to the community as non-traditional/free cockfighting primarily because it allowed gambling activities. During the fights, the roosters were equipped with specially designed small knives attached to the legs. The *Pe'iu Manu Lala* often caused issues in the community due to gambling activities. However, the practice of this type of cockfighting persisted clandestinely despite the government prohibiting the ceremony due to the problematic occurrence. These four forms of cockfighting were essentially rituals that had been passed down through generations within the Sabu Raijua ethnic community. According to a community leader (P8), the staging of cockfighting events—particularly as part of customary ceremonies—was an annual ritual in which community members gathered and participated to reinforce kinship ties and maintain social cohesion. Viewed through the theoretical lens of James W. Carey, this practice was associated with a form of ritual communication, where the primary communicative purpose was not the transmission of messages but rather the fostering of

gathering, solidarity, emotional bonding, and the preservation of social integrity within the community (Jamil et al., 2022; Lei et al., 2023).

Cockfighting as a Folk Media

The three types of cockfighting designated as part of the cultural ritual events (*Pe'iu Manu Daba*, *Banga Liu*, and *Hole*) were considered by the community to be sacred. Therefore, monetary betting was not permitted during the cockfighting performances. According to the perspective of the Sabu Raijua community, these traditions held significance as traditional communication tools, indicated by the presence of moral messages. Below are some comments from the participants.

"Cockfighting for the Sabu Raijua community served as an ancestral heritage passed down from generations. When a cockfight occurred, many individuals from the community would witness the performance. The ceremony communicated a moral message, inviting the community witnessing the cockfight that individuals should not harm each other" (P2).

P5 confirmed the comment by P2, stating that cockfighting was interpreted as a traditional communication tool used by the community in rural areas. Community members whose roosters were engaged in cockfighting aimed to convey a message to others that society should not participate in war, avoiding conflicts resulting in loss of life. The roosters should be allowed to fight to death in place of the humans. Below were quotes from the interview with P5.

The Sabu community considered cockfighting as a communication tool aimed to inform other society that living in peace was more crucial to life. Humans should not engage in fights, specifically when taking another life. This was related to the past stories that the Sabu community once had wars between villages. Therefore, a message of peace was passed across to others who did not witness the war through cockfighting (P5).

P3 further stated that the message contained in cockfighting had traditional significance. Therefore, cockfighting fostered an invitation to live together in harmony and peace with others besides entertaining the community.

"Cockfighting had the significance of an invitation to maintain harmony with others. The rooster was symbolized as a sacrifice to avoid bloody conflicts within the community. Therefore, an invitation to live in harmony with others was observed by engaging in cockfighting " (P3).

Based on the opinions and comments of the participants, the cockfighting ritual can be concluded to be perceived and constructed with significance as a society's medium in the Sabu Raijua community. The tradition and spectacle of cockfighting expressed a communicative message to the audience witnessing the performance, urging the members to live in peace and harmony with each other.

Construction of the Significance of Cockfighting by Society

Cockfighting as Part of a Cultural Ritual

The participant's perspective indicated that traditional cockfighting was construed as a method and effort to preserve the community culture. The Sabu Raijua community believed that traditional cockfighting was inherited and received from the ancestors through generations. Therefore, engaging in the ritual of cockfighting was perceived by the community as synonymous with preserving the culture and traditions. Cockfighting was considered an inseparable part of the community's customary ceremonies, as emphasized by some participants.

Participation in cockfighting commenced during childhood, with engagement in the ritual from the age of 8 alongside parental guidance. The activity was perceived to hold significant sacred value originating from ancestral traditions, which was observed periodically and at specific times. Cockfighting was not casually showcased because it was part of the customary ceremonies, specifically during the planting and harvesting events in the fields or gardens (P1).

