

Revitalization of the Symbolic Meaning and Aesthetic Culture of Lesung Panjang in the Kinali

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ABSTRACT

This research departs from the problem of the fading tradition of the Lesung Panjang tradition in Mandi Angin, Kinali District, Pasaman Barat, Sumatera barat, Indonesia as a result of changes in technology and people's lifestyles. The long mortar, which used to function as a tool for processing communal rice as well as a medium for forming the value of togetherness, symbolism, and sound aesthetics, now only appears in a limited way in traditional activities. The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to revitalize the long dlet not only as a cultural object, but as an intangible cultural heritage that contains visual, social, and symbolic value. The research gap was found in the lack of studies that placed Lesung Panjang in the perspective of fine arts and multisensory aesthetics, especially related to visual forms, sound rhythms, and accompanying social structures. This research aims to re-examine the symbolic meaning, aesthetic value, and social function of long dimples through an art approach as a cultural revitalization strategy. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an ethnographic design of art. The data source consists of primary data in the form of observations and in-depth interviews with community leaders, as well as secondary data in the form of documentation and literature studies. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation, with data analysis through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawn, as well as testing the validity of data using source triangulation. The results of the study showed that the Lesung Panjang has a strong visual and sound aesthetic value, representing the collective work structure and symbolic value of society. This research contributes to enriching the study of cultural revitalization based on fine art and recommends further research on the development of educational media and art works based on local traditions.

KEYWORDS

Dimples, Cultural Revitalization, Fine Arts, Symbolic Meaning, Aesthetic

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INTRODUCTION

Revitalization is one of the important approaches in cultural preservation that has begun to experience a decline in function, meaning, and community participation. Cultural revitalization is "an effort to revive traditions through adaptation and development so that they remain relevant in a changing social context" (Astrid et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage is a sustainable effort that must involve innovation, documentation, and the participation of the younger generation so that cultural values are not interrupted (Adiputra et al., 2025). However, in practice, many local traditions have not received adequate academic attention, especially from an artistic and aesthetic perspective.

One of the traditions that experiences this condition is the Lesung Panjang in Kinali, Pasaman Barat. A mortar or lasuang is a traditional tool used to pound rice. The definition of a Lesung is a long wooden lump used to pound rice (Bodedarsyah & Yulianti, 2019). Lesung is a long wooden tool

used to pound rice at the Bendrong Art which is used as a performance (Setyawati et al., 2023). Although mortar is found in various regions in Indonesia, the Lesung Panjang in Kinali, Pasaman Barat, has unique characteristics of distinctive shape, function and meaning. In addition to functioning as a tool for rice processing, the Lesung Panjang is also an important part of cultural processions such as weddings and the ceremony of appointing the head and is believed to have symbolic and spiritual value. The local community believes that not carrying out the tradition of pounding rice in a Lesung Panjang can bring danger, and after use, the mortar should be placed in an upside-down position to prevent unwanted things. This belief shows that the Lesung Panjang is not only functional, but also symbolic and spiritual.

Along with the development of technology and changes in people's lifestyles, the tradition of long dimples began to disappear. Ease of access to information changes the mindset of the younger generation to be more modern (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). This can affect the interest of the younger generation in preserving traditional Indonesian arts. Many of today's young generations no longer know the form, function and value of the Lesung Panjang tradition (Amalia et al., 2025). In the past, mortars were made from large logs taken from the forest by mutual cooperation, then the middle part was burned with dried coconut shells to form a basin. This traditional manufacturing process makes long mortars more durable than modern mortars that are made instantly from stone or cement. "Mortars made in the traditional way have a higher artistic value and durability" (Irsa & Sami, 2023).

The name "Lesung Panjang" is also influenced by the geographical conditions of the Kinali people who live in coastal areas. The main profession of the community as fishermen also influences the shape of the mortar which resembles a canoe or musuak, with an elongated body and a basin in the middle. This shape gives the long dimple a distinctive identity compared to other regional dimples. Only adult women can display the art of Bendrong Lesung (Setyawati et al., 2023). However, currently the art of Lesung is also played by young boys and girls to instill a love for local culture. The activity of pounding rice with a mortar involves a concave container made of large wood and pestles as a puncher. Mortars in other areas generally have one hole, but long mortars have a varying number of holes, ranging from one to six, and some even have one large basin that fills the entire body of the mortar. The uniqueness of the number of holes creates a variety of sounds when pounded, resulting in its own rhythmic pattern that used to be a symbol of togetherness and social harmony of society (Suprpto & Kariadi, 2018).

