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Food Heritage as Cultural Text: Reading the Traditional Cuisine of the Togutil Tribe from A Socio-Anthropological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the traditional cuisine of the Togutil people in North Halmahera, focusing on four main foods: Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua. This study departed from the assumption that food was not merely an object of consumption, but a cultural text that carries layers of social, ecological, historical, and political meaning. Using a culinary ethnographic approach, this study combined participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of culinary documents and artifacts. The analysis was conducted by integrating cultural ecology theory (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998), habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2010), collective memory (Halbwachs, 2020; Assmann, 2011), and the framework of cultural and postcolonial resistance (Hall, 1990; Said, 2003; Spivak, 2010). The results of the study showed that Togutil cuisine serves as an edible archive, combining ecological knowledge, social practices, solidarity, spirituality, and an arena of resistance against global food homogenization. Paruda symbolizes ecological adaptation and food sovereignty, Waji represents agrarian solidarity and hospitality, and Dodol affirms technical skills and cultural capital. At the same time, Halua becomes a medium of respect for ancestors and symbolic resistance. Theoretically, this study expands the horizons of sociological and anthropological studies of food by introducing the concept of "culinary social memory." Methodologically, this study affirms the relevance of culinary ethnography as a reflective approach to reading the connections between food, culture, and power. Practically, this research emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional cuisine as a strategy for food sovereignty, intergenerational education, and advocacy for customary rights amid the pressures of modernization and globalization.

Keywords: Food Sociology; Food Anthropology; Traditional Cuisine; Togutil; Food Sovereignty; Collective Memory; Postcolonialism.

INTRODUCTION

The Togutil tribe in North Halmahera, North Maluku, is one of the indigenous communities that still maintains a traditional way of life amid the increasingly strong tide of modernization (Haba 2020). The Togutil tribe, also

known as O'Hongana Manyawa—which means *"orangutan*"—is an indigenous community that inhabits the interior of Halmahera Island, North Maluku. Historically, they are believed to be part of the Tobelo tribe who chose to isolate themselves in the forest to avoid colonial interaction and outside influence from the pre-colonial to Dutch colonial periods (Yakub, 2019; Rizki & Asteria, 2023). This isolation gave rise to a distinct identity that differentiates them from the coastal Tobelo group.

The origins of the Togutil tribe are closely related to the migration and internal fragmentation of the Tobelo community. Colonial records show that in the early 20th century, this community was taxed by the Dutch East Indies government, which prompted some of them to migrate further inland (Munandar & Mikail, 2022). Their nomadic lifestyle, moving from place to place following the availability of food sources, strengthened their attachment to the forest as a living and spiritual space (Yakub, 2019). In terms of language, the Togutil people use a dialect of the Tobelo language, which is categorized as one of the regional languages in North Maluku (Fokaaya et al., 2014). This dialect differs from the coastal Tobelo language due to the adaptation of vocabulary from the forest environment and traditional belief systems. Language is an important tool in preserving ecological knowledge, rituals, and customary norms that have been passed down from generation to generation.

The main characteristics of the Togutil community are reflected in their forest-based subsistence lifestyle: hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation, and using sago as their staple food (Bayau et al., 2019). Their social system is bound by strong internal solidarity, mutual cooperation values, and traditional rituals such as gomatere, a traditional healing practice performed by a shaman or o *gomatere (*Abdulrahman, 2014). They view the forest as their home and spiritual center; every tree, animal, and river is treated as an entity with a soul (Yakub, 2019). In their cosmology, there is a belief in Jou Ma Dutu, the supreme power that rules the universe, as well as ancestral spirits called o *gomanga.* This belief shapes the ethical relationship between humans and nature, which is reflected in sustainable hunting rules, prohibitions on indiscriminate tree felling, and selective use of medicinal plants (Taib et al., 2021; Tukuboya et al., 2024).

Along with modernization and the expansion of extractive industries, particularly mining and deforestation, the existence of the Togutil tribe faces serious threats. Many of their customary forest areas have been reduced, affecting their subsistence patterns and access to traditional medicine (Rizki & Asteria, 2023). Nevertheless, they demonstrate cultural resilience by maintaining traditional practices such as the ecological hunting calendar and distinctive cuisine—for example, *Paruda* and *Waji*—which serve as symbols of identity and a means of resistance against cultural homogenization (Haba, 2020; Tamalene et al., 2023). Thus, discussing the origins, language, character, and history of the Togutil tribe provides an important framework for understanding their cultural practices in a contemporary context. This background also forms the basis for analyzing traditional culinary heritage and ecological wisdom, which not only reflect ecological adaptation strategies but also contain social, symbolic, and historical meanings. A comprehensive understanding of the tribe's background will enrich the interpretation of the report, highlighting not only culinary practices but also the identity, collective memory, and cultural dynamics of the Togutil tribe.

The four main culinary items that are the focus of this study—Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua—represent more than just food. Paruda, for example, is a processed toxic cassava that is specially prepared to remove linamarin content, reflecting *indigenous ecological knowledge* that has been passed down from generation to generation (Harris 1998). Waji, dodol, and halua are not only served on a daily basis, but also play an important role in traditional rituals, family banquets, and collective celebrations, which symbolically strengthen social cohesion and the value of hospitality (Turner 1969; Bourdieu 1984). Their culinary practices are not limited to fulfilling nutritional needs, but are also laden with social, symbolic, and spiritual values, making them part of the intangible cultural heritage that represents the identity and collective memory of the community (Geertz 1973; Halbwachs 1992). However, this culinary heritage now faces serious threats due to modernization, food globalization, and cultural commodification (Appadurai 1996; Hobsbawm 1983). Shifting preferences among the younger generation, the penetration of instant foods, and the homogenization of global tastes have the potential to erode the cultural values inherent in traditional Togutil cuisine. This is where the urgency of this research lies: examining cuisine not merely as food, but as a cultural text that contains a system of values, historical memory, and local knowledge that continues to be negotiated in changing times (Robertson 1995).

Previous research on the Togutil community has largely focused on ethnobotanical aspects or subsistence patterns (Monk et al. 1997; Wallace 2018), while studies highlighting the social, symbolic, and historical meanings of culinary practices have not been conducted comprehensively. This gap opens up space for proposing an analysis that combines cultural ecology theory (Steward 1955), habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), and collective memory (Halbwachs 1992) within a reflective and multidimensional framework. This study aims to analyze the meaning of Togutil traditional cuisine through eleven socio-anthropological dimensions—covering ecology, identity, social solidarity, health, education, cultural politics, gender, resistance to modernization, cultural economy, acculturation, and historical memory—and to offer a new theoretical framework called "culinary social memory."