P4, who was a leader added that the cockfighting tradition was part of the cultural rituals of the Sabu Raijua community, namely *Dhaba*, *Bangaliu*, and *Hole*. Cockfighting was held as the culmination of each of these customary rituals. The essence of cockfighting in the *Dhaba* tradition signified the completion of the planting season. The ritual was a form of gratitude to the ancestors for the opportunity to sow seeds in the fields. Furthermore, cockfighting in the *Hole* ritual was intended to honour the spirits of ancestors after the harvest. Below were quotes from the interview with P4.

Cockfighting in the tradition of the Sabu community was primarily carried out during customary ceremonies known as Dhaba, Bangaliu, and Hole. The Dhaba customary ceremony took place during the planting season. The ceremony was aimed to express gratitude to God with cockfighting performance as the culmination and manifestation of thanksgiving after planting in the gardens and fields. Similarly, the Hole ceremony was conducted after the harvest season to send the proceeds to be offered to the ancestors. Cockfighting was also performed as a gesture of gratitude for the completed harvest (P4).

Other participants reinforced the comments by P2 and P4. According to P5, cockfighting was an essential part of the thanksgiving ceremonies, both after planting (*Dhaba*), the *Bangaliu* ritual, and post-harvest (*Hole*). The presence of cockfighting was observed to be a crucial part of the worship rituals as it was considered highly sacred and respected by the Sabu Raijua community.

Cockfighting as a Symbol of Peace

Another significance constructed from the traditional cockfighting ritual as perceived by the participants was the symbol of peace. The community leaders of Sabu Raijua (P8) emphasized the fundamental essence of conducting cockfighting as a symbol of peace in the society. Below was a quote from the interview results.

The introduction of cockfighting was initially aimed to end the wars between villages in Sabu Raijua, where many were injured and even lost lives. Therefore, the elders agreed to resolve the conflict and establish unity with cockfighting performance indicating the symbol of peace which was performed before the ritual. This was a sign that the wars between villages had been resolved (P8).

A similar sentiment was expressed by P7, who stated that cockfighting symbolized peace. The roosters were allowed to fight and shed blood as a sacrifice to substitute for human blood, preventing warfare and maintaining harmony among each other.

"The community agreed that the fights between roosters in the cockfighting arena would represent the conflicts between humans. The spilt blood of the rooster symbolized that of humans serving as a substitute. The underlying message was that only the roosters should fight, while humans should refrain from violence, with the rooster serving as a sacrificial offering" (P7).

The same opinion was expressed by P9 and P10, indicating that the significances of organizing the tradition of cockfighting was to promote peace. The spilt blood had a cultural significance and referred to the importance of maintaining peace in the community by avoiding warfare or conflicts leading to bloodshed. A summary of the participants' opinions and the second-degree constructions is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: First and Second-Degree Construction Regarding the Community's Significance of the Cockfighting Tradition

Participant	First-Order Constructions	Second-Order Constructions
P2, P5, P3	A traditional game (P2), cockfighting expressed a message of peace to those witnessing the event (P5). Therefore, an invitation to live in harmony with others was communicated by engaging in cockfighting (P3).	Cockfighting as a traditional means of communication
P1, P4, P5	Therefore, cockfighting was a part of the traditional ceremony (P1). Cockfighting in the Sabu tradition was mainly performed during traditional ceremonies called <i>Dhaba</i> and <i>Hole</i> (P4). It was an essential part of the Thanksgiving ceremony, both after planting (<i>Dhaba</i>) and harvest (<i>Hole</i>) (P5).	Cockfighting as Part of a Cultural Ritual
P8, P7, P9 dan P10	The ritual of cockfighting was agreed upon as a symbol of peace, which was a sign that the war between villages had ended (P8). The message was to let the chickens fight in place of the humans. Therefore, the chicken served as a sacrificial offering (P7). The significance of organizing the tradition of cockfighting was to promote peace among the community (P9, P10).	Cockfighting as a Symbol of Peace

Source: processed research data

Individual's Motives for Cockfighting as a Gambling Event

Cockfighting had become an activity for gambling due to the development of the community. However, the *Pe'iu Manu Lala* was the only type of cockfighting used for gambling purposes, elaborating on the motives of the participants.

