

## **Cultural Values of Traditional House of Keo Community in the Context of Rural Community Change in Flores, Indonesia**

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**Abstract:** This study tries to describe the cultural values of traditional house of Keo community, in Flores. This was done due to rapid development in various aspects of community life which has brought changes in the social order of Keo community. By using a qualitative research approach (grounded research), we try to maintain the depth and integrity of objects that although they are limited but they have specific characters and unique characteristics that allow scientists to discover the essence of the fundamental issues that are being studied. We found that in the community of Keo, traditional house has many functions, not only a protective or shelter but also serves to build togetherness. Beside the traditional house, Keo community has a very high artistic value which has been maintained and preserved by the local community. Likewise sculptures are usually found in the form of traditional houses, Peo and Ngadhu.

**Key words:** Traditional house, Keo, tribe, social change, community

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Social change is a change of circumstances to the other conditions which have a certain result occurs in a society. Change is a natural reality that will continue to happen in people's lives, changes in physical, social or cultural fields. Such changes may occur because of factors in society (endogenous factor) as well as factors that come from outside community (exogenous factor). Factors that come from within the community are changes as a result of competition between members of a group or as a result of new findings (innovation). Meanwhile, the external factors are changes as the results of influence of cultural elements outside the community (diffusion). A number of theories about social change have provided overviews of the process of facts from one period to another period which is influenced by a number of surrounding factors. The phenomenon of social change is also happening in each community, including community in village Lajawajo, sub-district Mauponggo, district Ngadha, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara.

Keo community is a community of culture. Habits of the local community are inherited through traditions, customs and religious cultures. The habits then established norms that full of values such as cooperativeness, adherence to traditional leaders (mosalaki) and religious leaders, harmony, togetherness,

mutual respects and loves and deliberation. Symbolization of these values appears in the presence of Peo (monument/traditional altar) in the village that became the unifying and binding of Keo community.

In the village Lajawajo, traditional party is a characteristic of local community life. Traditional party activity is a general description that characterizes Keo society. Traditional party which is used to be held is a party to build a parent house or traditional house (Sao Pu'u). Long time ago, residents living in the traditional house consisted of three or four families, some times even more than that. Nowadays, the Keo's people are advised to build enough houses inhabited by small (one) family, consisting of father, mother and unmarried children.

Unfortunately, the acceleration of development in various aspects of community life has brought a change in the social order of Keo community. Openness of the community and accessibility of the development create opportunities of outside influence which have impact on cultures and other traditional ceremonies. The values of cooperativeness and togetherness have been shifted to the individualistic tendencies, the adherence to tradition and religion values have been shifted to the values of modernization and secularization, awards and bonding aspects of unity in the traditional wedding ceremony which is symbolized by belis have been shifted becomes imperative compulsion that tends to burden the

male side and adherence to mosalaki have been reduced and replaced by the presence of the village administration. With regard to this phenomenon, it is essential to maintain and preserve the local cultures because in addition to bringing a negative impact on local cultural values, these changes can also change the existing social culture.

Local government district Ngada, East Nusa Tenggara has sought to accommodate and preserve the cultural values of the society by imposing traditional party (pebha or sese) which are done with a good plan and regularly and are located in the capital of district Ngada. At the ceremony of Pheba or Sese, it is shown a number of traditional art such as religious dance which is derived from various tribes in Ngada which are scattered throughout the district. It also includes such thanks giving ceremony, marriage, land clearing and funerals, establishment of traditional house, traditional horse procurement, for preservation of the Peo. Pebha itself is known since 1885 and is associated with social order. It is also driven by the reality of the strong tradition of local communities through customs, art and religion which have been neglected for decades and have negative impacts because of the accelerated development.

Those facts encourage us to conduct studies and express cultural values in the context of changes in Keo community, in general and in particular in village Lajawajo, sub-district Mauponggo, district Ngadha. The purpose of this study is to analyze and describe the cultural values in the form of traditional house, art and religion in the public areas of the village Lajawajo, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara.

