

Revitalisation of Karo's Local Community Life: An Oral Tradition Study

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Oral traditions that live in every ethnicity in Indonesia basically have values and norms that can be utilised to answer the problems faced by society. Oral tradition is a source of local wisdom that can be utilised to regulate the order of people's lives in a wise and prudent manner. The problem of this research is: what are the forms of local wisdom in the Karo community? The objective of this research is: Revitalising the local wisdom of the Karo people. The method used is the descriptive qualitative method. The author collects data by observation, interview, and documentation. This research was conducted in the Karo Regency, North Sumatra.

Key words: *Oral tradition, Local Wisdom, Karo Society.*

Introduction

Local wisdom is local knowledge used by local people to survive in an environment that is integrated with belief systems, norms, culture, and is expressed in traditions and myths through oral traditions (folklore) and literary works, such as: hikayat, ejection, chronicle, suluk, song, and others (Gunawan, 2008). Indonesia is a country that has a variety of customs and cultures, each of which has its own local wisdom to regulate the order of life of its people. Local wisdom can be defined as a human effort by using his/her mind to act and behave towards an object or event that occurs in space and time.

Etymologically, wisdom can be interpreted as a person's ability to use their minds to act as an assessment of an object or event that occurs. Whereas 'local' can be interpreted as a limited interaction space with a limited value system as well. One of the ethnicities in North Sumatra is the *Karo* ethnic. The *Karo* community has a long-standing local wisdom which should be properly maintained so that it becomes an identity for the community that is manifested in

positive behaviour in dealing with humans and their creators, relations between humans, and human relations with nature and the surrounding environment.

The life of the *Karo* society is essentially based on religious beliefs, customs, ancient or cultural guidance that grows and develops and is naturally built up in the *Karo* society. These values grow and adapt to their environment, which then becomes a culture that has developed from generation to generation. In general, local wisdom becomes a local culture or regional culture which has a noble meaning, because it has elements that are extracted from the noble community itself. The life of cultural values is very good and can be guided, even more so in the conditions of social life today. The rapid progress of the times brings environmental changes, and local culture which has noble values and meanings, can be developed and eroded by technological advances that are not based on nobility, so as to make the *Karo* people forget their true identity that lives in a distinctive culture. The maintenance of the local wisdom of the *Karo* people must be maintained so that it can become an identity for the community itself as well as an ethnic wealth for Indonesia. For this reason, this research was conducted, so that the *Karo* people continue to hold the values and norms of local culture that lead to national culture that can ultimately shape the character of Indonesia.

Revitalisation is to revive, reactivate, manage and bequeath. While preservation is protection, development and utilisation. When combined, the reactivation will be in line with development and inheritance in line with utilisation (Sibarani 2017: 116). Thus, the revitalisation of local wisdom in the *Karo* community includes the activation and protection, management and development as well as the inheritance and activation of local wisdom as *Karo* cultural traditions.

To preserve and advance the culture of *Karo* it is necessary to do research and deliver it to future generations. In this case, the parents of the *Karo* community must advance the cultural existence of *Karo* to the younger generation. Until now the *Karo* culture ceremony still felt to be very important for the lives of fellow members of the *Karo* community in living their lives, because without carrying out traditional ceremonies in the *Karo* community's household life it feels incomplete, imperfect. The ceremonies would be in the occasion of birth, marriage, death and others.

Research Method

The objective of this research is to revitalise the local wisdom of the *Karo* people. The method used is a descriptive qualitative method. The author collected data by observation, interviews, and documentation. This research was conducted in the *Karo* Regency, North Sumatra.

Results and Discussion

The local wisdom that we will branch out in this study is *Aron* (a working group friend).

Aron (Friends of a group of collaborations) in the Karo Community

The word *Aron* in the *Karo* community in *Karo* District is a gathering of work group friends. In general communication throughout the *Karo* District, it is common to say the word *Aron*, which is a term for a group of friends, especially those working in the fields to grow rice, corn and fruits using *Aron*. *Aron* is a traditional working group on a group of agriculture. This group jointly works on agricultural land with its members. With this *Aron*, it will be able to ease the burden of the person in the working group (heavy burden becomes light) to achieve prosperity and peace. And even in *Aron*, jobs can also be an arena for finding a mate. Because in ancient times it often happened in 1 *Aron* that there was a love and mutual love. Some even get to the marriage level. (According to the recognition of Sembiring and Kartini br sitepu) who used to work together in one *Aron*, now have become a peaceful husband and wife. The principle of the *Karo* tribe listed in the pantun or saying for *Aron* is as follows.

