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STRUCTURE AND SIGN MEANING OF HANG WOJA CEREMONY (HARVEST THANKSGIVING) IN LENTO VILLAGE, POCORANAKA SUB-DISTRICT, MANGGARAI REGENCY

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Abstract
The Teing Hang Woja ceremony is an annual event held in August to express gratitude for a bountiful harvest. This study aims to describe the structure and meaning of the ceremony in Lento village, Poco Ranaka sub-district, East Manggarai district. Using a qualitative approach and descriptive method, the author collected data from the customary leader of Lento village through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data was analyzed through reduction, presentation, transcription, and conclusion drawing. The study concludes that the Hang Woja ceremony is a form of gratitude for a successful harvest.

Keywords: *Bountiful Harvest, Harvest Thanksgiving, Sign Meaning, Structure, Teing Hang Woja Ceremony*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation rich in nature and culture, with thousands of ethnic groups inhabiting its archipelago. Each ethnic group has distinct cultural elements, such as language, traditional ceremonies, thanksgiving, traditional dance, food, and traditional houses (Mabruri et al., 2018). This local wisdom is a valuable treasure for Indonesia (Sundjaya et al., 2016). The Teing Hang Woja ceremony is a form of gratitude for the abundant harvest of coffee, vanilla, cloves, and rice in Lento village, East Manggarai. It is held annually and is believed to ward off disasters and bring happiness. The ceremony is a tribute to God Almighty or *Mori Kraeng*, ancestors, nature, and fellow humans.

The Teing Hang Woja ceremony is typically held once a year in August because the people of Lento village believe that the success of the harvest for the following year is determined in the eighth month (Nggoro & Samekto, 2019). The ceremony has vertical, horizontal, and social dimensions (Djawad, 2016). The vertical dimension expresses gratitude to God (*Mori*) and ancestors (*Empo*) as creators and shapers. The people of Lento village and Manggarai in general acknowledge God's omnipotence and thank their ancestors for their services by making appropriate offerings to them. The social dimension of the ceremony fosters unity and integrity among the *wa'u* (clan), *ase ka'e* (younger siblings), *anak rona* (wife givers), and *anak wina* (wife receivers), and indirectly strengthens the extension of the Manggarai people as reflected in the famous philosophy: "*Gendang on'e lingko pe'ang*" to reinforce the customary rights held by the customary leader over the *lingko-lngko* owned or cultivated. This ceremony also imparts values that the community must adapt to the ever-changing advances in science and

technology, as people are strongly influenced by their environment (Martasudjita, 1998). The Hang Woja ceremony is deeply ingrained in the Manggarai community, serving as a special relationship that attracts future generations (Hibur et al., 2022).

The purpose of this study is to describe the structure and meaning of the *teing hang woja* ceremony in Lento village, Pocoranaka sub-district, East Manggarai district. The study aims to explore the cultural elements of the ceremony, its significance to the Manggarai people, and the values it provides for the community. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding and preservation of the local wisdom and cultural heritage of the Manggarai people in Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2017), the descriptive qualitative method is a post-positivist method that is used to investigate the state of natural objects. The data analysis is conducted inductively. The data source for this research is the customary leader of Lento Village, Pocoranaka sub-district, East Manggarai Regency. The primary data was obtained from a traditional leader who has an understanding of the hang woja ceremony (Mr Matius Amat). Data analysis involved the process of finding and systematically compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation, by organizing the data into categories that outline units (Margono, 2005). The researchers followed three streams of activities that occurred simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, data transcription, and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Hang Woja Ceremony (Harvest Thanksgiving)

Hang woja is a Manggarai traditional feast of thanksgiving to the ancestors/supernatural/supreme being (*Mori Kraeng*) held by a group of people in a formal situation and joyful atmosphere (Gunavan, 2021). Hang woja is a thanksgiving party to God for the harvest. Meanwhile, in the Manggarai language dictionary, *Hang woja* is defined as the new year party of the Manggarai people (Aninda & Sihombing, 2022). This definition is lifted from the Manggarai language in the form of go "et: *hang woja weki-peso beso reca rangga-wali ntaung; na "a cekeng manga curu cekeng weru* (gratitude from the villagers to God and the ancestors for changing the year, having passed the old working season and welcoming the new working season) (Bagul, 2008).

