

Mengetong Tradition in Minang Pariaman Wedding Ceremony: A Show-Off or Mutual Cooperation?

Fikry Prastyah Syahputra¹, Rudiansyah²

¹Universitas Sumatera Utara – Medan, Indonesia

²Universitas Sebelas Maret – Surakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. Indonesia has many tribes and produces many traditions. Tradition is a reflection of certain community cultures. One of them is the *Mengetong* tradition at the wedding ceremony of the Minang Pariaman community in Medan. This research is initiated by the distinction of this tradition which causes controversy. As a brief overview, *Mengetong* is when the amount of money given to the bride and groom is read aloud during the wedding reception. The initial perception of this research is to present an opinion based on empirical evidence that this tradition has a positive value rather than a negative one. This research applies the performance theory and local wisdom value theory. The data are in the form of text, and co-text taken from the video recordings of the *Mengetong* activity, supporting documents, and an interview with a customary holder. The results show that *Mengetong* is included in five elements of performance; 1) specific schedule, 2) specific instruments, 3) non-profitable, 4) having certain rules, and 5) being carried out in a specific location. This result indicated that *Mengetong* is indeed a tradition performed at a specific time, using specific instruments/tools, not a profit-oriented activity, applying specific rules in action and done by certain tribes. Moreover, local wisdom identifies this tradition as a social value in cooperation and reciprocity activity. This result also portrays the togetherness (*gotong-royong*) characteristic of Indonesian people. In the end, this study claimed that *Mengetong* in the Pariaman Wedding ceremony is meant to help each other when a family conduct a wedding ceremony.

Keywords: Oral tradition, *Mengetong*, performance theory, local wisdom

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1 Introduction

Every cultural diversity in Indonesia has its values or local wisdom reflected in the community's lifestyle, passed down from generation to generation, and become a tradition. Tradition should be interpreted as lasting over time, rather than immobile, round, or circular [1]. The evidence of this phenomenon can be found in songs, proverbs, wisdom, tenets, and sayings in weddings, deaths, and births events. It also includes recent works such as songs, films, and advertisements [2]. For instance, [3] in Harapan Jaya village, Pangkalan Kuras

*Corresponding author at: Universitas Sumatera Utara – Medan, Indonesia

E-mail address: fikryprastyah@usu.ac.id

subdistrict, Pelalawan regency, found that the *Jagongan Bayi* tradition is very convenient as a character of rural Javanese people who prioritize a sense of kinship and empathy [4]. This tradition is held at the moment of birth and lasts for seven days. A similar tradition of welcoming newborns, *Mancoliak Anak*, is also found in Silungkang village. The village is located in Sawahlunto City, Sumatera Barat province. Silungkang does not have as many cultural traditions as other sites in Sumatera Barat province. It is an ironic fact because there are many aspects containing local wisdom values in this tradition that can be applied as principles for the next generation. If they are left unchecked, they will gradually disappear due to globalization.

The same happens for traditions brought by diasporas. As with the traditions mentioned above, will their tradition continue if they move to other regions? Therefore, this article is written to discuss the value of local wisdom contained in one of the traditions of the diasporas. Will the tradition's procession still be the same if it is no longer carried out in its place of origin? Are the values of the local wisdom still the same? These are the questions that initiated the research and publication of this scientific article. According to [5], local wisdom is certain principles and ways that are adopted, comprehended, and applied by local communities in interacting and interrelating with their environment and transforming into a system of values and customary norms. Local wisdom is considered the result of habits that live and grow within the society and are implemented in social life in the community [6]. This view is also clarified stating that local wisdom includes customs or ethics that guide human behaviour, which is closely related to regional and community conditions passed down across generations [7]. Thus, it can be concluded that the sustainability of local wisdom is reflected in habits containing values as a guide for human behaviour that applies in certain communities. Due to the values in the community, all this local wisdom must be comprehended, practised, taught, and passed down across generations, as well as be able to shape the patterns of human behaviour towards each other [8].

In other words, local wisdom is formed as an advantage of the community's local culture and geographical conditions in a broad sense, even though it has local value, the value contained in it is considered universal [9]. Karyadi et al. [10] also added that local wisdom is a local idea that is wise, full of wisdom, and valuable that is embedded and followed by the community. It is even considered a

determining entity of human dignity in the community [11]. From this description, the magnitude of the function of local wisdom in the community can be observed.

Local wisdom reflected in people's living habits that have developed over time can become a tradition, even though it is a long process. A habit passed down across generations in a community with a broad nature is called a tradition, which includes all life aspects, so it is not easy to set aside with precise and definite details, especially difficult to treat like or similar, because tradition is not an inanimate object but an instrument that live to serve humans [12]. Previously, [13] has also described the meaning of tradition which comes from the Latin, *traditium*, which means 'to be continued', then developed its meaning to become something that has been desired for a long time and becomes part of a community. Based on the understanding of these concepts, it can be concluded that tradition is a hereditary habit that has been carried out for a long time and become part of the life of a community.