Example: *Adi si kuning-kuningen kita radu mengersing Adi si ageng-agengen kita radu mbiring*

Meaning: if we help each other we will be equally good / strong; if we speak ill of each other we will both become bad.

Aron is a concept of a cooperation pattern and help the *Karo* tribe community in North Sumatra, both in facing threats from outsiders, for example guarding other family's houses or in doing something, the most dominant is doing agricultural work in the fields together and alternately. *Aron* Istilh comes from the *Karo* language, namely *sisaro-sAron* (mutual assistance) which is manifested in the form of working groups of young or adults ranging from 5 to 20 people in one group, depending on the needs according to the extent of the land to be worked on. In the formation of *Aron* the number of men is greater than the number of women. This is done to see the ability of women is weaker than men in carrying out these activities, but at the present time the number of female workers is greater than the number of male workers. The *Aron* activities in the past were known not to be paid in money or not calculated with an economic nature, but paid in a flash (in the form of labour) alternatively. Where *Aron* is formed, it is based on deliberation and mutual agreement between the members of *Aron*.



How Aron Works in the Karo Society

Aron work usually starts in the morning, which is at 08:00 am - 05:00 pm. In the pattern of work there is regularity between fellow members with the aim of maintaining good relationships. Work patterns are carried out in rotation according to the needs of working on the fields rather than the members. For example, when a Jorena member will plant corn, the other *Aron* members must come to the Jorena field to work their fields together. And so on until it is finished in turn for each member of *Aron*. If one of the members wants to put his fields first, but it is not yet the priority, then the member can ask that the other fields take precedence. This is called *gegeh pelebeken* (borrow calm).

Hangers in the Aron Tradition in the Karo Society

Along with the development of the era, starting in 1990 until now, slowly the understanding of *Aron* has begun to change (shift). This can be seen during the harvest season, for example, where someone who owns a field must hire *Aron* workers to work on the field and pay their wages according to the time they work, so that workers in the field can finish faster.

In addition, the number of *Aron* available is also less compared to the number of *Aron* before 1990. In terms of working hours there are also differences that were before 1990; *Aron* works in one day for eight hours, but at this time *Aron* works only about seven hours in one day which starts at 08:00 WIB until 05:00 pm. The *Aron* workers work with salaries of around Rp. 60,000 for *Aron* women and IDR 80,000 per day for *Aron* men. Besides that, the presence of *Aron* has also been imported from outside Tanah Karo. Like the *Aron-Aron* in Berastagi, for example, most of them were imported from Samosir and Sidikalang, where most of them came from the Toba Batak tribe and some were from the Javanese who migrated to Tanah Karo Simalem.

During work, *Aron* was also given time to rest twice. The break is usually done by *Aron* to sing together happily to make them even more enthusiastic about working. The song that is often sung is Family Teksi song as entertainment for those who glance as follows:

<p><u>Family Teksi</u> <i>Ciger warina-ciger warina aron i juma</i> <i>Paksa ngadi-ngadi aron i juma</i> <i>Paksa ngadi- ngadi</i></p> <p><i>O... turang singuda keleng kel ateku</i> <i>Ngo rulut-rulut kel ateku jadi</i> <i>Ngo rulut-rulut Kel ateku ngena</i></p> <p><i>Reff: family taksi dalana kahe kolu turang</i> <i>Dalan-dalani pasarna si nggedang</i> <i>Uga nge ndia, deba ku bahan bangku</i> <i>turang</i> <i>Kenang ateku jadi, jadi lanai teralang</i> <i>Mbiar kel aku turang, mbiar kel aku</i> <i>ncidahken ukur</i> <i>Aru ateku turang, aru ukurnndu erkusur</i> <i>Perban kena e, pengodak kena</i> <i>E erban bene Bene kel aku turang</i></p>	<p><u>Taxi</u> At day time Workers in the fields Resting</p> <p>O, uh ... The Young Child I Love My love for you is really strong My love for you is really deep</p> <p>Reff: Taxis are going here and there Go a very long way How's my attitude going to you Because you are the one I cherish the most and I love the most.</p> <p>I was so scared, I was afraid to express my feelings Sad, I feel dear, sad, I think that if your heart turns away, Your words, your actions, make me crazy about you</p>
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Aron is a form of community together in a collaboration group and has been known since the development of the agricultural system in *Karo*-resistant. *Aron* was known long before they knew of modern agriculture to grow vegetables, fruits, rice and others. *Aron* was introduced by the *Karo* tribe people from the past to the present in the early 1950s, who generally planted vegetables, fruits and food crops such as corn and rice.

