

Revitalizing Mangongkal Holi Tradition: As an Effort to Preserve Batak Toba's Local Wisdom in Tourism Issues

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Abstract: This is a result of a qualitative direct participatory research done by the researcher, as a part of his Dissertation; in-depth and open-ended interview were applied to obtain the data research from the informants. He tried to compare a successful Tourism issues between *Mangongkal Holi Tradition* and *Rambu Solo*. In his concept, *Mangongkal Holi* and *Rambu Solo* have many similarities, and Batak Toba as well as Toraja societies also have some similar characteristics. Furthermore, if Toraja can be famous with their traditional preservation on *Rambu Solo*, and others traditional activities' agenda, so North Sumatera, especially Toba Samosir, Samosir districts could follow Toraja's success story. Revitalizing *Mangongkal Holi* should be able to uplift Batak Toba's local wisdoms as indigenous good identities to the nations. A Good governor as well as those Districts' leader surrounding the Toba Lake regions should use this potential treasurer as a magnet to gain international/ local tourists. Because the central government has provided many infrastructures (air[ports], toll roads, ships, hotels, resorts, etc., to welcome tourists.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mangongkal Holi (excavating respected ancestors' bones; then replaced it into *tambak na timbo/ batu na pir*, or men made stone grave) is the highest level of tradition in *Batak Toba* society (Silalahi, 2016). This tradition is held in order to show the descendents' respect to their *Hula-Hula*'s families as well as a thanksgiving devotion to God for all the good things received by the descendents' families. Nowadays, this oral tradition is acknowledged as a rare ritual done by the Batak Toba societies. Since it is still classified as a family responsibility (funding, organizing) and it needs a long terms preparation; so, that is why, this oral tradition could be rared to find in the society.



Figure 1: (1) excavating and cleaning the bones; (2) Drying the bones; (3) Batu na Pir [multi-levels graves]

In meantime, the appearance of this tradition could be used to attract the tourists, since Inter(national) tourists fond of attending such ancient and unique traditiona. And the provincial government as well as the district government could arrange this issues as a regional agenda in promoting Tourism activities in the area of Toba Lake world widely as the part of Indonesian great agenda, Toba Lake as the Monaco of Asia.

Actually, this is what the researcher’s main proposal on this occasion; through comparing as well as sharing his factual experience while visiting Tana Toraja as a part of his Disertation discussion. He admits that Tana Toraja is more familiar to the inter(national) tourists if it is related to the cultural activities/attractions. Geograpically, Tana Toraja and Toba (Samosir) have some similarity; the people live as highlander, people who live in high land (700m-1700m above sea level), the weather is cool and mostly people live as farmers.

The researcher believes, if Tana Toraja can attract the inter(national) tourists come to see and enjoy the cultural performances named ‘*Rambu Solo*’; which is closely related to *Mangongkal Holi*, so Toba (Samosir), North Tapanuli also can do the same thing through promoting their indigenous oral tradition world-widely.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

In order to collect the data of the research, the researcher do a field research through a direct participant observatory; where the researcher attended the traditional events both on Mangongkal Holi in Sidamanik regency, Ronggur ni Huta regency and Rambu Solo in Tana Toraja. Furthermore, the researcher did in-depth and open-ended interview to obtain the more complete data research from the informants. The data were analyzed based on Anthropolinguistics and socio-cultural tourism theories.

3 DISCUSSION

Some people relate Batak Toba society with Tana Toraja society, a group of society who lived in the residence of Tana Toraja, ±300 kms north of Makassar (the capital of South Sulawesi). When the researcher visited Tana Toraja in July 2016, he luckily made a lively direct participatory research on a *Rambu Solo* rituals, as well as indepth interviews

and open-ended questions related to some tremendous data related to the tradition of Tana Toraja’s society from some respected Toraja’s anthropologists/ experts.

Some of the Toraja’s people argue, that Toraja comes from the words ‘*TOBA RAJA*’, means that Batak Toba and Toraja society have one-line descendant. Eventhough the researcher noted many similarities related to the culture and tradition between this two society but he also noted some basic and actual differences between them (especially related to ‘sure name’s deliverence, physical appearance, language and et cetera.).

Table 1: Toraja’s Aluk (ritual) hierarchical order.

Aluk Rampe		Aluk Rampe	
No	Matampu’ (Death Facing Ritual)	No	Matallo (Life Facing Ritual)
1	To lollo rara	1	Sorongan tallo, piong sakke
2	Disilli’ batu/ kayu	2	Suru’ reresan manuk do banua
3	Dipasang bongi	3	Ma’karerang manuk
4	Dipatallung bongi	4	Ma’karerang bai
5	Dipallimang bongi	5	Massura tallang
6	Dipapitung bongi	6	Merok
7	Rapasan	7	Bua kasalle

The lowest level of funeral ritual is ‘*to lollo*’ *rara*’ the dead as caused by miscarriage (1) this ritual is considered the lowest level and its pair in life ritual is *sorongan tallo, piong sakke*’ (making some offerings to deities by using eggs and rice cooked in a bamboo container).