## **Literature reviews**

**Concepts of culture:** Classic definition of culture that is more frequently cited are those of Tylor (1981) which stated that culture is a whole complex which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and every ability and habits acquired by person as a citizen. Culture as a whole way of a society, reflecting an agreement on the norms, values and beliefs that make a person want to live together in harmony (Babbie, 1982). Culture can be in forms of ideas, patterns of action and physical objects as the result of human creativities which are manifested itself in the overall elements of the culture of a society. The universal element of culture consists of a system of knowledge, social organization, economic systems, systems technology, language, art and religion. In summary, according to Koentjaraningrat, the culture has three forms, namely a complex of ideas, values, norms, rules, a complex pattern of activities as well as the actions of people in society and objects as the result of human activities.

On the basis of the explanation of some of the experts, it can be said that culture is basically refers to the various aspects of life, both valid ways, beliefs, attitudes and the result of human activities or work which is typical for a particular community (Ihroni, 1981). To make it easier to describe and analyze the pattern of community life, the concept of culture is sorted again into seven elements namely: language knowledge system charitable organization system equipment life and technology eye system subsistence the system of religion belief and art.

Cultural elements include the overall pattern of human activities around certain institutions which are numerous. In accordance to that, a broad culture can always be broken down into its elements which are more specific. Each element of universal culture manifests into three forms of culture which are in the form of cultural system, in the form of a social system and in form elements of physical culture. Cultural system of a universal culture is the form of traditional culture which can be broken down into several cultural complexes. Each complex culture can be further elaborated into some cultural themes. And finally, in every cultural theme can be broken down into ideas. But all the elements of physical culture in particular consist of cultural objects.

Culture as a whole way of life reflects the consensus on norms, values and beliefs that enable a society to live together in relative harmony (Babbie, 1982). It includes ideas and practices which approved and performed by many residents about how they respond to natural and social conditions they face. In connection with the understanding of human behavior, Spradley (1972) stated that the acting, individual has a set of rules which is used as a control to interpret the symptoms that exist in the environment and as the handle to realize the behavior.

**Concepts of community and social change:** Society is a group of humans that are hanging out or interact each other. A group of people can have a infrastructure so that citizens can interact with each other. Bond that make the people became a society is a pattern of behavior that is typical of all the factors of life in the unitary limit. The pattern should be steady and continue, or in other words, a typical pattern that should already be a distinctive customs (Geertz, 1993). It is as seen in the tribe Keo which have the potential to interact that is the presence of language Keo. However, the potential will not automatically make everyone in Keo to develop activities that involve an intensive interaction among all the Keo.

Every society must have experienced changes in accordance with the dimensions of space and time. Many

definitions of social change have been engendered by various researchers with different emphasis and viewpoints. According to Moore (1973), some researchers claimed that social change as an important change in the social structure of the pattern of behavior and interaction, including norms, values and cultural phenomena (Moore, 1973). Moore defines social change as an important change in the social structure that includes patterns of behavior and social interaction. Social change covers all aspects of social life and occurs at various levels of human life includes the individual, organizational, institutional, community, society, culture and civilization. Changes at every level of social life are considered as social change. Related to the social change, Williams and Schirmer (2012) conducted a study to observe the impact of land-use change not only on social but also on economic impact. Their findings have implications for land use policy and social impact assessment, illustrating the importance of understanding both perceived and actual social change.

So, research with background of Keo community culture can be focussed on the direction and rate of change at various levels and the relationship between changes in the different levels. Social change as the process of development will lead to differences in the structure and functioning of society. The process of social change can also be influenced by policy maker. According to Liu (2006) who conducted a research in Shanghai, she describe recent changes of neighbourhood governance in Shanghai to illustrate whether and how social changes and policymaking are related in a transitional context.

Meanwhile, the program of social change for the purpose of development is based on change of aspects of individual behavior, society, values, structures and social systems in which individuals perform its function. The basic assumption of this idea is the activity or program that is intentionally planned and implemented to improve the quality of human. It dues to the fact that in order to face the change which occur rapidly, especially to be adapted to the post-industrial life, we need to have creative thinking and perfect ability. In academic levels, research on social change have also been conducted such as a research by Hayward and Voros (2006) which discussed how the social change theory of P.R. Sarkar is introduced to students through an action learning process.

**Cultures of keo community in flores:** Each tribe had their own cultural values and many tribes that have similarities and some time even the same. In order to identify the culture Keo, we conduct a research which is drawn from

tribal communities, according to the real situation. Keo community, in everyday life is always thinking, living and acting socially-collectively. It can be seen from the expressions and ways of life. To express solidarity and collectivity, indigenous peoples often use couplets of poem and symbolic language.