This concept is intended to broaden the understanding of how cuisine functions as a cultural instrument that records history, affirms identity, and strengthens social sustainability in the face of the dynamics of modernity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Analyzing traditional cuisine as a socio-cultural phenomenon requires a multidimensional theoretical framework capable of explaining the interconnectedness between ecology, identity, memory, and cultural politics. Julian Steward's (1955) cultural ecology theory provides an important foundation with emphasizing the relationship between subsistence, technology, and the environment in forming social organizations. Within this framework, food not only functions as a source of biological energy, but also as a strategy for human adaptation to their ecosystem. This is reflected in the process of processing poisonous cassava into Paruda, which requires ecological skills and is passed down from generation to generation in the Togutil community (Harris, 1998). Marvin Harris (1998), through cultural materialism, deepens this idea by emphasizing that culinary choices are often not determined by taste preferences alone, but by ecological rationality, nutritional needs, and energy efficiency. Thus, traditional foods are understood as products of ecological and social interactions, not just the result of taste.

Furthermore, traditional cuisine has symbolic and historical dimensions. Maurice Halbwachs (1992/2020) shows that memory is collective and lives on through shared practices. Jan Assmann (2011) adds the idea of *cultural memory*, in which food can function as *a mnemonic device* that archives ancestral narratives and historical experiences. In the context of Togutil, Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua act as "edible archives" that record experiences of subsistence, harvest gratitude, and communal solidarity. Pierre Bourdieu (1984/2010), through the concepts of *habitus* and *cultural capital,* emphasizes that eating patterns and serving techniques are expressions of social dispositions instilled through the process of socialization. Habitus determines not only "what is eaten," but also "how" and "with whom" something is eaten. For the Togutil community, the complex Paruda processing technique, the aesthetics of Waji wrappings, or the ritual status of Dodol and Halua are cultural capital that strengthens identity and reproduces gender-based social structures, in which women play a central role as guardians of culinary knowledge (Tamalene et al., 2023).

The political dimension becomes increasingly apparent when cuisine is understood as an arena of resistance. Hall (1990) argues that cultural practices are spaces for negotiating meaning and identity, while Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983/2012) assert that traditions are often "recreated" in response to modern homogenization. In the context of Togutil, preserving Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua amid the penetration of instant foods is a form of symbolic sovereignty as well as a strategy of resistance against the dominance of global tastes. The postcolonial framework expands this analysis by highlighting the power relations that shape culinary representations. Said (1978/2003), through *Orientalism,* shows how non-Western cultures are often positioned as "exotic" by colonial discourse. Spivak (1988/2010) adds that indigenous communities are often positioned as *subalterns* whose voices are silenced. In the culinary context, local food traditions are often reduced to tourist attractions or market commodities, regardless of their ecological and historical significance. Thus, the Togutil's efforts to preserve their cuisine can be read as *a counter-discourse* that rejects food neocolonialism and affirms the epistemic authority of indigenous communities over their local knowledge.

Empirical studies on Togutil have so far focused mainly on ecological, ethnobotanical, and basic social dynamics aspects. Tamalene et al. (2023) documented traditional knowledge about food plants, which shows the existence of *a food–medicine continuum*. Traditional health research highlights the role of women in preparing food that is also therapeutic (International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, 2023). Conservation studies note the application of customary norms in preserving forests and ecological hunting calendars (Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, 2024). Studies on acculturation highlight the role of opinion leaders in introducing new food patterns (International Journal of Environmental and Social Sciences Studies, 2023). Legal studies show how deforestation, mining expansion, and customary land disputes threaten the Togutil food system (International Journal of Education, Research and Social Science, 2024).

Despite their valuable contributions, these studies have not yet positioned cuisine as a cultural text that comprehensively integrates the dimensions of ecology, memory, habitus, gender, resistance, and postcolonialism. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by presenting a multidimensional analysis, in which Togutil traditional cuisine is understood as an archive of identity, a cultural political instrument, and an arena of resistance against the homogenization of modernity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic framework that positions the traditional cuisine of the Togutil tribe as a cultural text that can be "read" through symbols, practices, and social narratives. The

ethnographic approach was chosen because it allows researchers to delve into the life experiences of communities and understand culinary practices not only as technical activities, but also as arenas of identity, collective memory, and cultural resistance (Geertz, 1973; Spradley, 1979; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In the tradition of food sociology and food anthropology research, ethnography is considered the most effective method for exploring the meanings attached to food, given that food often operates in the symbolic, ritualistic, and everyday realms (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002).

The research location was in Titipa Hamlet, Dodadag Village, East Wasilei Subdistrict, East Halmahera Regency, an area that is the center of the Togutil community's settlement as well as a meeting place between tradition and modernity. This context is important because traditional cuisine is not only practiced in everyday life but also becomes a medium for negotiating identity in interactions with outside communities. Research participants were selected purposively and followed up with *snowball sampling,* including traditional elders as guardians of culinary traditions, women as food processors and agents of knowledge inheritance, and younger generations who have experienced shifts in meaning and taste due to modernization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, this study seeks to capture the dynamics across generations and genders that color Togutil culinary practices.

Data was collected through a combination of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of documents and culinary artifacts. In participatory observation, researchers were directly involved in the processing of Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua, noting the techniques, symbolism, and social context of each stage of processing. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 main informants and 6 additional informants to record narratives of memory, symbolic meaning, and cultural values attached to food. Document analysis included recipe notes, cooking utensils, and folk tales related to food, which were treated as cultural texts laden with symbolic meaning (Atkins & Bowler, 2001).

Data analysis was conducted following the qualitative stages formulated by Strauss and Corbin (1998), namely *open coding* to identify initial categories such as ecology, identity, memory, resistance, gender, and cultural capital; *axial coding* to connect these categories with the theoretical framework; and *selective coding* to formulate the main themes that position cuisine as a multidimensional cultural text. The interpretation process was carried out using Geertz's (1973) *thick description*, so that food was not only understood as a material object but also as a system of meaning that lives through symbols, rituals, and social actions.

Data validity was maintained through triangulation of methods—combining observation, interviews, and documentation—as well as triangulation of sources by involving various generations and social groups in the Togutil community. *Member checking* was conducted by confirming the initial interpretation results with the informants, while audiovisual documentation was used to strengthen the empirical evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, the results of this study not only represent the researcher's views but are also recognized and legitimized by the community being studied.

As a study that combines food sociology and food anthropology, this research attempts to read Togutil cuisine from two sides. From a food sociology perspective, this study looks at how food shapes and reproduces social structures, classes, and identities through consumption practices and banquet rituals (Bourdieu, 2010; Collins, 2004). From the perspective of food anthropology, this study emphasizes the connection between food and ecology, cosmology, and history, as demonstrated by the tradition of processing bitter cassava into Paruda, which preserves ecological and spiritual knowledge (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002; Wilk, 2006). With this methodology, Togutil cuisine is treated as a gateway to understanding the relationship between humans, nature, and culture within a historical and political framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on field findings that show that the traditional cuisine of the Togutil tribe cannot be understood solely as a means of fulfilling nutritional needs, but rather as a cultural text that contains layers of social, symbolic, historical, and political meaning. Four main cuisines—Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua—show that food functions as a medium of identity, an archive of collective memory, and an instrument of resistance against the homogenization of modernity. Within the framework of the sociology of food, food is viewed as a social practice laden with symbols, class, and identity. Bourdieu (2010) asserts that food preferences, processing techniques, and presentation methods are forms *of habitus* that are both inherited and reinforce social structures. Similarly, Collins (2004), through the concept of *interaction ritual chains,* shows that the practice of eating together strengthens social bonds through repetitive rituals. This perspective helps us understand how Togutil cuisine, both in family gatherings and traditional celebrations, becomes a vehicle for solidarity that binds the community.

