

Economic Value in the *Bejuli* Tradition of Kuang Dalam Malay Community

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ABSTRAK

Setiap tradisi dalam masyarakat tidak hanya memiliki nilai sosial, budaya melainkan juga nilai ekonomi. Tidak terkecuali Tradisi *Bejuli* Masyarakat melayu Kuang Dalam. Penelitian ini akan membahas hal tersebut dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui nilai ekonomis pada tradisi *Bejuli* Masyarakat Melayu Kuang Dalam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan model pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara dengan stakeholders. Hasil penelitian ini adalah Tradisi *Bejuli* di masyarakat Melayu Kuang Dalam tidak hanya memiliki nilai budaya yang tinggi, tetapi juga memberikan dampak ekonomi yang signifikan. Tradisi ini menciptakan peluang usaha bagi pengrajin lokal, terutama dalam pembuatan tandu juli, pakaian adat, dan berbagai pernak-pernik tradisional yang digunakan dalam prosesi pernikahan. Namun, ada sisi negatif dari tradisi ini. Biaya tinggi mulai dari pakaian adat seperti "Aesan Gede", music pengiring, sampai pada makan-makan setelah prosesi *Bejuli* dapat menjadi beban ekonomi bagi keluarga yang kurang mampu

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Value, Economy, Tradition, Bejuli

Every tradition in society not only has social and cultural values but also economic values. The Bejuli tradition of the Kuang Dalam Malay community is no exception. This research will discuss this with the aim of knowing the economic value of the Bejuli tradition of the Kuang Dalam Malay Community. This research uses a qualitative method with a data collection model through observation and interviews with stakeholders. The result of this research is that the Bejuli tradition in the Kuang Dalam Malay community not only has high cultural value, but also has a significant economic impact. This tradition creates business opportunities for local craftsmen, especially in the manufacture of tandu juli, traditional clothing, and various traditional knick-knacks used in the wedding procession. However, there is a downside to this tradition. The high cost of traditional clothing such as 'Aesan Gede', musical accompaniment, and the meal after the Bejuli procession can be an economic burden for poor families.

PENDAHULUAN

In every society, marriage traditions have always been one of the important and meaningful cultural elements (Bachtiar & Edorita, 2022). Each community group has a unique way of celebrating and organising weddings, which usually reflects values (Sudrajat, 2023), beliefs (Husna & Maola, 2023), and cultural identity (Pratiwi & Yarham, 2023). Marriage traditions are not only about the union of two individuals, but also a sacred moment (Aulia, Setiadarma, & Supratman, 2022) that involves the wider community, as a symbol of the continuation of ancestral values and social ties between Community members (Perdamean, 2022.). Through distinctive processions, symbols and customs, marriage traditions play an important role in preserving culture (Nurdin, 2018, Habibi & Kusdarini, 2020) and strengthening relationships between families and communities (Panjaitan & Sundawa, 2016, Samad & Munawwarah, 2020).

The marriage tradition is also found in the Kuang Dalam Malay Community, namely the *Bejuli tradition*. The *Bejuli* tradition in the Kuang Dalam Malay community is one of the traditional ceremonies that is full of symbolic and social meanings. In this procession, the bride and groom are paraded around the village so that they can be recognised by all members of the community, making *Bejuli* a tradition that not only strengthens collective identity, but also gives more prestige to the bride and family who carry it out. However, behind the pomp and honour attached to this procession, there is an economic value that cannot be ignored. The cost of *Bejuli* is considerable, from paying for the music to accompany the procession, preparing special bridal outfits, to the cost of the meal after the procession is over.

The main problem that arises is how communities maintain this tradition in the midst of increasingly challenging social and economic changes. Many families face difficulties in balancing the financial burden required to carry out *Bejuli*, raising questions about the future sustainability of this tradition. The novelty of this study lies in analysing the economic value of the *Bejuli* tradition, an aspect that has not been discussed much in depth, although it is very relevant in the context of modern societies experiencing changing economic dynamics.

Research on this issue has basically been done by many previous researchers such as Anggraeny, 2017, Nur Ainun Nisya Mohi, Niswatin, & Nilawaty Yusuf, 2024, Muhammad & Samiun, 2017, Hilnicputro, 2022, Aisyah, Harahap, & Siregar, 2023 and Nasution, 2023). However, all of them have very significant differences with the research that will be done here. Moreover, the discussion of the economic value of *Bejuli* is important because this tradition is not only a traditional ceremony, but also reflects the balance between cultural identity and economic challenges. Realising the significance of *Bejuli* as part of the cultural heritage that must be preserved, there needs to be more attention to how the community can maintain this tradition without being burdened by increasingly complex economic factors.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this research is qualitative research, using data collection techniques such as observation and interviews. Qualitative method is a scientific research that aims to understand a phenomenon in natural social contact by prioritising the process of in-depth communication interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon to be discussed (Moleong, 2013, Sugiyono, 2018).