Keo community is a society that must communicate with each other because of the encouragement of needs of things that are physically and mentally, including the desire for protection, security and peace. In Keo community, kinship spirit is ingrained in the society and is generally broad and relies on blood ties. These ties strengthen solidarity between peoples. This is apparent in the parties, in traditional ceremonies, or in dealing with dangers that threaten the tribe and at the time of carrying out an activity for the benefit of an individual or society. Strong attachment to custom make all citizens think socially and collectively as well as with mutual solidarity. The obligation to take part in traditional ceremonies as well as in joint activities, keep the citizen to have taste of togetherness. If someone is doing something, then the members of the group or society will spontaneously help. Most of the tribal people will automatically engage in a ceremony administered by chiefs or elders customs.

In indigenous tradition, the tendency to be privileging the values of harmony with the collective commitment of the tribe which underestimates the power sense has become the foundation of Keo community in the past. Nowadays, in the era which is dominated by a sense, it is slowly shaping identity which will undoubtedly reap the benefits of traditional levels while leaving, stripped or distort the values that have been worn, to switch to a new virtues in real acts (Fernandez, 1990).

Since long time ago until today, Keo community has been living by farming or gardening. The sky drops down rain, the sun provides good weather and soil fertility are natural resources which are constantly available as the people expected. In addition, long-term crops such as coconut, hazelnut, coffee, grapes, palm, cloves, cocoa, cashew and so on are the main source of money for the community. They take care of the animals to for sale or for own pets especially, tribe affairs. Animals such as chickens, pigs, goats, horses, cows, buffalo are fairly reliable as non-oil commodities.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study used qualitative approach of grounded research methods which try to maintain the depth and integrity of limited objects and have character and unique characteristics that allow scientists to discover

the essence of the fundamental issues that are being studied. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), study in qualitative research uses participant observation and in-depth interviews of the respondents. In this case, Black and Champion (1976), argued that a case-study research such as this study is carried out on specially social units which are selected as study materials to understand social situations with unpredicted total population.

For that reason, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the concept of relevant sampling used in qualitative research is the maximum variation sampling to document uniqueness that have emerged in adapting to different condition. Therefore, in the data collection process, if the variation does not appear or no more information is found, the researcher does not need to continue any longer to look for information/new samples. This means, the number of samples/informants/respondents can be very little but it can also be many. Faisal said it really depends on: the selection of informants itself and the complexity/diversity of the phenomena which is being studied. In this study, the sampling of informant/respondent were conducted by purposive sampling that is by finding people who are competent or able to provide the required information (key informants) on culture of Keo community, Keo's traditional house and Keo's religious system in accordance with problems and research purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demographics conditions of village Lajawajo:** Village Lajawajo is located in the sub-district Mauponggo. The area of the village is 12.05 km<sup>2</sup> with population size of 1086 people. The majority (98.05%) of the villagers of Lajawajo are embracing Catholic religion. According to the existing data about area of the village and the distribution of the population shows that village Lajawajo has population of more than the other villages in the sub-district Mauponggo. Meanwhile, according to education level, the highest education level that can be achieved by Lajawajo villagers are relatively low which is about 49.66% of them are educated at elementary school (Table 1).

However, until now this sub-district has already 27 elementary schools, three junior high schools and one senior high school. To obtain a higher level of education or universities, people of the village usually go to the city of Ende at 105 km (2 h) distance from the sub-district Mauponggo. The low level of education in the sub-district Mauponggo implies on the livelihoods of the population which is relatively homogeneous as farmer.

**Cultural values of tribe house in keo's community:** Various cultural sites suggest that the Keo's traditional

Tabel 1: Population size of sub-district Mauponggo by education level on year 2006

Education level	No. of people	Percentage
Elementary school	5.346	49.66
Junior high school	3.893	36.16
Senior high school	1.158	10.75
Diplomma	256	2.37
Bachelor degree	112	1.04
Master degree	0	0
Doctorate	0	0
Total	10.765	100

house is basically having value as a center and controller of all social activities in everyday life. Cultural values of the traditional house also contain value as a protective for the community togetherness in everyday life. It appears from the fact that the traditional house of Keo community has become part of their lives. As a protector, Keo's the traditional house of Keo can be divided into two types namely Sa'o Pu'u and Sa'o Yeda. The function of the traditional house from long ago until today, not only a place for shelter but also as a social entity and as a center for various activities undertaken by Keo community members.

