

## LOCAL WISDOM OF NIAS TRADITION *ORAHU*

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### Abstract

*Orahu* is a tradition of deliberation which is well known in the life system of the people of South Nias, especially in the areas of Maniamölö, Onolalu, To'ene and Mazinö. *Orahu* is carried out in every important activity in the community, for example discussing problems related to the village, death events, weddings, *Fa'ulu* and Mambu Ana'a parties (ceremony to increase social status or traditional parties) and others. *Orahu* to a large extent is called *Orahua Mbanua*, and is usually performed at Ewali Sawolo or Ewali Orahua (the courtyard in front of the house of the most influential nobleman or Balö Ji'ulu). The *Orahua Mbanua* was followed by the Si'ulu (nobles), Si'ila (traditional leaders) and Ono Mbanua (the whole community). This research was aimed at describing as well as revealing the local wisdoms of *Orahu*. This research applied qualitative descriptive method. The data in this study were collected using interview techniques and literature study. The research results shows that *Orahu* tradition emphasizes on the solidarity and wise decision taking which become a very important aspect in the life system of Nias people. It was in this open forum that all village problems were discussed, and decided how to handle them. In ancient times, *Orahu* was also used as a trial and for determining punishment for violators of village customs. *Orahu* is usually done at the *bale* (village meeting hall), but to a lesser extent, it can also be carried out at home.

**Keywords:** Local wisdom, *orahu*, Nias tradition, village customs

### 1. Introduction

Local wisdom is knowledge obtained through a series of activities carried out by a group of people in a certain area or place, and then passed down from generation to generation orally. Local wisdom itself includes not only knowledge, but also life values. The value of local wisdom is a kind of science that needs to be preserved because it contains many moral lessons and scientific philosophies that are still relevant to life in modern times. Oral tradition is a form of human communication wherein knowledge, art, ideas and cultural material is received, preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another (oral Tradition, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral\\_tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_tradition)). From the definition above, it can be inferred that the cultural values are the core principles and ideals upon which an entire community exists such as *Orahu* which is based on characteristic solidarity and a wise decision taking.

*Orahu* is a well-known Nias tradition which constitutes a local wisdom. *Orahua* is a social gathering of the Nias people to reach a certain agreement. In this social gathering, Nias people are discussing any issues in the village, particularly in terms of the social problems dealing with the death and the wedding ceremonies. To solve those issues or the social problems, Nias

people uphold solidarity because they believe that it is difficult for to achieve a wise decision or to carry out such a big ceremony alone. The different perception to handle the issues regarding village and social problems such as the wedding and the death ceremonies will be undertaken in *Orahu* tradition, which constitute a meeting to unite the point of view. *Orahu* is a Nias tradition which has been undertaken for generations since long time ago. Thus it has become a local wisdom that must be preserved. It is the indigenous wisdom or knowledge of a society derived from the noble value of cultural traditions to govern the life order of society (Sibarani, 2014. 113).

*Orahu* begins by calling the Si'ulu (nobles), Si'ila (traditional leaders) and Ono Mbanua (the whole community) to gather. Then Balö Ji'ila/Ji'ulu (the most influential nobleman in the village) opened the meeting by explaining the main issues to be discussed. After that each person expressed his opinion on the problems. Even though everyone has the opportunity to speak, it is usually the elders who are experienced to do so.

People who speak in *Orahu* are called *Sorahu*. *Sorahu*, to speak in *Orahu*, must have good oratory skills. Besides, in delivering the idea or insight, *Sorahu* usually does not go straight to the point, sometimes they use proverbs, or saying or ancient parables, and intonation games of sentences. When speaking in *Orahu*, one will direct one's speech to a single person who is called *Sanema Li Oragua* or *Sanema Oragua*. This *Sanema Li Oragua* will answer every word, with a long shout of 'Eeeee', 'Ya'iyä', 'Ya'iyä Hö' or 'Ya'iyä Wa Hö'. To end his conversation, *Sorahu* usually says 'Li gu hö!' which can be interpreted as: that's all my speech.

*Orahu* ends with a summary of the results of the deliberations spoken by *Balö Ji'ila*. He then does a *Hugö* (shout that ends *orahu*) which the whole community answered with shouts of 'Huuuu, Yaiya, Heeeeeee' which signifies the approval of all participants. Every wise decision taking is not in the written forms so each participant must be able to interpret all the utterances.

