



THE EXISTENCE OF THE ROAH BALE BELEQ TRADITION AS A REINFORCEMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNITY IN LOMBOK

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Abstract: *This research aims to investigate the existence of the Roah Bale Beleq tradition in Wakan Village as a reinforcement of spiritual and social aspects. The research method employed is a descriptive-qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the head of the hamlet and traditional leaders. The results indicate that the Roah Bale Beleq tradition serves to strengthen spiritual aspects, such as ta'lim assemblies, dhikr, and communal prayers, as well as social aspects like cooperation and communal meals. These positive elements need to be preserved, making them among the reasons the tradition is still upheld today, despite changes such as reduced participant numbers and the discontinuation of traditional Lombok clothing, namely Lambung.*

Keywords: Existence of Tradition, Spiritual Aspect, Social Aspect

Introduction

Cultural diversity in Indonesia arose from its geographical features, comprising numerous islands and a variety of ethnic groups that reside there.¹ Despite being influenced by national legal regulations, numerous regions in Indonesia still prioritise the implementation of customary law. During the period of regional autonomy, indigenous communities gain the authority to operate the customary law systems they adhere to. When customary law is violated, sanctions in the form of customary fines are imposed to correct

¹Jefri Dadang Triyoso dan Yohan Susilo. "Makna Dan Fungsi Tradisi Upacara Nyadran Di Dusun Ngadiboyo, Desa Ngadiboyo, Kecamatan Rejoso, Kabupaten Nganjuk." *Jurnal Baradha: Jurnal Pengembangan Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya Jawa*, 17 no. 2 (June 5, 2021): 675-698 <https://doi.org/10.26740/job.v17n2.p675-698>

the violator's behaviour. This phenomenon reflects efforts made to maintain cultural diversity and uphold harmony between national and customary law in Indonesia.²

Culture is a heritage passed down from one generation to the next. Understanding these cultural aspects is crucial for future generations. Through this understanding, the values embedded in this culture can be applied effectively in various social contexts, such as education, family environments, and society as a whole. Various megalithic cultural practices passed down through generations by our ancestors have continued into the contemporary era. Examples include traditional dance performances, the use of traditional clothing, artworks such as carved statues, megalithic stone structures, regional culinary variations, traditional house architecture, and other elements. All these expressions are part of a local intellectual heritage rich in historical background and profound significance.³ The cultural diversity found within the Indonesian society is reflected in the wide range of traditions held by various community groups.⁴

Tradition refers to a collection of practices, beliefs, and values that are passed down from one generation to the next within a society. Its primary function is to shape a collective identity, ensure cultural continuity, and regulate social interaction to foster harmony among members of society.⁵ Tradition has become an uncontested normative pillar in the social structure of society, with violations of traditional norms potentially resulting in the enforcement of sanctions. Sanctions applied in the context of tradition are often implicit, where the consequences of breaching customs are imposed based on principles that have been passed down from one generation to the next. This normative system remains relevant in today's ongoing era.⁶ Tradition not only refers to practices or activities that have been carried out for a long time and have become an integral part of people's lives, but also encompasses various norms, customs, and values that have been passed down from the past to the present. Tradition is not merely a historical heritage or hereditary custom; it also embodies values regarded as benchmarks of truth and esteemed as positive by the community.⁷

Variants of this tradition encompass oral and non-verbal forms. Oral tradition refers to the customary practice or transmission of messages that are passed down and conveyed verbally. The process of cultural transmission through oral traditions, passed down from generation to generation, highlights the use of spoken language as the primary method in cultural preservation efforts, which holds cultural

²Tri Wahyuni, Inni Inayati Istiana, dan Ratna Asmarani. "Denda Adat Pada Tradisi Pepadun Masyarakat Lampung Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam." *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)*, 9 no. 1 (2023): 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i1.1895>.

