


## Myth of *Wa Sirikamba* in The Muna Community in Wali Village, Watopute District, Muna Regency

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Oral Tradition, Wa Sirikamba Myth, Forms, Functionalism</p>	<p>This study aims to identify the forms and functions of the Wa Sirikamba myth in the life of the Muna community in Wali Village, Watopute District, Muna Regency, as well as to analyse the influence of this myth on their mindset and social behaviour. Employing a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with local cultural figures and community members, as well as relevant documentary studies. Data analysis was conducted using Bronislaw Malinowski's functional theory, which emphasises the role of myths in maintaining social and cultural stability within communities. The findings indicate that the Wa Sirikamba myth is not merely an oral narrative but also involves sacred sites and belief rituals that bind the community in religious and social practices. This myth serves several important functions: (1) a social function as a tool for social control that shapes interactions among individuals, (2) a religious and spiritual function that connects the community with supernatural forces, (3) an ecological function that regulates the relationship between humans and nature, (4) an educational and moral function that instils local wisdom values, and (5) a mystical and magical function in spiritual life. This research asserts that the Wa Sirikamba myth is more than just a traditional story; it is an integral part of the belief system and cultural identity of the Muna community, remaining relevant within a modern social context.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">CC BY-NC</a> license</p> 	<p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Sadam Muhammad Universitas Halu Oleo <a href="mailto:sadammuhamad1309@gmail.com">sadammuhamad1309@gmail.com</a></p>

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural diversity, traditions, languages, and beliefs. This diversity has become an inseparable part of the daily lives of its people (Suryadmaja & Saearani, 2025). One aspect of culture that continues to be passed down from generation to generation is myth. Almost every ethnic group in Indonesia possesses myths that serve as a means to explain natural phenomena, regulate social norms, and reinforce the values of community life (Nurtikawati, Santika, & Niampe, 2022; Puspita & Utari, 2025).

Myths are often regarded as sacred stories believed to have a close relationship with supernatural powers and forces (Nurtikawati, Arfan, & Suraya, 2022). Myths are not merely old tales inherited from the past; they also play a role in shaping social identity and providing moral guidance for the community. Despite the advancements of the times and various

scientific explanations for natural phenomena and life, myths continue to hold a special place within traditional Indonesian society.

Various scholars have defined myths from different perspectives. Koentjaraningrat describes myths as sacred stories related to the community's beliefs in supernatural powers or events from the past (Muzakir & Suastra, 2024). Bronislaw Malinowski adds that myths contain symbolism that reflects the community's beliefs regarding deities, supernatural beings, or the origins of the universe (Sari & Brata, 2020). Myths in the Muna community play a role in shaping social values and strengthening collective identity (Masyarakat, Pada, & Muna, 2021). This also emphasises that myths are often used as moral guidelines and a means to understand the world from a traditional perspective. Buchori, F. (2006: 102) reveals that myths are part of the oral tradition that develops within indigenous communities, containing philosophical, spiritual, and social values (Manuaba, Satya Dewi, & Kinasih, 2012). Another perspective views myths as a form of local wisdom that functions to maintain environmental balance (Butar, Isman, & Syamsuryurnita, 2019; Gual, 2024). Myths often contain specific prohibitions that are essentially forms of environmental preservation, such as the prohibition against indiscriminately cutting down trees or damaging water sources. From a psychological standpoint, myths are also considered a way for communities to cope with anxiety and uncertainty regarding natural phenomena, such as prolonged droughts or other natural disasters (Putri, 2019).

Functions of Myths in Society Myths serve various functions in community life, including: As Moral Guidelines Myths often contain moral values that are instilled in the daily lives of the community. For example, the myth of karma in Javanese culture teaches that every good or bad deed will receive its reward (Endraswara, 2006). As a Means of Socialisation and Cultural Identity Myths also help shape the cultural identity of a community. For instance, the Dayak community in Kalimantan has myths related to their relationship with nature and ancestors, which simultaneously strengthen their identity as an indigenous community.

As Explanations for Natural Phenomena Before the advent of modern science, communities used myths to explain various natural phenomena. For example, the myth of Nyi Roro Kidul, believed to be the ruler of the Southern Sea, serves as a symbol of respect for the power of the sea (Danandjaja, 2002). As a Means of Environmental Preservation Many myths are related to the protection of nature and the environment.

