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# Social Livelihoods of Silk Weaver's Family in Bira Bulukumba

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**Abstract**—This study is using a qualitative that aimed to describe the social livelihoods of weavers' families in Bira, knowing their cultural values that affect the lives of weavers' families. The subject in this study was selected purposively from weavers' families in Bira with the following criteria. (1) Bira women who are working as silk weavers and (2) Bira women whose husbands sail and return after months. In addition, additional informants were also chosen: village heads, staffs and community leaders. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data collected from the observations, interviews, and documentation analyzed qualitatively with Compound Analysis techniques. The results of this study concluded as follows: (1) The Social livelihoods life of the Weaver family in Bira was very simple, both from the level of education and income level. However, they still exist to carry on weaving activities, to family income, as well as to kill boredom, waiting for the husband to return from the sea, and without realizing it, it turns out weaving as maintaining their culture which is inherited from parents, grandmothers, and predecessors decades ago. They were also very loyal to their husbands, and because of that they never sounded an affair, they never divorced even though they were left behind long ago by husbands who sailed. (2) The life of the Weaver family in Bira is strongly influenced by cultural values which are reflected in their views on the meaning and principle of life, the meaning, and principle of work and creation, the meaning of the relationship with nature and the meaning of living relationships with fellow human beings. They view life as part of their service; they do not dream much to see life as an attempt to gain a position. Work is for life, not to achieve position and life solely for charity and devoted. The nature according to them can be conquered to be used for the life of mankind. They assume that generally humans are good and that is why cooperation is needed. These cultural values contribute to strengthening the existence of weavers in Bira.

**Keywords**—weavers family, Bira, Bulukumba, culture

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bira is one of the villages with various potentials in Bontobahari district, Bulukumba Regency in South Sulawesi. It is one of a famous village, not only in Indonesia but also in abroad. There are a lot of natural resources potential and the uniqueness of the culture. Bira keeps a million natural charismas as beautiful beaches with white sand. It also has a cultural potential where the people used to weave silk clothes, as well known as the Bira silk. The weaving is traditions from generation to generation for local people especially Bira's women. They weave the

cloth to kill time while waiting for their husband to back home from sailing. Therefore, silk fabrics in Bira have been long produced by the people. It initially as a hobby, however, nowadays it has slowly become a home industry to earn money. This home industry is not only marketed in Bira and its surroundings, but also to other areas in Indonesia. It is marketed by sailors who sail in the eastern and other regions in Indonesia.

The popularity of Bira silk made it became one of the popular tourist icons in Bulukumba, beside Bira beach. Silk enhance the image of the Bulukumba community as a cultural tourism destination, in addition to the coastal nature tourism. This predicate increases tourist attractions in Bulukumba, besides Aparalang, Bara beach, Samboang Beach, and the Kajang community in the East Bulukumba.

Until the 1970s and 1980s, the production of Bira silk fabrics was still one of the home industries that contributed to the improvement of the family's finances in Bira. However, the number of weavers is decreased but the activity of weaving still exist, and the result is no longer optimal.

## II. METHODS

The subject in this study was selected purposively with the following criteria: firstly, The Bira woman whose husband was sailing; secondly, the Bira woman who was working as a weaver. Finally, other informants also occupied such as village heads and their staff, and community leaders.

Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. And were processed and analyzed with a componential analysis technique [1], [2]. Moreover, this research was carried out in Bira with the following considerations: 1) this village is one of the villages most inhabited by female weavers from seafaring families, and is historically very well known in Indonesia and abroad. 2) all Bira people are Moslem who obeys the religious law and is still firmly holding the culture, both as cultural ideas and when they implement in daily life.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bira is one of the villages in Bontobahari District, of Bulukumba, at South Sulawesi Province. It is classified as a coastal area, a center for tourism and fisheries development in Bulukumba. The area is around 19.50 km<sup>2</sup> and is

inhabited by more than 3974 people. All people are Moslem and follow the religion law, besides the culture and traditions. Bira has unique in terms of language. Mattulada [3] calls the language as *Konjo*, a communication tool in daily life; it also used by people in Kajang, Bontotiro, Bulukumba.

The Bira people, especially those who live in Bira and Darubiah village, are centers of silk fabrics and craftsmen. There are around 115 and almost all women workers and dominated by sailors' families. Most of their last education is an elementary school. The results of interviews with some craftsmen mention that the average income is around Rp. 100,000 / month. This number is of course relatively small, but they still work wholeheartedly, because besides being an addition to the family's income, it is also a routine to wait for the husband to come back from sailing.

