

## TEACHING ISLAM THROUGH CULTURAL SYMBOL: EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF RIMPU IN BIMA WEST NUSA TENGGARA

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#### **Article History**

<i>Submitted</i>	: 17 November 2023
<i>Revised</i>	: 29 December 2023
<i>Accepted</i>	: 31 December 2023

### **Abstract**

Covering aurat is one of Islamic teachings in which its implementation can vary according to the local cultural context. In Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, Rimpu stands as the symbols for women in adhering to Islamic law by covering their aurat properly. This present research is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach to understand the cultural meaning of Rimpu. The findings of this study implies: (1) the educational values in Rimpu are cultural values containing moral, decency, aesthetics, and religious values as the identity and cultural symbol of the Bima community, especially for Bima women who preserve Rimpu culture as a symbol of Islamic law. By using Rimpu, Bima women adhere to the teachings of the Quran to cover their aurat properly, (2) Rimpu culture is a symbol of women's morality in performing good or bad deeds. For this reason,

Rimpu culture symbolizes good morality for women. As in Islamic teachings regarding aurat, Rimpu teaches the limits of aurat, protects women when they leave their homes, preserves the honour of women from the direct gaze of non-mahram men, and control direct interaction and communication with men.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Values; Identity; Morality; Rimpu; Symbol.*

## **Abstrak**

*Menutup aurat merupakan salah satu ajaran islam yang penerapannya beragam sesuai dengan konteks budaya lokal. Di Bima, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Rimpu merupakan simbol bagi perempuan dalam menjalankan aturan Islam dengan menutup aurat. Penelitian ini adalah kajian kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi untuk memahami makna budaya dari Rimpu. Temuan penelitian ini mengimplikasikan: (1) nilai pendidikan di Rimpu merupakan nilai kebudayaan yang mencakup nilai moral, kesopanan, estetika dan religious sebagai identitas dan simbol budaya masyarakat Bima, khususnya perempuan Bima yang menjaga tradisi Rimpu sebagai simbol syariat Islam. Dengan mengenakan Rimpu, perempuan Bima menjalankan ajaran al-Qur'an untuk menutup aurat mereka dengan baik, (2) budaya Rimpu merupakan simbol moralitas perempuan dalam melakukan perbuatan baik dan buruk. Oleh karena itu, budaya Rimpu melambangkan moralitas yang baik bagi perempuan. Seperti halnya ajaran Islam mengenai aurat, Rimpu mengajarkan batas-batas aurat, menjaga perempuan ketika keluar rumah, menjaga kehormatan perempuan dari pandangan laki-laki yang bukan mahramnya, dan mengatur interaksi dan komunikasi langsung perempuan dengan laki-laki.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Identitas; Moralitas; Nilai Budaya; Rimpu; Simbol.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

School, as an educ *Rimpu* is the traditional daily clothing of the *Rimpu* people (especially women) to cover the *aurat*. According to Syaukani, a Bima community leader and cultural

figure, the word "*Rimpu*" in Bima is taken from a combination of two syllables, namely Ri which means "back" and Mpu which means "cover." While according to the term, *rimpu* is clothing that covers women's limbs called *aurat* using a typical sarong (*Tembe Nggoli*). The use of sarong as *Rimpu* is because *Tembe Nggoli* at that time was very popular as the clothes used by the *Mbojo* people every day (Ulya, 2017: 154). It is very easy and simple to wear. The cloth or sarong can be draped over the head many times without having to be tied. Likewise, *Sanggentu Tembe* (Wearing the Sarong), just twisted without the need for a binder. Therefore, when wearing the *Rimpu*, underwear is still used as usual.

Generally, women wear the *Rimpu* to cover their *aurat* as Islamic teachings teach that every woman who has reached puberty must cover her *aurat* in front of people who are not *mahram*. In the Jia community it is also realised by wearing *Rimpu* as a form of obedience to Allah SWT (Aulia, 2013: 3). *Rimpu* is one of the clothes that has strong moral, social, modesty and religious values. In the Jia Village community, *Rimpu* culture is still very strong to be maintained, because for the people of Jia Village, *Rimpu* culture is not only a religious reinforcement, but *Rimpu* culture is also able to help support the economic growth of the community, by making typical Bima cloth (*Tembe Nggoli*), by weaving using yarn. In addition, *Tembe Nggoli* also has different fabric motifs. Hence, it is very natural that the *Rimpu* culture is still preserved today. *Mbojo* is very well known for many women who wear the *Rimpu*, because the *Rimpu* provides a symbol and a very high social identity. *Rimpu* society feels comfortable when wearing the *Rimpu*. This comfort increases the spirituality of *Rimpu* women

in facing modern era. It is amazing if the *Rimpu* community maintains customary and cultural traditions like this.

