

## The Meaning of Moke for Ethnic Students of Sikka in the Era of Social and Technological Change: An Explorative Study From A Cultural Perspective

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**Abstract.** The Sikka community has a rich cultural heritage, including the traditional Moke drink, which plays a vital role in shaping their ethnic identity. However, globalization, encompassing information technology, social media, international trade, and cultural exchange, has influenced the understanding and practices surrounding Moke from older to younger generations. This study explores Sikka students' perceptions of the Moke tradition amidst social and technological changes. A qualitative approach was employed, with semi-structured interviews conducted in Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara. The participants consisted of four Sikka ethnic students, selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that while Moke serves as an essential symbol for preserving ethnic identity and traditional values, the younger generation faces challenges in maintaining this tradition. Adapting to the dynamics of globalization is necessary to ensure the survival of this unique local culture without compromising its richness.

**Keywords:** *Moke, culture, globalization*

**Abstrak.** Masyarakat Sikka memiliki kekayaan warisan budaya, termasuk minuman tradisional Moke yang berperan penting dalam membentuk jati diri etnik mereka. Namun, globalisasi yang meliputi teknologi informasi, media sosial, perdagangan internasional, dan pertukaran budaya telah memengaruhi pemahaman dan praktik seputar Moke dari generasi tua ke generasi muda. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa Sikka tentang tradisi Moke di tengah perubahan sosial dan teknologi. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan wawancara semi terstruktur yang dilakukan di Kota Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur. Partisipan terdiri dari empat siswa etnik Sikka yang dipilih secara purposive sampling. Analisis data dilakukan dengan analisis tematik. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun Moke berfungsi sebagai simbol penting untuk melestarikan jati diri etnik dan nilai-nilai tradisional, generasi muda menghadapi tantangan dalam mempertahankan tradisi ini. Beradaptasi dengan dinamika globalisasi diperlukan untuk memastikan kelangsungan hidup budaya lokal yang unik ini tanpa mengorbankan kekayaannya.

**Kata kunci:** *Moke, budaya, globalisasi*

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## **Introduction**

The Sikka people are one of the ethnic groups inhabiting Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara region. The Sikka people have a rich cultural heritage, including unique and diverse traditional traditions. As part of this rich cultural heritage, the traditional Moke drink is one characteristic that enriches the Sikka ethnic identity. This drink has many names, such as Sopi, which comes from Maluku and Papua; Cap Tikus, which comes from Manado and Minahasa; Ciu from the Banyumas area; Bekonang from Sukoharjo; Lapen from Yogyakarta; Balo from Bugis Makassar; Dewe from Bali (Soa, Aswim, & Natsir, 2023).

Residents in Maumere have long made Moke, a traditional alcoholic beverage from palm sap (Levi, 2023). The alcohol content in Moke makes it an alcoholic beverage that can be produced, bought, sold, and consumed freely, making it accessible to everyone (Luu, Rini, and Ariyanto, 2022). The practice of making and consuming Moke has become an inseparable part of the daily lives of the Sikka people, reflecting local wisdom that has been passed down through generations.

Moke reflects the values, beliefs, and ethnic identity of Sikka that have been passed down from generation to generation. For the Sikka people, Moke is a symbol of hospitality and harmony, and consuming Moke has become a lifestyle for most of the Sikka people (Joan, 2022). This phenomenon shows that Moke is not only about taste but also about social connections and solid cultural identities among the Sikka people. Moke is used in traditional traditions such as the Letu Umne Ritual, which presents Moke as one of the traditional symbols used to build a house (Genua and Bala, 2022).

In addition, in the belis tradition in Maumere, Tuak or Moke represents a symbolism that has an implied meaning in the expression that states that Moke is used to warm the stomach and water is used to cool the throat, with warmth depicting affection and coolness reflecting the meaning of sincere friendship (Sina and Rahman, 2022).

The people of Maumere use moke drinks to strengthen family ties in various customary matters. Consumption of moke drinks is related to social relations between teenagers, teenagers with parents, and teenagers with customs.

However, the Moke tradition has faced various challenges and significant changes in recent decades. Setyaningrum (2018) explains that globalization has unknowingly changed cultural values, causing a shift in value systems, attitudes, and views in society and increasing social mobility and changes in cultural value relationships. The influence of foreign cultures, technology, and lifestyle changes have caused a shift in the priorities and values the younger generation holds. Technological advances can threaten regional culture because people forget or do not develop their local culture. Therefore, information communication technology can replace cultures that depend on traditional wisdom and symbols, which encourages dependency (Yoga, 2018).