Bira silk weavers produce several types of kinds including Bira silk fabrics, *La'bu* clothes, and Samarinda sarongs. The types of silk fabrics and *la'bu* clothes are obtained from Sengkang Regency. Meanwhile, raw materials for Samarinda sarongs are obtained from Surabaya. And the raw materials for silk and silk fabrics are obtained from Sengkang. The motifs produced by the craftsmen include wave motifs, floral motifs, *Kolahu* motifs, fur motifs, and motifs from Gowa. These motives, of course, contain historical values and have meanings.

The price of each type of silk varies; for example for the *Kolahu* sarong usually ranges between Rp. 300,000 to Rp. 600,000, the *Samarinda* sarong is about Rp. 175,000 to Rp. 300,000. The price based on the type and quality materials and techniques of the weaving. Bira silk waivers are generally female sailors and the tools used are still very simple, weaving looms (*cidong*) and non-machine looms. They generally managed and produced under the house. About the meaning and principle of the work, there is a culture that sees the work as an attempt to get a life. There is also a culture that sees the work as an attempt to achieve position and considers work as an attempt to produce work.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the results of interviews with all informants (5 families), it came to the conclusion that work and creation are for life. There were no respondents who stated that work and creation are for achieving a certain position. Compared to respondents' answers about the meaning and principle of life – life is for charity and act; it can be concluded that the weaving family in Bira views work and creativity as a means of living, and the living for charity. Furthermore, weaving families in Bira works not to achieve a position, but solely to maintain life and to work solely to achieve a better creation in the future.

According to the head of Bira Village, weaving for Bira women is not new. This work has not only economic value but also a mean to avoid the feeling of missing and bored, waiting for the husband to come home. That is why *Birake village* head told that almost all Bira women are good at weaving silk fabrics. According to him, it was not a Bira woman if she was not good at weaving cloth. The types of Bira weave is a fabric for *la'bu* clothes (long shirt) and silk sarongs. They are marketed in the surrounding area or shipped out of the area by their husbands when they go sailing.

The village head of Bira pointed out that the families, even though their education is low, they also never run out of mind to anticipate living in this less-productive nature for farming. Therefore, they are looking for alternatives to weaving as part of an effort to challenge nature. They argued that nature must be used well for survival. Let husband sail, and we are here to fill time, drive boredom and remain faithful waiting for the husband from sailing.

Regarding the meaning and principle of human relations, according to Kluckhohn [4], there is a culture that views human relations with fellow humans as vertically oriented (superiors). Some are horizontally oriented and maintain relationships with each other. Besides, there are also culture that independent oriented – not depend on others.

Weaving families in Bira came to the conclusion that relationships with humans need to be careful and selective, especially in social interaction with those who are not the community. One of the community leaders who had been interviewed suggested that weaving' families in Bira were very independent. They did not like to slave even ask for mercy on others. Even though they lived modestly, it was enough for them, rather than begging to others. That is why they weave because they want to be independent. And even though their lives are modest.

The life of the Weaver family in Bira despite the low level of education and income, there are interesting things from certain aspects of life. First, they exist in the profession as weavers, even though the income they get from weaving work is very low. Second, <sup>6</sup> the weaving turns out as maintaining their culture which has been passed down from generation to generation, from grandmothers and predecessors decades ago. Third, weaving is not the main orientation, but it also kills boredom waiting for the husband who was sailing. Fourth, it seems very clear that the Bira weavers, especially those who are married are very faithful waiting for the husband. It was never heard that a wife who was left behind by her husband who was sailing had an affair, or they asked for a divorce. Here are some points on certain sides that are interesting for weavers in Bira.

According to some cultural experts, the Bira weavers, as the *Bugis / Makassar* people are still very strong in their culture. In line, Pelras [5] state that every choice is taken by the *Bugis* people for their actions shows a strong tendency to cultural values and the attractiveness of the people. It is well-known that people in Bira, and generally families of sailors are very strong in their cultural attraction. It is also seen in the *Phinisi* boat making which is full of cultural values, especially from religious values. Mattulada [6] states that the life of the Bugis-Makassar people in carrying out various actions is strongly influenced by the culture and the attractiveness of the community.

The way of life of Bira people, especially women, is strongly influenced by their environment, especially when their husbands go to sea, they are very faithful in holding commitments. In line, Kluckhohn [4] states that the way of life determines a person's view of life, the interaction between the two cultures takes place. Next, he also continues that humans are actors who behave based on the environment, while the environment is dynamic and can change based on the activities of actors who have the ability to find alternatives for their environment.

Furthermore, Bidney [7] stated that the view of life is not always a principle or essential, but it is elastic. It depends on the situation and conditions. Thus, when someone or society says something about his view of life, it does not always reflect expressed consciousness. On the contrary, especially the community that is being held in their aspects of life by the bureaucratization process. What they really want to say does not become or reflect the unexpressed consciousness.

