

# "Dalian Natolu": Local Democracy of the Mandailing Batak Community

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## ABSTRACT

Culture is often interpreted as an obstacle to the progress of democracy in parts of Indonesia, even though the stigma occurs due to the inability to live in harmony between local wisdom and government democracy. It is the influence of globalization that has an impact on local wisdom where each generation experiences a decrease in the value and understanding of its own regional culture. It is also possible that the democracy desired by the government is reversed with the running of the local wisdom desired by the Mandailing people. The Mandailing people use their local wisdom as a tool of democracy which is called "Dalian Natolu". The purpose of this study was to determine the role of the "Dalian Natolu" system in the democratic process of the Mandailing people. This research was conducted in Kampung Lama, Langgapayung, South Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra. The method that researchers use in this research is a descriptive qualitative method with a purposive sampling technique. The research subjects were the customary chief of Mandailing (Raja) and the prime minister (Rakkaya). The data collection techniques used were observation and interviews. The data analysis technique used is to reduce data, present data, draw conclusions, and verify data. The results show that the role of local wisdom "Dalian Natolu" in the democratic process in the Mandailing community plays a role in filling empty spaces in democratic development such as reducing the occurrence of conflicts as a result of political contestation, this can be seen in the changes in the distribution of economic resources and achieving the goal of democracy, namely the welfare of the people.

**Keywords:** *Dalian Natolu, Mandailing Society, Democracy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is perhaps one of the most subtle of the concepts that hinder the category of transparency and analytic consistency. To some extent, culture is a marker of difference, replenishing an ensemble of collective routines. For others, this culture is only the effect of differentiation, the boundaries of which are unreasonably drawn from dualisms such as self-others, us-them, here-there, and West-Oriental[1].

An Adult now, Often culture is interpreted as an obstacle for certain groups because it is considered to eliminate a sense of comfort, for example, democracy. Perhaps the biggest problem humans face these days is the inability to live in harmony together. Using local wisdom becomes a separate ability for

people who live in urban areas and must be able to adapt old local wisdom to the conditions they live in now [2].

By the mandate of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia fourth Alenia, it is formulated that "society is led by wisdom in deliberation/representation" which illustrates how important democracy is to the state and its people to achieve common prosperity. However, mature today the democracy that the government wants is reversed with the passage of local wisdom desired by the Mandailing people. the Mandailing community uses its local wisdom as a democratic tool to elect their respective regional leaders. The ongoing democratic style within the Mandailing community has changed the direction of the environment that the government hopes for.

Democracy that developed in South Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra, for example, no longer follows election elements as mandated in the Law that the principle of election must have the principle of LUBER JURDIL (direct, general, free, confidential, honest and fair). For the Mandailing community, Dalian Natolu is a principle inherent in the cultural customs of the Batak people in general, including the Mandailing community in South Labuhanbatu. Dalian Natolu can be said to be a kinship system that is built based on very strong blood ties. Dalian Natolu's kinship system is not only used to fill customary spaces, in fact, this kinship system can penetrate in terms of economic distribution, distribution of political positions and can also maneuver in political contestation.

It's not fair if we confront it directly between Dalian Natolu's kinship with the democratic system which will ultimately undermine the main objective of the consolidation of democracy. It is possible, by using this kinship system, the consolidation of democracy in the Mandailing community is more acceptable amid the unstable foundation of democracy development in Indonesia. On the other hand, arguments may arise that the system of democracy which has been glorified so far is good in the administration of regional government, it is destroying the cultural system that has long been cared for by the Mandailing Batak people. To borrow a term used by Haris[3] that the process of consolidating democracy in Indonesia presents political battles involving many parties, both from local political elites who carry carriages of local wisdom as political movements as well as political elites who want to take advantage of existing political spaces.

This is what is interesting for us to examine with a positive perspective that the consolidation of democracy must provide its own spaces for the existence of customs or local wisdom which previously developed. With high hopes that the

indigenous system of Dalian Natolu, the local democracy of the Mandailing community, will be able to fill the empty spaces in the development of Indonesia's democratic.

The purpose of this study is expected to determine the role of the "Dalian Natolu" system in the democratic process of the Mandailing people. The benefits of this research are lifting and preserving the cultural values of the Mandailing Batak community. Then as an effort to encourage students to contribute more in applying the knowledge they have.

