

CULTURAL ACCOUNTING OF AJIKRAME SORONG SERAH VALUE

DETERMINATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Sorong Serah is a Lombok tradition that is still preserved through the cultural practice of elopement. This research aims to understand the accounting practices in Sorong Serah customary wedding expenses, especially the determination of ajikrame. The approach used in this research is qualitative and based on ethnographic methods. The results of this study found that the factors determining the cost of Ajikrame, which is one of the main components of the Sorong Serah fee, are education, occupation, family background, and the reference price of Sorong Serah circulating in each region as the basis for determining the Sorong Serah fee. These factors cause the costs that must be incurred by the male party to be higher or the price set by the female party to be more expensive. This is something that is generally accepted and has become a tradition of the Sasak tribe.

Keywords : *Accounting; culture; Lombok; Sorong Serah.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred social act that legitimizes the formal relationship between a man and a woman according to religious, legal, and customary practices. The formal bond culturally recognized between a man and a woman involves a promise between two people to live together, share responsibilities, and build a life together (Miranda & Sokarina, 2024). Essentially, men and women need each other. The Merarik culture is a form of societal resistance against cultural, political, and economic domination. Culturally, men are intimidated by the tradition of elopement in Lombok, but economically, elopement is seen as a shortcut to alleviating the burden of being unable to afford the bride price (Aslan et al., 2021). Oppressive and intimidating social class factors cause the tendency for high bride prices. As a result, wedding costs seem to increase indirectly due to changes in lifestyle and social conditions in society.

Marriage practices in Indonesia are influenced by the forms and institutions of local marriage customs, which are related to the social structure and kinship of the community in question. In the elopement process in Lombok, the first step taken is a man take away the girl -that he wants to marry- at

night, then hide her in the nearest relative's house for three days without the knowledge of the girl's parents. After three days have passed, the traditional wedding ceremony can then be performed. Society considers this elopement as a sign of the man's seriousness towards the woman. A cultural expression often used is "selapuk sak berharge lamun mele mauk harus bedoe pengorbanan," which means that anything valuable we want to possess must be achieved with a sacrifice. Hence, the term tepaling merarik is no longer unfamiliar in the community. If the girl agrees to the marriage, the following steps will be taken. Besejati and Beselabar, or the man, will go to the village and ask the hamlet authorities to inform them of the elopement. Then, the girl's parents are informed, and the information is shared with the entire community in the village. One of the Sasak tribe's traditions in the wedding ceremony is Sorong Serah Aji Krame, which means the transfer of responsibility to both parties regarding the marriage between the husband and wife. This culture is practiced based on the customary and religious laws applicable in each region (Maezura & Jumaidi, 2024).

The marriage of the Sasak tribe is an important tradition that must be carried out after both parties reach an agreement, following all the

applicable rituals and customs. This ritual is called Sorong Serah. Sorong Serah is a Sasak phrase meaning Quickly surrender. Sorong means to push, and serah means to surrender. Sorong Serah means pushing to rearrange. It can also mean surrender, and the items handed over are called Ajikrama (Depdikbud 1991). Ajikrama has a concept similar to uang panai. According to Almeida (2023), uang panai is money given to the bride's family, which can be determined by the bride's family themselves or by the groom's side with the bride's family's approval. According to the patrilineal kinship principles of the Sasak tribe, the amount of Ajikrama given depends on the groom's position. This aims to determine the bride's status in her husband's family and the status of the children born from the marriage (Depdikbud, 1991). Sociologically, this custom is a way to signal to the world that there is a bond between a young man and a girl he intends to marry. Cultural activities and traditions in Indonesian society can also incur significant costs.

Accounting and culture have long been a subject of debate (Randa & Daromes, 2014). Accounting emerges as a form of local culture that occurs within society. To demonstrate the presence, uniqueness, and richness of accounting in Indonesia, it is essential to explore accounting

practices, concepts, and meanings based on local culture. The culture of the Sasak tribe has principles similar to Chinese society, which is patrilineal with a patrilocal marriage system. Since the Zhou Dynasty, the bride price has been an important part of marriage, and its role has never diminished (Gao, 2006). The payment of the bride price marks the official endorsement of the engagement; without a bride price, the marriage will not take place (Hicks & Gwynne, 1994).

