

The Lelang Kue Tradition at Kuang Dalam Community Wedding

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap makna sosial dan budaya dari tradisi Lelang Kue, dengan menggunakan metode studi lapangan sebagai pendekatan utamanya. Tradisi ini bukan sekadar bagian dari prosesi menjelang pernikahan, melainkan mencerminkan sistem sosial ekonomi berbasis adat yang mengikat masyarakat melalui nilai-nilai gotong royong, solidaritas sosial, dan tanggung jawab kolektif. Lelang Kue berfungsi sebagai sarana pengumpulan dana untuk kebutuhan adat sekaligus mempererat hubungan sosial antar tetangga. Peran aktif gadis desa sebagai pembawa kue juga berfungsi sebagai media pewarisan nilai-nilai budaya kepada generasi muda. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Dalam praktiknya, proses penawaran dalam lelang melibatkan seluruh lapisan masyarakat, yang mencerminkan rasa hormat, komitmen sosial, dan status dalam masyarakat. Berdasarkan teori pemberian Marcel Mauss, kegiatan ini mengandung prinsip resiprositas yang memperkuat kohesi sosial dan kewajiban moral antar individu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Lelang Kue berperan penting dalam menegaskan identitas kolektif dan menjaga warisan budaya lokal. Tradisi ini merupakan contoh nyata bagaimana masyarakat Kuang Dalam memadukan dimensi ekonomi, sosial, dan simbolik dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Tradition, Lelang Kue, Wedding,
Kuang Dalam Community

This research aims to uncover the social and cultural meanings of the Lelang Kue tradition, using the field study method as the main approach. This tradition is not simply part of the procession leading up to a wedding, but rather reflects a custom-based socio-economic system that binds the community together through the values of mutual aid, social solidarity and collective responsibility. The Lelang Kue serves as a means of raising funds for customary needs as well as strengthening social relations between neighbours. The active role of village girls as cake carriers also serves as a medium for passing on cultural values to the younger generation. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. In practice, the bidding process in the auction involves all levels of society, reflecting respect, social commitment and status in the community. Based on Marcel Mauss' theory of giving, this activity contains the principle of reciprocity that strengthens social cohesion and moral obligations between individuals. The study results show that Lelang Kues play an important role in emphasising collective identity and maintaining local cultural heritage. This tradition is a clear example of how the Kuang Dalam community integrates economic, social and symbolic dimensions in their daily lives..

INTRODUCTION

Tradition is an integral part of a Society's cultural identity (Ardhini, et.al, 2024), which not only reflects hereditary habits (Fathiha, 2022), but also symbolises the existence and continuity of social communities in the face of changing times (Putri, et.al, 2024). Traditions contain dimensions of values, norms, and symbols rooted in the collective history of a society (Kanzunuddin, 2017). In Indonesia, a country rich in cultural diversity, local traditions function as a bridge between generations, as well as a social instrument that strengthens community cohesion and solidarity (Wulan, 2024).

According to Koentjaraningrat (2022), tradition in the context of Indonesian society does not stand alone, but is interrelated with the social structure, economic system, and religious system of the community. It becomes a vehicle for the articulation of collective values that live in everyday life. In rural communities, tradition even becomes a social system that regulates interactions and relationships between groups in important situations, such as birth, marriage, and death.

One tradition that is interesting to study is the Lelang Kue tradition that developed in the community of Kuang Dalam Village, Rambang Kuang Sub-district, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. This auction is carried out in a series of wedding events and is carried out during the wedding reception. This activity takes the form of an Lelang Kue Bolu Nanas and whole fried chicken called *Ongkol Ayam*, and is offered by village girls and auctioned to invited guests. However, this tradition is not just an ordinary auction, but is full of various social, economic and symbolic meanings and reflects the mutual cooperation relations of the Kuang Dalam community.

Previous research conducted by Riza Septi Atun Nisa (2021) on the practice of Food Auction Rituals in Ogan Community Wedding Customs found that the celebration of food auction rituals was originally intended as a form of community spirit by the Ogan community to provide assistance (help) and mutual cooperation to the host when holding a wedding party that requires a large amount of money. This is reinforced by research by Rukmana Sari, et.al (2018) that some people find it difficult with the auction tradition because of the need to pay back according to

the nominal amount at the time of the auction and if they do not pay not only social sanctions are obtained but count as a debt that must be paid at any time.

The Lelang Kue tradition in Kuang Dalam also contains symbolic elements related to social status and honour. Invited guests who successfully win the auction not only get food, but also get social recognition as generous and influential people. This is in accordance with Marcel Mauss' theory in *The Gift* (1925), which states that gifts in traditional societies are always accompanied by moral and social implications, namely the obligation to give, receive and reciprocate (Ningsih, et.al, 2022, Mallard, 2018). This Lelang Kue is also interpreted as a form of giving that forms a sustainable social network into the future.

