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Economic Activities of Karo Older Adults in Lingga Village, Tanah Karo Regency, North Sumatera, Indonesia

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Abstract: Older adults become one of the most crucial issues faced by many countries nowadays. The composition of older adult population increases significantly both in developed and developing countries. The increase makes the attention to the existence of older adults become necessary in order that they not only live a long life but also enjoy their old age happily and improve their quality of life. In several regions, the high number of older adults becomes a burden when they have a decrease in their health causing the increase of the health care costs, the decrease of incomes, the increase of disabilities, no social support, and the dependent behavior to others. This statement is not completely true since there are still older adults who are able to be independent in living their life to achieve their life satisfaction. This writing describes the economic life of older adults in Lingga village, Simpang Empat subdistrict, Karo Regency. By owning timidity as the trait of Karo people, the older adults in Tanah Karo are ashamed to rely on the compassion of other people for their life. Therefore, Karo older adults in Lingga village still conduct their economic activities until they rest in peace.

Keywords: Older Adults, Economic Activities, Village Economy, Incomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Older adults are one of the most crucial issues faced by many countries nowadays. The composition of older adult population increases significantly both in developed and developing countries. Based on the data retrieved from United Nations 2015, the population of older adults has increased in 2010, 2015 and it is predicted that the population will still be increasing in 2030 and 2050. For instance, the total number of older adults in Africa is 42.4 Millions in 2000 and then in 2015, it is 64.4 Millions. It is predicted that in 2030 and 2050, it will respectively become 105.4 and 220.3 millions. Then in Europe, the total number of older adults is 147.3 Millions in 2000 and it becomes 176.5 Millions in 2015. It is predicted that in 2030 and 2050,

it will respectively become 217.2 and 242.0 millions. Lastly in Asia, the total of older adults is 319.5 millions in 2000 and it becomes 508.0 millions in 2015. It is predicted that in 2030 and 2050, it will respectively become 844.5 and 1.293.7 millions. As seen from the percentage based on the data, the increase of older adult population from 2000 to 2015 is by 51.9 percent in Africa, 19.8 percent in Europe, and 59.0 percent in Asia (World Population Ageing 2017). According to the projection of population in 2010-2035, Indonesia the fourth most populated country in the world after China, India, and the United States of America as well as the most populated country in South East Asia than the other 10 countries joining in ASEAN will be in the period of ageing in which 10 percent of the population will be more than 60 years old in 2020. The sum of the older adult population is predicted to be 11.8 percent in 2025, 13.8 percent in 2030, and 15.8 percent in 2035 of the total population in Indonesia (Infodatin, 2015).

The high number of older adults in Indonesia has both positive and negative impacts to the future. The positive one occurs when the older adults have a healthy, active, and productive life. Otherwise, the negative one is that the high number of older adults becomes a burden when they have a decrease in their health causing the increase of the health care costs, the decrease of incomes, the increase of disabilities, no social support, and an unfriendly environment for older adults. Although placing older adults in nursing homes contradicts the Indonesian cultures, some studies show that older adults who are dependent to others are always placed in nursing homes (Achmad, 2016).

Based on the regulation of Indonesian government, the development of older adults should be established by using a family-base approach. This argument is appropriate for the empowerment paradigm of older adults implying that older adults are the families' responsibility. It is in line with the cultures of Indonesian people and the economical principal. Literature results related to older adults infer that there are 3 categories of older adults based on their places to live of which the first place is their own home. Older adults who live in their own home are usually considered as the ones who are independent. The second category is the older adults who live in a Three Generation Family: older adults, adults, and children to which this term is common in DEPSOS (Social Department). The third one is that the older adults who live in nursing homes both free of charge under the service of Indonesian government and the otherwise one under the service of private sectors. Basically, the category of older adults is divided into two groups: family based and institution based. The family-based group is for the older adults who live in home solitarily or with their family. Meanwhile, the institution-based group is for those who live in an available and provided institution. However for some communities who hold their cultures in Indonesia, the main option for the older adults' place to live is family-based (Achmad, 2016). For Karo people who hold timidity as their tradition, the act of asking others' compassion is a taboo. In this case, older adults will try to move in order to earn a living even though they are near to their demise. It explains why Karo older adults still do their work to be independent especially in their economy. By using a descriptive approach, this research is conducted to give the portrayal how older adults in Lingga village fill their old age by farming.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Village Economy

As a rural community, of course with all the wisdom of the community always take advantage of the potential optimum, ranging from farm, gardening, livestock and brick industry. Their dependence on the

land is very strong economic and social nuances. As economically, the land can be a source of family economic life in addition, they also perform activities support or sideline business is positioned as a form to meet the interests of eating. According to the tradition of livestock community it is not only a part to support the family economy, but also can be a form of family investment, which can be used for the cost of establishing a house, a marriage, or a child's education.

