



## Traditional Communication and Language Power In The Deliberative Culture Of "Lonto Leok"

\* YERMIA DJEFRI MANAFE,<sup>1</sup> IDO PRIJANA HADI,  
<sup>2</sup> KAROLUS BUDIMAN JAMA

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Nusa Cendana, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia, <sup>2</sup> Universitas Kristen Petra, Surabaya, Indonesia  
Correspondance author: [yermiadjefri@staf.undana.ac.id](mailto:yermiadjefri@staf.undana.ac.id)

### Article

#### Article History

Received: 27/4/2023  
Reviewed: 5/7/2023  
Accepted: 28/7/2023  
Published: 30/7/2023

#### DOI:

[doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i1.2277](https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i1.2277)



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Volume : 39  
No. : 1  
Month : June  
Year : 2023  
Pages : 187-196

### Abstract

Communication of traditional elite power relations and language power over silent groups in the "Lonto Leok" deliberation culture greatly influences the results of deliberations which essentially ignore the opinions of the lower community, so that the democracy that occurs seems to represent all community opinions. Therefore, it is necessary to know the power relations of traditional elites with the community (silent groups) in order to gain an understanding of this democratic context. This research was conducted among the Manggarai ethnic group in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province using qualitative methods. Data collection was conducted by in-depth interviews with local elites and people who practice the "lonto leok" culture. To get the appropriate views, focused discussions were conducted to match the results of the interviews. The results of this study concluded that the lonto leok culture is a form of deliberation in the context of the Manggarai indigenous community, where the customary elite (traditional elite) has a very strong role in decision-making which is implicitly supported by the power of language to silence the lower layers of society (non-elite) to prevent dissent.

**Keywords:** Lonto Leok; Traditional Elites; Power Relations; Power of Language; Silent Group.

© 2023 Mimbar: Jurnal Sosial dan Pembangunan, Unisba Press. All rights reserved.

### Introduction

Throughout history, the term elite has always been an interesting object of study, as elites are often interpreted as decision makers. According to Bottomore, the term elite itself, was used in the 17th century to describe goods of perfect quality, the term was later extended to upper-class social groups, such as superior military units or high nobility and the word elite came into use in 1823 when applied to social groups. However, the term was widely used in social and political writing in Europe in the 19th century or in Great Britain and America in the 1930s, when it was spread by sociological elite theories, especially the writings of Vilfredo Pareto. (Wibisono and Djumadin, 2020 : 7809).

The term elite, always refers to a person or group who has a particular interest and in which that person, by his own interest, can play an influential role in a particular area of life Haryanto (1990) in (Wibisono and Djumadin, 2020 : 7810). Usually traditional elites consist of people from the same background, such as noble families, religious leaders or traditional leaders. Elites involve themselves in several ways or avenues in order to maintain their power and wealth (Fokatea and Mas' udi, 2020 : 73). They have great influence in the community, especially in important decisions such as the selection of village leaders or traditional leaders, land ownership, and other social rights and obligations. According to (Rothenbuhler, 1998) (Sawaludin et al., 2022 : 430-432), this group is known as the non-political elite. They have an important role in providing enthusiasm or positive energy for the community as a whole to continue to maintain existing local wisdom, arguing that this is a legacy from ancestors that should be taught from one generation to the next. In addition, these elites also play an important role in maintaining and preserving the identity that characterizes them.

Some scholars, such as Lasswell, Mill and Putnam, view the role of elites in decision-making from different dimensions. According to Laswell, elites are people who achieve the highest value in society because they can actively participate in policy-making. Mills sees the role of elites in politics according to the highest position of individuals in institutions, while Putnam divides them into two categories, namely elites who have a direct influence on policy making and elites who have an indirect influence. The decision-making process.

Although there are many definitions of elites, in principle there is a common understanding that elite means a group in society that occupies an important position in the social structure and plays an important role in the life of society. The elite's superiority over the masses depends entirely on their success in manipulating their environment through symbols, virtues or actions. Elites are organized groups with authority. This elite class is an organized minority that imposes its will through manipulation or violence, especially in a democracy. (Wibisono and Djumadin, 2020 : 7810). The elite's superiority over the masses depends entirely on successfully manipulating their environment through symbols, policies or actions.

Power relations are relationships between individuals or groups that influence the allocation of resources and decisions in a social or political system. According to Weber, power relations are the ability of a person or group to influence the actions of others in a social system. Foucault describes power relations as a social process that involves control over information, policies, and norms used in society (Pratama, 2021 : 36). Bourdieu argues that power relations are the result of struggles in the form of social, economic and cultural capital. Luke proposes three dimensions of power, namely visible power, hidden power, and ideological power (Sumitri and Arka, 2019 : 207).

