

Makna Budaya Tebolak dan Agensi Perempuan dalam Pelestari Memori Kolektif di Desa Kabar Lombok Timur

The Cultural Meaning of Tebolak and Women's Agency in Preserving Collective Memory in Kabar Village, East Lombok

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Information Article	Abstrak
Article history: Posted 10/04/2026 Revised 11/05/2026 Accepted 24/06/2026 Cite: Nur Laili Hidayah, 2026 , The Meaning of Tebolak Culture and Women's Agency, SAKAAI: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora, Vol. 03, No. 01, pp. 74-82, DOI :...	Penelitian etnografi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi signifikansi budaya tebolak, kerajinan penutup makanan tradisional Sasak, dan untuk mengidentifikasi agen perempuan dalam melestarikan memori kolektif masyarakat di Desa Kabar, Lombok Timur. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam dengan pengrajin perempuan lintas generasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa signifikansi budaya tebolak diwujudkan dalam setiap motif, warna, dan proses pembuatannya, yang mencerminkan keharmonisan kehidupan, kosmologi lokal, dan etika sosial masyarakat Sasak. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bagaimana perempuan menempati posisi sentral sebagai aktor utama (agen) dalam transmisi pengetahuan budaya. Di tengah arus modernisasi dan gempuran produk yang diproduksi secara massal, para perempuan dalam keluarga pengrajin ini terlibat dalam perlawanan diam-diam untuk mempertahankan keberadaan tebolak. Melalui proses tenun dan tenun yang diturunkan dari ibu ke anak perempuan, mereka tidak hanya mendukung ekonomi rumah tangga keluarga tetapi juga bertindak sebagai penjaga memori kolektif, menghubungkan generasi masa lalu dengan masa kini. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pelestarian tebolak di Desa Kabar sangat bergantung pada ketahanan perempuan Sasak, yang secara bersamaan mengintegrasikan peran domestik, ekonomi, dan budaya. Kata Kunci : Tebolak, Agensi Perempuan, Memori Kolektif, Etnografi Abstract <i>This ethnographic research aims to explore the significance of tebolak culture, the traditional Sasak food cover craft, and to identify female agents in preserving the collective memory of the community in Kabar Village, East Lombok. Data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews with cross-generational women artisans, and documentation.</i>

The results of the study show that the significance of tebolak culture is manifested in every motif, color, and process of its making, which reflects the harmony of life, local cosmology, and social ethics of the Sasak people. Furthermore, this study reveals how women occupy a central position as the main actor (agent) in the transmission of cultural knowledge. In the midst of modernization and the onslaught of mass-produced products, the women in this artisan family are involved in a silent resistance to maintain the existence of tebolak. Through the process of weaving and weaving passed down from mother to daughter, they not only support the family household economy but also act as guardians of collective memory, connecting past generations with the present. This study concludes that the preservation of tebolak in Kabar Village is highly dependent on the resilience of Sasak women, which simultaneously integrate domestic, economic, and cultural roles



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Keywords : *Tebolak, Women's Agency, Collective Memory, Ethnography*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional handicrafts are not merely economic commodities or visual displays, but rather cultural artifacts that hold the narrative, values, and identity of a society. Amidst the currents of modernization and globalization that offer practical products. Culturally, Tebolak is not just a dish cover on the dining table. In the cosmology of the Sasak people, this object represents respect for sustenance, domestic warmth, and a symbol of family protection. The woven bamboo or palm leaves that form Tebolak reflect social order, patience, and precision passed down across generations. Unfortunately, this philosophical meaning is often overlooked by modern society, which tends to view Tebolak superficially as merely a usable object, without understanding the depth of collective memory woven into each sheet.

Behind the continuity of the Tebolak-making tradition lies a central, often invisible role: the agency of Sasak women. Women in rural Lombok are often positioned within the limited domestic sphere. However, through the activity of Tebolak weaving, they are actually exercising powerful agency. Weaving provides a space for women to express themselves, negotiate their family's economic role, and simultaneously serve as the primary subjects transmitting local knowledge to the next generation. Sasak women serve as guardians of cultural memory, ensuring this tradition remains intact over time.