By means of production and income of the family economy, it can be seen that the employment of society is still relatively homogeneous. In this connection, the norms and traditions governing the cultivation of land are expected to be wise and prudent, since the function of the land also contains the social values that need to be developed if the community needs its development (Tarmizi *et al.*, 2016). The current rural and urban population growth imbalances need to be closely watched. Because if not anticipated early will be able to cause complicated and prolonged problems, especially in the social field. Rural development is quite successful especially in family planning prisons or because of the increased village facilities that can change the status of the villages into towns. But if it is caused by the flow of urbanization alone it will become a problem in the village. However, if we look more deeply it tends to the homogeneity of rural communities (Sirojuzilam *et al.*, 2016). Its appearance is more inclined towards holding firmly, tradition of ethnocentrism of rural community. Subsistence of Economy, unlike the countryside in the Europe country, America, and Australia, rural residents of Indonesia more belief in openness there are the immigrants, more friendly, and cheaper smile. Even the values of comerialism are not visible, which stands out the value of Gotong-Royong (Hasan, Zaini & Salladin, 1996).

2.2. Changes in the Village Economy

In the past, agricultural business could meet the needs of each family, at present the income from the agricultural business is insufficient, because the area of agriculture is fixed while the number of the farmer's family is increasing, so the size of the agricultural land of the family is narrowed, the impact of the income of each average farming families declined. The openness of the village makes the village an extension of the city, meaning isolated village is one hundred percent almost non-existent, it brings impacts other than the changing socio-culture as well as changing livelihoods of the population. In the past, the work of the village community in the traditional sector business sector, then changed into the formal sector for those who are educated, currently headed to the informal sector, such as small pedicab drivers, motorcycle taxi drivers, other service vendors (Hasan, 1996)). It is also by the progress of smooth transportation routes. The further impact of the village openness, they hope to move to the city or urbanization will be able to increase income, education, employment, employment and so on if without a policy effort that leads to the village just stay behind those elderly, less innovative, less educated, diseased, so that it can harm the village itself.

2.3. Structure of Labor

The process of transforming production structures or changes in the composition of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an important part in the process of socio-economic transformation (Tarmizi *et al.* 2017). This transformation resulted in growth and increase of national income per capita in the period long enough (Susilowati, 2017). Changes in production structures also result in shifts and changes in labor structures. In Indonesia, the structure of labor is differentiated by hours of work, sex, age, and education

level. Changes in the structure of labor in Indonesia continue to occur along with changes and technological developments from year to year. Labor shifts and changes due to land shifts and labor paradigm shifts. Changes in labor paradigm are caused by job opportunities that exist in the world of work. Labor employed in the agricultural sector has declined. At the global level, the issue of aging farmers received less attention than with other issues, such as the issue of decline production due to climate change, whereas the aging problem of farmers is a challenge serious demographics that need attention because it involves sustainability of the sector agriculture. An increasing number of aged farmers old more than 60 years, on the contrary increasingly the decline of young farmers, took place in almost all over the world (Sirojuzilam *et al.*, 2016). This matter indicates that the declining interest in energy agricultural work has become a common phenomenon which needs serious attention of policy makers in order to save the agricultural sector. Overview structural changes in labor demography at the agricultural sector outlined below strengthen the general phenomenon that lead to the increasingly elderly farmers and the decline of the youth employment in the sector agriculture. The aging issue of farmers and their performances in some countries needs to be reviewed in order to look for alternative policies to encourage young workers enter the agricultural sector, especially in the era of adult free trade. Here's a review of the aging phenomenon of farmers in Indonesia and in some other countries.