Based on several definitions of power relations, the meaning that can be understood is that power relations are power that can express different ways in the form of coercion or influence, such as persuasion, manipulation or intimidation through institutions. It can be through educational, religious or legal institutions, and power can be exercised by controlling symbols of power such as language, knowledge or lifestyle.

The power relations of traditional elites can be formed in various ways, including kinship or family relations, relations between religious leaders and their communities, and relations between traditional leaders and their communities. In addition, traditional elites can strengthen their power relations, for example by monopolizing access to resources. Traditional elites have a strong influence on traditional communities. According to the realistic view of traditional elites, the culture and traditions that the community has inherited over the years are very important values and must be nurtured properly. They believe that traditional values must be preserved and passed on to the next generation so that society can continue to live in harmony and stability.

In Manggarai culture traditional elites, such as *tu'a golo* (tribal chief), *tu'a teno* (customary figure who controls the land), *tu'a gendang* (customary figure who keeps the customary house), *tu'a panga* (customary figure who represents the family clan), *tu'a kilo* (head of the family) are role model leaders, symbols of custom, spiritual and intellectual in the community. They play an important role in decision-making in community life, such as marriage, traditional ceremonies and interaction with the natural environment. In addition, traditional elites help communities preserve their culture and traditions and ensure that they do not lose out to modernization and globalization.

Traditional elite power has long been a topic of social science research, especially in countries with social systems that are still dominated by traditional elite groups that have great power or influence in society, for example, wealth, descent, and cultural or religious influence. In this context, studying traditional elite power relations is important for understanding the dynamics of power and influence in society. Studying the traditional power relations of elites can help to

understand how their power and influence affect the social processes of a society. Examining traditional elite power relations can also explain how democratization processes can be carried out when power is still controlled by traditional elite groups.

The *lonto leok* culture is a form of consensus in the context of the indigenous people of Manggarai, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara where the traditional elite plays a very strong role. Over time, this culture has become a symbol of unity, brotherhood and kinship in solving social and cultural problems. This habit that has been passed down from generation to generation in the lives of the Manggarai people has made *lonto leok* a culture that cannot be separated from the social interaction of the Manggarai people. In social interaction, *lonto leok* is often used depending on the context and purpose, such as preparation for traditional ceremonies/rituals and as a medium of social communication.

If you want to do something in Manggarai that requires the participation of many people, *lonto leok* first. *Lonto leok* is a place to convey all inspirations and complaints related to living together in a spirit of brotherhood and kinship. The basic spirit of *lonto leok* is summarized in the expression *kope hole todo kongkol, nai ca anggik, tuka cal leleng, muku ca pu'u neka woleng curup, teu ca ambo neka woleng lako* (two swords that stand together, one heart, one soul, like one banana tree does not disagree and like one clump of sugar cane is inseparable).

This expression presents *lonto leok* as a folk melody that reveals the history of Manggarai society consisting of various tribes that were originally at war with each other. *Lonto leok* promises the hope of equality and brotherhood in a bond of solidarity full of empathy as an instrument of democracy with the power of assertiveness. This bond of solidarity is heavily influenced by traditional elites, such as *tu'a golo* (tribal chief), *tu'a teno* (traditional figure who controls the land), *tu'a gendang* (traditional figure guarding the traditional house), *tu'a panga* (traditional figure representing the family clan), *tu'a kilo* (family head). Traditional elites are figures who play a very important role in the democracy of the Manggarai community, they have a social status above ordinary people as people who lead, influence, direct and organize society. (Van Pranata and Nami, 2020 : 92).

The phenomenon of *lonto leok* is interesting to study, including the results of previous research from Simangunsong & Rahmat (2021) entitled the meaning of kinship in *lonto leok* culture in the 2020 Pilkada process in West Manggarai. The research method uses phenomenology, where the results show that the meaning of kinship in the *lonto leok* culture in the election process in West Manggarai is togetherness and dependence. While the role of *lonto leok* culture in the political process is at the time of decision making and fostering kinship ties. Menggo (2017) also examined *lonto leok* culture in English speaking skills. The research conducted used classroom action research. He argued. *Lonto léok* is one of the local wisdoms of Manggarai, NTT, which is a local democracy to manage the Manggarai ethnic life system such as the maintenance of peace and security, law enforcement and customs, unity and integrity, maintenance of decency and manners, land division, learning activities, and others. According to him, *lonto léok* has clear implementation steps in learning such as *céngka* 'apperception and exploration' *cica* 'responding', *caca* 'finding a way out' and *congko* 'concluding'. The aspects mentioned are fundamental to *lonto leok*.

