

Oral Traditions of *Taur-Taur* and Forms of Local Wisdom in the *Maragad* Activities of Simalungun Community

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ABSTRACT

Oral tradition is a part of culture that is spread and passed down traditionally from one generation to the next in a different version. The presentation is in the form of oral which can be accompanied by examples of actions and reminder aids. The Simalungun community have an oral tradition, one of them is *taur-taur*, which is an oral tradition in the form of poetry or song that is sung when the *manggar enau* is tapping. This oral tradition is associated with the legend of the growth of enau trees in Simalungun. With the growth of enau trees (*Arenga pinnata*), *maragad* activities has come, namely tapping enau sap. The Simalungun people called enau as *bagod*. Before taking sap from an enau tree, there is a tradition that carried out by tappers, namely humming in a sad and mournful tone (*taur-taur*). The community believes that this tradition must be carried out if you want the enau tree to put out a lot of water. In this series of activities, the various local wisdoms that has come and needed to be revitalized. To revitalize local traditions and wisdom, an appropriate research is carried out, namely the research of oral traditions and local wisdom. This research discusses about the form, function, and meaning of *taur-taur*, performance (components, stages, symbols), and local wisdom contained in the *maragad* tradition. The method used in analyzing the problem is a qualitative method with field research techniques. There are two theories applied, namely the theory of oral tradition and the theory of local wisdom. As stated by Finnegan, it is stated that *maragad* activities are passed down from generation to generation without

experiencing significant changes, traditions are conveyed with guidance, direction, and practice within the family sphere, this oral tradition is carried out in stages. Meanwhile, the forms of local wisdom that found in the *maragad* oral tradition include helping, mutual cooperation, discipline, gratitude, hard work, honesty, gender management, preservation and creativity, culture, positive thinking, and education.

Keywords: oral tradition, *taur-taur*, *maragad*, and local wisdom

1. PREFACE

The existence of the enau tree (*arenga pinnata*) has its own legend for the Simalungun community. Some people still believe that the enau tree that grows in Simalungun is closely related to the story of a woman that named *Boru Sabou* who transformed into an enau tree. Starting from *Boru Sabou's* searching for her brother who went abroad but did not meet, then the woman received a news that her brother had been taken hostage by the community because he was in debt. To pay off the debt, *Boru Sabou* called out to the community and sincerely turned herself into an enau tree as a debt payer. With the permission of the Almighty, *Boru Sabou* has turned into an enau tree and is beneficial to others. Since then, the community who want to take sap from enau trees will chant *taur-taur* first. The word of *taur-taur* means 'to call repeatedly'. Dasuha, et al. (2015:419) defines, "*Taur-taur* is a type of song of the

Simalungun tribe; the singing of men and women in the fields; the singing of men and women when they are in the river."

Enau trees as a type of tropical plants thrive in the province of North Sumatra. This tree grows wild or is planted at an altitude of 1.400 M above sea level. This plant grows a lot on river slopes or cliffs, as found in Simalungun Regency. In general, the people's plantation land is grown by enau trees. This tree is very easy to grow even though it takes a relatively long time to be tapped. The fruit that falls from the *mayang enau* will grow so that the enau tree will continue to multiply.

The Simalungun community consider that this enau tree as a source of sustenance or livelihood. Almost all components of the enau tree, such as enau fibers, sticks, seeds (sugar enau tree), and the enau tree trunks can be used as a source of money. This plant does not need extra care from the community because this tree will grow by itself even though it is overgrown with shrubs. Until now, the community has never given fertilizer to this plant. However, this plant still thrives. Such is the magnitude of the benefits of enau trees for society that the tradition handed down by their predecessors relating to the taking of sap, continues to be carried out by *paragad* 'sugar enau juicer' to this day.

In general, the sap obtained from enau trees will be processed into enau sugar or brown sugar by these enau sugar farmers. However, some of sap is made into wine by enau sap taps or by sap collectors or agents. This sap tapping activity is usually done in the morning and collecting the tapped results in the afternoon. The activity of tapping enau sugar is a tradition that must be preserved by the community, because this activity is inherited from their ancestors and is one of their livelihoods.

This *maragad* activity has stages of implementation. Each stage of the activity contains local wisdom values. Therefore, this *maragad* activity must be preserved because it can form a strong character.