2.4. Structure of Labor

Manpower is divided into two groups: the labor force and not the labor force. The labor force is the worker or resident in working age who works, or has a job but is temporarily unemployed, and who is looking for a job. Not the labor force is a workforce or working-age population who are unemployed, unemployed and unemployed (Tarmizi *et al.*, 2017). The labor force is divided into two, namely workers and unemployed. Employed by workers is a person who has a job, including a person who has a job and when census or surveyed is working, and a person who has a job but temporarily does not work. Unemployed is a person who does not have a job, a complete person who is not working and looking for a job (Tarmizi *et al.*, 2016). This unemployed by bps is expressed as open unemployment. Manpower is the entire number of people who are considered able to work and able to work if there is no job demand. According to the Labor Law, those classified as laborers are those between the ages of 15 and 64. About three quarters of Indonesia's population is within the working age limit. A quarter of the population is not classified as a workforce because they are not yet 10 years old. The proportion of workers classified as labor force is only about 55-60 percent. Growth in the number of workers is higher than the total population growth. This is because the structure of our population according to age composition, until now still in the domination of young people.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research is a study aimed at understanding social reality, that is what the world has to do. Therefore, doing qualitative research on the world of psychology and social reality. In social research, research problems, themes, topics, and research titles differ both qualitatively and quantitatively (Muda *et al.*, 2017). Both the substantial and the material of the two differ by philosophical and methodological. Common quantitative problems have large areas, complex levels of variation but located on the surface (Lubis *et al.*, 2016; Lutfi *et al.*, 2016; Handoko *et al.*, 2017 and Erlina *et*

al., 2017). However, the qualitative problems are in a low level of variation but have unlimited depth of language. Qualitative research is a research method based on postpositivism philosophy, used to examine the condition of natural objects (Gusnardi *et al.*, 2016 and Dalimunthe *et al.*, 2016; Sadalia *et al.*, 2017 and Yahya *et al.*, 2017). With the aim to understand a phenomenon in a natural social interaction between researchers and the phenomena studied. The location of this research was conducted at Lingga Village, Karo Regency, Indonesia.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

4.1.1. Older Adults in Lingga Village

Lingga village which is populated by 3,467 people in total has the population of 425 older adults. It means that 12.25 percent of the total population in Lingga village is at the age of 60 years old and above. Based on the population census, the population of an area or region is considered as an old structure if the number of older adults living there is 7.5 percent of the total population (Achmad, 2017).

Most of older adults in Lingga village would rather live solitarily than live in a family. From 100 surveyed respondents, 30 older adults live with their children while the other 70 older adults live with their partner who is old as well. On average, most of the older adults have 5 children and nevertheless, some of them even have 9 children. However, older adults who have no children whatsoever are also there.

4.1.2. Lingga Village as an Agricultural Village

The width of Lingga village is 1,624 ha consisting of residences, agricultural lands, forests, and so forth. Lingga village is located in the elevation of 1,300 m above sea level and most of the land surfaces are flat there. The air temperature in the village is between 18° C and 23° C. The total of agricultural lands is 1,563 ha in width or equal to 96.24 percent of the total width of the land there. The rest of 62-ha land is for residences, forests, roads, and so forth. The land condition in Lingga village can be said as a very fertile land so that it is suitable for an agricultural land. It can be seen from the plants or crops planted there such as orange, chili, corn, potato, cabbage, coffee, and some other plants. The main agricultural commodity nowadays is coffee. Since the width of the agricultural land is great there, the main occupation of the people is farmers like what we can see in the Figure 1.

Farming is the occupation since the past which the people keep doing. Despite their possession of other non-farming jobs, they still do the farming. Based on their perception, farming is not a side job or extra work, but the main occupation. Instead, being PNS (civil servants) and private employees is the side job. The people there will call someone as a lazy person if he cannot cultivate his land or plant productive plants or crops in his land.

4.1.3. Karo Older Adults' Gardening Tools Preparation for Farming

At about 09:00 o'clock in the morning, Tigan meets Bolang in a living room and tells him to prepare tools for farming. Like what has been discussed last night, Tigan and Bolang will go to the farmland to collect areca nuts. Tigan prepares the needs for farming and takes the woven plastic basket which has a small size