³Merdina Ziraluo, Helnanirma S. Fau, Nursari R. Simanullang, Bestari Laia, dan Disayangi Gaurifa. "Filosofi Dan Makna Omo Sebua (Rumah Adat Besar) Di Desa Bawomataluo Kecamatan Fanayama Kabupaten Nias Selatan" *Curve Elasticity: Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi*, 3 no. 2 (August 25, 2022): 72-87. <https://doi.org/10.57094/jpe.v3i2.465>.

⁴Nurlaili Khikmawati. "Eksistensi Tradisi Nyadran Dalam Ketidakpastian Ekonomi Masyarakat Waruduwur Kabupaten Cirebon." *Social Issues Quarterly*, 1 no. 2 (January 15, 2023): 293–302.

⁵Ahmad Pramudiyanto. "Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Tradisi *Sompreten Lelayu* di Kampung Pusponjoyo Semarang." *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 7 no. 1 (January 11, 2020): 1-6.

⁶Yanti Fardayanti dan Nurman Nurman. "Eksistensi Tradisi Juadah dalam Melestarikan Solidaritas dalam Upacara Perkawinan (Studi di Korong Kampung Ladang Kabupaten Padang Pariaman)." *Humanus: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Humaniora* 12 no. 1 (March 2013): 43- 52. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jh.v12i1.3103>.

⁷Abdul Shomad dan Topan Priananda Adinata. "Tradisi Adat Methik Pari di Desa Kalistail Kecamatan Genteng Kabupaten Banyuwangi (Studi Pendekatan Historis)." *Agastya Jurnal Sejarah dan Pembelajarannya* 10 no. 1 (January 2020): 35. DOI:10.25273/ajsp.v10i1.5090.

significance for the participants and followers of these traditions.⁸ The widespread practice of oral culture in society is understood as an effort by ancestors to maintain values considered positive, which can be inherited through various forms of communication, such as oral traditions, singing, rhetoric, and traditional narratives. The presence of this culture, which includes the heritage of oral traditions, is perceived as an integral part of the folkloristic domain. Folklore is an integral part of a community's cultural heritage, widely spread and passed down from generation to generation among various groups, typically in oral form, accompanied by gesture movements or aids to memory. Its anonymous presence creates a variety of different versions in each location. There are various forms of folklore. This oral tradition encompasses various aspects of life, including beliefs, technology, customary legal systems, traditional ceremonies, dances, folk celebrations, and more.⁹

The presence of cities in Indonesia, which should uphold local cultural values, is now influenced by foreign cultural currents, resulting in a disregard for local values. In the context of regional autonomy, many cities strive to develop a unique identity as a promotional strategy to enhance competitiveness both locally and internationally. Strengthening this identity requires active involvement from both the government and the community to promote regional potential, particularly in the cultural, tourism, and economic sectors.¹⁰

Currently, a trend is emerging in Indonesia where many aspects of culture and ethnic identity are beginning to receive less attention from the public. However, some regions, like Lombok Island, still firmly maintain their cultural heritage and ethnic identity. Lombok Island is divided into four regencies: East Lombok, Central Lombok, West Lombok, and North Lombok. The Sasak tribe is one of the indigenous ethnic groups that inhabit the island of Lombok. The Sasak community carries with it several traditions and cultural values that are still preserved and continue to evolve within their society.¹¹ One of the traditions still maintained by the people of Lombok today is the Roah Bale Beleq tradition in Wakan Village, primarily inhabited by the Sasak community. This unique ritual seeks welfare and is led by religious leaders or *kiai*. It involves communal prayer for rain, peace, and prosperity for the community. Although it resembles the Istisqo' prayer, it is conducted as a joint prayer. The Bale Beleq building, where this tradition occurs, reflects a history intertwined with the spiritual and social practices of the Wakan people. This tradition not only showcases the spiritual aspect of prayer and dhikr, but also fosters social solidarity through its collective preparation and execution.

