

THE BATTLE OF TASTE UNDER THE TENT A STUDY OF THE TOGAL TRADITION ON MAKEANG COMMUNITY IN NORTH MALUKU

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**Abstract:**

This article studies the tradition of togal in Makeang communities in North Maluku. This tradition faced various dynamics, one of which is a matter of taste. The young and old generations have different taste when togal performed. The young generation does not appreciate togal, while the older generation is still very appreciative. The assumption is that if the young generation does not appreciate anymore, the existence of the togal is being threatened. The reason is, the generation that has the role in the sustainability of this tradition has not positive attitude. By using the qualitative research methods, this study reveals that tastes are a subjective area that cannot be debated. Tastes are the truth of everyone. However, in most cases, conflicts often occur. The generation that has an interest in togal is involved in the battle of tastes with the generation who are not interested in the context of performance. The older generation wants to play togal, while the younger generation rejects as a music of party (performance). This battle occurs because there is a different opinion between of them. Thus, there is a negotiation process in solving the problem. If the older generation is more dominant, the party will be held with the music of togal. If there is a way of agreement, then the time for the party that takes all night is agreed to be two parts. The first part is for togal, while the second for modern music.

**Keywords:** Makeang, Togonal, Taste, Negotiation

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading the current cultural diversity of North Maluku, at least two research results need to be explored. First, the North Maluku Oral Tradition Association (ATL) conducted research on North Maluku culture from 2015 to 2016. Second, Main Thoughts of Regional Cultural 'Pokok Pikiran Kebudayaan Darah' (PPKD) in North Maluku in 2018 was conducted by the Faculty of Cultural Science, Khairun University. What is the importance? These two studies recorded hundreds of traditions spread across various ethnic groups in North Maluku. This study also provides an overview of the cultural diversity in North Maluku while at the same time confirming that the province, which is located at the periphery of this nation, has an abundance of cultural wealth.

On the one hand, the facts on the ground are like that (cultural wealth), but on the other hand, the health facts of these various traditions also raise a variety of tastes. Some are happy, some are disappointing, and some are sad. The various traditions that have been recorded are mainly in a sad situation because some are extinct, while others are weakening. The problem is attention and appreciation.

Togonal, one of the oral traditions in North Maluku, which is the object of this study, also faces the same problem. This oral tradition, which the two studies above noted spread in several areas in North Maluku, experienced ups and downs in its development. At least two things are considered to have weakened the Togonal tradition. First, the government as the authorized party does not yet have any concern or awareness of the importance of a tradition for livelihood.

Second, as the future foundation of the Togonal tradition, the younger generation does not appreciate this cultural wealth because they are always suspected of being out of date. Something outdated is not a matter of time but a matter of the intensity of its appearance in various media. A tradition has been around for a long time (ATL limits it to at least two generations), but the length of a tradition is not necessarily out of date. At present, many people realize that the moral crisis begins with a crisis of awareness of the importance of actualizing cultural values (tradition). This view holds that the issue of obsolescence is not a matter of time but a matter of importance or usefulness. The extent to which a tradition contributes to developing the welfare and peace of its community.

Togonal has various values that can contribute to the life of the Makeang people. Of these values, one that can be mentioned in this paper is the Togonal role in bringing together various social entities of the Makeang community. Togonal becomes a rite of meeting because through this traditional art, the Makeang people are brought together in one performance context.

In North Maluku, Makeang is one of the ethnic groups that are considered challenging to unite in several areas of life. For example, in terms of language, Makeang is a community that lives on an island with a diameter of approximately 10 kilometers. However, on the island live two languages that do not understand each other. The people of North Maluku call it the Inner and Outer Makeang languages. These two languages come from different families.

In other aspects, such as politics, it is assumed that if there is an election for mayor or governor, there must be more than one candidate from Makeang. Likewise, with aspects of education, religion, and others. In matters of religion and education, the people of Makeang seem like a race. Who will go on the pilgrimage faster and whose more children will graduate and be accepted as Civil Servants (PNS). Thus, people even take this as a measure of success. Amin (2016) termed *landadi manusia* or *dadi manca*. When the Makeang people *landadi manusia* actually open up social demarcation, the implication is that they do not obey each other. Everyone feels like a great person. These various differences that are difficult to put together are not visible at the time of Togonal implementation. We do not mean to glorify the Togonal excessively, all the different entities dissolve and melt into a musical interaction process called the Togonal. When the Togonal is executed, all have the same position.