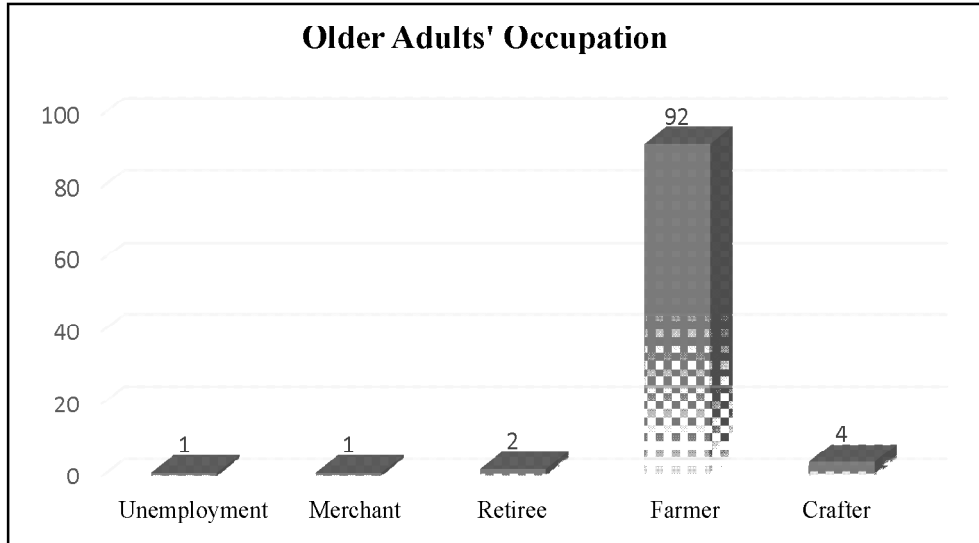


Figure 1: Older Adults' Occupation

and dominant yellow color with a black line in its centre. He puts a medium chopping knife, takes a big used plastic bottle which its *Fanta* label has been removed and then he uses the bottle as a water container brought to the farmland. He fills up the bottle with drinking water until the bottle is full and he also puts a red lighter in the basket. He never forgets to bring his *kampel* or small woven bag wherever he goes. He checks the content of the bag whether there is still something to put in the bag since he is very fond of his bag. The bag, knife, and bottle are already in the basket. Afterwards, he changes his cloth with a special service uniform, he says. He intentionally does not wear a jacket since the uniform is lighter and less hot for his body, he says while wearing it. He wears dull and faded livid trousers as well as wears brownish-white shocks.

Tigan wears his shoes kept in the backyard for farming. People here often call this kind of shoes as a pair of black *kater*. The shape of the shoes is the same as soccer shoes and the shoemaking materials are quite hard and probably made of rubber. Most of the farmers in this village wear that kind of shoes whenever they go to the farmland. *Kater* not only gives a good grip on the ground but also gives comfort to farmers since they can move freely without feeling pain whenever they step on everything laid on the ground. After rechecking all of his tools, he always remembers bringing his brownish-white gloves. He also brings sarong cloth as a head hood so that his head is protected from the direct exposure of intense sunlight. Meanwhile, Bolang also changes his cloth with a long-sleeved shirt as well as wears shoes, shocks, and a quite dull blue hat. The shirt or uniform worn by both of them is indeed for farming only. Tigan reminds Bolang to bring matches or a lighter since both of those tools are very important to set fire in the farmland.

4.1.4. Long Journey

The distance between Tigan's home and the farmland is about one kilometer reached by foot. Since the farmland is far away and there are his neighbors' and close relatives' houses along the journey, he often stops for a while in his close relative's house. Like today, he visits his child's house. He spends about 15

minutes to talk to each other with his grown-up child and drinks the coffee made by his child. Afterwards, he asks to leave to continue his journey to the farmland.

At about 50 meters from his child's house, Tigan meets some mothers who gather together and tell stories in front of a house. One of the mothers calls him to ask his *sontil* or tobacco. After giving his tobacco, he is invited to vent and tell what he has been through by the mothers. They also require him to stop and tell stories to them. With Karo dialect, both he and the mothers talk about the mothers' financial difficulties in funding their children's school because one of them is a single parent. He pats the mother's arm with his hand while saying "be patient, everything will be beautiful just in time".

Tigan spends about 20 minutes in the house and then he asks to leave to go to the farmland. However by using Karo dialect, one of the mothers says that it is just too hot to go to the farmland. Tigan replies that it will be cooler when he reaches the farmland. Sometimes, he has to go to the farmland by pedicab in order to avoid the people's invitation to stop and spend more time. It can happen in such a way because he is a *Sintua* (Church Leader) who has the responsibility to listen to the people's laments.

