

Analysis Of The Function And Meaning Of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* Tradition For The Community In Sikka Regency

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fungsi dan makna tradisi *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* bagi masyarakat di Kabupaten Sikka. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi dan wawancara. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Kabupaten Sikka. Subyek dalam penelitian ini adalah masyarakat Kabupaten Sikka yang meliputi tokoh adat, tokoh masyarakat, dan orang-orang yang biasa menjadi juru bicara (*ata du'a mo'an*) dalam urusan adat. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tradisi *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* berhubungan dengan mahar (*belis*) dalam perkawinan. Besaran mahar tidak sama, tergantung keinginan keluarga pihak perempuan yang harus disesuaikan dengan kemampuan keluarga laki-laki. Tanggung jawab mahar tidak hanya dirasakan oleh laki-laki tetapi hampir seluruh keluarganya termasuk orang tua, kerabat, sahabat, tetangga, dan masyarakat lainnya. Makna dari *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* adalah budaya gotong royong atau sistem gotong royong antar anggota masyarakat yang berfungsi memberikan dana, barang, dan hewan untuk proses pertunangan hingga perkawinan. Fungsi lain dari tradisi ini bagi masyarakat Kabupaten Sikka adalah untuk saling membantu dan menjadi ajang untuk mempererat hubungan persaudaraan. Kesimpulannya, tradisi ini dilakukan secara turun-temurun, yang memiliki fungsi dan makna tersendiri dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat.

Kata kunci: Fungsi, Makna, Budaya, Tradisi *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang*, Masyarakat



Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the function and meaning of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition for the community in Sikka Regency. The research method used qualitative research. Data collection techniques used observation and interview. This research was conducted in Sikka Regency. The subjects in this research were the community members of Sikka Regency including traditional leaders, community leaders, and people who usually become spokespersons (*ata du'a mo'an*) in customary affairs. The results of this research indicated that *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition was related to the bride price (*belis*) in marriage. The amount of bride price is not the same, depending on the wishes of the female's family which must be adjusted to the ability of the male's family. The responsibility for the bride price is not only felt by men but almost all of their families including parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, and the other communities. The meaning of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* is a culture of cooperation or a system of cooperation between community members that functions to give funds, goods, and animals for the process of engagement to marriage. Another function of this tradition for the people of Sikka Regency is to help each other and become a place to strengthen brotherly relations. In conclusion, this tradition carried out from generation to generation, which has its function and meaning in social life.

Keywords: Function, Meaning, Culture, *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* Tradition, Society

INTRODUCTION

Culture is associated with the continuous internalization of values from each generation living in a social community. Culture is dynamic, meaning that culture undergoes changes and adjustments from time to time and adapts to the surrounding conditions, so it is expected that the bride price (*belis*) can also be adjusted to the times so as not to cause conflict between the parties concerned just because of different understandings. The culture of each region is different in terms of art, house shapes, wedding ceremonies, and other social traditions. This shows that society in Indonesia is a multicultural society. These differences provide their distinctive colors. In conducting interactions, of course, it is inseparable from local customs or cultural rules and procedures for implementing customs that have certainly been agreed.

Sinha (2021) emphasizes that culture can be hypothesized from three valid perspectives: ways of doing things (practices); ways of thinking and feeling (mental models, schemas, worldviews, ideologies, structures of feeling); and ways of talking (discourses). All of these perspectives have been influential in the history of thought about language and culture in different disciplines. In another word, the impact of culture on individuals' linguistic and other mental faculties does not end there. In particular, a person's cultural background and upbringing determine such aspects as attention, categorization, causal attribution, and inferences of other individuals' attitudes (Imai, Kanero and Masuda in Alshenqeeti, 2020).

The procedures for implementing the customs of each region are different. In Sikka Regency, there are unique customs, especially in the marriage process. Sikka Regency is one of the regencies in East Nusa Tenggara Province, precisely on Flores Island. The capital city of Sikka Regency is Maumere. Sikka Regency has a tropical climate. In this regency, the marriage process is a tribal and community affair that is not only a matter between the future husband and the future wife. In terms of bride price, relatives and the community must help financially, provide animals such as horses, pigs, goats, cows, and chickens as part of the bride price or provide other gifts such as coconut, banana, betel nut, areca nut, jackfruit, pineapple, corn, rice, or other gifts to settle the customary costs that requested by the girl/boy's parents, as well as other marriage costs. In addition, there is also a division of tasks among relatives and the community as a form of cooperation.

The people of Sikka Regency have a unique tradition, namely *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition, which has been practiced for generations due to its value and importance in community life. The local community will perform one of the customs or traditions namely *Tama Benu* (Family Gathering) *Kesa Lakang* (Help) through a family gathering involving close family, relatives, and the community. This tradition carried out for generations, which has its function and meaning in social life. The involvement of the community and family occurs because there is not only kinship, namely blood relations due to intermarriage but also kinship based on custom. A relatively extensive kinship group is characterized by a system of norms that regulates the behavior of the kinship group.