Social change and technological advances have shifted that tradition. In the past, people pounded rice in long mortars together to strengthen social relationships, but now many families have their own mortars or use rice grinding machines. As a result, the value of togetherness in the tradition of pounding rice is fading. This is in line with the opinion of Sutanto (2015: 120) that "technological changes have changed the pattern of social interaction in agrarian societies. Agrarian society has played a central role in the development of human civilization since the beginning of history (Simanullang et al., 2024). Their transformation from subsistence communities to more complex societies is influenced not only by internal factors such as technological development and population growth, but also by external dynamics such as policy changes, global economic developments, and the influence of colonialism and globalization. This is what happened to people living in the Mandi Angin area, Kinali District, Pasaman Barat.

However, academic studies on mortars and agrarian traditions in Indonesia have tended to be discussed more through anthropology, folklore, and cultural history approaches. This perspective has made an important contribution to understanding the social and historical context of traditions, but readings that place Lesung Panjang as art artifacts with attention to visual aspects, materiality, rhythm of sound, and their relationship to social structures are still relatively rarely touched in depth. In fact, multisensory art and aesthetic approaches have the potential to present a more comprehensive understanding of the symbolic, visual, and performative values inherent in the long dimple tradition, especially in the context of local cultural revitalization. The series of art activities in the Budoyo Village Festival serves as an effective visual and participatory medium in revitalizing local cultural values that the multisensory approach of art and aesthetics has important potential in re-reading agrarian traditions, including long mortars, as art artifacts that contain visual, material, performative, and relationship dimensions with social structures (Herliana & Anggrian, 2025). The uniqueness of

the shape, function, and sound value produced by the Lesung Panjang is what then becomes the inspiration in this paper to re-examine the symbolic and cultural meaning of the Lesung Panjang through the revitalization of cultural heritage not only to maintain its shape, but also to pay attention to the sustainability of its values and practices through innovation and the participation of the younger generation.

Therefore, this research is urgent to be carried out to re-examine the symbolic meaning, social function, and aesthetic value of the long dimple through an art approach as a cultural revitalization strategy. This research not only seeks to document traditions that are beginning to disappear, but also offers a conceptual perspective in the development of art-based cultural revitalization, which is relevant to efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage amid the challenges of globalization and modernization.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnographic approach to art. The data source consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of the physical shape and visual character of the long dimples, as well as in-depth interviews with local communities who understood their function, history, and symbolic meaning. Secondary data were obtained through documentation studies in the form of archives, literature, and relevant visual sources. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data is tested through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as confirmation to informants (*member check*). Data analysis is carried out qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to interpret the Lesung Panjang as a cultural artifact that has aesthetic, historical, and symbolic value as measured from the visual rhythm formed from its use, as well as the relationship between the function, symbolic meaning, and cultural context of the supporting community, this is in line with the visual analysis approach in the study of traditional art allowing researchers to read the relationship between visual forms, movements, and cultural symbols within communities, thus supporting a collective understanding of the social structure and cultural values of the community (Permata & Setiawan, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Physical Form of the Lesung Panjang as an Artifact

Visual The results of observations show that the Lesung Panjang in the Wind Bath has a different visual character from the mortar in general (Irsa & Sami, 2023). Its elongated shape resembles a canoe or bisuak, influenced by the geographical conditions of the coastal people of Kinali, Pasaman Barat. The physical structure carved from large logs as well as traditional burning techniques to form the basin result in natural textures, old wood colors, and traces of use that give it high aesthetic value. In the context of fine art, these visual elements give rise to the materiality of how cultural objects show the history of use, working techniques, and human-object relations. The uniqueness of the number of holes (one to six holes or one large basin) creates a shape composition that is not only functional but also forms a distinctive visual and rhythmic pattern. In the author's observation activity to the location of the existence of the Lesung Panjang in the Mandi Angin area, Kinali, Pasaman Barat, the author did not succeed in finding the form or visual form of the Lesung Panjang because the form no longer existed, so the author decided to make an object as a visual description of the Lesung Panjang through the results of interviews that the author conducted with the local community, as follows:



Figure 1. Simple Visual Embodiment of Lesung Panjang
Photo: Rajif Ayunda, 2025

The picture above is a simple visual embodiment of the Lesung Panjang that the author made to give an overview of the six holes found on the body of the Lesung Panjang. Simple visual embodiment of this Lesung Panjang has been used as a property in the dance performance resulting from the Creation of Contemporary Dance in the Form of Revitalization of the Lesung Panjang Tradition which is the work of the author in the field of dance art, explaining that property is usually a complement to the performance (an aid in the form of objects) that has meaning in accordance with its function of use on occasions in the performance arena (Fajri et al., 2024).