Entertainment Motive

Almost all participants emphasized that the main reason cockfighting was converted into a gambling event was for entertainment purposes. Participants experienced joy and happiness through the ritual of cockfighting. Furthermore, since traditional forms of entertainment were limited in the Sabu Raijua community, cockfighting served as a source of enjoyment. As expressed by P10 and P7, the following were the participant statements.

"Participation in cockfighting betting was purely for entertainment and relaxation. The community lacked diverse entertainment options, and cockfighting evolved as a primary avenue of enjoyment. The bets placed were modest, with the primary aim of being relaxation." (P10).

P7 confirmed the comments of P10 by stating that the primary purpose for participating in cockfighting bets was to relieve stress after work. Below was a statement made by P7.

"Engagement in Pe'iu Manu was solely for fun and to relieve stress. Moreover, the bets placed were usually small, typically just a few hundred thousand rupiahs. It was all about having a good time, nothing more." (P7).

Economic Motive

Other participants, such as P6 and P9, perceived that the main purpose for participating in the tradition of cockfighting was to earn additional income. By engaging in cockfight gambling, the participant had the opportunity to generate additional money when fortunate to win bets placed. In the interviews, participants P6 and P9 expressed the motivations for participating in *Pe'iu Manu*. P6 stated that winning bets were correlated to earning cash, contributing to the motives in participating in money betting. The winning increased the cash at hand, which could be used to cover daily expenses. Additionally, P9 mentioned that participants engaged in *Pe'iu Manu* to seize the opportunity to make money. Renting out roosters and sharpened knives served as a source of income for the participants. Even without participating in money betting, members could still earn by providing these items for rent. Therefore, *Pe'iu Manu* served as a financial contribution for P9.

Based on the information from P6 and P9, it was understood that economic motives were a trigger for the prevalence of gambling through cockfighting in the Sabu Raijua Community. However, all participants stated that *Pe'iu Manu Lala* was not an ancestral heritage because it included gambling. This practice had evolved in the community based on the participants' agreement. Furthermore, the elders did not recommend *Pe'iu Manu Lala* because this type of cockfighting could lead to social problems in the community, including conflicts and other criminal actions such as theft and disputes. The true essence and purpose of cockfighting were not intended for gambling as stated in the previous session.

Building Social Networks

Another motive found in this research was social networking, as stated by the cockfighting participants. P5, P7, and P1 emphasized that the cockfighting ritual fostered the creation of numerous friendships within and beyond the neighbouring villages. The participant's sentiments were expressed in the following interview excerpts:

"Besides seeking entertainment, the members actively participated in cockfighting to create new friendships. It allowed connections with individuals from various villages, thereby expanding the social circle. The participant decided to attend every cockfighting event because friendships were always created and fostered" (P5).

P7 confirmed P5's sentiments, emphasizing that spectators and gamblers flocked to each cockfighting event not only from the village but also from the neighbouring community. The gatherings attracted individuals from nearby areas, fostering good relations and friendships.

"Every cockfighting event was always attended by individuals from neighbouring villages. Consequently, good relations and friendships were created with the participants. These interactions often lead to further visits and the formation of new connections with individuals from different villages" (P7).

P1 further expressed a similar sentiment, stating that cockfighting became an avenue to expand social interactions and relations with others. Cockfighting was participated in by P1 due to the invitation of friends.

"Initially, a friend invited P1 to participate in betting on cockfights. It was believed that many friends with the same hobby would be present at cockfighting events because numerous individuals were present to watch" (P1).

Social Inheritance Motives

Engaging in the tradition of cockfighting, whether through traditional rituals or with a specific type of rooster called "Lala" was perceived as preserving the cultural heritage of ancestors by participants. As expressed by P3 and P9, the act of participating in cockfighting served to ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage. Here was a quote from the interview with P3 and P9.

"Pe iu manu had existed among the ancestors of the Sabu community, passed on to children and grandchildren. By participating in cockfighting, the participant contributed to preserving this tradition preventing its extinction. Furthermore, cockfighting became a part of the Sabu community lives" (P3).