3.1.1. The purpose of the hang woja ceremony (harvest thanksgiving)

The Hang Woja ceremony serves several purposes for the Manggarai people. Firstly, it aims to promote the meaning of gratitude and raise awareness among the Manggarai people about the importance of giving thanks for the harvest (Dagur, 1997). Secondly, the ceremony fosters family and kinship relations, bringing people together in a formal yet joyful atmosphere. Finally, the ceremony plays a role in realising the spatial unity of Manggarai culture, which includes various elements such as the village (*beo/gololonto*), the village yard for playing (*natas labar*), the dwelling house (*mbaru kaeng*), the offering place (*compang te somba*), drinking water (*wae teku*), the grave

cleaning event (*weang boa*), and the garden (*uma duat/lingko*). By celebrating Hang Woja, the Manggarai people honour their ancestors and supreme being while strengthening their cultural identity and community ties (Lon & Widyawati, 2017).

The Hang Woja (Harvest Thanksgiving) ceremony is an important event in Manggarai culture. Despite the word being unfamiliar in daily language, when someone mentions "*hang woja*," Manggarai people immediately think of a festive thanksgiving ceremony (Hidajat, 1976). The ceremony is performed to express gratitude to Mori Jari Dedek (God the Creator) and the spirits of ancestors for all the fruits of labor obtained and enjoyed, as well as to celebrate *celung cekeng wali ntaung* (the changing season and year). Typically, the ceremony is held after all harvests are completed between June and September. It is usually held every year, but sometimes it can be held every three or five years. There is a belief that if it is not performed, it will make Mori Jari Dedek angry, resulting in disasters for the people of Manggarai. Overall, the Hang Woja ceremony is a significant cultural tradition that expresses gratitude and celebrates the changing of the seasons and year.

3.1.2. Cepa Ceki

Cepa ceki is the act of giving betel nut as a greeting or invitation to attend the ceremony. The cepa ceki ceremony is performed by the customary leader (*tua teno*) in the drum house and the betel nut is usually placed right at the door of the drum house (Fridolin, 2020). This ceremony is carried out with the intention of calling the spirits of the ancestors who have passed away to be present in the Hang Woja ceremony. It is a way of showing respect and inviting the ancestors to take part in the celebration. The purpose of the ceremony is to call upon the spirits of the ancestors to be present at the Hang Woja ceremony by offering them betel nut.

3.1.3. Sanda Lima

Sanda lima is a singing ceremony that takes place at night in the drum house. Usually, it involves only certain people, namely the customary leader and the head of the family. During sanda lima, they perform *congka sae* (dance) and sing using a *kope* (machete). After performing *renggas*, they follow with sanda lima, a song sung by *Tua adat* (customary head) and the head of the family. The meaning of this song is to ask God to provide enough and unlimited food (Fridolin, 2020).

3.1.4. Renge Ella

The *Renge Ela* event begins with *Tudak Ela*, a prayer offering that involves the slaughter of a pig. During this event, the Tua Teno (customary leader) takes a little pig's blood and wipes it on the door of the Drum House. The pig is then made into food to be shared by the community, with each family providing rice. The offering symbol is still done in the traditional way, where the inside of the pig is cut into small pieces, mixed with a little rice, and prayed over by the Tua Teno (Fridolin, 2020). The offering is then placed on top of the *Sanggar* (place of offering) as *Hang Helang*, which is the offering for the spirits of the ancestors to consume.

3.1.5. Hang Woja

All the villagers gather in the drum house to hold the Hang Woja feast together. The offerings used in this ceremony are chicken and pig. "*Neka koe baka bara kali, neka ngentaung tuka*" means that whatever they eat will not interfere with their health and may

sustenance continue to flow ("*wiga ras kid pea, ng natas*"), and whatever is planted will bear fruit ("*dasor wu,a raci po'ong kali lebo kala weri*"). Thus, the betel leaf is dense, which means that they hope the children will multiply.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering that the *hang woja* ceremony is a cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation by the ancestors and contains essential values for the survival of the Manggarai people, especially the people of Lento Village, the author suggests several ways to preserve this culture, namely:

1. The traditional elders and community leaders should conduct cultural socialisation to the next generation, so that Manggarai culture, especially hang woja culture, is preserved, and the values it contains are not deviated from.
2. The people in Lento Village, both parents and the younger generation, should always preserve their culture, especially hang woja culture, so that it can be passed on to future generations. This will ensure that these values continue to be a part of everyone's personality and can be applied in daily community life.
3. Researchers should continue to study the culture, especially the hang woja ceremony, so that further research can be conducted in-depth.

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