

**THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE CULTURE AMONG
THE BANGGAI ETHNIC GROUP IN BANGGAI ISLANDS REGENCY**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the forms and processes of transformation in the stages and values of traditional wedding ceremonies among the Banggai ethnic group in Banggai Kepulauan Regency. A qualitative approach was employed using field research methods, including direct observation, in-depth interviews with six key informants, and literature review. The findings reveal that traditional Banggai weddings in the past represented a complex socio-cultural system rich in symbolic meaning. Rituals such as Popitoi, Mansadaiyan, Mansaiyan, and Molibakon were conducted with deep respect for customary norms, spirituality, and kinship. Each stage served not only as a formal ceremony but also as a medium for transmitting values, affirming cultural identity, and reinforcing social bonds between extended families. These traditions were carried out with strict etiquette and symbolic depth—from the use of intermediaries, the wrapping of dowry items in traditional sarongs, to the procession of escorting the bride as a symbolic and spiritual union between two families. In the context of Banggai customs, marriage is not merely the union of two individuals but also the affirmation of social structure, customary norms, and the continuity of lineage through kinship ties. However, over time, significant cultural transformations have occurred in the practice of traditional Banggai weddings. Arranged marriages are increasingly replaced by individual choice; traditional symbols such as salapa and customary dowries are now substituted with decorated boxes and cash; and ritual practices such as zikr and the groom's overnight stay have been abandoned for the sake of efficiency. These changes are driven by cultural diffusion, acculturation with religious values, and a modern lifestyle that emphasizes individualism and practicality. Nevertheless, core values—such as religiosity, social solidarity, symbolic aesthetics, customary legal norms, and educational functions—are still preserved in more flexible forms. This shift reflects a selective cultural adaptation process that negotiates between preserving tradition and responding to contemporary realities. Thus, traditional Banggai weddings persist as dynamic cultural expressions, continuously evolving in their forms, meanings, and modes of practice.

Keywords: *Traditional wedding, Banggai ethnic group, cultural change, customary values, social transformation*

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1. Background

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural and traditional diversity, reflected in various aspects of community life, including its marriage system. Marriage creates a family with its own uniqueness, especially when it involves couples from different ethnicities, cultures, or religions. In Indonesia—a country with numerous ethnic groups and cultures—marriage is governed by various customs and traditions that differ from region to region.

According to customary law, marriage is a significant event in the life of indigenous communities because it involves not only the bride and groom but also their parents, siblings, and extended families (Fau, E. A. F., 2000; Makin et al., 2024). In customary law, marriage is not only important to the living but also requires the blessing and full recognition from the ancestral spirits of both families. Customary marriage law refers to traditional legal rules that govern various aspects of marriage, such as the process of proposing, wedding ceremonies, and divorce in Indonesia. These rules vary across regions due to differences in social characteristics, customs, religions, and beliefs (Nurtahjo, 2012). In customary marriage, there are strong values and norms that regulate individual behavior within the community.

One community in Indonesia with a rich and unique marriage tradition is the people of Banggai Islands Regency. This regency in Central Sulawesi still practices ancestral traditions that have formed shared customs. When such customs are continuously maintained, they solidify into customary law that becomes a tradition in society. Examples include the *Basalo* confirmation tradition, the *Bapidok* tradition (planting sweet potatoes in gardens), and the *Osoan* (marriage) tradition, all of which have been preserved through generations.

The population of Banggai Islands Regency is predominantly of the Banggai ethnic group, and the local people have specific procedures related to the traditional *Mian Banggai* marriage. Each ethnic group has its own unique customs and procedures, which are still upheld with high respect. These differences are essential elements symbolizing the identity of each ethnic group. The regency consists of 12 districts, each with a similar yet distinct marriage tradition. This means that although the traditional process is generally the same, each district has its own unique characteristics in how it is practiced.