## **2. METHOD**

The qualitative research was conducted in Kampung Lama Langgapayung, South Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra from March to July 2020. Data collection techniques used observation and interviews. Interviews were conducted with the Chief of Customs (Raja) and the Prime Minister (Rakkaya) of Mandailing Kampung Lama Langgapayung. They are Fatah Yasin Harahap and Andak Wahid Siregar as Raja and Rakkaya. Observations were made during the last 2019 election activities and other community events where the vital role they expressed seemed to be a separate mandate for the community. The data validity test used data triangulation and method triangulation. The technique of taking research subjects with a purposive sampling amounted to two people as key informants and other literacy materials. And data analysis techniques with a step-by-step procedure,

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***3.1. The history of Dalian Natolu***

In the Mandailing Batak culture, the concept of attachment and trust is closely related to the concept of Dalian Natolu. The beliefs of the Mandailing people were not as strong as the beliefs of the Toba Batak, which were all related to mysticism.

Many myths have existed since the existence of the Batak community or group, starting from their belief in Mula Jadi Nabolon which they believe to guide their daily lives. This belief was first believed and believed by the Toba Batak people to worship. In this understanding, if we look at it from a traditional perspective, then this concept becomes a social heritage tradition passed down by the Toba Batak people.

The concept of *dalian natolu* developed in the Toba Batak community with the Mandailing community is slightly different. If we refer based on the principles of belief and belief. The Mandailing community always prioritizes each culture and tradition so that it is no different and by the Qur'an and Hadith because the majority of the Mandailing people since the beginning of the Batak community, have embraced the teachings of the Islamic religion.

*Dalian Natolu* the Mandailing community initially digest that there are three important points from birth to death, such as life, blood, and flesh. These three important elements, if described, have the meaning of the unity of the human body created by the creator for his servant [4]

Of the three elements that have been embedded in humans, the Mandailing community has three main foundations in life and must be represented in social life. According to Mr. Andak Wahid Siregar (23/03/2020 / 08:00 WIB) that the presence of *Dalian Natolu* in the life of the Mandailing indigenous people has existed since the emergence of a village/region, and cannot be separated even with the continuous reforms that the government has launched. This is because for them *Dalian Natolu* has been present among them long before the reform process that the government has recently offered to its citizens and is obliged to be preserved for generations to come.

### **3.2. Culture and Tradition in the Democratic Process**

The attachment of the Indonesian people to the culture and traditions that they carry out until now has emerged earlier than the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Traditional communities have their way of determining or electing regional heads / tribal heads. The democratic process that takes place in their midst is called the plural of indigenous peoples.

The government uses democracy as a forum for people who want to elect their leaders both on the scale of village head elections to head of state elections. The purpose of this democracy is to lead to the realization of good governance as aspired in the mandate of the constitutional law of the Indonesian state.

The role that the government gives in accommodating its citizens in a democracy is sometimes in contact with customary values, so what happens in an area results in vertical and horizontal conflicts which sometimes can still be reconciled but sometimes cannot be dammed and what happens is violence that cannot be controlled. Such incidents should be used as evaluation material for the government so as not to forget the traditional values that have long been present amid in these communities. The government must have a tug-of-war nature and represent it to allow customary values to play its role but still be controlled by a government agency so as not to deviate from the constitution of the Indonesian state.

Therefore, the government issued a regulatory basis which is called democratically to suppress conflicts that occur amid during in society, be it vertical, horizontal, closed, or open conflicts. With this regulatory foundation, it is hoped that it will suppress acts of violence that will occur as a result of contacting traditional culture with democracy.

The basic principle of a democracy is the participation of the people.

Participation that does not abandon the essence of human rights that emphasizes solidarity, freedom, and security. If we refer to Bertrand Russell's statement which states that the style of democracy applied in Indonesia cannot be the same as a liberal democracy. This is because the nature of the Indonesian people upholds the principles of togetherness and cooperation which in this case is the personality of the Indonesian nation in general.

Therefore, communal society cannot be separated from their local wisdom, because with that they are separated from the state. Empowerment of Local Wisdom, as stated above, democracy based on local wisdom is very necessary for a democratic system. The development of good governance from the bottom (bottom-up) is carried out by empowering the local wisdom pearls of wisdom of the community. Democracy starts from the smallest things, only society itself can formulate the problems closest to that society. Community welfare starts from the communal society which then increases to the welfare of the state in general.

Values and norms become the foundation for the structure of local communities to uphold and be proud of their region. This pride must be minimized because otherwise, ethnocracy will be prone. The ethnocracy in question is the reversal of democracy where the government structure is the main principle in the administration of government itself [5].

Referring to all of the above problems, the communal community or the Mandailing community, namely still upholding the king's orders, which they believe to be the democratic order owned by the tribe without any intervention from the government. Making democracy as a forum for carrying out the election process, even though in its implementation they still make their tribes lead in the areas they live in, all are inseparable from

distrust with existing political actors and more selfish than the interests of community groups who there is.

