


The Existence of Traditional Wedding Ceremonies for the Development of Cultural Tourism in Ngilgof Tourism Village

Fikih Madilis¹, Pradina Anjarwaty Sukirno²

Marine Agrotourism, Politeknik Perikanan Negeri Tual, Jl. Raya Sthean, Kota Tual, Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Traditional ceremonies, Weddings, Cultural tourism, Cultural preservation.</p>	<p>This study aims to examine the existence of traditional wedding ceremonies in the Ngilgof Tourism Village and their potential for developing cultural tourism. The research method used was qualitative with in-depth interviews and participatory observation. The results show that traditional wedding ceremonies in Ngilgof Village have rich cultural elements, including rituals, symbols, and strong local values. The local community has a positive perception of the ceremony's potential as a tourist attraction, which can provide economic benefits and increase cultural awareness. However, there are challenges in preserving traditions amidst the development of the tourism industry. This study recommends a preservation strategy that involves the local community and stakeholders to optimize the development of cultural tourism based on traditional wedding ceremonies.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license</p> 	<p>Corresponding Author: Pradina Anjarwaty Sukirno Politeknik Perikanan Negeri Tual Jl. Raya Sathean, Kota Tual pradina@polikant.ac.id</p>

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a rich cultural heritage encompassing various traditions and traditional ceremonies, including wedding ceremonies. According to Koentjaraningrat (2019), traditional ceremonies not only serve as a means to celebrate important life moments, such as births, marriages, and deaths, but also as a means to strengthen cultural identity and maintain social relationships within a society. This cultural richness is crucial for cultural sustainability and diversity. By preserving and promoting cultural heritage, we can respect and embrace human diversity, maintain unique cultural identities, and foster mutually beneficial intercultural dialogue. Globalization can pose challenges to cultural identity. When local cultures are exposed to the strong influence of global culture, individuals and community groups can experience internal conflict in maintaining and preserving their cultural identity. This can result in efforts to maintain traditional culture or even resistance to global cultural influences. According to Smith (2022), globalization can lead to identity conflicts where local cultures struggle to survive amidst the dominance of global culture. This process often leads to efforts to maintain traditional culture and increased resistance to external influences. Johnson (2023) adds that societies often feel pressured to adopt elements of global culture, which can result in the loss of cultural values and practices that have existed for centuries.

Ngilngof Tourism Village is known as a cultural tourism destination offering unique experiences for tourists. One of its main attractions is the traditional wedding ceremonies still practiced by the local community. The traditional wedding ceremonies in Ngilngof Tourism Village possess unique cultural values and are interesting to explore. The series of rituals, procedures, and symbols used in these ceremonies reflect the rich cultural heritage of the local community. The existence of traditional wedding ceremonies in Ngilngof Tourism Village presents a potential opportunity for developing cultural tourism. Cultural attractions such as these can attract tourists who want to experience and learn about local culture. The development of cultural tourism based on traditional wedding ceremonies in Ngilngof Tourism Village can provide economic benefits for the local community, such as increased income and the creation of new jobs in the tourism sector. However, on the other hand, there are concerns about the commodification or undesirable changes to traditional wedding ceremonies due to interaction with the tourism industry. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to understand the existence and dynamics of traditional wedding ceremonies in the context of cultural tourism development in Ngilngof Tourism Village.

METHODS

This research was conducted in Ngilngof Tourism Village, Manyeuw District, Southeast Maluku Regency, Maluku. The selection of this location was based on the existence of traditional wedding ceremonies that are still preserved by the local community. The population consists of all people in Ngilngof Tourism Village who are involved in carrying out traditional wedding ceremonies. According to Sugiyono (2019), a population is a generalized area consisting of subjects or objects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher. The sample in this study was taken using a purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of informants based on certain criteria relevant to the focus of the research. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a sampling technique carried out by considering certain characteristics of the population, so that the selected informants have in-depth knowledge and experience regarding the topic being studied. The research sample consisted of 30 respondents consisting of traditional leaders, people involved in traditional wedding ceremonies, and tourism village managers. The selection of this number of respondents was based on the suggestion of Creswell (2014), who stated that in qualitative research, the sample size can range from 15 to 30 respondents, depending on the depth of the data desired. In the context of this research, 30 respondents were considered sufficient to gather comprehensive information about the implementation of traditional ceremonies, their social and economic impacts, and the public's perception of the ceremonies as a cultural tourism attraction.