2. Traditional Function and Evolving Social Values

An interview with Mr. Asman revealed that the Lesung Panjang used to be the main tool in the post-harvest process. The practice of pounding rice is carried out together, so that the Lesung Panjang is not only a tool, but a medium of social interaction. However, technological changes and the presence of rice grinding machines have made this function shift. Lesung Panjang are no longer used as daily agricultural tools, but only appear in traditional events such as weddings. This reduction in function has implications for the reduction of the value of togetherness that used to live in rice pounding activities. These findings reinforce the opinion of Sutanto (2015) that technological changes have shifted the social interaction patterns of agrarian communities, and in the context of cultural arts, this has also shifted the visual and performative values inherent in these traditions.

Based on an interview with Mr. Asman (56 years old), one of the community leaders of Mandi Angin who understands the tradition of the Lesung Panjang information was obtained that "the practice of Lesung Panjang in the past was generally carried out whenever the harvest season arrived. The Lesung Panjang functions as a means of pounding rice together and becomes an important part of the community's agricultural activities". However, according to him, currently this tradition is rarely carried out and more often appears only at certain traditional events, especially weddings. Mr. Asman explained that;

"In the Lesung Panjang tradition, there are two main processions. First, the procession is carried out before the day of the feast, which is to pound rice to separate the rice grains from the leaves and husks. At this stage, the work is done by men, since the process of pounding requires strong force and heavier rhythms. Punching at this early stage is considered a job that requires physical strength so it becomes the responsibility of men. The second procession is carried out on the day of the party or the day of the wedding. At this stage, the workers are dominated by women, because what is ground is no longer rice mixed with husks, but the results of previous collisions that have been smoother. The second stage of pounding aims to produce rice or flour, so it does not require as much energy as the first procession. Nevertheless, men still help to ease women's work, but overall this process is more done by women. (Interview, Asman, November 2025)

The information from these interviews shows that the Lesung Panjang tradition is not only related to technical functions, but also has a clear division of social roles between men and women, which reflects the values, norms, and structure of collective work in the Windbath society. The information also shows that the Lesung Panjang tradition not only functions as a rice processing activity, but also a reflection of the values and social norms that live in the Mandi Angin community.

The division of roles between men and women shows the existence of an organized collective work structure that is inherited from generation to generation. In the early stages of consolidation, men are responsible for carrying out work that requires heavy physical strength and rhythm, thus reflecting the value of resilience and the protective role of men in communal activities. On the other hand, in the second stage of the collision, women take the lead role in smoothing the results of the collision, which reflects the value of precision, perseverance, and the important role of women in ensuring the readiness of food for traditional ceremonies. The collaboration between men and women in the two processions illustrates the norms of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and complementarity, which are the basis of the social structure of the community. Men and Women are compatible and complementary (O'Neill, 2002). Thus, the long dimple tradition not only represents agrarian activities, but also contains the values of harmony, collective work, and the balance of gender roles that have long been a core part of the Wind Bath culture. According to Abdul Jalil & St. Aminah (2018) Gender is understood as a social institution that reflects the division of roles between men and women based on the values and cultural norms that develop in a community, so that different roles in traditions reflect not only biological differences but also collectively inherited socio-cultural constructs. In addition, in the traditional rituals of agrarian communities, the roles of men and women are divided in such a way that they complement and strengthen the value of mutual cooperation and social harmony in the preservation of cultural traditions (Aryani, 2025).

3. Symbolic Meaning and Social Structure in the Tradition of Rice Pounding

The Lesung Panjang tradition contains strong symbolic values, such as the belief that not carrying out this tradition can bring danger as well as the rule to turn the mortar over after use (Son of the Sun et al., 2024). This ritual shows that the Lesung Panjang is understood as a sacred object in the cosmology of society. An interview with Mr. Asman shows that there are two stages of the procession with a clear division of gender roles: The first stage: the pounding of rice mixed with husks, carried out by men because it requires strong energy and rhythm. The second stage: the pounding on the day of the party, more subtle and dominated by women. This division of roles reflects the collective work structure and social values of the Mandi Angin community. From an art perspective, the dynamics of the body, rhythm, and the interaction of humans with objects in the procession result in traditional visual and performative compositions that are part of cultural identity.