Another research by Adon (2021) is related to the folkways *lonto leok* of Manggarai culture in the light of William Graham Sumner's thoughts on society as antagonistic cooperation. The research used an interpretative method where the results of his research revealed that Manggarai society was born from the antagonistic cooperation of tribes that fought each other in ancient times, uniting to form the current Manggarai society. Meanwhile, Mahur & Bustan (2019) conducted a descriptive qualitative research exploring the conceptualization of the Manggarai people on *lonto leok* culture as a sociologically responsive customary law tool. The results showed that there are several verbal expressions in the Manggarai language whose forms and meanings reflect the function of *lonto leok* culture as a sociologically responsive customary law tool in an effort to resolve land conflicts and maintain the social harmony of the Manggarai community.

Research conducted (Letuna and Manafe, 2023) on *Lonto Leok* Collaboration Across Differences, Consequences, and Democracy of the Manggarai Community. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research location was carried out in Wae Ri'i District, Manggarai Regency during the Simultaneous Village Head Election (Pilkades) of Manggarai Regency from 2021 to 2027. The results of the research that were successfully constructed were *lonto leok* as a collaboration across differences that was born from the compromise of tribes that inhabited Manggarai land since centuries ago; *lonto leok* as a form of cooperation with consequences as a result of consensus that is expected to be implemented, but for those who do not care, the sanctions are social sanctions in the form of exclusion from social interaction; and

*lonto leok* in Manggarai democratic life promises hope for political freedom, equality and brotherhood with bonds of solidarity full of empathy for the suffering of citizens as a means of democracy that has power and translates into political power.

The *lonto leok* phenomenon shows traditional elites working together to play out power relations for their interests and desires. In other words, referring to what Gramsci expressed, which supports Marx's idea that "the scientific world is not sterile of hegemony and power". When Jürgen Habermas pointed out that knowledge is closely related to interests, (Foucault, 1972) formulated it with the expression "knowledge of power", the relationship between knowledge of power and truth. (Sumintak and Idi, 2022 : 59-60).

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in elaborating on the culture of *lonto leok* deliberation through the problem formula how is the Communication of Traditional Elite Power Relations and Language Power over the Mute Group in the Manggarai Ethnic "*Lonto Leok*" Deliberation Culture? The aim is to explore the *lonto leok* culture related to the power relations of traditional elites with the community (silent groups) in the Manggarai ethnic *lonto leok* culture. Previous research did not mention the issue of power relations communication. This is the advantage and attractiveness of this research as well as the novelty of the research results compared to previous similar studies

### **Research Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is research that uses natural objects where researchers try to describe and interpret objects according to what they are based on the facts and characteristics of objects and subjects precisely (Bungin, 2011 : 19). Qualitative research observes people in their environment, interacts with people, understands their language, and examines how they interpret the world around them (Nasution, 2003) in (Faisal and Rifai, 2020 : 322). This qualitative research guides researchers to obtain previously unexpected findings and build new theoretical frameworks (Suwardi Endraswara, 2003) in (Sutikno et al., 2022 : 47).

The data collection technique used is observation or participant observation which is carried out deliberately to observe the *lonto leok* culture by observing carefully and taking notes. To obtain oral information from informants or respondents and to complement the results of the observation, researchers used interview techniques (Syahrin et al., 2019 : 432). Furthermore, researchers use data documentation techniques to find data about *lonto leok* culture in the form of notes, books, journals, newspapers, magazines and so on. After obtaining all the necessary data, researchers conducted an analysis using data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction by summarizing, selecting key things, focusing on important things to get themes and patterns. After the data is reduced, the next step is to display the data to make it easier to understand what is happening and plan further work based on what has been understood from the existing data. Then draw conclusions, in the form of new findings that have not previously existed or have not been clear after research becomes clear.

### **Results & Discussion**

Based on the results of the research, it is necessary to discuss *Lonto Leok* as a Cultural Heritage of Manggarai Deliberation, Traditional Elites in the Manggarai Context, Power Relations of Traditional Elites with the Community and Power (in) *Lonto Leok* Ritual Language, as follows:

#### ***Lonto Leok* Cultural Heritage of Manggarai Deliberation**

The *lonto leok* culture is a form of agreement among the indigenous people of Manggarai, Flores and East Nusa Tenggara. Over time, this culture has become a symbol of togetherness, brotherhood and association in working on social and artistic issues. This hereditary habit in the lives of the Manggarai people has made the *lonto leok* culture even stronger in the lives of the Manggarai people. In social relations, *lonto leok* is used according to its purpose, such as in traditional/ritual ceremonies or as a tool for social discussion. *Lonto leok* is a contemplative tradition of the Manggarai ethnic group in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. In the Manggarai language, *lonto leok* means "wise speaker" (Pandor, 2015 : 444).