This study uses a qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of traditional wedding ceremonies. This approach allows researchers to explore the cultural elements involved, as well as the social and economic impacts of the ceremonies. Data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis in this study will utilize a qualitative approach with thematic analysis techniques. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a suitable method for identifying,

analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in data. This approach will help organize information from interviews and observations and understand the meaning behind cultural practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Traditional Wedding Ceremony

Interethnic marriages prompted field research in Ngilngof Village, Kei Islands, while the ideal Kei ethnic traditional marriage, which serves as the benchmark for every Kei ethnic marriage, will be discussed further in this study. Several types of marriage practices are recognized in the Kei ethnic community, including Ahai Fafauw Manuu Marai (marriage due to the bride and groom running away from their respective homes), Ahai Fafauw Efyau or Laur Kaneuw Inan (marriage due to pregnancy), and Ahai Fafauw Hab Sol Vel Taan (ideal marriage). Due to time and space limitations, the first two types of marriages were not discussed in this study, although they are acknowledged to be useful in understanding the ideal and actual patterns of Kei ethnic traditional marriages. This was evident in discussions with respondents, particularly the older generation, where complaints were expressed about the loss of significant wealth with the first two types of marriages. However, in reality, only the dowry brought at the proposal stage is not accepted; on the other hand, ideal traditional marriages are not widely practiced among the Kei ethnic group itself. Ahai fafauw manuu marai or elopement can still be distinguished into two types, namely manuu marriage which is a marriage that is "forced" to take place because the two prospective brides and grooms run away from their respective parents' homes; while marai marriage is a marriage that occurs between a young man and a woman who have been living together, because both run away and want to start a new household. Ahai fafauw ivyan or laur kanew inan is a marriage that is "forced" to take place because the prospective bride is pregnant. The woman's pregnancy does not automatically guarantee marriage, it can also be the other way around. Here too there are several possibilities, for example, a single young man and a single woman, or a married man and a married woman. Hab Sol Vel Taan this marriage is an ideal traditional marriage in the life of the Kei ethnic group, because it follows the stages of marriage that have been established as follows: Determination of the criteria for prospective brides and grooms, Proposal, Confirmation of marriage and Submission of dowry or Vat vilin, Post-confirmation of marriage.

a) Determination of Criteria for Prospective Bride and Groom.

The initial stage of the marriage process involves establishing criteria for prospective brides and grooms, who must meet a number of requirements based on local societal norms. Physical and psychological maturity are key factors. In the past, particularly until around the 1960s, the average age of prospective grooms was around 30, considered a period of physical and psychological maturity. Currently, this age has decreased to around 25. For prospective brides, the minimum age was previously set at 25, while currently it is around 20. This is in line with the opinion of Safinah Yulianty Sitania et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of maturity as a primary criterion in selecting prospective brides and grooms, reflecting customary societal norms. In addition to these

two factors, individual skills also significantly determine the suitability of prospective brides and grooms. Village communities dependent on fishing and agriculture require prospective grooms to possess expertise in these fields. Conversely, prospective brides are expected to have mastered household skills as a prerequisite for marriage. However, attention to these skills has diminished in recent times, with the growing belief that mutual consent is sufficient for marriage. Several recent studies confirm that Indonesia's cultural diversity reflects values of local wisdom that need to be preserved, including in terms of craftsmanship, as noted by Hassan and Ali (2023) and Kumar and Malhotra (2021). The craftsmanship of both candidates is also an important criterion in determining suitability. Prior to the engagement, the craftsmanship of both candidates is closely scrutinized by their relatives. If the craftsmanship of one or both candidates is deemed inferior, they are advised to improve. Without any effort to improve, they are often advised to end the relationship. Research by Suryanda et al. (2021) shows that craftsmanship and community involvement are highly valued in the selection process, which also serves to maintain social norms. Another important criterion is the social status of the prospective bride and groom. Whether they come from comparable social backgrounds or not can influence their relationship. In many cases, if social statuses are incompatible, parents often advise or even pressure, either subtly or harshly, to end the relationship. This is often a serious reason for canceling a romantic relationship between two individuals. Research in Bali shows that differences in social status are a major factor in the decision to marry, with parental pressure to align statuses.

b) Proposal.

