

## Ethnographic study of democratic character values in Tradition Sko kenduri in Clean Water Village

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### Abstract

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*This study aims to explore democratic values embedded in the kenduri sko tradition in Air Bersih Village. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed, utilizing participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation for data collection. Data analysis involved organization, categorization, and interpretation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the tradition. The findings reveal that the kenduri sko tradition embodies democratic values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, solidarity, transparency, equality, and inclusivity. These values are reflected in every stage of the tradition. The findings highlight that the kenduri sko tradition plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and strengthening democratic character within the community of Air Bersih Village.*

**Keywords:** *Kenduri Sko, Democratic Character, Ethnographic, Desa Air Bersih*

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### INTRODUCTION

In a traditional society, heritage or ancestral relics are very valuable heirlooms. Therefore, this heritage can be considered an important identity—even sacred—to be guarded and maintained. The way that traditional communities usually protect heritage is by carrying out traditional ceremonies/rituals at certain times. This has even become a way of life for the people who own it (Manik, 2021). Geertz (Geertz, 1983) said that the way of life of preserving heritage is a way of reminding humans of their existence with their environment. One of them is the kenduri sko (KS) tradition carried out by the Kerinci people.

Kenduri Sko is a traditional tradition that is still preserved by indigenous communities in several regions in Indonesia, especially in West Sumatra and Jambi. Kenduri Sko is a tradition that is always held continuously from generation to generation once every year. This ceremony will be held when the rice harvest in the rice fields has been completed as an expression of gratitude for the harvest that has been obtained. This ceremony uses various symbols including: using tumpeng rice (yellow rice), various kinds of flowers (flowers) in Kerinci language called terasih (Nugraha, 2021). The aim of implementing Kenduri Sko is to appoint and enthrone new traditional stakeholders, as replacements for traditional stakeholders who have stopped in accordance with what is regulated by existing customs. The next function is to ask God Almighty for salvation so that he will be given abundant sustenance from the crops and fields. Another function is to recall inheritance lands and strengthen the role of women as owners of inheritance (Hardi et al., 2022). This tradition has an important meaning not only as a means of traditional rituals, but also as a vehicle for strengthening togetherness and



family values. This tradition involves all members of society regardless of social status, so that it becomes an effective medium in building equality and strengthening democratic values at the local level.

The Kenduri Sko tradition is considered to be a medium that has character values in it, this character content indirectly grows and is present in every procession carried out by its implementers (Hajri, 2023). One of the character values contained in the Kenduri Sko tradition is democratic character. The democratic values contained in the Kenduri Sko tradition are clearly visible in the process of planning and implementing the ritual. The process of deliberation to reach consensus is a concrete form of how democracy is carried out in this tradition. Every decision taken, whether related to the implementation of the kenduri or other technical aspects, is always based on mutual agreement. In this context, deliberation is not only a symbol of democracy, but also part of efforts to maintain harmony and balance in society.

Kenduri Sko also reflects respect for the rights and obligations of every individual in the community. Indigenous peoples highly respect the role of each member in social and ritual life. Everyone has the opportunity to participate and voice their opinions, either directly or through trusted representatives. This reflects that even in traditional traditions, the basic principles of democracy such as participation, freedom of opinion and equal rights are highly upheld. Women also have their own place in this tradition. Women play an important role in the implementation of the kenduri sko ceremony in Kerinci. This is because women are the only heirs to the sko owned by every village in Kerinci. Therefore, the implementation of the Sko kenduri is held by the inner child or the daughter of the Sko heir. It's just that in its implementation the batano children are assisted by male children who occupy traditional positions, namely the Depati. However, all control in implementation remains under the direction of the inner child as the heir (Hardi et al., 2022).