Moreover, there has been a decline in the younger generation's interest in maintaining and understanding this culture. Students are highly susceptible to the influence of globalization, where information technology, social media, international trade, and cultural exchange influence their daily lives so that national identity often competes with global culture and influence (Saragih and Fimansyah, 2023). Advances in information technology have opened their access to the outside world and influenced how they communicate and interact with global culture. This can affect the younger generation's understanding of the meaning of Moke and how they are involved in preserving their ethnic identity.

In addition, there is a need to understand the extent to which Sikka students interpret Moke as a symbol of hospitality, harmony, and ethnic identity and how

they feel the influence of social and technological changes in this context. As a result, the meaning of Moke, which is usually passed down from generation to generation, is less passed on to the younger generation. This raises concerns about preserving Sikka's ethnic traditions and identities in the future. Through this study, the researcher hopes to explore how students' meanings of Moke in this changing era are viewed from a cultural perspective.

### **Method**

Based on the issues studied, this research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Sikka students about the Moke. The study uses semi-structured interviews conducted in Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling to select four participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research (Supratiknya, 2015). Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, identifying patterns or themes that emerged from the participants' responses. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between different phenomena, offering insight into the participants' experiences (Heriyanto, 2018). To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation was performed by comparing interview results with field observations and participant reflections, ensuring the data collected accurately reflects the participants' experiences.

### **Result**

The results of the thematic analysis identified five themes in this study. These themes are related to the meaning of Moke for Sikka ethnic students in the era of social and technological change, namely: 1) Understanding and Meaning of Moke, 2) Education and Inheritance of Tradition, 3) Ethnic Identity and Moke, 4) Influence of Technology and Social Change, and 5) Preservation and Adaptation of Culture. The following is a more detailed explanation of these themes.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
Understanding and Meaning of Moke	Traditions and Customary Ceremonies Values and Symbolism
Education and Inheritance of Tradition	Learn to Drink Moke
Ethnic Identity and the Moke	Symbol of Ethnic Identity
The Influence of Technology and Social Change	The Impact of Technology on Moke Traditions Generation's View of Moke
Cultural Preservation and Adaptation	Maintaining Traditional Values of Moke Culture Moke Adaptation in the Modern Era

### Theme 1: Understanding and Meaning of Moke

#### Traditions and Traditional Ceremonies

Participants explained that Moke has become part of the Sikka community's traditions, culture, and customs. Participant R mentioned that Moke is used in traditional ceremonies such as weddings, guest welcoming ceremonies, and Catholic religious events such as Sambut Baru. According to him, Moke has been part of the culture and customs inherited from ancestors since ancient times.

*"This Moke has become a tradition, culture, custom... for culture, custom, it is when in traditional ceremonies, marriages/weddings, or religious ceremonies, in Catholicism; Sambut Baru, yes Moke is inseparable from culture/custom itself because it has been from our ancestors, since ancient times.", R*

S said drinking Moke was practised at traditional events such as weddings and receiving guests as a welcome.

*" The practice of drinking Moke is for traditional events such as weddings, receiving guests as a welcome. ", S*

N revealed that whenever there is a particular ritual, Moke is always present as part of the activity.

*" Usually, if we have a ritual or something, Moke will be there. ", N*

### **Values and Symbolism**

Participant S revealed that during traditional ceremonies such as antar belis, participants are required to drink Moke and are not allowed to refuse unless they can find a substitute for drinking Moke. Participant R explained that they were served Moke when attending traditional events in Maumere. Even though they did not drink, they still drank one or two glasses as a form of respect for the traditions of the ancestors and elders sitting at the traditional table.

*"When it is done during traditional ceremonies such as the delivery of the belis... there we are required to drink Moke and are not allowed to refuse... we are allowed to refuse, but we must find a substitute for drinking moke ", S*

*"when attending a traditional event in Maumere, when we sit and are served Moke, yes, even if we do not drink, one or two glasses are a form of respect because we are sitting at a traditional table, so even if you do not drink, it is a form of respect for the traditions of the ancestors and the elders there. So we respect even if we do not drink", R*

## **Theme 2: Education and Inheritance of Tradition**

### **Learn to Drink Moke**

Participant S explained that he was first introduced to drinking Moke at his sister's dowry delivery event, where he was asked to drink as a sign of respect and was curious about what it tasted like to drink Moke. Participant N learned about Moke by observing his surroundings, especially from his family.

*"The first time I was introduced to drinking Moke was at my brother's dowry delivery event... there, I was told to drink it as a sign of respect... and at that moment, I was curious about what it felt like to drink Moke.", S*

*" observing the surroundings from the family ", N*

Participant R said that he used to dislike Moke and never drank it from elementary to junior high school, but after graduating from high school, he started drinking Moke. Before that, he was already familiar with Moke because he often attended traditional and family events where Moke was always present.