The *Wa Sirikamba* myth of the Muna tribe in Southeast Sulawesi is part of local beliefs that state that ancestors or supernatural beings have the power to control the weather, particularly in bringing rain. *Wa Sirikamba* is believed to be an ancestor or sacred spirit with spiritual power to summon rain, hence being revered and central to customary rituals. In times of prolonged drought, the community conducts the *Wa Sirikamba* ritual, which involves a symbolic act of slaughtering a man (pretend) as a form of plea for rain. This phenomenon encompasses extreme drought threatening livelihoods, the collective participation of the community in the ritual as an expression of solidarity, and the emergence of psychological hope that nature will respond to their pleas. In some cases, rain does indeed fall after the ritual, thereby reinforcing the community's belief in the power of this myth. Besides being a spiritual effort to face disaster, this ritual also serves as a means of preserving the culture and

ethnic identity of the Muna people, passed down from generation to generation (Ningsih, Saputra, & Suryadmaja, 2025).

Myths play a very important role in the life of Indonesian society. In addition to being a cultural heritage, myths also function as moral guidelines, social means, and a form of local wisdom in maintaining environmental balance. Although modern science has provided more rational explanations for various phenomena, myths still hold valuable philosophical significance in understanding the relationship between humans and their environment and each other.

Several studies have addressed myths, one of which concerns the myth of Nyi Roro Kidul. An in-depth study of the myth of Nyi Roro Kidul was conducted by Robert Wessing (1997) in his article titled "Nyai Roro Kidul in Puger: Local Applications of a Myth," published in the journal *Archipel*. In his study, Wessing examined the fishing community in Puger, East Java, and found that the myth of Nyi Roro Kidul is not merely a folk tale but has a tangible social function in the lives of coastal communities. The figure of Nyi Roro Kidul is believed to be the ruler of the Southern Sea, who governs the safety and fate of fishermen. This myth has been passed down through generations as the basis for various customary rituals, such as offerings or prohibitions against wearing green clothing, which is believed to be the favourite colour of the sea queen. Wessing's findings indicate that this myth serves as a mechanism for social control, strengthening community solidarity, and providing a traditional form of mitigation against natural dangers such as storms and large waves. These rituals, while symbolic, effectively instil collective vigilance and regulate human interaction with the sea, demonstrating that local beliefs can be an essential part of the knowledge system and adaptive practices of communities in facing environmental risks.

The Nyi Roro Kidul Myth (West Java & Central Java) This myth depicts Nyi Roro Kidul as the ruler of the southern sea who forbids humans from wearing green clothing around the southern coast (Danandjaja, 2002: 79-81). This belief developed as a form of respect for the power of the sea and as a warning of the dangers of large waves that frequently occur in the area. Additionally, various regions have also developed local myths related to natural forces, as found in the Muna tribe community in Southeast Sulawesi.

From the existing phenomena and referring to previous studies, it is evident that there has been little research specifically addressing the Wa Sirikamba myth, particularly highlighting its forms and functions within the community. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting further research on the Wa Sirikamba myth in the Muna community in Wali Village, Watopute District, Muna Regency. This study is expected to contribute to enriching the body of knowledge, particularly in the field of cultural studies and local wisdom.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at depicting the socio-cultural phenomena related to the *Wa Sirikamba* myth within the Muna community, specifically in Wali Village, Watopute District, Muna Regency (Creswell, 2018; Lisa M. (Editor) Given, 2008; Kielmann, Cataldo, & Seeley, 2012; Ugwu, Chinyere, N; Eze Val, 2023). This approach was selected for its ability to explore the meanings and values contained in the myth as well as its

impact on the social life of the local community. The study aims to understand how the *Wa Sirikamba* myth is accepted, practised, and interpreted by the Muna community within their cultural context. The research was conducted in Wali Village, Watopute District, Muna Regency, chosen because it is the location where the *Wa Sirikamba* myth is still preserved in the daily lives of the community. The selection of this location was based on the strong practices and understanding of the myth, which provides the researcher with the opportunity to gather information directly from relevant sources.

The data used in this study are divided into two main types, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants who possess direct knowledge of the *Wa Sirikamba* myth. These informants were purposively selected based on specific criteria, such as in-depth knowledge of the myth, active involvement in related traditions, and social status that enables them to provide diverse insights. In addition, the researcher also conducted participatory observations to capture social dynamics that may not always be expressed in words but are more palpable in the daily social interactions of the community. This observation allows the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how this myth is enacted in the everyday practices of the Muna community (Masrurroh, Yuliatin, Rahman, & Murcahyanto, 2022).

