

The Characteristics of *Kosu* Tradition in the Traditional Marriage of Amarasi Society in Timor Island

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Amarasi Characteristics <i>Kosu</i> Marriage Tradition	This research present study to explore the characteristics of the <i>Kosu</i> tradition in the traditional marriage of the Amarasi society in Timor Island, which holds significant meaning in the social and cultural context of the local community. The <i>Kosu</i> tradition is an integral part of the Amarasi traditional wedding ceremony, serving not only as a religious ritual but also as a means to strengthen social and economic relationships between families and the community. <i>Kosu</i> embodies the unity and moral support between the two families, signifying their collective commitment to the success of the newlyweds' household. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with five traditional leaders of the Amarasi society as research subjects. The author uses interviews to collect data. The results of the data analysis show that the characteristics of the <i>Kosu</i> tradition consist of a structure that includes songs, shawls, sticks, money, and music. The characteristics of the <i>Kosu</i> tradition provide economic benefits to the Amarasi society and also hold deep symbolic meaning, such as expressions of gratitude and moral support from the family and community to the newlyweds.
How to cite: Kapitan, Y., Bustan, F., Dapa Taka., S. (2026). The Characteristics of <i>Kosu</i> Tradition in Traditional Marriage of Amarasi Society In Timor Island. SPARKLE Journal of Language, Education and Culture, 8 (1) 57 – 60.	

INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara is one of the cultural provinces of the Indonesian archipelago. (Bustan, 2007; Gana et al., 2020.) Timor Island is home to various indigenous communities, each with a rich cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation. Among these communities are the Amarasi people, who are famous for their unique and time-tested traditions and customs.

One of the most important aspects of Amarasi culture is the practice of traditional marriage that is deeply rooted in the beliefs and values of their ancestors. These differences occur because each culture has its own perspective and understanding of the world, both the world of facts and the symbolic world (Boas, 1962; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Schneider, 1976; Cassirer, 1978; Casson, 1981; Kecung, 1981; Wallace, 1981; Balai, 1997; Suriasurmantri, 2001). Differences between cultures can be seen in the social organization system, one of the main elements of culture, which concerns the pattern of relationships among members of society. It is generally recognized that each society has a different culture.

The essence of Amarasi traditional marriage lies in the "*Kosu*" tradition, a sacred ritual with deep significance in society. The *Kosu* dance originates from the Amarasi tribe in Kupang Regency, NTT. This dance has been passed down from generation to generation and has become an important part of the life and traditional events of the Amarasi people, such as weddings. Marriage will be the beginning of a

new household, especially in Amarasi, where there is a tradition of providing provisions for the newlyweds. The provisions are not in the form of goods but in the form of money that will be tucked into a coconut stick, bamboo, a piece of wood, or other equipment and then sprinkled on the bride and groom's head while accompanied by songs and dances. For the Amarasi people, the *Kosu* dance is characterized by standing in place and moving their hands to the strains of Amarasi music, and it serves as an opening act at a wedding reception. Usually, the amount of money varies in value. Some use five thousand rupiah to hundreds of thousands of rupiah. The money is used as initial capital for the new family to purchase household necessities and other investments.

This dance is an expression of the extended family's joy and happiness as they surround the bride and groom. This dance is popular among both young and old people. This dance remains popular and known across all levels of Amarasi society. The *Kosu* tradition is not just a show-off but a form of appreciation for the bride and groom and support from the entire family for the bride and groom in building a new household. Culture, in its scope, is built on beliefs, values, behavior, or material objects produced by a particular group of people.

METHOD

This research applies the descriptive qualitative research method. The descriptive qualitative method involves explaining the results of the analysis in words and sentences, since the results are not numerical data. Roberts (2006: 45) states. "Qualitative research is based on an interpretive epistemology, meaning that knowledge is generated and shaped through interaction between those involved in the research process. Qualitative methodologies are concerned with how the researcher can explore and analyze whatever it is he or she believes can be known, and are based upon prior epistemological assumptions."

Referring to this question stating that qualitative method focuses on describing to the main issue which is limited in research scope and limitation for main issue which is analyze from a certain phenomenon, the writer apply phenomenology research in his case seeing things as they really are and establishing the meanings of things through illumination and explanation rather than through taxonomic approaches or abstractions, and developing theories through the dialogic relationships of researcher to researched.