Research by Urpiani indicates that the tradition includes a range of practices that are necessary to uphold in our society, especially regarding shared values. The community's collective involvement in

⁸ Ridho Wildan Rohmadi, Ahmad Karim Maulana dan Suprpto Suprpto. "Representasi Tradisi Lisan dalam Tradisi Jawa Methik Pari dan Gejug Lesung." *Diwangkara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya Jawa* 1 no. 1 (August 2021) <https://jurnal.stkipgriponorogo.ac.id/index.php/DIWANGKARA/article/view/107>.

⁹ Riza Fitriatul Khusna. "Tradisi Lisan Grebeg Suku di Candi Suku: Kajian Semiotik." *Diwangkara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya Jawa* 3 no. 1 (August 2023): 39-47. <https://doi.org/10.60155/dwk.v3i1.307>.

¹⁰ Mustakim Mustakim, Ishomuddin Ishomuddin, Wahyudi Winarjo, dan Khozin Khozin. "Konstruksi Kepemimpinan Atas Tradisi Giri Kedaton sebagai Identitas Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Kabupaten Gresik." *Media Komunikasi FPIPS* 19 no. 1 (April 22, 2020): 11-27. <https://doi.org/10.23887/mkfis.v19i1.23250>.

¹¹ Sukron Azhari dan Sukardiman. "Eksistensi Tradisi Mertoq pada Masyarakat Sasak di Desa Wakan Kecamatan Jerowaru Kabupaten Lombok Timur." *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia* 2 no. 2 (July 2021): 111-118. DOI:10.22373/jsai.v2i2.1490

preserving traditions and cooperative practices represents a tangible expression of these social values. Additionally, dhikr and communal prayer activities are essential components of the tradition, symbolising gratitude towards the Creator. This tradition also reflects a commitment to sharing with orphans as a sincere effort to demonstrate concern for others.

Although initially the Roah Bale Beleq tradition involved the entire people of Wakan Village, over time, participation has become limited to only a few specific hamlets, such as Mampe, Wakan, and Kelotok. Changes are not only visible in the level of participation but also in the visual aspect, such as clothing. Previously, people wore Sasak traditional clothes known as Lambung, but those who still carry out this tradition tend to wear polite and neat attire. In light of these changes, further research is needed to understand how societies maintain the traditions they adhere to.

Method

This study employs descriptive qualitative methods. The research was conducted in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, from November 2023 to March 2024. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with one Hamlet Head and one traditional leader. Subsequently, the data is presented using reduction techniques, data presentation, and verification (to conclude).

Result and Discussion

The origin of the Bale Beleq

Bale Beleq, or large houses, are known as residences for individuals or groups, offering large spaces. Traditionally, bale beleq served as a hub for traditional activities, a place where social, religious, and similar matters could be discussed and resolved.¹² In the 1800s, there was a person named Kiyai Masmirah, who was a renowned religious figure and a devout Muslim. At that time, most residents of Wakan Village were still practising animism before converting to Islam. As a result, Kiyai Masmirah became the main driver in efforts to spread Islam in Wakan Village. Concurrently, the people of Wakan Village faced challenges from drought that threatened their survival. In response to this disaster, Kiyai Masmirah organised a tradition or thanksgiving ceremony commonly called Roah Bale Beleq, aimed at asking for safety, rain, and various other blessings.¹³

Steps to implement the Tradition

The tradition takes place on the 7th day of the 7th month of the Sasak calendar, which corresponds to the months of the Islamic calendar, like Muharram, Shafar, Rabi'ul Awal, Rabi'ul Akhir, Jumadil Awal, Jumadil Akhir, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Syawwal, Dzulqaidah, and Dzulhijjah. The people involved in the tradition wear traditional Lombok clothing known as Lambung.¹⁴

¹² Elmi Septiana, Ahmad Afandi, Anwar Ilmi dan Agus Herianto. "Meaning and Philosophy of Bale Beleq Traditional House East Lombok." *Ibda': Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya* 21 no. 2 (October 1, 2023): 203-220. DOI: 10.24090/ibda.v21i2.7789

¹³ Interview with H. Jamhuri Ihsan QH, January 10, 2024.

¹⁴ Interview with Pemangku, December 20, 2023.