The *Osoan* tradition is a series of marriage customs of the Banggai ethnic group that begins with *Popitoi* (initial notice). In earlier times, the groom's family (*Malane*) would send a family representative to meet the bride's family (*Boine*) with a *salapa* (a container for betel nut). The person chosen as the representative would be someone of good character and high social standing. This person would gather information about the woman to be proposed to, and inquire whether she and her family were willing to accept the groom's proposal. If accepted, the groom's family would be allowed to proceed with *Mansadaian* (formal proposal), held during the day.

During *Mansadaian*, it was customary for parents to consider and advise their son on his choice of a bride. After confirming the desired bride, the groom's family would bring gifts such as clothing, cosmetics, sandals, and other items for the bride. The groom's party would walk to the bride's house while chanting *dzikir* or playing tambourines. The gifts were wrapped in sarongs and carried by women known to have good lineage and fortune; unmarried or childless women were not allowed to carry the offerings. These gift-bearers were covered with sarongs and shaded by others until they reached the bride's house. Alongside traditional cakes and other food, betel nut was also prepared for the negotiations during the *Mansadaian* stage.

During this stage, the bride (*Boine*) would be asked whether she accepted the proposal. Afterward, both families would engage in a poetic exchange as part of negotiating the wedding costs or *akad*. This tradition could last a whole night or longer,

depending on how quickly both sides reached an agreement. The bride's family would provide a list of needs and a cost estimate.

In the past, marriage costs were not monetary but consisted of goods like rice, livestock, firewood, and other essentials. If the bride had an older unmarried sister, the groom's family had to provide *Lolumpa* (a symbolic gift to "jump over" the older sister), usually in the form of goods. After agreeing on the bride price, both families would set a date for the delivery of the dowry in a tradition called *Mansaiyan*. This consisted of two parts: gifts for the bride's parents and materials for the wedding ceremony. In earlier times, during *Mansaiyan*, the groom's family brought all necessary items, and the groom would stay overnight at the bride's home with the items.

The groom, accompanied by his family, would stay overnight to guard the dowry, a tradition called *Mongkoloi Buat* (guarding the wealth), indicating that the main dowry had been received. At this stage, both families would discuss the appropriate date for the wedding ceremony. The date was determined by traditional elders and finalized by the bride's family. Once the date was set, preparations began at the bride's house. In some districts of Banggai Islands, there is a tradition called *Pakamela* night, which begins with *Barzanji*, while other districts do not follow this. The night before the wedding is called *Bajaga*, followed by the wedding ceremony and reception the next day. The final stage is *Balibakon*, when the bride moves into the groom's home.

The Banggai traditional wedding is known for its distinctive stages, from the proposal (*Poponco*), determination of dowry (*Hantaran*), to the symbolic, meaningful ceremonies. Values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect for elders, and the strengthening of social bonds are central to this custom. This wedding tradition is not merely ceremonial—it reflects identity, social structure, and cultural heritage passed down through generations via both oral transmission and lived practice. Cultural transmission functions as a mechanism for passing on cultural information, enabling cultural change and adaptation. It occurs vertically (from parents to children), horizontally (among peers), and obliquely (from adults to younger generations).

However, with the passage of time, these traditions have begun to change. Based on initial findings from the 12 districts, the processes are largely similar. However, there have been noticeable changes in the way traditional Banggai weddings are conducted today. Some communities still practice all the stages, while others omit certain parts. Whether consciously or not, traditional wedding practices have gradually changed, and the ceremonies no longer strictly adhere to customary law but are adapted to modern times and the couple's economic capacity. The items used in traditional weddings have also changed; many are no longer the same as those used in the past. Social status greatly influences weddings today—people often judge based on societal hierarchy. For instance, the higher the social status of a bride (*Boine*), the higher the *Pasai* (bride price) that is typically demanded.

2. Research Method

This study employs a field research approach, which involves directly engaging with the field to collect empirical data from the community, particularly the indigenous Banggai ethnic group. Field research was chosen because the primary goal of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural transformation within the Banggai traditional wedding procession—insights that can only be obtained through direct observation, interviews with key informants, and documentation of ongoing cultural practices.