This research is carried out to describe as well as to reveal the local wisdom of *Orahu* through interpreting the cultural meanings in the social gathering to decide a certain agreement. It is seen that the significant point of local wisdom covered in *Orahu* is solidarity and a wise decision making.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is the presence of a unique cultural form, which contains the values, or local wisdom serving as a means of nurturing and developing a good life in a collective group. Local wisdom can be found in any culture traditions of one's ethnic or place. Manugeran (2017) states that local wisdom is a set of ideas or polices based on the values of virtues found in a community and often applied, believed to be the guidance of life, and handed down from time to time. In other words, it may become the society fundamental characteristic to guide their habits. They need wisdom to be wisely in community process life to achieve their own goal by implementation of knowledge. Classically, wisdom was defined as a quality concerned with making sound judgments to stay out of trouble and live the good life (David J. Pauleen. 3:2017). The local knowledge is related to the people's indigenous understanding that the local people use to overcome their social problems.

A social causes problem that influences a considerable number of individuals within a society. It is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control, and is the source of a conflicting opinion on the grounds of what is perceived as a morally just personal life or societal order. Sternberg's in (Pauleen, 2017: 3) said that the balance theory

suggests that wisdom is a value-mediated use of intelligence and experience to achieve the common good through a balance among intra-, inter-, and extra-personal interests over both the short and long term, to reach a balance among adapting to, shaping of the existing, or selecting a new environment.

*Orahu* is an interaction among a diversity of individuals of all abilities in small, medium and large groups for social and community in certain purposes. Local wisdom can be local knowledge, local skills, local intelligence, local resources, local social processes, local norms, and local customs. Substantially, local wisdom is the values and cultural norms to organize the social life. The values and norms that are believed to be true become the reference for the daily behavior of the local people (Sibarani. 3:2018).

As cultural product from local wisdom we may understand it from our deep interpretation. cultural product, cultural traditions contain many things concerning the life of its community, such as the value system, beliefs and religions, social rules, work ethics, even the way in which social dynamics takes place (Sibarani. 3:2018). The essential of *orahu* is oral tradition.

## **2.2 Solidarity**

Without social gathering, there would not be solidarity, and as consequence, there is no living in community. Why commit the social gathering in community is to unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group. In *Orahu*, social gathering, has the terminology about solidarity is *Fa'asaradõdõ*, it means by gathering we can face all the problems by togetherness. The traditions have identified five forms of social solidarity, pertaining to mechanical, organic, distributive, inclusive, and dialogic ones( Stephen Kan Ma. 147:2010). The aim of solidarity is to keep social harmony and to achieve common interest. It expands the original, functionalist typology, which differentiates mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity (Durkheim1893). Mechanical solidarity is the sharing of ideas, beliefs, values, norms, and teachings among people to reach a consensus. It has a long history, probably salient in feudal or traditional societies, through the preaching of religion, education, family sanctioning, and other means of socialization. The sharing of norms in mechanical solidarity in effect creates a culture for people that becomes institutionalized and enduring.

## **2.3 Wise Decision Taking**

Life requires that we make wise decisions, to ensure that our lives are happier and that we can have peace of mind. Making a wise decision means fully utilizing all of information processing. It should also be evident in the way we act when we are faced with a complex, in life. How do we make a decision when there are no clear guidelines or procedures and where the outcome is uncertain or known. A wise decision ought to be recognized by general consensus to be wise, and by implication to bring about the most benefit to self, others, and more broadly the common social good. Whenever we face a decision, we need to begin by framing. Decision theory is the study of principles and algorithms use for making decision. This is achieved by identifying values, uncertainties and other things that might influence the decision. (Maryam Temitayo Ahmed, Habeeb Omotunde. 51: 2012). All the decision making they called *Fondrakhe* which regulates all aspects of life.

### 3. Research Method

This research is qualitative descriptive, in which the researcher focuses on the characteristics of *Orahu*. As a qualitative research, it conducted methods of data collection which was obtained from deep interview of Nias people living in Medan and understanding the *Orahu* in Nias society by recording technique.

The descriptive method applied was Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis procedures. After collecting data, there are three activities in qualitative analysis, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. (Miles and Huberman, Sibarani, 6: 2018).

The analytical model used is a model of local wisdom values, especially for drawing conclusions and verification to analyze the forms that contain the text about the characteristics as well as procedures of *Orahu*.