As part of the social sciences, accounting has a strong interaction (mutual influence) with the social environment of society, thus playing a role in shaping social reality (Hines 1988; Morgan 1988; Triyuwono 2012). Because society has complex and diverse socio-environmental characteristics, people may have different perspectives on objects, including accounting concepts (Ahmed 1994). Different perspectives (such as business, social, or cultural perspectives) provide different meanings to an object. Jeacle (2009) states that the existence of accounting can be found in daily life and can be applied to activities such as shopping, household management, and culture. For example, wedding culture, in some accounting studies, is referred to as Bride Pricing. Cultural issues such as Ajikrama are always interesting topics to discuss within society, even within the scope of

scientific development, including accounting. This also proves that the scope of accounting studies is expanding and is not only focused on debit-credit journal entries in financial statements. As part of the social sciences shaped by humans, accounting is related to and influences the existence of humans within a social group (Sylvia, 2014).

Spending a large sum of money at one time requires a lot of consideration. To pay for the dowry, many families must save and accumulate money for years. Some families are even forced to borrow money or take out other loans. In very urgent situations, they may try to obtain money illegally to fulfill the dowry obligation (Jiang & Barricarte, 2012). This is because the financial sacrifice in a wedding is not considered an investment activity that yields a return greater than what has been spent. The funds expended are usually the result of a price agreement between the parties involved in the marriage. According to Dharmesta & Irawan (2005), price can be influenced by costs, economic conditions, supply and demand, and competition. This aligns with the traditional pricing concept that the primary goal of pricing is to generate profit (Auerer et al., 2018). Generally, the process of achieving pure material gain requires a pricing concept (Amaliah et al., 2018). This significant profit can be considered the main goal in the pricing process.

Pricing in the cultural context of wedding customs related to this accounting is called "bride pricing". According to Goody & Tambiah (1973), "bride price" is a value proportional to a woman's productivity. In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Dictionary), productivity refers to the ability to produce something. From an accounting perspective, productivity is related to the efficiency of input usage to achieve optimal output results (Wiliana, Pagalung & Damayanti, 2024). Thus, "bride pricing" represents an assessment of a woman's value from two perspectives. The first concerns the characteristics a woman possesses before marriage: social status, education, achievements, or occupation. The second concerns a woman's ability to manage a household, including taking care of her husband, children, and household chores. Men tend to spend more money if women have both perspectives. In accounting, the Sorong Serah process involves the community negotiating to set the price of the bride's ajikrame. This process incorporates the concept of pricing, conventional accounting theory, as well as the notion of price-setters and price-takers, similar to negotiations in a perfectly competitive market (Nahdhiyah et al., 2022). Therefore, The discussion on determining the price of Sorong Serah attracts researchers' interest to

delve deeper, given the numerous accounting studies within the socio-cultural tradition in Lombok or through a specific research approach. Social exchange theory views exchange as a social act that can produce economic and social outcomes. Social exchange theory argues that relationships are formed through the use of subjective benefit-sacrifice analysis and comparison of alternatives. Self-interest and interdependence are at the core of social interaction (Revianti & Waluyo 2019). Social exchange theory also highlights the reciprocal relationship between behavior and environment. Since our environment is largely made up of other individuals, we and these people influence each other's behavior. In this relationship, there are elements of reward, sacrifice, and gain. The core of Homans' exchange theory lies in a collection of basic propositions that explain the interaction between at least two individuals (Homans, G.C, 1961). This theory seeks to explain basic social behavior from the perspective of rewards and costs. This research will broaden the perspective of the public and academics on the meaning of ajikrame that lies behind this social phenomenon. Sorong Serah's price-determining meaning, both socio-cultural and accounting, ultimately involves many individuals and communities in the traditional marriage procession and creates

mutual benefits, where the man can have the girl by providing benefits to the girl's family. This will reduce problems that arise before the marriage and even after the marriage. Based on the explanation above regarding the lack of academic interest in writing about accounting and culture, especially ajikrame, the researcher is interested in understanding the practice of determining the cost of ajikrame in Lombok in accounting terms.

Ramzan et al. (2023) found that the pandemic increased inequality and poverty in Pakistan, exacerbating the vulnerability of low-income households. However, dowry customs persisted, despite burdening the bride's family and threatening women's livelihoods. Significant differences in marriage practices between Pakistan and local traditions were found, where in Pakistan, the woman pays, while in local traditions, the man pays. In line with research conducted by Lyu & Zhang (2021) shows that excessive marriage payments burden households, especially in rural areas. The study found that couples who married based on love paid less dowry, and there was an inverse relationship between marriage distance and dowry payments. Further research by Indaryani & Sokarina (2024) found that accounting plays an important role in non-Bugis tribal marriages, assisting in financial planning and