*Lonto leok* comes from the words *lonto* meaning sitting and *leok* meaning around or around. Lexically, *lonto leok* means sitting in a circle. This circular sitting tradition is an adaptation of the round shape of the Manggarai traditional house and is identical to the shape of the *lingko*. *Lingko* is a traditional garden that resembles a spider web. The process of dividing the circle is measured from its center, precisely in the middle of the ring which is often called *lodok*. Manggarai people also understand the term "*lonto leok* or *lonto cama*" as a tradition of meeting or deliberation. The



meeting place for *lonto leok* is the *mbaru gendang* (traditional house). *Mbaru gendang* is a traditional house or the main building of a village house. The existence of the *mbaru gendang* is not due to its size, but because of its function as the residence of the village leader (*tu'a adat*) and the center of ritual activities of the indigenous community in a village. *Mbaru Gendang* is the place of *neki weki ranga manga kudut bang pa'ang olo ngaung musu* (where all villagers gather to reach an agreement).

The *lonto leok* culture is a model of local democracy that regulates all orders in the life of the Manggarai people, such as maintaining peace and security, maintaining customary law, unity, maintaining decency and modesty, sharing land (*lingko*), maintaining the environment, participating in traditional ceremonies (Pandor, 2015 : 456). As a forum, *lonto leok* is an opportunity to discuss something together. The ideal *lonto leok* is when it is able to produce a situation in smoothing perceptions and unifying the desires of various participants. All *lonto leok* participants are expected to master *nai ca anggik* (one heart one soul) and avoid *woleng curup* (different opinions). In this way, the vision of group cohesion, such as *muku ca pu'u* (a banana grove), is ensured or realized.

As a strategic platform, *lonto leok* becomes an area that connects the dots and unifies the movement. At this level, everyone participating in the *lonto leok* is expected to act *tuka ca le leng* (not in different directions) and as the object of struggle, try to avoid the possibility of *woleng lako* (walking apart from the forum). This illustrates cohesion, which is interpreted as a form of collective in society, where the collective is described as a shared vision, understanding and attitude. It is this commonality that ultimately encourages community members to place common interests above personal interests. The common interest is the decision as the principle of mutual understanding, cohesion is always the spirit of unity, hand in hand.

The statement of togetherness in *lonto leok* culture is confirmed by Pandor in (Riyanto et al, 2015: 14) that "meeting as life emphasizes the principles of unity, brotherhood and mutual cooperation in the daily life of the Manggarai people. Every member of the community has an obligation to live together in society, as in the following expression:

*"muku ca pu'u neka woleng curup, teu ca ambong neka woleng lako; ema agu anak neka woleng curup, weta agu nara neka woleng bantang"*

This means that bananas from the same tree cannot talk differently, sugar cane allies cannot walk differently, fathers and sons cannot talk differently, siblings cannot disagree.

In a political context, such as an election event, the community deliberates to decide which candidate to vote for. According to traditional elites who became informants in this study, all those present must follow what is agreed in the *lonto leok*, there is no room for dissent other than mutual agreement (Simangunsong and Rahmat, 2021 : 14). This is also confirmed by community members that decisions taken in meetings are always based on *lonto leok* agreements. Political *lonto leok*, revealed in the utterance *"nakeng ca wae neka woleng tae"* means that fish from the same river should not differ in words. This expression emphasizes the principle of similarity of words, i.e. if someone agrees to vote for one of the candidates, then every member of the community must have that agreement, there should be no other choice.

In this case, *lonto leok* culture contributes to the democratic process in Indonesia to the wider community. This research was conducted by Mauritius Van Pranata and Yohanes Jimmy Nami (2020). They examined the role of the *lonto leok* tradition on voter behavior in the 2018-2023 East Manggarai Regency elections. This research shows that *lonto leok* is not only used as a data aggregator to solve social problems, but also as a means of political consolidation in the modern democratic era. This observation is a new phenomenon in the field of democracy, when *lonto leok* as local wisdom is used as a tool to gain votes for political actors in local elections. It was found that legislative candidates used *lonto leok* to attract votes from prospective voters (Van Pranata and Nami, 2020 : 85). Whereas the purpose of *lonto leok* wisdom is basically to express the cohesiveness and unity of the Manggarai people in solving various social problems in the lives of the Manggarai people (Mahur, 2019 : 277).

In the context of power relations between the local elite and the community in the *lonto leok* culture, there is an imbalance between the dominant (local elite) and the subordinate (community). The necessity for the community to agree in the *lonto leok* culture positions the people to be silenced. On the other hand, UNESCO recognized *lonto leok* culture as an Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019. The recognition should help preserve and develop the contemplative traditions of the Manggarai ethnicity and raise people's awareness of the importance of the values of deliberation, consideration, participation and justice in society and politics.

## **Traditional Elites of Manggarai Context**

Traditional elites are individuals who play an important role in decision-making. Keller argues that the term nobility refers to those individuals who are destined to serve the collaborative in a socially valued way. Traditional elites are leaders based on custom, heritage or old traditions, family and trust-based culture, such as religious leaders, landowners and people who have been given special rights by the community. Traditional elites function effectively and are responsible for their communities (Keller, 1995) in (Jehamat, 2011 : 70).