The research is planned to be conducted in Banggai Islands Regency, located in the Central Sulawesi Province, with the fieldwork scheduled from April to July 2025. According to Sugiyono (2013), respondent selection is based on specific considerations

aligned with the research objectives, commonly known as purposive sampling. The sample will consist of approximately six key informants.

In this study, the researcher uses two main methods: field research through observation and interviews, and literature study to address all issues related to the research subject. Referring to Miles and Huberman (2014), data analysis in qualitative research is conducted interactively and continuously until the data becomes saturated. The analytical process involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification.

3. Research Finding and Discussion

Forms of Traditional Marriage in the Banggai Ethnic Group

According to Van Gennep, the entire series of traditional wedding ceremonies can be understood as *rites de passage*—a transitional ritual that marks the change in an individual's social status from being single to becoming part of a new family. Traditional marriage is not only a bond between two individuals but also a social tie that connects families and communities with the primary aim of preserving lineage and ensuring the continuity of clans or ethnic groups (Yulia, 2016). The traditional marriage process is a series of ceremonies rich in cultural values and symbolism passed down through generations. This form of marriage is viewed not just as a union between two individuals, but as the merging of two extended families, reinforcing social and kinship networks within the community.

Each stage of this marriage process is carried out with proper decorum and strict adherence to customary rules—from the early phases of courtship and engagement, discussions on dowry, to the wedding ceremony itself and the ritual of welcoming the bride into the groom's family. These stages are not merely formal rituals but serve as a means of expressing respect for ancestors, maintaining social harmony, and affirming cultural identity. Although they may seem superstitious, many Indonesians still believe in and widely practice these customs. According to Hazairin, there are three sets of magical acts in marriage aimed at ensuring calmness (*koelte*), happiness (*welvaart*), and fertility (*vruchtbaarheid*), all of which are embodied in the wedding ceremony (Wulansari, 2018).

The traditional wedding process of the Banggai people consists of a series of stages filled with symbolic meaning and cultural values passed down across generations. The following are excerpts from interviews with informants about the symbolic meanings and values in the traditional marriage of the Banggai people. The findings show that, in the past, traditional Banggai weddings were sacred, binding, and had to be carried out sequentially by both families. This tradition is known as *Osoan*, beginning with a declaration of intent to propose, followed by the delivery of the bride to the groom's house. Each stage carries its own symbols, rules, and designated roles based on strong customary values. The traditional Banggai wedding process in earlier times consisted of four main stages, each rich in familial and symbolic meaning:

1. *Popitoi*

Popitoi is the initial matchmaking phase, where the parents of the prospective groom choose a bride from close relatives or extended family circles. Below is an excerpt from an informant's interview about the *Popitoi* stage:

“In the past, before the proposal, there would be *Popitoi*, usually held three days to a week beforehand. Only after *Popitoi* would the actual proposal (*Mansadaiyan*) take place. Once the proposal was accepted, the bride's family would receive a token called *salapa* or betel nut container. During *Popitoi*, no engagement items were brought yet—those would follow if *Popitoi* was accepted. Then, they would arrange

the dowry in a stage called *Mansaiyan*, which was separate from the main dowry.”
— *Raqib Alisi, 2025*

The phase before the proposal (*Baminang*) serves as an initial “assessment” by the groom’s family to determine the status and readiness of the bride’s family. Typically conducted a few days before the official engagement (about three days to a week prior), a positive outcome leads to *Popitoi*—a formal visit to request a sign of approval (often symbolized by the gift of *salapa* or betel nut container). This process is not carried out by the groom himself but through a carefully chosen intermediary, selected for their good conduct and respected background. This intermediary visits the bride’s family carrying the *salapa*, symbolizing the beginning of the marriage proposal.

2. *Mansadaiyan*

The second stage is *Mansadaiyan*, or the official proposal. In earlier times, this proposal phase in the Banggai wedding tradition was carried out with sacredness and well-structured etiquette. It was typically held during the daytime—not without reason, but because daylight symbolized openness, honesty, and transparency between the two families. The bright setting was believed to reflect sincere intentions and the hope that the meeting would lead to goodness and clarity for the couple's future. Below is an image of engagement gifts wrapped in traditional sarongs.