4.1.5. Activities in the Farmland

After reaching the farmland, so many rambutan and duku peels are there since both types of those fruits just bear fruits today. The condition of his farmland is clean because it has been sprayed by someone who does spraying as his job. Tigan puts his basket in front of his *sapo* (the word *sapo* derives from Karo dialect which actually means a house but people here use *sapo* for the hut in the farmland) and then he walks to look for firewood which is small and dry wood under the cacao trees. When he is looking for firewood, Bolang comes with his motorcycle. Tigan says that it is usual to leave Bolang behind to go to the farmland because Bolang is very slow in doing things or stuff. He continues saying that sometimes, he walks first to the farmland and lets Bolang ride motorcycle himself. Tigan only takes some firewood and put them on the ground which is the place to light a fire. Not only is the firewood taken by him, he also put some areca fruit peels on the firewood and then set the fire on it by using a lighter. He says that we must light a fire as a sign to indicate that the farmland is ours and the areca fruit peels have a function to make the fire produce more smoke, thereby repelling mosquitoes. After lighting the fire, he drinks his drinking water in his *Fanta* bottle, takes his bag, starts rolling his betel, chewsit, and then sticks the tobacco to the top of his bottom lip while Bolang smokes near Tigan.

Tigan sits in front of his hut veranda just awhile for about five minutes. Then, he walks, takes a broomstick and sweeps the front yard of his hut which is full of branches, rambutan and duku peels. With the tobacco stuck to the top of his lip, Tigan sweeps the trashes toward the backyard of his hut. While sweeping, he says that he cannot stand still when seeing the dirt in the front yard of his hut. He asks Bolang to take a wheelbarrow which is used as the container for areca fruits from inside the hut. The areca trees are used as fences and borders between his farmland and others'. He begins walking to the right of his hut by bringing the basket while Bolang brings the red wheelbarrow. They collect the areca fruits on the ground one by one by occasionally crouching and bowing in order to take one of them and search the ones covered by the grass near the areca fruit plants. Tigan goes around taking every areca fruit in the farmland. Without any fatigue and tiredness, Tigan and Bolang continuously bow and crouch when they collect areca fruits on the ground. Some of the collected areca fruits are yellow due to their young age but there are also already brown areca fruits meaning that the fruits are dry. In fact, Tigan also takes some of the areca fruits

that have sprouted small shoots and puts them in the basket. When he enjoys taking the areca fruits, Bolang takes four medium durians of which one durian has been bitten by a squirrel. Bolang says that those fruits are delicious even though their size is not large. In Lingga village, people who have durian trees must go to pick their ripe durians at five or six o'clock in the morning when the durian season is happening or otherwise, thieves will steal their ripe durians. However, Bolang as the one who owns durian trees never wakes up early to pick his durians when the durian season is happening. It turns out that the one who picks his durians is my younger cousin and thus, the yields of durian trees in total are divided fifty-fifty for both Bolang and my younger cousin.

After we go around taking the areca fruits which are only few for about one hour, the collected yields of areca fruits can only fill two medium urea sacks. Tigan says that indeed, the areca fruits in his farmland were just collected a week ago and in order to collect more areca fruits, he usually asked my younger cousin to climb the areca fruit trees and dropped the yellow areca fruits from the trees. However this time, he only collects the areca fruits on the ground without asking anyone to climb. Bolang carries his wheelbarrow which is full of areca fruits and four durians and Tigan also carries his basket in which there are some areca fruits. After arriving at the hut, Tigan asks Bolang to unload the wheelbarrow and put the areca fruits in *kaling gargar* (i.e., a very wide seat made of bamboo on which people need no table because it is designed to have a table set and to accommodate a lot of people sitting on it) beside the hut. After feeling weary and sweating, Tigan refuses to feel tired by always moving and training his body to do all of his activities. He then says that by doing so, the activities will make his body feel rejuvenated and make his brain sharp because too much sleep and laziness in the old age like in the age of Tigan and Bolang right now makes the brain weak and senile. These words are actually addressed to Bolang who very much likes sleeping. While sitting at the hut veranda, Tigan takes his bag and starts rolling his betel as usual. After inserting some betel mixed with lime and gambier into the roll, Tigan begins to chew the roll and enjoy the farmland atmosphere which is tranquil and has no fuss. He also adds areca fruit peels into the fire in front of the hut so that the fire produces more smoke and repels mosquitoes. While enjoying his betel inside the roll, he moves to sit on *kaling gargar* where the areca fruits are put. He begins to sort and select the dried and brown areca fruits onto the right side and the yellow areca fruits onto the left side. He is still sorting the areca fruits which will be left and dry in the farmland while telling a story about fruits in the farmland. Various types of trees producing fruits are planted in his farmland like rambutan trees in front of and behind the hut, some duku trees in middle of the farmland, a countless number of durian trees, several pineapple trees on the left of the farmland, newly planted mangosteen trees, *cempedak* or jackfruit trees which the fruits are often brought by Bolang to his child's home. Tigan says that planting those trees aims to make his grandchildren able to eat fruits from his farmland.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, Tigan arranges his stuff which will be brought to home such as the basket, knife, and the yields from his farmland. He stares at the symmetrical rows of his cacao trees and notices that there are plenty cacao fruits which are already yellowish in the trees. He tells Bolang to go to the farmland in order to pick the cacao fruits tomorrow.