Meanwhile, food anthropology emphasizes the connection between cuisine and ecology, cosmology, and history. Steward (1955) and Harris (1998) view food as an ecological adaptation strategy, while Mintz and Du Bois (2002) highlight food as a mirror of social structures and historical transformations. In the case of Togutil, Paruda not only represents technical skills in processing poisonous cassava, but also ecological and spiritual knowledge

passed down across generations. Thus, food becomes an ecological archive as well as a symbol of the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors. The dimension of collective memory adds reflective depth. Halbwachs (2020) asserts that memory lives in social practice, while Assmann (2011) explains how food can be *a mnemonic device* that connects generations. Togutil cuisine functions as an "edible archive," storing stories of hunger, migration, and harvest gratitude that continue to be kept alive in daily culinary practices and traditional rituals.

Furthermore, Togutil cuisine also serves as an arena for cultural resistance. Hall (1990) mentions that cultural practices are spaces for negotiating identity, while Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) emphasize how traditions are often recreated in response to the threat of globalization. By continuing to produce Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua traditionally, even though instant foods are increasingly dominant, the Togutil community affirms its symbolic sovereignty. In a postcolonial framework, Togutil cuisine can also be read as *a counter-discourse* to the practice of food neocolonialism. Said (2003) shows how non-Western cultures are often positioned as exotic in colonial discourse, while Spivak (2010) emphasizes that indigenous communities are often reduced to *subalterns* who have no voice. Preserving traditional cuisine amid the tide of modernization means rejecting such reductionism and asserting epistemic authority over local knowledge. Thus, the discussion of Togutil cuisine not only touches on aspects of taste or processing techniques but also shows how food becomes an instrument of identity, memory, and resistance. The next section will describe in detail the symbolic, social, and ecological meanings of each food—Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua—to show how each dish represents the socio-cultural dynamics of the Togutil community.

Paruda

As a staple food made from bitter cassava, Paruda shows how local ecological knowledge—shaped by the risk of cyanogenic toxicity—is translated into standardized processing techniques through soaking, squeezing, drying, and fermentation. These techniques are passed down across generations and carried out collectively, so that each stage is not merely "technical," but rather embodies a habitus that encompasses bodily discipline, social coordination, and the ethics of collective work (Bourdieu, 2010). Within a cultural ecology framework, Paruda is an adaptation strategy that combines simple technology with the forest environment of Halmahera; it demonstrates the "fit" between subsistence, technology, and the environment that Steward (1955) viewed as the core of social organization formation. The perspective of cultural materialism adds that the choice to maintain Paruda is not primarily driven by taste, but rather by efficient ecological-energetic calculations within the forest subsistence regime (Harris, 1998). Your field findings—a multi-stage process that maintains consumption security and collective work efficiency—are in line with this framework.

Paruda functions as an ethnic identity marker that binds people, forests, and ancestors. On a sensory level, it is indeed a source of carbohydrates, but on a meaningful level, it is "who we are" in the Togutil social horizon. This is where *habitus* comes into play: the preference for Paruda, the methods of processing and serving it, and the decision to preserve it amid the influx of instant foods are expressions of cultural capital that reinforce internal differentiation and cultural boundaries with "the outside" (Bourdieu, 2010). Your manuscript has emphasized Paruda as a food icon that distinguishes Togutil from surrounding communities—a practice of distinction that is closely linked to *habitus (*Bourdieu) and social cohesion (Durkheim).

From a symbolic anthropological perspective, Paruda can also be interpreted through the *purity–danger* dialectic (Douglas, 2003/1972). Bitter cassava is a "dangerous substance" that is transformed into "suitable" and "useful" food through technical and moral rituals—soaking, squeezing, drying. The ritual of removing toxins is not merely a hygienic procedure; it is a purification ritual that gives social legitimacy to food, affirms the boundary between what is threatening and what is saving, and at the same time organizes the moral cosmos of timeliness, sequence, and appropriateness of domestic work. The correct sequence is considered a condition for the validity of food; deviations are remembered through cautionary tales that shape *collective memory (*Halbwachs, 2020; Assmann, 2011), as noted in your manuscript that technical knowledge is always accompanied by narratives of famine, migration, and survival strategies (Halbwachs/Assmann).

The organization of Paruda work reveals a moral economy of the household *embedded* in kinship relations (Polanyi, 2001) as well as limited *gift/barter* (Mauss, 2016/1925). Paruda is sometimes exchanged for goods from outside communities, but its exchange value is more symbolic than commercial: it affirms the authenticity and dignity of local knowledge, not merely a commodity waiting for a price (Mauss; Scott, 1976). Evidence from the field that Paruda functions as a barter commodity with symbolic value reinforces this reading.

The gender dimension occupies a central position in the Paruda knowledge economy. Women dominate the hydro-detoxification phase—soaking, squeezing, drying—while men are more prominent in the provision of materials and drying infrastructure. This complementary division of labor affirms women as "guardians of taste" and curators of food security, while men become providers of energy and workspace. Through the lens of food sociology, the gender relations manifested in Paruda kitchens are *ritual interactions* that bind collective emotions (Collins, 2004) as well as devices for the reproduction of knowledge across generations (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The gender findings in your manuscript—women as managers of the core process and men in physical labor—are consistent with this reading.

As an archive of memory, Paruda activates *a mnemonic device* that stores stories of hunger, harvest rituals, and experiences of displacement. Each processing session is *a history lesson* demonstrated through hands, water, fire, and time: knowledge is not transmitted as "information," but as "precision of movement" and "shared rhythm." With *thick description (*Geertz, 1973), the experience is read as a text that combines taste, aroma, the sound of squeezing, and the color of the pulp—establishing a relationship between humans, forests, and ancestors. This narrative of memory has been documented in your manuscript as an integral part of Paruda's practice. When modernization offered fast commercial food, Paruda was preserved using traditional techniques. At the cultural-political level, this is a form of resistance against the homogenization of taste (Hall, 1990; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012) and—in a postcolonial *key—a counter-discourse* to the exoticization and commodification of indigenous cuisine (Said, 2003; Spivak, 2010). Your manuscript shows two faces at once: resistance through daily practice, but also selective adaptation such as variations in taste and the function of Paruda as barter. Rather than signifying "loss," these variations demonstrate glocalization (Robertson, 1995) that

preserving the symbolic core while embracing new forms of value circulation.

Paruda must also be read within the spiritual ecology of Togutil. Belief in Jou Ma Dutu and relational ethics towards the forest—reflected in the prohibition of indiscriminate logging and hunting regulations—creates a moral horizon in which food is not merely the "fruit of labor," but rather the "fruit of relationships" that must be preserved. Under this horizon, Paruda is a *more-than-human* practice that binds humans to ancestral spirits and the forest landscape; therefore, violations of the processing sequence are understood not only as technically wrong, but also as morally–cosologically "inappropriate" (Douglas; Ingold, 2000). You have already explained this cosmological and ecological ethical foundation through sources on beliefs, forest norms, and the hunting calendar.

