

MEKARE-KARE TRADITION AS SPORTSMANSHIP AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Mekare-kare tradition as a means of cultivating sportsmanship and cultural resilience. Mekare-kare, a traditional ritual from Tenganan Pegringsingan, Bali, involves a mock battle with pandan leaves. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, gathering data through interviews, observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that Mekare-kare embodies values of respect, discipline, and humility, fostering fair play and cultural identity. It serves as a platform for community engagement, cultural preservation, and character education, highlighting the potential of local traditions in shaping a generation that is both competitive and culturally aware. This tradition also fosters values for individuals to maintain their culture in the face of globalization and modernization.

Keywords: *Mekare-kare; Balinese Tradition; Sportsmanship; Cultural Resilience; Character Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom is a philosophy of life and knowledge, as well as various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by local communities in answering various problems in fulfilling their needs. Local wisdom is also defined as the ability to adapt, manage, and cultivate the influence of nature and other cultures that become the driving force for transformation and the creation of extraordinary Indonesian cultural diversity. Local wisdom is one aspect that is very closely related to culture. Local wisdom is a way of life of a society and relates specifically to a particular culture. Each region has local wisdom that contains socio-cultural values that must be preserved. Local wisdom is passed down from generation to generation through stories from word of mouth. Local wisdom is usually found in folk tales, proverbs, songs, and folk games.

Characteristics of local wisdom include: 1) must incorporate knowledge of virtues that teach people about ethics and moral values; 2) local wisdom must teach people to love nature, not to destroy it; 3) local wisdom must come from older members of the community; 4) local wisdom can be in the form of values, norms, ethics, beliefs, customs, laws, customs, and special rules. Local wisdom has the following characteristics: 1) able to survive in the midst of increasingly active foreign cultural attacks, 2) has the ability to provide something to fulfill elements from foreign cultures, 3) has the ability to combine or blend foreign cultural elements into the original culture, 4) has the ability to control, give direction to cultural development. The traditional village of Tenganan Pegringsingan is still classified as one of the ancient villages in Bali located in the Karangasem regency.

Then it is classified as an ancient village, as seen from the influence of culture that entered this area. According to Philip Frick McKean (1973), the life of Balinese society today, as a whole, illustrates characteristics that can be distinguished into small tradition types, large traditions and modern traditions (Geriya, 1996: 3). The characteristics of small traditions according to Swellengrebel (1960), are described as (1) a rice field economic system with irrigation; (2) raising chickens for their meat and cockfighting; (3) house buildings with small rooms made of bamboo and wood; (4) crafts including iron, bronze, dyeing and weaving; (5) a temple system related to family, village and territory; (6) in the temple there is a sufficiently complex ritual and ceremony system; (7) the local language with oral literature; (8) dances and tabuh are used in the context of ceremonies at the temple which includes selunding, angklung and Tari Sanghyang (Geriya, 1996: 3).

Based on the characteristics and criteria that have been explained above, the traditional village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan is classified into small traditions, with other terms besides ancient Bali, such as mountainous Bali or Bali-Aga (native Balinese people). As a form of dichotomy that is contrary to Balinese plains or Balinese immigrants (wong "Majapahit). Because it still shows distinctive characteristics in terms of the antiquity of community life which is still surviving today. Even though Balinese culture in this phase of development has entered a transition period from traditional culture to industrial culture (modern). Mekare-kare (pandan war) is a form of ritual ceremony that is held once every year, by the local community it is called the sambah ceremony which takes place in the fifth month according to the local village calendar. This Sambah ceremony lasts for one month, starting when entering the penanggal (towards the full moon) and when panglong (entering the new moon), when the transition from the full moon to the new moon.

The Mekare-kare tradition, also known as Perang Pandan, is one of the unique cultural heritages of Tenganan Pegringsingan and several surrounding areas. This tradition takes place from generation to generation and has a deep meaning as a symbol of courage, strength, and the cultural identity of the local community. In this activity, participants divided into two groups face each other to fight using tools made of woven bamboo from pandan leaves, called pandan. Although it looks like a tough physical competition, Mekare-kare not only emphasizes strength and courage, but also contains moral messages, sportsmanship, and respect for opponents and tradition.