*"I used to dislike Moke from elementary to junior high school. I never drank Moke. But after I graduated from high school, I drank Moke. But before that, before I drank Moke, I knew, it turned out that every day I was also present at traditional events at home, family events, I was present, Moke was present", R*

### **Theme 3: Ethnic Identity and Moke**

#### **Symbols of Ethnic Identity**

Participant N stated that Moke is very important for the culture of the Sikka people because Moke is identical to the Sikka people.

*" Moke is very important for the culture of the Sikka people because, firstly, it is inevitable that Moke is very identical with the Sikka people. ", N*

Participant R explained that Moke influenced him because he felt proud as a Maumere person, considering it a tradition in his area that is a form of respect for ancestors. In addition, participant N also observed that most Maumere people are very identical to Moke.

*"Moke itself can influence me because I feel that this is also a source of pride for me as a Maumere person, and this is also a tradition in my area in Maumere, yes, as a form of respect for our ancestors.", R*

*" What I see is that most Maumere people are very identical to Moke. ", N*

### **Theme 4: The Impact of Technology and Social Change**

#### **The Impact of Technology on the Moke Tradition**

Participant N mentioned that outsiders came and were interested in trying Moke. Participant R argued that the influence of technology on the Moke tradition was minimal because alcohol consumption in Maumere is commonplace, with Maumere known as the City of Moke.

*"Of course there are. Some outsiders come here, they are interested in trying our Moke.", N*

*"Yes, in my opinion, the influence is very minimal. Because, eh, in Maumere we consume alcohol not just one or two days, but every day. Because of that, there is a nickname in Maumere called the Moke City.", R*

Participant S highlighted that technologies such as the internet and social media are used to introduce Indigenous culture to outsiders but also have negative influences because outsiders may follow cultures such as getting drunk.

*"Technology such as the internet or social media is to introduce traditional culture to people outside... but there are negative influences because people outside will also follow our culture, such as getting drunk.", S*

### **Generation's View of Moke**

Participant N saw that the variations of Moke increased as time went by. This shows that Moke remains relevant among the Maumere people, although with more modern variations.

*"As time goes by, it will change because Moke is not, indeed, it can be said to be attached to the people of Maumere, but as time goes by, there are more and more types of Moke, right? So there will be many... in the future, there will be many, especially young people who choose to try other variants of Moke, nowadays there are already many variants of Moke", N*

Participant R noted that according to their ancestors, Moke is part of critical traditional ceremonies, such as weddings or other ceremonies. However, some young people misunderstand the meaning of Moke as a symbol of power or prestige, which is contrary to traditional values.

*"Previously, our ancestors viewed Moke as a traditional ceremony. So when they drank Moke, it became a tradition because when they drank it at a traditional ceremony, many young people misunderstood the meaning of Moke itself. So, they consider Moke as material to show that they are strong. Strong in the sense of drinking Moke. So that they are called great and all sorts, so that they assume that if we drink Moke, we are great, we are respected people, we are great at drinking, but that is wrong", R*



Participant S argued that the current young generation tends to see Moke as a drink for fun, in contrast to the view of the previous generation, who considered Moke only suitable for certain traditional events.

*" If for young people nowadays, they drink Moke to have fun... but for old people, they only drank Moke during traditional events. ", S*

### **Theme 5: Cultural Preservation and Adaptation**

#### **Maintaining Traditional Moke Values**

Participant R emphasized that in Maumere, Moke has become part of the culture and traditions of the Flores people, especially in the context of traditional ceremonies such as weddings. For them, it is essential to maintain the existence of Moke as part of a tradition that should not be forgotten or ignored.

*"In Maumere, Moke, for us Flores people, it has become a culture and a tradition for us Maumere people. So it must not disappear. Even if we are not exhausted to drink Moke, but also when we have traditional ceremonies... Wedding ceremonies/marriage and so on, Moke must still exist because it has become a tradition.", R*

Participant S argued that to maintain the traditional cultural values of Moke in the modern era, the steps taken are to maintain the Moke drinking customs. This is done to ensure that this cultural heritage remains relevant and respected in the Sikka community.

*" How to maintain Moke in the traditional cultural values of the Sikka community in the modern era... by maintaining the custom of drinking moke ", S*

#### **Adaptation of Moke in the Modern Era**

Participant R revealed a shift in the meaning of using Moke today. Although Moke remains part of the tradition of respecting ancestors in Maumere, it is also used as a symbol of greatness or prestige in the current social context.

*"What shifts the meaning is when people come out carrying the name Maumere, showing that they are not carrying tradition, but they show that they are great by drinking Moke. As for the meaning, it remains the same, it is a tradition, eee... we, the people of Maumere, Flores, for the ceremony of respecting our ancestors, use Moke.", R*

Participant S emphasized that in current developments, drinking Moke is also considered a sign of appreciation and an effort to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and kinship in the Maumere community.