Togonal with all its greatness now tends to be abandoned by the younger generation. One thing that is most visible from this trend is the taste of the younger generation of Makeang towards Togonal which continues to decline. If there is a Togonal performing, there is often a battle of tastes between the older and younger generations. The older generation wants Togonal, while the young crave modern music (pop, dangdut, and others). The problem is that both want their tastes to be fulfilled. There is a public acknowledgment that, to fulfill this taste, there is often a close conflict. Generations of young and old almost get into fights for the fulfillment of their respective tastes. For this reason, the Makeang people have a negotiation model that can resolve this conflict while at the same time meeting their individual tastes.

This paper examines aspects of the battle (tastes) and various forms of negotiation. This is important to see because, on the one hand, Togonal shows its role as a medium of meeting. However, on the other hand, there is a new fact that the younger generation has different musical tastes from the older generation. The estuary is, of course, related to the weakening of appreciation because the younger generation has a different structure of experience. The question is, the difference in taste is something wrong, or people who like Togonal are considered right and those who have different tastes from that are considered wrong. This paper will describe the complexity of the problems faced by all of the above as well as provide various solutions.

## **METHODS**

This article is structured on a qualitative framework. Without needing to explain the qualitative concepts further, the findings in this paper are presented and compiled by relying on three things. First, it should be emphasized that the two authors in this article are culturally

Makeang people. Even though they were not born and raised on the island of Makeang, their family background and life experiences made the two authors in this article experience firsthand the oral tradition of the Togonal in various aspects of life. Second, the observation of the implementation of Togonal on various occasions illustrates a struggle of tastes between generations. Third, the supporting data for the preparation of this paper rely on several previous studies on tugal, including the results of the previous author's research on tugal.

The experiences, observations, and results of research on Togonal in the Makeang community as mentioned above are then elaborated with further observations on aspects that have not been studied previously, namely the intergenerational battle of tastes. In Togonal performance, conflicts often occur because of different views on natural tastes. However, at the same time, there are often conflicting intergenerational negotiations so that all tastes are accommodated. Based on those new facts, this article was created.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Togonal and Oral Tradition, Limitations About Togonal.** Besides Togonal, the Makeang people know this traditional art by the term Manika. Compared to Togonal, the term Manika is only known in a limited way by the Makeang people. In contrast to the Togonal that the people widely know of North Maluku. These two terms have the same meaning or refer to the same tradition. For this reason, in this study, the author will then use the term Togonal.

The people of Makeang or North Maluku generally refer to the Togonal in one performance context as "implementing the Togonal," "Makeang the Togonal," "creating a Togonal event," or "Togonal party," not "performing the tugal" or "staging the Togonal." Togonal is understood as a cultural expression that does not take the form of performances or performances in its implementation. This happens because the performance in the Makeang community's understanding only leads to one performance context, such as a performance at a theater in a theater building or the courtyard. The show is understood the same as a society in general, namely that there is a stage – a higher position – on which there are several people who move and speak according to their roles, then witnessed by the audience below. Such an understanding requires a kind of separation between performers and audiences who should not be involved in one performance context. If the show has an element of dance, the audience cannot participate in the dance. The audience is only in charge of watching the show. This is not directly proportional to the performance in a full context that involves many people. The audience can act as a witness and participate in one of the Togonal elements, namely dance. Even if that person can play one of the tugal instruments or is proficient in rhyming or reciting poetry, that person can act based on his expertise.

In terms of performing arts, Togonal is certainly included in the framework of performing arts because in its implementation, it at least involves several elements, namely there are players or artists, stage, and an audience. Thus, the framework developed in this study positions tugal as a performance for the Makeang community because it fulfills several elements of the performance as mentioned above.