Figure 1. Engagement Offerings Wrapped in a Traditional Sarong during a Banggai Indigenous Wedding Ceremony

In its implementation, the engagement items—such as food, fabric, or other customary symbols—are wrapped in traditional sarongs as part of the symbolic representation of cultural values. The sarong serves not only as a practical wrapper but also symbolizes respect and propriety. The motifs and wrapping techniques are carefully considered, as they reflect the image and dignity of the groom’s family. This procession is not merely the handover of items, but acts as a medium through which the groom’s family expresses their goodwill to the bride’s family in both customary and symbolic ways. Furthermore, if the bride-to-be comes from a different village, the groom’s family will stay overnight at a transit house before continuing their journey on foot while chanting *dzikir* (Islamic devotional recitations) until they arrive at the bride’s home.

3. *Mansaiyan*

The third stage in the Banggai traditional wedding series is called *Mansaiyan*, which refers to the delivery and arrangement of the marriage property (dowry), marking the

mutual agreement of both parties to proceed with the marriage. In the traditional context, this marriage property is not seen merely as a bridal gift, but as a symbol of the groom's responsibility and appreciation toward the bride and her family. This can be seen in the following quote:

"The main dowry consisted of ten coconut stems given to the bride, and other parts for the parents (tombukand dengit) in the form of one set of clothes for the mother and father. Nowadays, it's different—if the total dowry is thirty million rupiah, it's no longer divided between the bride, the parents, and the custom transfer—it's all bundled together. So they first discuss the dowry expenses and details before setting the wedding date."— Arifin Basa, 2025

In practice, the dowry is divided into two main parts. The first part is intended for the bride's parents as a form of respect for their care and the blessing they have given.



Figure 2. Items Used in the Implementation of a Traditional Banggai Wedding Ceremony

The second part of the dowry is intended for the needs of the wedding celebration, which generally includes food supplies, traditional ceremonial items, and other technical necessities for the event. Unlike modern practices that are dominated by cash, in the past this dowry was delivered in the form of tangible goods or household necessities such as agricultural produce, fabric, furniture, or livestock. The handover of this property was not merely a formality, but was accompanied by a traditional sign of acceptance. One form of acknowledgment that the dowry had been accepted was for the groom-to-be to stay overnight at the bride's house, usually accompanied by a close relative. This was expressed in the following interview:

"Then, during the delivery of the dowry, in the past, the groom would sleep at the bride's house, and at the same time, they would discuss the date of the wedding. The delivery of the dowry would be accompanied by dzikir until they reached the bride's house."— Sartika Adungka, 2025

The groom's overnight stay holds a powerful symbolic meaning: it signifies that the bride's family has fully accepted the responsibility and commitment of the groom's family. It also represents the initial union of the two extended families. This act is part of the customary mechanism that ensures transparency, seriousness, and respect for family values and social bonds within the Banggai community.

4. *Molibakon*

The final stage in the Banggai traditional wedding procession is called *Molibakon*, which refers to the ceremonial escorting of the bride to the groom's house. This stage is not merely a physical relocation of the wife to her husband's home, but is imbued with deep social, cultural, and symbolic meaning that represents the unification of two extended families.



Figure 3. Traditional Wedding of the Banggai Ethnic Group

In the traditional Banggai society of the past, the timing of *Molibakon* largely depended on the distance between the couple's residences. If they lived in the same or neighboring villages, the escorting would typically take place the day after the wedding reception, as a continuation of the event in a sequential and consistent manner. However, if the couple resided far apart, the escorting would be postponed for several days after the entire wedding series was completed, allowing the bride's family sufficient time to prepare the departure with dignity and honor. This is reflected in the following quote:

"The final stage is Molibakon, or escorting the bride to the groom's house. In the past, if the groom lived in the same village, the bride would be escorted the day after the reception. But if they lived in different places, it usually took a few days after the reception ended."—Lukman, 2025

Molibakon is usually carried out in a solemn atmosphere, with the bride escorted by her family and accompanied by traditional rituals that signify the formal and blessed release of the bride. In some areas, this tradition includes the handover of personal belongings, household items, or other customary symbols as provisions for starting married life. For the Banggai people, *Molibakon* is not just the closing of the wedding procession, but also marks the official shift in the woman's social status—from a daughter in her natal family to a wife in her new family. Thus, this stage reinforces family values, collective responsibility, and respect for the customary social structure that has been passed down through generations.