The data used in this study were taken from sources within the Amarasi community, specifically from the Amarasi traditional leaders, particularly those from Kotabes Village. The researcher conducted interviews with these traditional leaders to gather information about the characteristics of the *Kosu* custom in traditional marriage.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, several meanings were identified in the linguistic phenomena that characterize the *Kosu* tradition in traditional Amarasi community marriages in East Nusa Tenggara. These meanings are not only reflected through verbal expressions, such as traditional speech, songs, and symbolic expressions used in traditional ceremonies, but are also deeply rooted in non-verbal elements, such as body language, clothing, and ritual objects. Together, these linguistic and cultural expressions reveal layers of social values, kinship ties, economic relationships, and spiritual beliefs that form the core identity of the Amarasi community, highlighting the integral role of the *Kosu* custom in sustaining culture and the integrity of society.

The Structures of Kosu Tradition

The tradition has long been a highly respected part of Kupang Regency's cultural heritage, especially in the Amarasi area, and has been passed down from generation to generation. This tradition is an integral part of wedding ceremonies, especially at receptions, where it serves as the opening entertainment. The dance itself is performed by the bride and groom in the center of the venue, surrounded by guests. During the performance, guests are invited to give money gifts to the bride and groom in a unique and traditional way. Using wooden sticks or utensils, guests pinch paper money and attach it to the bride and groom's bun or headband as a symbolic gesture of goodwill and support for the bride and groom's future life. The *Kosu* tradition has several key characteristics that make it unique and culturally important in traditional Amarasi weddings.

First of all, the bride and groom come to the front of the stage together with their family and all their relatives. The music used for *Kosu* is the song *Kosu Bife noni*. After the music is played, the family starts dancing around the bride and groom, and while putting money that has been pinned to the broomstick on the heads of the bride and groom, accompanied by music and dance from the family and all the invited guests who are present, *Kosu* is carried out for approximately 30 minutes until finished. Later, someone who has been appointed by the family will secure all the money that is obtained in a box and hand it over to the bride and groom, and the amount obtained is only known by the substitute. This is a form of support from both families, who are present to help the newlyweds build a new household.

The *Kosu* tradition is performed at wedding receptions, serves as a symbolic and fun opening to entertain guests, and lasts approximately 30 minutes or more. It reflects the community's unity and togetherness, emphasizing the social bond between family and guests. To perform the *Kosu* tradition, several items are needed: music, the couple, a stick, a shawl, and money, along with the music used for this *Kosu* tradition which is Timorese music and songs.

The music of this song that can be mentioned is *Kosu bife noni* music. Here is the link to song of *Kosu bife noni* <https://youtu.be/RnsnC9-ISi0?si=vdWwOBiUsDJ2pCm->.

The next one is the stick; it can be made from coconut skewers, in local language, people call it '*Lidi*'. This *Lidi* is split at the top to hold the money. Thus, when the *Kosu* is danced, people would clip money onto those skewers (*Lidi*) and stick them into the bride's and groom's head.



Picture of *Kosu* Tradition, where people stick money into the bride's & groom's head

The meanings of Kosu in social and economic

Meaning is the relationship between the form of language and the object or something (thing) it refers to (Finoza, 2008: 109). More clearly Aristotle, a Greek thinker, who lived in the 3rd century BC was the first thinker to use the term meaning, he said that words as the smallest units that contain meaning, Aristotle also revealed that words can be divided into two, namely words that are present from the word itself autonomously and the meaning of words that are present due to the occurrence of grammatical relationships (Ulliman 1973: 30). (Plato, 347-429 BC)

In the *Kosu* tradition in Amarasi, the term "socioeconomic" refers to the money given to the couple. The money is intended only for the couple; it is forbidden for anyone else to use it. The money is regarded as the beginning for the couple to start their family life. The couple uses the money to start a new life as a family.

The *Kosu* dance is a symbol of economic support from the extended family and invited guests to the bride and groom. The giving of money (*saweran*) tucked into the bun or crown of the bride, or to the groom, symbolizes financial assistance and blessings so that the couple can start a new household life with sufficient provisions, both economically.

The social meaning of *Kosu* lies in its function as a medium for expressing affection, solidarity, moral and material support, and the preservation of culture for the bride and groom. This tradition strengthens social ties among individuals, families, relatives, and friends in the Amarasi community and serves as a symbol of appreciation, blessings, and good wishes for the bride and groom as they start a new life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the *Kosu* tradition is a respected cultural heritage of the Amarasi people in Kupang Regency, passed down through generations and performed during wedding receptions as a symbolic and joyful expression of unity and social bonding among families and guests. The performance involves specific preparations, including traditional Timorese music (notably the "*Kosu Bife Noni*" song), the bride and groom, sticks made from split coconut skewers for holding money, shawls, and other symbolic items that reflect the community's cultural.

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