

## The Factors which Faded the Implementation of Traditional Wedding Ceremony and Death Ceremony in Mandailing Ethnic Society in Medan and in Their Hometown (Muarasoma Regency, Madina)



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### Abstract

Based on the topic and the problems of the research, the writer focussed on the analyses of the factors which might fade the implementation of a traditional wedding ceremony in Medan and in Muarasoma, Batang Natal Regency in South Tapanuli. The data were collected by using the method of direct and open interview. Qualitative method is used to explain and describe the data in the form of statements ideas and thoughts which will be analyzed by using the theory of culture and local wisdom. There are about twenty informants from both places. They might represent traditional/local leaders in their society. They expressed their ideas and thoughts about the implementation of the traditional wedding ceremony. It could be seen from the analyses that the implementation of a traditional wedding ceremony in Medan was decreasing due to the large sum of money and time spent for the wedding ceremony. In Muarasoma, it needed three days and nights to conduct the ceremony because it had a long process to be done. Beginning with the invitation, discussion among the leading persons, slaughtering the bull, performing of Gerdang Sembilan, traditional dancing, giving advice and clan name for the bride and so on. In Medan, people only spend one day to make the wedding ceremony, it is so simple and efficient. Anyhow, all informants hope that Mandailing people will hold their tradition and culture strongly in the future.

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## 1. Introduction

Custom and tradition inherited by our ancestors should be preserved and maintained because they contained noble values and social norms which might become our philosophy in life. Tradition and way of life were usually used to overcome the problems in our environment. There are internal and external factors which may influence people to change their ideas and behavior on the tradition and culture. Internal factors come from the community itself, they change their ideas due to the social-economic the condition where they live.

Tradition and culture are so dynamic and always influenced by social condition especially in the era of globalization, people want to live more practical and efficient. And this is also influenced by an economic condition which seems become worse and worse. In fact, globalization offers opportunities to be successfully supported by sophisticated technology. This improvement may cause exaggerated, individualism, consumerism and materialism. People buy the properties not because they need them but to show prestige and social status. To get a specific commodity could mean a symbol of achievement in the economy. At the present time, there are many ways to show the commodity that people have by using mass media like Instagram and Facebook. Advertisement in mass media may also give a great influence on consumerism in society. Capitalist advertised the goods by using mass media, and they succeeded in making a public opinion that anybody who can not get the commodity are not successful people.

Based on the condition above, people change their thoughts and behavior toward their tradition and culture. The traditional wedding ceremony may spend a lot of money and time due to the process and the stages of the ceremony, it needs at least three days for the preparation and the implementation of the wedding ceremony. It really needs a lot of money and energy spent on the traditional ceremony. And this may become one of the reasons why people change their behavior toward tradition and culture. Anyhow, this local tradition should be preserved and maintained. This research is conducted to find out the factors or reasons why people don't hold their tradition anymore, in other words, people tend to forget their old way of life and tradition. The informants interviewed are the leading persons in society who may represent people in religion and tradition in Medan, North Sumatera Province and in Muarasoma Batang Natal Regency.

They are expected to give their ideas about the implementation of a traditional wedding ceremony in their community. In Mandailing society, the leading persons still have their function and role to manage daily activities in society, even they have stronger power than the local authority. Most of the Mandailing people are Moslems, they hold their religion and tradition strongly. Both religion and tradition can run well in daily life, there is no controversy in the implementation.

The changes due to external factors caused by modernization supported by the improvement of knowledge and technology. In the global era, people changed their thoughts and behavior, they lived more practical efficient and realistic. Anyhow, tradition and culture should not be extinct from our lives. The local and central government had tried hard to motivate people to keep on living with tradition and culture because it contained noble values and local wisdom which could become the philosophy of our lives to reach better social economic and peaceful condition (Sibarani, 2012: 152).

The quotation above shows how the sociocultural model may be regarded as a social institution, social structure, social communication, social belief, values and sociocultural norms, culture and tradition and local wisdom which could be used to empower people to reach better economic life and peaceful condition.

Traditional wedding ceremony contained symbols and values which are used to manage all dimension in social life. Tradition ceremony may spend three days begin with preparing for the ceremony like discussing with the family and leading persons in the community. They talked about a material and moral donation to help the family who wants to make the ceremony. In Mandailing community there is a social structure which is called *dalihan natolu*, there three elements in society, they are *mora*, *kahanggi*, *anak boru* their function and role are complete each other in daily activities of the society. The community planned and managed the stages or the steps of the ceremony so that it can run well, and the ceremony was successful.