In the Makeang community, confusion occurs not only in the mention of the Togonal in the context of carrying out Togonal but also in the limitation of the Togonal. There is no definite mention of this tradition that uses oral media. Some refer to it as a culture of Togonal, others call dance of Togonal, music of Togonal, or tradition of Togonal. The variety of mentions by the Makeang community of Togonal is because, in its performance, the tradition combines several elements, namely dance, music, pantun, syair, and commands which have been carried out for a long time and have become a hereditary tradition.

This study should also explain that various elements can often be carried out in one performance context. If the Togonal is done using elements of dance and command, then the Togonal in this sense is a party of Togonal. But, if Togonal is performed only with elements of music and syair (without dance and command), then it is called music of Togonal, not a party of Togonal. The Party of

Togal requires a specific location and time, while music of Togal can be performed anywhere and anytime.

**Togal as an Oral Tradition.** Tradition is understood as a hereditary habit of a group of people or society based on the cultural values of the community concerned. Tradition which comes from the Latin *traditum*, basically means everything that is inherited from the past. Tradition shows how community members behave, both in worldly life and towards things that are occult or religious. Tradition is also understood as knowledge, doctrine, habits, practices, and others that are passed down from generation to generation. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), tradition is defined as a custom that is carried out from generation to generation and is still being carried out by the community.

Meanwhile, Finnegan (1992: 7-8) defines tradition as something the community owns (rather than as individual property), unwritten, valuable, or out of date. According to him, tradition has several different meanings, including culture as a whole, the process of transmitting practices, ideas, or values, and so on.

Suppose tradition is understood as a hereditary habit by a group of people or a specific community and is even considered out of date and so on. There is also a new creation due to innovation. In that case, oral tradition also means a habit that is carried out from generation to generation and experiences the same thing but uses oral as a medium. According to Hoed (2008: 184), oral tradition is a variety of knowledge and customs that have been passed down from generation to generation orally. Hoed's assertion is close to the definition of oral tradition presented by Albert Lord, which focuses on the hereditary process by using the oral tradition as a medium. Lord defines oral tradition as something that is spoken in society. The speaker does not write what he says but speaks it, and the recipient does not read it but listens (1995:1).

If the definitions above are connected with Togal, they can be categorized as tradition and oral tradition. It becomes a tradition because Togal is an ancestral heritage passed down from generation to generation and becomes an oral tradition because the implementation process combines oral aspects and inheritance using oral media.

**The Battle of Tastes, Taste as Subjective Truth.** On a lecture occasion, the author illustrated the dress structure of a woman. This structure is deliberately made to exemplify how cultural researchers see an object. Supposedly, the woman was someone who had just come from the village and had just entered college. One afternoon, the sun was scorching. The girl came with a yellow headscarf, red shirt, blue pants, and white shoes. All students' responses to the woman in the illustration were negative. The woman is considered crazy, does not know fashion, tacky, etc.

The question is, are all the answers given by the students in response to the illustration a mistake? Of course not, because what they saw was deemed untrue. For them, the way city people dress is not like that. The structure and color relations built by the girl are not directly proportional to what the students think. For the girl, the color structure is her area of truth. Thus, this becomes his guide in dressing.

On the other hand, students who see this view it as invalid because it contradicts the truth in terms of dressing in their experience. For students, perhaps the yellow color does not match red, blue, and white, or vice versa. The red color does not match the others. Moreover, the color composition is present on a hot day. For them, maybe on a hot day, it is not suitable for bright clothes. The illustrations and student responses above illustrate that everyone has their truth. To that truth, people make it a guide to act or behave.

Once a person is born into the world, he does not have any taste, just like any other human being. In its development, a person's taste, including in terms of art, only begins to form since he begins to realize that what he agrees with is correct. Awareness is the keyword about the birth of the truth (art) on the tastes he agrees with.

According to Sumardjo in his book "Philosophy of Art," every human being must seek awareness of the truth because humans have responsibility for their lives and the lives of others

who need the truth. For this reason, the truth must continue to be sought until someone agrees with what is found (2000: 3).

Truth is fundamental to look for because every human being needs support in their behavior. Something that is considered authentic, helpful, and valuable will guide it. For Sumardjo, truth is not static but continues to evolve and change. The reason is that truth is outside the human realm. Truth is an essence that existed before humans existed. For this reason, although the truth continues to change along with the growth of each individual, the truth will continue to be sought until someone believes it.