As for the concept of covering the *aurat* in Islam according to Fuad Mohd Fahrudin, the origin of the word "*Aurat*" is a cognate of the word '*awira*' which means losing one eye, so it means the eye that has lost its light. In general, this word means that it is not good and is considered shameful. If the word "*ara*", means covering or hoarding so that it cannot be seen or seen. And the word '*awara*' as something that when seen is defiling, so it must be covered so as not to cause disappointment and shame. While the word "*awrah*", in the dictionary "*Al-Mawrid*" is defined as defects, damage or disgrace. The term *aurat* has actually existed in the early days of the creation of Adam and Eve as told in the Qur'an. They were persuaded by the devil's deception to approach and eat the forbidden fruit that Allah forbade them to eat, resulting in both being expelled by Allah from heaven and down to earth. So, the *Rimpu* culture is one way for Bima women to use it to cover their *aurat* and protect them from the eyes of a man. Covering the *aurat* is important for women in Bima society, especially in Jia Village, Sape Kecamatan, Bima Regency, because as is known in Islamic teachings that the law of covering the *aurat* is mandatory for both women and men.

Apart from functioning as a headscarf, *Rimpu* can also function as a *mukenah* (prayer garment). As long as it is clean and pure and equipped with a *sanggentu Tembe* as a *sarong*. So, automatically all limbs are covered. What's more, in the past until now, *Rimpu* girls were still shackled and could not freely leave the house. Therefore, if they leave the house, the *Rimpu* becomes very important to use (Naniek, 2012: 181-185). According to *lebe* and previous scholars in Bima regarding *Rimpu* culture, *Rimpu* is an ethnic character, because it is a tradition that is only owned by the *Rimpu* tribe. The specific religious understanding adopted by the *Rimpu* community, namely Ahli Sunnah wal Jama'ah, makes the *Rimpu* tradition fanatical in the community as an implementation practice of the recommendation to cover the *aurat* based on the arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith.

The existence of social control emerged if women do not cover the *aurat* (*ber-rimpu*), it will be discussed and chided by the surrounding community as a social sanction. During the Bima sultanate era, the ones in charge of controlling Islamic traditions in Bima society were ulama and members of the Bima Land Syara Law Board, but after the collapse of the sultanate, the wider community was also indirectly responsible for overseeing these religious practices. Some of the research questions to be explored in this study are how the community's perception of *Rimpu* culture in shaping women's awareness to cover up in Jia Village, Sape Sub-district, Bima Regency, and how the value of women's morality is built with the establishment of *Rimpu* culture in the village.

Studies investigating the highlighted issue had conducted by Nur Aeni, which examines the Local Wisdom of the *Rimpu* Tradition in *Mbojo* Tribal Women in Soro Village, Lambu District. This research shows that *Rimpu* is a custom for the people of Bima in general that has emerged since the 17th century after the entry of Islamic influence in Bima. *Rimpu* is a way of dressing that contains distinctive values that are in line with the condition of the region with Islamic nuances (sultanates and Islamic kingdoms). The purpose of this research is to describe the development of *Rimpu* as a cultural tradition of the *mbojo* tribe women in Soro Village, Lambu District (Nue Aeni, 2020: 42). Among the *Rimpu* community, there are two kinds of *Rimpu*: *Rimpu Mpida* and *Rimpu Colo*. *Rimpu Mpida* is usually worn by young women and teenagers. While *Rimpu Colo* is usually used by married mothers. In ancient times, *Rimpu* women used to wear *Rimpu* when they left the house. Otherwise, they have broken the moral law and violated religious customs.

Furthermore, a systematic study conducted by Arafah, revealed the existence of *Rimpu* in the community in Simpasai

Village, Lambu District, Bima Regency. The implications of the research are: the *Rimpu Mpida* culture that is thick with the daily life of Bima people, the very important role of the community in preserving the *Rimpu Mpida* culture, helping to preserve the local expertise of the community in Simpasai Village in managing the main ingredients of the *Rimpu Mpida* tradition (*Tembe Nggoli*). *Rimpu Mpida* has become a dress culture for women in Lambu sub-district and gives a very deep meaning to Muslim clothing similar to the jilbab (Arafah, 2015: 24).

