



The Reconstruction of Local Wisdom as Socio-Political Ethics: A Conceptual Inquiry into the Philosophy of *Maja Labo Dahu* in Bima Society

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received June 05, 2025

Revised July 14, 2025

Accepted July 16, 2025

Available online July 17, 2025

Kata Kunci :

Maja Labo Dahu, Etika Sosial-Politik, Nilai Lokal

Keywords:

Maja Labo Dahu, Socio-Political Ethics, Local Values



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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi secara mendalam posisi filosofis dan performatif dari nilai-nilai lokal khususnya Maja Labo Dahu dalam konfigurasi etika sosial-politik masyarakat Bima sebagai respons terhadap disorientasi moral dalam tatanan sosial modern. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif historis-interpretatif, studi ini memadukan metode sejarah (heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi) dengan kerangka teori praktik sosial Pierre Bourdieu dan hermeneutika budaya untuk menyingkap bagaimana nilai-nilai malu (*maja*) dan takut (*dahu*) dikonstruksi, direproduksi, dan dimaknai secara transgenerasional sebagai modal simbolik dan etika publik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Maja Labo Dahu* bukan sekadar relik budaya, tetapi sistem nilai transendental yang menubuh dalam habitus masyarakat Bima dan beroperasi sebagai pranata etik imperatif yang menavigasi tindakan sosial dan legitimasi politik secara afektif dan spiritual. Nilai ini berfungsi sebagai mekanisme moral yang mampu mendisiplinkan ruang sosial tanpa bergantung pada hegemoni regulasi formal, dan karenanya relevan untuk dijadikan arsitektur etik dalam kebijakan publik, pendidikan karakter, serta praksis kepemimpinan berbasis nilai. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa revitalisasi nilai lokal semacam *Maja Labo Dahu* dapat menjadi praksis resistensi terhadap erosinya moralitas publik dalam era globalisasi, sekaligus menjadi fondasi konseptual untuk membangun etika kewargaan substantif yang berakar pada relasi ontologis antara manusia, komunitas, dan Tuhan dalam ruang kebudayaan Islam-Bima.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to deeply investigate the philosophical and performative position of local values, particularly Maja Labo Dahu, within the socio-political ethical configuration of Bima society as a response to moral disorientation in the modern social order. Employing a historical-interpretive qualitative approach, this research integrates historical methods (heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography) with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice and cultural hermeneutics to uncover how the values of *maja* (shame) and *dahu* (fear) are constructed, reproduced, and interpreted transgenerationally as symbolic capital and public ethics. The findings reveal that Maja Labo Dahu is not merely a cultural relic, but a transcendental value system embodied in the habitus of Bima society, functioning as an imperative ethical institution that guides social actions and political legitimacy through affective and spiritual dimensions. This value system serves as a moral mechanism capable of disciplining social spaces without relying on the hegemony of formal regulation, thereby making it highly relevant as an ethical architecture for public policy, character education, and values-based leadership praxis. The study further indicates that the revitalization of local values such as Maja Labo Dahu can serve as a form of resistance against the erosion of public morality in the age of globalization, while simultaneously offering a conceptual foundation for constructing a substantive civic ethics rooted in the ontological relationship between humans, community, and the Divine within the Islamic-Bima cultural sphere.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culture, conceived as a configuration of value systems, norms, symbols, and social practices, constitutes a foundational element within the structural fabric of societal life ([Atabikrifki et al., 2019](#)); ([Umar et al., 2025](#)). It is not merely a contingent historical product but serves as an epistemological and ideological framework that shapes praxis-oriented orientations in daily socio-political life ([Gultom et al., 2015](#)). Within the discourse of social and political sciences, culture cannot be reduced to a mere assemblage of customs or folkloristic manifestations. Rather, it must be understood as a contested field of power, morality, and spirituality, intricately entangled and mutually constitutive ([Manalu, 2022](#)); ([Umar et al., 2019](#)).