The initial stage of the Roah Bale Beleq ceremony involves cleaning the area where the tradition takes place, followed by community cooking activities aimed at sharing a meal, known in the context of Sasak culture as *Begibung*. After that, the community gathers, and one of the traditional leaders on duty continues with the reading of the Sage. The Sage is a book or *kayat* that recounts the history of the prophethood, crafted from duntan leaves similar to the Sage kere leaves made during the time of the Prophet. It was copied in his era and brought to Wakan Village by the late Papuk Rumenah.¹⁵



Figure 1. Sage/book

The tradition begins with the beating of the gong as a sign of the event's start, followed by the gathering of stakeholders to provide compensation to orphans as a gesture of concern for others. The event continued with the implementation of the taklim assembly, dhikr, and joint prayer, which aimed to seek safety, peace, and rain to support fertility in farming. Furthermore, the task of the traditional stakeholders is to carry out a procession of watering water that has previously been prayed for. This watering symbolises the hope that rain will fall, like the water that the keepers keep. The event ended with a meal together. Food that had been brought from each house was not allowed to be taken home but was left at the location where the tradition was carried out, as a symbol of sharing with other creatures who are also considered part of life.

Spiritual Aspects

The spiritual aspect encompasses two interrelated processes. The first process, which focuses on improvement, involves the development of internal forces that transform an individual's relationship with God. The second process, also geared towards improvement, is marked by an increase in the individual's physical awareness as a result of the internal transformations that occur.¹⁶

The spiritual elements of the Roah Bale Beleq tradition include the gathering of ta'lim, dhikr, and collective prayers.¹⁷ So the first spiritual aspect of Roah Bale Beleq is the practice of prayer and dhikr

¹⁵ Interview with H. Jamhuri Ihsan QH, January 10, 2024.

¹⁶ Agus Subandi. "Makna Spiritual Tradisi Pindapata Sebagai Wujud Sanghadana Dalam Masyarakat Agama Buddha Di Kota Magelang." *Lingua: Journal of Language, Literature and Teaching* 18 no. 1 (March 20, 2021): 125-137, <https://doi.org/10.30957/lingua.v18i1.685>.

¹⁷ Alif Iman Mansyur, Lailatussakdiah, dan Budiman. "Religious Social Values in the Bale Beleq Celebration of the Jerowaru Community East Lombok." *Cendikia: Media Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 13 no. 4 (March 31, 2023): 595-602. <https://doi.org/10.35335/cendikia.v13i4.3572>.

together. This is performed to seek forgiveness, ask for rain, peace, and to find a way for people to grow closer to their community's Lord. Dhikr strengthens a Muslim's connection with God, enabling individuals to feel His presence while enhancing their piety and spiritual ties.¹⁸ In the second spiritual aspect, attending a ta'lim assembly aims to enhance knowledge about religion and can contribute to developing a good personality in line with religious teachings.

Fuad Hasim explained that human beings require religious teachings to satisfy their spiritual longings. This allows them to find peace for their souls and minds while ensuring that their actions align with the Divine values inherent in the concept of spirituality.¹⁹ Environmental and family factors play a crucial role in fostering the spiritual well-being of the community. Therefore, the Taklim Council aims to foster a supportive environment and family structure to cultivate positive character.²⁰

Social Aspects

In social life, mutual assistance is essential as it has become a necessary habit for neighbours or others seeking help.²¹ Since humans, as social beings, cannot exist independently, human interaction plays a positive role in thinking, communicating, and working together to accomplish tasks.²²

Society is a social system made up of interrelated components or elements that interact harmoniously.²³ The social aspect of the community, in this tradition, involves cooperation where the tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, and eating, are done together.²⁴ To ensure that the community's social aspect holds value, the social aspect of tradition provides significant benefits, helping the community to stay united in society.