Research conducted by Nur Inayah (2019), which examines the *Rimpu* Tradition among Bima women in West Nusa Tenggara, explains the tradition of wearing *Rimpu*. In this case the object of research is focused on Rato Village, Lambu Sub-district, Bima Regency. In general, this research examines the socio-historical context such as the background of *Rimpu* as a dress tradition among Bima women, the dynamics use of *Rimpu* in the midst of globalisation, the meaning of *Rimpu* in the past and the meaning of *Rimpu* today among Bima women in Rato Village.

Previous researches have revealed evidence that before the term *Rimpu*, Bima people knew the term *sanggentu* (rolling the sarong up to the chest) for women and *katente* (rolling the sarong up to the waist) for men which is still used in the daily life of Bima people. *Rimpu* was first introduced after the introduction of Islam in Bima Sultanate, as a form of manifestation of Islamic teachings in covering the *aurat* for every Muslim woman. The *Rimpu* tradition was born from the encounter between the teachings of Islam and the local culture of the local community. The existence of *Rimpu* is rarely used

anymore by the people of Bima in general because they think *Rimpu* is an old culture that must be replaced with a new culture that is more modern and fashionable.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This present research is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach and studied using the theory of women agency. Research conducted using interviews and observations in the Jia Village Sape district, Bima. Informants came from traditional leaders, local people, especially women and also religious leaders. The data collected and analysed by reducing the data in accordance with the subject of research then the final step is verification process. Meanwhile, the data validity test was carried out by triangulating sources and techniques. Some technical means for collecting data collaborates with villagers and religious elite that constructing the Muslim identity as shown in using *Rimpu* as way to cover the *aurat*. Some published document also was used in this research as reference to enrich the point of view of this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before the introduction of Islam in Bima, people of Jia adhered to animism, dynamism and a local version of monotheism. Up until the arrival of Hinduism in the 14th century and Islam in the 17th century, the main religious value for the Jia community were a commitment to the teachings of their ancestors. This ancestral teaching was known by the people of Bima, especially the people of Jia, as Makamba

Makimbi (Rahim, 2021). Makamba Makimbi (*syncretic beliefs*) are two indigenous beliefs of the Bima people or (*Mbojo Tribe*) whose teachings are orientated towards the light. These two schools of belief complement each other, and have even merged as one religion (*syncretism*). Both have existed long before Hinduism and Islam. The Makamba Makimbi belief (*syncretism*) teaches that everything around humans is influenced by supernatural forces.

In the context of culture, *Rimpu* culture in Jia Village represents the embedded Islamic values of the people (Inayah, 2019: 53). Jia community also consider that the *Rimpu* culture is not limited to clothing that just covers the *aurat* but also a symbol of honour, purity and the high degree of Muslim women. *Rimpu* has become a dress culture for women in Sape Sub-district and gives a very deep meaning to Muslim clothing similar to the jilbab.

To understand deeper about *Rimpu* meaning. we need to know the meaning of society. Society is defined as a gathering and living together with mutual contact and mutual influence (Baharudin, 2010: 20). According to Ralph Linton (1960), society is a group of people who have worked together long enough to organise themselves as a social unit with certain boundaries (Baharudin, 2010: 20). These definitions correlated with the long lasting co-existence and cooperation among inhabitants of Jia Village. The experience of living together leads to cooperation, adaptation to the organisation and behaviour patterns of the members.



## Educating Women's Morality through *Rimpu* Culture

The birth of the *Rimpu* culture was inspired by the teachings of Islam which encourages its people to cover the *aurat* perfectly. This suggestion is found in the Quran. Surah Al-ahzab [33]:59.

*"Which means: O prophet, say to your wives, your daughters, and the wives of the mu'min, that they should spread their veils over their whole bodies". That is so that they may be more easily recognised, so that they may not be harassed. And Allah is most forgiving, most merciful"*.

Preserving human honour and dignity, especially of women, is principle that promoted by Islam in all of its rulings and laws. The issue of hijab is one of these matters. Al-Quran has explained the topic of hijab in many different forms, descriptions, and expressions. Hence, hijab is considered an obligation in Islam. The same thing lies underneath the *Rimpu* culture for Bima women, as its purpose is to form women awareness to cover the *aurat*. Moreover, there is also moral message in wearing the *Rimpu*. *Rimpu* culture is not just clothes to cover the *aurat*, but as Islamic educational values for girls in Sape District. *Rimpu* contains honour for the people of Jia Village, especially honour for women. People of Jia Village consider that the honour and *aurat* of women must be maintained together, so that women remain dignified and remain respected. For the people of Jia Village, it is shameful for women when their *aurat* is seen directly by men, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Value is something good that is always desired, aspired to and considered important by all humans as members of society. Therefore, something is said to have value if it is useful and valuable (truth value), beautiful (aesthetic value), good (moral

or ethical value), or religious (religious value) (Setiadi, 2006: 31). The value of women's morality contained in this *Rimpu* culture determines whether an individual is a good person or not. By wearing *Rimpu*, a woman is maintaining her dignity, family, and the people around her. Therefore, *Rimpu* contains moral values, such as how to behave well and speak to others, politeness, and good personality. According to the Jia community, *Rimpu* is inextricably linked to the idea of morality. Morality encompasses the notion of good and bad human behaviour (Pespoprojo, 1999: 118). The Jia community considers that women's morality is built upon the establishment of *Rimpu* culture as a form to instill values.

