

# Mata Golo Cultural Rite (An Ethnographic Study on Lolo Tribe Customary Community in Ratogesa Village of Golewa Tengah Sub District of Ngada Flores Regency of Nusa Tenggara Timur)

Emanuel Suka

Department of Sociology, Postgraduate Program of Sebelas Maret University  
Ir. Sutami Street No. 36 A. Kentingan Surakarta 57126

Counselor I : Drs. Ahmad Zuber, S.Sos, DEA. Co-Counselor : Dr. Argyo Demartoto, M.Si. Thesis, Department  
of Sociology, Postgraduate Program of Surakarta Sebelas Maret University

## Abstract

Lolo tribe community knows two types of dead: *Mata Ade* and *Mata Golo*. *Mata Ade* is the dead due to medical disease while *Mata Golo* is the one due to accident, suicide/murdering. The objective of research was to explain the procedure and the meaning of *mata golo* cultural rite in Lolo Tribe Customary Community in Ratogesa Village of Golewa Tengah Sub District of Ngada Flores Regency of Nusa Tenggara Timur. The result of research showed that Lolo tribe conducted *mata golo* rite as the form of purification to be secured from unluckiness, evil, *polo* (devil), and other evil spirits' effect.

**Keywords:** Lolo Tribe Community, *Mata Golo* cultural rite, Self-Purification

## INTRODUCTION

The problem of death is an integral part of human beings, because every human being cannot live forever. Human age is limited by God. The perception on death has been suggested by scholars. Clifford Geertz defines death by categorizing the meaning of death into three versions. Firstly, Islam version concerns the concept of everlasting recompense. Secondly, a perfect concept indicates that individual's personality disappears after he/she has passed away and nothing is left but dust. Thirdly, the perspective on reincarnation, when someone dies, his soul will get into an embryo in the being-reborn attempt (Yusuf, 2009: 120).

An individual's death can be experienced in many ways. Wisnu Murti suggested that human death is due to four factors:

- The used up age
- The used up age because of the birth-inducing deed and supporting deed
- The used up age and as the consequence of deed (action)
- Disconnected by accident, disaster or misfortune (Wisnumurti, 2012: 32).

Lolo Tribe/Clan is one of hundreds tribes living in Ngada Regency, Flores Island, in the center of Nusa Tenggara Timur Province. Lolo Tribe is one of tribes in Ngada with different social-cultural background. Some customs, habit, and languages are very different but some other are similar. In Ngada ethnic communities, particularly Lolo Tribe, a number of traditional rites are still alive related to human life cycle from birth to death. Those rites include birth, death, new land opening, marriage, harvesting, customary house building rites, and so on.

Death rite is the special theme addressed in this article. Lolo Tribe views death as '*Dewa da Enga* or *Nitu da Ni*'. *Dewa* is the power above the good (*Dewa Zeta*) who gives life and death. *Nitu* is the power under the evil (*Nitu zale*) that can pull out the human soul compulsively. For that reasons, there are two types of death among Lolo tribe community. **Firstly** *Mata Ade* is the death due to medical disease. **Secondly**, *Mata Golo* is the unreasonable death due to accident, suicide or murder. This community believes that custom is ancestor's heritage that cannot be ignored. Custom is the regulation used to govern the relationship between human beings and the Supreme Being (God) or between one human being and another and between human being and his/her environment.

## METHOD

This study was a descriptive qualitative research. This research was taken place ethnographically in Ngada, Nusa Tenggara Timur for six months in 2015. This research focused on revealing the meaning and the objective of *mata golo* cultural rite implementation.

## DISCUSSION

### *Mata golo* Ritual Process

Lolo tribe community has a distinctive way of holding death rite due to accident, suicide and murder. In the case of an individual passing away due to accident, suicide and murder, the first step taken as the form of

implementing the rule is that the corpse is not allowed to be brought into home or *sa'o* (customary house). For example, when an individual dies because he/she fell down the tree (*roba kaju*): The corpse would be raised from the happening place with the clothes still put on his/her body and having arrived at the house yard, the corpse would be put on the wooden or bamboo couch prepared in the house. This corpse is not allowed to be brought into house because it is *mati golo* (unreasonable death). In addition, the local community believes it as the rule that should be done to prevent the similar accident from being transmitted to other members of family or the descent of house/customary house.