Development of the Roah Bale Beleg Tradition

Traditions from various regions tend to fade from the lives of local communities over time. This decline is due to an increase in knowledge of religious studies and the growing influence of Westernization on Indonesian culture. Consequently, these traditions have started to diminish as society develops.²⁵ As we

¹⁸ Abdul Rahman. "Tradisi Hiziban sebagai Momentum Meningkatkan Karakteristik AI Washatiyyah dan Merealisasikan Islah bagi Penerus Perjuangan Maulana Syaikh." *Manazhim: Jurnal Manajemen dan Ilmu Pendidikan* 5 no. 2 (August, 2023): 1171-1204. <https://doi.org/10.36088/manazhim.v5i2.3780>.

¹⁹ Fuad Hasim dan Yasin Nurfalih. "Pendidikan Spiritual dalam Tradisi Istighosah Santri Pondok Pesantren AI Mahrusiyah III Ngampel." *eL BIDAYAH: Journal of Islamic Elementary Educator* 2 no. 2 (September 30, 2020): 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.33367/jiee.v2i2.1304>.

²⁰ Mohtarom dan Anang Wiliam. "Upaya Peningkatan Spritualitas Masyarakat Melalui Majelis Taklim Masjid Jami' Baiturrahman Desa Payaraman Kabupaten Ogan Ilir." *Social Science and Contemporary Issues Journal* 1 no. 3 (November 28, 2023): 542-547. <https://doi.org/10.59388/sscij.v1i3.337>

²¹ Husnul Hatimah, Emawati Emawati dan Muhammad Husni. "Tradisi Tahlilan Masyarakat Banjar Di Kecamatan Pahandut Kota Palangka Raya." *Syams: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 2 no. 2 (June 30, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.23971/js.v2i1.3031>

²² I Wayan Sunampun Putra. "Realisasi Ajaran Teologi Sosial Melalui Tradisi Ngejot Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19." *SPHATIKA: Jurnal Teologi* 12 no. 2 (September 2021): 159-167.

²³ Erni Irmayanti Hamzah. "Tradisi Mabbaca Doang Masyarakat Suku Bugis Kelurahan Kabonena Kecamatan Ulujadi Kota Palu." *Moderasi Jurnal Studi Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 2 no. 1 (August 2021): 25-40. DOI:10.24239/moderasi.Vol2.Iss1.38.

²⁴ Alif Ilman Mansyur, Lailatussakhidiah, Budiman, *loc.cit.*

²⁵ Tata Twin Prehatinia dan Widiati Isana. "Perkembangan Tradisi Keagamaan Munggaran Kota Bandung Jawa Barat Tahun 1990-2020." *Priangan: Journal of Islamic Sundanese Culture* 1 no. 1 (July 21, 2022): 60-77. <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/priangan/article/view/19311>.

progress further into a modern era, human life continues to advance without pause.²⁶ With the increase in population and the expansion of the village environment, traditions and practices have also adapted to the current societal conditions.²⁷

The state of the tradition of Roah Bale Beleq in the past is as follows:

- a. The participants involved in the tradition initially wore traditional Sasak clothes called *lambung*.
- b. The entire community of Wakan Village carries out the *Roah Baleq* tradition.
- c. Lack of role of elders and the government in introducing practices related to tradition.

There are several reasons why tradition has changed as follows:

- a. Around 1998, Sasak traditional clothing was no longer commonly used due to the wider spread of religion and the impact of globalization.²⁸ One of the main factors is that the traditional clothes of *lambung*, which are traditional clothing, are considered inappropriate because they do not cover the *aurat* (intimate parts of the body according to Islamic teaching). Therefore, the traditional clothes were then abandoned. Currently, people who follow this tradition choose to wear clothes that are considered more polite or modern.



Figure 2. Shirt/*Stomach* used in the old days

- b. There is still no agreement on the date of implementing the tradition between villages, and the lack of dissemination of information related to this.²⁹ As a result, individuals who have recently settled in the village are unaware of the tradition's existence.

