

Between Price and Pride: *Siri*' as a Culture-driven Factor in Fish Trader Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of *Siri*' as a cultural basis for fish traders' pricing decision-making processes. It adopts an ethnomethodological approach to examine everyday reality and how traders produce those realities through their presentations of self and interactions with others in pricing practices. Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with five key informants. The results of the study identified four practices that manifest *Siri*' in the context of fish price decision-making, namely *Lempu* (honesty), *Siamasei* (compassion), *Sitinaja* (fairness), and *Reso* (effort). From these practices, Bugis fish traders' decision-making is more driven by the culture of *Siri*' than by purely economic calculations. *Siri*' function as an unwritten, yet effective, practical guideline for everyday economic behavior. This condition challenges the neoclassical assumption that firms tend to maximize profits. Instead, fish traders strive to maintain a balance between dignity, social relations, and business sustainability.

Keywords : *Siri*'; Price; Trader; Decision-Making; Ethnomethodology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets are fundamental economic institutions that play an important role in the economic structure of developing countries, especially in Southeast Asia (Chen M., 2021). The dynamics of price setting in traditional markets do not solely follow conventional supply and demand mechanisms but are also influenced by complex social and cultural factors (Rahayu et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding local cultural values is crucial to uncovering how economic behaviour is formed and operates in the context of traditional markets.

In Bugis-Makassar society, the value of *Siri'* functions as a normative system that regulates social and economic interactions (Pelras, 2019). *Siri'* is a multidimensional construct that encompasses the concepts of honour, self-esteem, and the principle of reciprocity in social relationships (Abdullah, 2018). Economic anthropology research shows that local cultural values such as *Siri'* significantly influence economic behaviour, including in pricing decisions (Granovetter, 1985; Scott, 1976)

The literature on the relationship between culture and economic behaviour has developed substantially in recent decades. Bourdieu (1986) emphasises the importance of cultural capital as a resource that can influence social and economic interactions. Granovetter,

(1985) emphasises that economic actions are always embedded in social networks, which in the context of Bugis culture are manifested through the value of *Siri'*. Sen (1999) also criticises the assumption of neoclassical economic rationality by emphasising the role of social values and ethics in economic decision-making. In addition, North (1990) institutional economics theory highlights the role of informal institutions, such as cultural norms, in regulating market behaviour and reducing transaction costs.

In Indonesia, studies on *Siri'* culture mostly use anthropological and sociological approaches. Mattulada (2018) used ethnographic methods to analyse *Siri'* as social capital in the Bugis community, while Hamid (2020) applied a phenomenological approach to understand the manifestation of *Siri'* in everyday life. Rahim (2019) explores *Siri'* in the context of entrepreneurship, but his focus is limited to the urban business environment and does not examine price decision-making in traditional markets in depth.

There are research gaps, particularly regarding the relationship between *Siri'* and economic decision-making in traditional markets. There are no empirical studies that specifically examine how the value of *Siri'* influences pricing behaviour in the context of traditional markets, which are steeped in local cultural

values. This is particularly relevant given that traditional markets in Indonesia are currently facing pressure to transform to the digital era, while still maintaining the cultural authenticity that is their competitive advantage.

This study aims to fill this theoretical gap by exploring the practice of *Siri* as culture-driven in the decision-making of fish traders. Specifically, this study analyses how *Siri* practices influence the price-setting decision-making process using an ethnomethodological approach, as well as the role of these cultural values in shaping economic behaviour in traditional markets. Thus, this study is expected to provide a new perspective in understanding the economic dynamics of traditional market communities that are strongly rooted in local cultural values.

With an ethnomethodological approach, this study attempts to capture the social reality constructed by Bugis fish traders in their daily interactions, particularly in pricing practices that are not only based on economic calculations but also on *Siri* values that emphasise honour, honesty, and social responsibility. This approach allows for a more holistic understanding of how culture acts as a major driver in economic decision-making, while challenging the neoclassical economic paradigm that oversimplifies human motivation to financial gain alone.

Thus, this research not only contributes to the literature on cultural economics and ethnomethodology, but also offers practical insights for the development of policies and strategies for the sustainable preservation of traditional markets, which value and integrate local cultural values as social and economic capital.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts an ethnomethodological approach as the main methodological framework for analysing the social practices of fish traders in the context of price decision-making at Lappa Fish Market, Sinjai Regency. Ethnomethodology, developed by Garfinkel (1967) and reinforced by Heritage (1984), is an interpretive approach that focuses on understanding how individuals actively create meaning in everyday social interactions through practical reasoning and common sense knowledge.