With the previous explanation, the *Mengetong* tradition in the Minang Pariaman wedding in Medan is chosen. The Minang Pariaman people originated from Sumatera Barat and many of them are already settled in Medan, Sumatera Utara. In several marriages of Minang Pariaman people in Medan, the practice of *Mengetong* tradition is still carried out and it is an interesting phenomenon for the heterogeneous people of Medan. This study applies the performance theory, where a tradition consists of; 1) specific time, 2) specific value given to the object, 3) unproductive, 4) specific rule, and 5) location constraint can be added [14]. Moreover, the value of Local Wisdom with Alport's theory in [15] is applied to bring up the values of the *Mengetong* tradition.

2. Method

A qualitative approach is adopted in this study. In his book, [16] suggests that qualitative research is 'interpretive' research, in which you make a personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information. The interpretation that you make, for example, differs from the interpretation that someone else makes, this does not mean that your interpretation is better or more accurate; it simply means that you bring your perspective to your interpretation. Furthermore, this study applies a qualitative descriptive research method [17]. The reason is that this research focuses on the

meaning of the data obtained naturally so that this approach and method are suitable for the research to be carried out. The steps required for the research:

1. Recording *Mengetong* activity.
2. Watching the video and converting the speeches into written text.
3. Presenting data.
4. Analyzing data.
5. Concluding.

The data to be researched is the result of recording the *Mengetong* activities. From the recording, the sentences are taken. It can be said that the data comes from the recording (video) of *Mengetong* activities and data in the form of written text and co-text. Some data and information are also obtained from informants. The informant is a traditional leader, a member of the Perkumpulan Daerah Keluarga Pariaman (PKDP) in Medan.

The data collection method applied in this research is the documentation method, carried out along with the observation method. The steps to obtain the data are described as follows;

1. Looking for a Minang Pariaman wedding ceremony.
2. Making sure there is a *Mengetong* activity at the ceremony.
3. Attending the wedding.
4. Recording activities.
5. Transferring the recorded data into the computer.
6. Transcribing the recorded data.

3. Result and Discussion

The Description of *Mengetong* in Minang Pariaman Tribe Wedding Ceremony

In Indonesian, *Mengetong* equals *Menghitung* (counting). *Mengetong* itself is an activity where guests give envelopes containing money or money without an envelope. The person and the amount of the given money are announced during this activity, but some are documented first and announced later. This event is usually held after Maghrib or Isha prayers. There are two types of *Mengetong* and the researchers divide it into *Mengetong Langsung* and *Mengetong Catat*.



Figure 1. Mengetong Langsung

Mengetong Langsung

It is called *Mengetong Langsung* if the guests directly give the money to the committee as shown in Figure 1. This table is the place where the money is collected. In Figure 1, there are three adult men called *niniek mamak*. The man with the mic is the auctioneer who announces the nominal and the name of the giver while others help tidy up the money and document the amount of money. These are the stages of the *Mengetong Langsung* activity;

1. Courtesy. Welcoming the guests, inviting the wedding committee to supervise food supply and parking spot, and inviting guests to donate.
2. After the guest gives the money, the auctioneer announces the amount and the giver.
3. Documenting. The amount of money and the giver's names are documented.

Mengetong Catat

Mengetong Catat is different from *Mengetong Langsung* as it is not directly given to the table of the *Niniek Mamak*. The guests go to another available table. Their names and the amounts of the given money are not announced but documented. The committee announced it later after the other guests leave depending on the crowd and the number of guests. The *Niniek Mamak* guests who head to the *Mengetong Catat* table are limited to particular people; usually siblings, close relatives, and people with large donations (< IDR 1,000,000.-)



Figure 2. *Mengetong Catat*

The stages of *Mengetong Catat* are described as follows;

1. The guests come to the table.
2. The names and amounts of money are documented.
3. It is announced after the other guests leave or with only the *Mengetong* committee, *Ninieki Mamak*, and close relatives are left.

Based on the process of *Mengetong* description above, it can be classified into the performance theory. That performance covers five areas. The five fields share some similarities. That is, 1) specific time, 2) specific value given to the object, 3) unproductive, 4) specific rule, and 5) location constraint. Based on this five categories, viewed from performance theory, *Mengetong* is classified as;

Specific Schedule

The *Mengetong* activity is carried out after the wedding ceremony. This activity usually takes place at night around 08.00 – 09.00 P.M indicated by the bride and groom leaving the aisle. The guests coming at that time are dominated by particular guests who are other diasporas with the same cultural background.