From Islamic perspective that views human as a best embodiment of morality (*ahsani taqwim*), human are equipped with the potential knowledge to distinguish between good and bad. Human moral awareness grows gradually along with the development of thinking and feeling (Lubis, 2008: 10). According to Selly Tokan (Budiningsih, 2004) a person is said to be moral if they have moral awareness, which is able to judge between good and bad things, things that can be done and things that cannot be done, and things that are ethical and not. A state of morality in person will be obvious through in his moral judgement, reasoning and behaviour that are in accordance with ethical norms.

The moral values in *Rimpu* culture reside in maintaining self, family and community dignity. It is also referring to the norms of interactions between individuals, especially on how women should behave and speak to others, to criteria of politeness and good personality. In addition, aesthetic value in *Rimpu* is found in the style of sarong used for *Rimpu* (*Tembe*

*Nggoli*). For example, the sarong that has *Ngusu Tolu* (triangle in the form of a cone) means that the supreme power is in Allah which is symbolised by the pointed top of the cone (Ratna, 2022).

The cultivation of values in *Rimpu* culture makes people aware on how important it is to uphold cultural values in society to preserve and develop them. The values contained in *Rimpu* culture are not only moral values, but so many values contained in *Rimpu culture*. One of them is the value of beauty (aesthetics) and religious values (religion).

Evaluating the background and the form of *Rimpu*, it can be concluded that the use of *Rimpu* is an effort to follow the Islamic teachings in covering the *aurat*. *Rimpu* is also the orders of modesty in dress and clothing. Therefore, *Rimpu* represents the philosophy of life for Muslim women in Jia village, in epistemological, ethical and aesthetical forms.

The findings of this research are in line with the opinion of Edward B. Taylor, regarding culture. Culture is a complex whole, in which knowledge, beliefs, arts, moral laws, customs, and other abilities obtained by a person as a member of society (Nuraeni, 2013: 15). This is also in line with Kupper's opinion that culture is a system of ideas that guides and directs human life in behaving and behaving, both individually and in groups (Nuraeni, 2013: 15). It is also in line with cultural relativism states that each culture is a unique configuration of distinctive flavors, styles and capabilities. The term cultural relativism can be seen in its variety. Relativism is divided into two types, namely individual relativism, and social relativism, (Sulasman, 2013: 231). Individual relativism is that each individual determines their own moral rules, seeing that individual

choices determine the validity of a moral principle. The assertion is that morality resides in the eyes of the beholder (Shomali, 2005). Just like the *Rimpu* culture in the Jia Village community, that *Rimpu* culture is one of the cultures that has such good moral values to cover a woman's *aurat*, so each individual can determine the moral value of good and bad, what to do and what to avoid.

### **Educational and Morality Value Behind the Use of *Rimpu* in Shaping Women's Personality**

The value of women's morality contained in *Rimpu* culture is what determines whether individual is good or not. When women use *Rimpu*, they always maintain their reputation, their families and the people around them. The moral culture of *Rimpu* reflects the way of interaction, behaviour, speaking, politeness and personality. The researcher's findings are in line with Durkheim's theory of morality, which divides morality into three components. The first of those components involves discipline of restraint against the impulses of desire. Discipline confronts a person with his moral responsibility, which for Durkheim is a social obligation (Goodman, 2008: 113). As discussed above, social discipline also calms the individuals, as it limits human desires and therefore provides an opportunity for humans to feel sufficient, calm and demand no more. Similarly, in the Jia community, using *Rimpu* represents moral codes, because it consists of certain limitation and restraint on certain desires to dress in order to cover women's *aurat* properly and protect women from direct male glance.

The second component is that morality requires attachment to society, because society is the source of morality.