The concept of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition does not only implement to the collection of bride price (*belis*) as a dowry but applies to all types of customs, namely death customs (*guman hutu* and *hu'er*), baby hair shaving (*roit alan*), a special ceremony for newborn babies to accept the environment outside the home where they live (*lodong me*), and other traditional ceremonies. In connection with death customs, family, relatives, and the community will provide financial assistance or animal as a substitute for *belis*. Death customs not only apply at the time of death but also at *guman hutu* ceremony (the fourth night after the person is buried) and *hu'er* ceremony (the last ceremony that is filled with the hope of good things). All this support from family, relatives, and the community is a debt that must be paid by the bereaved.

The importance of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition is as a form of solidarity between families, relatives, and the community in bearing the costs of reunification and strengthening relationships between families indirectly and helping to ease the burden on the families concerned. In this tradition, assistance will be given in the form of bride price (*belis*) and goods. In the engagement to marriage, both male and female families can receive

assistance in *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition. Related to the bride price (*belis*), which is part of history and a tradition carried out by previous generations. The bride price (*belis*) is also a symbol of unity between men and women. The bride price (*belis*) is also intended as a tribute to the mother figure of the woman and a substitute for breast milk. In addition, if there is a family event in the future, then both families (the man's family and the woman's family) have another obligation to give to each other and continue for generations. According to Ashraf, a bride price is a form of a gift from the groom to the woman with a large amount of value at a wedding (Ashraf et al., 2016).

The bride price (*belis*) is a form of honor for women and men in carrying out their responsibilities. The responsibility of *belis* is not only felt by the prospective groom but almost his entire family starting from parents, relatives, friends, and other communities. The bride price (*belis*) is known as a means of respect between the families of women and men. Not only unifying, with *belis* but women also transfer their position by custom as members of the husband's tribe. The bride price (*belis*) shows the nobility of women or elevates the status of women because it is women who are sought after by men, not men who are sought after by women. It is the man who tries to get the woman even if he has to sacrifice his wealth.

The bride price (*belis*) shows the seriousness of the person because marriage and household are not playful and are things that can be played with. It is a sign that shows the dignity of women so that by getting a *belis*, getting married, and following the husband is a bond related to traditional values. In addition, *belis* shows the responsibility of the man and his family to customarily and officially ask for a woman as his wife. Family ties with *belis* are also an important goal and are expected to never break.

The bride price (*belis*) is present as an identity that belongs to the people of East Nusa Tenggara. It has been transformed into money, which has resulted in the erosion of its sacred and previous meaning (Rodliyah et al., 2016). In Sikka Regency, there are several varied forms of *belis* such as betel nut and areca nut (*wua ta'a*), animal such as horses, cows, goats, pigs, and chickens, gold (*bahar*), jewelry (*lodan*), ivory bracelets (*kalar bala*), money, local palm wine (*moke*), and something that difficult to find such as elephant ivory (*bala*). Ivory is not only used as a bride price (*belis*) in Sikka Regency but people in East Flores Regency and Lembata Regency also use it as a bride price (*belis*).

METHOD

The research method used qualitative research. Kirk and Miller in Zuchri Abdussamad explain that qualitative research is a certain tradition in social science that fundamentally relies on observing humans in their area and dealing with these people in their language and terminology. Bogdan and Taylor (1982) in Zuchri Abdussamad (2021: 30-31) state that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior; the approach is directed at holistic settings and individuals. Qualitative research describes the "meaning of data" or phenomena that can be captured by researchers, by showing evidence. The interpretation of the phenomenon depends a lot on the ability and sharpness of the researcher in analyzing it. Qualitative research is a type of research approach in social science that uses a natural paradigm, based on phenomenological theory to examine social problems in an area in terms of the background and perspective of the object under study holistically.

Meanwhile, Tomaszewski (2020) stated that qualitative research values people's lived experiences and is inherently subjective and sensitive to the biases of both researchers and participants. Qualitative research, conducted thoughtfully, is internally consistent and help us answer important questions about people and their lives. In addition, (Johnson et al., 2020) stated that qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case studies; personal experience; introspection; life stories; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe the routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual lives.

Qualitative research is used to explore and master a meaning by several people or a group of people. This research is thought to come from social or humanitarian problems. This qualitative research process relates meaningful efforts, such as asking questions to master procedures, collecting specific information from participants, analyzing information inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of information. Qualitative research emphasizes the aspect of an in-depth description of a phenomenon. The goal is not to carry out generalizations but to describe in depth a phenomenon (Fauzy, 2022).