Figure 1. Victim of vehicle accident  
: the wooden or bamboo couch on which the *mati golo* corpse is put  
Source: Research Documentation, December 2015.

The procedure of rite in *Mata Golo* culture is as follows:

a. *Keku* (scream)

*Keku* is the questions in the form of screams. *Keku* starts from the funeral home, along the road, to the grave and it is conducted during *tibo* process. *Keku* is only done by *mali* or the trusty. For example: *Kaju e.....kau da bodu puu zeta tolo nio da pu'u apa, da mode da lima gheso gho or polo dhedo gho* (The name of victim is Kaju ... you have fell down the coconut tree, what is the cause, is this due to your less strong hold or due to satan's action).



Figure 2. The victim's uncle and sister get out of home as the sign that the *keku* event will begin immediately.

: The ritual leader does *keku* (screams)

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

The *mata golo* funeral is different from *mata ade* one. The members of tribe dying in *golo* manner will be buried in the funeral separated from those dying normally. *Mata golo* funeral is usually conducted behind the settlement or in the edge of ravine.



Figure 3. *Mata golo* funeral process, *mata golo* grave, *mata ade* grave.

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

b. *Pa'i Tibo*

*Tibo* is the event conducted to look for the cause of the victim's death. The objective of this event is to find out the cause of the victim's death.

Supporting tools in *Tibo* rite are:

- 1) Corn seed (the corn is not taken haphazardly but it is elicited from the road or the one fell down on the road far away from crowd). The corn is put on *wati* and mixed with one type of plant, the size of which is similar to the corn's size, helping the corn preserving process.
- 2) When bamboo is used, the young bamboo or fur is needed.



Figure 4. Corn seed serves as the means of looking for *tibo* and the means of calculating.

Source: Research Documentation, 2015

- 1) *Ma'e fena* (don't sneeze)
- 2) *Wa'i ma'e radha dhoe* (don't hang the foot like sitting down on the chair). *Podhu dhia te'e* (sit down on plaited mat).

3) *Ma'e pesu* (don't expel flatus)

c. *Ja'i Laba Polo* (Satan Dance)

*Jai laba polo* is intended that satan has won because he has taken the victim's soul and the family accompanies the satan's winning. *Jai laba polo* particularly accompanies the victim's body symbolized using banana stem to be returned to the last resting place. This dance is also done when the corpse is delivered to the last resting place.



Figure 5. *Jai laba polo* toward the funeral

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

d. *Soka Golo*

*Soka golo* is the rite to confirm the satan's winning that has successfully taken the victim's soul. This rite is performed with a dance called *saka golo*. This rite aims to return the *tobo* and to relieve the victim, in addition to legitimize the satan's winning.



Figure 6. *Soka golo* event in funeral place

*Tobo* (the corpse symbolized using banana stem wrapped with the victim's clothes).

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

e. Peaceful Rite

Ideally, there should be a solution to every problem, accompanied with the reconciliation. It also occurs in *mata golo* event. *Malis* often reconcile symbolically with the one colliding and victim's family. The reconciliation is intended to prevent hostility from occurring between the one colliding and the victim's family.

In reconciliation rite, there are some requirements to be met. Here are materials and tools that should be prepared in reconciliation rite:

- 1) 6 pieces of *Wako* (a like-coarse grass forest plant) (as the spear)
- 2) Not-castrated piglet
- 3) Small bamboo in 2 or 3 m size (separating the victim's family and the one colliding)
- 4) *Kuali* (wide-mouthed clay pot)
- 5) Three stones (hearth) and fuel wood
- 6) *He'a tua* (cleaned coconut shell serving as drinking container)
- 7) Arrack or white *moke* (*tuak*/water from sugar palm tree)



Figure 7. *Poke Wako* (*wako* war/throw), hand shaking/reconciliation, slaughtering piglet, *geu he'a tua* (exchanging the glass of *tuak* from coconut shell), eating together without rice in reconciliation rite.

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

f. Buffalo slaughtering Event

Culturally, buffalo is the highest-valued sacrificed animal in the tribute to ancestors and God. Buffalo is

dedicated as the manifestation of expectation for the security in the family left. The buffalo is an absolute condition for the tribute that cannot be replaced with other animals.