*Dalihan natolu*, the three elements in Mandailing society have their own role, the first element, *mora* gives ideas, advice, and suggestion, they also acted as the leading persons supported by the second element, that is called *kahanggi*, they are the brothers from the husband and the wife's family. The third element is *anak boru*, they are the men who get married with the daughters of the *mora*. These men are responsible for doing the work in the wedding ceremony like cooking and serving the food for the guests in the ceremony.

## 2. Research Methods

This research applied qualitative method. [Ratna \(2004: 46\)](#) stated that the process of the qualitative method is just the same with the hermeneutic method and content analyses. All the method above used the way of interpretation then the analyses are pretended in narrative form or description. All the method need direct involvement of the researcher on the object observed. The process of interpreting the object was needed to get the total meaning of the object. In the field of social and cultural, the data taken is always in the form of statements, comments, and ideas, that's why they should be collected and classified based on the problems.

The quantitative method can't fit the phenomena of humanity and that's why can't be explained and measured by numbers. Qualitative method tends to use the power of five sense observation to expose cultural realities which are always changes following the era.

According to the qualitative method, the researcher is the main instrument to collect the data and follow the cultural phenomena, so the researcher should flexible, imaginative and reflective. Cultural research needs direct observation and participation from the researcher.

In the field research, the data were collected by the method of documentation by recording and taking photos. The interview was designed to be open for a long explanation from the informants related to the objects being observed, it is an open interview some informants may express their ideas quite differently according to their opinion. They may also give their experiences in other places with a different situation, they were free to tell about the history of the case and other explanation to add their information. Focus Group discussion is also applied to get a different opinion about one case of a problem, some informants gathered together to answer the same questions, they were free to express their opinion.

Qualitative data are always in the form quite long sentences and can be collected by direct observation, interview, documentation or recording. In the analyses, there are three stages that can be done they are data reduction data presentation and taking conclusion or verification. This is clearly explained by miles and Huberman in *Qualitative Data Analysis A Sourcebook of New Methods*. We consider that analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and so conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the "raw" data that appear in written up field notes ([Miles dan Huberman, 1984: 21](#)).

## 3. Results and Analysis

### 3.1 The Implementation of Traditional Wedding Ceremony in Batang Natal Regency

The research team interviewed ten informants consist of the leading persons who are responsible for religious and tradition activities. There were at least six villages where the leading persons lived and all of them agreed to say that the villagers would hold and implement the traditional wedding ceremony. There were no problems for them to make the traditional ceremony, although they had been influenced by new ideas and thoughts from the surrounding towns like Medan city and Padang in West Sumatra. Even the young generation was willing to be involved in running the ceremony. They volunteered to participate in every stage of the traditional ceremony. They did not refuse the old way of choosing the partner to marry, the parent might choose the wife for them, the wife was from their extended family, in the local language it is called "*Boru Tulang*".

All the informants stated undoubtedly that the people would hold the tradition as long as they could, they were proud to perform it because it could show their social identity. The parent suggested the young generation hold their tradition and religion strongly.

The Economic life of the people in Batang Natal Regency was quite good, most of them were farmers. They planted rubber, palm tree, fruits, and vegetables, the prices might go up and down but it was quite enough for them. There were some government officials (PNS) who worked as teachers, nurses and also local administrators in a government department, their economic condition was good because they were also farmers. In fact, they were no poor people in the village, the people, and local government was always ready to help.

The people lived in the environment just like the common village with a small forest and long river passing through the villages, and the air was clean and quiet. In a certain place like Muarasoma, sometimes it was

crowded by the students and people who were busy walking and shopping. Muarasoma is the capital city of Batang Natal Regency, there is a local hospital, a police officer, a guest house and of course a local government for a subdistrict (*camat*).

Muarasoma is very different from other villages which are quite so fresh, there are only the voices of birds and other small animals and the water passing through.

There is a significant local wisdom that is still maintained in the villages that are called *Lubuk Larangan*. It is a traditional way to keep and produce local fishes in the river that is passing through the villages. People are forbidden to catch the fish until it is the time for harvesting. People may catch the fish once a year there is a certain committee to manage the price and the profit gained from the fishes. The benefit is kept by the committee for the social activities like renovating mosque, repairing roads helping the poor people and the orphan. The leading persons in the villages made the unwritten regulation that people should obey. The regulation was not set by the local government. The function and the role of the leading persons in society were regarded as a guidance to act and behave. Although the regulation was not written, people willingly obeyed.