In addition to interviews and observations, documentation is also an important technique in data collection. The researcher reviewed relevant literature and archives, both written and oral documentation that contains information about the history and development of the *Wa Sirikamba* myth in the local community. This documentation provides an additional in-depth perspective on the origins and influences of the myth on local culture. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques, whereby informants were chosen based on certain considerations related to the research objectives. The selected informants are those who possess extensive knowledge about the *Wa Sirikamba* myth, both in terms of the story, the values contained within it, and its influence on the social life of the community. In this regard, the researcher selected various types of informants, such as cultural leaders, religious figures, and general community members involved in social practices related to the myth.

The data collected were then analysed using thematic analysis methods. The analysis process begins with data reduction, which involves selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the selected data are grouped into specific themes based on similarities in patterns or content (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006; Febriandiela & Fitrisia, 2023). This process allows the researcher to highlight important elements that emerge from interviews, observations, and documentation. After that, the researcher will draw conclusions, where the main findings are identified and linked to relevant theories to provide a deeper understanding of the role of the *Wa Sirikamba* myth in the culture and social life of the Muna community.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Form of the *Wa Sirikamba* Myth among the Muna People in Wali Subdistrict, Watopute District, Muna Regency

#### Oral Narratives

The myth of *Wa Sirikamba* has evolved as a piece of folklore passed down orally from generation to generation. As part of an oral tradition, this story is transmitted by traditional leaders, parents to their children, and shared during customary ceremonies, community gatherings, or other cultural events. The myth tells the story of a woman named *Wa Sirikamba*, believed to have lived and died on a mountain. Local communities believe that her presence is not only a part of their historical past but also holds strong spiritual significance. As such, the myth is often linked to local beliefs, including rain-invocation rituals and protection of the surrounding area.

Beyond its cultural significance, this oral narrative also functions as an educational medium for younger generations. It conveys moral values, respect for nature, and the importance of maintaining harmony with ancestors and fellow human beings (Watoni, 2024). Through continual retelling, the *Wa Sirikamba* myth remains alive in the collective memory of the community and serves as a cultural identity marker. As explained by an informant, Mr. La Ode Suharno, S.Hut (43 years old):

*"Mie welo liwu doparasaea ane de basa dhwa ne keburu Wa Sirikamba ini nemesalo nerimba nofo wagho sumanga Wa Sirikamba ini. pada aitu, koburu Wa Sirikamba ini dokalahie omiehi mindalono mesalono okabarakati bhe Atawa okaghosa. siga deowahim Sabhara hulano katoka so Dae basagho dhwa nembali katumpuhano lalo ne Sumanga Wa Sirikamba."*

*Translation:* "The community believes that by performing rituals at this site, their requests are more likely to be granted by the spirit of *Wa Sirikamba*. Furthermore, the grave is frequently visited by those seeking blessings or protection. Some even bring offerings or say special prayers as a sign of respect for *Wa Sirikamba's* spirit."

Based on the above interview, it can be explained that the local people believe that performing rituals at Mount *Wa Sirikamba* increases the chances of their prayers being fulfilled by the spirit of *Wa Sirikamba*. Consequently, this site is often visited by individuals seeking blessings and protection. As a gesture of reverence, some visitors bring offerings or recite special prayers. After her death, her burial site was considered sacred and believed to possess supernatural powers. Nearby the grave lies a cave inhabited by snakes, which are believed to be manifestations of *Wa Sirikamba's* spirit. Their presence is seen as a sign that she continues to "guard" the area. Therefore, the community avoids disturbing the cave and instead respects it as a sacred site. When recounting the myth, the community often embellishes it with elements of the supernatural, such as mysterious voices near the grave or natural events interpreted as signs from *Wa Sirikamba*. These additions reinforce the community's belief in the myth.

#### Sacred Site

In addition to being passed down through oral tradition, the *Wa Sirikamba* myth also takes physical form in a sacred site revered by the local community. The grave of *Wa*

*Sirikamba*, located on a mountain, is regarded as a holy place with high spiritual value. It is frequently visited by people seeking to perform pilgrimages, pray, and engage in traditional rituals. Belief in the mystical power of this site draws many who hope to receive blessings, protection, or guidance in their lives.