2. DISCUSSION

Taur-taur activity is one of the activities of the oral tradition. So it is with the *maragad* activity 'tapping enau sap.' This can be proven by the characteristics of the oral tradition as stated by Sibarani (2014:125-126) that the characteristics of the oral tradition are as follows: (1) customs are in the form of oral, some orally, and not verbally, (2) has events or activities as the context, (3) can be observed and watched, (4) traditional, (5) is passed down from generation to generation, (6) the process of delivering it through oral or oral media ear to ear, (7) has a version or variation, (8) contains cultural values as local wisdom, (9) has the potential to be revitalized and appointed as a creative source for the cultural industry, and (10) belongs to certain communities.

Oral tradition is a noble past activity that related to the present situation and which needs to be passed down in the future to prepare for the future of future generations (Sibarani, 2014:3). While the contents contained in the oral tradition are values or norms that generally explain about the meaning, purpose, role, and function. The values or norms of the oral tradition that can be used to shape social life are called as local wisdom.

Local wisdom comes from the word of wisdom which means 'wisdom', and local means 'of the same place'. Local wisdom can be defined as local ideas and knowledge that are wise, full of wisdom, of good value, and implemented by community members (Sibarani, 2014: 114). Local wisdom is obtained from cultural traditions or oral traditions because local wisdom is the content of oral traditions or cultural traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation and are used to organize the social life of the community in all areas of life or to regulate the order of community life. There are 5 (five) cultural dimensions of local wisdom, namely local knowledge, local culture, local skills, local resources, and local social processes (Sibarani, 2015: 116).

The stages of implementing *maragad* activities 'tapping enau sap' realized that local wisdom as a cultural value of the Simalungun community. These cultural values are used to regulate various orders of life wisely and wisely to gain peace and prosperity. The stages start with building stairs (*pajongjong sigai*), making a place to clean the *manggar* enau trees (*manghodot*), hitting the *manggar* enau trees (*mambalbal*), cutting or beheading the *manggar* enau trees (*manampul*), and tapping the enau sap (*maragad*). The activity of the *taur-taur* oral tradition appears at one of these stages, namely at the stage of hitting *manggar* enau (*mambalbal*).

For each stage of this activity contained the values of local wisdom. When build up a stairs that made of long bamboo, an enau tapper must be assisted by another person. At this stage there are helping activities. When making a place to clean the *manggar* enau, the enau tappers have to work hard. Because, the place that will be used as a foothold or pedestal must be really strong because it will be used during the tapping process of palm sap (about 4 months). This requires hard work, prudence, and careful consideration. Furthermore, at the time of beating the *manggar* palm should be done regularly. This activity will be repeated at the same time. This embodies the wisdom of discipline. The next step is to cut the *manggar* palm with a sharp knife. In this activity, the existing local wisdom is prudence and patience. Because, if palm sap tappers are impatient then it will have an impact on the acquisition of palm sap. And the last stage is *maragad*, namely tapping palm sap. This activity must be carried out in a disciplined manner.

Based on this research, the oral tradition of *taur-taur* and the forms of local wisdom that contained in the series of activities to tap palm sap (*maragad*) are as follows:

A. Oral Tradition of *Taur-taur*

Taur-taur that found in the tapping of the palm sap, especially those found during the beating of *manggar* enau trees, are in the

form of a series of words that are hummed. This series of words is very varied because it is adapted to the economic conditions of palm sap tappers while it tapping. Someone will tell *Boru Sabou* about her economic condition, the figure of a woman who transforms into an enau tree. If the complaints from the palm tappers could stir *Boru Sabou's* heart, then she would cry. *Boru Sabou's* tears are believed to be sap water which flowing from *manggar* enau. In this context, the predecessors instilled character formation to the next generation. Everyone should know that plants are also living things that must be treated properly and civilized in order to get what they want from these plants.

This oral tradition of *taur-taur* has functions as an educational tool and a religious function. As an educational tool, this tradition will shape the next generation to have a polite and civilized attitude towards God's fellow creatures, even if they are in the form of plants. Because all of God's creatures are not in vain. As a religious function, society will realize that everything on this earth has a Creator. Therefore, we must ask the Creator in a serious and civilized manner. The local wisdom that can be seen from this *taur-taur* tradition is honesty. A palm sap tapper will convey his true condition (honestly) in the hope that all his requests will be granted.