Transformation in the Stages of Traditional Marriage of the Banggai Ethnic Group

The traditional marriage of the Banggai ethnic group is a cultural system rich in values and symbolism, but it now exists in a dynamic position due to the influence of social, economic, religious, and technological changes. Although the traditional rituals are still observed and respected, significant changes have occurred in their implementation and the values they convey. These changes indicate that customary traditions are not rigid but rather adaptive to the times. Such transformations reflect a relaxation of customary values, though they do not entirely erase the cultural essence. The ongoing changes represent a negotiation between the preservation of tradition and the demands of modern life. While some customary values are now practiced more flexibly, customary law is still enforced, including social sanctions for violations such as marriage within the same clan. Thus, the dynamics of traditional marriage demonstrate a form of selective cultural adaptation, in which core values are maintained while responding to contemporary social realities (Hikmah et al., 2025).

Based on field research findings, it was discovered that the stages or processes in the Banggai traditional wedding ceremony have undergone several significant changes. These changes are most apparent in three stages: *Popittoi* (initial notification), *Mansadai* (formal proposal), and *Mansaiyan* (delivery of marriage payments). As explained by Koentjaraningrat (2009) in his theory of cultural transformation, such changes are a process of adapting traditional cultural elements to new societal demands without eliminating the original identity. For instance, the shift in initiative from parents to the groom in choosing a partner reflects changes in communication patterns and the growing autonomy of individuals within a more open society.



Figure 4. Traditional Banggai Marriage in the 1990s and 2025

In the past, the *Popitoi* process was carried out through an intermediary representing the groom's family, who brought *salapa* (a traditional betel container) as a symbol of politeness and sincere intentions. The selection of a spouse was the responsibility of the parents and usually involved close relatives to ensure the continuity of family ties. However, in current practice, the initiative for marriage mostly comes directly from the groom himself, without the involvement of a traditional intermediary. Young people now have more freedom in choosing a life partner and often express their intention for marriage directly to the bride's parents.



Figure 6. Changes in Wedding Offerings in Traditional Banggai Marriage

The *Mansadai* stage also shows significant shifts. A tradition once held during the daytime—accompanied by *zikir* (religious chants) and involving selected women to carry the engagement offerings—is now conducted more practically: often at night, with the offerings placed in decorative boxes and no longer delivered by individuals with specific social criteria. Changes in *Mansaiyan* are also apparent. Previously, wedding expenses were divided into two parts: one for the bride's family and the other for the wedding celebration. Items such as rice, sugar, coconuts, and chickens were symbolic contributions reflecting participation in the event. Today, all expenses are typically presented in monetary form and no longer symbolically distinguished. In addition, the tradition of the groom staying overnight at the bride's family home has become rare. These changes reflect a shift in values—from collective, religious, and symbolic practices toward more practical, functional, and efficient forms. Although the essence of the tradition has not entirely disappeared, the symbolic strength and spiritual meaning of each ritual are gradually diminishing under the pressure of modern demands.

Transformation of Values in Traditional Banggai Customary Marriage

Turner (1969) argues that rituals serve important social functions in society, including in marriage. According to Turner, traditional marriage rituals are not merely ceremonies binding a couple, but transitional moments that signify a change in an individual's social status and carry cultural values. Hofstede (2001) defines cultural values as the fundamental orientations within a society that shape individuals' worldviews and influence how they perceive social norms and behavior. These values encompass aspects such as morality, aesthetics, and social relationships, forming the basis for a group's cultural identity. Schwartz (1992) further explains that cultural values are abstract concepts that unify

individual attitudes and behaviors within society and play a significant role in shaping social preferences and individual decision-making.

