



# The Values of the *Robo-robo* Tradition of the West Kalimantan Malay Society in Cultural Preservation

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**Abstract:** Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture, traditions, and customs. Many of them are still maintained, one of which is still preserved and practiced is the *robo-robo* tradition among the people of West Kalimantan, especially the people of Mempawah. The purpose of discussing this topic is to describe the phenomenon of adult behavior today, contrary to traditional messages, advice from parents in the Malay philosophy of life. There is a need for replanting and re-understanding or reconstruction of the values contained in traditional messages as characteristics and self-identity of ethnic Malays, the values of traditional messages are contained in local wisdom called *Robo-robo*. The Malay community believes that the traditional value of *Robo-robo* is a message to become a civilized person according to the Malay philosophy of life. The traditional values in *Robo-robo* represent Islamic values because Islam is the religious identity of the Malays.

**Keywords:** *Robo-robo*, values, tradition, cultural preservation



## Introduction

Indonesia is a diverse country, consisting of different customs and many cultures in Indonesia, which enrich Indonesia. This diversity makes Indonesia full of culture, and a lot can be found in Indonesia with these cultural differences. These different cultures make Indonesia more pluralistic, which means that they still maintain each other's culture with different cultures. This religious culture owned by Indonesia is a wealth of the country that must be preserved at all times.

History of the *Robo-robo* Tradition in the Mempawah Regency Community The history of *robo-robo* culture began with Opu Daeng Manambon and Princess Kesumba and their entourage from the Matan Kingdom to Mempawah to receive the throne of the Bangkule Rajankg Kingdom in 1737 AD. When entering Kuala Mempawah, the group was greeted warmly by the people of Mempawah at that time. They even put up colorful paper at the houses of residents who were on the river banks. Seeing the community's enthusiastic response, Opu Daeng Manambon stopped at Muara Kuala Secapah, to be precise, at the Marines where there used to be a pile of white sand and then gave food to the community. The community was pleased to receive the arrival of the grandson of their King (Raja Senggaok).

Because his arrival coincided on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar where some Muslims believe that the month of Safar is a month full of trouble, Opu Daeng Manambon reads a congratulatory prayer and rejects reinforcements with the community to avoid calamities in the month of Safar. After praying, the food is eaten together in the open, called the Safar meal. When Opu Daeng Manambon came, many scholars were already in Mempawah. From a religious perspective, it is not against the rules to read a prayer of congratulations and a prayer to reject reinforcements. Isn't that a good thing? We are human-centric who should view existence for nature, which provides many benefits for all living beings. This brief event became the initial history of the *robo-robo* culture, which has become a tradition.

Tradition means habits such as customs, language, beliefs, and the social system, which are passed down from generation to generation and continue to be preserved. There are thematic tours in West Kalimantan, precisely in Mempawah Regency, namely *robo-robo* crocodiles. Zulkarnain (2018:1) reveals



that *robo-robo* is a tradition carried out by kings and descendants of the Amantubillah Mempawah Palace. It is still preserved by the community from the past until now. Since 2016, the *robo-robo* culture has been included as one of the intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia. The celebration of the *robo-robo* tradition is a local cultural tour and a national cultural tour every year.

## Methods

The method used in this research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. Bogdan and Taylor (Moleong, 2002) define a qualitative approach as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observable people and actors. By the type of data required, namely qualitative data, data collection techniques used in the study were using open interviews, observation, and documentation.

## Findings

The traditional robo-robo ceremony in Mempawah Regency has a series of ritual processions carried out on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the last week in the month of Safar. The stages of the ceremony are (a) the release of puaka (animals); (b) heirloom carnival and heirloom washing; (c) Haulan Opu Daeng Manambon; (d) pilgrimage to the graves of Opu Daeng Manambon and the tombs of the kings; (e) national seminars; (f) customary title toana; (g) traveling on a bath; (h) go on a trip; (i) ritual wasting at sea; (j) fresh flour from fishing boats; (k) ceremonial events.