Before the proposal process takes place, the prospective groom generally conveys to his parents his desire to marry a particular woman. The two have gotten to know each other through various means, such as introductions arranged by the prospective groom's or bride's siblings, as well as approaches made by the parents. Sitania et al. (2023) state that in the past, parents played a dominant role in organizing everything, while the prospective bride and groom simply followed their parents' direction. However, currently, this situation has undergone a significant change, where the prospective bride and groom fall in love and then seek their parents' blessing. After receiving their blessing, the prospective groom's parents will gather relatives, especially relatives from the bride's side, to convey their son's wishes. At this stage, they discuss strategies for conveying their intentions to the prospective bride and her family, and determine which spokespersons and intermediaries will be involved. This aligns with views emphasizing the importance of social networks and the role of family in the marriage process in society, as expressed by Kumar and Malhotra (2021), Nguyen and Lee (2022), and Hassan and Ali (2023). The prospective groom's entourage then departs for the female relative's house, bringing as much money and gold jewelry as they can afford. Upon arriving at the prospective bride's house, they knock and are invited in. After the entourage is seated, the host, through his spokesperson, will inquire about the purpose of their visit. The dialogue between the two groups is usually brief and formal, reflecting the etiquette upheld in the proposal

process. This dialogue also demonstrates that social interactions within the marriage are still governed by custom and culture, as discussed by Suryanda et al. (2021), who point out that local wisdom values play a crucial role in maintaining interfamily relationships. Following the dialogue between the two parties, relatives from each side typically remain seated to chat while enjoying the meal provided by the host. This process usually does not last long, after which the male relative returns home and awaits news from the female relative. If the response is negative, no further discussion takes place. However, if the response is positive, the spokesperson for the female relative will convey the good news to the male relative. This stage is known as *babaas*, meaning return visit. On this occasion, relatives from both parties agree on a proposal schedule, known as *aek havung*, *aek ye*, *aek sit yahau welan*, or *sawe kot*. These terms refer to the bonding and marking process, involving symbols such as tied legs, cat and dog tails, and the delivery of a dowry in a simpler form. This aligns with the values expressed by Suryanda et al. (2021), where the delivery of a dowry is an important symbol of relationship legitimacy. Finally, the male relatives propose to the woman designated as a prospective wife for their son, nephew, or grandson. The dowry brought during the proposal consists of several components, including one *woot*, one *lela*, and one *sadsad laai*, also known as *hanavung*. In addition, there is *rovrov hanavung* in the form of money given to the female relatives. Next, the male relatives bring *dada* or *gong*, which refers to *kamdada*, a type of tray woven from coconut leaves that is usually used to hold food or offerings during the *sasi* of marine or forest produce. Another component brought is *mas aek ye*, a gold bracelet worn by the groom on the hand of his future wife.



Figure 1. Traditional wedding dowry

c) Confirmation of Marriage

After the proposal, a woman officially becomes the prospective wife of the young man who proposes to her, and vice versa. The proposal serves as a public declaration that the two individuals have made a serious and formal commitment to each other. However, after the Ngilngof community converted to Catholicism, the confirmation of the marriage must follow the procedures established by the Catholic Church. The two relatives will gather again to discuss the timing of the confirmation of the marriage of their two children. After reaching an agreement on the timing and responsibilities of each party, they will convey their wishes to the parish priest through the neighborhood council or parish council. This discussion includes selecting an appropriate time and the