People in the villages always help each other, people gave their donation for the family who conducted the traditional ceremony. People may bring rice, hens or cocks, fruits and vegetables and many others.

The leading person in one village was called Raja Aek Nangali. He was the one who “opened” and managed the villagers as the only authority. During the Dutch colonialization, he was very powerful that the Dutch administration should ask permission if they wanted to make local regulation for the people. The Dutch administration gave him the rights to lead the local people.

The research team visited the “big house” which was “*Bagas Godang*” where the “King” lived when he was still alive. The house was big and beautiful, built by the Dutch contractor. At the present time, the second generation of the “King” inherited the house and the properties from the king, but he had no more power “to rule” the local people.

The research team interviewed the second generation of the king who lived in Muarasoma named Darwin Karim Nasution, and the family name was “Raja Mulia”. According to him tradition, customs, and culture would be implemented by the people for the present time and in the future. There was no problem for the people to perform the traditional wedding ceremony. The local people helped each other to make the ceremony. The tradition still functions as a social identity for them. Religious teachings and the implication of tradition could run well without any conflict. Although people might spend a lot of money and time, they willingly implemented the traditional ceremony.

### **3.2 The Implementation of Traditional Wedding Ceremony in Medan**

The informants living in Medan gave a quite different explanation, they said that implementation of the traditional wedding ceremony had been reduced due to the influence of other ethnic group living in Medan. There is at least eight ethnic group living in Medan. There are five Batak ethnic groups, Java, Malay, China, and India. Each ethnic groups influence each other. Multiculturalism happened naturally in Medan, there have been mixing or intermingling between ethnic groups, there has been a marriage between ethnic groups. In consequence, Mandailing people prefer to make a national way of marriage because it is more efficient and more practical. The national way of the ceremony is more acceptable for Medan people. If compared with the traditional way, the common ceremony only needs one full day, while the traditional way may need at least three days to perform the wedding ceremony. People may need a lot of money and time to perform the ceremony. In the villages, people can make the ceremony because people can help each other (*gotong-royong*). The community may give their donation in the form of money, rice, coconut, fruits, and vegetables and much more. In Medan, *gotong-royong* is not so strong anymore, people may come to the ceremony and give a little money or small gifts. So, it means that it really needs a lot of money to make the traditional wedding ceremony.

Due to the above reasons, there are not many people who can implement the traditional ceremony. Then they considered that it is not a must to make the traditional ceremony to show their social identity. The informants in

Medan felt doubtful about the continuity of the implementation of the traditional ceremony. Although the informants were born in the villages, they thought quite differently with the informants in the villages. The Mandailing community was strongly influenced by the culture of other ethnic groups. The usage of local language during the ceremony became the problems for the young generation, to understand mentation of ceremony. Young people did not speak a local language that's why they could not get the meaning and the advantages of implementing the ceremony. The young generation was not interested in involving in the process of the ceremony. They lived with other groups of people and tried to be tolerant a getting along well. Anyhow the parents tried hard to show the young generation the traditional ceremony is a valuable heritage that should be maintained and preserved. There are principles and philosophy and can be implemented to guide our life. Although the tradition was not so strongly held by the community in Medan, they still performed as good as they could. They spent quite a lot money and time but they did it willingly for the sake of heritage.

Other informant gave quite different explanation that the problem is not about spending a lot of money but actually the changing of thoughts, attitude and behaviour toward the tradition itself, the community in Medan could not fully understand the valuable norms and religion hidden behind the process of the traditional ceremony, such as respecting the parents and the elders how to get along well with the community in their environment, how to be tolerance and patient on the differences among the people. Young generation should learn how, to be honest, and work hard, how to live in harmony with the nature including forests and the river.

The young generation in Medan could not feel the emotional tie with their hometown, the family relation, the memory of the playground swimming in the river, the close relation with neighbors, helping each other, loving each other.

In the process of the wedding ceremony, there is an event (performance) which is called *mangupa* which means giving some food for a couple of brides. The food means blessing for the couple. The fish may symbolize the hard work (struggle) for life, chicken roasted means is a symbol to protect the children that the couple will have and to fees.