P9 shared a similar perspective stating that cockfighting rituals held high cultural value. The participation in cockfighting was due to the belief that the ritual was taught by the ancestors and therefore, deserved to be preserved and maintained.

"Pe iu manu was part of the traditions and culture of the Sabu community which was taught from one generation to the next. It was performed as an inseparable part of traditional rituals such as Dhaba and Hole. The new generation also needs to be introduced to the ancestral traditions to prevent extinction. Although members gamble on it, but it was just for fun" (P9).

Based on the opinions of both participants, it was deduced that another motive for the community to engage in cockfighting was social inheritance. Cockfighting was positioned as a form of cultural work inherited through generations from the ancestors. Despite the instances of *Lala* cockfights including gambling, participants perceived the ritual as an effort to introduce and pass it on to the younger generation.

Curiosity When Losing a Fight and Addiction to Winning a Bet

Informants (P11 and P12) expressed a perspective where the participants engaged in the ritual of *Lala* cockfighting following losses in previous bets. The motive of curiosity arising from losing a fight became a trigger for conducting cockfights with friends. Below are quotes from the interviews with the participants.

"When a loss occurred in the previous cockfighting bet, it made the participants more curious.

The loser would be more enthusiastic about waiting for the next cockfighting opportunity to win because it was not always about losing or winning, there were both outcomes" (P11)

A similar opinion was shared by P12, who stated that losing in cockfighting made the participants more curious. The participation intensity in cockfighting gambling would increase when losses were experienced. However, when the money bet was won, the participant even became more enthusiastic.

"Personally, winning the bets was the aim. But there were times when luck came into play, and sometimes the bet would be lost, which was part of the gambling game. Winning made the participants more excited to play again and when losses occurred, curiosity came into play wondering the reason for the loss. The participant would be prompted to seek better fighting rooster and sharper knife blades" (P12).

Based on the information from these two participants, a common thread was identified that the curiosity about losing and the addiction to winning bets were among the motives contributing to the increased activity of the cockfighting ritual in the Sabu Raijua community. Consequently, losing a bet did not deter the participants, particularly when considering other motives mentioned earlier, such as entertainment, building friendships, and social inheritance.

Channelling a Hobby

The participants generally emphasized that the main purpose for engaging in *Lala* cockfighting, besides entertainment, was the need to pursue the members' hobbies. Almost all participants agreed that this activity took place during leisure time to channel the participant's hobby. The cockfighting ritual was typically conducted on days when there were no other activities such as gardening or working in other formal and non-formal sectors. This sentiment was expressed by several participants.