Warnaén strengthens this notion by referring to cultural values as “human morality,” which includes: morality toward the self, toward others, toward God, toward nature, and in pursuit of physical and spiritual fulfillment. Each culture addresses these moral dimensions in different ways, reflecting the core values held by the community. These cultural values are crucial in shaping individual behavior and daily social interaction, as well as determining social expectations (Rohaedi & Nurjanah, 2023).

The traditional marriage of the Banggai ethnic group in the Banggai Islands Regency is rich in cultural and spiritual values. It comprises a series of rituals, each holding deep symbolic meaning that reflects the community’s worldview and belief system. These ceremonies not only serve to preserve ancestral heritage but also strengthen social and spiritual ties among community members. Based on interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, the parents of the bride and groom, and younger generations involved in the ceremony, it was found that traditional marriage processes contain various upheld values despite changes influenced by globalization and modernity.

1. Religious value

Religious value reflected in reverence for ancestors and spiritual forces. According to Scheler, religiosity entails deep belief accompanied by knowledge and understanding of religious values. Hence, religiosity is not only manifested through obedience to religious rules but also through sincere spiritual engagement in daily life (Fariha, 2025). The ritual of *Babubusi*, in which ancestral graves are cleansed and visited, represents a plea for permission and blessings, believed to spiritually safeguard the upcoming marriage. As Islamic teachings spread among the Banggai people, certain rituals have undergone acculturation—a process in which elements of foreign cultures are accepted and integrated into local culture without eliminating original values (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Historical studies show that Islam successfully spread in the Indonesian archipelago through cultural adaptation, integrating local customs peacefully (Muamara & Ajmain, 2020).

In practice, prayers in several ritual stages have been aligned with Islamic teachings, ensuring that traditional practices do not contradict sharia principles. These findings are consistent with those of Utama and Junaidi (2023), who stated that traditional marriage elements not conflicting with Islamic law are maintained, while those that do—such as ancestral worship—are modified or removed. Islamic prayers like *Al-Fatihah* and supplications for safety are now incorporated into customary rituals.

2. Social value

Social value which emphasizes togetherness, solidarity, and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), is also a key component. The *Mansai* tradition, where the groom’s family seeks support from relatives and neighbors, illustrates how marriage is viewed as a collective responsibility. *Gotong royong* in wedding preparations strengthens social bonds and nurtures a sense of empathy. Harmony and peaceful relations are core values, highlighting that the purpose of marriage extends beyond uniting individuals to include bonding extended families and community members. Stages such as *Popitoi* (notification), *Mansadai* (proposal), and *Mongula Tukul* (gift-giving) involve active participation from families and the broader community as tangible expressions of solidarity. This collaboration extends beyond physical labor to moral and emotional support (Purwansih, 2018). Sabalino (2023) emphasizes that marriage unites not just individuals, but entire families, serving as a moment to reconnect and strengthen social networks within Banggai society.

3. Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value is evident in the ceremonial beauty and symbolic elements that reinforce cultural identity. The beauty of Banggai traditional marriage lies in its elegant rituals and meaningful symbols reflecting community beliefs. Sriyana and Hiskiya (2020) assert that meaning and symbols are inseparable; symbols inherently carry specific cultural meanings. Social life is shaped by ideas, symbols, and values formed through individual and group interactions, leading to culturally embedded practices. Each stage from *Popitoi* and *Mansadai* to *Mongula Tukul* involves traditional attire, symbolic items like betel leaves (*sirih pinang*), and ritual procedures rich in grace and philosophy. These aesthetic elements reveal the Banggai people's deep appreciation for artistry in sacred moments like weddings. Traditional marriage is not just a series of events but a narrative passed down across generations, filled with hopes, prayers, and life philosophies (Dunggio et al., 2023).