Apart from its spiritual value, the sacred site also serves as cultural heritage that illustrates the deep-rooted connection between the community and the *Wa Sirikamba* myth. The presence of this site is evidence of how beliefs and traditions are preserved and handed down through generations. Hence, the community makes efforts to maintain its sanctity and prevent any damage. This location also attracts researchers and tourists interested in exploring the culture and local belief systems of the area. As stated by informant Mr. La Ana (63 years old):

*"Kobhuru Wa Sirikamba we kabhawo Wa Sirikamba dhokonae kesaloha dhoo so nghuse. Mie we loliwu dhokalaghie koburu amaitu rampahano ngoleo mewanta bheharapa so nasumampungho nghuse."*

Translation: "The grave of *Wa Sirikamba*, located on Mount *Wa Sirikamba*, is believed to be a place to pray for rain. During long droughts, locals visit the grave to pray and perform rituals in the hope of rain." (Interview, February 22, 2025)

Based on this interview, it can be concluded that the grave of *Wa Sirikamba* on Mount *Wa Sirikamba* is believed by the local community to be a sacred site for requesting rain. During prolonged droughts, residents come to this location to pray and conduct rituals aimed at bringing rain.

Near the grave is a cave known as the "Snake Cave," so called because of the many snakes that inhabit it. These snakes are not regarded as ordinary animals but are believed to be spiritual manifestations of *Wa Sirikamba*. The community believes that the snakes are closely tied to ancestral history and local spiritual beliefs. Therefore, the cave is treated as a sacred space, and the presence of the snakes is respected as part of their spiritual heritage. This belief has been passed down through generations, making the cave one of the most revered and protected sites in the area.

Because of its sacred nature, people are prohibited from entering the cave or disturbing the snakes without a clear reason. Any attempt to disrupt or expel the snakes is believed to bring misfortune or provoke the wrath of the residing spirit. As a result, the cave is only entered by individuals with specific needs or those involved in certain rituals. The cave also draws the attention of researchers and tourists interested in the region's culture and belief systems, though they are required to respect the rules and beliefs upheld by the community for generations. As explained by informant Mr. La Muhama, S.Pd. Ind., M.Sos (52 years old):

*"Lia amaitu mina dafogheleghoa dopesua we lalo, tamaka mie welo liwu do tehi dopesua welo lia amaitua rampahano lia amaitu ne lateghie ghule."*

Translation: "The cave is not strictly forbidden to enter, but locals are afraid to go in because it is inhabited by snakes." (Interview, February 23, 2025)

From this statement, it can be concluded that while the community is not formally prohibited from entering the cave, they generally avoid it due to the widespread belief that it is inhabited by snakes, evoking fear and spiritual caution among residents.

### Ritual Practices and Belief Systems

One of the most significant aspects of the *Wa Sirikamba* myth is the set of ritual practices that continue to be carried out by the local community today. These rituals serve as a form of ancestral reverence as well as a medium of communication with supernatural forces believed to grant blessings or protection. The central ritual associated with this myth is the rain-invocation ceremony, which is performed during extended periods of drought. This ritual not only reflects the community's belief in spiritual powers capable of influencing natural events but also reinforces social cohesion by fostering collective participation and unity. Furthermore, the ritual acts as a symbolic gesture of maintaining harmony between humans and nature—an equilibrium considered essential for sustaining life.

#### 1. Preparation Phase

Before the ritual takes place, the Muna people in Wali Subdistrict engage in extensive preparations. They gather necessary items such as food, beverages, and agricultural produce, which are then used as offerings. These offerings symbolize respect and reverence toward ancestors and spiritual beings believed to possess mystical powers. Rituals are typically performed at sacred sites, with the grave of *Wa Sirikamba* being one of the most prominent locations. This site is believed to be imbued with strong spiritual energy and is thus regarded as the primary site for the execution of the ceremony.

The offerings are carefully arranged around the grave or at other designated locations as symbolic tributes to ancestral spirits. The community believes that these rituals can help bring about rain, especially during times of severe drought. As explained by informant Mr. La Ana (63 years old):

*“Ane dhe rabu ritual amaitu dofosiapu kadeki ihino galu tapeda okampirodo, mafusau, lamidawa, kalei, bhasari, bhe oeno ghai atawa oeno pae.”*

*Translation:* “When performing the ritual, we prepare agricultural produce such as young corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas, barley, and coconut water or plain water.” (Interview, February 23, 2025)

Based on the interview, it can be concluded that the preparation phase involves collecting various types of produce such as young corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas, barley, and coconut or plain water. These offerings are dedicated to ancestral spirits or supernatural beings in hopes of bringing rain. The ritual is generally held at sacred sites like the grave of *Wa Sirikamba*, which is believed to possess mystical power.

