



Bale Beleq Tradition of the Wakan Village Community: Analysis of Function and Aesthetic Value

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Abstract

This research examines the *Bale Beleq* tradition in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, NTB Province, which is part of the cultural heritage of the Sasak ethnic community. This research highlights the social function and aesthetic value of these traditions in strengthening the sustainability and cultural identity of local communities. The research method used in this research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. The research results show that the *Bale Beleq* tradition not only functions as a means of transmitting cultural values and norms from generation to generation, but also has an aesthetic appeal that influences people's perception and appreciation of their cultural heritage. The visual and auditory beauty of this tradition plays an important role in increasing public awareness and participation, including the younger generation and tourists, in preserving the tradition. This research emphasizes the importance of maintaining and appreciating local traditions as an integral part of a living and dynamic cultural identity.

Keywords: *Bale Beleq Tradition; Social Function; Aesthetic Value*

Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country that has cultural diversity with various tribes, ethnicities, languages, religions and customs, all of which are a reflection of the nation's diversity. Indonesia, as a result of the collaboration between BPS and ISEAS (Institute of South Asian Studies), concluded that there are around 633 tribes obtained from the grouping of tribes and sub-tribes in Indonesia. Thousands of islands in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are one of the characteristics that this country is a country with diverse ethnicities and different cultural backgrounds (Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017).

These cultures come from various regions in Indonesia. One of them is that the East Lombok region of NTB Province has a unique culture, namely tradition *Bale Beleq* which was held in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency. The culture of the Sasak tribe has lived for generations, starting from individual life to activities carried out by formal, informal and traditional groups (Budiwanti, 2000). Culture has a huge function for humans and society (Mahdayeni et al., 2019). Culture is the total knowledge possessed by humans as social creatures, the others are tools, models of knowledge that can be selectively used to understand and interpret the environment they face and to encourage and create the actions they need (Wijaya, 2017).

Public Wakan Village, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, NTB has various forms of ancestral cultural heritage, including the Pentun Bubus traditional ceremony, Gamelan Art, Jangger, Dramatic Art, Beleq Drum and *Bale Beleq* which is still well maintained and preserved to this day. The celebration took place with the participation of the people of Wakan Hamlet and Wakan Village.

Tradition is a fundamental element in forming the cultural identity of a community. In the context of the *Bale Beleq* tradition as a local culture, this tradition functions as a means of passing on values, norms and customs from generation to generation (Mustari et al., 2023). The existence of the *Bale Beleq* tradition has a very essential role in strengthening social relations and maintaining community integrity. Regarding the importance of tradition, contributing to the preservation of cultural identity and social integration of local communities (Ilham et al., 2023). With this tradition, it is able to provide support for local communities to continue to maintain and preserve their local wisdom.

Bale Beleq is one of the oldest buildings in Wakan Village. This Beleq was founded around the 15th to early 16th century when Islam spread to Lombok, which was founded by Balok Imut. *Bale Beleq* was used as a place of prayer or a place to meditate on Baloq Imut, so that at that time *Bale Beleq* was also used as a place to recite the Koran and a place of repentance for people who still adhered to animist beliefs. *Bale Beleq* is used as a religious place, namely remembrance and prayer in the Sasak language is called roah (Septiana et al., 2023). *Bale Beleq* this is commonly known by the people of Wakan Village as Ketubuk as one of the cultural heritages that is still managed by the Wakan people.

Cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible culture (Diana & Tiaraputri, 2021). There is physical evidence of ancestral remains in the form of Gendang Belek and a traditional house called Bale Kemaliq (Ketubuk), in Sasak language terms also known as "Balén Bubus", similar to the traditional house where the Pentun Bubus ceremony took place. Gamelan equipment, Gendang Belek and the *Bale Beleq* tradition are managed jointly by the Wakan people and their communities.

According to (Junaidi, 2017), aesthetics is the study of processes that occur in subjects, objects, and values related to experiences, properties, and parameters of attractiveness and unattractiveness. The aesthetic value instilled through the *Bale Beleq* tradition is the value of beauty in the form of decoration and the uniformity of the tools used in the *Bale Beleq* traditional ceremony process. The use of decorations symbolizes the ceremony process and in the process of carrying out the ceremony several trays are used which have become a sacred part of the process. The use of utensils that still have a traditional smell such as Dulang Tinggi (a towering serving dish), earthen kettles, the use of round wooden trays, red serving hoods made specifically from kere leaves which are similar to coconut leaves which have a thicker leaf shape. width, use of traditional clothes, and many other things. And the implementation process is very systematic and orderly, both in the form of the event structure and the placement of trays in neat rows.