The meaning of the robo-robo tradition, which is held in the last week of the month of Safar can be known historically, namely, the ritual performed on Monday to commemorate the death of Opu Daeng Manambon, Monday, 26 Safar 1175 H. On Tuesday, pilgrimage rituals to the Opu Daeng Manambon Tomb were carried out to commemorate the day on which Opu Daeng Manambon was buried in Bukit Rama. On Wednesday, a traditional wasting ritual was carried out in Muara Kuala, the Mempawah River, which borders the South China Sea, to commemorate the arrival of Opu Daeng Manambon from the Kingdom of Matan to Mempawah. The values contained in the robo-robo tradition are; (1) ritual value; (2) spiritual value; (3) entertainment value.

Culture is the result of the creation of human thought to commemorate a specific event that is characteristic of the community group in the



environment. According to Liliweri (2009:10), culture exists among humankind, which is diverse, acquired, and transmitted socially through learning, described from biology, psychology, and sociology as a structured human existence, divided into several dynamic aspects relative value.

The Mempawah community living in the coastal area of West Kalimantan has a very well-known culture, namely Robo-robo, as an intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia established by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia on October 27, 2016. Robo-robo is a sizeable annual ceremony, and the sacred ceremony is held on the last week of the Safar Month by the Mempawah community.

The history of robo-robo culture begins with the arrival of Opu Daeng Manambon and his entourage from the Matan Kingdom to Mempawah to accept the power of Princess Kesumba as the Great Queen of the successors to the throne of the Kingdom and Opu Daeng Manambon was appointed as a significant royal official in the Bangkule Rajankg Kingdom. When entering Kuala Mempawah, the group was greeted with joy by the community, feeling touched by the welcome, so he stopped and gave food supplies to the community. Natsir et al. (2017:35) said Opu Daeng Manambon prayed with the residents who welcomed him, asking God for safety to be kept away from calamities and disasters. After praying, it was followed by eating together.

Although the togetherness lasted for a short time, it was very memorable for Opu Daeng Manambon and the people. The incident then became the beginning of the robo-robo culture, a tradition for the Mempawah community to establish friendships to strengthen relationships with relatives. The historical robo-robo event was also carried out as a commemoration of the arrival of the figure, which had a significant influence in the Mempawah area.

Cultural values are values that are agreed upon and upheld in the community. Batubara (2017: 92) says that the traditional value of an area will become normative in the form of culture if embraced tradition is glorified and upheld by the community. The celebration of the robo-robo tradition carried out by the people of Mempawah Regency has positive values that we should uphold to preserve a local culture passed down from generation to generation.



Triandis (1991; 170) divided culture into two aspects, namely subjective and objective culture. Subjective culture is the norms, roles, and values and how humans categorize and associate information with their environment. Objective culture results from human work in the form of objective objects such as the everyday tools we use, radio, roads, and stations. Local wisdom is traditional (indigenous) knowledge passed down from one generation to the next and is generally passed down in the family environment orally, either through speech or through rituals, ceremonies, and other means. In the structure, individuals do what the group expects and the cultural pattern is collectivism, if people only had a few groups at their disposal and had to work with those groups to survive. Values are emphasized by collectivism promote security, obedience, duty, harmony in groups, hierarchies, and personalized relationships. This is contrast with the values emphasized by individualistic perspective that promote personal pleasure, competition, individual uniqueness achievement, freedom, autonomy, and fair exchange (Triandis, 1991:172).

The traditional message of the Malays is actualized in the form of local practices, which are often carried out obediently by the ethnic Malays, namely Robo-robo. Robo robo is a local cultural identity of ethnic Malays in Mempawah Regency. Mempawah is taken from the term "Mempauh," which is the name of a tree that grows in the river's upper reaches, also known as the Mempawah River. Currently, the king of Mempawah is led by Prince Ratu Mulawansa Mardan Adijaya Kesuma Ibrahim. The form of gratitude in Robo-robo is a sign of the first entry of Islam, traces of King Opu Daeng Menambon, and gratitude for marine products, which are the source of life for the Malay community. From the local practice activities of Robo-Robo, various ethnic groups consisting of ethnic Malays, Dayaks, and Chinese interact with each other in maintaining mutual harmony (Natsir, 2014).