4.2. Discussion

Villages in everyday life or in general are often termed, which is an area that is located far from the city crowd, which is inhabited by a community group where most of his livelihood as a farmer. While

administratively the village is consisting of one or more or hamlets that are combined to become an independent area or entitled to regulate their own household (Nurzaimah *et al.*, 2016). Villagers tend to be homogeneous where the village people usually have relatives who are still closely connected, so that this homogeneous nature reflects the togetherness that is formed in the nature of mutual cooperation is the hallmark of the village community. A good empowerment program is also capable of generating a variety of community-specific potentials and developing assisted by new systems, tools or technologies and the role of co-facilitators or facilitators that will accelerate the empowerment process so that high added value, as well as processes to facilitate and encourage communities to be able to position themselves proportionally and become the main actors in utilizing their strategic environment to achieve a sustainable development for the long term. Long-term development is closely linked to community empowerment where community empowerment is a major prerequisite to be considered as a gateway that will lead people to a dynamic economic, social and ecological sustainability (Muda *et al.*, 2016). Through empowerment efforts, the community is encouraged to have the ability to utilize its resources optimally and fully involved in various aspects of development in the region from planning, implementation to conservation, including production, economic and socio-cultural factors. The government prepared several empowerment programs that were devoted to the increasing number of elderly workers.

This empowerment program is expected to make the elderly workers remain productive and economically independent. Empowerment program for elderly workers to encourage job creation with independent entrepreneurs in accordance with the talents, interests and abilities that can be developed and provide economic impact for the older worker so as not to become a social burden for families and communities (Sirojuzilam *et al.*, 2016). A person undergoes the elderly in a variety of ways and not the same one with another. In the context of human existence an elderly person can see the meaning important old age, that gives them opportunities as a stage of life to continue to grow and strive to keep working. While others looking at the elderly with attitudes that embody passive submissiveness, they feel helpless, often feel rejection, and despair. An elderly person with circumstances like this will certainly make the elderly become more restrained with themselves. This situation can result in further accelerating their own bodily and mental degeneration processes.

5. CONCLUSION

The economic activities done by older adults are just the activities to fulfill their own needs such as only collecting the yields and not replanting them in the farmland. The works done in the farmland are only the easy ones. The activity in the farmland is a must but it is not intended to fulfill economic needs but to show that the older adults are not lazy. Besides, it is also influenced by the timid trait of Karo people. They are ashamed of relying on others for their life so that they keep doing activities. For Karo older adults in Lingga village, farming is a permanent work in the old age.

Glossary

1. *Tigan* is the name for an older adult created by the clan of *br Tarigan* from grandchildren or people considered as grandchildren.
2. *Bolang* is the name for a grandfather. Commonly, the name *Bolang* is added with the name of his grandchildren. For example, an older adult named *Bolang Andre* indicates that he is the grandfather of

a grandchild named Andre. It can happen in such a way because for Karo people, it is a taboo to mention their name.

3. *Sapo* which means a house is considered a hut in the farmland by the people there.
4. *Kampel* is a small woven bag used as a container to store tools for betel (betel leaves, gambier, lime, tobacco, and the place for pounding the betel potion).
5. *Kater* is a pair of plastic shoes used by the people to go to the farmland.

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