The ethnomethodological analytical framework in this study was operationalised through three fundamental concepts adapted to the context of economic behaviour. First, indexicality analysis was used to examine context-dependent meanings in price-setting interactions, including verbal expressions, non-verbal cues, and symbolic actions that reflect *Siri* values. In this context, indexicality refers to how the

meaning of price is determined not only by its nominal value, but also by the situational context and the dynamics of the relationship between the trader and the buyer (Garfinkel H., 1970)

Second, reflexivity analysis is applied to understand how traders reflexively consider and evaluate pricing decisions in relation to social relationships, cultural expectations, and economic rationality. Reflexivity refers to the process in which actions and explanations mutually shape each other in the creation of a dynamic social reality (Heritage, 1984).

Third, contextual action analysis is used to examine situational practices in price negotiations, including how traders adapt strategies based on market conditions, customer characteristics, and cultural considerations. This concept emphasises that economic actions are always embedded in specific social and cultural contexts (Suchman, 2007).

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on price-setting interactions, negotiation processes, and manifestations of *Siri*' values in fish sales transactions. This study involved five fish traders as key informants who had experience trading at Lappa Fish Market, were actively involved in daily pricing decisions, had a deep understanding

of *Siri*' culture, and were willing to participate in the observation and in-depth interview process.

This approach enabled the researcher to capture in detail how *Siri*' cultural values are internalised and actualised in everyday economic practices, while providing a holistic understanding of the social interactions that shape price decision-making in traditional markets. The detailed characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Participants	Gender	Age
P1	Male	62
P2	Female	45
P3	Male	51
P4	Female	38
P5	Male	47

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study confirms that *Siri*' culture serves as a normative framework that guides price decisions made by Bugis fish traders. *Siri*' is not merely a cultural concept, but rather a value system that integrates moral, social, and economic aspects into everyday practices. Based on the results of this study, the following are four practices that dominate price decisions made by traders:

1. The practice of *Lempu* (Honesty)

Lempu is a manifestation of social capital that is very important in maintaining trust between traders and buyers. This trust enables sustainable transactions and reduces monitoring

costs. Bugis fish traders in Sinjai believe that honesty is the foundation of *Siri'*. Cheating on prices or hiding the quality of fish is considered a violation of *Siri'* and can tarnish the social reputation of traders in the market.

Sometimes they sell at a loss to neighbors or family members who are in need. This is not out of pity, but because *Siri'* teaches that social relationships are more valuable than money. If relationships are damaged, business will also be damaged.

"Dena na hedding tede ma belle kalo mataroi harga bale. Tammaka lari manengmi pangelli'e kalo dena na mateppe taue. Biasani tede sialempurang modala na bale" (P1 and P4).

This means that in determining the price of fish, there should be no manipulation because it will cause buyers to lose trust. They are accustomed to being upfront about the prices and capital they spend to sell fish.

In practice, traders tend to quote reasonable prices according to quality, rather than manipulating prices to maximize profits. This reflects that *Lempu* is the main foundation in building effective and efficient economic relationships. In the context of decision making, pricing is at the core of the economic practices of Bugis fish traders. *Lempu* requires traders to remain open and transparent in determining prices, even if it reduces their profits.

Transparent and honest pricing is considered a way to maintain the dignity and trust of customers, as well as to maintain their integrity in society. In the view of traders, maintaining trust is more valuable than obtaining greater profits in the short term.

Bugis fish traders not only consider honesty a moral obligation, but also a vital component in maintaining the continuity of their business. It is a practice that is not only profit-oriented, but more about how they can coexist with the community without damaging the integrity and dignity they hold dear.

2. The Practice of *Siamasei* (Compassion)

Siamasei, or compassion, shows that pricing decisions are not only based on profit calculations, but also on social considerations and empathy. This confirms that economic transactions are always framed by social relationships and cultural values. It is a pricing practice that takes into account the historical relationship and mutual obligations between traders and customers.

"Kalo langganan'e engka, dipakurang-kurang umpa ellina bale. Alena tossi manessa melliki baleu. Meja'to diseding kalo dipapadai laing'e. apalagi gara-gara doi ceddi mi na cecce'a materru, masiri ka sedding" (P2).