4. Customary legal value

Customary legal value is reflected in the rules and norms governing each ritual stage. Customary marriage law outlines forms of marriage, proposals, ceremonies, and dissolution (Hadikusuma, 2003). Beyond procreation, traditional marriage sustains local kinship groups and social structures (Sembiring & Christina, 2024). According to Hadikusuma (2002), customary marriage aims to preserve family happiness, ensure lineage continuity, and maintain inheritance traditions. Adherence to customary law signifies respect for ancestors and collective cultural heritage. Dowries (*tumpe*) and gifts to brides often symbolize social status and honor. While these practices can reflect prestige, critics argue they risk portraying women as objects of cultural exchange.

5. Educational value

Educational value in traditional marriage lies in the transmission of cultural values to younger generations. Involving children and youth in rituals provides informal yet impactful cultural learning. Banggai society also demonstrates adaptability to change by modifying rituals to reduce financial burdens while preserving core values. These adaptations strike a balance between cultural preservation and modern demands, ensuring that identity is not lost.

This study reveals that transformation in Banggai customary marriage reflects complex cultural dynamics, where traditional elements change in form and function due to modernization, globalization, and social mobility. According to Sztompka (2004), such changes result from mechanisms like cultural diffusion, acculturation, assimilation, and innovation. For instance, the shift from collective matchmaking (*Popitoi*) to personal choice reflects the assimilation of individualism into traditional collective norms. Nevertheless, researchers also observe subtle cultural resistance, as explained by Scott (1990) through the concepts of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts. While traditions may formally change, symbolic practices are often quietly retained such as the use of traditional terms, choice of wedding dates, or the presence of customary leaders in negotiations.

Transformation of Attributes in Traditional Banggai Customary Marriage

All of these stages indicate that traditional Banggai customary marriage in the past possessed a well-structured framework, rich in meaning, and embedded with strong social, spiritual, and symbolic values. Each step was governed by strict customary norms that could not be violated, and was carried out with the collective awareness and participation of the extended family. This tradition was not only a means to unite two individuals, but also served to strengthen inter-family relationships, reinforce social solidarity, and act as a medium for intergenerational transmission of cultural values. In addition to changes in the ceremonial stages, the findings of this study also reveal significant transformations in the material attributes of Banggai traditional weddings, which include traditional clothing,

ceremonial equipment, the form of wedding offerings (*hantaran*), and decorative properties. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

“In the past, at weddings, the bride wore a white *kebaya*, and the groom wore modest attire—usually a white shirt or collared shirt with a traditional cap (*kopiah*). But now it’s different; people often wear modified traditional outfits, resembling king-and-queen costumes. When I got married, a woman’s hair had to be neatly tied in a bun (*sanggul*)—a high one. But now, for Muslim brides, they often wear a hijab with crown-like headpieces on top. Non-Muslim brides also style their hair at salons and wear elaborate headpieces.” (*Arifin Basa, 2025*)

Based on the interview above, traditional wedding attire in Banggai culture was once highly distinctive, especially in terms of color, patterns, and materials that held deep symbolic significance. Brides traditionally wore handwoven cloths (*kain tenun*) made manually, paired with elaborate headpieces such as large buns and gold ornaments that symbolized the family's social status. Today, however, brides tend to choose modified outfits or rent attire that imitates traditional clothing but is produced in modern and instant ways. The symbolic value found in traditional motifs and dressing methods has gradually been replaced by considerations of aesthetics and comfort.



Figure 7. Changes in Traditional Wedding Attributes of the Banggai Ethnic Group

Changes are also evident in the wedding offerings (*hantaran*) items. This was conveyed by one informant as follows:

“In the past, the offerings had to include a *gong*. The *gong* was important—it symbolized respect. But nowadays, *gongs* are rarely used; they’re also expensive. So people usually replace them with other items. Previously, the offerings were wrapped in a sarong, neatly folded. Now, there are decorated gift boxes like those used in urban weddings.” (*Raqib Alisi, 2025*)

Traditionally, engagement offerings (*isi pinangan*) consisted of essential goods such as rice, betel leaf and areca nut (*sirih pinang*), palm sugar, and other agricultural produce that symbolized the groom’s readiness to provide for the household. Today, the contents of wedding offerings have become more varied and modernized, shifting toward items such

as household appliances, cosmetics, cash, and other symbolic lifestyle goods, as shown in the image below.