Weavers' families in Bira are strongly influenced by cultural values which are reflected in several things about the meaning and the principle of life, the meaning of work and creation, the meaning of relationships with nature, and the meaning of life with fellow human beings. The meaning and principle of weaver's family life in Bira is very simple. The harmony life with family is enough for them. This view influenced by the Islamic teachings in the Qur'an, "I did not create jinn and humans except to serve Me."

Weavers' families in Bira in various activities are also strongly influenced by their views on work and creation. That work and creation are for life, not to achieve the position. Life is solely for charity. Therefore weaving is only to fill the "longing" and "bored" waiting for the husband to come from sailing.

Bira weaver families in their work are also related to their views on nature. Although their education is relatively low, their views about nature are very advanced. They think that nature can be utilized to be used for human life. That is why they always try to make alternatives for their problems in life, including weaving. Thus, the solution to the problem in subjective perception is to get harmony with nature. Finding a harmonious form in society through syncretic efforts cannot be eliminated. It is an absolute part of the totality that is sacred, and it must be harmonized in that totality.

The views are also in harmony with the Bugis-Makassar cultural system which can be seen in the *lontara* which contains *paseng* (mandate). *Paseng* is stated in *Latoa* that if you want to do something you should pay attention to seven things. This message reads as follows: "this is the seven kinds of deeds, remember truly do not lost them from your heart, a clear solution. Every individual in his growth is printed by the community in which you were born. On the contrary, every individual throughout his life also gave donations to color his community. Both are not contradictory; broadly humans are a part of the community; human nature only exists because it is shaped by society. Individuals and communities are two sides of the same human behavior that are complementary and sufficient [6].

In carrying out daily activities, both between individuals, individuals and their communities; individuals and nature; and communities and natural; humans are always influenced by the value system. This system according to Pelras [5] functions to regulate human behavior, about what must be done, what to do and what is not done. Humans and society in carrying out their various lives are destined by various patterns and lifestyles that must follow the rules, norms, and habits (conventions) that originate from values as a system.

In relation to humans and their values, Giddens et al. [8] write that humans are social beings who have freedom besides their desires and interests. It integrates into society with other individuals. It maintains its status and

understands its role. In society, there also grows a number of values. The value of society according to them is the applicable provisions in the context of human interaction with regard to aspects of life that have consequences for everything on a particular group. Thus, humans not only live at the present time but also with regard to their past. They are in a position of those values. All of their activities are not only regulated by their present life, but also by the provisions inherited by their predecessor generation, and by their aspirations for the future. When a person has to respond, it means that people behave in their society, besides they pay attention to the urgency of their society while at the same time thinking about the heritage of cultural values. The values that exist in the community are normative provisions. Thus, the cycle of human life and society of "past, present and tomorrow" becomes a chain that cannot be separated [9].

It is not surprising that the Bugis-Makassar people who in the South Sulawesi are often called seafarers 'families since, in the ancient times, the ancestors have been excellent and superior sailors' families. The evidence is revealed by various historical records. One is Tome Pires's travel record entitled "Sumarientale" which was rewritten by Mattulada [3]. This source presents that the Makassar people were more like Siamese. They have accomplished sailors with boats, they sailed the seas, sailed to near the island of Pegu (Philippines), to the Moluccas, Banda and all the islands around Java. Bugis-Makassar cultural heritage as a sailor family can be witnessed in various coastal areas in southern Sulawesi, one of them is in Bulukumba precisely in Bira, Tanah Lemo, Tanah Beru, Ara, and all places in the Bontobahari District, where Pinisi boats are made [10].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

1. The life of the Weaver family in Bira was very simple, both from the level of education and income level. However, they still exist to carry out weaving activities, in addition to increasing family income, as well as to kill boredom, waiting for the husband to return from sailing, and without realizing it, it turns out weaving as maintaining their culture which is inherited from parents, grandmothers, and predecessors decades ago. They were also very loyal to their husbands, and because of that they never sounded an affair, they never divorced even though they were left behind long ago by husbands who sailed.
2. The life of the Weaver family in Bira is strongly influenced by cultural values which are reflected in their views on the meaning and principle of life, the meaning, and principle of work and creation, the meaning of the relationship with nature and the meaning of living relationships with fellow human beings. They view life as part of their service; they do not dream much to see life as an attempt to gain a position. Work is for life, not to achieve position and life solely for charity and devoted. The nature according to them can be conquered to be used for the life of mankind. They assume that generally humans are good and that is why cooperation is needed. These cultural values contribute to strengthening the existence of weavers in Bira.

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