In the development era and after receiving the influence of farming from outside there is a change in the *Aron* procedure, namely in the practice of the *Aron* way of working. The change from *Aron segegeg* become *Aron sigemo / sierdahin* (which works). Originally in the system of rice cultivation, both paddy and paddy rice, the *Aron* system was called *Aron sada gegeh*. The way it worked was mutual cooperation with the *kerin* system (turn) for each stage of the life cycle of rice, and exchanged power (*gegeh*), without payment of money, and in further development known as the *Aron Singemo* system (which works). The way it works in planting is done jointly by the working group with the division of labour in accordance with the needs of each field owner who needs *Aron* workers to complete the one-day target, and the power is paid in cash.

This agrarian cultural value that reveals the "*Aron*" contains the value of mutual cooperation in the community of vegetable and fruit farmers in Berastagi and Kabanjahe. The value of mutual cooperation contained is that each member of *Aron* alternately works on the land owned by fellow *Aron* members. Uniquely, vegetable farmers in Berastagi and Tanah *Karo* have switched from self-fulfilling motives to commercial motives, namely directing wages and labour paid with money.

In this research, the main study on the topic of "*Aron*" has changed, in the form of an exploration of the knowledge and experience of vegetable, rice and corn farmers in their daily farming endeavours, starting from the process of planting, production, harvesting, and distribution. Including in it are strategies used at each stage of the activities carried out by *Aron*. In the past before 1980, the term *Aron* was very positive, which was to help one another, love one another and there was nothing selfish. But nowadays along with the times the development has begun to be selfish, that is, not helping, not loving one another. This happened because of the decline in character and character from the community. according to the *Karo* saying below:

- gundera sala gundera, buluh belin ku tekteki
- kutera kalak kutera, beltekku mbelin ku besuri

Which means: I cut up large bamboo spices (leeks)
After all people as long as my stomach is full I'm full.

Meaning: People, who don't want to think anymore, help others as long as they are full of themselves, no matter how ignorant (people who have a selfish nature) they are.

Aron culture is the result of the taste and initiative of *Karo* ancestors, as their response to the challenges of the world in which they are at their time. This culture was previously deeply rooted in the lives of *Karo* people. At that time there were hardly any activities in the lives of *Karo* people who were not in contact with the *Aron* culture, ranging from household life, social life, agricultural activities (which were the main livelihoods of the majority of *Karo* people at that time), and other activities, all of which accustomed to *Aronkan* (in Indonesian, carried out together). The results of this appreciation of culture not only make *Karo* people live in social intimacy alone, but more than that the appreciation of *Aron* culture in the past has been able to take the *Karo* people as a fairly strong ethnic group in North Sumatra, both in the perspective of social strength, and in economic power perspective.

Strength in a social perspective can be seen from the history of the *Karo* people who were almost never subject to foreign powers. Dutch colonialism in the *Karo* area was not as smooth and as long as in other regions. The *Majapahit* Kingdom that once ruled in almost the entire archipelago also tried to control the *Karo* region, but failed to conquer the *Karo* people.

What strikes these foreign powers from power in Taneh *Karo* is the solidity of the community, which is tightly bound in *Aron* culture. The *Aron-Aron* (*Aron*) culture also makes the *Karo* people respected in the surrounding area. This is still an imprint up to now. In almost all regions in North Sumatra the *Karo* tribe is not a tribe that can be considered low by other tribes. *Karo* ethnicity is rarely used as a mockery, especially as an insult to other tribes. A lot of people from other tribes are susceptible to *Karo* people, and the cause of that attitude is its cultural roots because *Karo* people are known to be very strong in their kinship. It is this solidity that makes the *Karo* people strong and respected by their brothers from other tribes.

