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Kosu and Implementation of Local Wisdom Character Values in West Amarasi, Indonesia

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Abstract

The development of civilization impacts human life, namely the occurrence of a shift in character values in civil society. Kosu tradition is one that has experienced a shift in terms of procedures but still holds firmly to its character values. The aim of this research is to determine the local wisdom character values in the kosu tradition in Toobaun Village, Amarasi Barat Subdistrict. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Character education based on local wisdom is the most appropriate, through the culture and tradition of Kosu, the teachings and values of the Toobaun Amarasi West village community, namely the values of responsibility and affection, tolerance, social care, cooperation and communal cooperation, and cultural preservation, can be learned and emulated. Therefore, the implementation of culture based on local wisdom should already be started from now on to prepare a generation that loves the nation's culture and has character in accordance with its local wisdom and must be transmitted to the next generation to prevent extinction.

1. Introduction

The boundary of a change of an era is marked by the development of civilization. The development of civilization has positive impacts on human life, however, there are also negative impacts, namely the shift in character values in civil society. This transformation also occurs in the cultural heritage of West Amarasi. West Amarasi is a sub-district in Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, which is approximately 36 km from Kupang City and its capital is Baun. West Amarasi sub-district consists of 1 urban village and 7 villages, one of which is Toobaun Village which uses the *Ro'is* dialect, its utilized as well by the people of South Amarasi and East Amarasi.

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In daily life of the West Amarasi community, especially in Toobaun village, until now they still firmly maintain several traditions that hold meaning for the community's way of life, despite the current progress of civilization. Among the cultures or traditions still held by the Amarasi community are: the distinctive characteristic of traditional woven cloth different from other *Atoin Meto* ethnic groups in Timor, the tradition of women's engagement (*tamantoit bife*), the *Se'anono Heu* tradition (family name migration), and the traditional wedding customs. Marriage (*kaibin*) in the Toobaun village community is closely linked to the Kosu tradition (provision) in nowadays has undergone changes with an inculturation system where all customary procedures serve as symbols with the aim of glorifying the name of the Almighty God.

The West Amarasi community perceives Kosu not only as a form of cultural expression but also as a means to instill and apply important values such as respect, gratitude, and solidarity (Praja et al., 2020). The Kosu tradition has been practiced since their ancestors' time. This tradition is a sign or form of their care for each other as siblings, family members, friends, companions, where if one of them gets married, they leave the family (their parents' house) and embark on married life.

In the past, the happy couple stood amidst the guests, dancing according to their traditional dance, and one by one, members of their extended family would come forward and approach the happy couple while dancing, bringing agricultural produce such as sweet potatoes, cassava, corn, rice, or livestock such as chickens, goats, pigs, or cows, as their initial capital to start their new married life. However, due to the changing times, the West Amarasi community has also begun to use money as a substitute for these items. Typically, in the past, after the celebration, the newlyweds would carry many kosu items to their new home. For efficiency reasons, the tradition of kosu, which originally began with agricultural produce, has now been replaced with currency.



Figure 1 Kosu for Wedding

The transformation also occurred in society regarding the purpose of this Kosu tradition, but it does not change its significance as provisions. This change is manifested in Kosu being used as a form of congregation's offering for the construction of churches, where besides money, offerings can also come in the form of agricultural produce from the congregation such as coconuts, corn, and sweet potatoes, which will then be auctioned, and the proceeds from the auction will be used for church construction.

A documentary video of Kosu for construction offerings at the church can be accessed at this link (https://drive.google.com/file/d/15zVYETyGShsKKWTMB9Eoa2hxI7lvqHps/view?usp=sharing)



Figure 2 Kosu for Church Construction

The tradition of kosu has become a common practice among the *Atoin Meto* ethnic community in Kupang Regency, especially in Amarasi (Siki 2020). As an ancestral heritage, kosu not only has a recreational meaning that entertains both the newlyweds and the guests, but traditionally, this dance holds significant meaning for the community as a whole, especially for the newlyweds and their families. From these shifts in procedures, the objective of this research is to understand the character values based on local wisdom in the kosu tradition in Toobaun Village, West Amarasi Sub-district.

2. Materials and Methods

This research is qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Bogdan and Taylor describe the qualitative approach as a research strategy in creating descriptive data in the form of written and oral data through individuals and actions under study (Nugrahani, F., & Hum, 2014). In the method used in conducting this research, the natural state of the object, namely the researcher, is an integral part. The subjects of this qualitative research are informants, individuals who provide information in the form of data desired by the researcher regarding the subject under investigation (Moleong, 2018). Data collection is conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Interviews are particularly useful for exploring the construction and negotiation of meaning naturally (Cohen et al 2007).

3. Results and Discussions

Customs and traditions are treasures and cultural heritage that must be transmitted to the younger generation to prevent extinction because traditions and cultures contain fundamental positions, one of which is as a means to acquire new education and knowledge. The aspects contained within a tradition or culture are numerous, including character values. Character values are not only limited to the content learned in schools and within society; achievement in this regard is not just about knowledge but also involves a deeper essence that needs to be cultivated, namely, how to implement these character values in daily life. This formation aims, among other things, to serve as a moral guide (Hindaryatiningsih, 2016). Character values are the basis for responsible and ethical decision-making. Additionally, the purpose of character values is to shape individual identity, which demonstrates the integration of a person's personality such as beliefs, attitudes, and

principles held by that individual. Character values found within a tradition will shape positive values that an individual uses to live in society.