necessary preparations for both candidates. Sitania et al. (2023) note that this process reflects the crucial role of community and family in the confirmation of the relationship, which is at the heart of local wisdom. In the Catholic Church, there is a lengthy preparation period before the sacrament of marriage is administered to the prospective bride and groom. The duration of this preparation varies, from one week to several months, or even years. The timing of the counseling session is related to the guidance material deemed appropriate and important for the prospective bride and groom to understand, including aspects of family finances as well as moral and legal provisions regarding marriage in the Catholic Church. Several recent studies have shown that counseling is important to ensure both candidates understand the responsibilities and commitments they will undertake, as expressed by Nguyen and Lee (2022) and Hassan and Ali (2023). The bride and groom formalize their relationship in a church building through a public celebration attended by relatives, members of the congregation, witnessed by two witnesses, and confirmed by the parish priest or his delegate. This public celebration can take the form of a prayer service or a Eucharistic celebration, depending on the agreement between the priest, the prospective bride and groom, and their relatives. Suryanda et al. (2021) emphasize that this celebration is not only ritual but also serves as social recognition of the couple's status as husband and wife within the community. After the celebration, the two are officially husband and wife according to the Catholic Church, and this status is also recognized by the community. However, the wife continues to live with her relatives until the next ritual, namely the presentation of the dowry. This process demonstrates that despite the influence of religious practices, traditional elements of marriage are maintained as a form of recognition of the cultural identity of the Kei people.

d) Post-Marriage Confirmation (haok il vat, pick up the wife).

After the marriage ceremony, a reception is often held if the relatives of the bride and groom have the desire and ability to hold one. The reception itself depends largely on their financial capacity. After this ceremony, the wife stays with her family and relatives for a relatively short time, usually about a week, while the husband returns with his relatives. When the appointed time arrives, the male relatives will pick up their daughter-in-law (haok il vat), although sometimes female relatives also accompany their daughters to their husbands and relatives in an event called hov duak vat. During the reception, the female relatives prepare everything necessary. The bride is dressed and seated on a bed, held in the lap by a female relative. Her entire body is covered with a sarong and shaded by an umbrella held by the relative. A full divan (bed) is provided outside the house, and both male and female relatives are present. The preparations include the following: 1. Duvan Etbaan, the bed for the newlyweds, is prepared by the bride's family, often her maternal relatives. This bed includes not only a mattress but also sheets, pillows, pillowcases, a mosquito net, and a blanket. In the past, people prepared a dar tarngu (pillow mat). The person responsible for this arrangement usually receives a sadsad (lela) and must prepare a sarong for the person carrying it, an act known as hervalin. 2. Kaas Lemar, a cupboard filled with clothes,

sarongs, or other items. Providing the cupboard and its contents is the responsibility of both male and female family members. In return, those who provide the cupboard and clothing receive a *sadsad*. 3. *Lakat Kaloi*, kitchen equipment consisting of cooking utensils, food supplies (both cooked and raw), buckets, ladles, and other items, donated by family and relatives. In return, they will receive *voryaf*, in the form of money and gold from the male relatives when they accompany the bride to the groom's house. 4. When all preparations have been made, the bride's arrival by the groom and his relatives begins. The groom's entourage and his relatives march to the bride's house. Upon arriving at the door, they knock and the person who opens it is called the door. They do not enter immediately, but instead hand over a gold bracelet as a door-opening gift. In return, the person who gives the bracelet receives a sarong. Afterward, the entourage is allowed to enter, and the clan head invites them to explain the purpose of their visit. Next, they must open the second door (the door to the room where the bride is located). Here, the groom's female relative must also hand over another gold bracelet as the gold bracelet to the person who opened the door. The person who received the bracelet will hand over a sarong in return. Afterward, the bride is carried out and seated on a prepared bed, along with the female relative who carried her. The bride is still covered in a sarong with an open umbrella over her head, while a mosquito net is draped over the bed. She is carried onto the bed by predetermined men, who cover her shoulders with sarongs. Afterward, the bride's entourage is escorted to the groom's house, accompanied by loud cheers. Upon arrival at the groom's house, they are greeted by relatives and acquaintances of the groom. The bed bearers will not lower the bride until the women of the groom's relatives arrive with gold for them. After receiving the gold bracelets, they lower the bride and hand her a sarong as a gift. Next, the groom's relatives hand over a gold bracelet to lower the umbrella (*mas tuvu baeng*), a gold bracelet to open the veil (*mas uv'uv*), and another gold bracelet to the woman carrying the bride (*mas uv'uv*). Each gold bracelet given is matched with a sarong, so that those carrying something always have a sarong with them.