Existing Togutil research reinforces the above reading. Documentation of ethnobotanical knowledge shows the community's closeness to food and medicinal plants (Tamalene et al., 2023), while the ecological hunting calendar shows a subsistence timetable that is in harmony with the natural cycle (Tukuboya et al., 2024). Traditional health studies underscore the position of women in family care practices (Taib et al., 2021), and writings on the threat of deforestation emphasize the critical relationship between forest space and food sustainability (Rizki & Asteria, 2023). These findings collectively reveal the "ecosystem of meaning" in which Paruda operates—although, as you point out, studies that position Paruda as a text of identity and culinary politics are still rare, and this is the gap that this research fills.

Finally, reading Paruda as food sovereignty requires a framework that goes beyond "nutritional security." Food sovereignty here is the right to define for oneself what is good, appropriate, and fair to eat; the right to determine the rhythm of production–distribution–consumption based on one's own memory, ecology, and cosmology (Patel, 2009). Paruda is thus *a cultural infrastructure* that binds identity, memory, moral economy, and the politics of space—a living archive that affirms the collective subjectivity of the Togutil amid market pressures and narratives of modernization. Your field evidence—the function of symbolic barter, resistance to instant food, and ritual meaning—supports this proposition.

Waji

The culinary practices of the Togutil community show that food is never just about biological needs, but is also a social symbol, a medium of identity, and a cultural and political arena. One of the most important examples is *Waji*, a sweet snack made from sticky rice, brown sugar, and coconut, which is processed through boiling and steaming. The combination of these ingredients is not merely a matter of taste, but a reflection of a broad ecological connection—between shifting rice fields, mixed gardens, and the coast—which demonstrates a biodiversity-based subsistence system (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998). Thus, Waji is not only a dessert but also a form of ecological adaptation that connects humans with the natural landscape around them.

The meaning of Waji becomes even more prominent when viewed from the perspective of food sociology, particularly Bourdieu's (2010) ideas about *habitus* and *cultural capital*. The making and serving of Waji is not a random practice, but part of an inherited social disposition. The skills of wrapping with leaves, selecting quality ingredients, and presenting aesthetically represent cultural capital that marks the Togutil community as a group with a distinctive habitus of taste and aesthetics. In this context, Waji becomes a means of distinction that reinforces collective identity, though not in the sense of modern class stratification, but rather in the symbolic difference between "us" and "them."

Anthropologically, Waji functions as a social ritual that strengthens cohesion. It is usually present at traditional ceremonies, birth celebrations, or the welcoming of important guests, thus shifting its status from everyday food to sacred food. Douglas (2003) explains that food is a classification system that distinguishes the profane from the sacred and establishes social boundaries. The presence of Waji in collective rituals confirms that it is not only consumed but also "performed" as a symbol of social order. Durkheim (1995/1912) adds that such collective

rituals renew the moral solidarity of the community. Thus, every production and consumption of Waji serves to strengthen social networks while affirming the boundaries of Togutil ethnic identity.

The collective process of making Waji demonstrates the logic of ritual interaction as described by Collins (2004). The shared activities of preparing ingredients, wrapping, and steaming are not merely technical tasks, but also rituals that generate positive emotional energy and deepen a sense of solidarity. Your research manuscript shows how all family members, including women and children, are involved in the production of Waji (see Report Manuscript). This is consistent with the findings of Tamalene et al. (2023) on the Togutil community's food knowledge, which emphasizes that cuisine always involves cross-generational social relations. Thus, Waji functions as a vehicle *for social glue* that binds the community together.

The gender dimension in Waji production is also significant. Women play a central role in selecting ingredients, managing cooking techniques, and ensuring the aesthetics of presentation. This confirms DeVault's (1991) argument that the kitchen is a space of female authority and an arena for organizing caregiving work. In the Togutil context, women are not only "food providers" but also symbolic curators who determine culinary standards and ethics. The inheritance of knowledge through intergenerational mother-daughter learning practices is in line with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*, where culinary skills are passed down through direct practice, not just verbal instruction. The role of women in Waji reveals the interconnectedness of gender, food, and cultural reproduction.

In addition, Waji functions as an archive of collective memory. The sweet taste of palm sugar and the aroma of coconut bring back memories of harvest festivals, social rituals, and family togetherness in the past. Assmann (2011) refers to food as *cultural memory* that stores ancestral narratives, while Sutton (2001) emphasizes the sensory dimension of remembering. In Togutil practice, Waji becomes *a remembrance of* repasts—a means of reviving historical memory through taste and aroma. This is also in line with traditional health research that emphasizes the function of food as both therapy and a social memory binder (Taib et al., 2021).

At the economic level, Waji has a dual role: sometimes it is sold or exchanged, but its symbolic value far exceeds its economic value. Mauss (2016/1925) explains the concept *of the gift* as a logic of social exchange, in which the giving of food carries with it a moral obligation to reciprocate. In this framework, Waji functions more as a sign of solidarity and symbolic exchange than as a market commodity. Field findings that mention Waji as a barter object in limited interactions with outside communities show that this food remains within the orbit *of moral economy (*Polanyi, 2001), not full capitalism. However, Waji is not immune to the dynamics of modernization and globalization. Bread, biscuits, and instant foods are increasingly accessible, but Waji continues to be produced on special occasions. This reinforces the argument of Hall (1990) and Hobsbawm & Ranger (2012) that cultural practices often become arenas of resistance to global homogenization. Innovations such as the use of pandan flavor or modern packaging for souvenirs do not erase the symbolic meaning of Waji, but rather demonstrate glocalization—the adaptation of global forms into local frameworks (Robertson, 1995; Wilk, 2006). In this context, Waji remains a symbol of tradition as well as a means of adaptation to the modern world. From a critical food sociology perspective, Waji shows how culinary practices shape social structures, regulate gender power relations, and become an arena for identity politics. From an anthropological food perspective, Waji reveals the interconnectedness of humans with ecology, cosmology, and history. Both perspectives show that food is not neutral, but rather a locus where social, ecological, and political meanings are negotiated. The fact that research on Togutil has focused more on ecology, conservation, and health (Tamalene et al., 2023; Tukuboya et al., 2024) reveals a gap in the study of cuisine as a cultural text and instrument of identity. This study attempts to fill this gap by showing how Waji functions as a cultural archive, a medium of solidarity, and a form of political resistance.

Finally, Waji can be understood as a form of food sovereignty within the Togutil community. Patel (2009) asserts that food sovereignty is the right of communities to define what food is good, appropriate, and in line with their cultural values. Within a postcolonial framework, preserving Waji means rejecting the reduction of local cuisine to mere tourist exoticism or industrial commodities (Said, 2003; Spivak, 2010). Thus, Waji is more than just a sweet snack; it is a cultural political symbol that affirms the identity, memory, and autonomy of the Togutil community amid the tide of globalization.