Remember that every truth of taste, including aesthetic tastes, will be different due to different experiences. A person who grows up with dangdut music in his environment will shape his aesthetic taste into dangdut. Likewise, if the environment is dominated by traditional music, pop, country, and other music genres, their aesthetic tastes will also be formed based on the musical environment. This is the necessity of culture (art). Each person or group has its uniqueness that cannot be compared.

The taste for traditional Tegal, which in this study is conceptualized as a form of a battle between the younger and older generations, is a consequence of different aesthetic experiences. For that, all tastes, whether they like it or not, are the truth of each generation. Thus, debating other people's tastes or imposing one's will on other people's tastes is a problem. For that, what must be sought is a way out, not being forced to have the same aesthetic taste.

**Party Habits and Taste for Tegal.** In North Maluku, people have a habit of holding parties to celebrate certain activities or celebrations. The held party is not just a matter of eating but artwork. People call it the barongge party. The habit of making this party can appear in various life events. When someone wants to get married, there will be a party, not just a wedding party but also a barongge party after that. When someone just finished graduation, there will be a party, not just inviting people to eat but there is a barongge party that night. When a group of people win a certain match, there will be a party. Even when someone is holding aqiqah activities (religious rituals), now there are community members who hold a party after the ritual is carried out. Almost all life activities that are celebrated or grateful for, barongge parties are always there.

In city centers in North Maluku, more parties take place on the street than in the building. For economic reasons, the main streets are used as barongge party venues. Many buildings can be used as a party venue, but it seems that the street is still an idol because it is much cheaper. Party organizers no longer spend more to rent buildings and so on. It is enough to rent several tent units and a sound system package. Then everything can be done.

This kind of partying thrives in small areas or outside city centers, including in Makeang, where the Tegal tradition originated. Makeang is an area that is far from the city center, either from Ternate City as the city center in North Maluku or from South Halmahera Regency, which administratively houses Makeang. From these two city centers, one must cross the sea using existing shipping facilities to reach it.

Generally, the party lasts all night. They are usually starting at 8:30 p.m. or after Isya prayer until dawn or around 4:30 in the morning. If the party is performed using Tegal music, the instruments are performed directly until the morning. As time goes by, some of those who perform Tegal parties often use Tegal music that is already in recorded form and is ready to use because the performers of this tradition have decreased. While parties that use modern music, of course, use music that is ready to use.

On this island, parties are held based on the various purposes of life mentioned above, except when people die. When viewed from the place of the party, there are at least two places that are often used as the location of the party. Both depend on the ownership of a party. Usually, each village has its location, which is usually shared by the community. For parties held in the public interest – such as parties for winning a specific match or a party for the visit of an official, and so on – held at a jointly owned location. Meanwhile, for the doing of a party due to a particular family celebration it is usually only centered in the family home area. However, it does not rule out the

opportunity for every family who does not have a party location to use the public location or other places deemed appropriate.

This tradition of partying has long existed in the Makeang community. Since ancient times, all the above activities have been carried out by Togonal parties. Even to put a child to sleep, it becomes cradle music. This kind of condition could be found because the Makeang people had no other musical experience besides Togonal. Along with the development of time, ease of access and technology have made the Makeang community interact with other ethnic groups. That interaction also impacted the development of the Makeang people's musical tastes. After Togonal, the people of Makeang began to get used to dangdut songs and in subsequent developments were familiar with pop music and other genres as it is today.

The generation born and raised with Togonal music has an unmatched taste for Togonal. Nowadays, if there are older generations who listen to Togonal music, they can even shed tears. Different from the previous generation, today's young generation finds music not only Togonal. Thus, his tastes have been mixed with a variety of other music, so that their aesthetic tastes are also not the only one. Their tastes are varied.

The description above refers to two forms of taste. First, the older generation has a complete aesthetic taste to Togonal. Second, the younger generation has diverse or mixed tastes. In this second taste, although some do not entirely like Togonal, they still have space for interest in Togonal tradition. Meanwhile, others do not like it. However, in specific spaces, those who do not like Togonal still consider this traditional art to represent their identity even though their attitude is not appreciative.