For Durkheim, this second element of morality is attachment to social groups and willingness to be committed to certain group codes, not because of external obligations, but because of sincere feelings of attachment (Goodman, 2008: 114). This is also found in the *Rimpu* culture which is a source of morality that has an attachment to the Jia Village community. *Rimpu* culture is practiced in accordance with the rules of law and mutual agreement in social life, from sincere feelings without any element of compulsion to use it. Therefore, *Rimpu* culture is practiced purely from individual willingness and in accordance with collective agreements, which give birth to a joint commitment within the Jia Village community.

Third, Durkheim views morality as the responsibility of individuals for their actions (Goodman, 2008: 114). The individual responsibility in the Jia Village community to cover the *aurat* by using *Rimpu*, is still carried out and still preserved from the past until now. This continuation comes from individual responsibility for the actions so that the behaviour they take is very important and must be followed in accordance with the collective agreement.

From islamic perspective that views human as the best embodiment of morality (*ahsani taqwim*), humans are equipped with the potential knowledge to distinguish between good and bad behaviour. Human moral awareness grows gradually along with the development of thinking and feelings of good and bad (Lubis, 2008: 10). In the *Rimpu* culture covering the *aurat* properly by using the *Rimpu* is considered good and has moral value in the Jia Village community. *Secondly*, extrinsic morality is assessed based on the applicable legal regulations, whether they are commands or prohibitions. This extrinsic morality is

the reality that humans are bound to the values or norms that are enforced in common life (Lubis, 2008: 10). In similar tone, Immanuel Kant, distinguishes morality into two: *first* heteronomous morality, an attitude where obligations are obeyed and carried out not because of the obligation itself, but because of something that comes from outside the will of the perpetrator himself. *Second*, autonomous morality, human awareness of the obligations he obeys as something he himself wants, because it is believed to be a good thing (Harahap, 2005: 105).

From above descriptions, this study observed that in the Jia Village community, women's morality is assessed from the attachment to community commitment. There, to use *Rimpu* as is the value of women's morality in society, because covering the *aurat* is the obligation of a Muslim woman. Thus, morality is considered as limiting things that are prohibited in society. Just like the *Rimpu* culture used by Bima women to cover the *aurat* as a symbol of culture and morals in society, so that the moral value of women to keep themselves from bad deeds, limit themselves from interacting directly with men who are not their muhrim, protect themselves when going out of the house and avoid the direct view of men. Since moral imperatives are obligations, moral imperatives are based on the fact that humans regulate their behavior according to rules or norms. Norms are laws, but human beings themselves must subjugate themselves to these norms; human beings must accept and live by them.

## ***Rimpu* in the Midst of Massive Muslim Women Fashion Products**

In the midst of the development of hijab fashion in the current modernisation changes, the value of *Rimpu* culture includes morals, beauty (aesthetics), religiosity (religion), and modesty. Amidst fast change in fashion, *Rimpu* culture is still demonstrated and preserved even though not all people use it. In the Jia Village, almost 70% of the community still maintains it. *Rimpu* is very often used by mothers who go to traditional markets, use it during cultural parades, independence days, carnivals and even some develop it in cultural arts performances.

In the modern era now where modern hijab is becoming trends, *Rimpu* still exists and demonstrated as beautiful cultural arts through the craft of weaving (*Tembe Nggoli*). In addition, through *Rimpu Juka*, *Rimpu* is elaborated through producing distinctive colour pattern, soft fabric and a variety of diverse motifs.

During globalisation and modernisation that is happening now where certain modes of dress becomes globally distributed and dominates dress style, certain models of hijab also become trends. However, this does not reduce the desire of the community to maintain *Rimpu* culture. They are still many people make the typical Bima *Tembe Nggoli* cloth as one of the cultures. From other perspective, preserving *Rimpu* culture helps economic growth for Bima people where tourism is becoming more important aspect of their economy.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study rise insight in teaching Islam through cultural symbols. First, *Rimpu* was one of the edicts issued by the Kingdom of Bima, so that women could not dress, meet, mingle with men freely, especially before marriage. However, that cultural restraint comes to gave birth to cultural creativity for artistic artifact embodied in the *Rimpu* cloth which contribute to community's economic growth. Second, people of Jia Village consider that *Rimpu* culture is a form of instilling the value of morality to maintain women's honour that women are not allowed to meet face to face and communicate directly with men. Third, *Rimpu* culture also not only contains moral values, but also has beauty (aesthetic), religious (religious), and politeness. From the various values contained in the *Rimpu*, it illustrates that the *Rimpu* is one of the cultures upheld by the people of Bima in which it supports economic growth of the community through craft making. It is suggested for policy makers in Bima to maintain the *Rimpu* culture as one of the local cultural treasures that reflects the morality of Bima women and find different new ways of preserving it.s

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