Next level is *didilli’ batu* or *kayu* and its pair is *suru’ reresan manuk do banua* (no.2). this death ritual concerns the dead baby. In Toraja when a toothless baby dies, its body buried in the lving tree when its parents are still the followers of the autochthonous religion; but when its parents are already Christians, the dead baby is buried in the stone. For a noble baby a false tooth is usually inserted into its mouth, so that its death ritual is held like an adult’s death ceremony. The pair for this *disilli’ batu* or *kayu* is the ritual performed as a Thanksgiving (*suru’ reresan manuk do banua*) in which case the ritual is performed in the house.

The one-night ritual (*dipasang bongi*), and its pair, the ritual of Thanksgiving (*ma’kareranga manuk*) can then be performed. The requirement of aluk (ritual) for this death ritual is the sacrifice of a bufallo. Its pair, the *ma’karerang manuk* is the life-related ritual in which a chicken is offered to deities.

Then the next level of funeral ritual is the three-night ritual (*dipatalung bongi*) in which case at least three buffaloes are sacrificed. *Ma'karerang bai* life ritual, in which a pig is sacrificed. Next level is the five-night ritual (*dipalimang bongi*) in which case five buffaloes are sacrificed. Its pair is a more elaborate *surasan tallang* life ritual in which case a pig is sacrificed. Then comes the seven-night ritual and its pair is merak-feast. Finally, we come to the highest step of death ritual called rapasan in which case two phases of funeral- rituals are performed. First *aluk pia*, or sometimes called *ma'batang*; is performed at the *tongkonan* house of the deceased and the other is *aluk dio rante* (the performance of ritual at the funeral site called rant).

This is the most elaborate death ritual. Its pair is *bua' kasalle*, the highest form of life rituals performed in some *tongkonan* houses belonging to the noble class people. The performance of rites in each of the ritual level mentioned above may vary from region to region but basically they are the same.

Furthermore, the rapasan death ritual may further be subdivided into several sub rapasans. *Rapasan sapu randanan* (the most complex and elaborate ritual) in which 36 buffaloes are sacrificed, *rapasan sundun* (complete rapasan) in which 24 buffaloes are sacrificed, *rapasan tangnga* (middle rapasan) in which 16 buffaloes are sacrificed, and *rapasan diongan* (lowest rapasan) in which 12 buffaloes are sacrificed and *anak rapasan* (child of rapasan) in which 9 buffaloes are sacrificed.

Rambu Solo (Customary Death Ritual/ Ceremony) Rambu Solo is a customary ritual death in Tana Toraja society that aims to respect the spirit and the people who deliver death to the spirit, which is returned to the immortality with their ancestors in a health resort, called Puyo, which is located in the south where people live. The ceremony is often also called the completion ceremony of death.

Therefore, local people consider this very important ceremony, because perfection ceremony will determine the position of this spirit is the person who died, the soul reaches the level of the gods (*tomembali puang*), or become a patron deity (*deata*). In this context, the ritual signs Solo into a "duty". In the beliefs of *Aluk*, soul of someone who died must be delivered so that he can reach heaven (*puyo*). Rambu Solo is a delivery. If family did not carry Rambu Solo, soul of the deceased will be rumble. So with all the power efforts, a certain kinship will conduct this ceremony.

In Tana Toraja, 'death men' cannot be understood literally; because of the roles of the tradition (they should have enough/ready financial),

mostly they should balm the corpse and save it at the back of the Tongkonan for years, and act as if they are sick. So, when they held the *rambu solo*, the condition of the corpse are in skeletons (bones) without skins or muscles.



Figure 2: (a, b) Dances rites of Rambu Solo; (c) *Mapasilaga tedong*; (d) *matinggoro tedong*

While performing Rambu Solo, there are also various cultural attraction on view, among them such as:

- *Mapasilaga tedong* (buffalo fighting), competed buffalo in Toraja has unique characteristics horns curved down or crusted striped called *tedong bonga*. This type of water buffalo (*babalus bubalis*: mud buffalo) is endemic species in Tana Toraja.
- *Sisemba*, people compete their foot or leg each other.
- Dances ritus of Rambu Solo, namely *ma'badong*, *ma'dondi*, *ma'randing*, *ma'katia*, *ma'papanggan*, and *massailo*. On *ma'badong*, guests were standing around while holding onto hands. Then they sing and dance together. Strain of their song describes the sadness.
- Instrumental music called *pa'pompang*, *pa'dalidali* and *unnosong*.
- *Matinggoro tedong* (slaughter the buffalo). How to slaughter the buffalo on this ceremony is unique, cut the neck with a single swing of chopper. Buffalo is first tethered on a stone called *simbuang batu*. Buffalo butcher (*patinggoro tedong*) swing the chopper in a moment.

