


# The Presentation Form, Function, and Meaning of the *Ma'badong Tomakaka* Music Lyrics in the *Rambu Solo* Ceremony of the Toraja Tribe

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Article Details	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History</b></p> <p>Received mm dd, yyyy Revised mm dd, yyyy Accepted mm dd, yyyy</p>	<p>This research aims to describe the form of presentation, function, and meaning of <i>Ma'badong Tomakaka</i> music verses in the <i>Rambu Solo</i> traditional ceremony of the Toraja tribe. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnomusicology approach. Data collection techniques include direct observation, interviews with sources, documentation, and literature study. Data analysis was done through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that <i>Ma'badong</i> music is a traditional vocal art performed without musical instrument accompaniment in melting at formation. The singers are called Pa'badong. <i>Ma'badong</i> performances are held in open areas such as fields or courtyards during the day and night. A red and black shirt or t-shirt top using a Toraja woven sarong is the costume often used for <i>Ma'badong</i> performances. The gradual procession starts from <i>Ma'tabe</i>, <i>Issi</i>, to <i>Ma'passundun</i>. This music serves as a medium of ritual, entertainment, cultural identity, means of communication, and aesthetic expression in Toraja society. The poetry of <i>Ma'badong</i> or <i>Kadong Badong</i> contains deep meanings, such as moral messages, expressions of grief, prayers for the spirits to the afterlife, and hopes for the families left behind.</p>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Toraja tribe is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia known for its rich belief system and traditions, particularly in the funeral ceremony known as *Rambu Solo*'. This ceremony is part of the *Aluk Todolo* belief system passed down from generation to generation. One important element of *Rambu Solo*' is the performance art of *Ma'badong*, a form of mourning poetry chanting combined with body movements in a circle formation. This performance is a means of honoring the dead and reflects Toraja's complex social structure and cultural values.

However, *Ma'badong* is not just uniformly performed by all levels of society. It is strongly influenced by the traditional social structure of Torajan society, which consists of several levels: nobles (*Tomakaka*), commoners, and enslaved people (Lumbaa et al., 2023). Each stratum has a different form of presentation and aesthetics, especially regarding the number of buffaloes sacrificed, the duration of the ceremony, and the composition and meaning of the verses sung. This shows that *Ma'badong* art has a ritual dimension and a social and symbolic one, reflecting societal status and power.

Previous studies have examined *Ma'badong* from aesthetics, ritual functions, and its relationship with *Aluk Todolo*'s beliefs (Tendenan, 2024). Research has also highlighted how *Ma'badong* functions as a character-based education paradigm (Sambira & Kristanto, 2020). Also, previous research has examined the meanings of connotation and connotation in *Ma'badong* performances (Nur Vita Dinana, 2004). However, not many studies have specifically

discussed the form of *Ma'badong's* presentation and the meaning contained in its lyrics in the context of *Tomakaka's* social class.

This research seeks to fill the void by examining the form, function, and meaning of *Ma'badong* in the *Tomakaka* social environment. The approach used is qualitative with an ethnomusicology approach. Ethnomusicology is a science that investigates musical art as physical, aesthetic, psychological, and cultural symptoms (Maulana et al., 2022). Then, direct observation, visual documentation, and in-depth interviews with cultural actors, including *Indo badong* (*Ma'badong* leader), were conducted. In addition, a semiotic analysis of *kadong badong* verses will be conducted to interpret the symbolic meaning in the lyrics delivered during the performance.

The primary focus of this research is to answer how *Tomakaka's* social status affects the presentation of *Ma'badong*, both in terms of musicality, performance structure, and the meaning of the poetry performed. This research also examines the changes that have occurred in the practice of *Ma'badong*, particularly in the context of the shift in belief from *Aluk Todolo* to Christianity and adaptation to modern socio-economic conditions. Thus, this research is descriptive and analytical, examining the dynamics between cultural heritage and social transformation.