Observation was carried out through non-participatory observation (Herdiansyah, 2017), where researchers went directly to the research location and saw firsthand the practice of the *Bejuli* tradition. While interviews were conducted with Stakeholders who were directly involved in the tradition such as the bride and groom, traditional and religious leaders and the local community who witnessed and were involved in the *Bejuli* tradition. After the data is collected, it is interpreted, analysed descriptively to arrive at a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of the Kuang Dalam Malay Community

The Kuang Dalam community is a group of people who live in the Kuang Dalam area, administratively included in the Ogan Ilir Regency area. This community is often referred to as part of the Ogan Tribe, but is also known as the Malay Tribe, because it has traditions, values, arts, kinship systems, and social relations that are closely related to Malay culture, especially in religious aspects. The majority of the

population of Kuang Dalam is Muslim, with the population being almost 100 per cent Muslim (Aravik, 2006). Religious life in this village is very strong, indicated by the existence of many places of worship that function to support the spiritual activities of the community such as mosques, musholla and various recitation centres, both for women, men and children. The oldest mosque, Masjid At-Taqwa, was built in 1913 AD.

The language of the Kuang Dalam community is a variant of the Malay language spoken by the residents of Kuang Dalam Village. This language reflects the characteristics of the Malay language, both in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure, although it has its own characteristics that distinguish it from the languages in the surrounding area. The language of the Kuang Dalam community is part of the Malay language family, which is influenced by migration history and local culture. As one of the local dialects, it is used by the population for daily communication and has been passed down through generations. Its similarity to Riau Malay suggests a historical connection between the people of Kuang Dalam and past Malay Sultanates, such as the Sultanate of Siak Indragiri.

The kinship system of the Kuang Dalam people has strong characteristics and plays an important role in their social life. Generally, the Kuang Dalam community adheres to a patrilineal kinship system, where the lineage is drawn through the male line. This system determines the division of inheritance, family responsibilities, and roles in the community are centred on the male line.

The arts in the Kuang Dalam community are an important part of the culture that reflects the identity, values and worldview of the people. The arts encompass various forms of cultural expression, including music, dance, literature, performing arts and handicrafts. The Kuang Dalam community is renowned for its rich culture that is laden with spiritual meaning, aesthetics, as well as moral teachings, which are passed down from generation to generation.

Islam played an important role in the development of the arts of the Kuang Dalam community. Religious elements are often incorporated in dance, music and literature (Khairusani, 2020). For example, poems and rhymes often contain advice or moral teachings related to Islamic life. Music such as *Bedikir*, *Betembang* and other dances are also often influenced by elements of Islamic culture.

2. The Practice of *Bejuli* Tradition in the Kuang Dalam Community

The *Bejuli* tradition is an integral part of the procession. The procession is a procession in which the bride and groom are paraded around the village from the bride's house to the groom's house. The clothes used by the bride and groom on Juli are the 'Baju gede' or 'Aesan Gede' clothes worn by the bride and groom. The bride wears a lotus chest cover, a noble red coloured baju kurung studded with golden star flowers, a gold-embroidered songket lepus cloth, and a headdress in the form of an 'Aesan Gede' crown (Tiffany et al., 2019). There are also trinkets to decorate the clothes such as golden-imaged jewellery, Bungo Tusuk Cempako, Tusuk Teratai/Kembang Goyang, Kelapo Setandan and kembang kenango as well as flat bracelets, canoe bracelets and sempuru bracelets on the hands and tapak jajo necklaces that adorn the neck. The groom wears an 'Aesan Gede' shirt with a songket sarong and satin trousers embroidered with gold thread and a segitigo handkerchief, bracelet, pending and embroidered slippers.

The bride and groom are carried on a traditional palanquin called 'Juli' and accompanied by a group of the bride and groom's extended family, and accompanied by traditional music called 'Behusin' which was hired to enliven the procession. This tradition is also known as 'ngarak-ngarak penganten' or 'parading the bride and groom,' and the bride and groom being carried onto the Juli is called '*Bejuli*' (Aravik, 2020). The duration of the procession usually ranges from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on the length of the route (Hasanah, 2014).

Before the procession begins, there are several important preparations that must be fulfilled to ensure the smooth running of the event. *First*, it is necessary to make Juli, a stretcher made of rattan, iron, or wooden chairs, assembled with 3-4 metre long pieces of wood and decorated with woven bamboo and long cloth (samban). This decoration is given additional ornaments such as oil paper balls at the front and back. *Secondly*, juli bearers are needed, which usually consist of 16 men, with four on each side of the palanquin. The number of bearers can be more than 16, and they are usually people who have been carried at their own wedding, as part of the tradition of 'ngule,' which is repaying a debt of gratitude through a similar act.

Thirdly, the bridal family also prepares special gifts for the juli bearers, in the form of cigarettes and fizzy drinks. However, nowadays fizzy drinks are often replaced with liquor such as vodka or wine, which often destroys the harmony of the *Bejuli* procession and causes problems such as the fall of the bride and groom from the juli, which is against the Islamic values of the majority of Kuang Dalam people.