Dodol

Togutil dodol, made from glutinous rice, coconut milk, and brown sugar, requires technical skills and precision in its preparation. The process of stirring for hours over an open fire demonstrates a high level of expertise as well as physical endurance, indicating that this food is the result of complex *cultural labor*. Within a cultural ecology framework, this practice shows how the Togutil community processes local resources with adaptive techniques that ensure food sustainability (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998). The local ingredients used emphasize the connection with the forest, field, and coconut garden ecosystems that support daily life. More than just a sweet snack, Dodol occupies a symbolic position as a representation of luxury in simplicity. It is present at major celebrations, traditional parties, or when welcoming important guests, making it an indicator of social status. Within Bourdieu's

framework (2010), Dodol functions as *cultural capital* that distinguishes special moments from daily routines. Thus, Dodol not only satisfies the sweet tooth but also serves as a sign of social distinction that reinforces the collective identity of the Togutil community.

The making of dodol also reveals the collective dimension of ritual. Because the lengthy stirring process requires a lot of energy, family members and community members usually take turns stirring the mixture while chatting or singing. This activity is in line with Collins' (2004) concept *of interaction ritual chains*, in which repeated interactions create emotional energy and strengthen social solidarity. In Durkheim's (1995/1912) sense, dodol becomes a sacred medium that binds the community through culinary rituals full of togetherness. The transition from the aspect of collectivity to the dimension of cultural capital confirms that dodol is a symbol of inherited skills. Technical knowledge regarding ingredient proportions, fire quality, and serving methods becomes a form of *embodied cultural capital (*Bourdieu, 2010). Cutting Dodol in specific patterns or wrapping it neatly with leaves shows how culinary aesthetics shape a distinctive habitus. This habitus not only reproduces tradition but also fosters pride in culinary expertise as a marker of Togutil gastronomic identity.

Gender dimensions once again play a central role. Women, as kitchen managers, are responsible for the success of Dodol, from selecting ingredients to determining the level of maturity. However, at the stirring stage, which requires considerable strength, men also participate, emphasizing the flexibility in the division of labor. This is in line with feminist studies on food that emphasize the kitchen as an arena for the production of women's knowledge (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013; DeVault, 1991), but also shows that in the context of collective work, gender is not entirely rigid. From the perspective of collective memory, Dodol becomes a narrative vessel. Its production process is often accompanied by stories about the harvest, the origin of the ingredients, or community events. This is in line with Halbwachs' (2020) idea of memory as a social construction, as well as Assmann's (2011) emphasis that cultural objects can function as *mnemonic devices*. Dodol, with its chewy texture and sweet taste, becomes a symbol that recalls collective experiences and community history.

The transition from memory to cultural politics shows how Dodol also functions as an arena of resistance. The presence of modern foods such as chocolate or candy among the younger generation does not displace Dodol's status as a ritual and special food. Within Hall's (1990) framework, preserving Dodol is a form of identity negotiation, while Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) emphasize that traditions are often recreated to counter the threat of global homogenization. Thus, Dodol becomes a symbol of cultural resistance against the penetration of instant foods. In economic terms, Dodol also displays a more dominant symbolic value than commercial value. Occasionally, Dodol is exchanged for goods or given as gifts in interactions with outside communities, but its value is not merely monetary. In line with Mauss's theory *of the gift* (2016/1925), Dodol operates within a logic of social reciprocity that strengthens kinship networks and moral status. This shows that Dodol is part of *a moral economy (*Polanyi, 2001), where social value is more important than market exchange.

The variations of Dodol that have begun to emerge, such as the addition of peanuts or sesame seeds, demonstrate the dynamics of selective acculturation. Robertson (1995) refers to this phenomenon as *glocalization*, in which global influences are reworked within a local framework. Thus, despite innovations in taste and form, the essence of Dodol as a symbol of identity and celebration is not lost. This adaptation process is also in line with Wilk's (2006) argument that traditional foods in the global era are often preserved precisely through innovation.

From a critical food sociology perspective, Dodol shows how food regulates social structures, shapes gender relations, and becomes a symbol of status. From a food anthropology perspective, Dodol shows the connection between humans, ecology, and cosmology. Research on Togutil to date—such as Tamalene et al. (2023) on food knowledge, Taib et al. (2021) on traditional health, and Tukuboya et al. (2024) on the hunting calendar—has focused more on ecological and medical aspects. Analyzing Dodol as a cultural text broadens the scope of the study by emphasizing that cuisine is also an instrument of memory, resistance, and identity politics. Thus, Dodol is more than just a dessert. It is a symbol of social flexibility—its chewy texture is interpreted as representing the community's ability to adapt to change without losing its identity. In the context of food sovereignty, Dodol is evidence that the Togutil community has a culinary system that is not only nutritionally adequate but also aesthetically, symbolically, and politically valuable. Patel (2009) asserts that food sovereignty involves the right of communities to determine what foods are appropriate to their values and history; in this framework, Dodol is a symbol of Togutil food politics.

The overall analysis shows that Dodol functions as a living cultural archive. It binds together the dimensions of ecology, aesthetics, gender, memory, moral economy, and political resistance in one culinary practice. By placing Dodol within the framework of critical food sociology and anthropology, we see how traditional cuisine can be a gateway to understanding the dynamics of identity, solidarity, and resistance of indigenous communities amid the tide of globalization. Dodol, ultimately, is a "chewy food" that not only satisfies the body but also reinforces the cultural resilience of the Togutil community.

Halua

Halua, a traditional snack made from peanuts, brown sugar, and coconut oil, has a meaning that transcends its consumptive function. In the Togutil culinary landscape, Halua is a food produced for important events, traditional ceremonies, and collective gatherings. Its ingredients, which come from mixed gardens and forest products, demonstrate the close connection between food and the local ecosystem. Within the framework of cultural ecology, Halua is evidence that the Togutil community integrates subsistence strategies with the availability of tropical forest resources (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998). Thus, this food can be interpreted as a representation of ecological attachment as well as subsistence adaptation rooted in the environment. Furthermore, Halua occupies a special position as a symbol of cultural identity. Its presence in traditional rituals makes Halua more than just a snack; it is a medium for articulating ethnic identity. Bourdieu (2010) emphasizes that food preferences, serving techniques, and taste aesthetics are part of the habitus that reproduces social structures. In the Togutil context, Halua operates a distinctive *taste* habitus—this food carries a social message that they are different from outside communities while reinforcing internal solidarity. This identity is strengthened through the practice of banquets, where Halua is often placed in a central position as a sign of respect and collective openness.

From a food sociology perspective, Halua also serves as a vehicle for the formation of cultural capital. The process of making it requires skills in processing peanuts, adjusting the proportion of sugar, and controlling the texture of the dough. This knowledge is not only technical but also aesthetic, as Halua is often cut or served in certain shapes that signify beauty and order. This cultural capital is passed down from generation to generation, marking who has culinary authority in the community. As Bourdieu (2010) suggests, such skills form symbolic differentiation in everyday life while reinforcing the social position of those who master them. At the collective level, the production of Halua demonstrates a strong communal character. The process often involves cross-family cooperation, where women and men share roles according to their capacities. This collective activity is in line with Collins' (2004) view of *interaction ritual chains,* where repeated actions in a particular social space generate positive emotional energy and strengthen social cohesion. Halua, thus, is not only a final product that is eaten together, but also the result of a social process that produces communal solidarity.