Figure 8. Event procession inside house before buffalo slaughtering, buffalo slaughtering in *mata golo* event, the activity of cutting the meat to be cooked.

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

g. Eating together

*Mata golo* is considered by local people as the victim's bad luck and will be experienced by family as well. For that reason, the family should recover itself by holding *mata golo* cultural rite with buffalo sacrifice. The local community will be convinced by the families who invite them to eat together. In this way, the family will be reaccepted as the members of society without defect.



Figure 9. Eating buffalo meat together

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

h. *Se De Ze,e* (Dispose every bad thing)

*Se De Ze,e* is the purification rite. The residual food collected for three successive days and entire residual food material or supporting tools such as heath, wood, kitchen dust, rice, cooked rice, meat, bone, wooden or bamboo couch on which the corpse is put, and etc are disposed to the place specified by mali. The disposal of event residues is called cleaning (purification). Through this disposal, it is believed that, the family has been freed from the victim's bad luck bond or other bad effect related to the victim's death.



Figure 10. Preparation and the process of disposing entire residual food and tools used in *mata golo* rite (the disposal location is in the steep ravine with about 100m-depth, in Rodha, Golewa Selatan Sub District, Ngada Regency)

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015



Figure 11: Monument of *mata golo* symbol

Source: Research Documentation, December 2015

## CONCLUSION

Lolo tribe community holds on tightly their ancestor's heritage culture. *Mata golo* cultural rite is a customary ritual process that had been implemented since the old generation. *Mata golo* rite is held when there is accidental (*golo*) death event. The objective of *Mata golo* cultural rite implementation is to clean the members of tribe from any evil caused by the evil power or *Nitue Zale*.

## REFERENCES

- Awaluddin Yusuf, Iwan. 2009. *Media, Kematian dan Identitas Budaya Minoritas* 'Representasi Etnik Tionghoa dalam Perspektif Duka'. Yogyakarta : Uii Press.
- Arndt, Paul. 2009. *Masyarakat Ngadha: Keluarga, Tatanan Sosial, Pekerjaan dan Hukum Adat*. Ende : Nusa Indah
- Arsana, I Nyoman Cau. 2014. Dalam Jurnal Pengkajian Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Rupa, Universitas Gadjah

- Mada Yogyakarta dengan Judul *Kosmologi Tatabuhan dalam Upacara* . Volume 15. No. 2, 107 – 125.
- Arndt, Paul  
1929/31 Die Religion der Nad'a (West-Flores, Kleine Sunda-Inseln.) *Anthropos* 24: 817-861; 26: 353-405; 697-739.
- 1932 Die megalithenkultur der Nad'a (Flores). *Anthropos* 27: 11-63
- 1936/37 Deva, das Hochste Wesen der Ngadha. *Anthropos* 31: 894-909; 32: 195-209; 347-377
- 1956 Krankheit und Krankheitsursachen bei den Ngadha (Mittel-Flores). *Anthropos* 51: 417-446.
- 1956 Totenfeiern und Brauche der Ngadha. *Anthropos* 54: 68-98.
- 1960 Mythen der Ngadha. *Annali Lateranensi* 24: 9-137.
- 1961 Wörterbuch der Ngadhasprache. Posieux: *Anthropos Institut*. (Studia Instituti *Anthropos*, 15)
- Murti, Wisnu. 2012. *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*. Jogjakarta: Diva Press.
- Maleong, Lexy J. 2011. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT Rosdakarya.
- Susane Schoter, Ph. D. dalam *Anthropology* ( Mainz Institut Ilmu bangsa-bangsa dan Studi tentang Afrika, 1994); Beri kuliah pada Frobenius-Institute, Universitas Frankfurt, Negara Jerman- Lingkungan kerja di Flores tahun 1994, 1995, 1996-1998- Penerbitan: lihat Acuan Utip
- Widyanta, AB. 2002. *Sosiologi Kebudayaan*. Cindelas Pustaka Rakyat Cerdas. Yogyakarta.
- Waluyo, J. Herman. 2007. *Pengantar Filsafat Ilmu*. Salatiga : Widya Sari Press.