In this study, traditional elites are considered as people who have more power than others, thus gaining excessive respect from their followers. Traditional elites are a small group of people who have an important position and role in society, they get the majority of everything and belong to an influential elite group. The symbols that make up the elite are values, which can be wealth, honor and knowledge. For Laswell, they are elites who can control most values, because of their abilities and personalities (Wibisono and Djumadin, 2020 : 7811).

The social structure of the Manggarai ethnic group is patrilineal-genealogical because it traces the same family tree along the paternal line called *wa'u* Verheijen (1991) in (Lawang, 1999). So in this case the concept of social structure refers to the *wa'u* social structure as a patrilineal-genealogical clan. The following is Table 1. The Concept of Patrilineal-Genealogical Social Structure of Manggarai Ethnicity. The following is Table 1. The Concept of Patrilineal-Genealogical Social Structure of Manggarai Ethnicity.

**Table 1**  
**Patrilineal-Genealogical Social Structure of Manggarai Ethnicity**

No	Structure	Role	Function
1	<i>Tu'a Golo</i>	The Supreme Leader	Supreme leader of the social structure
2	<i>Tu'a teno</i>	Customary Land Rulers	Dividers of customary land to be managed
3	<i>Tu'a Gendang</i>	Ruler of the Customary House	The leader who guards the traditional house
4	<i>Tu'a Panga</i>	Family Group Leaders	Leaders who represent multiple family groups
5	<i>Tu'a Kilo</i>	Family Head	The family leader

Source: Researcher, 2023

The highest leader in the *wa'u* social structure is called *tu'a golo*. Textually, the word *tu'a* is a *golo* compound word derived from a combination of the word *tu'a* (old) and the word *golo* (mountain) or (mountain peak). The word *tu'a* is a modified form of *ata tu'a* (old man). The word *golo* is synonymous with the word *beo* (kampong), because according to the physical condition and topography of the Manggarai area (*golo*) consists of mountains, most villages or settlement units are located on hills. Therefore, the use of the word *golo* in the expression *tu'a golo* corresponds in meaning to the word *beo* (village). Thus, in certain contexts, *tu'a golo* is often referred to as *tu'a beo*. In context, the word or expression *tu'a golo* is an adjective name or attribute of the highest leader of the *wa'u* social structure, who lives together in one *beo* as a Manggarai ethnic settlement.

In addition to *tu'a golo* there are several influential traditional elites who can push the masses towards their interests, such as *tu'a teno* (customary leader who controls the land), *tu'a gendang* (customary leader who guards the customary house), *tu'a panga* (leader who represents the family group), *tu'a kilo* (head of the family). These elites are the ones who stand above the common people and play a very important role in the democracy of Manggarai society (Pranata and Nami, 2020: 84). Traditional elites are role models, symbols of *adat*. All aspects of the life, behavior and social relations of traditional elites reflect institutions inspired by traditional values. Traditional elites play an important and functional role in *lonto leok* culture as a model of local democracy that regulates all orders of life in Manggarai society (Pandor, 2015 : 447). In classical works, elite describes a group of people who have certain positions and duties in traditional society.

### **Power Relationships of Traditional Elites with Society and Power (in) Lonto Leok Ritual Language**

Traditional elite power relations refer to the power relations formed between elites or elite groups that have influence in traditional societies. Foucault talks a lot about interpersonal relationships and how power is used in culture and human interaction. Power can be used for prevention and control in the sense that one person can control another, but Foucault defines power in terms of strategy and interpersonal relationships (Pratama, 2021 : 36). Power is used in society as a strategy to influence others. Traditional elite power relationships can take many forms, including kinship or family relationships, relationships between religious leaders and their followers, and relationships between traditional leaders and their communities. In addition, traditional elites can strengthen their power relationships by taking actions such as monopolizing access to resources or oppressing groups that disagree with them. (Kebung, 2017 : 41).

Traditional elites in the Manggarai context (*tu'a golo, tu'a teno, tu'a gendang, tu'a panga and tu'a kilo*) have total power because their social status is influenced by the patrilineal-genealogical structure. A patrilineal-genealogical social structure society is a social system in which descent and inheritance are calculated from male or patrilineal descent from one ancestor or ancestor. This model of traditional elite power relations refers to the hierarchical structure of society, where traditional elites at the top of the hierarchy have more power and influence than traditional communities at the bottom. It also shows a patrimonial or client-patron pattern, where traditional elites support weaker traditional communities in the form of certain benefits or protection. In this model, honor or loyalty to the stronger elite is expected from the weaker. There is also a paternalistic relationship pattern where the traditional elite acts as "fathers" or leaders responsible for the welfare of the people. In this model, traditional elites seek to meet the needs of their people, but in many cases they also make decisions on behalf of the people, without considering their wishes or needs (Letuna and Manafe, 2023 : 604).