Gender dimensions play a central role in Halua. Women are usually the ones who determine the quality of taste and texture, ensuring that Halua meets the community's taste standards. However, because the process of stirring heated nuts and sugar requires physical strength, men are also involved at certain stages. This shows that the division of labor based on gender is flexible and dynamic. DeVault (1991) emphasizes that women's culinary work is not merely a domestic activity, but a form of cultural work that regulates social relations. In the case of Halua, the kitchen becomes an arena where women hold symbolic authority, as well as a space where men participate as part of mutual cooperation. Within the framework of collective memory, Halua preserves traces of history and communal experiences. Each time Halua is made, it is often accompanied by stories about harvests, ancestral myths, or tales of migration, making this food a narrative medium. Halbwachs (2020) states that memory is a social construct that lives through collective practices, while Assmann (2011) emphasizes that cultural objects can function as *mnemonic devices*. Halua, with its sweet taste and distinctive aroma, serves as a medium connecting the current generation with narratives of the past, shaping the continuity of identity amid the currents of change.

Halua can also be understood as an arena of cultural resistance. Although modern sweet foods such as biscuits and candy have begun to enter the market through interaction, Halua is still preserved in traditional ceremonies. Hall (1990) emphasizes that cultural identity is formed through negotiation and resistance to homogenization. In this context, preserving Halua means rejecting the dominance of global food and asserting authority over one's own culinary traditions. Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) also remind us that traditions are often renewed in response to external threats; Halua, with minor variations in ingredients or presentation, demonstrates the dynamics of a tradition that continues to adapt without losing its essence. Economically, Halua operates on a more symbolic than commercial logic. Sometimes Halua is exchanged for other goods or given as gifts, but its value is more moral and social than market-based. In Mauss's (2016/1925) perspective, Halua can be seen as a form of *gift* that contains reciprocal obligations, strengthening social bonds within the community. Polanyi (2001) adds that this kind of practice shows the existence of *a moral economy,* where exchange is regulated by the values of solidarity and kinship. Thus, Halua functions as a sign of social relations, not just a commodity product.

Variations of Halua have begun to emerge among the younger generation, for example, by adding ingredients such as sesame seeds or roasted peanuts to enrich the flavor. This adaptation reflects the phenomenon *of glocalization* (Robertson, 1995), where external influences are reworked within a local framework. Halua retains its primary symbolic meaning, but these small innovations demonstrate the community's ability to adapt. As Wilk (2006) explains, culinary traditions survive through innovation, not stagnation. Thus, Halua serves as an example of how tradition and modernity can intertwine without erasing identity. When viewed through the lens of critical food sociology, Halua demonstrates how cuisine shapes gender power relations, cultural capital, and social solidarity. From a food anthropology perspective, Halua reveals the relationship between humans and ecology, memory, and cosmology. Previous research on Togutil has focused more on ecological aspects (Tamalene et al., 2023), health

(Taib et al., 2021), and conservation (Tukuboya et al., 2024), but has not yet positioned food as a complex cultural text. This analysis fills that gap by showing how Halua is an important instrument in the formation of identity and cultural resistance.

Halua, ultimately, is a symbol of food sovereignty. Patel (2009) asserts that food sovereignty is the right of communities to determine what food is good, appropriate, and in line with their values. Within a postcolonial framework, preserving Halua means rejecting the reduction of traditional food to mere tourist exoticism or industrial commodities (Said, 2003; Spivak, 2010). Halua affirms that the Togutil community has the capacity to define its own cuisine, preserve ancestral memory, and confront globalization without losing its identity.

The overall analysis shows that Halua is a living cultural archive that unites ecology, habitus, cultural capital, memory, gender, solidarity, and resistance in one culinary practice. With its sweet and dense texture, Halua becomes a metaphor for social integrity and flexibility: it represents the Togutil community's ability to face change, absorb influences, and maintain the essence of their collective identity. From a sociological and anthropological perspective on food, Halua is not merely a snack, but a cultural and political symbol that affirms the existence of the Togutil community in an ever-changing world.

Comparative Synthesis: Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua in the Perspective of Food Sociology and Anthropology

When analyzed comparatively, the four Togutil cuisines—Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua—present a complete framework of how food functions as a complex cultural text. Each type of food has its own ecological, social, and symbolic logic, but in practice, they form a complementary matrix. From a cultural ecology perspective, Paruda represents subsistence adaptation to hazardous food resources (bitter cassava), while Waji, Dodol, and Halua demonstrate the utilization of relatively safe garden, forest, and coastal products (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998). Thus, these foods collectively reinforce the Togutil's relationship with a diverse ecological landscape.

Table 1. Comparative Sociological–Anthropological Culinary Analysis Matrix of the Togutil Tribe

No.	Dimension	Paruda	Waji	Dodol	Halua
1	Social Relations	Eaten together after hunting → strengthens social solidarity based on subsistence activities.	Served during harvests and family celebrations → builds cohesion and collective gratitude.	Collective cooking → becomes a space for sharing stories, singing, and renewing social networks.	Eaten together at traditional gatherings → a symbol of egalitarianism and hospitality.
2	Social Structure	Processing bitter cassava requires coordination among family members and neighbours → distribution of roles across age groups.	The production involves the cooperation of women, children, and youth → symbolic division of labour.	Marking important occasions → positioning the host family as culinary authorities.	Presentation in traditional banquets → reinforces the symbolic hierarchy between guests and hosts.
3	Subsistence Economy	Dependent on forest products (cassava, bamboo); emphasizing food self-sufficiency.	Utilizing sticky rice, sugar palm, and coconuts from local farms → demonstrating agricultural sustainability.	Reliance on local crops (sticky rice, coconuts, brown sugar) → dependence on harvest cycles.	Based on peanuts, sugar, coconut → reflects the diversification of traditional food sources.
4	Cultural Identity	Ecological symbol → identity as a community capable of overcoming natural toxins (linamarin).	Marking the simplicity and modesty of life → cuisine as a non-luxurious identity.	Luxury in simplicity → festive food that marks sacred moments.	Authentic identity → simplicity versus industrial aesthetics.
5	Rituals & Traditions	Sometimes presented at ceremonies to give	A must-have snack for harvest festivals	Prepared for traditional	Attending traditional ceremonies → a