Apart from that, the Kenduri Sko tradition also teaches the importance of social responsibility and caring for others. The entire community works together in preparing and carrying out the kenduri, starting from providing food ingredients to arranging the venue. The value of mutual cooperation is one of the main pillars of democracy in Indonesia, which shows that cooperation and solidarity are an integral part of democratic life. Democratic values can develop if society has a system that regulates activities both internally and externally in a structured manner. This system is not implemented by force, but is driven by the consciousness of every individual in society. As stated by Mohammad Hatta, democracy will flourish if there is a sense of responsibility and tolerance. The democratic attitude that exists in society is reflected through democratic values. Amril Mansur added that these values, in practice, have indicators such as attractive, desirable, pleasant, and liked in a positive or nuanced sense (Santosa & Hidayat, 2022).

In a broader context, Kenduri Sko contains many values that are relevant to efforts to build democratic character in the younger generation. One of the important values that can be learned is an open and inclusive attitude towards differences. Kenduri Sko does not differentiate between who can or cannot be involved, so this tradition also teaches the importance of accepting diversity as a

wealth, not as a threat. In line with that, this tradition also instills the values of social justice. The distribution of duties and responsibilities in the implementation of Kenduri Sko is carried out fairly and evenly, regardless of a person's background or social status. Each individual is considered to have an equally important role in maintaining the continuity of this tradition, so that a sense of mutual respect and respect is built between each other. As (Pramono, 2024), Inclusive Democracy is an environmental concept who supports broad and inclusive participation, where every citizen has an equal opportunity to get involved. This creates society Which more diverse and democratic, which reduces inequalities in political participation and helps reduce social tensions and conflict

The indigenous people who run Kenduri Sko show that democracy does not always have to be implemented within a formal framework such as in state government, but can also be found in everyday life at the community level. Democracy in this tradition is organic, grows and develops along with the social dynamics of the community. This shows that democratic values have actually existed for a long time and are alive in the local culture of Indonesian society.

In efforts to strengthen democracy in Indonesia, it is important to explore and preserve local traditions such as Kenduri Sko which contain democratic values. This tradition can be an inspiration and model for modern society to apply democratic principles in social life. Values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, equality and social justice reflected in Kenduri Sko are very relevant to efforts to build a democratic and just society.

Thus, the Kenduri Sko tradition is not just a traditional ceremony that preserves ancestral cultural heritage, but is also a forum for forming and strengthening democratic character in society. The democratic values contained in this tradition need to continue to be introduced and instilled, especially to the younger generation, so that they can understand the importance of democratic principles in maintaining harmony, togetherness and shared prosperity.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This type of research is qualitative which focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Referring to Creswell's theory (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research aims to develop an understanding of complex problems through subjective interpretation based on participants' views. This descriptive approach does not attempt to test hypotheses, but rather to describe and understand social reality based on the experiences and perceptions of the individuals involved. By using this method, researchers can identify patterns, themes, and meaning from the data obtained, providing a richer and more contextual picture of the phenomenon being studied.

This research uses an ethnographic approach, based on Creswell's perspective (Creswell, 2018) which focuses on exploring in depth the meaning and social life of a particular cultural group. Through this method, researchers are directly involved in participants' daily lives to understand the patterns, values, norms and perspectives they hold. Researchers collected data using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of relevant documents, thereby

providing a holistic description of the participants' culture and experiences from their own perspective.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interview and observation techniques, which enabled researchers to obtain more comprehensive qualitative data. The qualitative data analysis process involves organizing data, grouping by themes, and in-depth interpretation to produce accurate and meaningful descriptions of phenomena. The data collected was then analyzed thematically to find important meanings that emerged. Through this approach, research aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon as well as in-depth insights that are relevant to the issues discussed (Creswell, 2014).

The triangulation process for testing the validity of qualitative research data has four types: source triangulation, technique triangulation, time triangulation, and theory triangulation. Source triangulation means comparing and rechecking the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research. For example, comparing observation data with interview data, as well as comparing interview results with the contents of related documents (Sugiyono, 2013). This research uses triangulation of sources and methods.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

In the context of Kerinci customs, the ABS-SBK philosophy contains at least four main values: religious values, human values, democratic and deliberative values, and social values. These four values serve as guidelines for the Kerinci people in living their socio-cultural life. Durkheim called this philosophy mechanical solidarity, namely prioritizing collective cohesion, which characterizes eastern philosophy (Yohanis, 2020). Tocqueville also stated the same thing about civil society as an area of social life characterized by voluntarism, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, independence and attachment to legal norms and values (Kurniawan et al., 2021).