The novelty of this research lies in its study that specifically examines the relationship between social structure and cultural expression in the *Ma'badong* art of the aristocratic class. By highlighting the practice of *Tomakaka's* version of *Ma'badong*, this research makes an innovative contribution to ethnic performing arts studies by showing how social status shapes an art form, function, and cultural message. The findings are also important for the documentation of intangible cultural heritage, as well as providing a basis of understanding for preserving local cultures increasingly eroded by globalization.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative method with an ethnomusicology approach to examine the form of presentation, function, and meaning of *Ma'badong* poetry in the *Tomakaka* (noble) social strata in Toraja society. Data were collected through direct observation of the *Rambu Solo* ceremony of the late Bernadus Bangla, in-depth interviews with cultural actors such as *Indo Badong* (*Ma'badong* leader), the family of the ceremony organizer, and visual documentation in the form of photos and audio-visual recordings of *Ma'badong* performances. Researchers also took additional information in the form of literature studies at the Makale Library, Tana Toraja. The data analysis technique was carried out qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with a semiotic approach to interpret the symbolic meaning in the *kadong badong* poems and performance movements.

## 3. RESULT

### Form of *Ma'badong Tomakaka* Music Presentation

The Toraja tribe inhabits the mountainous region of South Sulawesi and has strong traditions. As stated in the theory of culture, according to Koentjaraningrat, one of the elements of culture is a belief system, namely the religious or belief system, which is closely related to culture and includes elements such as religious emotions, beliefs, and rituals. Likewise, until now, most Torajans still adhere to ancestral beliefs known as *Aluk Todolo*. One of the most famous traditional rituals is *Rambu Solo*, a death ceremony to deliver the spirit to the spirit world (*Puya*) (Hasbi et al., 2019). In implementing *Rambu Solo*, *Ma'badong* performance art became one of the most important elements, especially in the highest social strata, namely *Tomakaka* (nobles). *Ma'badong* is a ritual vocal art that combines elements of music, dance, and literature and is passed down from generation to generation as a form of respect and expression of male grief in Toraja culture (Adolph, 2016b).



Figure 1. *Ma'badong* performance

*Ma'badong* performances differ between social castes. In the *Tomakaka* stratum, performances are grand at night and during the day when important guests are received. In addition, the duration is longer, and the main requirement is the sacrifice of many buffaloes as a symbol of status and respect. In the case of the late

Bernadus Bangla, who belonged to the *Tomakaka* caste, *Ma'badong* was held for four days with the sacrifice of 28 buffaloes, the buffaloes in this rambu solo emphasizing his position in the social hierarchy (Abdurahim, 2015).

*Ma'badong* music is divided into three categories according to the age of the deceased: *Badong Pia* (children), *Badong Tomangura* (teenagers), and *Badong Tomatua* (adults) (Adolph, 2016a). Bernadus Bangla belongs to the *Badong Tomatua* category. This performance utilizes a typical Torajan vocal structure that is melismatic and layered, reflecting sadness and reverence. This tradition represents aesthetic value and strengthens the Aluk Todolo belief system's social identity, preserving Torajan traditional values amid changing times.

### Players

Quoted from Edi Sedyawati's theory In performing arts, players play an important role as actors who convey messages through speech or action. In *Ma'badong* performances, the performers are called *Pa'badong* and are led by *Pantollo badong* or *Indo Badong*, who cues the other singers. The formation usually includes 2-4 leaders spread on the sides of the circle, with a minimum number of 10 singers. Although open to all, *Pa'badong* generally consists of adult men. In practice, even guests can join the circle. This research recorded the involvement of 35 *Ma'badong* performers, including 4 Indo Badong and guests who also sang. Communities usually have their own *Ma'badong* groups ready to perform at *Rambu Solo*. However, in the *Tomakaka* caste, families may call in professional groups from outside the area and cover the entire cost of their performance.



Figure 2: *Ma'badong* singers

### Place and Time

Edi Sedyawati's theory also says that place and time are important elements in performing arts. *Ma'badong* performances are not held on a stage or closed space but in an open area such as a house yard because it requires ample space for a circle formation that can be enlarged with the participation of guests. In this study, *Ma'badong* was performed in the courtyard of the late Bernadus Bangla's house facing south. The position of the players is flexible as it follows the shape of the circle.