This is a *taur-taur* text from one of the palm sap tappers:

Text 1:

*Ou botou Boru Sabou...
Ham na marholong atei
Tangis ma ham inang
Mangidah au na masombuh on
Holong ma uhurmu mangidah au
Pos do uhurhu banmu inang Boru Sabou*

Dear *Boru Sabou*...
You are very affectionate
Cry you
Look at my hard life
I'm sorry that you see me
I really hope for you *Boru Sabou*

Text 2:

*Hubarbar sada hulappah
Hu lopah ni si hala bolon
Dob ai lanjar marumbak hu bani tanggiang
Hu ajar ma ham patugahkon au na susah
Marunjahoni halani sitaronon
Halani ai sai marbah ma ham
Ase magou ganup na hurang*

I cut down a piece of wood
Close to the tree kincung
Then fell to the palm stem
To you (palm) I complain about my sadness
Very sad because in distress
Therefore, you flow (palm water)
To get rid of all sorrow'

*Ooo...tamuei na i alaman
Attigan pe ham ase sakkot hu paralingan
Ooo..botou sabou haholongan
Attigan do ham sakkotan ni hadingan*

'Ooh..drying (rice) in the yard
When are you going to the rice place
Oh..my beloved *sabou*
When are you going to the sap place

*Hubarbar hayu sindulpak
Dohor hubani tanggiang
Hupasabar pe ham hu paulak-ulak
Ase layur manggoki hadingan*

I cut down sindulpak wood
Close to the big root
I sabra repeatedly
So that it may be full of sap

Based on the text above, it can be seen that the entire text contains about the meaning of an expression of sadness over the economic condition of palm sap tappers. This situation was conveyed to *Boru Sabou* as a woman who transformed into an enau tree. Even though currently the Simalungun community have embraced religion, some still carry out this *taur-taur* tradition.

B. Oral Tradition of *Maragad*

The tapping of palm sap (*maragad*) was carried out by the Simalungun people to this

day, which was passed down from generation to generation. This activity can embody various local wisdoms, as follows:

1) Mutual Help

The *maragad* activity of 'tapping aren' is generally carried out individually by the community in Simalungun Regency. However, when a *paragad* 'palm tapper' is sick or there is a certain need that causes him to be unable to tap and take the stored palm sap from the tree either in the morning or in the evening, then that job will be replaced by a family member who has the same profession, or by a neighbor who have the same profession. This absolutely must be done, because palm sugar must be tapped 2 times a day. If the palm is not tapped, it will affect the acquisition of the next sap. The sap water that is already in the container above the palm tree can be damaged (stale) so that it can no longer be used. There is even a possibility that *mayang aren* as a source of sap water will not release sap water anymore. Someone who replaces this *maragad* activity does not get paid. This is done voluntarily because you want to help others. *Paragads* believe that one day they will need the help of others too.

2) Cooperation

Simalungun community still maintain the habit of working together (mutual cooperation) when completing work, both in an atmosphere of sorrow and joy. For *maragad* activities, especially when cooking palm sap into sugar, this collaborative activity is evident. When the sap water cooked in the cauldron starts to boil, it is a sign that the process of making brown sugar is begin. When it boils, someone help to stir the sugar so it doesn't overflow from the pan due to boiling. Meanwhile, one of the family members start to preparing the place for printing brown sugar. This printing process is done quickly so that the brown sugar does not cool and harden. This is a form of collaborative activity that must be

carried out in order to produce the brown sugar which has a good quality.

The atmosphere of cooperation be more visible when spinning the rope from the palm fiber base material. This activity must be carried out by at least 2 people who will work together to produce the quality of spun rope. In addition, in the manufacture of palm fruit-based on sugar palm fruit, the number of workers must be at least 3 people in order to achieve the planned targets according to the requests of the collectors.

The community is very aware that working together will foster a sense of togetherness, increase of social solidarity, strengthen brotherhood, make people aware of the public interest and social responsibility, create the harmony and a sense of unity in society.

3) Dicipline

Every *paragad* must be discipline to do their work. They should be discipline in a processing time. In generally, they will go to palm tree which was didered around 06.30 o'clock until 07.30 o'clock in every morning. Likewise in the afternoon, they should go to take palm sap from a tree trunk around 16.30 o'clock until 17.30 o'clock. There is not a single day of time that they should ignore. Because, if it is done it will have an impact on the continuity of obtaining palm sap. Usually, palm sap that taken by the tapper in the afternoon and also in the morning, depends on the time that the sap is begin to take the palm. A fruit of *manggar* sugar can be tap for the 3 to 4 months.

4) Gratitude

Every *paragad* and their families in generally grateful for all the blessings that has given by Allah to them. A little or a lot of the results obtained, they are still grateful. Because, they realize that all of that has been arranged by the Creator. This *maragad* tradition is an activity that passed down by its predecessors to the next generation. As a proof of their gratitude,

they usually give the palm sugar free of charge to the neighbors who need it.