management of wedding expenses, suggesting a link between accounting and marriage culture. In a study conducted by Uddin (2023) the practice of dowry in Bangladesh, which although not justified by law, remains a social obligation. This research highlights the violence women experience due to their family's inability to pay the dowry, as well as revealing the changing social values in Lombok, where women take an active role in the marriage procession. Maezura & Jumaidi (2024) found accounting practices in the Sasak wedding tradition, where wedding costs are determined by the level of *aji kramé* owned by the bride and economic conditions. Accountability in traditional costing is seen in the sacrifices made by the groom. Another study Li & Li (2023) investigated the relationship between dowry and rural household income, finding that high bride price reduces agricultural income but increases income from remittances due to encouragement to work as migrant workers. The relationship between dowry and income is inverted U-shaped, where moderate dowries favor income growth. Miranda & Sokarina's research (2024) shows that the sacrifice of wedding expenses in Sasak society is used to demonstrate social status, honor, friendship, and family love. This tradition shows how wedding expenses are an important symbol in

Sasak culture, in contrast to modern economic approaches.

Previous studies have discussed the meaning of costs. In a cultural context, there are two concepts that we can observe: previous research on wedding costs conducted by Syarifuddin and Damayanti (2015) aimed to critique the culture of setting *uang panaik* (a sum of money that must be given by the groom's side to the bride's family to hold a wedding reception) or *uang belanja* as one of the cultural wedding traditions of the Makassar tribe. The higher the bride's social status, the higher the *uang panaik* value requested by her family. Costs are a form of sacrifice valued in monetary terms, in the form of a decrease in assets or economic benefits that results in a reduction in equity in a given period. High costs, without an increase in revenue, can result in a decrease in profits or even losses. According to the Indonesian Institute of Accountants, costs are not directly related to the revenue or income received. This is because non-profit organizations do not aim to profit from their activities but to optimize the resources they have and ensure sustainability in providing services to the community (IAI, 2007).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. The study aims to describe the facts, events, and behaviors of the

community related to Sorong Serah. The data sources are divided into two categories. Primary Data, This data was obtained from interviews conducted by the researcher with local community leaders. The informants include traditional leaders and community figures, people who are about to perform the Sorong Serah ceremony, and those who have already performed it. Secondary Data: This data was gathered from literature sources such as books and research findings in the form of journals, articles, and literature discussing Sorong Serah.

The researcher obtained relevant information regarding the factors determining wedding costs and the importance of the Sasak Traditional Wedding Costs on Lombok Island from various perspectives within the community, including those who have conducted or are about to conduct marriages, and from various views of traditional leaders in Lombok. This research was conducted on Lombok Island without being limited to a specific area. The reason the researcher chose the Sasak tribe on Lombok Island as the research location is that the Sasak tribe has practiced the Sorong Serah tradition since ancient times, and it continues to be practiced today. The following are some of the informants interviewed by the researcher:

Table 1. Informant Interview List

Name	Age	Information
H. M. Safri	45 y.o	Public

		figure
Baiq Nadia Armadita	22 y.o	Who will get married
L. Zainudin	38 y.o	Those who have married using the sorong serah custom
Saidun Yusuf	53 y.o	Chief character

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Bustami et al. (2009), cost is the sacrifice of economic resources measured in monetary units that have occurred or are likely to occur to achieve a specific goal. In this context, cost can be measured not only in abstract terms but also in monetary units that reflect the value of the sacrifice. Therefore, wedding costs are not just about numbers; they also represent commitment, dedication, and a comprehensive investment in building a solid foundation for a happy married life. After the tradition of abducting the girl for three days, the girl tells her parents that she is getting married. Next, the boy's family comes to the girl's house to convey their good intentions. Discussing the cost of the wedding is very important in preparation for the event. The culture of giving a gift or paying a dowry for the girl has become an obligation for the man who is going to get married.

According to Mr. H. M. Safri, a community leader, he expressed his views on the meaning of costs in the *Sorong Serah* wedding procession in Lombok as follows:

"The expenses incurred are usually considerable, especially for those who engage in the marriage process in Lombok, from the beginning of the proposal all the way through to the large wedding ceremony. These events have become somewhat of a necessity, so the costs are not seen as a problem, especially because of the love and affection that parents have for their children, no matter how large the expenses."

Wedding ceremonies, a Sasak tradition in Lombok, have become a generational tradition. In fact, holding a grand Thanksgiving event has become a necessity embraced by the community without being seen as a burden. Parents who deeply love their children are not hesitant to bear the wedding costs.

Another explanation from Mr. L. Zainudin:

"The expenses incurred when I got married were not burdensome for me because this has become a customary practice commonly done by the people in Lombok. When I saw relatives getting married, I

could take examples from their events. Some even performed the Nyongkolan tradition, although public opinions vary—some see it as an important tradition, while others do not."