Figure 3. *Pa'badong* entering the courtyard of the venue

In terms of time, *Ma'badong* is ideally performed at night, as the night atmosphere is considered more solemn (Patandean et al., 2018). Based on observation, the performance takes place from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and is performed for days, from the reception of guests until three days after the funeral. In the *Tomakaka* caste, *Ma'badong* is also performed during the day as a welcome to guests, starting at 09.00-14.00, with 15 minutes per welcome. This matinee takes place from October 15-17, 2024, before the funeral procession on October 18.



*Ma'badong performance at night*

### **Instrument**

(Purwacandra & Nainggolan, 2019) It defines musical instruments as tools used to produce sound in musical performances, individually or together, and can be hit, pluck, blow, string, and even vocal instruments. Instruments are also referred to as one of the media for channeling musical works. In *Ma'badong* music, there are no accompanying musical instruments, but the instruments used are vocal cords or vocals only and are sung in unison. At first, *the indo badong* sings it, followed by other *Pa'badong*.

### **Costumes**

Costumes in performance function as symbols that give psychological and emotional meaning (Andani & Lutfiati, 2017). In *Ma'badong*, the *Pa'badong* generally wears a red or black top and a black or white Toraja woven sarong, with no special provision for footwear. The color red symbolizes life and victory, while black symbolizes grief and death- the combination of the two symbolizes the duality of life and death. In the *Tomakaka* noble caste, as in the *Rambu Solo* ceremony of the late Bernadus Bangla, the family provides special costumes and complete uniforms, including hats. Meanwhile, in ordinary community events, *Pa'badong* wears simple clothes without uniformity.



*Ma'badong costume*

### ***Ma'badong* Music Performance Procession**

*The Ma'badong* performance procession consists of 3 stages: *Ma'tabe*, *Issi*, and *Ma'passundun* (Patandung, 2016). At first, the *Pa'badong* gather somewhere to make a line before entering the courtyard where they perform *Ma'badong*, then the *Pa'badong* enter the courtyard area, form a circle, and hold hands to facilitate movement; usually, they only tighten their little fingers. After that, the *Pa'badong* starts the procession by giving respect and asking permission to perform his badong. *Pa'badong* does not face the guests or the late Bernadus Bangla, remaining in the circle while saying greetings such as "*Tabe indo, tabe ambe, tabe lako to ma' parentata, si ambe then tondok, la parampopakan batingki lako indo sola ambe tukikamasei*" which means "greetings to the father, mother, the government, and tetuah, permission we will perform the song". This procession is called *Ma'tabe* (conveying greetings). After delivering *Ma'tabe'* (greetings of respect), *Pantollo Badong* or *Indo Badong* begins to sing the first notes of the song, which is then followed by other members singing the poem. This procession is also called *Issi* (content/core).





*Issi procession (content/core)*

The *Pa'badong* will sing Badong sequentially according to its function, namely Badong Nasiat (*Pa'pakilala*), Badong Lament (*Badong Umbating*), *Badong Berarak* (*Badong Ma'palao*), and Badong Selamat or Berkat (*Badong Passakke*). During this performance, the *Pa'badong* may ask for cigarettes and drink coffee if tired, and the badong verse must continue. The badong movements include head nodding, shoulders, hands moving up and down, and feet moving to make a rotation. The next procession is Ma'Pasundun, the final stage of Badong singing. At this stage, *indo badong* delivers verses containing prayers and blessings for the deceased in this context, namely the late Bernadus Bangla, the family left behind, and the guests present. After that, *indo badong* gives directions to *Pa'badong* so they can return to their respective places.

### **The function of *Ma'badong* Music**

*Ma'badong* music, as part of culture, has various important functions in society. Based on Malinowski and Merriam's functionalism theory in (Kristianto, 2019) and (Wahyudin, 2019), music is a form of expression of beauty and a means of fulfilling emotional, social, and cultural needs. Traditional music, such as *Ma'badong* helps people cope with the tensions of life and becomes a medium of connection, participation, and cultural preservation. Merriam argues that there are ten functions of music in ethnomusicology studies, namely: (1) the function of emotional expression; (2) the function of aesthetic expression; (3) the function of entertainment; (4) the function of communication; (5) the function of symbolism; (6) the function of physical reaction; (7) the function related to social norms, (8) the function of validating social institutions; (9) the function of cultural continuity; and (10) the function of community integration. In this context, the five most relevant functions of *Ma'badong* music are:

### **Ritual Function**

Rituals are repeated actions or activities with particular symbolic meanings in the context of culture, religion, or belief. Rituals are usually performed according to rules or procedures that have been established and passed down from generation to generation (Eddy, 2005). The ritual function is one of the functions of music expressed by Merriam in his book *The Anthropology of Music*. Music is used in society as a practice or ritual commonly performed or as part of implementing customs, both in terms of the activity and other activities. This ritual function is very relevant in *Ma'badong* music. Toraja people believe that *Ma'badong* is A traditional Toraja belief (Aluk Todolo), and death is not the end but a journey to Puya (spirit world).

Through *Ma'badong*, the community conveys prayers and hopes that the spirit will get the best place in the afterlife. So, *Ma'badong* can be said to be a medium to deliver the spirit to the afterlife, which is why buffaloes must be sacrificed; they are considered vehicles that spirits will use to take them to *puya*. *Ma'badong* is also a means of communication to be real, as a link between the real and supernatural worlds. *Ma'badong* used to be an expression of praise, and its lyrics contained praise to worship the gods/ancestors.

### **Entertainment Function**

Like other branches of art, music also functions as entertainment. Music can bring sadness, happiness, and comfort to the listener. Music can influence human emotions and provide aesthetic satisfaction, so it has become an important form of entertainment. Music is often needed by someone to entertain, especially when feeling bored or sad. This entertainment function is relevant in *Ma'badong* music (Eko Raharjo, 2007).

Despite the theme of mourning, *Ma'badong* chants also serve as a comfort to the families left behind. By chanting poetry and typical movements, the atmosphere of mourning becomes more focused and does not dissolve into deep sadness. To comfort the families and relatives who are left behind so that they can accept and let go of the family members who have died. Meanwhile, for guests or migrants from outside the city or country, such as tourists, *Ma'badong* is a performance entertainment for them.

### Identity Function

Identity is a characteristic or mark attached to something, in this context referring to regional or tribal identity (Yudarta & Pasek, 2015). Identity allows individuals or communities to have distinctive features that distinguish them from other groups, whether in culture, language, customs, or values. A strong identity can increase pride in one's origins and culture and build confidence in interacting with others. Cultural identity helps to preserve ancestral heritage so that it does not become extinct and is passed on to the next generation.

This function is very relevant to *Ma'badong* music because *Ma'badong* can be a cultural identity that distinguishes the Toraja tribe from other tribes in Indonesia. *Ma'badong* has attracted the attention of tourists and cultural researchers from various countries. This makes it one of Toraja's cultural icons that is recognized beyond its community.

### Social and communication functions

Music is not only a form of entertainment but also has an important role in social life and communication between individuals and groups. Music can create a sense of unity within a group on a small (family) and large (community) scale. As a social and communication function, music helps build interaction, strengthen togetherness, convey messages, and become a means of cultural and emotional expression in people's lives (Sihabuddin et al., 2023).

Similarly, *Ma'badong* music can also serve a social function. *Ma'badong* is performed in groups in a circular formation, holding hands and reflecting the togetherness and solidarity of the community in the face of grief. Participation in *Ma'badong* helps people understand and pass on ancestral traditions, keeping Torajan culture alive. Funeral ceremonies in Toraja, including *Ma'badong*, bring people from different regions together. This strengthens social relations between people within the community and with outsiders who attend the ceremony. Funeral ceremonies in Toraja require the involvement of many people, so *Ma'badong* is also a symbol of gotong royong within the community. In a social context, *Ma'badong* is a form of respect for the deceased and ancestors. It demonstrates an important value in Torajan culture of respecting and maintaining relationships with those who have passed on. *Ma'badong* contains poems that express grief and respect for the deceased. With these songs and dances, the bereaved families feel supported by their community, reducing their emotional burden.