Kabar Village, located in East Lombok, stands out as a key location for the preservation of this craft. In this village, Tebolak weaving is not merely a sideline, but rather the cultural heartbeat that binds the community. Through initial observations, the dynamics of this preservation are most clearly visible within the smallest community unit: the family institution. Within a family of artisans, the transfer of knowledge, spiritual values, and technical skills of Tebolak weaving occurs organically from mother to daughter, creating a vibrant ecosystem of collective memory.

Collective memory itself is not static, but rather a dynamic process that is continuously nurtured and reproduced. When a female craftswoman sits weaving, she is not only moving her fingers to form patterns, but also recalling memories of the past—about how their ancestors survived, respected nature, and celebrated togetherness. Failure to nurture this collective memory will result in the loss of the cultural identity of the Kabar Village community, where Tebolak could become extinct and completely replaced by plastic food covers that uproot local values. Despite their significant contributions, studies on women's agency in the Sasak handicraft industry, particularly in Tebolak production, are still relatively minimal. Major historical and cultural narratives are often gender-biased, highlighting the public role of men and ignoring the contributions of women in the corners of village homes.

Therefore, an ethnographic approach in this research is crucial. Ethnography allows researchers to immerse themselves, hear voices that have been silent, and capture the depth of meaning in the daily lives of these women craftspeople in their entirety. Through a case study of one Tebolak artisan family in Kabar Village, this research seeks to delve deeper into how a bamboo stick or palm leaf is transformed into a meaningful cultural symbol through the skilled hands of women. Focusing on one family allows for an intimate, in-depth, and micro-spatial analysis of how women's agency operates at the domestic level, and how intergenerational relationships within the household serve as the final bastion of collective Sasak memory.

Based on this background, this ethnographic research is crucial to document, analyze, and articulate the role of women in Kabar Village in preserving Sasak culture. By understanding the meaning of Tebolak culture and the power of women's agency within it, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the anthropology of gender and material culture, while also providing a critical reflection on efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage based on grassroots communities.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic and case study design. The ethnographic approach was chosen to deeply understand the way of life, meaning systems, and daily practices of Tebolak artisans from their own perspective (emic perspective). Meanwhile, a single case study method was used to focus the analysis on one artisan family in Kabar Village, East Lombok. This micro-focus allows the researcher to conduct an intensive, in-depth, and contextual investigation into how women's agency and the transmission of collective memory operate in everyday interactions in the domestic sphere.

This research was conducted in Kabar Village, Sakra District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. The location was selected purposively because Kabar Village is historically known as one of the centers of traditional Sasak weaving crafts that still actively maintains Tebolak production. The determination of research subjects used a purposive sampling technique, with the main criteria being a family that has produced Tebolak for at least three generations, where weaving activities are still actively carried out by the women in the household to this day.

Data in this ethnographic research was collected through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Researchers will conduct a live-in or stay with/intensively participate in the lives of the artisan families to directly observe the weaving process, intergenerational interactions, and how Tebolak is made. used in their daily lives. In-depth interviews were conducted informally and fluidly with the women artisans (mothers, grandmothers, and daughters) to explore oral narratives, symbolic meanings of Tebolak, and their reflections on their role as preservers of tradition.

The primary instrument in this research is the researcher herself (the researcher as the key instrument), assisted by supporting tools such as interview guides, field notes, a voice recorder, and a camera for visual documentation. The researcher's presence in the field is designed in such a way as to blend in with the activities of the artisan families without distorting the naturalness of the subjects' daily behavior. Detailed field notes will include not only the informants' speech, but also the atmosphere, emotions, gestures during weaving, and the dynamics of the domestic space where the creative process takes place.

Data analysis was conducted inductively following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Researchers transcribed the interview results and organized field notes, then coded them to categorize major themes such as "the symbolic meaning of Tebolak," "the articulation of women's agency," and "mechanisms of memory transmission." The grouped data were then presented in the form of a thick, descriptive-analytical narrative typical of ethnography, to fully depict the cultural reality of the subjects.