Mr. Saidun Yusuf had a different opinion from the previous two informants:

"Almost everyone feels burdened. Why do I say it's burdensome? Because of the transaction system where, for example, the bride's side demands a dowry beyond the groom's capability, since all the funds come from the groom's side and are given to the bride's side."

From the interviews with H. M. Safri and L. Zainudin, it can be concluded that the costs of the *Sorong Serah* wedding procession in Lombok are considered reasonable and not burdensome to the community. This is because these costs have become part of the tradition, accepted and understood as a norm in marriage. Although Mr. Saidun Yusuf has a different view regarding the financial burden borne by the groom, the majority of the community does not feel burdened by the expenses involved in this procession. The community interprets the costs incurred during the *Sorong Serah* wedding procession as customary money and is respected, even the community is

willing to spend a lot of money for the implementation of a magnificent sacred wedding for the bride and groom.

The factors that influence decision-making in the *Sorong Serah* wedding process in Lombok include several essential aspects. First, the educational background, occupation, and family of both the bride and groom are highly influential. Second, the financial capability of the groom is a primary consideration because the Ajikrame cost must be adjusted to his economic capacity. Additionally, local customs and traditions play an important role in determining the steps and requirements for the wedding. All these factors must be taken into account to ensure the wedding proceeds smoothly and without conflict.

Factors That Influence Wedding Costs

Factors such as education, occupation, family background, and prevailing *Sorong Serah* price references in each region determine *Sorong Serah* costs.

1. Family Background/Social Status

The negotiation takes place when the boy's family visits the girl's house. The girl's family conveys the asking price as a benchmark. If there are some indications that social stratification has a major influence on Sasak marriages, it

is that women who occupy a high social class will also get a high dowry from the man they marry.

Baiq Nadia says,

"The primary standard for marriage is not financial but based on lineage, often referred to as Menak (noble families). The bride's family must adjust to the groom's side."

"For example, in marriage, the primary standard is not financial but based on lineage, whether I come from a noble family or not. Secondly, the bride's family will then adjust according to the groom's side."

This aligns with Mr. Saidun Yusuf's experience:

"I almost married someone from a noble family. However, her parents felt embarrassed by my family's modest situation. While she was from an honorable and wealthy family, and her family generally married within their social strata, the marriage did not take place."

Here is Mr. L. Zainudin's explanation about social status:

"Indeed, in Lombok, there are individuals with social status inherited from their family, called Menak. However, it is also possible that the girl is not from a

Menak lineage but comes from a wealthy family."

According to the views of the three informants above, the social status of the bride is an aspect that must be respected and valued by the majority of their lineage. This is especially true for women from noble families or wealthy families, even if they do not have a noble title. Therefore, when a man intends to propose to such a woman, he must work hard, even if it requires significant expenses. Parents cannot prevent a noblewoman from marrying a man from an ordinary background. This reflects a respect for individual choice in marriage, even though tradition and social status still play a significant role.

2. Level of Education

Generally, the people of Lombok view education as an important factor in determining the amount of Ajikrame a woman receives. Education is seen as a valuable asset, as it is believed to open up greater opportunities and increase a person's value in various aspects of life, including economics. The community assumes that an educated person is better able to ensure that the offspring produced by the bride and groom can be educated to be useful children, compared to someone who does not have an education.

As explained by Baiq Nadia:

"In terms of the woman's education level, how

far has she gone? Then, does that education come with a rank, and with that rank, can she work or not? This really matters. In my family, to put it bluntly, a high school graduate wouldn't have the same dowry as someone with a bachelor's degree, and someone with a bachelor's degree wouldn't have the same dowry as someone with a master's degree. Additionally, a woman from a reputable family wouldn't have the same dowry, even if they all have the same level of education."

Baiq Nadia's statement reflects social values that highly regard academic achievements. The difference in dowry based on the woman's education level is seen as a form of appreciation for her accomplishments.

Mr. Saidun Yusuf also expressed:

"Most parents feel a sense of pride when their child, who has achieved a high level of education, receives a substantial dowry."

From these interviews, the researcher concludes that the level of education is a primary factor for parents who desire a higher dowry for their daughters. This is seen as a way of expressing gratitude for the education their child has achieved.

Society tends to assess and value the educational level of the prospective bride, and thus, a higher dowry is often considered a symbol of prestige and appreciation for educational accomplishments. Therefore, many parents seek the highest possible education for their children in order to achieve a high social status in society.

3. Occupation Held

The occupation held by a woman can significantly increase the *ajikrame* (dowry) requested by her family from the groom's family. This is especially true for parents who belong to the lower working class. Similarly, in high-income families, a dowry is given to their daughter as compensation for the loss of her ownership rights. The occupation also helps children achieve affordable and reliable economic stability, so parents tend to want good economic conditions for their children's lives after marriage.