An interview with Mrs. Neti, one of the women who has been involved in the tradition of pounding rice in Mandi Angin since childhood, provides a more in-depth explanation of the symbolic value and social structure inherent in the Lesung Panjang tradition. Ibu Neti's interview is as follows:

"According to Mrs. Neti, the Lesung Panjang is not only seen as a household tool, but also as a "pusako kampuang" that must be maintained in its purity. He mentioned that every family that uses a Lesung Panjang must follow customary rules, one of which is mambalie lasuang (turning the mortar over after use) so as not to invite reinforcements or bad energy. According to him, the act of turning the mortar over is understood as a form of respect for the ancestors as well as a closing symbol of the collective work that has been completed."
(Interview, Mrs. Neti, 2025).

In her explanation, Mrs. Neti also emphasized that the social structure in this tradition is very strong, especially related to the division of roles between men and women. He explained that men are not only responsible for the first stage of the knock which requires a lot of energy, but also play the role of the leader of the work rhythm, determining the initial tempo of the knock so that the process runs simultaneously. Meanwhile, women not only punch at a lighter stage, but also play a role in maintaining rhythmic harmony, arranging the position of the pestle, and ensuring that the results of the collision are smooth. "If women enter the second stage, the results are neater and cleaner," said Mrs. Neti, showing that women play an aesthetic role in the final quality of the process.

In addition to the technical aspect, Mrs. Neti said that the activity of pounding rice together is an event to strengthen social relations. The women usually sing or rhyme, while the men maintain the stability of the rhythm. He also explained that every family is obliged to send members to participate, as a symbol of togetherness and mutual cooperation in the community. Lack of participation is considered a form of social impoliteness. Thus, the Lesung Panjang tradition not only produces food, but also builds the structure of social relations between citizens.

From a symbolic point of view, Mrs. Neti said that the sound produced from the mortar has the meaning of "calling blessings." The rhythm of the beat is considered a sign of the life and prosperity of a village, so in the past the sound of Lesung Panjang could be heard all day long during the harvest season. According to him, the loss of the sound today indicates a major change in the social pattern of the community.

This interview shows that the tradition of the Lesung Panjang, for women like Mrs. Neti, is not just an agrarian work, but also a space for the expression of identity, collective work, and traditional aesthetic values. This perspective reinforces the understanding that the revitalization of the dimple is not only concerned with the preservation of physical objects, but also the revival of the symbolic values, social rhythms, and cultural structures contained within them. The tradition of the Lesung is not only an agricultural tool, but has been interpreted as a cultural symbol (including aesthetic values and mutual cooperation) as well as efforts to preserve and develop traditional arts involving the collective participation of the community (Ambarwati & Pinasti, 2019). The tradition of Lesung music as an agrarian folklore, the practice of mortar is not only an agrarian work activity, but also contains cultural values, social rhythms, and aesthetic expressions that are internalized in people's lives (Primamona, 2020).

4. The Aesthetic Value of Sound and Rhythm

In addition to the visual shape, the Lesung Panjang has the character of a traditional sound. The variation in the number of holes creates different rhythmic patterns when pounded. These sounds used to be a symbol of togetherness, a marker of harvest activities, as well as part of the soundscape of the Mandi Angin culture. In the study of art, sound is part of a multisensory aesthetic, in which cultural experiences are not only captured through visuals, but also sound. The rhythmic value of Lesung Panjang is an aesthetic element that is now starting to disappear due to the rarity of the practice.