Strength in an economic perspective can also be seen in its historical facts. Decades of the *Karo* people have succeeded in becoming business people between the nations. As a producer of high quality vegetables and fruits, the *Karo* people are not only supplying the needs of North Sumatra residents, but also extending to the islands of Java and other countries, especially Malaysia and Singapore. Even though the area is not too broad, Taneh *Karo* in the past was able to develop an efficient and effective agricultural system, so that the agricultural products were not only able to meet the needs of its citizens, but were also able to meet the needs of other local residents. This made the *Karo* people at that time generally relatively more prosperous.

In the past, the *Karo* nomads were usually evenly distributed because of two big reasons, namely seeking education or developing a business. These two things show the economic strength of the *Karo* people. Another interesting fact that cannot be forgotten about the *Aron* culture of the *Karo* people is "In the days when there were almost no *Karo* people who became labourers of other tribes." The facts do show that the workers (especially farm labourers) in Tanah *Karo* in the past came from other ethnic groups. The contributing factor is not due to laziness because *Karo* people work. These are all products of *Karo Aron* culture.

Aron culture is a culture of mutual cooperation, which means that almost all aspects of *Karo* people's lives always hang out in a culture of cooperation. From the time of birth until the death of the *Karo* people have been wrapped in a culture of cooperation. When a baby is born into the world, almost all of his relatives (who used to live in the same village) are required to give or take certain actions for the baby and his family. For example giving a tidy and eggs and also giving a long cloth (cloth carrying). Likewise, when a *Karo* person marries, builds a business or even when he dies, he cannot escape from the involvement of his relatives. *Karo* community involvement is the strength of *Aron*. This appreciation of the strong *Karo* culture will protect the *Karo* people from birth to death.

In the *Karo* cultural structure there are no *Karo* people who are not related, because they are all bound in a fraternity of *merga*. Even though there is no blood relationship with one another, the *Karo* people still have a strong sense of brotherhood as a result of bearing their

merga. These fraternal associations are the foundation of *Aron's* culture. The kinship of the *Karo* tribe is manifested in the *merga silima* system, *said siwaluh*, *sitelu raccoon*. Because of the realisation of the kinship system which is not only based on mere blood ties, the *Karo* people become very solid, a form of solidity that not only makes them able to live in a socially orderly manner, but also able to withstand the hegemony of foreign powers, and emerge victorious in the arena of economics.

In the past *Aron* (cooperation) was a local wisdom that had brought the *Karo* people to its former glory. Now the condition of the *Karo* people, especially in *Tanah Karo*, is generally not as great as their past. If in the past the *Karo* people could be one step ahead of their brothers and sisters from other tribes, now people in *Tanah Karo* are actually starting to lag behind. The first reason is that we begin to be difficult to talk, it is difficult for the dwarf to fit the *mehuli* (hard to discuss for the best). Very often the dialogue between *Karo* people ends with an explosion of anger, emotion, explosion of contention, and finally an explosion of hatred. Both social media in the real world such as coffee shops and social media in cyberspace, *Karo* people are easily provoked by their emotions. Often the cause is only trivial things that are exaggerated. No matter the other person is *senina* (same-sex), *kalimbubu* (family of our female parents), *son of a bear* (who plays in the kitchen when there is a wedding, misfortune, etc.), if you don't like it, you will be yelled at without thinking about the good and bad or the advantages and disadvantages. This is certainly very different from the way of life of the old *Karo* people, who are known to be very polite, especially to *kade-kade* (his brother).

The reason is the thinning of a sense of togetherness among the *Karo* people. Egoism is increasing very rapidly. The sense of being socially responsible is very minimal. In the past, our ancestors had a shared joy and sorrow, *Karo* people today prefer individualist. If grieving, they may still want to share.

Aron in *Karo* community is almost the same as *Gotong Royong*. Mutual cooperation is a socio-cultural concept that is inherent in the practice of community life in almost all ethnic groups in Indonesia (Sibarani, 2017: 19). As a socio-cultural concept, people may not know that the cooperation and help they practise is classified as mutual cooperation, but they "enjoy", like, and do it in their daily lives. Although it has shifted its intensity from what our ancestors practised, mutual cooperation is still alive and can be revitalised with modifications that are appropriate to the development of the times.