The role of young women as cake bearers in this auction also shows the process of involving the younger generation in cultural preservation. The village girls are not only symbols of beauty and fertility in the context of local culture, but also agents of tradition transmission. Their involvement shows that this tradition is not only part of the past, but also revived in the dynamics of contemporary life. This is in line with Geertz's (2017) opinion, that culture is a system of symbols that are inherited, and constantly reinterpreted by the people who own them. Thus, the Lelang Kue tradition in Kuang Dalam is not just an activity in a wedding party, but a complex social and cultural system. It reflects the richness of the locality, the value system of gotong-royong, and the reciprocal relationships that are the main foundation of the village community. This research aims to unravel the structure, function and meaning of the Lelang Kue tradition as an effort to document and understand the cultural heritage that is still alive and relevant in the lives of the Kuang Dalam community today.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design (Adji, 2024) that focused on the tradition of Lelang Kue in the community of Kuang Dalam Village, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the social context, cultural values, and symbolic meaning of the Lelang Kue practice in the lives of local people. Case studies are relevant because these traditions have unique and distinctive characteristics

that cannot be generalised, but can make an important contribution to the understanding of local culture and the social dynamics of rural communities. Data collection was conducted through three main techniques, namely: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) participatory observation, and (3) documentation studies (Fadilla & Wulandari, 2023). In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants who are considered to have direct knowledge and involvement in the implementation of the tradition, such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, auction event guides, and residents who have been or are currently involved in Lelang Kue activities, either as participants or as committees. Participatory observation techniques were used to directly observe (Hasanah, 2017) the Lelang Kue process, from preparation to event implementation. Documentation studies were used to complement primary data with secondary data, such as village historical records, archives of traditional activities, photographs of Lelang Kue documentation, and local reports or writings that have discussed this tradition.

This research was conducted during June 2024, coinciding with several traditional wedding agendas of the local community. This time was strategically chosen so that researchers could directly observe the implementation of the Lelang Kue tradition which was the focus of the study. During the research process, the researcher also applied research ethics principles, such as obtaining informants' consent, maintaining identity confidentiality if requested, and endeavouring to understand local customs and norms during the data collection process.

After all the data were collected, thematic data analysis was conducted, namely by identifying, classifying, and interpreting the main themes that emerged from interviews, observations, and documentation (Majid, 2017). This analysis aims to find patterns of meaning related to the implementation structure, social functions, and cultural values contained in the Lelang Kue tradition. The analysis process is carried out in a literative manner, through data reduction, data presentation, and temporary conclusion drawing which is then verified again with data in the field to ensure the validity and validity of the findings (Purwanto, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Process of the Lelang Kue

The Lelang Kue tradition in Kuang Dalam Village begins with the appearance of five men as hosts on stage. Each individual has a specific role that indicates an organised system of work within the social structure of this traditional event. The Chairperson is the leader who organises the flow of the auction, the Secretary prepares the cake girls (*gadis lelang*), the Treasurer is responsible for the collection of the proceeds, while the other two members act as assistant organisers, ensuring that the whole process runs smoothly and orderly. This division of labour demonstrates the existence of structured traditional governance, as well as being a reflection of the mutual aid system that lives in the local community.

Before the auction process begins, the Chairman reads the rules of the game in front of the invited guests as a form of norm affirmation in the implementation of the tradition. The reading of these rules not only serves to control the event, but also demonstrates the community's awareness of the importance of social order and ethics in public activities. This shows that despite its ceremonial nature, the tradition is organised within the framework of unwritten laws collectively agreed upon by the community.

After the rules are read out, village girls who have been specially selected by the committee come on stage carrying trays of Lelang Kue and *ongkol ayam*. The Lelang Kueed is not just any food, but a symbol of offering and honour to the invited guests. It is usually a pineapple sponge cake decorated with various flavours and colours, such as chocolate and strawberry, and a whole fried chicken called *ongkol*. The appearance of the cake and its bearer contribute to the aesthetic value of the event and create a festive and sacred atmosphere.

The auction begins with the guest of honour, such as the village head or guests coming from outside the region, with an opening price predetermined by the committee, generally around one million rupiah or more. This strategy signifies respect for the chief guest while stimulating the symbolic value of the auction itself. The act has a double meaning: as a form of social honour and as an economic strategy that subtly stimulates participation in auction donations from other guests.

After the auction session for the guests of honour was over, it was then the turn of the general invited guests who were allowed to participate in the auction. At this stage, the atmosphere starts to become dynamic, with an open bidding process involving various groups. This situation often creates a competitive atmosphere, and even entertainment for the audience, because there is often a 'chase' of prices between bidders. This phenomenon shows that the Lelang Kue tradition is not only a customary economic practice, but also a social performance that strengthens the sense of community and affirms the existence and social status of individuals in the community.