5) Hard Work

Paragads are people who always hard work. Their enthusiasm will not subside even when they are working, they are facing the rain and hot weather. In addition, they realize that the more palm *manggar* tapped, the more likely they are to get income. Hard work is a work that is supported by a strong mentality. Hard work is also associated with responsibility for the work that he is doing. The behavior of hard work and responsibility in everyday life, independence and responsibility are very important to be owned by humans. This is important because even though humans are social beings and are always in contact with other humans, they are must be responsible for their life and themselves.

6) Honesty

Honesty is the source of religious values. A culture of honesty is a sincere attitude in carrying out something that is mandated, even it in the form of assets or responsibilities. Being honest and trustworthy is something that is very important in all aspects of life, such as in household life, company life, commerce, bureaucracy and social life, including in the profession as *paragad*. For example, if a *paragad* adds the water to the tapped of palm sap, no one will know about it. However, they do not do this because they are aware that their actions are not good and can harm others. This action is very likely to be carried out in making palm wine.

7) Gender Management

In carrying out the *maragad* tradition in Nagori Parbutaran, gender management was found. Since the beginning of the tradition until now, women have never taken sap from palm trees. This work is very extreme work that requires a strong physique to climb a very high palm tree. Women has a role to help, especially in the activities of making palm sugar. When making palm

sugar, there is harmonious cooperation in the family. It starts with a fire in the palm sugar cooking stove is a woman's duty and responsibility.

8) Preservation and Cultural Creativity

Until now, *maragad* activities are still being carried out. There is even an effort to replant palm trees on the remaining land. The palm tappers do not want to lose their livelihood for the future. Indeed, their next generation is trying to go from school to university in hope that they will not become a *paragads* like them. If there are no family members who continue this *maragad* tradition, then the palm trees will be rented out to other people. Palm tree planting is an effort to preserve nature and the environment. In the *maragad* tradition, creativity is needed from people who rely on palm trees as their livelihood.

9) Positif Thinking

Every *paragad* demanded to always positif thinking. In the mind it remains instilled that working optimally will get the maximum results as well. Otherwise, if a job is not done seriously, the results will never satisfy. There is a belief that some of *paragad* will get help from *Boru Sabou*, the figure of a woman who transforms into an enau tree, when complaints are conveyed to her, this is a form of positive thoughts. The enau tree is also a living creature created by God that needs to be treated kindly. Every time you instill goodness, you will reap goodness.

10) Education

The important things that are mandated through this *maragad* activity are elements of education. Expertise in *maragad* activities only can be obtained from studying. Someone will be able to climb an enau tree when they know how to position the main toe in the hole in the bamboo ladder. This is because only the main toe is used as a support for heavy loads when it going up and down from the palm tree. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the balance of the body so that it does not sway

and fall from the top of the palm tree. So it is in the process of making palm sugar, the stages must be carried out properly so that the results are satisfactory. The *raru* mixture that used to turn the palm sap into palm wine must also be suitable. If the amount of *raru* that is put into the sap is not appropriate, then the result will taste bitter or sour.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on this field research, it can be explained that the activities of *taur-taur* and *maragad* are two inseparable oral traditions. This is because the *taur-taur* activity will occur when the *mayang aren* is beaten (*mambalbal*). The two activities (*taur-taur* and *maragad*) are used to fulfill the characteristics of an oral tradition because these activities are in the form of oral, in the form of activities, it can be observed and watched, traditional, passed down from generation to generation, conveyed orally, it contained the cultural values as local wisdom, it has the potential to be revitalized and was appointed as a local creative.

As stated by Sibarani (2014: 114) that local wisdom is the original wisdom or knowledge of a society that comes from the noble values of cultural traditions to regulate the order of people's lives, it can be described that various local wisdoms found in *taur-taur* and *maragad* activities in Simalungun, namely: mutual help, cooperation, discipline, gratitude, hard work, honesty, gender management, preservation of cultural creativity, positive thinking, and education.

4. CLOSING

Oral tradition for some people is called folklore. This is due to the similarity of the object of study, namely studying some cultures. These two fields of knowledge are considered complementary. When talking about oral tradition it will allude to folklore, and otherwise. This oral tradition is an asset as well as a cultural strength for the community. The oral tradition still survives despite advances of science and technology.

Because, oral tradition does not only contain stories, myths, legends, or fairy tales. Oral tradition contains various things about life and the lives of the people who own that tradition.

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