To ensure the validity of the research data or validity, source triangulation and method triangulation techniques were used. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing statements between members of the artisan family from different generations (for example, the statement of the grandmother compared to her daughter), and conducting *member checks* with informants to ensure the researcher's interpretation was appropriate. Meanwhile, method triangulation was conducted by confronting or matching what informants said in interviews with what they actually did during participant observation during the weaving process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on ethnographic investigations conducted through participatory observation and live-in with the family of Mrs. Patiah (40 years old), a second generation Tebolak craftsman in Kabar Village, it was found that Tebolak occupies a central position in the cultural and cosmological system of the Sasak people. Physically, the Tebolak produced by this family is made from selected bamboo shavings (bamboo rope) and palm leaves colored using natural materials. Its convex, dome-like shape is not merely an architectural aesthetic, but a representation of the macrocosm that shelters the microcosm (food as a source of life). In Kabar Village, Tebolak is a symbol of the highest respect for food (sustenance) given by God, so that food should not be left open without proper protection. Furthermore, the exploration of symbolic meanings reveals the existence of social stratification and spiritual values woven into a piece of Tebolak. The red, yellow, and green color patterns that often decorate the edges of the woven palm leaves express the sociological character of the Sasak people of East Lombok who are religious but still uphold their customs (remain traditional). In ritual contexts, Tebolak, specially prepared by Ibu Nuraini's family, is often ordered for major ceremonies such as Roah (celebration), Beleq Saji (wedding ceremony), and life-cycle rituals. Closing a

meal with Tebolak in these rituals signifies the sacredness and spiritual purity of the food, as well as a form of respect for the guests and ancestors present in the social setting.

The production dynamics within Mrs. Patiah's household confirm the real agency of Sasak women in the domestic sphere. Amidst the Sasak patriarchal structure that positions men as heads of families and primary breadwinners, weaving provides a space for autonomy for Mrs. Patiah and her 15-year-old daughter, Marisa. Weaving Tebolak is no longer merely a "part-time job," but rather a strategic form of economic agency. The daily income from selling Tebolak gives women control over household finances, finances their children's education, and provides them with a more balanced bargaining power in domestic decision-making with their husbands.

However, the agency of female artisans in Kabar Village extends beyond the material-economic dimension; it manifests in existential agency and a space for social negotiation. During the weaving process, conducted on the terrace of their house (*berugak*), women create their own alternative public space. As their hands move nimbly as they weave bamboo, they exchange stories, discuss community issues, and even resolve personal conflicts. It is on this *berugak* that female artisans redefine their identities. They are no longer passive subjects confined to domestic tasks such as cooking and washing, but rather cultural actors with full authority over creative space, time management, and motor skills that men in the village lack.

Viewed from the perspective of the anthropology of memory, Ibu Patiah's family serves as the main bastion of collective memory for the Sasak people in Kabar Village. The collective memory of how Tebolak decorative motifs are made is not stored in printed or digital form, but rather lives in memory and materialized through body movements (*embodied memory*). Ibu Patiah remembers with precision how her mother once taught her to cut bamboo paper-thin without a ruler. This collective memory includes local ecological knowledge about the best time to cut bamboo in the forest, namely during the dim full moon to prevent the bamboo from being eaten by powder—a memory that binds humans to the natural rhythms of Lombok.

This process of preserving collective memory takes place intimately through intergenerational cultural transmission within the household. The method of passing on knowledge from Ibu Patiah to Marisa is not done through rigid formal instructions, but rather through a process of *gupat-gantih* (continuous/direct imitation). From childhood, Marisa has been accustomed to sitting beside her mother, observing the rhythm of her crossed fingers, listening to the rustle of palm leaves, and gradually trying to make small woven items. This is a form of organically cultivating the craft *habitus*. Through this habituation process, the values of patience (Sasak patience), perseverance, and pride in ancestral identity are internalized into the younger generation without coercion.