### 4. Result and Discussion

The people of Nias prioritize attitudes and actions with the so-called *fabanasa* (spirit of cooperation) and *falulusa* (mutual cooperation), guarding their hearts, being full of love, and considerate. The traditional houses of the Nias people are built in a row and in the middle there is a hallway that connects the houses so that there are no dividers, this is deliberately made to maintain communication between families. The basis of the construction of this house is *fabanasa* and *falulusa*. Nias society upholds high solidarity of *fabanuasa* (spirit of cooperation) and *fahasaradödö'* (unity), while wise decision taking is *Angetula* which they write it on the *Fondrakhö*. *Fondrakhö* is a customary law that is obeyed and carried out by the Nias tribal people who are grouped in villages or commonly called *ori*. In Nias community structure, the *Fondrakhö* differs operationally between regions for territorial and situational reasons. Nevertheless the *Fondrakhö* of each of these areas basically express the same values.

*Orahu* is one of leadership values that should be considered by Nias ethnicity to be a leader because a leader should be able to give good solution to any problems in the society. Therefore, *Orahu* functions as a symbol of unifier in Nias society. Furthermore, *orahu* is one among other potential characteristics to develop the region (Laia, Asaaro & Darwin. 2019).

#### 4.1 *Orahu* as Solidarity Characteristics of *Fabanuasa* (Spirit of Cooperation) and *Fatalifuso* (Brotherhood)

Solidarity is a necessity for every society or social group. Society will still exist if the social group has a sense of solidarity among its members. In the book *The Theory of Classical and Modern Sociology* (1994) by Doyle Paul Johnson, solidarity refers to a relationship between individuals and/or groups based on shared morals and beliefs, as well as shared emotional experiences. It holds solidarity, namely unity, friendship, mutual trust that arises as a result of shared responsibility and common interests among its members. The sociologist Emile Durkheim also clarified the notion of solidarity. Solidarity is a feeling of mutual trust between members in a group or community. If people trust each other then they will form friendships, mutual respect, driven to be responsible and pay attention to common interests.

*Orahu* tradition in Nias community can be carried out well because Nias people have the characteristic of being familiar. This characteristic is well known in Nias society. The word *fabanasa* comes from the language *banua* which means village, so *fabanasa* refers to one room, one homeland, while *fatalifuso* means brotherhood and *falulu* mutual cooperation. So *fatalifuso* and *falulu* mean one mission or one heart to deal with various problems that exist in the village, especially social problems which include marriage ceremonies and death. This

principle is also in line with the proverb that is popular in the Nias tribe, namely "Öndröravabanuas, kiri-kirimbambatö" which means "upholding the principle of defending and protecting the name of the village". In other words, this shows that there is a greater sense of patriotism in the household than in the family. *Orahu* tradition is a tradition that can still be found in Nias society, however the concept of the characteristics of *Fabanasa* and *Fatalifuso* is currently starting to fade in Nias society because many people have worked together but the ultimate goal is not for the common interest but to fulfill individual needs and activity paths, seek input from others, and contribute to individual results.

The wise words *Noro niluivahea, noroniluluivaosotafaföfönaenautafaheanaasolo* is wise words in solidarity inspiration which means 'the load should be carried-out together, the heaviness should be brought together, we put the problems on the shoulder together if it is big, we carry the burden together if it is big'. In order the heavy burden (*noro*) can be carried, it should be put on the shoulder together (*niluluivahea*), or lifted together (*niluluivaoso*). If the burden is long, it must be placed on the shoulder together and if it is big (*asolo*), it should be lifted together'. This local wisdom teaches us that heavy work can only be solved when it is done together. To lift heavy loads or face major problems in society, people need to think together and find ways or strategies for wise decision making.

#### 4.2 Orahu as Wise Decision Taking Characteristic *Fondrakhe*

The people of Nias are people who are still actively living according to the norms and practices of indigenous cultures. Wise decision-making is a well-known feature of Nias society, and this is called *Fondrakhe*. In Orahu wise decision-making is actually done by Siu'lu and Si'ila. This wise decision making also depends on the issue at hand. Their wise decision-making was known as *Fondrakhe*. *Fondrakhe* binds the Nias people to remain in an order of goodness and decency, because the decisions made are the result of the discussions that have been carried out.

### 5. Conclusion

Orahu is very important to build up the solidarity and a wise decision taking in Nias society. Orahu was carried out from generations and continues to this day. Based on the study, Orahu has the characteristics of *Fabanasa*, *Fatalifuso*, and *Fondrakhe*. Orahu is very reasonable to be maintained considering the cultural values contained in it. Orahu, social gathering in certain agreement, is used as a powerful way to maintain the social harmony life. Therefore it is very appropriate if this tradition continues to be carried out so that the social life process become harmony.

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