		thanks for the forest's bounty → a symbol of the bond between humans and the forest.	→ a symbol of the continuity of agrarian traditions.	ceremonies and family celebrations → a symbol of prayer and blessing.	symbol of respect for ancestors and guests.
6	Ecology & Environment	Bamboo is used as a cooking vessel → harmony with natural materials.	Banana leaves as wrappers → environmentally friendly practices and ecological cycles.	Brown color resembling forest soil → metaphor for connection with the ecosystem.	The aroma of nuts and sugar → nostalgia for traditional wood-fired kitchens.
7	Symbolic Meaning	The transformation of poisonous tubers into food → a metaphor for adaptation and survival.	Sweet and simple taste → the philosophy of life is to be content, honest, and share.	Chewy texture → symbol of social flexibility and solidarity.	Sweet and crunchy → a metaphor for warm and solid togetherness.
8	Inheritance of Values	Ecological knowledge about cassava is passed down orally → younger generations learn directly in the fields and kitchens.	Recipes are passed down through mutual cooperation between generations of women.	Complex cooking skills are passed down through collective experience → a symbol of family expertise.	The value of togetherness is passed down through traditional feasting practices.
9	Cultural Politics & Resistance	Becoming a symbol of resistance to instant food → claiming ecological identity.	Affirming agrarian-customary identity → distinct from urban industrial food.	Traditional dodol → fighting against modern culinary homogenization.	Halua as a traditional feast → rejects the dominance of outside tastes and full commodification.
10	Gender	Men hunt, women process → complementary gender division of labor.	Women dominate cooking, men provide the ingredients → the kitchen as a space of female authority.	Long stirring process → men and women take turns → flexible gender.	Women as the primary managers of taste → men provide physical strength.
11	Spirituality & Sacredness	Associated with the spirit of the forest and ancestors → symbol of harmony between humans and nature.	Symbol of gratitude for the harvest → food as a spiritual offering.	Dodol is present in family rituals → a symbol of prayer and prosperity.	Halua is served in traditional rituals → symbolic offerings to ancestors.
12	Nutritional Value	High carbohydrate content; pressing technique → adaptation to linamarin toxins.	High energy from sticky rice, coconut milk, palm sugar → energy-boosting food.	High in calories and fat → highly nutritious festive foods.	The combination of carbohydrates and sugar → quick energy; the crunchy texture adds variety to the diet.
13	Adaptation & Change	Promoted at cultural festivals → symbolizes local authenticity.	Made into traditional souvenirs → integration into the tourism economy.	Easily accepted by the modern market → potential for commodification.	Started being marketed at festivals → transformation from traditional consumption to commercial

					consumption.
14	Glocalization & Hybridization	Paruda remains traditional despite entering global festivals → a symbol of authenticity.	Waji with pandan variations & modern packaging → an example of localization.	Dodol is varied with peanuts or sesame seeds → acculturation of global flavours.	Halua was presented at an interregional event → a symbol of identity in the global arena.
15	Collective Memory	Reminding the younger generation of their ancestors' struggle for survival.	Becoming a symbol of gratitude for the harvest → the community's agrarian memory.	Bringing back memories of large family celebrations and traditional banquets.	Reminiscent of ancestral feasts → nostalgia for kinship and spirituality.

In terms of identity, each food has a different social role. Paruda serves as an icon of everyday food and a symbol of ecological independence, while Waji emphasizes the value of hospitality in collective celebrations. Dodol displays symbolic luxury in simplicity, and Halua becomes a medium of respect in social rituals. These functional differences show that Togutil cultural identity is shaped through layers of cuisine according to social context. This is in line with Bourdieu's (2010) theory that taste and food preferences not only reflect biological needs but also social practices that affirm who "we" are in relation to "others."

From a habitus perspective, the four foods reflect social dispositions formed through socialization and the inheritance of traditions. Paruda shapes a habitus of hard work, patience, and complex detoxification techniques; Waji teaches aesthetic values and banquet etiquette; Dodol emphasizes technical skills in lengthy processing; and Halua displays values of order, respect, and aesthetic neatness. This culinary habitus not only shapes taste but also builds a taste structure that affirms internal solidarity and external differentiation (Bourdieu, 2010).

Collective memory also operates differently for each food. Paruda stores stories of hunger, migration, and survival strategies; Waji revives memories of harvest festivals and family togetherness; Dodol conveys stories of bountiful harvests and historic moments in the community; while Halua serves as a sweet archive of respect, traditional rituals, and ancestral narratives. Within the framework of Halbwachs (2020) and Assmann (2011), these foods become *mnemonic devices* that ensure ancestral narratives remain alive through taste, aroma, and consumption practices. Thus, Togutil cuisine is an *edible archive* that preserves traces of collective identity.

Gender aspects reveal patterns that are both consistent and diverse. In all four culinary traditions, women act as guardians of knowledge and curators of taste, while men are often involved in stages that require physical strength, such as cutting wood, stirring Dodol, or preparing the Paruda drying area. This flexible division of labor confirms that the kitchen is a space of female authority, but also an arena of gender cooperation (DeVault, 1991; Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013). In this context, food is not only a domestic product, but also an instrument for the reproduction of cross-generational cultural knowledge.

Cultural capital is evident in the technical and aesthetic differentiation of each food.

Paruda marks who is capable of properly processing cassava toxins; Waji demonstrates aesthetic refinement in presentation; Dodol underscores technical expertise in prolonged stirring; while Halua showcases skill in adjusting ingredient proportions and creating the right texture. All of these skills are forms *of embodied cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 2010) that are sources of pride and social authority within the community.

The four foods also serve as arenas of cultural resistance. By maintaining traditional techniques despite the increasing availability of modern foods, the Togutil assert their symbolic sovereignty over culinary knowledge. Paruda symbolizes resistance to the homogenization of industrial food, Waji preserves local hospitality amid modern individualization, Dodol rejects the logic of fast food with its lengthy processing techniques, and Halua rejects the reduction of culinary meaning to mere commodities. All of this is consistent with Hall's (1990) view of culture as an arena for negotiating meaning, as well as Hobsbawm and Ranger's (2012) view of tradition being recreated to confront globalization.

At the level of moral economy, these four foods operate more within symbolic logic than the market. Paruda is sometimes used as a barter item, Waji and Halua as social gifts, while Dodol has high economic value but remains more symbolic than commercial. Within Mauss's (2016/1925) framework, these foods are *gifts* that affirm reciprocal relationships, while Polanyi (2001) asserts that they operate within a moral economy embedded in kinship, not the logic of the free market.

All four foods also demonstrate the dynamics of acculturation and glocalization. Variations of Paruda with added sugar or coconut, Waji with pandan flavor, Dodol with peanuts or sesame seeds, and Halua with modified flavors show adaptation to new tastes without erasing symbolic meaning. This phenomenon confirms the concept

of glocalization by Robertson (1995) and Wilk (2006), in which local cuisine survives through small innovations that actually enrich tradition.

From a critical food sociology perspective, these four cuisines demonstrate that food is a locus of power: it regulates social structures, shapes habitus, preserves memory, and negotiates identity. From a food anthropology perspective, they reveal humanity's connection to nature, cosmology, and history. However, previous research on Togutil (Tamalene et al., 2023; Taib et al., 2021; Tukuboya et al., 2024) has focused more on ecology, health, and conservation, while the culinary dimension as a text of identity and arena of cultural politics has been relatively unexplored.