In general, in Keo community, the unity of the people currently comes from descendants who have been inhabiting the same traditional house in the past. If we observe it based on its shape, the traditional house of Keo community is a building that was made not only as a residence but also as a place to provide protection. Since it is a place for protection, then since the process of development, it has involved all the elements of a large family who in the tribe Keo. Therefore, matters relating to the tribe ceremony belong to those collateral from one tribe. For the people of Keo, the traditional house is an important building for the unity of tribes known as Sa'o Pu'u. While traditional house as a place to gather and be protective, deliberations or as a meeting place is known as the Sa'o Waja. In spelling of the Sa'o Pu'u and Sa'o Waja, although slightly varied in several villages but the still have the same meaning. In the sub-district Mauponggo (Keo community), traditional house is known as Sa'o Pu'u but each group in tribe Keo name it in accordance with the group language. The word Pu'u probably comes from Keo language which means the center. As the center of a large family in which the tribe has settled, then the function of the traditional house as aegis plays important role in Keo community.

In indigenous Keo community, traditional house in addition to functioning as a protective or shelter, according to Mr. Joseph Etel (68 year), it also has a function to build unity, a deep rooted tradition for the Keo people. According to him, besides reflecting the spirit of the protection or shelter, harmony, cooperation and responsibility of every member of society, traditional

house is a form of togetherness. Since, in general, Keo society has a very strong tradition of togetherness; it appears a tradition of mutual assistance. Through the traditional house, the tradition of mutual assistance can be established and well maintained. Forms of mutual assistance can be seen from the beginning of the establishment of the traditional house until it is completed. The tradition of mutual assistance also happens and continuously active as long as the big family of tribe Keo occupy their traditional house. All activities for building the traditional house involve members of the local indigenous community.

Keo's traditional house, judging from its existence has religious value. Before the arrival of the Catholic religion, the first official religion which came into this region, the people of Keo still cling firmly to the original belief which sees the world or the universe as a whole. Human life, according to Keo tribe, always associated with the universe so that human life is a religious experience. Life, according to them is a unity that is not possible to separate the things that are physical with things sacred or spiritual. Any activities they do have close connection with nature original belief. In their view, the orders of well-organized nature as well as its supernatural power are always master of human life. A farmer of tribe Keo always felt wherever he cannot be separated from God's supervision. Faerie is typical of a man with a variety of feelings. On the one hand there is a feeling of love, respect, devotion but on the other hand he is ruled by fear and scare. Those feelings had been encouraging them to perform various actions which aimed at looking for a relationship with the supernatural called "all about religion" the "all about religion" behavior is seen in their religious ceremonies.

In Keo's society, the characters who have a sacred role such as chairpersons of the tribe, landlords, the chiefs (mosalaki), medicaster (ata mali) as well as a regular family leader use to deliver a sacrifice to avert calamity or prayers and mantras to ask for blessings and protection of God. So it can be said that they acted as a ceremonial priest. They play role as mediator between the divine and the human. One of the requirements so that we can contact with God is ritual purity which mean that the sacrificial carrier must be clean from bad things or evil. Things are not good are considered as obstacles to the sacrifices for the spirits. Or in other words, sacrifices or offerings given as repellent reinforcements will not be accepted by the spirits when the carrier have mistakes or sins that have not been restored. The spirits used to live in sacred areas in the mountains, hills, forests, Springs, large trees, caves, sea and others.

Keo community also observes that there is a value of chastity, especially those which directly related to custom objects, whether it is the heritage of our ancestors or the one which is results of work of the present generation, in various forms and manifestations. In this case, the houses which are in the middle of the village are grouped in a cluster whose existence has a value of chastity. The society views such houses as the residence of the ancient ancestors. The traditional house has also function for custom equipments for the establishing traditional houses purpose, the needs of pregnant women or for other purposes of parties. Therefore, since all of these sites have value of chastity, then a tribe chief is given full rights to protect and preserve such sites. The rights which have been given to the tribe chief include:

- The right to own the land of Ngadhu bhaga/Peo
- eligible to receive awards in indigenous community. Methods or ethical norm of the underlying is: Mbeo ame tana, Mbeo ame watu
- The right to intervene in determining belis and
- Entitled to monitor the rights of family members

An interesting thing which can be found in the life of Keo community, among others is related to honesty. The life in indigenous community is more bound to customary norms. Compliance of the society is simply based on the existence of indigenous agreement that has been passed on from generation to generation which have been kept, maintained or protected as well so that it becomes something valuable or even has a value of chastity. The value of honesty, in fact is originated from Keo public adherence to all indigenous heritages which are handed down by their ancestors. What has been determined by the customs such as customs of clearing land for cultivation, the procedure in daily life of children with their parents, young man with the older one, among the elderly men and women, the procedures in ceremony of pregnancy until delivery, also procedures in marriage, demand the willingness and sincerity of all members of the community customary to obey and execute them well.

All contained in a traditional house of Keo community has very high artistic values which have been maintained and preserved by the local community. The wedding ceremony and dance are examples of the high value of public art of Keo community. Likewise sculptures which are usually found in the form of the traditional house, on the Peo and Ngadhu which are placed in the middle of the village or traditional house have high artistic value which have been maintained and preserved. The value of art can also be found in the habit of people in traditional dress especially for the party at the time of

building a traditional house, at the time of the wedding ceremony as well as other cultural activities. The artistic values do not have a lot of changes. This can be seen, for example in the form of traditional houses from ancient times until now that persisted as the original. Likewise, the traditional dance form which have not much changed. Similarly, the sculptures which are located either on traditional house or on traditional clothes, the style and uniqueness have been maintained in accordance with the values of the local community.

The existence of traditional house is also supported by the presence of Peo, a type of monument as a center of offering indigenous peoples which is located in the middle of the village. The base of the Peo consist of several stones that serve as reinforcement where Peo which has meaning that the leader is always held in high esteem by other functions. The cantilever stones have a number of meanings and there is a person who is responsible to take care for the stones. These stones are also functioned as a symbol on certain tribes who have contributed to their existence and social influence on that site. Meanwhile, in Keo community, there are Peo and Nabe which are a unity which can not be separated from one another. These figures teach people that the leader can stand up in public if he has people who are responsible for his lives as long as there is unity which is a safe and stable. The persistence of the values of the art, according to Michael Du'a (59 years) is caused by some sort of belief that everything which is inherited is results of work that must be upheld.

Basically, Peo has philosophical value as a reflection of the leadership value in the tribe Keo. It has been believed by Keo society that Peo is able to present four strong leadership strengths, namely ruler, firmness or knight, wisdom or sincere and concern or respect. Keo people believe that if there is a gap in power it will open up opportunities for other people maintain the power each other, so that it make an easy-going dispute. Likewise, the determination, wisdom and compassion are fundamental archetypes which become a forum for the development of indigenous leadership or Mosalaki of Keo community. Discussions about archetypes which are presented recently provide a framework in which there are equipment, models and understanding relevant to leadership demanded by custom. Peo has been providing a broad archetypes and able to describe the bad or negative characteristics. Understanding how if a leader has parts of bad and negative characteristics in togetherness can provide insight into how to heal and integrate the challenges of strength in the joint and professional life as a leader. To benefit from these four forces in the society can also provide the basis for developing maps of personal leadership development.

Increasingly aware of the power of the community, then people will be easier to access the latent potentials. The existence of the traditional house can also be able to know that the Keo community still has chief tribe who has the ability to move people. Tribe chiefs, in the view of the local community is still sorely needed because in addition to the figure to raise public togetherness as well as the driving spirit of mutual help. As a figure of leader, the tribe chief has authority to: coordinate activities in woe such as to build Ngadhu bhaga and pay attention to tribal members, especially fay walu and ana kalo.

## CONCLUSION

The existence of traditional house with Peo Ngadhu is the center of all the power of the tribe Keo. We are able know that the traditional house of Keo community is also a peace that animates the value of community life. Embodiments of the value of peace is especially more evident in the form of Peo as leadership and a unifying figure for the Keo's people. Through Peo, the atmosphere of peace can be maintained properly because all the gushing in the power of leaders who carried by a tribe chief. In summary, traditional house of Keo community contains many cultural values that can be used as a guide to living fori Keo community that continues to develop and change over time.

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