Aron revitalisation model in the Karo community

Revitalisation has three concepts, namely (1) reactivation and re-living, (2) management, and (3) inheritance. Reactivation is used to revitalise cultural traditions that are still alive, but

have declined, while livelihoods are again used to revitalise cultural traditions that have become extinct or have disappeared from people's lives. Management is used to manage or organise cultural traditions both reactivated, activated and still active so that cultural traditions can last a long time. Inheritance is used to pass down cultural traditions from one generation to the next (Sibarani 2017: 227).

The Aron Local Wisdom Activation and Revival Model of the Karo Community

The reactivation of livelihood is based on efforts to revive *Aron* (cooperation) in the *Karo* community, especially in the younger generation. It is necessary to conduct socialisation, training, especially in the younger generation, and the formation of *Aron* working groups in every area of the livelihood cycle and traditional ceremonies. The socialisation was intended to disseminate the benefits of *Aron* as local wisdom to improve welfare and create peace in the *Karo* community. The training is intended to make prospective *Aron* participants carry out all types of *Aron* in their domain. Empowerment is intended to increase the ability of prospective *Aron* participants so that they can increase their potential to *Aron* in increasing prosperity, and creating peace in their communities. The formation of *Aron* groups is the target of the reactivation or livelihood phase of *Aron*.

The philosophical basis of livelihood or reactivation of *Aron* is based on the need to emulate the traditions and cultural values of ancestors that are useful for building the character of the younger generation. Thus, livelihoods or reactivation of *Aron* are carried out by exploring *Aron* functions and benefits, socialisation, and the formation of *Aron* working groups in the *Karo* District areas.

Aron Local Wisdom Management Model

This management implements, and enforces *Aron* in every area of the livelihood cycle, the traditional ceremonial cycle, and public works (Sibarani 2017: 229). In the implementation of *Aron*, it is necessary to foster, increase, and make independent *Aron* for the people of *Karo* to be able to improve their welfare and create a state of communication.

Fostering is intended to manage *Aron* groups so that they can run smoothly and well. Improvement is intended to improve the quality and quantity of the *Aron* group so that their role will increase for the welfare and peace of the community. Independence is intended to be able to run by itself so that it can last long and be sustainable without being responsible to other parties. *Aron's* independence or sustainability is the final goal of this *Aron* local wisdom management effort.

The Inheritance Model of Aron's Local Wisdom

Inheritance is an attempt to inform the local wisdom of *Aron* to the younger generation so that local wisdom can continue from one generation to another generation. Sustainability is the goal of inheritance. This inheritance needs to be shown to children as a younger generation (Sibarani 2017: 230). *Aron* inheritance can be done by teaching this local wisdom to young people, families and communities.

Aron 's inheritance informally starts at home and with neighbours by getting children to work together and helping each other to work on public works. *Aron* inheritance is done informally by mobilising government institutions such as mutual cooperation which is initiated to villages or religious institutions such as church mutual cooperation. *Aron* inheritance is formally carried out through mutual education practice in schools ranging from elementary school to high school or as future generation candidates.

Conclusion

1. Local wisdom can be an element of strengthening the culture of the area and can enrich national culture and in time will be able to become wisdom and build the character of the nation towards a better direction.
2. *Aron* in the *Karo* community is a group of work group friends. *Aron* will be able to ease the burden on fellow members, especially in the agricultural sector. A heavy burden becomes light to get prosperity and peace according to the *Karo* proverb:

Adi si kuning-kuningen kita radu mengersing Adi si ageng-agengen kita radu mbiring

Meaning: if we help each other we will be equally good / strong
if we speak ill of each other then we will both become ugly

In the *Aron* tradition in the *Karo* community, in the development of the era in Tanah *Karo*, after receiving the influence of farming from outside, there is a change in the *Aron* procedure namely in the practice of the *Aron* way of working. The change from *Aron segegeh* become *Aron sigemo/sierdahin* (which works). Originally in the system of rice cultivation, both paddy and paddy rice, the *Aron* system was called *Aron sada gegeh*. The way it worked was mutual cooperation with the *kerin* system (turn) for each stage of the life cycle of rice, and exchanged power (*gegeh*), without payment of money. But today it has shifted from self-fulfilling motives to commercial motives, namely directing wages and labour paid with money.



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