Departing from the problems between the culture of Dalian Natolu and the government bureaucracy, local wisdom that is held can take a position in creating good governance. local wisdom in a cultural contestable to fill empty spaces in democratic development, such as reducing conflicts that occur as a result of political contestation, distributing economic resources, and achieving the goals of democracy, namely the welfare of the people.

### ***3.3. Mandailing Community Democratic System***

The cultural tradition of dalian natolu (three stoves) is a social system used by the Mandailing people. Mora, Kahanggi, and Anak Boru are the three important pillars that are trusted by the community and are appointed as traditional leaders. Not only the three pillars above are called traditional leaders, but there are also scholars, scholars, parents (*hatobangon*) and government officials (*naipatobang*) who are included in traditional leaders as well. The establishment of a village known as *sibuka huta* which is called *harajaon* or king, and in that village there is also what is known as the head of the ripe or the head of the hamlet/environment as we usually know today. All of the above are played by people who have a major role in the community, therefore those who hold these positions are known as the Mandailing indigenous people. In the Mandailing community, these three important pillars will participate in every activity that occurs in the village environment, be it the process of birth, marriage, death, even to local politics, such as the election of regional heads and village heads [4].

Mora, Kahanggi, and Anak Boru play their respective roles in their power which is bound by customary institutions

that guarantee any problems that occur both groups and individuals.

In line with the above understanding, according to Mr. Fatah Yasin Harahap (21/03/2020 / at 09:29 WIB) regarding Dalian Natolu is the basis of life for the people of both Batak Toba and Mandailing which governs the community in relating and behaving towards every element of the Mandailing community wherever they are. Dalian Natolu is also considered a stove that is three or a stove made of three stones arranged symmetrically to support the cauldron while cooking. Dalian Natolu who has an important role in forming a village has 3 descendants, namely the King (Mora), the son of Boru, and the Kahanggi. The meaning of the King (Mora) is that which has an absolute throne over the establishment of an organization called a village or what is also called Founders, the Boru child here is the daughter of a king who is married to another man so he is called the word Anak Boru,

When viewed from the social value of implementation and customary law in the living community or the custom, the daily Mandailing ceremony is carried out based on a social structure and system called *markoummarsisolkot* (family in a group), or often referred to as dalian natolu. Dalian natolu means three pillars, which means that the Mandailing people believe in a social system that is joined together in a single structure consisting of Kahanggi, Mora, and Boru [6].

The principle of helping to help is inherent in every Mandailing community, especially those in North Sumatra, which makes it culture and tradition.[7]. In line with that, according to Mr. Andak Wahid Siregar (23/03/2020 / 08:00 WIB) the culture and traditions that developed among the Mandailing people, namely helping each other, are called *margialapari/marsialapan* which aims to simplify and ease the burden of doing anything. The traditions that exist in the Mandailing community are very diverse,

starting from a wedding tradition called *Martahi*. The tradition of death is called STMK (Society of Help Help Death). And the birth tradition is called the Harajaon tradition or giving a name or prayer.

The role of Mora, Kahanggi, Anak Boru laying on the purpose and purpose in an implementation/activity is very necessary, because without these three elements the process of implementing an event cannot take place, so one can reprimand one another, increase brotherhood and can strengthen communication between the village community and indigenous culture [8] and also the attachment to equal dignity and rights is a foundation of freedom, justice, and peace [9].

Regardless of the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance that has existed and is taking place in the Mandailing community, it refers to the democratic attitude they adhere to. According to the Mandailing community, especially those in the Kampung Lama of Langgapayung South Labuhanbatu, the democratic process in Indonesia has not fully formed the ideal concept of democracy as mandated by law. Democracy, which is used as a forum to bridge a representation between the people and their prospective leaders, is felt to have no responsibility during the democratic process, this has an impact on a crisis of public confidence in the election process held by the government. This not only has an impact on reducing citizens' interest in the election process but also creates a bad mindset for the community towards other government institutions, for example, political and legal institutions. Even though democracy is formed based on the constitution of the Indonesian state [5].

In line with the above statement, such as the opinion of Mr. Yasin (21/03/2020 / at 09:29 a.m.) Dalian Natolu is not obliged in the laws and regulations or an absolute requirement for the candidate, but Dalian Natolu has more

followers so that it can mobilize voters to elect the candidate and be able to win over the candidate pairs. The role of the Natolu diversion is still very strong in determining the regional leader because the selling value of the Natolu diversion is still very influential. In the same way that citizens are expected to comply with the subsequent decisions of the competition process, the outcome remains dependent on their collective preferences as expressed through fair and ordinary or open elections (Schmitter & Karl, nd).