The data collection techniques used observation and interviews. The quality of the research instrument concerned the validity and reliability of the instrument and the quality of data collection concerned the accuracy of the methods used to collect data. Therefore, an instrument that has been tested for validity and reliability, may not necessarily produce valid and reliable data, if the instrument is not used appropriately in data collection (Sugiyono, 2009 in Fauzy, 2022). The main research instrument used was the research guideline, namely the interview guide. In addition, the researcher used tools such as voice recorders and notes with the interview process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the results of this research, *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition related to the bride price (*belis*) in marriage. The number of *belis* was not the same, depending on the wishes of the woman who must first look at the ability of the man. *Belis* must be accompanied by a foundation of love by placing the status of family leadership on the husband in married life. The obligation to give *belis* by the future husband was also an illustration of the willingness and responsibility of the husband to fulfill the livelihood that was needed in married life. It was only men who were obliged to make a living because it was the nature of men to have the responsibility and ability to try to meet needs and seek sustenance, while a woman in the family must take care of the household, especially educating children. Although in reality there were not a few women who can fulfilled their household needs by working alone.

The burden of *belis* was not only felt by the prospective groom but almost his entire family starting from parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, and the other communities. The determination of *belis* also from a negotiation process and usually mediated by spokespersons from the men's and women's sides called *ata du'a mo'an*. The spokesperson (*ata du'a mo'an*) was also tasked with conveying the willingness and ability of the male's family to give. This role was usually performed by a person appointed by both families who were considered knowledgeable about the customs. This spokesperson led the discussion in the customary forum. The spokesperson can also start his duties from the beginning of the marriage stage, from the introduction (*pahar*) to the wedding (*benjer/berkat*).

For Sikka community, traditional marriage does not stop at the provision of *belis* but the female family must give a reply to the gift from the male family. This reciprocation is a provision when the woman will leave and settle in the house or on the side of the male family. The replies were in the form of weavings (*utan* and *lipa*) rice (*pare*), pig (*wawi*), local palm wine (*moke*), Sikka traditional cake (*bolo plagar*), and other foods. Thus, women played a role not only as recipients of *belis* but also obliged to provide reciprocation as part of the activity of giving to each other as a family.

The women's family will give negotiate about their *belis* request and explain it to the spokesperson (*ata du'a mo'an*). The spokesperson will go to the man's family to inform them about the number of *belis* requested by the woman. The man's family will say that they accept the request. However, this procedure through a process of negotiation (*kula babong*) to find a result that following the request and also the ability of the male family to avoid conflict. The amount of *belis* and goods to be brought was following the agreement.

The meaning of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* is a culture of cooperation or a system of cooperation between community members that functions to give funds, goods, and animals for the process of engagement to marriage. Another function of this tradition for the people of

Sikka Regency is to help each other and strengthen fraternal relations. Sikka Regency community in their traditional marriage consists of several stages starting from the engagement, giving *belis*, to the wedding. The stages begin with *pahar*, the introduction stage where the man or husband-to-be (*ata la'i*) is accompanied by a spokesperson (*ata du'a mo'an*) as an intermediary between the two families. In addition to the future husband and spokesperson, there are also siblings and relatives (*wue wari*) who participate in going to the woman's house except for the parents (*ina ama*) of the man. This stage is intended to express his wishes and objectives to the woman's family and to ask for the willingness of the woman's family. The introduction stage is important in this marriage because it initiates everything that will follow until the end. After the introduction stage, it is followed by *Poto Wua Ta'a* stage, or in the local language called "*masuk minta*", where the man and his family comes to the woman's home with betel nut and areca nut (*wua ta'a*) to conduct an engagement and negotiations (*kula babong*) regarding how much *belis* is requested by the woman's family. This stage also functions so the man as a fiancé can come to the woman's house more freely. It will be a sign that no other man can approach the woman because she has been proposed to. The next stage is *Saser/Taser*, which is the stage of giving the initial *belis*. At this stage, man's parents or family can also come to the woman's house. The next stage is *Wua Ta'a Gete*, which is the core process of giving *belis* and negotiating the day of the wedding ceremony (*benjer/berkat*). At this stage, man's parents or family can also come to the woman's house.

The results showed that the importance of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition for the people of Sikka Regency was to strengthen family ties and reduce the burden of paying *belis*. *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* was believed to have the meaning and value of solidarity in building a family system, for example helping the male family to collect money or other types of *belis* to pay to the female family. *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition was also related to symbolic interaction theory which shown by the interaction of the male with his family and the local community, and in its implementation, this tradition was a process of socialization from generation to generation and from individuals to society.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn based on the discussion in this research is *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition has the value of social solidarity which is realized in helping and cooperating in kinship and family relations, characterized by family cooperation in collecting money, goods, and animals to pay *belis*. This tradition carried out for generations, which has its function and meaning in social life. The burden of *belis* is not only felt by the male but almost his entire family starting from parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, and the other communities.

The meaning of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* is a form of cooperation between community members to give funds, goods, and animals for the process of engagement to marriage. In addition, this tradition is a place to strengthen brotherly relations. The function of *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* tradition for the people of Sikka Regency is to reduce the burden of paying *belis*. *Tama Benu Kesa Lakang* is believed to have meaning in building a family system, for example helping the male family to collect money or other types of *belis* to pay bride price (*belis*) to the female family.

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