Social and Economic Impacts

Interviews with respondents regarding the social and economic impacts of traditional wedding ceremonies revealed significant changes in society. In lively discussions, respondents described how these ceremonies have brought about changes in the social structure. Approximately 70% of respondents perceived a shift in the social hierarchy, with individual roles and participation in traditional ceremonies now more valued, creating a stronger sense of community among residents. Furthermore, 65% of respondents noted that traditional wedding ceremonies have influenced relationships among residents. They reported that the shared activities involved in preparing and conducting these ceremonies strengthen social bonds, reduce conflict, and enhance cooperation between communities. A sense of ownership and responsibility for traditions is key to creating harmonious relationships. Economically, the impacts are also quite encouraging. Approximately 80% of respondents acknowledged an increase in community income from the tourism sector, thanks to the appeal of traditional wedding ceremonies. They mentioned that many tourists come to

witness and participate in the rituals, which in turn increases revenue for local businesses. Furthermore, 75% of respondents highlighted the creation of new jobs as a result of increased tourism activity. They explained that various job opportunities have emerged, ranging from catering services to tour guiding, which not only provide additional income but also improve people's skills.

Strategies for Cultural Tourism Development

The strategy for cultural tourism development revealed a number of constructive recommendations. In a dynamic discussion, respondents highlighted the importance of building collaboration between stakeholders. Approximately 80% agreed that collaboration between the government, local communities, and tourism industry players could improve the effectiveness of cultural tourism development. They believed this synergy would facilitate better resource allocation and optimize existing potential. Furthermore, 75% of respondents emphasized the need to improve the promotion and marketing of cultural tourism. They suggested using digital platforms and social media to expand the reach of information about local ceremonies and traditions. Respondents believed that creative and engaging marketing strategies could attract tourists and increase the visibility of local culture. Finally, 70% of respondents recommended the importance of education and training for local communities. They emphasized that training in hospitality, tour guiding, and event management could empower communities to play an active role in tourism development. With improved skills, communities could not only capitalize on economic opportunities but also contribute to the preservation of their own culture. These interview results align with previous research that emphasizes the importance of collaborative strategies in cultural tourism development. Research by Roberts (2020) shows that collaboration between government, local communities, and tourism industry players is key to sustainable tourism development. Approximately 78% of respondents in the study also confirmed that this synergy allows for more efficient and optimal resource management. Furthermore, research by Chen (2019) highlights the importance of promotion and marketing in attracting tourists. Chen noted that the use of social media and digital platforms is highly effective in expanding the reach of information and increasing the visibility of local culture. This finding aligns with 75% of respondents who recommended creative marketing strategies to attract tourists.

CONCLUSION

This study presents several key findings that underscore the importance of traditional wedding ceremonies in the context of cultural tourism development in Ngilngof Tourism Village. First, traditional wedding ceremonies serve not only as cultural rituals but also as a reflection of local identity and values held dear by the community. Approximately 80% of respondents confirmed that these ceremonies strengthen social bonds and create a sense of togetherness among residents. This study reveals the significant cultural tourism potential of these ceremonies, with 75% of respondents seeing them as a tourist attraction. The uniqueness and beauty of wedding rituals can increase tourist visits, which in turn contribute to increased income for local communities. Furthermore, challenges in preserving traditional ceremonies, such as the influence of globalization and cultural commodification, are a

significant concern. Therefore, mitigation strategies are needed that involve community education and training, as well as collaboration between various stakeholders.

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