Along with the times, the Mekare-kare tradition needs to be seen from a character education perspective. In this day and age, this context becomes relevant as a medium for instilling values of sportsmanship, responsibility, discipline, and a sense of brotherhood among the younger generation. This is important considering the pressures of modernization and foreign cultural influences that can erode local cultural identity and heritage. In this context, the Mekare-kare tradition can become an effective learning medium if it is packaged positively and educatively, so that it can strengthen cultural resilience while building a society of good character.

Apart from being a means of sportsmanship education, Mekare-kare also plays a role in strengthening cultural resilience. This tradition is not only as entertainment or a mere spectacle, but also as a form of preserving local wisdom and cultural identity that must be preserved. Through this activity, the community is taught to appreciate and maintain traditional values, so that they are able to survive in the midst of globalization and modernization that threaten the sustainability of local culture. Thus, the Mekare-kare tradition can be considered a symbol of cultural resilience which affirms that the success of a community is not only measured by physical strength, but also by the endurance and sustainability of the culture they have.

The sustainability of the Mekare-kare tradition requires attention from all parties, starting from the government, traditional communities, to educational institutions. Strategic efforts are needed to document, preserve, and develop this tradition so that it remains relevant and able to provide pedagogical benefits in the lives of present and future communities. Through a deeper understanding of the meaning and values contained within, it is hoped that the Mekare-kare tradition will not only develop as a traditional activity, but also as a form of education that can strengthen the sportsmanship and cultural resilience of the Indonesian nation.

2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

The qualitative research method was chosen in this study because the main goal is to understand the meaning, perceptions, cultural values, and subjective experiences of participants and communities who are directly involved in the Mekare-kare tradition. This approach allows researchers to investigate complex cultural phenomena, which cannot be measured quantitatively, in depth and contextually. This research aims to explore the values of sportsmanship and cultural resilience that are inherent in the Mekare-kare tradition. Because these aspects are subjective, contextual, and rooted in social meaning, an approach is needed that can reveal the experiences and perceptions of the community in depth. The qualitative method supports this process by opening up a rich interpretation space, allowing for a description of cultural aspects that are not visible.

The approach used is a case study and exploratory, which allows researchers to focus on a specific location with a specific community to deepen investigations related to cultural patterns, meanings and practices. Data analysis was carried out thematically, categorizing findings based on main themes such as sportsmanship, maturity, and cultural resilience. Thus, the research results are expected to provide meaningful and relevant insights for the development of cultural preservation and community character education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mekare-kare Ceremony Tradition (Pandan War)

The Mekare-Kare Ceremony procession is an attraction for foreign and domestic tourists. To describe the uniqueness of the Adat Tenganan Pegeringan village, this discussion only highlights one aspect of the religious life of the Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan Village regarding the mekare-kare ceremony procession. Mekare-kare (Pandan War) is a form of ritual ceremony held once a year, by the local community it is called. The sambah ceremony which takes place in the fifth month according to the local village calendar. This Sambah ceremony lasts for one month, starting when entering the penanggal (towards the full moon) and when panglong (entering the new moon), when the transition from the full moon to the new moon. An interesting event in this ceremony is Mekare-kare or the pandan war four times. Related to this Muran Sambah ceremony, the implementation of Mekare-kare begins at Hud 5th which is held in front of the Bale Agung. This is followed by the implementation of Mekare kare at Hud 12th, which is carried out alternately from the front of Petemu Kelod (place in the South), continuing to Petemu Kaja (place in the North) and ending in front of Petemu tengah (place in the Middle) which is held at Hud 13th. The fifth Sambah sasih is distinguished according to its level into two parts, namely (1) the level of the main fifth Sambah sasih ceremony. At the Ordinary Sambah ceremony, Mekare-kare (Pandan War) starts at Hud 4th, held in front of Bale Agung. At the same time, the Ngelawad ceremony is also held, which is carried out by Krama Desa Luh (members of the banjar from the wife's side) together with Daha (teenage girls), Teruna Temu Kelod (youth groups located in