#### 2. Invocation of Ancestral Spirits

Following the preparation phase, the ritual continues with the invocation of ancestral spirits, especially the spirit of *Wa Sirikamba*. This phase is led by a traditional elder or spiritual leader with deep knowledge of local customs and belief systems. Specific prayers and chants are recited as a means of establishing spiritual communication. These invocations have been transmitted orally for generations and are believed to have the power to summon the spirit of *Wa Sirikamba* so that she may hear the people's pleas.

The ritual is conducted solemnly and often involves sacred objects believed to strengthen the connection between the human and spiritual realms. It is believed that when the prayers and chants are performed correctly, the spirit of *Wa Sirikamba* will appear and bestow her blessings. The goal of this phase is to seek divine intervention for rain, particularly during droughts that threaten agricultural productivity and community well-being. The success of the ritual is thought to depend on the sincerity of the participants and their adherence to customary rules. As described by informant Mr. La Ana (63 years old):

*“Dho bhata ta do bhasi sumanga Wa Sirikamba, bhata tano peda aini: mai fuma ihino galu Wa Sirikamba nando katumbu watu, nando kampirodo, nando bhasari, nando mafusau, nando lamedawa, bhe nando kalei. Maemo tangkahi konokido lalomua nosampugho ghuse maitu rampahano nomatemo kafembula mani watu.”*

### 3. Ritual Dance and Music

An essential part of the ceremony includes traditional music and dance, which accompany the prayers and invocations. Community members gather and proceed toward the ritual site while singing and dancing, creating a festive yet reverent atmosphere. These performances are seen not only as tributes to ancestral spirits but also as a way to draw the attention of *Wa Sirikamba* to the community's requests.

More than just a spiritual expression, the dances symbolize unity and shared values within the community. Participants of all ages and social statuses join together in the rituals, demonstrating that the ceremony is not solely spiritual but also a celebration of social harmony. This collective activity fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, with the common hope that rainfall will bless their lands and lives. As stated by informant Mrs. Wa Raena (72 years old):

*“Do Linda bhe de lagu ghuluhano nembali rio riono kabhasano dhoa bhe nemesalogo. Mie welo liwu delagu bhe do linda bhe kasukara dopoghonu ghonui, ne folahiri kadhajia rumempe tamaka do rame rame.”*

*Translation:* “Dance and music accompany the prayers and petitions. The community sings and dances together in a spirit of unity, creating a sacred yet joyful atmosphere.” (Interview, February 24, 2025)

From this statement, it can be concluded that music and dance play a central role in the ritual, functioning as spiritual accompaniments to the prayers while also strengthening social ties. The ritual space becomes one of both cultural expression and spiritual communion.

### 4. Symbolic Sacrifice

The culmination of the *Wa Sirikamba* ritual involves a symbolic sacrifice, which serves as the most sacred part of the ceremony. This segment features a man chosen to symbolically enact a sacrificial scene, simulating an act of being slain and shedding a small amount of blood. This act is not literal or violent; instead, it is purely symbolic and intended to invoke spiritual energy.

Alongside the symbolic sacrifice, women in the community perform ritualistic weeping. These cries are not simply emotional expressions but are considered spiritual appeals meant to move the hearts of ancestral spirits and supernatural beings into granting rain. According to local belief, once the blood is symbolically spilled and the cries heard, nature will respond.

Torrential rain accompanied by strong winds is believed to soon follow as a divine answer to their prayers.

This final phase of the ritual highlights the deep connection between humans and nature, underlining the belief that spiritual balance and natural harmony can be preserved through adherence to ancestral customs. As explained by informant Mr. La Ode Suharno, S.Hut:

*“Kahuleido kamokulahi robhinehi katandaino kabhilano lalo bhe nemolinagho. Tamaka bhari bharie ini ingke igkeho Kawu bhe KA korban. Mie welo liwu doparasaea de sumbele mie ini, osumanga nametingke nemesalondo bhe namanda kabarakat’i.”*

*Translation:* “The women’s cries symbolize sorrow and loss. However, there is no actual physical sacrifice. We believe that through this symbolic offering, the ancestors will hear our prayers and bless us.” (Interview, February 24, 2025)

This reinforces the notion that while no real sacrifice is made, the ritual remains a powerful spiritual expression. Through symbolic gestures and community participation, the people of Wali maintain a rich tradition that ties their present lives to ancestral wisdom and natural forces.