The hen has the ability to widen the wings to protect the small hens from a dangerous situation which may come the hens that will be eaten in *pangupa* will give the blessing for the bride. The parents and the elders gave advice for the bride to work hard and to survive until the end of their life. After the bride had eaten the food in *pangupa*, the food would be given to the closely related family.

### 3.3 The Strategy to Preserve the Implementation of Traditional Wedding Ceremony in Mandailing Ethnic Groups

#### a) Tradition and culture as the philosophy and social identity.

The people in Batang Natal Regency strongly stated that they would hold their tradition and culture for a long time in the future because they were proud of their heritage from their ancestors. The values and symbols hidden in the process of the wedding ceremony would become the philosophy of life, to guide them to survive and reach their dreams in life. The tradition may show the social identity including the music, dance, traditional cloth food and other ornaments. They committed strongly to maintained and preserved the tradition as well as they could. They did not want to lose it as the heritage from the ancestors.

#### b) The traditional ceremony preserved the local wisdom

Working together and helping each other is still hold strongly to the people living in their hometown in Batang Natal Regency. There is a social system called *dalihan natolu*, they are *mora*, *kahanggi*, and *anak boru*, their function and role are so important in the community, *mora*, and *kahanggi* giving ideas and advice then *anak boru* will enforce the activities suggested by *mora* and *kahanggi*. They really complement each other, other in daily life. People live in harmony with their environment. They are closely related and help each other. All the works in the wedding ceremony done by *anak boru* and the youth groups, they cook together, serving the guests, preparing for the food and other works. The people in Batang Natal believed that

tradition and religion can go along well there is no conflict between themselves. Religion and tradition can fit together and run well without any problem. Values and norms can become the philosophy to guide their lives.

a) Internal Factors

The informants living in Medan gave a quite different explanation about the implementation of the wedding ceremony. They were influenced by other ethnic groups living in Medan. There were not many people interested in conducting the traditional ceremony anymore because they did not fully understand the values and norms hidden in the process of the ceremony. They did not consider the tradition as a social identity anymore. There is a process of multiculturalism happened in Medan by intermingling naturally, the way of life has been assimilated or mixed together. The problems of money and time spent for the traditional ceremony may become a burden for the family of the bride, it happened because there is only a little donation and contribution from the extended family and the guests. Due to the problems above, people in Medan prefer to choose the national way of the ceremony which is widely accepted by many ethnic groups in Medan.

b) External factors

Due to the process of multiculturalism in Medan, Mandailing ethnic groups in Medan were influenced by the way of life from other ethnic groups living in Medan. That's why people prefer to choose the national way of the ceremony which is more practical and efficient. People only need one day to conduct the ceremony in the hotel or other rental building, even the invitation can be sent by handphone. All people need can be requested by phones such as food, music, and other bridal ornaments.

There were differences of ideas, opinion, and attitude about the implementation of a wedding ceremony in Medan and in Batang Natal Regency. The factors supporting the implementation are as follows.

- a) People living in hometown believed that tradition and culture will be held for a long time in the future. The ceremony considered the heritage social identity and local wisdom. It can also keep a close relationship between the relatives (extended family). The three elements in society *dalihan natolu*, *mora*, *kahanggi* and *anak boru* play their role and function in "ruling" their community.
- b) The money spent for the ceremony could be reduced by giving donation and contribution from the relatives. Working together and helping each other is still hold strongly in the hometown.
- c) The community living in hometown is homogeny, there is only Mandailing ethnic group living there. They only speak one language, that is their mother tongue, and the language brings the culture it can also keep the local wisdom and philosophy to guide their life.

#### 4. Conclusion

- a) The implementation of the traditional wedding ceremony would be held for a long time in the future. The young generation was willingly involved in the traditional ceremony because they could understand the values and social norms, religious teachings, and other symbols socials to guide their life. There was still a close relationship between the relatives in the community because the social element *dalihan natolu* still plays the role and function in society. Working together and helping each other was still hold strongly to the community in the hometown.
- b) Mandailing community living in Medan had been influenced by other ethnic groups and experienced multiculturalism naturally by intermingling, and cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. That's why they did not have the same ideas and thoughts like the people living in hometown. The implementation of the traditional ceremony was reducing. They did not consider it as the social identity and to be proud of having it as the heritage inherited by the ancestors. The problem of using the local language also hampered the young generation to get the meaning and values of the traditional ceremony, because language brings the culture.

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Best regards, Siti Norma Nasution.




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