Figure 8. Changes in Engagement Ceremony Decorations of the Banggai Traditional Wedding

Not only that, wedding venue decorations have also undergone a transformation. In the past, the wedding platform (*pelaminan*) was arranged using handwoven traditional fabrics and mosquito nets, reflecting local craftsmanship and symbolic aesthetics. Today, however, communities increasingly rely on wedding organizers, who offer modern and luxurious decorations inspired by urban trends and contemporary styles. Traditional cultural performances such as *motulidan* or *mopombetua*, which once formed an integral part of the ceremony, are now gradually disappearing, replaced by more popular entertainment such as keyboard music or live pop performances.



Figure 9. Changes in Engagement Ceremony Decorations of the Banggai Traditional Wedding

Each stage of the traditional wedding ceremony contains symbols and moral messages that serve to uphold social structure, strengthen kinship bonds, and instill noble collective values. The transformation of these cultural attributes reflects a shift in values from spiritual depth and sacredness to modern aesthetics, visual appeal, and new forms of

social status symbols. Modernization has not only altered the outward forms of traditional weddings but has also gradually displaced the symbolic meanings once deeply embedded in every element of the ceremony. As these symbols are replaced by more practical and instant alternatives, their underlying meanings risk fading. The researcher criticizes the emerging tendency of today's society to overlook the symbolic essence and instead favor administrative or financial approaches. The use of ornately decorated engagement boxes and the elimination of zikr chants in the *Mansadaian* ritual reflect a form of cultural acculturation and innovation that prioritizes visual aesthetics and time efficiency. However, as Capra and Dedy (2017) have argued, such transformation may lead to cultural and spiritual fracture, eroding the sacred meaning of traditional customs. Society appears to be replacing substantive values with empty symbols, simply following the logic of modernity—what Bauman (2023) describes as an anthropophagic process, in which local cultures are "consumed" and homogenized into a dominant, modern, and efficient stream.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that traditional marriage among the Banggai ethnic group in the past was a complex socio-cultural system rich in symbolic meaning. The stages of *Popitoi*, *Mansadaiyan*, *Mansaiyan*, and *Molibakon* were carried out with deep respect for customary values, spirituality, and kinship ties. Each stage was not merely a formal ritual but served as a medium for transmitting values, affirming cultural identity, and strengthening social bonds between extended families. These traditions were conducted with strict decorum and profound symbolism—from the use of intermediaries, engagement items wrapped in traditional sarongs, to the ceremonial escorting of the bride as a symbol of both social and spiritual union between two families. In the Banggai customary context, marriage was not simply a union between two individuals, but also a reinforcement of the social structure, customary norms, and the continuity of lineage through kinship.

However, over time, significant cultural transformations have affected the practice of Banggai traditional marriage. Arranged marriages have gradually been replaced by individual freedom in choosing a partner; traditional symbols such as the *salapa* and material dowries have given way to decorated boxes and cash gifts; and ritual practices like *dzikir* and the groom's overnight stay have been abandoned in favor of efficiency. These changes are influenced by cultural diffusion, acculturation with religious values, and modern lifestyles that emphasize individualism and practicality. Nevertheless, core values such as religiosity and social solidarity remain present in adapted forms.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that local government and traditional institutions in the Banggai Islands Regency revitalize traditional marriage practices through educational programs such as training sessions, public outreach, and cultural festivals. These activities can enhance young people's understanding of the meanings and values embedded in each stage of the traditional wedding process, while also fostering a sense of pride in their local cultural identity.

In addition, the community especially the younger generation should be encouraged to continue performing traditional ceremonies in a simplified yet meaningful manner. This simplification can be implemented without eliminating the core values, for example, by carrying out symbolic versions of certain stages that may be considered economically burdensome or complex. To achieve this, collaboration among traditional leaders, religious figures, and the general public is crucial in formulating ways of conducting customary practices that uphold cultural values while remaining relevant and adaptable to modern

times. Family deliberations and intergenerational dialogue are also essential steps to bridge differing views on tradition.

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