#### 5. Signs of Answered Prayers

The Muna community believes that the success of the *Wa Sirikamba* ritual is marked by the arrival of heavy rainfall shortly after the ritual is completed. This rain is seen as a direct response to the prayers offered to the ancestors and as a clear indication that the petitions have been accepted. Notably, the rainfall is often accompanied by strong winds, which are interpreted as manifestations of the supernatural power of *Wa Sirikamba*.

This moment is considered a time of joy and renewed hope for the community, as the rain is perceived as a divine blessing for agriculture and daily life. As explained by informant Mr. La Ode Suharno, S.Hut (43 years old):

*“Peda kabiasano, ane osumanga notarimaem nemesalondo, maka oghuse kansuru no sampu. Aitu nembali tandano nemesalondo notarimaem.”*

*Translation:* “Usually, if the ancestors have accepted our prayers, heavy rain will fall. That’s how we know our prayers have been answered.” (Interview, 25 February 2025)

From this statement, it can be concluded that heavy rainfall is regarded as a sign of successful communication with the ancestral spirits. The accompanying strong winds are further believed to represent the spiritual presence of *Wa Sirikamba*. Thus, the rain is not only a physical necessity but also a symbolic affirmation of divine approval and ritual efficacy.

### **The Functions of the *Wa Sirikamba* Myth in the Muna Community, Wali Subdistrict, Watopute District**

#### **Social Function**

The myth of *Wa Sirikamba* plays a vital role in strengthening social cohesion among members of the Muna community. Shared belief in the myth fosters a strong sense of unity, as it provides a common spiritual and cultural foundation. Through communal rituals related to the myth, people come together and engage in collective activities, which enhance solidarity and mutual support within the community.

During rituals such as rain-invocation ceremonies and other traditional events, each community member plays a distinct role. Some are responsible for preparing offerings, others perform traditional dances, while some lead prayers or facilitate the ceremonies. This collaborative participation instills a sense of collective responsibility and reinforces social ties. Additionally, such engagements cultivate communal values like cooperation, mutual assistance, and respect for ancestral traditions.

Beyond fostering unity, the myth also contributes to maintaining social order. Customary rules grounded in the myth provide moral guidance and behavioral norms for community life. Values such as mutual respect, obedience to communal norms, and the importance of harmonious living are woven into daily interactions. Hence, the myth serves not only as cultural folklore but also as a mechanism for social regulation and cultural identity preservation. As noted by informant Mr. La Hamida (61 years old):

*“Kapu Kana Aini nembali mie weloliwu dopomosi mosiraha tapedam, sanonando debasa te Wa Sirikamba, bhari bharie mie weloliwu dopoghonu ghonui, dopo tulu tulu tulumu derabu katoka sampe no rempo. Dhadi, kaposabha sabhangka weloliwu nohende kaghosa.”*

*Translation:* “This myth brings people closer together. For example, during *Wa Sirikamba* rituals, everyone gathers, works together, helps each other from preparation to completion. This strengthens our sense of togetherness and solidarity.” (Interview, 25 February 2025)

This interview underscores the myth’s role in reinforcing social bonds. It becomes a vehicle for cooperation, mutual assistance, and communal participation, thereby enhancing social unity.

### Religious and Spiritual Function

According to Bronislaw Malinowski's functionalist theory, myths serve practical purposes within the social and cultural life of a community. They are not merely ancient stories but are integral to how societies interpret, structure, and manage their existence. In the case of the *Wa Sirikamba* myth, it plays a profound religious and spiritual role among the Muna people. The myth is more than a narrative; it is a ritual framework through which the community interacts with ancestral and supernatural forces in pursuit of blessings such as rainfall and overall well-being.

Ritual practices—such as prayers, offerings, and traditional ceremonies—facilitate this sacred connection. These acts are believed to help maintain harmony between the human and spiritual realms. The symbolic animal sacrifice and ritualistic weeping performed during the ceremonies serve not only as spiritual expressions but also as cultural responses to environmental crises, such as prolonged droughts. Malinowski emphasized that myth and ritual provide psychological assurance in the face of uncertainty, functioning as tools for emotional stabilization.