### Aesthetic Expression Function

The last function relevant to *Ma'badong* Music, based on several functions that have been mentioned according to the theory of Allam P. Merriam, is the function of aesthetic expression. Music as an aesthetic expression means that music is used to express beauty, creativity, and emotion in the form of art. In general, music is created by someone to express their feelings or thoughts through beauty. Through music, feelings can be conveyed and more easily accepted, and tones representing expression are released. When happy, the tempo of the song will sound faster, and when sad, the tempo of the song is slower and smoother (Handayani, 2020).

*Ma'badong* is performed in a circular formation with participants holding hands, creating a harmonious and symbolic visual pattern. The movements performed in unison reflect collective harmony and beauty. *Ma'badong* chants use rhythmic verses that express grief, respect, and hope for the departed spirits. The poetic lyrics add aesthetic richness to the Torajan oral art form. *Ma'badong* is sung in groups with distinctive vocal techniques that create a solemn and meaningful atmosphere. No musical instruments are used, but the choir of participants provides a deep aesthetic feel.

### The meaning of *Badong Tomakaka's* poem

Lyrics in music are a part of communication that conveys emotional and social messages to the listener. Lyrics can reinforce the meaning of the music and create a connection with the listener.

The listener's Personal experience (Sri Astuti, Valentinus Ola Beding, 2021). The meaning of lyrics in traditional music is often related to the community's cultural, historical and ritual values. He explains that in some traditions, lyrics are not just entertainment but also part of social and spiritual identity. The poetry in *Ma'badong* music is also called *kadong badong*. The chanted poem describes the life cycle based on the group, from birth to death (Sambira et al., 2020).

Of course, for each social stratum, the *Chanting Badong* is also different according to the level of their social strata. Because their life cycles are arguably different. For ordinary people, *Ma'badong* lyrics are sung using local languages that are commonly used in everyday life. However, if the deceased comes from the nobility or *tana' bulaan*, the lyrics are a high literary form. Therefore, a *Ma'badong* group leader must have an in-depth understanding of Torajan literature and should not be careless in composing the sentences of *Ma'badong* poems. The meaning of a *ma'badong* lyrics consists of four parts (Berthin Simega & Benyamin Bongga Matalangi, 2021), namely :

### **Badong Nasihat**

Badong Nasihat in *Ma'badong* music refers to the part of the lyrics containing moral messages, advice, or counsel delivered in the Ma'badong ritual addressed to the family left behind or the listener. The implied meaning of badong nasihat lyrics in *Ma'badong* is in the form of life teaching. The lyrics in Badong Nasihat contain messages about life values, such as the importance of virtue, hard work, togetherness in family and community, and respect for ancestors and parents. The advice in *Ma'badong* often reminds the younger generation to respect their ancestors, parents, and customs as a cultural heritage that must be preserved. Then, Badong Nasihat also teaches that life has ups and downs, and humans must accept fate sincerely and continue to live enthusiastically. Lyrics in Badong Nasihat often convey that death is not the end but a journey to another world. Therefore, life must be lived well and remembered with respect.

### **Badong Wailing**

The badong lament in *Ma'badong* music reflects deep sadness but is also part of the honorable farewell process in Toraja's custom. This shows how music and ritual play a role in helping people express their emotions and accept the passing of their loved ones. The following lyrics are addressed to the deceased, where the family is deeply saddened to be left behind by the deceased. Overall, badong lament in *Ma'badong* music is a section of lyrics that expresses sadness, loss, and grief over the passing of someone who has died. The overall meaning of badong lament is an expression of sadness and loss, and it contains an expression of deep sorrow from family, friends, and the community who feel the loss of their loved ones. The following meaning is the memory of the person who died. The lyrics in this section often recount the merits, virtues, and fond memories of the deceased as a form of final tribute. The lament in *Ma'badong* is an expression of personal grief and collective grief, which strengthens relationships between families and communities in the face of loss.