However, discussions about preservation are not free from the contestation and challenges of modernity. Massive market penetration has introduced

manufactured plastic food covers that are far cheaper, more practical, and easier to clean. The presence of these plastic containers has shaken the existence of Tebolak in Kabar Village, triggering a decline in local purchasing interest for daily use. This challenge was addressed by a women's agency with creative adaptations without uprooting tradition. Mrs. Patiah and her daughter began modifying the function of Tebolak, shifting it from simply being a food cover in the kitchen to an aesthetic interior decoration product, wedding souvenir, and modern gift container sought after by urban markets outside Lombok.

This functional adaptation demonstrates that the collective memory maintained by the women of Kabar Village is not frozen or resistant to change. The women artisans demonstrate cultural resilience by reconstructing the meaning of Tebolak to maintain its relevance in the modern economic ecosystem. They utilize past memories to anticipate future opportunities. The commodification of Tebolak into art objects does not diminish its sacred value. When orders for the Beleq Saji traditional ceremony are received, this family continues to produce Tebolak using the same principles, materials, and prayer rituals as those passed down from their ancestors hundreds of years ago.

Theoretically, these ethnographic findings reinforce Maurice Halbwachs's view that collective memory requires physical space and the smallest social group to survive. The artisan families in Kabar Village are this smallest social group, and the *berugak* (household *berugak*) is their physical space. Without the agency of women who consistently allocate their time and energy to weaving every day, the chain of Sasak collective memory would certainly be broken. The women in this village have taken on the role of organic historians, writing their cultural narrative not with ink on paper, but with sharpened bamboo and woven palm leaves on a sheet of Tebolak.

Ultimately, this case study of a family of artisans in Kabar Village provides a critical reflection that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage will never be successful if it relies solely on top-down government regulation. The sustainability of material culture like Tebolak rests on the resilience of local actors at the grassroots level, particularly women. Through their flexible fingers, sweat, and devotion to domestic traditions, the Sasak women of Kabar Village are not only preserving a handicraft, but also saving their identity, spiritual space, and the collective memory of Sasak civilization from extinction amidst the waves of global modernization.

CONCLUSION

Ethnographic research on Tebolak handicrafts among artisan families in Kabar Village, East Lombok, confirms that this material object extends far beyond its practical function as a food cover. In Sasak cosmology, Tebolak is a cultural text that embodies respect for sustenance, a symbol of domestic protection, and a representation of the macrocosm in daily life and traditional rituals such as Roah and Beleq Saji. Through woven bamboo and palm leaves, Tebolak becomes a living

artifact that objectifies the spiritual values, sociological identity, and ecological harmony of the Sasak community with its natural surroundings.

Tebolak's continued existence amidst the onslaught of modern plastic products is consistently driven by the agency of Sasak women in the domestic sphere. Weaving, carried out in communal spaces such as the *berugak*, has proven to provide women with economic autonomy and a space for social negotiation, enabling them to escape the constraints of patriarchal domination. Women artisans in Kabar Village are not simply craft workers, but empowered cultural actors who hold full control over time management, household economic decisions, and possess unique local knowledge.

The artisan family serves as a crucial microcosm for preserving the collective memory of the Sasak people, passed down orally and through motor skills (embodied memory). The intergenerational cultural transmission process from mother to daughter occurs organically through habituation, direct imitation, and the instillation of values of patience and perseverance from an early age. Through this intimate chain of inheritance within the household, the collective memory of weaving techniques, the selection of environmentally friendly materials, and ancestral philosophies remains alive and materialized in the physical form of Tebolak.

In conclusion, the cultural resilience of Tebolak crafts in Kabar Village depends heavily on the creative adaptation of female artisans in responding to the challenges of the times. By reconstructing Tebolak's function into aesthetic decorative products and modern souvenirs without uprooting its sacred value, Sasak women have proven capable of bridging past memories with current market demands. This case study provides a critical reflection that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage based on grassroots communities will only be sustainable when women are positioned as the primary subjects of the nation's cultural memory.

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