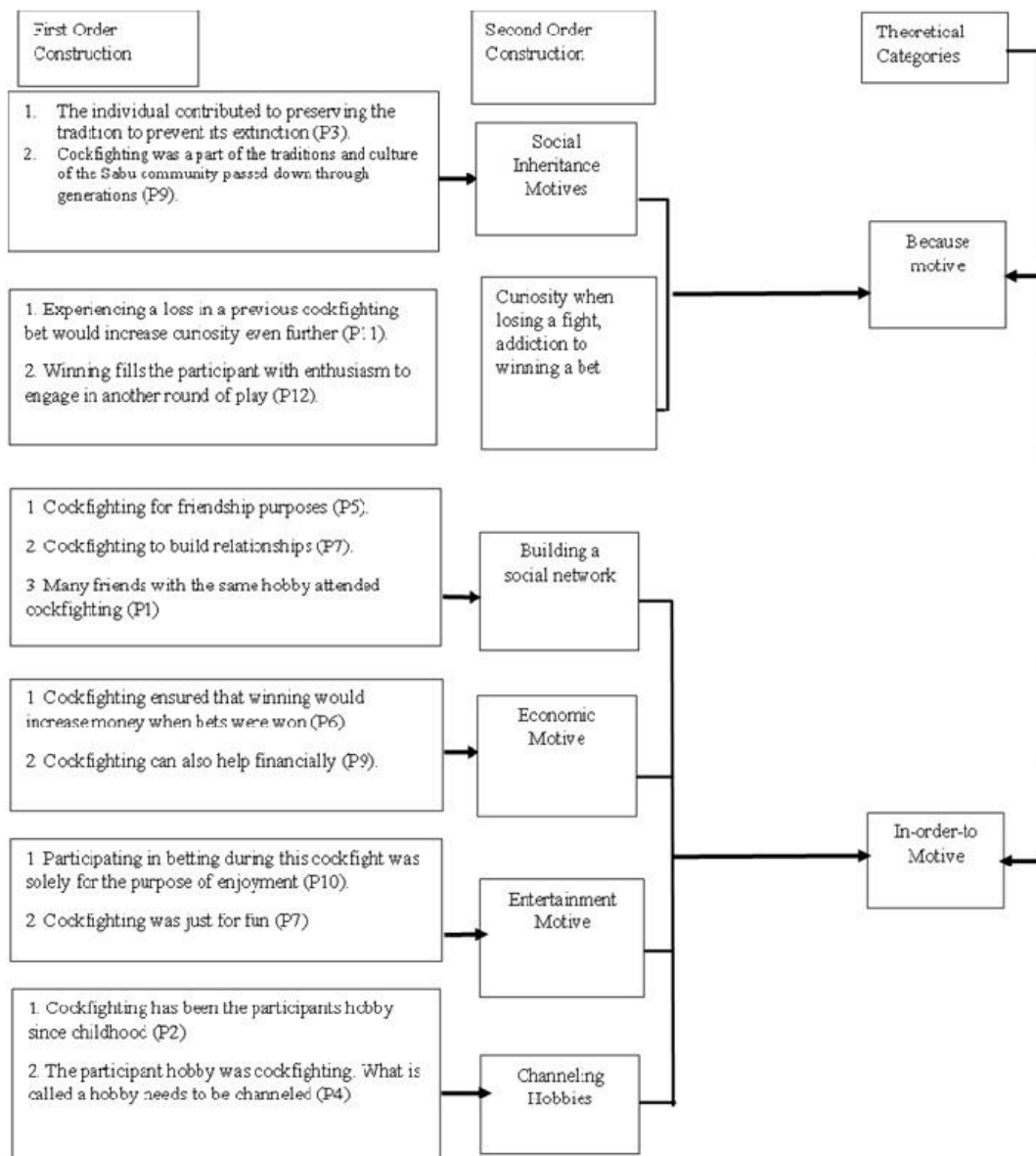
"Cockfighting has been a numerous hobby since childhood. Engaging in cockfighting events brought a sense of satisfaction to the participants. Furthermore, because it has been a tradition in Sabu society since ancient times, members also participated in it" (P2).

"The member's primary motivation for participating in cockfighting, besides finding entertainment, was because the ritual was the participant's favourite hobby since childhood.

"What is called a hobby needs to be channelled" (P4).

The perspective shared by P2 and P4 was further supported by other participants, including P5, P6, P7, and P11. All these participants affirmed that the cockfighting ritual served as both a source of entertainment in the community and an avenue to pursue a passion as breeders and practitioners of blade-fighting roosters.

Figure 1: Motives of the Community Engaging in Cockfighting Gambling Rituals



Source: processed research data

Discussion

Cockfighting as Ritual Communication

Cockfighting serves as a ritual within the Sabu Raijua community, representing organized and repeated activities that showcase the traditions or customs of the group (Over et al., 2020). In the context of cockfighting rituals, the Sabu Raijua community interprets it as a part of cultural rituals. Therefore, the motives for the community in carrying out the cockfighting tradition is to gather and build social networks.

Building unity and togetherness as a community can be perceived as a ritual communication. This term was initially introduced by James W. Carey to refer to the processes aimed at gathering, fostering togetherness, maintaining emotional connections, and social integrity among communities (Lei et al., 2023) (Jamil et al., 2022). Carey considers that communication from a ritual perspective is more positioned as a cultural behaviour rather than transmission (Tian & Wu, 2023). Gathering to build togetherness as a community is evident in the cockfighting ritual.