In research (Rahmawati et al., 2019) found that the aesthetic value that can be found on meron includes decorative forms placed on meron such as flowers, temples, and various geometric shapes. Meron's coloring is quite interesting because there are various contrasting colors. Each Meron has a different shape and function, which are interrelated and give the impression of completeness and harmony. The function of meron is divided into 3, namely: physical function as an embodiment of the existence of existing and ingrained customs in the community in Sukolilo Village, Sukolilo District, Pati Regency, social function, namely fostering a spirit of mutual cooperation between residents and the cultural function of Meron as a way of preserving traditions that already exist in Sukolilo Pati to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

To determine the function and aesthetic value in the *Bale Beleq* tradition, an empirical study is needed. So, the purpose of writing this article is to find out the function and aesthetic value contained in the *Bale Beleq* traditional ceremony of the Wakan Village community.

Research Methodology

This research uses descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative descriptive research presents data in its entirety without any manipulation or other treatment. This research aims to provide a comprehensive picture of an event or to reveal and explain the phenomenon that occurs (Sugiyono, 2019). This research was carried out in Wakan Hamlet, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency. Data collection techniques use observation, interviews and documents. The observation technique was carried out in a participatory manner, namely the researcher was directly involved as an observer and participant in the ceremony. The interview technique used was an unstructured interview so that researchers could obtain in-depth data. Determining informants used Purposive Sampling techniques because researchers had already determined the informants who would be interviewed. The data source in this research is primary data, namely data obtained from observations and interviews with 2 stakeholders and traditional leaders in the Wakan Village area, the community and youth leaders. Traditional figure 1 (TF1), traditional figure 2 (TF2), the data analysis used was 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions.

Result and Discussion

A. The Origin of the *Bale Beleq* Tradition

The *Bale Beleq* tradition is a traditional ceremony carried out by the people of Wakan Village and its surroundings which has been going on since ancient times. This traditional ceremony is one of the legacies of our ancestors which is still carried out and guarded and preserved by the people of Wakan Hamlet in particular. In the celebration called the *Bale Beleq* tradition, it has a function and aesthetic value in the celebration process. To find out what the functions and aesthetic values are in celebrating this tradition, researchers are interested in conducting a study that focuses on analyzing the functions and aesthetic values in the *Bale Beleq* tradition in the Wakan Village community as participants and direct observers. There are many perceptions of outsiders regarding the *Bale Beleq* tradition. Some people say that the celebration is associating themselves with the creator, but in this process people never know what values are contained in the *Bale Beleq* celebration.

The *Bale Beleq* celebration tradition is a collective prayer process carried out by praying together led by religious figures in Wakan Village. Often at the *Bale Beleq* celebration a teacher or kiyai is also present as the leader of the prayer tradition. This celebration is the same as performing the Istisqo' prayer, but the Wakan people pray together. After the joint prayer is done, the Wakan people will eat together and are not allowed to take home leftover food in Dulang. If there is food left over then the rule is to throw it there and not take it home. According to the stories of ancient people, *Bale Beleq* already existed in his time, what is still held from the past. until now is from story to story. People used to call Wakan a sacred hut, Kiyai Masmirah said "Whoever enters the Wakan area with the intention of committing a crime (stealing), committing adultery, or doing something with a criminal intent will not feel comfortable, will not feel at home, and they will swear that they will deaf and blind to seven generations" are proofs of sacredness Wakan Village. Wakan is called sacred by Balok Imut because it has four doors through which people enter, if people used to do penance then they had dine. If the south west gate is called tumpeng sari, the southwest gate is called merce sari, the southwest gate is called tunjung sari and the south east is called bloom sari.

Until now, *Baleq Beleq* has stakeholders whose descendants are from Baloq Imut. The stakeholders who hold weapons are of Amaq Icah descent, the stakeholders who are marbots or cleaners are descendants of Papuk Simah and the stakeholders who are women are descendants of Amaq Randah or Amaq Ratnadi. Baloq Imut used to do da'wah using gamelan, Baloq Imut only did a little recitation by saying "That's what you do, that's what you'll find" accompanied by gamelan and to gather the people also used gamelan. The gamelan is called "Two Voices" which symbolizes "Just to te pade" which means you are not allowed to compare A and B or you are not allowed to commit a crime between fellow Muslims.

In these celebrations, we as the people of Wakan Village participate directly, both traditional leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, and the government who carry out the celebrations, especially in the *Bale Beleq* celebration which is held on the 7th of the 7th month of the Sasak calendar and is held on the following days. certain days such as Monday and Friday.