In patrilineal-genealogical societies, heredity and hereditary are considered valid only if they are passed down through the male line which is considered the main line. The family or tribe is considered the most important social unit. Family or tribe members are intertwined and connected through the male line, and individuals' identities are closely linked to their family or tribe. For example, a *tu'a golo* is a male child who is considered a descendant of the family or tribal line, while women are only considered members of the family or tribe who marry into another family or tribe. In addition, in this system, the importance of the male line is also reflected in the social and political order of the community. Status and influence in society depends on their family and plays a role in the socio-cultural life of the Manggarai tribe as their thoughts, words and actions influence the behavior of society.

In a traditional elite leadership position born from a patrilineal-genealogical social structure, people in *lonto leok* culture cannot speak up to express opinions or remain silent. People must be of one word, not taking different actions, as in the following *lonto leok* ritual expression, *nakeng ca wae neka woleng tae* (fish from the same river should not be of different words). This phrase emphasizes the principle of similarity of words, that is if the traditional elite agrees on something, then every member of the community must share this agreement, there can be no other choice. In communication science this principle is known as the silent group theory. Silenced group theory is a science communication theory that focuses on how a marginalized group is silenced and marginalized through the use of a particular language. The main idea behind silenced group theory is that language gives native speakers more respect and self-esteem than other non-linguistic groups. This theory was invented by the Ardener sisters, Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener in 1975 by using the term "silencing" to refer to the inability of a group to express itself due to injustice, namely the communication system. This process can lead to distortion of information, as marginalized groups are unable to express their ideas clearly. Thus, dominant groups tend to ignore the voices of subordinate groups. So that in the end it affects the silence of marginalized groups (Sobur, 2014 : 788).

Power is abstract (Thomas and Wareing, 2007 : 98) and relational is defined as the ability to organize and influence others (physical and mind/spirit) resulting from better access to various physical, socio-cultural and human resources. (Green and Searle-Chatterjee, 2008: 112). Power exercises social authority and control over subordinate classes through a combination of power and consent (Barker, 2008 : 56). Its relationship with language is symbiotic and a distinction must be made between "power in language" and "power behind language" according to the statement (Green and Searle-Chatterjee, 2008 : 113).

The relationship between language and power is bilateral and multidimensional, including historical-social-cultural aspects. Power is not just language (Fairclough, 2013 : 17) because it takes many forms, including power institutionalized in various institutions, both modern and traditional. The symbiosis of dominant language emerges, shaped and supported by group ideology, which plays an important role in successfully influencing others. Language is not only a tool of communication, but also a tool of power. As a tool of power for example, communication (language) is not only for understanding; but because it is associated with certain shared ideologies and values, it must also be believed, fulfilled, obeyed, respected and recognized. For example, Fairclough (1995) explains that representations of power can occur in social class interactions, between institutional groups, between ethnic interactions, between sexual relationships and even between parents and children. Power can occur and be accepted in all areas of life, such as the military, journalists, class relations, gender and race. The exercise of power with the help of language does not only occur in the public sphere, but also in various contexts.

The power and strength of language in *lonto leok* culture in the context of silencing the non-elite lower strata of society is clearly expressed in ritual language, where all *lonto leok* participants are expected to master *nai ca anggi* (one heart and soul) and avoid bad things *woleng* (different opinions). Thus the vision of group togetherness is assured or fulfilled, for example *muku ca pu'u* (a banana grove). At this level, all *lonto leok* participants must *tuka ca leleng* (not differ in direction) with the aim of avoiding the possibility of *woleng lako* (leaving or moving away from the agreement). Here is the ritual phrase in *lonto leok*:

*"muku ca pu'u neka woleng curup, teu ca ambong neka woleng lako; ema agu anak neka woleng curup, weta agu nara neka woleng bantang"*

Meaning: Bananas from the same tree cannot speak differently, sugarcane from the same tree cannot walk differently, father and son cannot speak differently, siblings cannot disagree.

This expression is closely related to the knowledge of the Manggarai people. The meaning of words or words can be empirically measured by deeds or behavior, i.e. as family members, they must always be the same in words and always the same in deeds. The main reason is the social collective of the same family group, metaphorically called *muku ca pu'u* (one clump of bananas) and *teu ca ambo* (one clump of sugar cane). The collective interest must be higher than the individual interest because a person has a purpose in life if that person and his or her other siblings always live as a family in unity.

Significantly, this advice is one of the ancestral cultural norms of the Manggarai community that has legal value because it contains prohibitions. The legal value expressed by this advice is shown by the use of *neka* (not). *Neka* (not) is divided in front of the verb phrase *woleng curup* (say different). Prohibition acts as a control mechanism that regulates the behavior patterns of the Manggarai people to maintain social harmony, especially in their lives as members of the same family group.