**The Battle of Tastes and Negotiations.** When tastes are divided, then the real battle is on. Moreover, people do not know that tastes cannot be forced. Taste is a subjective area that cannot be contested by others. This is not seen in the Togonal tradition. There is a tendency for the older generation, or the generation with intact aesthetic tastes, to impose their will on the younger generation who have different aesthetic tastes to like the same traditional arts. Based on such coercion, conflicts often almost occur because everyone does not understand the subjectivity of these aesthetic tastes.

The imposition of Togonal tastes to the younger generation is not without reason. For the older generation, the younger generation's attitude who ignore the Togonal when there is a party, is essentially not a problem. This cross-view of tastes is because the younger generation's taste for music in a performance context is contrary to the habits or culture of the Makeang people. If music is used as music as its role as a communication tool or in Joost Smier's (2009) words as a means of struggle, then there is a message to be received in that music. Music is not just something to entertain, but there are moral messages, social messages, and the efforts to educate younger generation.

The problem is when music is used as an instrument for partying. The music accompanies certain community groups, especially the younger generation interested in barongge. The various movements (for dancing) displayed in the barongge using modern music seem irregular and violate local cultural norms. In the rongge rules of Togonal party, all movements are neatly arranged. The dance moves are arranged by a person known as a Komando. When partying using a Togonal, women and men, all line up according to the rules of interaction of the Makeang community. In the past, even men could not hold hands directly with women. For that, they often use a lenso (like a handkerchief). This rule parallels the religious belief of the Makeang community that someone of the opposite sex is not allowed to touch.

Meanwhile, a party that uses modern music always displays free movements. For example, according to the Makeang people's custom, women who raise their hands or hold their hands up during the barongge, this movement is seen as a free and unethical movement. Women have sensitive bodies. For that, the dance movement must be closed. While at a party that uses modern music, everyone dances according to their own wishes. Although in particular music, the

movements are patterned, these movements are not in line with the Togonal movement rules that have been desired so far.

Different from the old one, the younger generation considers Togonal music out of date, but this art, in the context of a party, is monotonous, both in its movements and music. It is considered not dynamic and quickly dull. Meanwhile, a party that uses modern music allows every barongge participant to change their style according to their tastes. Every music that is played has its movement. It is assumed that if there are 20 music (songs) played in one night, many forms of movement are danced.

This difference in taste has implications for the battle between the two generations above in the performance of a Togonal party. To resolve it, there is a negotiation process. The result can be in two forms. First, if the older generation with Togonal tastes is more dominant, the younger generation tends to lose. As a result, the young are often warned against partying with modern music. If the warning is violated, the older generation often closes the party unilaterally. It is not uncommon to find certain parties being closed suddenly because late at night, those who have no interest in Togonal music deliberately play modern music because they think the older generation has fallen asleep.

Second, if the negotiations result in an agreement, the implementation time is divided into two parts. These two parts are still held in one night of the implementation of the party. The party is always held from 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. and ends at 4:30 a.m. in the morning. For simplicity, the implementation time until the party's end is often referred to as starting from after Isya until it is finished before Subuh.

This time division prioritizes a Togonal party over a party using modern music. Togonal parties are often held from after Isya or 8:00 p.m. to midnight. Togonal takes precedence considering that this traditional art is more in demand by the older generation, for that they deserve priority. After the Togonal time is over at 12:00 a.m., the party using modern music starts and ends at 4:30 a.m. in the morning.

## **CONCLUSION**

Taste is a subjective area that cannot be debated, much less forced. Taste is the truth of each. When a generation likes Togonal that is the truth of their taste. Vice versa, the generation that rejects Togonal is also the truth. Both camps have their arguments, which are the basis for the truth of their aesthetic tastes.

Although taste is the truth of each, but in the case of Togonal there are often conflicts because the generations who have an interest in Togonal and not Togonal are involved in a battle of tastes because each wants each other to like one art in the context of the implementation of the party. The older generation wants Togonal, while the younger generation rejects Togonal as the music used in parties. This battle occurs because of a cross of views between the two. Thus, to resolve it, there is a negotiation process. If the older generation is more dominant, the party is held with Togonal. However, if there is an agreement, the full implementation, which lasts all night, is agreed to be divided into two parts. The first part is for Togonal, while the second is for modern music.

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