### **Badong Berarak**

The badong march in *Ma'badong* music is not just a farewell chant but also part of the spiritual process in Torajan culture. It shows how Torajans honor death with reverence and togetherness and believe that the deceased's spirit should be ushered in with prayers and sacred songs. The following poem is also addressed to the deceased to accompany his journey to *puya*. The meaning of badong berarak is to accompany the journey of the spirit. The lyrics in badong berarak depict the spirit's journey from the world to *Puya*, the afterlife in Toraja culture. It can also be interpreted as a symbol of farewell, in which the family and community send off the departed spirit with prayers and last respects. As well as the hope for the spirit's salvation. In Toraja tradition, death is not the end but the beginning of a journey to another world. The lyrics also contain the hope that the spirit will have a decent and peaceful place in the afterlife. In addition, Badong Berarak conveys the message of sincerity that every human being will undergo a similar journey one day.

### **Badong Berkat**

Badong Berkat in *Ma'badong* music is the final part of the ritual singing procession, which closes the ceremony with prayers, blessings, and good wishes. The lyrics contain prayers and good wishes for the family left behind as well as for the spirit of the deceased. The lyrics in Badong Berkat contain prayers that the deceased's spirit will find a good place in *Puya* (the afterlife) and that its journey will be smooth. The song also expresses the hope that the family left behind will be given strength, fortitude, and blessings. In addition to the lamentation of grief, this section also contains gratitude for the life that the deceased has lived and a message to continue the good values that he has inherited. Badong Berkat can also bring blessings to the next generation so they always live harmoniously and follow Torajan cultural values. This shows how Torajan culture

not only mourn the dead but also celebrate life and pray for a better future for both the living and the departed.

How to sing the following badong verses: Unlike popular songs, Ma'badong rhythms rely more on the dynamics of the rise and fall of the intonation of the vowels in the verses being sung. For example:

Poem: *Naparaimo indoqna*

How to sing



Figure 7 Ma'badong Music Melody Sample

Each part of the verse is sung once, after the second lyric, followed by the first lyric, until it is finished. Indo Badong chants the sentences in the next verse at the end of the previous verse. If the words have not been strung together, the *Pa'badong* continues to sing vowel letters such as E or O to keep the song's rhythm flowing without interruption. At the end of the previous verse, the singer lowers his voice so that the following verse spoken by *Indo Badong* can be heard clearly by all singers after *Indo Badong* says the next verse, again greeted by other singers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The presentation form of *Ma'badong* music has several important aspects that reflect how this music is performed in the context of the *Rambu Solo* ceremony, namely players, place and time, instruments, costumes, and processions or presentation stages. Regarding presentation form, *Ma'badong* music is delivered through vocal singing without musical instrument accompaniment. The *Pa'badong* singers form a large circle formation and sing the verses alternately. The presentation is done directly in an open space, held at night and during the day. The *Ma'badong* procession begins with *Ma'tabe* (greeting or excuse), followed by the core part (*Issi*), and closes with *Ma'passundun* (closing). The typical costumes, such as Toraja woven sarongs and clothes in red and black shirts or shirts, reinforce this ritual's symbolic grief and respect.

Regarding function, *Ma'badong* acts as a ritual tool in implementing the *Rambu Solo* ceremony, which has spiritual value in assisting the spirit's journey to the afterlife or *Puya*. In addition, *Ma'badong* also functions as a medium of entertainment presented to family and guests, a symbol of Torajan cultural identity, and a communication tool to convey social messages, history, and moral teachings. It is also a form of aesthetic expression that reflects the depth of feelings, solidarity, and respect for ancestors—the meaning of the poems in *Ma'badong*, or *Kadong Badong* as it is called. The poems contain various messages, including (1) advice and moral advice for the living; (2) an expression of sadness and loss at the departure of a loved one; (3) a depiction of the spirit's journey to the afterlife, and (4) prayers and hopes that the deceased will have a proper place in the afterlife. This shows that *Ma'badong* lyrics are not just an art form but a medium for transmitting ancestral values and teachings.

Summative evaluation is applied once a month by assessing students regarding aspects of mastery of note understanding and piano playing skills. In contrast, a diagnostic evaluation is applied to children who have difficulty distinguishing two black keys on the piano, so the color marking method is applied. The questionnaire results proved that the students succeeded in the learning targets: development, influence, interest, and effectiveness. Parents gave an upbeat assessment by answering a Google form questionnaire distributed to 10 parents/guardians regarding student achievement results when applying the color marking method. Thus, students are achieved in learning using the color marking method on the piano.


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