Interestingly, if there is a deadlock situation or no participants bidding, the host has a special strategy to revive the atmosphere. One method used is to add incentives in the form of entertainment, such as the opportunity to dance with a songstress. This tactic not only serves as an icebreaker, but also shows the community's cultural adaptation to the need for entertainment and excitement within the traditional framework. This shows that traditional culture is not rigid, but flexible in the face of the dynamics of public participation.

This tradition has a multifunctional role in the Kuang Dalam community. Apart from being a medium for raising funds to help the bride's family, the Lelang Kue also functions as a vehicle for cultural preservation, an arena for social interaction, and a means of strengthening collective solidarity. The dynamics of the committee's role, community participation, and symbolic values in each stage prove that this tradition is not only a formal ritual, but also a space for social expression that enriches the cultural identity of the Kuang Dalam community.



Picture: The Lelang Kue tradition at wedding

2. The Function of Lelang Kue in the Kuang Dalam Community

The Lelang Kue tradition for the Kuang Dalam community is not just a ceremonial ritual in a series of traditional weddings, but also contains very deep social, economic and cultural meanings. Its essence lies in the spirit of gotong royong and social solidarity, where invited guests voluntarily participate in the auction to help ease the burden of the bride's family costs. This tradition reflects the value of mutual help within a customary frame that is not only emotionally binding, but also morally, as this form of contribution will be 'reciprocated' in the tradition of customary debts on another occasion. On the other hand, the Lelang Kue is also a symbolic arena to show social status, respect for the guest of honour, and as a means of preserving culture that is passed on across generations. Thus, the Lelang Kue is not only an economic issue, but also a representation of the social relations and collective identity of the Kuang Dalam community.

There are at least 2 (two) main functions of the Lelang Kue tradition in the Kuang Dalam community below:

a. Social and Economic Functions

The Lelang Kue tradition in the Kuang Dalam community has significant economic value. With an average number of 80 auctioned portions, and a unit price that can reach one million rupiah, the potential funds collected are very large. These funds become a vital instrument to finance a series of traditional wedding processions that require a large budget, starting from *tuhun humah*, processions, *tangkap samban*, bribes, Lelang Kues, to bridal greetings. This practice shows that local traditions can play a strategic role in supporting the economic burden of the community, especially at important moments in the life cycle. Behind these simple practices, there is a distinctive economic system of traditional communities that runs parallel to the formal economic system, and functions very effectively in the local context.

These auction proceeds cannot be understood linearly as a one-way donation. Within the cultural framework of the Kuang Dalam community, the funds hold social consequences that are referred to as customary debts. This is in accordance with Marcel Mauss' concept of reciprocity in his classic work *The Gift* (1925), where gifts in traditional societies are never "free", but rather carry a social obligation to

reciprocate at a later date. The gift not only binds two parties in an economic transaction, but also strengthens social structures and affirms relations of power, honour and solidarity within the community (Poetri, et.al, 2024). In this sense, Lelang Kues are not just a means of resource distribution, but also a medium for the reproduction of collective social and ethical values.

This customary debt mechanism reflects what Pierre Bourdieu calls social capital - non-material wealth in the form of networks of relationships that have strategic value (Suaib, 2017). In the Kuang Dalam community, when a person or family participates in a Lelang Kue, they are not only making an economic contribution, but also 'planting' social capital that will be 'harvested' in the future, when they themselves need community assistance. This system maintains the continuity of relations between citizens and forms what Emile Durkheim called mechanical solidarity-a form of solidarity born out of the common values, beliefs, and closeness between members of a homogeneous society (Hanifah, 2019). Lelang Kue, then, are instruments that glue social ties and ensure that communities remain connected in networks of mutual support.

The Lelang Kue tradition also shows that the economic practices of local communities cannot be separated from their social and cultural context - an idea proposed by Karl Polanyi in the concept of embedded economy. Polanyi rejects the view that the economy stands as an autonomous institution (Keraf, 2010), and emphasises that in traditional societies, economic activities are always immersed in social relations, cultural values, and the moral structure of society. The Lelang Kue is clear evidence of an embedded economy, where transactions of money, food, and services do not stand alone, but are always within a complex frame of customs, social status, and moral obligations. This means that the continuation of this tradition is not only sustained by economic gain, but by the social values that are the foundation of the culture of the Kuang Dalam community itself.

b. Philosophical Value

The Lelang Kue tradition in the Kuang Dalam community is a social phenomenon rich in meaning and deep philosophical values. In general, this tradition not only aims to raise funds to support the traditional wedding procession,

but also to strengthen social networks and relationships between community members. The philosophy contained in the Lelang Kue can be seen as a form of the spirit of gotong royong that is deeply rooted in Indonesian culture. Gotong royong, as a very important social value in Indonesian society, manifests in the form of active participation of each community member in the success of important events, including in the context of marriage. This is in line with Emile Durkheim's view of mechanical solidarity, which is a social bond that occurs due to the similarity of values, norms and beliefs in a homogeneous society (Fathoni, 2024). In the context of the Lelang Kue, each individual is expected to feel responsible for the success of the event, which strengthens collective solidarity between neighbours.