The king's relatives follow Robo-Robo, but various ethnic groups follow the community, and in Mempawah Regency, this situation makes the motto "harmony in ethnicity." It means that the community works together, unites to maintain friendship and unity in diversity for the integrity of religious communities. The primary capital is to maintain national unity in the spirit of nationalism and internationalism. Robo-robo is one of the elements of the nation's culture and a source that can provide information and knowledge. It contains many values contained in a society, advice, messages, and instructions for today's millennial youth, and is helpful for life.



Given the importance of the content in expressing local wisdom, efforts were made to preserve it. One way is to collect data and study the expressions still alive in Malay society. From the message of local wisdom, Robo-robo, values can be extracted in the form of advice, praise, and satire that usually occurs among the Malay community. These values can be learned from various lessons, for teenagers to behave according to the traditional message based on the values of local wisdom and can become role models in life (Natsir, 2014; Zulkarnain, 2018; 107).

The values contained in the local practice of Robo-Robo include Religious Values, a form of gratitude to Allah SWT because, on the last Wednesday of the Sapar (Hijri) month, the community gets blessings. The first entry of Islam in Mempawah brought by the king of Opu Daeng Menambon was given thanks to the food and blessings of seafood from the Kuala River in Mempawah. Believing that Allah has created the sky and everything in it so that his servants are always grateful for the blessings from nature, the Malay community believes in the importance of protecting nature. Great values, people share, make each other happy through prayer together, share food and seafood. The value of hospitality in friendship, this moment is an opportunity for all community members to gather together to strengthen the brotherhood. This tradition was born from ethnic Malays, but in practice, all citizens, both Malays and other ethnicities join to witness this tradition, so this is where the friendship, harmony in diversity lies. The value of friendship, the Robo-Robo tradition not only makes residents of the older generation present, but the old, young, and even children happily attend and carry out this tradition.

From this atmosphere of togetherness and friendship, the connection is created between residents. Not only from the Mempawah Regency area, have even tourists from abroad often attended the annual Robo-robo festival. The value of unity and cooperation, the moment of Robo-Robo friendship, directly gives meaning to strengthen unity and solidarity humans should possess as a main strength of society. This symbolization inherits and believes in the values of goodness in culture and customs because traditional values have messages of wisdom and guidelines for personal and communal life. The next generation should foster unity and integrity so that cultural heritage does not quickly fade in value, even to losing its civilization.



## Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the meaning and value of the robo-robo tradition as the preservation of local culture in Mempawah Regency are; (1) as a meaningful and sacred annual ceremony held by the people of Mempawah Regency on the last week of the Safar month. The history of the robo-robo culture begins with Opu Daeng Manambon and Princess Kesumba and their entourage from the Matan kingdom to Mempawah. His arrival was on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar, where some Muslims believe that the month of Safar is a month full of calamities. Therefore, Opu Daeng Manambon reads a prayer of protection for them then eats with the community in the open air, known as robo-robo. (2) The robo-robo tradition is held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays in the last week of the month of Safar. The first ritual on Monday morning is the release of animals. In the afternoon, an heirloom carnival is held, and the washing of the royal war heirlooms and in the evening, a haulan Opu Daeng Manambon is held. On Tuesday morning, there is a grand pilgrimage ritual to Opu Daeng Manambon and Putri Kesumba in the complex of tombs of the king who once ruled Mempawah. After returning from the pilgrimage, a national seminar is held, and in the evening, a traditional toana is held. They took a Safar bath on Wednesday morning and continued with a Safar meal. A wasting ritual was performed at Muara Kuala Mempawah for the final part. The king will give plain flour to fishing boats and attend a ceremonial robo-robo event there. (3) The meaning of the robo-robo tradition which is held for three consecutive days in the month of Safar, among others: Monday to commemorate the death of Opu Daeng Manambon; Tuesday to commemorate the burial of Opu Daeng Manambon's body; and Wednesday to commemorate the footprints the arrival of Opu Daeng Manambon from Matan to Mempawah. There are 3 (three) values in the robo-robo tradition that we should uphold. These values include; ritual values, spiritual values, and entertainment values.





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