Baiq Nadia explained:

"If the woman already has a job, the parents will want her husband to have a job that matches hers to avoid negative comments from neighbors about the couple. For example, people might say things like, 'What kind of job does the girl have that warrants such a high dowry? Or does the girl not have a job at all?'"

Mr. L. Zainudin elaborated:

"The high demands are usually because the woman already has a job, as society tends to believe that if a woman is good at her job, it means she is diligent and capable of managing household chores."

Mr. Saidun Yusuf stated:

"The people of Lombok regard a working daughter as a sign of independence, and a job is often associated with a person's economic value, so a working woman is considered more valuable."

From the statements of the three informants above, it is evident that society often assesses the quality of a woman based on her occupation. A woman who already has a job is considered more mature and capable of managing a household well. Therefore, parents typically want a son-in-law who has a job to ensure their daughter's well-being after marriage, with the expectation that the prospective husband also has sufficient financial capability. The occupation also provides social status and recognition from society. Having a good job is often associated with achievement, responsibility and positive contributions to society.

Work is often part of a person's identity. In many cultures, work is associated with social status and prestige. People who have jobs, especially jobs that are considered

“good” or “prestigious”, are often considered higher in the social hierarchy. Adults have social norms and expectations that they must strive to fulfill their needs and contribute to their family and society. The unemployed may be perceived as unable to meet these expectations, leading to negative perceptions. People who work are seen as more competent, disciplined and responsible, while people who don't work may be seen differently, but that may not always be true.

4. Reference Price for "Sorong Serah" in Each Area

The rules and regulations of Ajikrame (dowry) are realistic, passed down through generations, and have become an integral part of the culture, where values and utility are interconnected within the community. Therefore, negotiations are held to decide the Ajikrame price that the groom's family will give.

Mr. L. Zainul explained:

"Each village has different customs and processes, so the 'aji sorong serah' (dowry) will vary as well."

The meaning of Mr. L. Zainudin's statement is that each village has its own customs and Ajikrame processes, leading to differences in the dowry price.

Mr. Saidun Yusuf similarly explained:

"In the Sorong Serah tradition, there are cost regulations that must not be exceeded or undercut in each area, leading to negotiation if there are objections to the price set. For example, if a village is known for having high dowry prices for its girls, then marrying a girl from that village will also demand a high dowry."

From the interviews with these two informants, the researcher concludes that the Ajikrame price varies by region. Therefore, when a marriage occurs, both families, the groom's and the bride's, engage in negotiations. This process involves bargaining until a mutual agreement is reached regarding the amount of Ajikrame to be given.

Baiq Nadia also expressed a similar view:

"The final step is 'itung due' = negotiating with the family. In my case, the Ajikrame costs and other expenses were determined by the family in accordance with the noble customs prevailing in the village."

From this statement, the

researcher concludes that when marrying a woman of noble lineage, one is usually expected to find a partner with an equivalent social status. However, over time, this requirement has not always been strictly adhered to. Even if the social status of the bride and groom differs, elopement may still occur. Among the community, both commoners and nobles, there are differences in determining the Ajikrame costs, which are often adjusted according to the financial capacity of the groom's side. Therefore, the Ajikrame cost is highly dependent on the customs and financial capability of each region. Therefore, the cost of Ajikrame is highly influenced by the customs and financial capabilities of each region. One of the benefits of enforcing the Sorong Serah custom is to reduce the amount of dowry set by the girl's family to the boy. Through negotiations, both families try to reach a mutual agreement to avoid potential conflicts that could hinder the implementation of the Sorong Serah marriage. This traditional procession is important because it aims to strengthen the relationship between the two families, creating a peaceful, happy and prosperous relationship.

IV. CONCLUSION

Sorong Serah Ajikrama is a traditional payment custom of the Sasak tribe in marriage, settled according to the customary laws of

each village. The agreement reached between the bride and groom shows that the costs incurred during the Sorong Serah ceremonial process in Lombok are not considered burdensome by the community because these expenses are part of a long-standing tradition that has been widely accepted. The sacrifice of costs incurred creates reciprocity between the two individuals, which ultimately results in benefits for both. Several key factors influence the costs of the Sorong Serah marriage process: social status, education level, occupation, and the prevailing Ajikrama price in each area. The practice of determining customary costs is a crucial stage in the marriage process, and there is a strong indication that these expenses hold special significance for parents who feel they have significantly invested in raising their daughters from childhood to adulthood. The higher the education level and social status of the daughter and her parents, the higher the bargaining value of the bride.

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