The weddings that hold *Mengetong* tradition need to follow certain rules, such as adjusting the schedules. The process for a host to hold a wedding ceremony with *Mengetong* tradition is to inform the members of the PKDP (*Persatuan Keluarga Daerah Pariaman*) that they are having a wedding with *Mengetong* tradition. Then, the PKDP members (*Ninieki Mamak*) make a special invitation or *Ninieki Mamak* invitation based on the family tree of the bride

and groom along with the community (the community; Chaniago, Piliang, Koto, Sikumbang, and others). After that, the PKDP members become the operators of *Mengetong* activity.

Specific Instruments

Before and during the *Mengetong* takes place, several specific objects characterize and qualify this activity. Not all weddings of the Minang Pariaman community, especially those settled in Medan, hold this activity at every wedding ceremony. A particular object identifying that the wedding holds *Mengetong* activity is the presence of a special invitation. The following figure shows the special invitation in *Mengetong*:



Figure 3. An Invitation to Minang Pariaman Community Wedding with *Mengetong* Activity

If the invitation is received by the relatives, the party knows that they should be present at night during *Mengetong* activity. In this case, this invitation has a special value and function as a requirement and a sign of a tradition. The invitation is a piece of paper containing data for the activity. However, what distinguishes it from other invitations is that this invitation contains the names of the whole families based on very broad relations. Moreover, the names included are the relatives of the groom's and bride's families. This invitation is called the *Ninie Mamak* invitation.

Etymologically, *Ninie Mamak* are the community leaders or people who maintain Minang Pariaman tradition. Why is it called a *Ninie Mamak* invitation? This is because the *Ninie Mamak* (referring to its definition that this is a term for people who keep their ancestral traditions) arrange the invitation. In other words,

the invited may not know or barely know the host (the person holding the ceremony). However, they are invited by *Ninieki Mamak*. Because that's the kinship concept in Minang community. These *Ninieki Mamak* gather in an organization called PKDP, which stands for *Persatuan Keluarga Daerah Pariaman*. One of their duties is to be the man in charge of *Mengetong* activity and to arrange *Ninieki Mamak* invitation.

Non-profitable

The performance of a tradition is also classified as a non-profit project, which means that this tradition is not a business-related activity to make money. Even though, these days, this tradition is exhibited and profitable. But in its nature, the value of a tradition is not to make money.

Mengetong tradition found in Minang Pariaman weddings is indeed related to money. Following the description, one of the *Mengetong* activities is counting and announcing the collected money during the wedding ceremony or the *Mengetong*. However, the collected money is not considered a business profit but a tradition of mutual cooperation. Why is that so? This refers to the principle of helping each other, that at this time, the new family formed from this wedding needs help to go through the beginning of their new life. Likewise in the future, if one of the guests who follow this *Mengetong* activity gets a turn, they will be treated equally for the same reasons. This reciprocal effect is included in the spirit of mutual cooperation.

Specific Rules

Special rules exist, are formulated, and persist because these activities are something apart from everyday life. A special world is created where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure. Dalam kaitannya dengan tradisi *Mengetong*, peraturan khusus yang muncul untuk menandai tradisi ini adalah pihak-pihak yang dapat terlibat dan ujaran khusus yang hanya ditemui di prosesi tradisi *Mengetong*. Only certain parties can carry out the *Mengetong* activity. It is coordinated by PKDP and *Ninieki Mamak* as the committee. PKDP is a legitimate institution with a chairman and funds for organization sustainability. The particular utterances that occur during the *Mengetong* activity are as follows;

Introduction;

“*Bismillahirrahmannirrahim, Assalamualaikum Warrahmatulahi Wabarrokatu, diberitahukan kepada silam kampuang dadoak yang ka junjuang, tolong dulu diperhatikan tamu – tamu kita yang datang agar bisa disongsong disalami, dibawa ke meja sajian terlebih dahulu. Dan juo mohon perhatian kepada bundo – bundo kanduang kami tolong dulu diperhatikan nasi yang kurang, sambal yang kurang agar bisa ditambah supaya tamu – tamu kito mendapek sajian. Dan juga kami beriahukan kepada pemuda – pemuda kami yang ikut mendukung pelaksanaan pesta iko kini, kepada seksi perparkiran tolong dulu diatur serapi mungkin supaya lancarnya acara ini. Supaya tidak terjadi yang tidak diinginkan.*”

After receiving donations;

“*Dengan Bismillah, dari Ridwan Tanjung (nama penyumbang) di gang langgar (alamat) tiga puluh ribu rupiah, tiga puluh ribu rupiah (jumlah sumbangsih) untuk itu kami haturkan ribuan terima kasih.*”

“*Dari Sutan Amdani Tanjung di gang pemuda pasar lima tembung muko belakang (ini berarti yang menyumbang suami – istri) lima puluh ribu rupiah, lima puluh ribu rupiah untuk itu kami haturkan ribuan terima kasih.*”

Announcement in *Mengetong Catat*;