- c. The lack of information related to the tradition is due to the limitations of the community, the majority of whom are elderly, and there is still a lack of communication with the government. As a result,

²⁶ Hadi Wiyono dan Iwan Ramadhan. "Pergeseran Tradisi Belalek Dalam Budaya Bertani Masyarakat Melayu Sambas." *Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat* 17 no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v17i1.2880>.

²⁷ Putri Indah Sari, Moh. Syawaludin dan Sholeh Khudin. "Tradisi Pantauan Bunting dalam Perkawinan Masyarakat Desa Sukarami Pagaralam." *Tanjak: Jurnal Sejarah dan Peradaban Islam* 1 no. 2 (June 30, 2021): 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.19109/tanjak.v1i2.9370>.

²⁸ Interview with H. Jamhuri Ikhsan, Q. H., February 13, 2024.

²⁹ Interview with Mujahid Akbar, February 12, 2024.

the tradition has received less attention, and the government is not only a disseminator of information, but is also expected to provide financial support.³⁰

Figure 3. Clothes used today



The Existence of the Roah Bale Beleq Tradition

Maintaining the tradition that is passed on is a form of respect for ancestors and an expression of gratitude to God.³¹ The existence of the Roah Bale Beleq tradition is one way the community maintains its ancestral heritage, which is passed down from generation to generation through stories and ordinances.³² Respect for one's ancestors is an integral part of important morality. The continuity of tradition requires respect and mutual respect among the actors.³³ The people of Wakan Village maintain the tradition of Roah Bale Beleq as a means for the community to continue respecting traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and as a reinforcement of the spiritual and social aspects within the community. The Roah Bale Beleq tradition embodies values worthy of emulation, which is why it has endured to this day. The community still has a sense of concern for the heritage of traditions from their ancestors, ensuring that they are well-maintained. Although the tradition has undergone some changes, it does not eliminate the essence of the values contained within it.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the *Roah Bale Beleq* tradition contains a spiritual aspect, as reflected in the activities of *majelis taklim*, *dhikr*, and prayer, which serve as a reinforcement of understanding of religion and the relationship with God. Socially, cooperative activities

³⁰ Interview with Mujahid Akbar, February 12, 2024.

³¹ April Griya Mutia dan Asep Ginanjar. "Eksistensi Islam Aboge di Tengah Perubahan Sosial di Desa Kracak Kecamatan Ajibarang Kabupaten Banyumas." *Sosiolum: Jurnal Pembelajaran IPS* 4 no. 1 (Mei 2022): 56-62. <https://doi.org/10.15294/sosiolum.v4i1.53030>; Alfelyus Babu Mahuze dan Yeyen Subandi. "Upaya LPPSLH (Lembaga Penelitian Pengembangan Sumberdaya Lingkungan Hidup) dalam Mengadvokasi Masyarakat Penghayat Kepercayaan Banyumas." *Maras: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2 no. 1 (March 11, 2024): 559-564. <https://doi.org/10.60126/maras.v2i1.217>; Nancy Aprilia Heydemans, Candri Betrius Liu Timpal dan Jilly Anggi Alva. "Eksistensi Agama Malesung di Minahasa." *Melo: Jurnal Mahasiswa Kristen* 1 no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 48-57. <https://ejournal-iakn-manado.ac.id/index.php/mello/article/view/1320>.

³² Interview with Mujahid Akbar, February 12, 2024.

³³ Dwi Oktaviani dan Heri Kurnia. "Eksistensi Kebudayaan Merti Dusun dalam Kesenian Reog Manunggal Mudho Lestari Budoyo Kulonprogo." *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 5 no. 1 (June 21, 2023): 37-43.

aim to strengthen community solidarity. This tradition is still practised as a way to honour the heritage of ancestors and preserve precious values, although it has undergone minor changes. In the design of this journal, there are still many shortcomings related to the details of activities carried out by the Wakan Village community, as well as the lack of knowledge of respondents about traditions. For this reason, it is necessary to further about the overall picture and to recommend that the next research not only focuses on traditional leaders and stakeholders, but also includes the elders in Wakan Village as the key informants concerning the tradition.

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