Moreover, the *Wa Sirikamba* myth strengthens cultural identity and social solidarity. In line with Malinowski's view, myth reinforces the social structure and transmits core cultural values. The spiritual traditions embedded in the *Wa Sirikamba* narrative shape the community's worldview, particularly their understanding of nature, ancestral respect, and the

interconnectedness of all life. The continuous practice of these rituals ensures the preservation of cultural heritage and reinforces collective identity. As described by Mr. La Ode Suharno, S.Hut (43 years old):

*“Kapu kapuna Wa Sirikamba maitu suano kawu tao tula tula Kawu, tamakanembalim kaparasaeando mie weloliwu. Yano Nando kabasa netula tula aini sebhari bharie mieno kampo dopoghonu ghonui, dopo tulu tulumu. Dhadi mieno kampo hende dopo mosi mosiraha, suano kawu aitu, karabu Aini nembali dhala weloliwu so damehulaigho bhe dadhumagani kampefunaha we wuna numandono nando Dhani wawono sempe ampahiaitu.”*

*Translation:* “The *Wa Sirikamba* myth is not just an ordinary tale—it’s deeply rooted in our beliefs. Whenever there’s a ritual related to this myth, everyone comes together, works side by side, and helps each other. This brings us closer, strengthens our harmony. It’s also a way to honor our ancestors and preserve the cultural heritage passed down to us.” (Interview, 26 February 2025)

This statement highlights the dual religious and cultural function of the myth. It is both a spiritual practice and a social institution that nurtures cohesion, transmits traditions, and sustains the community's identity.

### **Ecological Function**

The myth of *Wa Sirikamba* also plays a role in shaping the community’s attitude toward the environment. Belief in this myth encourages the local people to interact with nature more respectfully, especially in places considered sacred, such as the *Wa Sirikamba* cave and burial grounds. These locations are believed to possess high spiritual significance, leading the community to preserve their sanctity and avoid any destructive behavior. Indirectly, this contributes to the conservation of the local ecosystem, as such revered sites remain untouched and protected from overexploitation.

Furthermore, belief in the supernatural forces embedded in the myth instills a deep respect for nature. The community holds that nature is inhabited by spirits and energies that must be respected, prompting more mindful and sustainable use of natural resources. For example, during hunting or foraging, customary rules dictate the limits of resource extraction to prevent environmental degradation. These traditional practices promote sustainable living and ensure the availability of resources for future generations.

More than a belief system, the myth also serves as an informal environmental education tool. Through the story of *Wa Sirikamba*, younger generations are taught the importance of environmental conservation and the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. As such, the myth operates not only within spiritual and social dimensions but also as a cultural guide for maintaining ecological balance.

As explained by Mr. La Hamida (61 years old):

*“Doparasaea we lia bhe we koburu Wa Sirikamba maitu opopalia, dadi minahi naembali sabhara mie mesuano, nando tekamokulahi wawono doforatodampeda nagha, dadi rampano natiatoro kansuru.”*

*Translation:* “We believe that places like the *Wa Sirikamba* cave and burial sites are sacred, so not just anyone can enter or disturb them. We’ve been taught that from long ago to help protect the environment.” (Interview, 26 February)

This indicates that the community’s reverence for sacred spaces is not only rooted in ancestral belief but also functions as a form of local ecological wisdom aimed at preserving harmony between humans and the natural world.

### **Educational and Moral Function**

The *Wa Sirikamba* myth serves as a vehicle for moral education, particularly for the younger generation. The story conveys ethical values passed down through generations to shape personal character and community conduct. Through the myth, people learn to honor their ancestors, uphold traditions, and embrace communal values such as cooperation (*gotong royong*). These values become ingrained in everyday life and contribute to social harmony within the community.

In addition to promoting cultural and ancestral respect, the myth carries lessons on living in balance with nature. Many narratives warn that disrupting the natural order may lead to consequences such as natural disasters or mystical occurrences. These stories act as cautionary tales, reminding the community of their responsibility to preserve the environment and use resources wisely to maintain ecological balance.