Fourthly, the route of the procession is determined to avoid miscommunication and make it easier for the juli bearers to direct the palanquin as it travels around the village. After all preparations are complete, the event begins with the seating position of the bride and groom, where the bridegroom sits on the right and the bride on the left. This position allows the groom to protect the bride when the palanquin is lifted and swayed to the rhythm of behusin music, which consists of trumpets, drums, gongs and tambourines.

Next, the juli bearers, guided by the juli organiser, lift the palanquin and begin parading the bride and groom around the village. When rounding a corner, the tandu is shaken in different directions as part of the tradition. In this situation, the groom should protect the bride by crossing his arms over her body, while the bride holds on tightly to a chair. Tired juli bearers are replaced by others to keep the palanquin balanced.

Once the procession is over, the palanquin is lowered and the bride and groom are lowered with the help of a samban cloth or kebat kembangan. Apart from the bride and groom, the procession is followed by the family and invited guests, who often give hysterical reactions out of fear for the safety of the bride and groom. This fear is considered a symbol of the acceptance of the *Bejuli* tradition in the subconscious of the local community.

The main purpose of the *Bejuli* tradition is to introduce the bride and groom to the community as a legitimate couple according to religion and custom, as well as a symbol of the struggle and co-operation needed in the face of domestic life. The movement of the procession reflects the challenges that will be faced, while the juli bearers taking turns reflecting the importance of helping each other in marriage. This tradition is also a medium for socialisation before the official inauguration of the wedding reception (Hasanah, 2014).

3. The Economic Value of the *Bejuli* Tradition to the Kuang Dalam Community

The *Bejuli* tradition has a significant economic impact on the Kuang Dalam community. *Firstly*, the making of the Juli palanquin requires materials such as rattan, iron, wood, woven bamboo and long cloth, which creates business opportunities for craftsmen and raw material traders. The need for these materials creates employment opportunities and increases demand for local handicraft products, contributing to the economic growth of the region.

Secondly, the traditional clothing worn by the bride and groom in the *Bejuli* procession, such as the 'Aesan Gede,' also provides economic opportunities for local artisans. Traditional clothing and trinkets, including songket cloth and jewellery made from precious materials such as gold thread, boost local industries. These products have a high resale value and bring significant profits to local producers. In addition, the frequent rental of traditional clothing due to the high purchase price of such clothing creates business opportunities for bridal wear rental service providers. These traditional outfits also attract tourists who are interested in seeing local traditions, thus having a positive impact on the tourism sector.

Third, the procession involving Juli's bearers reflects the tradition of gotong royong (ngule) which reduces labour costs as contributions are made voluntarily. This tradition creates strong social ties and supports a solidarity-based economy. In addition, the gifts of cigarettes and drinks for the Juli bearers create additional demand for local consumer products.

However, this tradition also has negative economic impacts. Traditional clothing such as the 'Aesan Gede,' which is adorned with gold baubles, is often very expensive (Marianti & Istiharini, 2014), becoming a financial burden for families with limited economic means. Families may be forced to purchase or rent expensive clothing in order to comply with adat traditions, which can create economic stress. Reliance on luxury materials such as gold thread and songket, most of which may be imported, can also increase production costs, limiting the ability of local communities to make affordable clothing.

In addition, the shift from fizzy drinks to liquor such as vodka and wine may pose socio-economic problems. Spending on liquor risks lowering the allocation of

funds for other essential needs and can lead to negative impacts on people's health and productivity, as well as security issues during the wedding procession. Event preparations involving the making of Juli, music hire and gift giving can also be an economic burden for less well-off families, who have to incur substantial costs to fulfil customary standards. The shift in consumption from local products such as fizzy drinks to imported drinks can reduce the income of local small businesses.

Overall, the *Bejuli* tradition has positive impacts in terms of community economic empowerment and job creation, but unwise consumption and spending practices have the potential to cause negative impacts in the long run.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Bejuli* tradition in the Kuang Dalam Malay community not only has high cultural value, but also provides a significant economic impact. This tradition creates business opportunities for local craftsmen, especially in the manufacture of tandu juli, traditional clothing, and various traditional knick-knacks used in the wedding procession. In addition, the tradition of gotong royong (ngule) underpinning the procession encourages the strengthening of social ties and reduces the burden of labour costs, creating a solidarity-based economic system. The tourism sector also benefits from the uniqueness of this culture, attracting tourists to witness and document the processions.

However, there is a downside to this tradition. The high cost of traditional clothing such as 'Aesan Gede', the music that parades the *Bejuli* bride and groom and the meal after the *Bejuli* procession can be an economic burden for less well-off families. Reliance on expensive materials such as gold thread and fancy jewellery has the potential to increase production costs, reducing accessibility for local communities. In addition, the shift in consumption from local products such as fizzy drinks to imported liquor can damage the local economy and cause social problems.

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