In Kenduri Sko, consensus deliberation is an important value that is realized through a decision-making process that involves all levels of society. Observation results showed that before the event started, the community gathered to discuss preparations for the kenduri, such as the division of tasks, implementation time, and the role of each individual.

The implementation of the Sko kenduri begins with a deliberation stage or what is called *Traditional Sitting* led by indigenous people as a first step to unite views and joint decisions. In this deliberation, it was decided that the roles and responsibilities of each member of society would be determined openly and fairly. The deliberation is also a means of instilling the values of togetherness and collective agreement which will be implemented throughout the entire Sko kenduri series.

Deliberations are carried out substantively in accordance with theoretical values. As according to Cohen and Uphoff in (Kusnadi, 2020), the main factors that determine participation include involvement in decision making, implementation of decisions, achievement of results, and evaluation. One of the conditions proposed by Cohen and Uphoff is empowerment, where the level of

people's effective participation depends on how much power they have. Participation in decision making specifically involves gathering ideas, formulating options, evaluating options, choosing actions, and formulating strategies regarding the impact of decisions. In this context, there are three types of decisions that are known: (1) initial decisions, (2) ongoing decisions, and (3) operational decisions. This is confirmed by the results of an interview with the chairman of the Clean Water Village Traditional Institution who is also a person *Depati*, as his speech.

"We always start preparations for the *Sko kenduri* with a series of deliberations held several times. At the first deliberation, we set an implementation date that was mutually agreed upon by traditional elders, community leaders and residents. After that, we discussed the form and structure of the event, so that each part truly reflects the inherited traditional and traditional values. Before the day of implementation, the community also carries out a 'smoking the land' event, a pre-kenduri *sko* ritual which aims to cleanse spiritually and prepare the environment to be blessed and protected. "The highlight is the main event on the day, where all elements of society attend and take part in the procession according to traditional rules that have been carefully designed through joint deliberation."

On another occasion, the chairman of the *Kenduri Sko* committee, who also acts as deputy chairman of the traditional institution, said:

"In this consensus deliberation, we invited representatives from each *luhah* or group, incl *my dear* in and *ninik mamak* who represent their respective extended families. Their presence is very important so that every community group has a voice in every decision made, so that agreement can be reached by acclamation, without any debate or conflict. By involving all levels through their respective delegates, the results of deliberations truly reflect the common will. "The decision taken also has full force to be obeyed by the entire community in the implementation of the *Sko kenduri*."

The *Sko kenduri* event shows strong values of togetherness. All members of the community, regardless of social or economic background, participate and work together for the success of the event. Field observations show how people help each other, both in preparing food, decorations, and in event processions.

The spirit of mutual assistance and mutual cooperation reflects democratic values, such as equality and active community participation. Collaboration between community members is also very strong (Apandie, 2021), in line with the civic virtue perspective which encourages active participation in the community. There is no dominance of one particular group, all residents contribute according to their respective abilities to ensure the success of the *kenduri sko*.

*Kenduri Sko*, as a traditional tradition that has been going on for generations in Air Bersih Village, is an important moment that reflects community togetherness and cooperation. The results of interviews and observations from the preparation process to the implementation of this event involved all elements of society without exception, from traditional officials, youth, women, to community leaders. Each element of society has a clear role and works according to their respective portions, functions, responsibilities and obligations.

Traditional officials, as ceremonial leaders, have the main task of leading rituals and prayers during the *kenduri*. They ensure that every stage of the custom

runs according to the traditions passed down from their ancestors. Meanwhile, mothers have an important role in preparing food for all event participants, from cooking to arranging food presentation. On the other hand, the youth are responsible for technical matters, such as preparing the place, setting up tents, and taking care of other necessary equipment.