Thus, this comparative synthesis affirms that Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua are not merely foods, but also cultural archives, social instruments, and political symbols. They demonstrate that cuisine is a vehicle for reading social structures, collective memory, cultural resistance, and food sovereignty among the Togutil people. In the context of globalization, these four foods are a statement that indigenous communities have autonomy in defining their own culinary tastes, aesthetics, and meanings.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study shows that the cuisine of the Togutil people—as embodied in Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua—cannot be reduced to mere consumption practices, but rather constitutes a cultural text rich in meaning. This cuisine combines ecology, identity, memory, gender, cultural capital, resistance, and spirituality into a single social practice. From a sociological and anthropological perspective, these four traditional foods can be read as *edible archives* that preserve narratives of history, cosmology, and social solidarity, while also serving as arenas of cultural politics amid the pressures of globalization. Through food, the Togutil people not only preserve their traditions, but also make symbolic statements about who they are and how they choose to negotiate their identity in a changing world.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study enriches the study of food sociology and food anthropology by positioning cuisine not only as a symbol of identity or a means of subsistence, but also as a locus of power, resistance, and food sovereignty. The theory of cultural ecology (Steward, 1955; Harris, 1998) explains the connection between humans and nature through subsistence strategies, while Bourdieu's (2010) concepts of habitus and cultural capital reveal how taste, culinary techniques, and reproductive aesthetics shape social distinctions. Furthermore, Halbwachs' (2020) and Assmann's (2011) theory of collective memory asserts that food functions as a mnemonic device that maintains historical continuity, while Hall's (1990) and Hobsbawm and Ranger's (2012) framework of cultural resistance places cuisine as an arena for negotiating identity in the context of globalization. By synergizing these frameworks, this study shows that Togutil cuisine is a concrete example of how food articulates ecology, memory, and cultural politics simultaneously.

Methodologically, this research contributes by integrating culinary ethnography, interpretive sociology, and symbolic anthropology approaches. Through participatory observation, researchers were directly involved in the processing of Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua, enabling them to capture the symbolic and social details surrounding these culinary practices. In-depth interviews with traditional elders, women food processors, and younger generations enriched the data with narratives of collective memory, while analysis of documents and culinary artifacts revealed the continuity of tradition. Using *thick description* (Geertz, 1973), this study successfully interpreted cuisine as a multidimensional cultural text, rather than merely as a material object. This approach also demonstrates the potential of food ethnography as a bridge for analysis between ecology, gender, ritual, and identity politics.

In terms of practical contributions, this study emphasizes the importance of traditional cuisine in supporting food sovereignty and cultural preservation. Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua serve as instruments of intergenerational education that strengthen collective identity and social solidarity. Furthermore, traditional culinary practices also have the potential to become a moral economic basis that maintains a balance between symbolic and commercial values, while opening up opportunities for adaptation in the context of community-based tourism. In situations where indigenous communities face threats of deforestation, mining expansion, and global food homogenization (Tamalene et al., 2023; Tukuboya et al., 2024), traditional cuisine can become a medium of resistance and a cultural political statement that affirms the community's right to define their own food system (Patel, 2009).

Thus, this study provides implications for further research, opening up several possibilities. First, studies on indigenous culinary tourism can reveal how traditional cuisine is positioned in the global economy without losing its symbolic meaning (Wilk, 2006). Second, research on indigenous food politics can highlight the relationship between cuisine, customary law, and land rights, in line with the framework of food sovereignty (Patel, 2009). Third, more in-depth gender studies can reveal how kitchens and culinary practices become arenas of power for women in indigenous communities (DeVault, 1991; Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013). Fourth, comparative research

between indigenous communities can enrich our understanding of the role of cuisine in ecology, identity, and resistance in various contexts.

The implications of this research confirm that the study of traditional cuisine is not only an academic contribution but also a practical strategy to support cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable food policies. Togutil cuisine is a gateway to understanding the close relationship between humans, nature, and culture; preserving cuisine means preserving identity while strengthening the position of indigenous peoples amid the dynamics of globalization.

Ultimately, Togutil cuisine can be understood as a collective statement that food is not only about nutrition, but also about who they are, how they remember their ancestors, and how they negotiate their identity amid the currents of modernization and globalization. By preserving Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua, the Togutil community is not only maintaining the traditions of their ancestors but also asserting their autonomy and cultural sovereignty. In the context of an ever-changing world, cuisine becomes a symbolic field where tradition, memory, and cultural politics meet, as well as proof that food can be the most powerful social language in affirming the existence of a community.

Based on research findings regarding the traditional cuisine of the Togutil community, there are several policy recommendations that can be implemented to support cultural preservation, food sovereignty, and the empowerment of indigenous communities.

Strengthening Indigenous Food Sovereignty Policies

Local governments need to recognize the traditional cuisine of the Togutil as part of the local food system that supports food sovereignty. This can be realized through programs to protect local varieties (e.g., bitter cassava for Paruda and coconut for Halua) and the provision of support for subsistence farming practices. These regulations are important to prevent dependence on industrial food and maintain the independence of indigenous communities (Patel, 2009; Polanyi, 2001).

Protection of Culinary Knowledge and Heritage

Indigenous institutions and the government need to document recipes, processing techniques, and cultural narratives from Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua. This documentation can take the form of digital archives, books, or audiovisual materials. In this way, culinary knowledge that has been passed down orally can be preserved as part of *intangible cultural heritage*. This step is also in line with the principle of cultural memory (Assmann, 2011), which emphasizes the importance of symbolic heritage in maintaining community identity.

Empowering Women as Guardians of Culinary Knowledge

Women play a dominant role in the Togutil culinary process. Therefore, training programs, economic support, and formal recognition of women's roles in traditional kitchens need to be strengthened. Local governments and NGOs can develop gender-based empowerment programs that place women as the main agents of culinary knowledge preservation (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013; DeVault, 1991).

Integration of Traditional Cuisine into Education and Cultural Festivals

Togutil cuisine can be integrated into the local education curriculum, both through cooking activities and cultural history lessons. In addition, cultural festivals featuring Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua can serve as a vehicle for public education and promotion of local wisdom. However, these festivals must emphasize symbolic meaning, not merely the commodification of food (Wilk, 2006).

Community-Based Culinary Tourism

The development of culinary tourism can be an additional source of income, but it must be community-based and prioritize the participation of the Togutil community. Tourism programs should be designed to provide educational opportunities about the symbolic meaning of food, the process of mutual cooperation, and the ecology that supports traditional cuisine. The government needs to establish regulations so that culinary tourism does not reduce traditional food to a mere attraction, but rather remains a cultural text rich in meaning.

Environmental Advocacy and Indigenous Rights

Faced with the threats of deforestation and mining expansion, traditional cuisine needs to be positioned as an argument for advocacy to preserve forests and indigenous lands. Paruda, Waji, Dodol, and Halua can be used as symbols in environmental protection campaigns because of their connection to forest resources and mixed gardens (Tamalene et al., 2023; Tukuboya et al., 2024). Policies that integrate indigenous foods with ecological protection will strengthen the position of the Togutil community in facing external pressures.

This recommendation emphasizes that Togutil cuisine is not only a cultural heritage but also an ecological strategy, an arena of identity, and a symbol of resistance. Local governments, customary institutions, and NGOs

need to work together to preserve, empower, and promote traditional cuisine while respecting its symbolic meaning and spiritual value. Thus, Togutil cuisine can become a source of cultural strength as well as a foundation for sustainable indigenous community development amid the tide of globalization.

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