In the context of Bima society a sociocultural entity situated in the eastern region of West Nusa Tenggara, historically evolving from a kingdom into an Islamic sultanate there exists a local ethical construct with both hegemonic and integrative functions, known as *Maja Labo Dahu* ([Najamudin & Andang, 2022](#)); ([Ridwan, 2020](#)). Literally translated as “shame and fear,” this expression encapsulates a philosophical ethos embodying religiosity, moral consciousness, and social control, playing a significant role in constructing the collective consciousness of the Bima people, both in their vertical relationship with the Divine (*ḥabl min Allāh*) and in horizontal relations with fellow humans (*ḥabl min al-nās*) ([Sumbulah, 2016](#)); ([Demolinggo et al., 2020](#)).

Explored through genealogical and hermeneutic approaches, *Maja Labo Dahu* is not merely a cultural residue of the past, but a value formation that has become a moral substructure embedded within the social habitus ([Zidny et al., 2020](#)); ([Wisdom et al., 2025](#)). In Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical perspective, habitus as a system of social dispositions generates patterns of action that reproduce dominant values. In this regard, *Maja Labo Dahu* functions not only as a value system but also as an instrument for the moral and religious multiplication of values that orient subjects toward social compliance and spiritual transcendence ([Lestari et al., 2019](#)).

Substantively, *maja* (shame) represents a reflective and normative ethical awareness an internal regulatory mechanism that restrains deviant behavior from collective norms ([Widodo, 2012](#)); ([Kissiya & Biczó, 2024](#)). In a society that upholds collective integrity, shame is not a symbol of inferiority, but a manifestation of moral superiority. Conversely, *dahu* (fear) should not be interpreted as blind subordination but rather as the internalization of spiritual and ethical fear both toward God and the social consequences of moral transgressions ([Pulungan, 2024](#)). Hence, *Maja Labo Dahu* forms a dialectic between transcendental awareness and institutionalized social control embedded within local cultural systems ([Widodo, 2012](#)).

Amidst the currents of globalization and the intrusion of external cultural paradigms that often erode local values, *Maja Labo Dahu* may be interpreted as a cultural defense mechanism with strategic relevance for safeguarding social cohesion and cultural resilience. Within the broader framework of nation-building and character-building, local values such as this can serve as matrices for the formation of civic virtue rooted in collective awareness, social responsibility, and moral accountability ([Darmadi, 2018](#)).

Furthermore, from the perspective of political anthropology, *Maja Labo Dahu* is inseparable from the traditional power structures of Bima society. During the sultanate era, this value served as an ethical-political doctrine internalized by both rulers and subjects, legitimizing the political order. It constituted a *modus vivendi* between the leader and the led, between structure and agency, between tradition and modernity. Historically, the Bima Sultanate flourished for more than three centuries, with one of its principal foundations being the institutionalization of *Maja Labo Dahu* within its governance and social life.

In the realm of moral sociology, *Maja Labo Dahu* operates as a collective ethos that directs communal actions toward the common good. It is not merely a symbolic cultural expression but also a normative institution that governs, directs, and evaluates individual actions in both public and private spheres. In other words, *Maja Labo Dahu* is the embodiment of communal ethical principles that function implicitly yet effectively in nurturing virtues such as honesty, responsibility, and adherence to social norms.

Historically, the emergence of *Maja Labo Dahu* is closely intertwined with the Islamization of Bima. Since the enthronement of Sultan Abdul Kahir in the 17th century, Islamic values have become integrated into the local moral order. *Maja* is linked to *ḥayā'* (shame derived from faith), while *dahu* correlates with *taqwā* (God-consciousness). This syncretism between local values and Islamic teachings has formed a spiritual and normative foundation that renders *Maja Labo Dahu* a localized embodiment of universal Islamic principles (Demolinggo et al., 2020).

In contemporary society, the transformation of *Maja Labo Dahu* faces critical challenges. Processes of modernization, urbanization, and social rationalization have shifted the locus of social control from traditional norms to legalistic frameworks and politico-economic rationalities. Consequently, the value is often delegitimized by the dominance of instrumental rationality, which prioritizes efficiency and utility over traditional moral considerations. As a result, *Maja Labo Dahu* is increasingly subject to deculturation, frequently reduced to a rhetorical moral slogan devoid of practical implementation.