Almost all social activities are carried out in the *Bale Beleq* traditional ceremony. One of the series of events included in the celebration is the reading of the lontar which tells stories about the prophethood and tells how to behave properly towards fellow humans and also in the celebration process there are a series of events in the form of providing assistance to orphans, dhikr, eating together, prayer and majlis ta 'lim.

B. Process of Implementing the *Bale Beleq* Tradition

In the procession of implementing the tradition there are several stages including:

1) Discussion

The community held joint deliberations with traditional leaders, religious leaders, kiyai and community elders. This deliberation is held at one of the traditional leaders' houses or at the *Bele Beleq* or *ketobok* house. During the *Bale Beleq* celebration deliberation, the day, time and date of the celebration, event preparations, and funding issues for the *Bale Beleq* celebration in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District were discussed.

2) Carry Out Cleaning and Renovations

Amaq Menen, who serves as marbot or cleanliness guard for *Bale Beleq*, will inspect the damage to the *Bale Beleq* building. If damage is found to certain parts, Amaq Menen's job is to replace or repair them. However, before repairing the *Bale Beleq* building, Amaq Menen will hold a discussion with other stakeholders or the surrounding community to determine the time for repairs to the *Bale Beleq* building.

3) Buffalo or Goat Slaughtering

At this stage, the celebration committee slaughters a black buffalo or goat. In the past, people usually used buffalo for the *Bale Beleq* celebration, but over time, they now use goats. The reason for using scapegoats is because of the traditions and beliefs of the people who consider scapegoats to have a special meaning in this celebration.

According to Amaq Rohan, "emang ye mule lek laek, laek mule sampi, kao kadun t, laguk nani do'ang noh kadu bembek sak warne bireng". This means that the use of black cabs has been around for a long time, in the past they even used buffalo or cows, but now they use black cabs.

4) Cook

After the goat slaughter is complete, the next step is to cook together by working together with the stakeholders and local community, as well as preparing for the celebration which will be held this afternoon. When the side dishes are cooked, the families of the stakeholders take the tray to the place where the side dishes are cooked and fill them with side dishes and rice. Apart from that, the family of the stakeholder also brought a round container made of wood, containing cigarettes covered with corn leaves and tied with white thread, as well as a kettle made of earth filled with water. The tray must be lined with white cloth.

5) Lontar Reading

After the preparations were complete, Amaq Merin was in charge of reading Sage. Sage is a book or manuscript containing prophetic history, which is used for salvation or in certain celebrations (Naamy, 2022). Sage was created during the time of the Prophet, copied at that time, and brought to Wakan by the late Amak Rumenah. Amak Merin learned from the late Amak Rumenah, but there is no successor generation. Sage writing must be done using *catu rice* (*andang-andang*), a bundle of thread, banknotes

worth Rp. 244,000, and a chicken. Sage must be written under a whitecloth, it must not be written on any other medium. Sage is made from duntan leaves, a type of kere leaf, which are traditionally dried and crushed, then written using the tip of a small knife or putun maje in Sasak language. Sage must be read during the celebration of the *Bale Beleq* tradition. If there is no Amak Merin, the local people will look for someone who can read the Sage. Apart from the *Bale Beleq* tradition, Sage readings are also carried out during treatments carried out in the *Bale Beleq* building. When reading Sage, Amak Merin is provided with water to clarify the letters written on duntan leaves which are similar to coconut leaves.



Image 1: Lontar reading by Amak Merin
(Personal Document, 2020)

6) Starting Towards the Main Event

Traditional leaders and implementing members opened the event by hitting the gong, followed by a performance of Gendang Beleq music by their members. The blow of the gong indicates that the *Bale Beleq* celebration will begin. The Gendang Beleq musical instrument is played to inform the public that the celebration will soon be held or as the opening of the *Bale Beleq* celebration. Gendang Beleq players must wear special clothing called pegon, which is special traditional clothing for players.

When the Gendang Beleq musical instrument is played, the family members will line up carrying trays and clay kettles filled with water that were prepared before this tradition began.

7) Donations for Orphans

After the stakeholders bring the tray accompanied by gamelan music, the stakeholders or traditional leaders call the orphans who were present at the *Bale Beleq* celebration to receive compensation. After giving compensation, the event continued with a taklim assembly as well as collective remembrance and prayer, especially to ask for rain, safety and fertility in farming.

8) Siraman

The sprinkling of water on all the people present has a meaning as a symbol of fertility and an effort to bring rain. The water sprinkled by the traditional figure symbolizes the hope for rain and fertility.