Beyond moral teaching, the myth also functions as a form of social control. It encourages adherence to community norms and greater mindfulness in behavior. The values embedded in the myth foster a sense of accountability, respect, and awareness of the need to maintain harmonious relationships both socially and ecologically. In this way, *Wa Sirikamba* is more than cultural folklore—it serves as a moral compass guiding ethical living. As explained by informant Mrs. Wa Raena (72 years old):

*“Notandae ne tula-tula Wa Sirikamba ini, omiehi dofoguruda dahumaragai kamokulahi nando wawono bhe dalumagami katorohano liwu, dopo kao-kaowa bhe do dhagani liwu doparasaanem anahihi welo kampo dofenaghudha nando karubundo.”*

*Translation:* “Through the story of *Wa Sirikamba*, we’re taught to respect our ancestors and maintain balance with nature. Values like cooperation and environmental responsibility were instilled in us by our elders since childhood.” (Interview, 27 February)

This confirms that the myth is instrumental in instilling core moral values from a young age, particularly concerning respect for ancestors, environmental stewardship, and community cooperation.

### **Mystical and Magical Function**

For the Muna people, *Wa Sirikamba* is not merely a traditional narrative but a myth imbued with mystical powers. This belief keeps the myth alive and integrated into the community’s spiritual life. A concrete manifestation of this function is the rain-invocation ritual, believed to genuinely bring rainfall. The ritual follows traditional procedures passed down across generations and is still performed, particularly during extended dry seasons. This belief reflects the myth’s practical significance in addressing real-world challenges.

Beyond the rain ritual, the community also believes that sacred sites associated with *Wa Sirikamba*—such as caves and burial grounds—possess spiritual energy that demands reverence. These spaces are believed to harbor forces that can either protect or punish, depending on how people behave. As a result, people are particularly cautious in these areas, adhering to traditional taboos that prohibit actions considered disrespectful or desecrating, such as speaking rudely, taking objects without permission, or behaving irreverently.

This mystical belief also functions as a social control mechanism. Fear and reverence for supernatural consequences ensure adherence to customary norms. Such belief systems foster social harmony by encouraging individuals to act responsibly and respectfully. Furthermore, the myth reinforces cultural identity, as it represents a spiritual heritage that binds the community together through shared rituals and beliefs. This illustrates the continued belief in the myth's mystical force, reinforcing its importance in both spiritual and communal life.

As explained by Mr. La Ana (63 years old):

*“Kapu-kapuna Wa Sirikamba maitu suanokawu tula-tula biasa, tamaka doparasaee nando kaghosaha nando dhamani, nando wawono ane nomai gholeo mewanta, okamo kamokulahi dodhalam tora dorame-ramegho debhasim tora ghuse. Tamaka pada dorame-rame nagha oghuse kansuru nosampu.”*

*Translation:* “The *Wa Sirikamba* myth isn’t just an old story—we believe there’s power behind it. In the past, when droughts occurred, the elders would perform a rain-invocation ritual, and surprisingly, rain would often come soon after.” (Interview, 29 February 2025)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on the *Wa Sirikamba* myth among the Muna people in Wali Subdistrict, Watopute District, several key conclusions can be drawn. This research highlights not only the narrative content of the myth but also its profound functions within the community’s social and cultural fabric. First, the *Wa Sirikamba* myth represents an enduring oral tradition passed down across generations. It possesses a distinctive narrative structure that reflects the community’s belief systems and cultural values. Symbolic characters and sacred events within the myth serve not only aesthetic purposes but also convey the Muna people’s worldview. Its oral transmission demonstrates the strength of traditional storytelling in preserving local culture amidst the pressures of modernization. Second, while traditional rituals directly linked to the myth may no longer be practiced as frequently as in the past, the myth continues to hold strategic value. It acts as a social regulator that governs interpersonal and communal relations, while also serving as a vehicle for moral instruction. Through this myth, values such as local wisdom, social harmony, and adherence to customary norms are maintained, shaping how younger generations approach contemporary social challenges. Furthermore, the myth reinforces cultural identity among the Muna people. Even as certain ritual practices decline, the story itself remains a living part of collective memory, fostering cultural continuity and social cohesion. In this sense, *Wa Sirikamba* is more than a tale from the past—it is a cultural anchor that maintains harmony

between individuals, the community, and their shared heritage. In sum, the *Wa Sirikamba* myth is not merely a cultural relic, but a foundational element in preserving local traditions and fostering collective awareness of traditional values. Despite the passage of time and changing contexts, the myth continues to play a significant role in strengthening social cohesion and safeguarding the Muna people's cultural legacy.

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