One of the roles given by culture in the democratic process makes the leader not only from the political elite but also from rural, urban, and urban people who have the spirit of building the country. In the future, it is the responsibility of us the next generation to create political glory, both locally and nationally, to build state governance in democracy as it should be [5]. Likewise with the basic principles of democracy, namely freedom, prosperity, solidarity and equality to encourage what Soekarno thought about the right to democracy, that every society that wants to be selfish or individual will be eliminated because it is not in line with the principles of kinship and cooperation [11].

In line with the above statement that so far we have assumed that the democracy created by the government during the reformation period to win the hearts of its people in the general election process, it turns out that not all residents hold this view, for example, the Mandailing community in Kampung Lama Langgapayung who has the view that The touch of local democracy or what we call Dalian Natolu is the right fit in the process of determining regional heads and village heads around them, because basically, democracy is not the right thing to be placed anywhere. Because democracy will also be influenced by the history of the various regions in Indonesia. the local touch that has become ingrained in the people of the society is an opportunity for democracy to fail. because the majority of

local people would prefer to be loyal to their culture or the system prevailing in the society.

According to Mr. Andak Wahid Siregar (23/03/2020 / 08:00 WIB), Dalian Natolu's role in the implementation of democracy that takes place in the Mandailing community is to monitor, namely to minimize riots or commotion during the democratic election process, and to create safe, peaceful and conducive elections by the procedures set out in the law.

Batak Mandailing has a culture that is used as a system in people's lives. that is, a very democratic system, namely Dalian Natolu. Without Dalian Natolu, the life of the Batak people would not have the close kinship they have today. Dalian Natolu is also fundamentalism of life which is actually in harmony with the life of the nation and state which is regulated by Pancasila as the basis of the State.

The social system of the Batak people called Dalian Natolu is not inferior to the value of the popular system today, namely democracy. Because Dalian Natolu is represented by the nature and attitude of life of the Mandailing people in society. The placement of a position in a Mandailing person is certain from the time he was born to his death in three important pillars in the view of the Mandailing tribe, namely the Dalian Natolu.

For example, as stated by Mr. Fatah Yasin (21/03/2020/0929 WIB):

“The Mandailing-style democratic system has experienced a shift in understanding from the past to the present. This shift is influenced by the increasing influence of globalization which continues to erode the understanding of the Mandailing community about the role of local wisdom they have. In the past, the parents always put forward local wisdom which they believed to be the power holder from generation to generation. Today, local wisdom is still being

encouraged in the election of rulers in that place, it's just that there has been a shift that was previously chosen absolutely without going through an election that involved many citizens, but now it has followed the concept of democracy even though the result remains the same, namely local wisdom that takes played many roles in its final decision. "

The democratic system of the Mandailing people as mentioned by Mr. Andak Wahid Siregar (23/03/2020 / 08:00 WIB) namely Dalian Natolu became the foremost tool of democracy that was owned by the Mandailing community long before government democracy appeared, even to this day, the tool of democracy in the style of the Mandailing community is still involved in the general election process initiated by the government and has more points in the hearts of the Mandailing people until now. The level of trust of the Mandailing people in the concept of democracy carried out by the government, namely only using democracy that is exalted by the government as a forum or place to carry out the election process, but the Mandailing people still believe in their previous democracy, namely the natolu diversion which is more certain or hereditary.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Mandailing community has a *holong* and *domu* life philosophy, namely love and affection between members of the community. Based on their love and trust in the king's orders, they believe in the tribal's democratic order without any intervention from the government. One of the roles given by culture in the democratic process makes the leader not only from the political elite but also from rural, rural and urban people who have the spirit of building the country. Dalian Natolu became the foremost tool of democracy that was owned by the Mandailing people long before

government democracy appeared, even today the tools of democracy in the style of the Mandailing community are still involved in the general election process initiated by the government and have more points in the hearts of the Mandailing community until now. Therefore, Dalian Natolu can solve local problems in a high complexity plurality such as what happened among the Mandailing people themselves, whose clans are so many, whose family ties are determined by blood or genealogical relations. With Dalian Natolu in a cultural contestable to fill empty spaces in democratic development, such as reducing conflicts that occur as a result of political contestation, distributing economic resources, and achieving the goals of democracy, namely the welfare of the people.

The government's lack of understanding of the cultural values that develop in their communities that want to foster family values rather than democracy that has been glorified so far has become a material for the government's reflection, and it's good for the government to provide its own space for people who want to juxtapose democracy with local wisdom / local democracy. they have to go well with each other.

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