This means that if a customer has been buying here for years, they will not be given the same price as a

new customer. They already trust what we sell, so there is no need to weigh the profits too much, because that is part of *Siri'*.

Siamasei describes the importance of interpersonal relationships and a deep sense of empathy for others. In pricing decisions, this practice of *Siamasei* is reflected in the attitude of fishmongers who always try to help others, especially those who are less fortunate. Fishmongers often give lower prices or even discounts to buyers in need, even though this may reduce their profit margins. This reflects that Bugis fishmongers have internalized social norms that prioritize solidarity and mutual welfare.

3. The Practice of *Sitinaja* (Fairness)

Sitinaja refers to the principle of appropriateness and fairness in setting prices. Bugis traders in Sinjai do not set prices arbitrarily, but rather take into account the fair value that is acceptable to buyers. Prices are considered appropriate if they are in line with the condition of the fish, the fishing season, and the purchasing power of the community. Traders realize that if prices are set too high, they will be considered to have no *Siri'* because they are exploiting others. This practice shows that *Siri'* functions as an ethical mechanism that limits the orientation towards excessive profit.

"*Parelu diita kondisi na pasae, iyako maroa ki matanre-tanre to cecdi ellinna. Biasa meto kalo mabaru kale umpa balena, namu masuli na elli metoi taue. Apalagi kalo pajang pulengi, masempo si itu bale.*" (P3 and P5)

This means that the price of fish will be adjusted according to the quality of the fish and the buying and selling conditions in the market each day. If the market is busy, the offer will usually be higher, especially if it coincides with a full moon, which is believed to make it difficult to find fish, so the price of fish will also be expensive due to the lack of fish caught.

Bargaining is not about winning or losing. If the buyer feels humiliated because the price is too high, or feels insulted because the offer is too low, it violates *Siri'*. They always look for a middle ground where all parties feel they are not being disadvantaged. This practice results in a unique pattern of negotiation, where the final price often does not reflect pure market mechanisms but cultural compromise.

Sitinaja in the context of pricing refers to the principle that the price set must be balanced with the quality of the goods and existing market conditions. *Sitinaja* teaches that a fair price is not just a number calculated based on costs and profits, but must also reflect the value of the quality provided and be in line with

consumer purchasing power. Bugis fish traders, even though they have the freedom to raise prices according to their economic needs, still pay attention to the affordability of prices from a social and cultural perspective in order to maintain stability and harmony in the community.

4. The Practice of *Reso* (Effort)

Reso is a practice of struggle and hard work that characterizes the Bugis work ethic. In the context of fish trading, *Reso* is reflected in the efforts of traders to wake up early to go to the auction, take care of logistics, maintain fish quality, and face the risks of market price fluctuations. Pricing decisions are made based on calculations of effort, transportation costs, and efforts to maintain product quality. This practice emphasizes that prices are not merely the result of mathematical calculations, but also recognition of the hard work inherent in the business process.

"Pede maloppo aro reso-reso'e, sikenna meto itu matu ellina bale. kalo magatti ki tede mato magatti toi engka dalle'e. ."(P5).

This means that the more effort or hard work we put in, the more reasonable the price of the fish will be. If we wake up early, our fortune will come sooner.

Reso shows that in making pricing decisions, traders not only consider financial factors and the quality of goods, but also the importance of recognizing the efforts

and commitment they have made in running their business. *Reso* also directs us to value time and focus on achieving success in trading by being aggressive and adaptive in facing market dynamics. This is in line with a very famous proverb among the Bugis people, "resopa temmangingngi, namalomo naletei pammase dewata'e," which means that only through hard work and perseverance will God's blessings be bestowed upon us.

Pride in Prioritizing *Siri'* in Decision Making

The economic practices of Bugis fish traders in Sinjai are a clear manifestation of the moral concept of *Siri'*, which functions as a complex social norm that is alive in everyday society, not merely an abstract moral concept. The concept of *Siri'* in Bugis culture is not only the basis of personal ethics, but also forms a business ethical framework that governs economic interactions as a whole. Previous studies show that *Siri'* acts as a cultural value that integrates honesty, compassion, propriety, and hard work as the main pillars of Bugis economic practices (Azis, 2021; Marunta, 2021). These values not only shape the behavior of traders in setting prices, but also guide them to maintain social harmony and community solidarity, which differs significantly from modern markets that prioritize

financial gain (Marunta, 2021; Subri, 2016).