9) Eating Together

Eating together is done using a tray brought by each person. If someone doesn't bring a tray from home, they will eat together with the person who brought the tray. Usually, they will share side dishes, rice and drinking water. This community meal event was attended by the people of Wakan Hamlet and Kelotok Hamlet. while the people of Mampe Hamlet will go to Jero Puri. Jero Puri is a place that is still connected to the *Bale Beleq* tradition.

According to Zaedan, "after eating together with the residents of Wakan and Kelotok hamlets, the next step was to go to Pengempen which is located in Jero Puri hamlet. The trays that were brought there belonged to Amaq Rohan and Amaq Supik as well as trays from the people of Mampe Hamlet who were accompanied by Gendang Beleq.

Upon arrival, the trays that were brought were neatly arranged. Amaq Rohan's tray was placed at the front, close to the water channel flanked by rocks. Amaq Rohan first performed incantations, then continued with collective remembrance which was attended by all those present. After the dhikr together, one of the residents distributed the cooked meat to be eaten together according to their respective trays. The final step is the sprinkling of water, which marks the end of the celebration.

C. The Function of the *Bale Beleq* Tradition for the Wakan Village Community

Based on the results of interviews with traditional stakeholders, the function of the *Bale Beleq* tradition consists of 2 parts, namely a social function and a cultural function.

1) Social Function

Miftahul Huda, 2006: 26 in (Irawaty & Prasastiningtyas, 2023) Social functioning refers to the ability of individuals, families, groups, and communities to normally meet their needs when interacting with the surrounding environment.

The *Bale Beleq* tradition, which is regularly held in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, has a very important social role, namely fostering an attitude of mutual cooperation and cooperation. This tradition is said to foster an attitude of mutual cooperation and cooperation because this is the attitude that is seen when the *Bale Beleq* traditional procession is carried out. The *Bale Beleq* tradition in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok, helps foster a sense of togetherness and cooperation between residents. Mutual cooperation is clearly visible from preparation to completion of the event. Residents from various hamlets work together to cook the offerings, which takes a long time. Everyone from children to the elderly takes part in this event. Women bring trays, men distribute side dishes, and young people play Gendang Beleq music. This tradition shows that all citizens, regardless of profession or wealth, help each other.

The *Bale Beleq* tradition is often integrated into various social and religious rituals, such as traditional ceremonies and religious activities in processions. This function makes *Bale Beleq* a center of social and spiritual activity, which strengthens the role of religion and custom in the daily lives of the people of Wakan Hamlet. Through participation in the *Bale Beleq* tradition, the younger generation can learn about the cultural values, history and philosophy of life of the Lombok people, especially the Wakan hamlet community. This provides invaluable informal education and helps in shaping their character and cultural identity.

2) Cultural Function

The *Bale Beleq* tradition is one of the cultural heritages whose wisdom is still preserved in Wakan Village. The cultural function in this tradition lies in the preservation of various cultural heritages ranging from the musical arts of Gendang Beleq, Pentun Bubus, theater and so on. In an interview with one of the traditional leaders, the involvement of the younger generation provided or made this so that the existence of this culture was not lost. In this way, this cultural heritage remains alive and has noble values that must be upheld.

Through active participation from the community, this tradition is also a form of community engagement with the community and history that their ancestors left behind. Apart from that, this tradition also provides learning for the younger generation about moral values such as hard work, togetherness and mutual respect.

D. Aesthetic Values in the *Bale Beleq* Tradition of the Wakan Village Community

Aesthetics is a science that studies beauty (Djelantik et al., 1999). This beauty arises not only because of the sequence but also because of the ritual values contained in the *Bale Beleq* tradition. The aesthetic value in the *Bale Beleq* tradition lies in the arrangement of the trays in neat rows. With the uniformity of the color of the serving cover, it gives the impression of beauty, neatness and discipline. The way society shows ethics and aesthetics in order is the value of beauty. The beauty of the *Bale Beleq* tradition can be seen in the series of offerings that are arranged to have their own meaning. So that anyone who observes or watches this series will feel the beauty that is in it. Apart from that, beauty also emerges from young people wearing traditional clothes when carrying out the *Bale Beleq* tradition.

In the *Bale Beleq* traditional procession there are several important elements that support the smooth running of the activity. Where is the Gendang Beleq musical instrument. In procession activities, Gendang Beleq music is one of the most important elements and is an integral part of the series of events carrying out the *Bale Beleq* tradition. Apart from that, Gendang Beleq music is also part of the artistic cultural identity of the Sasak tribe (Mega Saputra, 2020). Secondly, there are offerings, based on the results of previous interviews, the use of these tall trays serves as a sign of honor or a banquet for important guests. Therefore, the tray is placed at the very front as a form of respect from the host to the guests.