The rhythmic value of the Lesung Panjang refers to the repetitive sound pattern resulting from the activity of pounding rice together. The sound of "duk-dak, duk-dak, dak-duk" created by the impact of pestles on the mortar holes is not just a working sound, but a traditional aesthetic element that forms the multisensory experience of the Mandi Angin community. The rhythm used to be present as a marker of social activities, a symbol of cohesiveness, and part of the village sound landscape during the harvest season. However, because the tradition of pounding rice is now very rarely done, replaced by rice grinding machines and lifestyle changes, the typical rhythmic pattern is no longer heard in daily life. The loss of sound means the loss of one of the aesthetic identities that used to be inherent in the culture of the community. Here is an overview of the activities:



Figure 2. Visualization of Lesung Panjang Movements and Sounds
Photo: Rajif Ayunda, 2025

The picture above is a visualization of the activity of pounding rice in the Lesung Panjang that the author presents to illustrate the activity that produces the rhythm of sound. The visualization of this activity was implemented by the author in the staging of the Lesung Panjang dance artwork. The visualization of the activity of pounding rice in a Lesung Panjang that produces the rhythm of sound represents the transformation of agricultural activities into a sound-based aesthetic expression, that the sound pattern of the mortar developed as a traditional musical practice (Primamona, 2020).

5. The Urgency of Revitalization through a Fine Arts Perspective

The results of the study show that the revitalization of the Lesung Panjang tradition needs to be carried out not only at the functional level, but also at the visual, symbolic, and aesthetic levels. The fine art approach is important because the Lesung Panjang are visual artifacts that reflect the material's history, craftsmanship techniques, and aesthetics. Symbolic value, both spiritual, social, and cosmological, is mostly embedded in its form and use as a cultural object, even through the staging of dance works inspired by the Lesung Panjang, can be a strategy that can be used by the younger generation to preserve culture even though the original integrity of the media is no longer found, but it can still be introduced by digging up information from elders or parents who understand and implement this tradition. Through visual documentation, form analysis, aesthetic reproduction, and creative interpretation, this tradition can be reintroduced to the younger generation. The perspective of fine art allows the tradition of the Lesung Panjang to be raised as an intangible cultural heritage that remains relevant through various media such as visual documentation, local museums, educational installations, form reconstruction, and the development of cultural object-based works of art. The visual identity system and documentation of intangible cultural elements play an essential role in maintaining the authenticity of traditions and conveying cultural symbols to the present generation as an effective revitalization strategy (Yang, 2025). In addition, the visual aesthetic characteristics of intangible cultural heritage including shapes, patterns, colors, and lines contribute not only to the conveyance of information but also to the aesthetic experience that enriches the visual meaning of the tradition (Chen, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Lesung Panjang tradition in Mandi Angin, Kinali, Pasaman Barat, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia is a cultural heritage that has complex visual, functional, symbolic, and aesthetic values. Physically, the Lesung Panjang not only functions as a rice processing tool, but also as a visual artifact that records historical traces, traditional craftsmanship techniques, and shape characters influenced by the geographical conditions and identity of coastal communities. Meanwhile, changes in technology and people's lifestyles have caused a shift in the function of the long dimple from a communal agricultural tool to a traditional ceremonial element that only appears at certain moments.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the results of interviews with community leaders show that the tradition of pounding rice with a Lesung Panjang contains an orderly collective work structure, a symbolic division of gender roles, and the norms of togetherness that are the basis of the social life of the Mandi Angin community. The ritual of turning the Lesung, the division of roles between men and women, the rhythm of communal work, and the sound of the Lesung as a marker of prosperity, all show that the Lesung Panjang functions as a medium that binds social, spiritual, and aesthetic relations of the citizens. However, these values are slowly fading as the practice of Lesung Panjang disappears in everyday life.

In the context of fine arts, the Lesung Panjang tradition contains the potential for multisensory aesthetics through visual forms, motion dynamics, and the rhythm of the resulting sounds. The rhythmic value that was once a typical village sound landscape is now beginning to disappear, thus emphasizing the importance of revitalization efforts. Revitalization through the approach of fine art becomes a relevant strategy, not only to preserve its physical form or its reconstruction, but also to revive the symbolic values, social structures, cultural rhythms, and aesthetic experiences that were once an integral part of people's lives. Through visual reconstruction, documentation, creative interpretation, and the development of artworks such as dance performances based on the Lesung Panjang tradition, the younger generation can get to know and pass on this cultural heritage in a more adaptive and contextual form.

Thus, the revitalization of the Lesung Panjang tradition is not only concerned with the preservation of cultural objects, but includes broader efforts to maintain the sustainability of the social, aesthetic, and spiritual values that make up the identity of the Mandi Angin community. This effort is important so that the tradition of the Lesung Panjang remains alive as part of the intangible

cultural heritage that is relevant in the present and the future.

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