In a democracy, everyone has the right to speak out, express their opinions and participate in decision-making. In practice, however, there are often groups that are silent or unable to speak out in democratic processes. These groups may not have equal access to information, political power or basic rights in society. The pattern of power relations and the power of ritual language in *lonto leok* culture are strongly influenced by the cultural values that prevail in it, such as the value of dependence, the value of togetherness, and the value of honor. The value of dependence of the Manggarai community on traditional elites shows the dependence between the weak and the strong and this value is highly valued. This leads to a patrimonial or paternalistic pattern of power relations, where politically or economically stronger elites provide support to weaker elites in the form of protection or certain benefits.

The value of togetherness for the Manggarai community is highly upheld by emphasizing the value of togetherness and cooperation among all members of the community. This can create a more diffuse and democratic pattern of power relations, where power and influence are distributed more evenly among different elites. The value of honor is highly valued by the Manggarai community, where individuals or groups who have great influence and power are considered to have a better reputation. This can create a hierarchical pattern of power relations, where traditional elites at the top of the hierarchy have greater power and influence compared to traditional communities at lower levels.

The consequence of *lonto leok* culture for the Manggarai community is the expectation that it be implemented, but for those who do not care, the sanction is social sanctions in the form of exclusion from social interaction (Adon, 2021 : 471). The behavior then becomes a moral standard that binds the conscience and then becomes a binding law. Violations will be prosecuted. The same thing also happens in the *lonto leok* process, requiring the participation of every member of the community in the *lonto leok* culture (Pandor, 2015 : 451). If someone is not involved in activities related to the community, that person is ostracized. Relevant participation is not only about ideas in *lonto leok*, but also about participation in its implementation. This involvement can be seen in many ways, especially in social issues. At the joint event, each citizen has their own roles and responsibilities to participate in all matters agreed upon.

Equality in all activities is the soul of *lonto leok*. This spirit is expressed in ritual language, which suggests that unification is not a natural process, but a human process with cultural patterns. Because human behavior is not only determined by internal beliefs and motivations, but also by norms, rules and structures that are collectively constructed, formalized and imposed on members of society to feel limited. In other words, society is born from an agreement between different individuals to build a common life where everyone can live freely and peacefully among themselves. To achieve such a common life requires shared ideals or customs that become local wisdom. So



what allows a society to exist is its culture. The identity of a society is its culture, because culture is the result of human creation, taste and spirit formed by mutual agreement. (Adon, 2021 : 416).

## Conclusions

The *lonto leok* culture is a form of consensus in the context of the Manggarai indigenous community, where the customary elite (traditional elite) has a very strong role. This culture is a symbol of unity, brotherhood and kinship in solving social and cultural problems. This habit, which has been passed down from generation to generation in the life of the Manggarai people, makes *lonto leok* a culture that cannot be separated from the social interaction of the Manggarai people.

Traditional elites in the Manggarai context are groups that are very influential in the culture of *lonto leok* deliberation. Positions as traditional elites are determined based on patrilineal-genealogical structures with their respective duties and functions, such as *tu'a golo* (the highest leader of the social structure), *tu'a teno* (customary leader who controls the land), *tu'a gendang* (customary leader who guards the customary house), *tu'a panga* (leader who represents the family group), *tu'a kilo* (head of the family). Traditional elites play an important and functional role in the *lonto leok* culture as a model of local democracy that governs the lives of all Manggarai people.

The power of traditional elites and language in *lonto leok* culture implicitly silences the lower layers of non-elite society, this is clearly illustrated in the ritual language where all *lonto leok* participants are directed to always *nai ca anggi* (one heart and soul) and avoid bad things *woleng* (disagreement) to achieve the vision of group cohesion is ensured or fulfilled, for example *muku ca pu'u* (banana clump). At this level, all *lonto leok* participants may diverge to avoid the possibility of *woleng lako* (going out of agreement). Language is not only a communication tool, but also a power tool that is not only for understanding, but because it is associated with certain shared ideologies and values, it must be believed, fulfilled, obeyed, respected and recognized.