Image 2: People bring food containing side dishes
Source: Jejaklombok 2020

E. The Relationship between Function and Aesthetic Value in the *Bale Beleq* Tradition

1) The relationship between social function and aesthetic value in strengthening the sustainability of traditions

The relationship between social function and aesthetic value in the *Bale Beleq* tradition makes it an effective medium for strengthening the sustainability of the tradition. For example, the aesthetic beauty of this tradition attracts the interest of tourists and the younger generation, so more and more people are interested in studying and preserving it. On the other hand, its social function in strengthening collective identity and as an educational tool helps ensure that cultural values remain alive and relevant. Through traditional events, festivals and performances on various occasions, *Bale Beleq* not only preserves cultural heritage, but also adapts to current developments. Thus, this tradition remains an integral part of the lives of the people of Lombok, especially the people of Wakan Village, and ensures its sustainability in the future.

2) The influence of aesthetic values on people's perception and appreciation of tradition

Aesthetic values have a significant influence on people's perception and appreciation of the *Bale Beleq* tradition. The following are several aspects of how aesthetic values influence these perceptions and appreciation:

a) Visual and Auditory Attraction

The aesthetic value of *Bale Beleq* lies in the visual beauty of traditional costumes, ritual processions carrying out traditions, and stunning music. This beauty attracts people's attention and makes them feel entertained and enchanted.

b) Cultural Awards

The aesthetic beauty of this tradition also helps increase people's appreciation for their cultural heritage. When people see and hear the beauty of the *Bale Beleq* tradition, they tend to feel proud and appreciate this tradition more as part of their cultural identity.

c) Influence on the Younger Generation

The stunning aesthetics of the *Bale Beleq* tradition play an important role in attracting the interest of the younger generation to learn and preserve this tradition. The younger generation tends to be more interested in something that is beautiful and attractive visually and auditorily. Therefore, the beauty of the *Bale Beleq* tradition can motivate them to get involved in these activities.

d) Tourist attraction

The aesthetic value of the *Bale Beleq* tradition also increases the attractiveness of this tradition for tourists. Tourists who are interested in art and culture will better appreciate and admire the beauty of the *Bale Beleq* traditional performance, which in turn can increase popularity and support for the preservation of this tradition. Not only tourists but regional officials also took part in witnessing the implementation of this tradition.

e) Education and Awareness

The aesthetic beauty of *Bale Beleq* can be used as an educational tool to increase public awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Beautiful performances can convey cultural messages and traditional values in a more interesting and relatable way.

f) Influence on Perception

The attractive aesthetics of *Bale Beleq* influence people's perception of this tradition as something valuable and worth preserving. The visual and auditory beauty makes people see this tradition not only as a legacy of the past, but also as a living and relevant part of their culture today.

Conclusion

The *Bale Beleq* tradition in Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, is a cultural heritage that has existed since ancient times. This tradition is not only a traditional ceremony, but also a medium for praying together, strengthening social relations, and maintaining religious values and local wisdom.

As for the social function of this tradition is that this tradition strengthens social relations in the Wakan Village community. Through various activities such as group prayer, eating together, and providing assistance to orphans, this tradition facilitates social interaction and strengthens the spirit of mutual cooperation. This tradition also functions as a means of preserving the norms and values held by the local community, as well as a medium for educating the younger generation about the importance of togetherness and social harmony.

The aesthetic value of this tradition is that aesthetics in the *Bale Beleq* tradition are reflected through the decoration and uniformity of the tools used in the ceremony. Elements such as high trays, earthen kettles, wooden trays and red serving hoods are part of the aesthetic value that is maintained. The value of beauty can also be seen in the form and arrangement of ceremonial equipment, the use of traditional clothing, as well as the systematic and orderly organization of events, creating a harmonious and structured impression.

The process of implementing this tradition involves several important stages, starting from deliberation, cleaning and renovating *Bale Beleq*, slaughtering buffalo or goats, cooking together, reading palm leaves, to core events such as charity for orphans and water sprinkling. Each stage of the ceremony is carried out involving various elements of society, showing solidarity and togetherness in maintaining and preserving traditions.

The influence of aesthetics on people's perceptions of the aesthetic values contained in the *Bale Beleq* tradition increases people's positive perception and appreciation for this tradition. The beauty and orderliness of the ceremony creates a sense of pride and strengthens the cultural identity of the Wakan Village community. This tradition also has a positive impact in increasing awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage and local wisdom, so that the *Bale Beleq* tradition remains alive and developing amidst changing times. Thus, the *Bale Beleq* tradition not only functions as a preserved cultural heritage, but also as an important means of strengthening social relations and maintaining aesthetic values which are an integral part of the identity of the Wakan Village community.

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