Nonetheless, the urgency of revitalizing local values such as *Maja Labo Dahu* becomes ever more pressing in the context of national cultural reconstruction amid a moral crisis and value disorientation. In this regard, approaches grounded in substantive multiculturalism and ethical pluralism can be employed to reactivate local wisdom as strategic social capital in the moral and civic development of the nation. *Maja Labo Dahu* can thus be rearticulated as an ethical paradigm for public policy reformulation, values-based education, and social governance rooted in normative traditions.

Conceptually, *Maja Labo Dahu* may be positioned as symbolic capital in Bourdieu's theory, functioning as a source of legitimacy and social prestige. In a society that continues to uphold traditional values, individuals who embody and practice this ethos attain elevated social status and trust. This underscores the notion that traditional cultural values are not impediments to modernity, but rather ethical foundations that can fortify the development of a dignified, value-oriented society.

Accordingly, scholarly inquiry into *Maja Labo Dahu* as a living value system within Bima society is not only of anthropological and sociological relevance but also significant to the discourse of socio-political policy and national moral development. Through cultural hermeneutics and social practice theory, this study endeavors to reveal how traditional values are produced, reproduced, and transformed within the dynamics of contemporary society and how they may serve as sources of public ethical inspiration amid the challenges of globalization and modernization.

Thus, this study is not merely a historical exploration of a traditional expression, but an epistemic reconstruction of a value system with profound relevance for shaping a spiritual, moral, and culturally rooted social-political ethic.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research methodology employed in this thesis adopts a qualitative approach grounded in a historical-interpretive paradigm, which ontologically emphasizes the tracing of cultural legacies and ethical values embedded within the social structure of Bima society. This study is anchored in the discipline of historical research, comprising four systematic stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

The heuristic stage serves to identify and consolidate both primary and secondary sources, including local manuscripts, historical documents, and oral narratives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and cultural practitioners, as well as participatory observation of social practices that embody the ethical value system of *Maja Labo Dahu*. These interviews function not merely as instruments for narrative data collection, but also as hermeneutical tools for interpreting the cosmology of “shame” and “fear” within the framework of social action.

The observational technique applied is both descriptive and contextual, aimed at capturing the structural and symbolic dimensions of cultural artifacts, as well as the verbal and non-verbal expressions of the community. This approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of how ethical values are manifested in everyday practices and cultural performances. The source criticism stage is conducted through both external and internal critique to assess the validity and reliability of the documents and to determine the authenticity of informants’ narratives within their specific temporal and spatial contexts. This dual-layered critique ensures the academic rigor and historiographical integrity of the data. The interpretation stage represents a dialectical process between text and context constructing meaning based on the interplay of cultural values, power relations, and the religio-ethical transformations within the historical social dynamics of Bima society. This stage serves as a bridge between empirical findings and the deeper philosophical currents that underlie them. Finally, the process culminates in historiography a narrative reconstruction that is not merely descriptive but also analytical and critical. The historiographical output is composed in a scholarly expository style that synthesizes historical facts with cultural interpretation, providing a multidimensional account of the evolving moral landscape

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Philosophical Epistemology of *Maja Labo Dahu* in the Reactualization of Local Socio-Political Ethics

The *Maja Labo Dahu* philosophy, literally meaning “shame and fear,” is not merely a cultural slogan but a condensed form of a local ethical construction that has long constituted the foundation of public morality in Bima society. It functions as a cognitive-cultural apparatus that regulates social relations, generates behavioral norms, and links individual existence to collective consciousness.

Within a politico-ethical paradigm, this philosophy can be reconceptualized as a form of moral restraint rooted in the affective and spiritual dimensions of peripheral communities. The value of *maja* (shame) represents an internalized ethical compass, serving as a deterrent against deviant behavior, while *dahu* (fear) embodies the internalization of transcendental values submission to Divine authority. These two values operate dialectically: *maja* cultivates norms of decency and public integrity, while *dahu* instills metaphysical vigilance against moral transgressions.

In traditional Bima society, these values form the basis for a theonomic public ethos, wherein social conduct is guided not merely by positive law, but by a profound ontological awareness of God, community, and the self. When introduced into the sphere of political praxis, *Maja Labo Dahu* emerges as an ethical foundation for the behavior of public officials, bureaucrats, and village leaders. A leader shaped by *Maja Labo Dahu* must internalize the principles of *taqwa* (God-consciousness) and *shidq* (truthfulness), rejecting political corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power. This philosophy acts as a meta-ethical structure that transcends legal positivism.