*" In current developments, drinking Moke is a sign of appreciation and to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and family. ", S*

Participant N observed that more and more variations and types of Moke are emerging, especially among today's youth. This shows that Moke's adaptation to the times accommodates the interests and preferences of the more diverse younger generation.

*" but as time goes by, there are more and more types, especially young people nowadays, they drink more, how come... they drink too, but they have many variants and they have many types. ", N*

## **Discussion**

Moke is seen as an ordinary drink in the Sikka community and has become a significant symbol for maintaining and articulating their traditional values and ethnic identity. This is reflected in its widespread use in traditional ceremonies such as weddings, welcoming guests, and religious events such as Sambut Baru. Moke in the life of the Sikka community functions as a traditional symbol used in various traditional events, welcoming guests, and family events (Putri et al., 2022). In this context, Moke not only plays a role as an alcoholic consumption material but more as an element that strengthens spiritual and social relationships with the ancestral cultural heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation. This is in line with the thinking of Indigenous peoples in research conducted by (Soa,

Aswim and Natsir (2023), that Indigenous peoples still uphold respect for ancestors through traditions passed down from generation to generation.

Moke in the Sikka village community tradition is known as a drink that has been passed down from generation to generation until now (Soa, Aswim and Natsir (2023). In the context of Matsumoto's theory of cultural and traditional inheritance, this study shows that the learning process related to Moke in the Sikka community does not only occur formally through traditional ceremonies but also direct experience and observation of family practices (Matsumoto, 2013). Participants in the study revealed that understanding and practices related to drinking Moke were obtained through personal experience and observations of previous generations. Matsumoto's theory of Culture and Memory (2013) states that culture is stored and maintained through a collective memory process, which involves experiences, stories, and cultural practices passed down from generation to generation. This indicates that the inheritance of tradition is not merely a formality but also involves a profound dimension of personal experience, which enriches their understanding of the significance of Moke in the context of Sikka culture and tradition.

Moke is an essential symbol of ethnic identity for Sikka students, as Bir Pletok is an ethnic identity inherent in the Betawi Muslim community, used to strengthen friendships between individuals in social gatherings (Sultani, 2020). Identification with Moke is not only a drink but also an integral part of the identity of the Maumere people, which shows how vital Moke is in maintaining and strengthening a sense of pride in local cultural heritage. This reflects a sense of solidarity and unity in society, where Moke is a marker that unites them in a unique ethnic identity.

However, there is a significant difference between the views of the younger generation and the previous generation regarding the meaning and practice of drinking Moke. The younger generation sees Moke as a drink for pleasure alone, without considering the traditional values attached to it. On the other hand, based on research conducted by Soa, Aswim and Natsir (2023), Moke has an essential

meaning in the Sikka indigenous community, functioning as a symbol of respect for ancestors, a complement to traditional events, a symbol of brotherhood in social life, and cultural heritage. Previous generations emphasized the importance of respecting and preserving Moke in the context of certain traditional ceremonies as a form of respect for tradition and as a means of maintaining cultural continuity.

Efforts to preserve the traditional culture of drinking Moke in the modern era are challenging. Although there is a push to maintain traditional values in the face of globalization and modernization, adaptation to changing times and the preferences of the younger generation also needs to be considered. Cultural change and adaptation in the era of globalization are inevitable, so people need to learn to adapt and interact with new cultures without ignoring the old culture that is part of their identity (Asisah, Arsi, and Sakka, 2023). This shows the importance of maintaining a balance between preserving tradition and adapting to the dynamics of society and technology that continue to develop. Overall, this study illustrates that Moke does not merely function as an alcoholic beverage but as a symbol rich in meaning that maintains and articulates the ethnic identity and traditional values of the Sikka people. A deep understanding of the role of Moke in the lives of local people not only strengthens awareness of the importance of cultural heritage but also inspires efforts to preserve and develop culture while facing the challenges of the modern era.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that Moke is an essential symbol in maintaining the ethnic identity and traditional values of the Sikka community. Moke plays a role in traditional ceremonies, strengthening spiritual and social relationships with ancestors. However, the younger generation sees it only as a drink, while the previous generation values Moke as a symbol of respect for tradition. The challenge of preserving Moke in the modern era involves adapting to globalization without

ignoring traditional values. Overall, Moke is not only a drink but also a symbol that strengthens the solidarity and cultural pride of the Sikka community.

### *Suggestion*

Sikka students are expected to better understand and appreciate the traditional meaning of Moke as a customary symbol that strengthens ethnic identity and ancestral values. Active participation in traditional ceremonies and cultural activities and finding innovative ways to preserve Moke traditions in a modern context, such as through cultural programs on campus or social media, is essential. Being involved in community activities that promote and maintain Moke traditions will also help maintain cultural continuity amidst globalization. Further research can analyze how Moke is presented and discussed on social media to understand how this tradition is adapted in the digital era.

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