Honesty is a central value that is highly upheld by Bugis fish traders. Sincerity in transactions not only serves as a strategy to build a good reputation, but also as an important mechanism in maintaining social balance and trust among community members (Azis, 2021). This honesty becomes valuable social capital, as explained by Bourdieu (1986), who emphasizes the importance of symbolic capital in social and economic interactions. In addition, the affection manifested in the relationship between traders and customers strengthens deep social bonds, creating mutual trust and solidarity, which are the main foundations of their economic practices (Marunta, 2021). Propriety, as a form of respect for prevailing social norms and values, ensures that economic actions do not violate the unwritten rules that govern communal life, while hard work is a source of pride, with traders feeling that their efforts reflect their dignity and social responsibility (Badewi, 2019).

These four values—honesty, compassion, fairness, and hard work—form a deep sense of social pride among Bugis fish traders. This pride stems from the recognition of the dignity and social values they uphold, where honesty and compassion are considered more valuable than mere financial gain. This shows a fundamental difference

from the neoclassical economic paradigm, which assumes that individuals always act to maximize personal gain (Sen, 1999). Bugis traders instead place social norms and interpersonal relationships as the main factors contributing to the collective welfare of their community, a view that is in line with Bourdieu's theory of social and symbolic capital (1986) and Tambiah's anthropological perspective (1985), which emphasizes the importance of social norms in economic decision-making.

This approach also offers a sharp critique of the assumption that economic decisions are rational and driven solely by individual motives. Bugis traders' decisions are influenced by strong social norms and an awareness of the impact of their actions on the wider community. In the context of local culture, economic decision-making does not only consider economic factors, but also social values that are ingrained and an integral part of their daily lives (Hofstede et al., 2019). This confirms that cultural norms such as *Siri* serve as an effective social control mechanism in maintaining social balance and harmony while shaping sustainable business ethics.

Overall, this study confirms that Bugis fish traders in Sinjai have a deep appreciation for social values that transcend purely financial considerations. They choose to prioritize collective welfare through

economic practices based on the social and cultural norms of *Siri'*, a reality that cannot be fully explained by neoclassical economic models that ignore more complex social and cultural contexts (Bourdieu, 1986; Sen, 1999). Thus, the economic practices of Bugis fish traders are a concrete example of how cultural values and social norms can shape sustainable business ethics oriented toward collective welfare, while challenging economic paradigms that oversimplify human motivation to purely financial gain.

***Siri* as Culture-Driven in Economic Behavior**

The findings of this study strengthen and expand the theoretical understanding of the relationship between culture and economic behavior, especially in the context of traditional markets. The results show that *Siri'* among Bugis fish traders functions not only as a cultural value but also as a form of cultural capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (Permana, 2022; Swedberg, 2011) where cultural capital can be converted into economic gains through relationship building and trust formation. This cultural capital, which includes norms and values, is important in building social interactions in the market, thereby creating a network of trust that supports transactions.

The practices of *Lempu* and *Siamasei*, for example, are in line with Granovetter's theory of social

connectedness, which emphasizes that economic actions are closely linked to social networks (Permana, 2022; Swedberg, 2011). This study adds a new dimension by showing that these connections have a strong cultural nature, where *Siri'* values encourage the formation of deeper social bonds in carrying out transactions. This is in line with Scott's concept of moral economy, which shows that pricing decisions in a local cultural context are often based on norms of reciprocity, honor, and social responsibility, rather than solely on the pursuit of profit maximization (Swedberg, 2011).

The practice of *Sitinaja* as a form of *Siri'*-based negotiation contributes new insights to the literature on the influence of culture on bargaining behavior. Unlike Western approaches to negotiation, which emphasize mutually beneficial outcomes (Permana, 2022), negotiation in the context of *Siri'* emphasizes preserving the dignity of all parties involved. These findings are in line with research showing that negotiation styles in Asia often differ from Western approaches, but focusing on specific cultural characteristics in the Bugis-Makassar context provides a more in-depth perspective (Laymonita & Basuki, 2023).

This analysis adds to the literature on cultural economics by focusing on the influence of cultural capital at the micro level in a specific

economic context. The concept of culturally driven decision-making that emerges from the data suggests that cultural constraints can be as influential as cognitive constraints in understanding bounded rationality (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014; Vigerland & Borg, 2017). This provides empirical support for institutional economics theory, which emphasizes the role of informal institutions in economic transactions, as described by North (Vigerland & Borg, 2017).