Openness in the division of roles and tasks is clearly visible in the Sko kenduri. Each individual can see and understand their role in the event. Interview results show that this transparent attitude strengthens mutual trust and increases active community involvement. High public participation in the Sko kenduri event reflects democratic values such as accountability and transparency.

However, what needs to be underlined is the possibility of the emergence of political practices of retaliation which could disrupt the integrity of the holding of the Sko kenduri. Hence, the principles *good governance* such as efficiency, fairness and responsiveness need to be adopted to ensure that kenduri sko truly reflects democratic values (Wibisono, 2014).

The value of equality is also present in the Sko kenduri. People who participate in the kenduri are given the same opportunity to contribute, both materially and energetically, according to their respective abilities. This reinforces the principle that every member of the community is valued for their contribution. Community participation in kenduri sko shows democratic values such as equality and inclusiveness. However, we need to be aware of the political practice of retaliation which could disrupt the organization of the event.

Kenduri sko also shows the values of equality and inclusiveness. All village residents, regardless of background or social status, are given the same opportunity to be involved in the preparation and implementation of the event. This is in line with democratic principles which uphold justice and equal rights for all citizens. . These principles can be a force in strengthening democratic culture at the village level.

The younger generation is actively involved in kenduri sko through direct teaching from parents and traditional leaders. The results of the interviews show that their involvement aims to pass on democratic values, such as deliberation and mutual cooperation, so that the younger generation can understand and continue this tradition.

## **DISCUSSION**

Kenduri sko is a real means of teaching and implementing democratic values in everyday life. The values of deliberation, openness and cooperation seen in this event show that democracy is not only related to politics, but is also reflected in social interactions that strengthen communal ties.

The deliberation process that occurs before the kenduri sko is in line with the principles of deliberative democracy, where everyone is heard and their opinions are considered. The Relevance and Uniqueness of Democratic Values in the Traditional Context Kenduri sko reflects democratic values in a form that is in accordance with local wisdom. Democracy applied in a traditional context shows how global values can be adapted to suit local culture. The values of togetherness and mutual cooperation are clear proof that Kenduri Sko strengthens social harmony and cohesion.

Even though democratic values are taught, the interview results show that there are challenges in preserving the kenduri sko tradition, especially among the younger generation who are increasingly interested in modern culture. This shows that there needs to be active efforts from traditional leaders and parents to continue to invite the younger generation to participate in traditional activities that are full of democratic values. Innovation in organizing kenduri sko could be one solution, for example by adding elements that are relevant for young people without losing the essence of the tradition.

The democratic values applied in kenduri sko strengthen relationships between members of society and create an inclusive social environment. Equality and fairness in this event creates a sense of mutual respect and reduces social inequality. Kenduri sko also has potential as a model for other collective activities in society, such as social activities or religious events, which can strengthen social cohesion in the long term.

With this format of results and discussion, the author can highlight how Kenduri Sko is not only a tradition, but also a means of democratic character education for society, especially in maintaining a culture of deliberation, openness and equality.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research aims to explore democratic values in the kenduri sko tradition in Air Bersih Village. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The data is then organized, grouped, and interpreted to gain an in-depth understanding of this tradition.

The research results show that the kenduri sko tradition contains democratic values, such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, togetherness, openness, equality and inclusiveness. These values are reflected in the various stages of implementing the tradition, from preparation to implementation. For example, deliberation is seen in joint decision making between residents, while mutual cooperation is reflected in the cooperation of the entire community to prepare for events. Togetherness and openness are present in the active participation of all levels of society without distinction of social status, while equality and inclusiveness can be seen from the recognition of the rights and roles of all individuals in this tradition.

Apart from preserving local culture, kenduri sko also plays an important role in strengthening the democratic character of the Air Bersih Village community. This tradition not only maintains social harmony, but also encourages the creation of more egalitarian relationships. These findings show that local traditions can be an important medium in building democratic values, which are relevant for maintaining social cohesion and strengthening community life.

This research is expected to contribute to understanding the role of local traditions as a means of building democratic character. Kenduri sko shows the potential of local culture in supporting the development of democratic values, both in local and national contexts.

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