## References

- Adon, M.J., 2021. Folkways Lonto Leok Budaya Manggarai dalam Terang Pemikiran William Sumner Tentang Masyarakat Sebagai Kerjasama Antagonistic. *J. Educ. Hum. Soc. Sci.* 4, 411–421. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v4i1.671>
- Barker, C., 2008. *Cultural Studies: Teori dan Praktik (Edisi Revisi)*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- Bungin, B., 2011. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Fairclough, N., 2013. *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Faisal, I., Rifai, A., 2020. Muhammadiyah Da'wah Communication on Instagram in Preventing the Spread of COVID-19. *Mimb. J. Sos. Dan Pembang.* 36, 320–333.
- Fokatea, F.A., Mas' udi, W., 2020. Konsolidasi Elit Dalam Membentuk Kekuasaan Politik Lokal Keluarga Mus di Kabupaten Kepulauan Sula. *J. Gov. Soc. Policy* 1, 70–85.
- Green, N., Searle-Chatterjee, M., 2008. Religion, Language, and Power: An Introductory Essay, in: *Religion, Language, and Power*. Routledge, pp. 1–24.
- Jehamat, L., 2011. Pola Relasi Sosial Elit Tradisional: Kasus Desa Rana Mbeling, Kabupaten Manggarai Timur, NTT. *J. Demokr.* 10.
- Kebung, K., 2017. Membaca 'kuasa' michel foucault dalam konteks 'kekuasaan' di indonesia. *Melintas* 33, 34–51.
- Lawang, R.M.Z., 1999. *Konflik tanah di Manggarai, Flores Barat: pendekatan sosiologik*. Penerbit Universitas Indonesia.
- Letuna, M.A.N., Manafe, Y.D., 2023. Lonto Leok Collaboration Across Differences, Consequences, and Democracy of Manggarai Communities. *Int. J. Multicult. Multireligious Underst.* 10, 597–606.
- Mahur, F.B.A., 2019. Konseptualisasi Masyarakat Manggarai Tentang Budaya Lonto Leok Sebagai Piranti Hukum Adat Responsif-Sosiologik Dalam Rangka Penyelesaian Konflik Pertanahan Dan Pemertahanan Harmoni Sosial. *J. Lazuardi* 2, 276–292.
- Pandor, P., 2015. Menyibak Praksis Lonto Leok dalam Demokrasi Lokal Manggarai, dalam *Kearifan Lokal~ Pancasila, Butir-Butir Filsafat Keindonesiaan*, Armada Riyanto, Johanis Ohoitmur dkk. Kanisius: Yogyakarta.
- Pratama, R.A., 2021. PEMIKIRAN FOUCAULT DAN BARON: KEKUASAAN DAN PENGETAHUAN DALAM PENDIDIKAN DAN BAHASA. *J. Filsafat Indones.* 4, 33–43.
- Rothenbuhler, E.W., 1998. *Ritual communication: From everyday conversation to mediated ceremony*. Sage Publications, Inc.

- Sawaludin, S., Haslan, M.M., Basariah, B., 2022. Eksistensi dan Peran Elit dalam Mempertahankan Nilai-Nilai Kearifan Lokal Pada Masyarakat Dusun Sade Desa Rambitan Lombok Tengah. *J. Ilm. Profesi Pendidik*. 7, 2426–2432.
- Simangunsong, B., Rahmat, F.N., 2021. Makna Kekerabatan Dalam Budaya Lonto Leok Pada Proses Pilkada Di Manggarai Barat. *LONTAR J. Ilmu Komun.* 9, 9–19.
- Sobur, A., 2014. *Ensiklopedia komunikasi*. Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Sumintak, S., Idi, A., 2022. Analisis Relasi Kuasa Michel Foucault: Studi Kasus Fenomena Kekerasan Seksual Di Perguruan Tinggi. *J. Intelekt. Keislaman, Sos. Dan Sains* 11, 55–61.
- Sumitri, N.W., Arka, I.W., n.d. TURNITIN" Kekuatan dan Kekuasaan (dalam) Bahasa dalam Perspektif Etnolinguistik: Dinamika Tradisi Ritual Etnik Rongga di Manggarai Timur".
- Sutikno, S., Wariyati, W., Ali, R., 2022. Shifting Functions And New Meanings Of The Ritual Of Rejecting "Treatment "The Malay From Serdang Bedagai. *Mimb. J. Sos. dan Pembang.* 44–50.
- Syahrin, A.A., SURYADI, K., KOMARIAH, S., 2019. The Ethnic Revival of Malay in The Governor Elections 2018 Of West Kalimantan Province. *Mimb. J. Sos. dan Pembang.* 35, 430–439.
- Thomas, L., Wareing, S., 2007. *Bahasa, Masyarakat, dan Kekuasaan*. Terjemahan oleh Sunoto dkk. dari *Language. Soc. Power*. Yogyakarta Pustaka Pelajar.
- Van Pranata, M., Nami, Y.J., 2020. Peran Elit Lokal dan Budaya Lonto Leok Dalam Mempengaruhi Perilaku Pemilih Pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah di Kabupaten Manggarai Timur Tahun 2018-2023. *J. Polit.* 9, 84–107.
- Wibisono, Y., Djumadin, Z., 2020. Kajian teoritis relasi dan kepentingan elit lokal partai di era otonomi. *J. Ilmu dan Budaya* 41.