The significance of the message created through various forms of rituals, including cockfighting, can take the form of both verbal and nonverbal understanding in the context of ritual communication. This is also evident in various other forms of rituals such as performing arts, singing, and other important traditions in society (Tjioe et al., 2023). As a form of ritual communication, cockfighting is constructed to have several historical and philosophical significances. Cockfighting is historically constructed to symbolize peace, related to the frequent wars between villages in Sabu Raijua. The conflicts ended after conducting several cockfighting rituals as sacrifices. Philosophically, cockfighting is interpreted as an essential part of the cultural ritual of the Sabu Raijua community.

The important implementation of the cockfighting ritual was initially positioned as a ceremonial performance to share cultural significance among fellow community members. This correlates with Rothenbuhler's assertion that ritual communication can be seen in various displays of communicative values, including all forms of ceremony in society. The primary essence is to foster an effort to collectively share significance for cultural preservation (Lin et al., 2023). Messages and significances contained in ritual communication are symbolic and, thereby tend to be ambiguous (Orzeata, 2022).

Cockfighting as Folk Media

Cockfighting fulfils the elements or components of folk media, serving as an essential part of cultural rituals through which messages are expressed to the spectators. The primary message expressed is an invitation to live harmoniously without conflicts with each other.

The term "folk media" is fundamentally understood as a traditional communication tool used by communities through generations. Practically, traditional media is closely related to the belief systems, customs, or cultures of the users (Kumar & Lenin, 2021). Folk media relies on various forms of traditional performing arts such as folk tales, dances, songs, games, and several other artworks that can express messages to the audience (Tadi & Khan, 2021) (Shaika & Mishra, 2020). Cockfighting in this context falls under the category of folk performances and games. This ritual represents symbolic messages about the importance of peace in the community. Messages communicated through various forms of folk performing arts are sacred, specifically when associated with traditions and customs passed down through generations such as cockfighting. Indigenous communities have long used various cultural works for communication. Therefore, the presence of folk media can overcome communication gaps due to language limitations within the community (Kumar, 2022).

The adoption of cockfighting as a channel of traditional communication is effective according to the beliefs of the Sabu Raijua community, particularly in fostering harmonious living. In addition to being part of cultural rituals, various forms of traditional communication are maximized for sharing information among community members (Safitri et al., 2022) (Madhubhashini, 2021). These folk media are typically forms of various local

wisdom passed down through generations. Therefore, the rituals have the potential to express various communication messages. The presence of traditional media is familiar in the daily lives of the community as it is a part of the culture. This undoubtedly makes folk media a cost-effective and efficient communication tool, in correlation with the cultural characteristics of the users.

Folk media serves to entertain and inform communities, closely reflecting the lives and culture of the users (Yemer, 2020). Due to the cultural foundation, the use of folk media is considered more effective in expressing various information to the local community compared to other media (As'adi, 2020) (Gogoi, 2022) (Radebe et al., 2020). Folk media in the form of traditional games has significantly played a role as entertainment for children and the community in general (Cabella & Rasminto, 2022).