“*Dari Sutan Ali di gang nangka muko belakang, memberikan sumbangsih dan gotong royong sebesar satu juta rupiah, satu juta rupiah, untuk itu kami haturkan ribuan terima kasih.*”

Specific Location

Perhaps this will be clearer if we consider for a moment where sports, theater, and ritual are performed for example in Great arenas, stadiums, churches, and theaters. Similar to tradition, it has its own specificity of its implementation. It is not considered as tradition if it is not done in a certain location. In this case, the *Mengetong* tradition takes a certain location - wedding ceremony. Generally, this tradition is found in various *Minang Pariaman* events (birth – marriage – death) in Medan. Moreover, in this research, the *Mengetong* tradition is focused on the wedding rites of *Minang Pariaman* community in Medan. From the description of the *Mengetong* performance, it can be concluded that *Mengetong* is genuinely a tradition. Indeed, this tradition need to be preserved and revitalized. There are four ways in revetilizing one tradition, which are; (1) procurement of competitions in the community about the tradition, (2) training the village youth about the procession of the tradition, (3) strengthening the traditional institutions, and (4) strengthening the traditional institutions. Furthermore, when compared to the classification analysis framework of an oral tradition [18][4]. *Mengetong* is indeed an oral tradition. After analyzing and describing the meaning of *Niniek Mamak*, *Mengetong* instrument, procedures, and utterances that commonly

appear, a table of oral tradition characteristics that reinforces the view that *Mengetong* is an oral tradition is displayed as follows;

Tabel 1. *Mengetong* as an Oral and Non-Oral Tradition

| Oral Tradition Characteristics | <i>Mengetong</i> |
|---|---|
| A cultural activity, habit, or culture in oral form, partly verbal, and non-verbal. | √ |
| Containing a performance, activity, or event as its user context. | √ |
| Observable. | √ |
| Traditional. | √ |
| Inherited across generations (three generations as a bare minimum). | √ |
| Delivered orally (this feature makes non-oral culture or activity included in the oral tradition) | Supervised by an institution (PKDP). |
| Containing cultural values and norms. | The words 'contribution and mutual cooperation' symbolize the culture of the Minang community described through 'many hands make light work' idiom. |
| Coming in versions | There are various schedules and utterances during <i>Mengetong</i> . |
| Co-owned by a certain community. | √ |
| Revitalizable and rated as a source of culture industry | X |

Furthermore, *Mengetong* has local wisdom values. This also reinforces the statement that *Mengetong* tradition is a form of oral tradition.

The Local Wisdom Value of *Mengetong*

The value of local wisdom is the value that has long been attached to the community and becomes the identity of a particular region and then passed down across generations that have been approved by the community. According to Alport's theory in [15], these values include:

1. Scientific value, if the purpose of the tradition is to find out the identity of objects and events around them, then the process of evaluating theory delivers knowledge.
2. Economic value, if the goal is to use objects or phenomena, which follow the efficiency to fulfill living needs.
3. Spiritual value, if humans consider the surrounding nature as an abstract form of life and the universe that is perceived as something sacred.
4. Aesthetic value, if it has a particular setting because the value is not only about the beauty that can enrich the mind, but also functions as a medium that refines character.

5. Social value, oriented to the relationship between humans and emphasizing the noble aspects of humanity.
6. Political value, centered on the power and influence contained in the life of society and politics.

In accordance with Alport's theory, the results show that *Mengetong* contains social value as the implementation of local wisdom value. Social value, oriented to the relationship between humans and emphasize the noble aspects of humanity. As mentioned earlier, one of the implications of this tradition is the spirit of mutual cooperation within the community. *Mengetong* tradition is not a tradition to show off the highest contribution and any other things indicated in it. This tradition emphasizes the reciprocity and mutual cooperation. The culture of mutual cooperation should be employed as a reference in folk's life by strengthening the local social institutions based on the value of unity, upholding morals or ethics, honesty, and mutual trust, all of which are mutual cooperation culture [19]. Furthermore, the implementation of mutual cooperation value in an oral tradition can be illustrated by the participants who have a sense of unity, mutual agreement, solidarity, mutual aid, teamwork attitude, and mutual support. In the end, *Mengetong* tradition is holding up the Minang Pariaman community identity [20] as a community that uphold friendship and kindness to each other's as portrayed in the tradition performance [21].

5. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, the conclusions are as follows: The diasporas continue to carry out their ancestral traditions, this is reflected in *Mengetong* at the Minang Pariaman wedding ceremony in Medan. The community organization has an important role in preserving the culture of a particular community. *Mengetong* is an oral tradition, the main idea strengthening the argument is that the oral tradition can be analyzed by applying performance theory and has local wisdom value. The author states that *Mengetong* is not a show-off phenomenon but a form of mutual cooperation as the characteristic of the Indonesians.

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