3.1 Mangongkal Holi: A Potentially Tourists Tradition Performance

Enjoying the wonderful panorama of Indonesia; Tana Toraja as well as Toba (Samosir) is very

interesting, but tourists will love to see authentic cultural performances, especially if they are possibly invited to be participated in the ceremonial performance, without avoiding the sacred/ rites of it. This will be a magnetic idea for the tourist to search the agenda of the live event in the local government websites, while the indigenous community presenting and deliberating the tradition.

In this case, both provincial government of North Sumatera together with the Cultural and Tourism Department of Toba Samosir, Samosir, Tapanuli Utara should collaborate with the chief community of Batak Toba society in organizing, uplifting their indigenous oral tradition as tourist magnetic agenda to visit. Eventhough the seasons must be arranged in local/ international holiday seasons (Juli-August, Dec-Jan). Actually, there are so many Batak Toba oral tradition that could be promoted as tourism attraction, such as: *mangadati* (wedding), *adat saur matua* (death ceremony), and *mangongkal holi* (post-death/ excavating the ancestors' bones).

Since Mangongkal holi is the highest level of traditional ceremony, and it should be arranged with a good preparation, the researcher now propose this event could be announced by the tourism department in their websites. In hence, the government also should seriously prepare and maintain all of the infrastructure of the street, transportation, as well as the guesthouse/hotel accomodation. So, the tourist could stay around the ceremonial place because it needs 2-3 days performances.

The government also need to do 'a good intervention' to the chief of the community; so, they could arrange a good interesting run-down where the tourists could be participated in the event, as well as preparing interpreter that can help them to understand and lead them in a good coordination, so the tourist will not disturb or break the limit of a visitor.

These acts actually supported to what Sibarani (2018:40-45) concept of marsirimpang (mutual cooperation), a Batak Toba society's local wisdom in Toba Lake area. As a good and preserved indigenous local wisdom, Marsirimpang should not be applied limitedly on the traditional performance, but also in tourism organizational issues. While most of the stakeholder of the cultural and tourism as well as the chief of Batak Toba community can sit together and discuss how to uplift the origins of Batak Toba's oral tradition named 'mangongkal holi' as a potentially tradition that could be promoted as an international tourists agenda; just like what Toraja's society success story.

4 CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Tana Toraja district is very famous with its Tourism industry, because God gave them wonderful panorama as well as great cultural performances that can become a strong magnet for the Inter(national) tourists to visit. *Rambu Solo* and other cultural performances are successfully attracting tourists because the governments and the people of Toraja agreed to collaborate, and create a good 'mutual coordination/cooperation'. The government concerned with the promotional issues to the world wide information of tourism agenda held in Tana Toraja, building/ maintaining all infrastructures, (in other hand the goverment can gain the tax of the party/ animals which are sacrificed in the rites) so the tourists and the society can reach the place of the tradition easily, and the host-family can administer, preserve the tradition in a good manner.

Mangongkal Holi as an indigenous oral tradition, in Batak Toba society could be assumed as linear with *Rambu Solo*. In mean time the panorama, view/characteristics of Tana Toraja almost the same with Toba (Samosir) and North Tapanuli districts. Based on these similarities, the researcher believes that if the government (central, provincial, district) as well as the chiefs of Batak Toba societies can sit together and declare/decide a solid 'mutual coordination' to uplift Mangongkal Holi as a potential oral tradition that could be promoted world widely. Cultural and Tourism department should start to build a strong relationship with researcher/anthropologists, sociologists, chiefs of Batak Toba society to study/understand the procedures of administering *Mangongkal Holi* itself.

In order to welcome the tourists, joining the process of the rites while performing/administering the event, the tourism department and the chief of the events should be able to invite them as a part of it. So, on their mind, they are trully respected, not only as viewers but also as doers (tourist-guide and chief of the event could arrange suitable moments, when they can involve in the event).

Uplifting the cultural Tourism unconsciously could uplift the socio-economic rates of the society. When the tourists come, they will need accomodation to stay, transportation to reach the places, food/beverages stuffs (restaurants, cafe), tourist-guides, and handicraft. It means, imitating other cultural performance could be good while the people wish to preserve their local indigenous oral tradition. The researchers lets/motivates the readers (especially tourism stakeholders/shareholders) to actualize their indigenous 'marsirimpang' not only

in a very simple way; while planting-harvesting the crops, but also in promoting the indigenous oral tradition as a good effort in preserving, revitalizing Mangongkal Holi as their own identity; *Rambu Solo* means Tana Toraja – *Mangongkal Holi* means Toba (Samosir), North Tapanuli, Toba Lake.

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