Cockfighting Developed into a Gambling Event

Cockfighting initially was a part of traditional ceremonies or cultural rituals as explained in previous sessions, but evolved into a platform for gambling. The community's act of engaging in gambling through cockfighting is based on specific motives. Based on the phenomenological theory presented by Alfred Schutz, categorizes motives into two major parts, namely "in-order-to" and "because" motives. The "in-order-to" motive refers to an individual's expectations and fantasies before undertaking an action. Conversely, the "because" motive is related to past events that trigger the culmination of an action (Barber, 2020). Those falling under the "in-order-to" motive category include building social networks, economic motives, entertainment, and leisure. Furthermore, the community's engagement in cockfighting for social inheritance, curiosity when losing a fight, and addiction to winning a bet fall into the "because" motive category.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism theory, the community's actions in performing the cockfighting ritual are evident based on the significance created by the Sabu Raijua community regarding cockfighting. The significance arises due to the interpretations given to the symbols in the cockfighting event. The essence of symbolic interactionism theory lies in producing, distributing, or communicating the significance of symbols surrounding objects, individuals, and events to others (University et al., 2022). The construction of the acquired significance is further reinforced through social interactions among members of the community (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Subsequently, the outcomes of the social interactions influence the social actions taken by the individuals (Conner & Baxter, 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study showed that the practice of cockfighting (*Pe'iu Manu*) within the Sabu Raijua community represented the integration of cultural meaning, social motives, and ritual communication practices. The primary motives behind the participation in cockfighting events correlated with Alfred Schutz's categorization of In-Order-To and Because Motives. In-Order-To motives reflected participants' prospective objectives such as seeking entertainment, generating economic profit, establishing social networks, and pursuing personal hobbies. In contrast, Because Motives were rooted in past experiences and the transmission of tradition including the desire to preserve ancestral heritage and the psychological drive to avenge previous defeats or replicate victories within the context of gambling.

In terms of meaning construction, cockfighting was understood through two primary dimensions namely historical and philosophical. Historically, cockfighting functioned as a symbol of peace, originating from customary agreements to resolve intergroup conflicts. The blood of the roosters symbolically substituted for human blood, serving as a marker of reconciliation and the preservation of social harmony. Philosophically, cockfighting constituted a crucial part of Sabu Raijua's customary rituals, particularly in agricultural ceremonies such as *Dhaba*, *Banga Liu*, and *Hole*, which reflected expressions of gratitude, reverence for ancestors, and aspirations for communal prosperity.

Furthermore, this study affirmed that cockfighting also served as a form of folk media, functioning as a traditional communication tool conveying moral and social messages to the public. Through cockfighting performances, the community was motivated to uphold values of peace and prevent the outbreak of conflict. The integration of cockfighting into the daily life and belief systems of the Sabu Raijua Community reinforced the role as a symbolic medium for disseminating cultural messages, particularly in rural areas where adherence to customary norms remained strong.

From the perspective of ritual communication, cockfighting reflected communicative practices as conceptualized by James W. Carey, where communication was not solely intended for the transmission of information but also for reinforcing social cohesion, building solidarity, and reproducing shared meanings. Ritual communication in cockfighting was expressed through both verbal and non-verbal means. Verbal expressions included customary prayers, while non-verbal symbolism was embodied in the cockfight, conveying cultural messages that aimed to preserve ancestral heritage and strengthen solidarity by advocating against bloodshed.

However, the development of cockfighting as a gambling platform marked a shift in meaning from sacred ritual to profane practice. This transformation which was most evident in the form of *Pe'iu Manu Lala* reflected societal responses to socio-economic changes including demands for entertainment, social interaction, and supplementary income. Although customary cockfighting rituals continued to be safeguarded within sacred spaces, the commercialization and gambling activities that surrounded the rituals posed risks to social harmony, legal order, and the preservation of cultural values. This shift outlined a tension between efforts to protect cultural heritage and the pressures of socio-economic adaptation. Consequently, strategic measures were necessary to preserve the original meaning of cockfighting as a ritual of peace inherited from ancestral traditions within the Sabu Raijua community.

The results of this study provided significant implications for the preservation of local culture and the management of traditions within customary communities, particularly in distinguishing between sacred rituals and profane activities such as gambling. Strengthening the historical and philosophical meanings of cockfighting as a symbol of peace and as a medium of folk communication needed to be integrated into cultural education programs, whether through regional government policies or community-led initiatives to prevent excessive commercialization that threatened the noble values of ancestral heritage. Furthermore, this study contributed to the development of ritual communication theory and symbolic interactionism by offering empirical insights into how traditional cultural symbols not only reinforced collective identities but also underwent transformations in response to evolving social, economic, and legal dynamics at the local level.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that I have no conflict of interest or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this study.

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