the South) and Pasek (Pasek citizens group). This Ngelawad ceremony takes place at Pura Puseh and Pura Petung, as well as the sacred Pakuwon place. Ceremonies like this are also held every two years at Pura Rambut Pule and Pura Batu Taikik. Furthermore, at Hud 8th, Mekare-kare takes place in front of Petemu Kelod (place in the South), followed by Hud 9th, Mekare-kare is held in front of Petemu Kaja (place in the North, and Mekare-kare ends at Petemu Tengah (the place in the middle) which is held at Hud 10th, and is also followed by a mecundang ceremony held at Petemu Kaja (place in the North). The involvement of the community in Mekare-kare (Pandan War) not only involves the Teruna sekeha (youth groups) from the 3 existing sekehas (Petemu Kelod, Tengah and Kaja, as mentioned above). However, it is also followed by all krama banjar (community members) of the Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan village, and also invites krama banjar Pande (Pande banjar residents), Tenganan Dauh Tukad, Bukit Kangin, Bukit Kauh, Bukit Kaja and Ngis villages which are outside the residents of Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan village. Mekare-kare (Pandan War) a duel in the form of a duel which is individual in nature, meaning one person against one person. However, those involved in Mekare-kare are not limited to the general group, free meaning children, teenagers and adults (already married and only men play).

In the pandan struggle, each war participant carries a bundle of pandan leaves that have been cut into pieces with a length of approximately 25-30 cm. This bundle of pandan leaves is held by the right hand, to be used to scratch the opponent's body until it bleeds (blood comes out of the scratched body). The left hand holds a shield with a diameter of approximately 1 meter made of strong woven bamboo as a shield to prevent scratches from sharp pandan thorn leaves from the enemy. To assess who wins and loses between two people competing in Mekare-kare (Pandan War), there are several judges as referees during the fight. This jury has very high authority in deciding and determining who wins or loses in the match.

In Mekare-kare (Pandan War) the process of implementing the fight each round advances two people which lasts approximately 5-10 minutes. During this fight, whoever of the Mekare-kare participants (Pandan War) is hit by pandan scratches first, that participant is considered defeated. Furthermore, the jury quickly separates or mediates so that the fight does not last long. Because what is hoped for by the people of Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan, is that in Mekare-kare there should be no feelings of revenge. For Mekare-kare participants (Pandan War) who are injured due to pandan scratches from their opponent or enemy. The wounds on the body that are scratched by pandan thorns are treated with a liquid (boreh) made from types of plant tubers, such as lengkuwas (isen) and kunir (turmeric). Lengkuwas and turmeric are grated and the grated results are mixed with vinegar. Then apply to the body that is injured due to being scratched by pandan thorns. At the beginning of treatment it does feel very sore, but it doesn't last long, after the medication has soaked in until it dries, the scars from Mekare-kare (Pandan War) also become dry, at the same time healing without any scars left. While the Mekare-kare (Pandan War) is taking place, it is accompanied by the gamelan selonding (a kind of music) performance.

The actual purpose of holding the Mekare-kare (Pandan War) ceremony is related to the Ngusaba ceremony Sambah in the village of Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan still requires a more in-depth understanding. The form of Mekare-kare (Pandan War) is the only one that still exists today in Bali which is centered in the village of Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan. There is a discourse that has emerged that the possibility of Mekare-kare (Pandan War) is related to the tabuh rah ceremony

(sacrifice ceremony) as is the case in Bali in general. Because a series of events with the Ngusaba Sambah ceremony in the village of Adat Tenganan Pegeringsingan, apart from Mekare-kare (Pandan War), a cockfight (tajen) is also held alternately as many as 3 pairs in front of Bale Agung. Then the cockfight is held at Petemu Kelod (place in the South, followed by Petemu Kaje (tempat in the North) and ending at Petemu Tengah (the place in the middle). In this cockfight (tajen) there is no money betting (gambling), which prioritizes the ceremonial as the tabuh rah ceremony (sacrifice ceremony) which aims to maintain a balance between human life and the natural environment.