The involvement of village girls as cake bearers in the Lelang Kue is not just a ceremonial task. They hold a very important symbolic role, namely as representatives of the younger generation who have the responsibility to preserve and continue the tradition. In this case, the Lelang Kue tradition is in line with Clifford Geertz's view that symbols and rituals in traditional societies function as cultural blueprints, or collective life guides that shape individual perspectives and behaviour (Mubayanah & Amin, 2024). By placing the girls as the cake bearers on stage, this tradition gives them a very important position in the social and cultural structure of the community. This role not only teaches them about cultural values, but also strengthens women's position in the social sphere, which has its own significance in the formation of the Kuang Dalam people's cultural identity.

The bargaining process that takes place in a Lelang Kue provides a philosophical dimension that goes beyond mere economic activity. The open and often fierce bargaining illustrates the principles of openness, participation, and equality in society. In Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, this bargaining practice can be analysed through the concepts of habitus and social arena. According to Bourdieu, every individual action in a social arena reflects cultural dispositions shaped by previous social experiences (Hakim, et.al, 2023). In this case, the Lelang Kue is not just a place to buy goods, but a social arena where individuals show their appreciation for the bride and groom's family, as well as show their status and social role in the community. High bids in auctions can be understood as a form of respect

for the bride's family and evidence of active engagement in social life, which in turn reinforces the social hierarchy in the community.

The Lelang Kue tradition also has a very important dimension from the perspective of Marcel Mauss' gift theory. In his book *The Gift*, Mauss explains that gifts in traditional societies are not one-way transactions, but always create reciprocal relationships (Klenden, 2017). In the context of Lelang Kues, the money given by bidders to buy cakes is not only seen as a donation, but as part of the customary debt system that must be paid back in a similar form in the future. This practice strengthens the social fabric between community members, where each individual or family is tied into a social network of give and take. In other words, kue auctions create sustainable social ties that are not only economic but also ethical and moral. These social relationships underpin the principle of mutual aid (Yulianto, 2014), where each individual or family is committed to supporting each other in a larger series of traditional celebrations.

It can be understood that the Lelang Kue in the Kuang Dalam community is not just an economic transaction that occurs in the context of a wedding, but more than that, it is a cultural practice that strengthens social solidarity, maintains traditional values, and ensures the continuity of social ethics in the community. This tradition contains deeper values related to the role of the younger generation in cultural preservation, the symbolisation of social status in the community, as well as the ethics of giving that binds each member in a fabric of reciprocity that is not only based on material, but also on social and moral values.

Through this analysis, it can be understood that the Lelang Kue is not only an economic phenomenon, but also a reflection of the deep social, cultural and philosophical dynamics within the Kuang Dalam community. As a tradition, the Lelang Kue teaches us about the importance of solidarity, active participation and moral obligation in maintaining cultural continuity and social relations between people. It demonstrates how traditional communities can integrate cultural values into daily life, create space for individuals to engage in larger social processes, and ensure that cultural heritage is preserved in modern life.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from the analyses above shows that the Lelang Kue tradition in Kuang Dalam Village is more than just a ceremonial activity before a wedding. It is a custom-based socio-economic system that unites the community through the principles of mutual aid, social solidarity and collective responsibility. The Lelang Kue functions not only as a strategy to raise the funds required for the traditional wedding procession, but also as a platform to strengthen social relations between residents and as a medium for passing on cultural and social values to the younger generation, especially through the role of village girls as cake bearers.

This tradition reflects how the Kuang Dalam community combines economic, social and symbolic aspects in a ritual that is rich in meaning. The bargaining process in the Lelang Kue, which involves the active participation of all community members, means more than just an economic transaction, but also shows respect, social commitment and status within the community. Through the concept of gift described by Marcel Mauss, the Lelang Kue tradition strengthens the reciprocal relationship between community members based on the values of solidarity and moral obligation. Therefore, the Lelang Kue is not only a cultural activity that aims to fulfil financial needs, but also serves as a form of affirming collective identity and strengthening solidarity in the Kuang Dalam community. In the context of cultural anthropology, this tradition illustrates how local communities integrate social and cultural values in their daily lives, and maintain the continuity of cultural heritage through the active participation and involvement of each individual.

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