Theoretically, *Maja Labo Dahu* may be interpreted as a local civic ethic, akin to the Aristotelian notion of *aretē* (virtue), yet contextualized within the cultural landscape of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Through this lens, local philosophy is not reduced to

passive cultural heritage, but reconstructed as an epistemological framework capable of generating normative foundations for contemporary political action. Consequently, in the political realm, *Maja Labo Dahu* functions as a normative anchor—a moral regulator and a manifestation of the Bimanese collective will to establish a just, transcendent, and civilized system of governance.

Cultural Genealogy and Transformative Strategies for Recontextualizing Local Ethics as Socio-Political Capital

The ethics of *Maja Labo Dahu* did not emerge in a vacuum; rather, it is the product of a long genealogical process shaped by the interaction between Islamic values, local customs (*adat*), and the cosmology of the Mbojo people. It was born from the convergence of pre-Islamic belief systems rooted in the sacredness of *paraflu* (ancestral spirits) and the transcendental values of *tawhīd* (monotheism) introduced during the Islamization of the Bima Sultanate in the 17th century.

The reactivation of these values requires a hermeneutical approach to re-read their cultural significance. In the context of contemporary Bima society where moral disorientation prevails due to the penetration of modernity and a crisis of political representation *Maja Labo Dahu* can be understood as a form of cultural capital, in Bourdieu's terms: a system of dispositions (*habitus*) embedded within social and symbolic actions, ultimately shaping the structure of socio-political life.

The implementation of these values offers a response to socio-political fragmentation and the erosion of public ethics. Its transformative strategies include: (1) The integration of *Maja Labo Dahu* into the civic education curriculum; (2) The codification of these values into institutional regulations, such as codes of ethics for civil servants and local leaders, and; (3) The revitalization of community-based cultural rites to reinforce collective memory and ethical commitment.

Normatively, these values can serve as an ethical foundation for a participatory and morally accountable governance model, particularly within the framework of regional development. When the values of shame and fear of God (*dahu*) are internalized, political actions tend to align with transparency, responsiveness, and an awareness of divine and social mandates. In this regard, *Maja Labo Dahu* operates as an ethical mechanism that can mitigate political opportunism and restore public integrity.

Moreover, these values function as a form of cultural immunity against destructive populism and misleading identity politics. They foster a deliberative ethos, wherein the public sphere is no longer dominated by the pursuit of power, but guided by ethical reason and collective moral decency. When conceptually recontextualized, this philosophy may be regarded as a form of socio-political ethico-literacy a process of value-consciousness emerging through the dialectic of culture, spirituality, and social action.

4. CONCLUSION

From a genealogical inquiry into the existence of the *Maja Labo Dahu* philosophy within the socio-political ethical configuration of Bima society, it can be concluded that this normative entity is not merely a product of conventional cultural heritage, but rather an ethical-transcendental construct that interlinks metaphysical consciousness, collective identity, and political praxis grounded in public piety. As an articulation of the values of *maja* (shame) and *dahu* (fear), this philosophy functions as a moral institution rooted in the ontological dimensions of Mbojo society—transcending the realm of formal normative ethics and embodied in an epistemological apparatus that is both culturally imperative and hegemonic. It operates as a system that governs affective dispositions and behavioral conduct, regulates social representation, and internalizes moral surveillance over political and social

subjects, strongly affiliated with an Islamic worldview that mandates *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *siddiq* (truthfulness), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) as moral imperatives in the domain of power. Within the logic of contemporary politics, *Maja Labo Dahu* affirms itself as an indigenous civic ethic with disruptive potential against structural ethical crises, as it possesses the capacity to rehabilitate integrity and public accountability without relying on the recycling of positivist legal instruments. Thus, the reconstruction of these local values is not a form of cultural romanticism, but a radical endeavor to dismantle the moral pathology of modern bureaucracy and to reintroduce an ethical horizon grounded in historical roots, symbolic potency, and transformative vitality. It articulates a new paradigm of *value-driven polity*—a model of politics that is not only procedurally rational, but also ethically legitimate and holistically relational, encompassing the triadic nexus between the state, its citizens, and the Divine.

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