Thus, *Siri'* values not only function as moral guidelines but also as informal institutions that regulate market behavior, create predictability, and reduce transaction costs through trust building and relationship maintenance. This study shows that Bugis fish traders choose to prioritize social and cultural values in their economic practices, demonstrating their resilience and attachment to the traditions that shape social and economic interactions in their community.

The findings of this study reinforce and expand the theoretical understanding of the relationship between culture and economic behavior, particularly in the context of traditional markets. The results show that *Siri'* among Bugis fish traders does not only function as a cultural value, but also as a significant form of cultural capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (Permana, 2022; Swedberg, 2011). This cultural capital can be converted into

economic gains through the development of social relationships and the formation of strong trust. The norms and values contained in *Siri'* are an important foundation in building social interactions in the market, thereby creating a network of trust that supports smooth economic transactions.

The practices of *Lempu* and *Siamasei* found in this study are in line with Granovetter (1985) theory of social connectedness, which asserts that economic actions are always embedded in social networks (Permana, 2022; Swedberg, 2011). However, this study adds a deeper cultural dimension by showing that these social ties are not only structural but also highly cultural. The values of *Siri'* encourage the formation of strong and sustainable social bonds in the conduct of economic transactions, which is in line with the concept of moral economy proposed by Scott (1976). Within this moral economy framework, pricing decisions are based on principles of reciprocity, honor, and social responsibility, rather than solely on the pursuit of financial profit maximization (Swedberg, 2011).

Furthermore, the practice of *Sitinaja* as a form of *Siri'*-based negotiation makes an important contribution to the literature on the influence of culture on bargaining behavior. Unlike Western negotiation theory, which emphasizes mutually beneficial outcomes (Fisher W.,

1991; Permana, 2022), *Siri*'-based negotiation prioritizes the preservation of the dignity and honor of all parties involved. These findings are in line with Chen's (2001) study, which shows that the Asian style of negotiation has different characteristics compared to the Western approach, but with unique cultural characteristics in the Bugis-Makassar context (Laymonita & Basuki, 2023).

This analysis enriches the cultural economics literature by focusing on the influence of cultural capital at the micro level in a specific economic context. The concept of culturally driven decision-making that emerges from the research data expands the understanding of bounded rationality (Simon, 1957), emphasizing that cultural constraints can be as influential as cognitive constraints in shaping economic behavior (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014; Vigerland & Borg, 2017). Furthermore, this study provides empirical support for institutional economics theory, which emphasizes the role of informal institutions in regulating economic transactions (North, 1990b; Vigerland & Borg, 2017). In this context, *Siri*' values function as informal institutions that regulate market behavior, create predictability, and reduce transaction costs through the development of trust and the maintenance of social relationships.

Thus, *Siri*' not only serves as a moral guide, but also as cultural capital and an informal institution that regulates economic interactions in the Bugis traditional market. These values form a strong normative framework, which allows Bugis fish traders to prioritize social and cultural welfare in their economic practices. These findings demonstrate the resilience and attachment of traders to cultural traditions that shape social and economic interactions in their communities, while challenging the neoclassical economic paradigm that ignores social and cultural dimensions in economic decision-making

IV. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that *Siri*' plays a culture-driven role that underlies price decision-making by Bugis fish traders at Lappa Fish Market, Sinjai Regency. Practices such as *lem pu*' (honesty), *Siamasei* (compassion), *Sitinaja* (fairness), and *Reso* (effort) are concrete manifestations of *Siri*' values that guide the economic behavior of traders in setting prices. These findings indicate that pricing decisions are not based solely on rational economic calculations, but are also influenced by strong social and cultural norms.

Siri' functions as an informal institution that regulates market behavior, creates predictability, and

reduces transaction costs through the building of trust and the maintenance of social relationships. Therefore, this study challenges the basic assumption of neoclassical economic theory that individuals always act to maximize financial profit. Instead, Bugis fish traders demonstrate that the balance between dignity, social relations, and business sustainability are key considerations in their economic decision-making. These findings make an important contribution to the literature on cultural economics and ethnomethodology, and offer a new perspective on understanding the economic dynamics of traditional market societies rooted in local cultural values.

This study primarily focuses on the perspective of traders without adequately exploring the customer's point of view. Future studies could adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural dynamics in traditional markets.

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