Study of Sportsmanship Values and Cultural Resilience Character in the Mekare-kare Tradition (Pandan War) as Sportsmanship and Cultural Resilience Education

The Mekare-kare tradition, or known as Perang Pandan, is a cultural heritage that has been going on for generations. This tradition introduces elements of violence which are packaged in the context of customs and rituals, but behind it contains deep moral, social and educational values. This tradition not only functions as entertainment or a traditional ceremony, but also as a learning medium about sportsmanship and cultural resilience that is relevant in efforts to build a community with integrity and culture.

Sportsmanship is an attitude and behavior that is honest, respectful, disciplined, and respects opponents during competition. In the context of Mekare-kare, this value emerges through the attitude of participants both during and after the match. Participants show respect for opponents and follow traditional rules, prioritizing safety together, even in a harsh and competitive atmosphere. Participants are taught not to be angry or resentful, to accept defeat with an open heart, and not to take actions that demean their opponents. Success is not only seen from physical strength, but also from aspects of maturity and sportsmanship in competing. This tradition fosters an attitude of humbleness, respects opponents, and develops mature character and local wisdom.

Through the Mekare-kare tradition, participants and the community are taught that physical strength must be balanced with honesty and respect for others. This message becomes one of the foundations for forming positive character and sportsmanship in everyday life. Cultural resilience is the ability of a community to preserve, maintain, and develop its cultural values amid increasing influence from foreign culture and modernization. Mekare-kare is a symbol of the cultural identity of a community that is continuously preserved by the younger generation and traditional communities so that it remains alive and relevant. Mekare-kare becomes an educational medium about the importance of maintaining, respecting, and developing local culture while introducing the values of local wisdom to the younger generation.

Pandan War is able to become a arena for maintain and strengthen the cultural character of society, while expanding their insights in appreciating the diversity and history as part of the identity of the Indonesian nation. The Mekare-kare tradition can be integrated into the character education curriculum through an educational approach and direct experience-based teaching. Teachers and educators can use this tradition as a medium to instill values of sportsmanship and cultural resilience.

In the context of the Mekare-kare tradition, sportsmanship is not just an attitude of being honest and fair in competing, but also includes an attitude of mutual respect, discipline, and self-control during or after battle. This tradition contains the message that physical violence must be balanced with affection, respect, and

honesty as part of the life learning process. Mekare-kare teaches important values in competing in a healthy and characterful manner. Participants learn that defeat does not reduce self-esteem, but becomes a lesson to become a more mature, honest, and respectful person towards others. This message is important in building a society that is characterful and has integrity.

Cultural resilience is the ability of the community to maintain, develop and strengthen their cultural values and identity, especially in the midst of very rapid currents of modernization and globalization. The Mekare-kare tradition as part of local cultural wealth has a vital role in maintaining identity and strengthening a sense of togetherness and the continuity of customs. This tradition is preserved through rituals, teachings and routine practices that are passed down from generation to generation. Through the implementation of traditions on a routine basis, the community strengthens cultural identity and shows that they are capable maintaining the cultural heritage of their ancestors. The sense of togetherness that is fostered during activities strengthens social cohesion. This tradition contains local values such as respect for nature, mutual cooperation, and polite behavior which are cultural assets that must be preserved and developed. Mekare-kare becomes an effective vehicle for instilling cultural values in the younger generation through direct experience and observation

4. CONCLUSION

The Mekare-kare or Pandan War tradition is a cultural heritage that has a deep meaning in building community character, especially in aspects of sportsmanship and cultural resilience. Although it appears to be a tough physical battle, this tradition essentially contains the values of honesty, respect, discipline, and self-control which support the formation of a sporting attitude. These values are very important in character education which instills fair play and moral innovation in competing. Apart from functioning as a vehicle for sportsmanship learning, Mekare-kare also plays a role in strengthening local cultural resilience. With the existence of this tradition, the community is able to maintain and strengthen the values of local wisdom, as well as build collective social and cultural cohesion in facing the challenges of the times. Overall, Mekare-kare is not only a traditional tradition, but also a media effective education to instill values of sportsmanship and foster cultural resilience. Through preserving and developing this tradition on an ongoing basis, the community can face various modern challenges while still maintaining their cultural identity which also strengthens the character of the Indonesian nation in general.

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