The Kosu tradition in the West Amarasi community, especially in Toobaun village, is part of the wedding ceremony. Before the wedding, the initial stages begin with the process of introduction, preparation for engagement, engagement itself, and the wedding reception. In the introduction stage, the groom's side visits the bride's side, bringing betel leaves and betel nuts as a symbol of "*knocking on the door*" and introduction. In the engagement stage (*tamantoit bife*), the prospective groom and his family bring offerings according to the agreement made during the engagement preparation stage, containing items symbolizing cultural values such as betel nut containers (*okomama*) as a symbol or sign of respect or honor for the bride's family and can enhance one's self-esteem. The lamp (*raumut*) symbolizes light or brightness in the family, respect for parents (*roit noni ina nok ama oritata nok baba*) in the form of money, jewelry (*noni*), betel nuts (*pinang bonak san es, manus, ao, maro*) symbolizing the unity of two families united in marriage.

The Kosu is performed at the wedding reception. Accompanied by music and song lyrics titled *Bife Noni, Hit Kuan Amarasi, Ra'aro*, it carries a melancholic meaning, depicting sadness, happiness, and prayers as well as giving blessings from parents who are about to let go of their daughters to start a new life with their husbands by circling around the groom and the bride. Each dancer, with their unique dance style, grips a number of banknotes using coconut sticks, bamboo, a piece of wood, or other tools, then inserts or pierces them into the bun or hairpin of the bride. Usually, the amount of money varies. Some use five thousand rupiahs to hundreds of thousands of rupiahs. This money serves as initial capital for the new family to purchase various household necessities or other investments. For the community of Toobaun village, the Kosu dance with its characteristic standing and hand movements following the rhythm of the music can be repeated several times, and of course, all family members and invited guests have the opportunity to participate in the dance. Character values based on local wisdom contained within the Kosu dance or tradition include the following.

The value of Responsibility and Care:

One of the character values found in Kosu is the value of responsibility. The success of this activity is inseparable from the contributions of all individuals, families, or communities involved in the implementation of this tradition. Both extended families, namely the family of the bride and the groom, respectively attach money above the shoulders of both the bride and groom as a form of responsibility and care for the couple (Nurmansyah 2019).

The value of Tolerance:

Refers to the behavior and attitude of mutual respect and peace towards the existing differences in society (Soekanto 1990). In the Kosu tradition, it involves various economic backgrounds, social statuses, and even positions within the community. In these differences, families and communities are asked to think openly and accept these differences.

The value of Social Care:

Manifested in the Kosu tradition through the gathering of families and indigenous communities to share happiness. This strengthens social networks, builds relationships between individuals, fosters communication with people from different backgrounds, expands social ties, and even forms strong community bonds characterized by the sincerity of providing 'provisions' to the couple. This

interaction occurs both verbally and non-verbally, and communication takes place when members of the community meet each other. It is evident that within society, there are individuals who interact with each other, forming a living social entity (Nurmansyah 2019).

The value of Cooperation and Communal cooperation:

Can be found from the introduction stage to the wedding stage, where the entire extended family in the indigenous village participates in cooperation and mutual assistance in the form of material and moral contributions (Koentjaraningrat 2009). This is undoubtedly also due to the existence of written customary rules decided in the village meetings of Toobaun, where if it comes to matters of joy or sorrow, all heads of families are required to participate. If they do not participate, then the family will face social sanctions in the form of social indifference from the entire community of Toobaun village, both in moments of joy and sorrow.

The value of Cultural Preservation:

Kosu is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation in the community of West Amarasi, especially in Toobaun Village. Cultural preservation through cultural experience is carried out by immersing directly into a cultural experience. The preservation referred to is an ongoing, directed, and integrated activity aimed at achieving specific goals that reflect something enduring and eternal, dynamic, flexible, and selective (Ranjabar 2006).

4. Conclusion

Customs and traditions are treasures and cultural heritage that must be transmitted to the next generation to prevent extinction. Within traditions and cultures lie fundamental positions, one of which serves as a tool to acquire new education and knowledge. The aspects contained within a tradition or culture are numerous, including character values. Character values are not only limited to the content learned in schools but can also be learned through societal and cultural experiences. Achievement in this regard is not just about knowledge but involves a deeper essence that needs to be formed, namely, how to implement these character values in daily life. This formation aims, among other things, to serve as a moral guide.

Character education based on local wisdom is most appropriate. Through the culture and tradition of Kosu, the teachings and life values of the community in Toobaun Village, West Amarasi, such as responsibility and care, tolerance, social care, cooperation and mutual assistance, and cultural preservation, can be learned and emulated. Therefore, the implementation of culture based on local wisdom should already be underway to prepare a generation that loves the nation's culture and embodies its character according to its local wisdom.

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