

Research Article

The Bentor in Gorontalo City Becoming the Preferred Mode of Transportation

Ade Permana¹, Tasrifin Tahara², Muh Basir Said², Ansar Arifin²

¹PhD of Anthropology Program, Universitas Hasanuddin Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

²Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University Kampus Tamalanrea Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

Abstract.

This article describes the sociocultural factors that affect the people of Gorontalo's choice of Bentor as their favorite public transportation. Considering safety, Bentor is not a proper vehicle compared to other means of transportation (bendi, city buses, taxis, minibuses, and online transportation). Yet, Bentor is the favorite public transportation in Gorontalo Province, especially in Gorontalo City. This article used observed data collection techniques by interviewing informants and documenting studies. Collected data were analyzed by qualitative descriptive analysis. As the most favorite mode of transportation, Bentor has developed a social capital in terms of building power relations that are supported by the cultural values of the Gorontalo people in their life.

Keywords: Bentor, Power Relations, and Favorite Mode of Transportation

Corresponding Author: Ade Permana; email: adepermana.ss2000@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

Tohulondhalo deutonu po na owalo woluwo bentor

Murah waw dengaamila tambatiyalo unaowalo gambangi mao

Ja mopatu waw ja didiyalo

Dulota waw towulota mowali ta'e liyo lo bentor

It means

Wherever we want to go in Gorontalo, we would like to use *Bentor* Using *bentor* is cheap, the path can be anywhere Can be loaded with two to three people We did not have hot and wet effects and its fare is cheap.

If I asked about the reason why people in Gorontalo City choose the *Bentor* (or *Becak Motor*) as their public transportation, that sentence had been answered by them. Even though they realized that the *Bentor* has some problems such as the safety reason, so that the *Bentor* is not a proper means of transportation compared to other means of transportation (city buses, taxis, and minibuses). In the fact, *Bentor* is a favorite

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means of transportation for the people of Gorontalo, especially in Gorontalo City. It is not surprising when we go around Gorontalo City, *Bentor* is a vehicle that can be easily found on almost all corners of the city. Therefore, Gorontalo is well-known by its *Bentors* and we can even call Gorontalo as "The City of *Bentor* in the World".

Discussions about urban development are inseparable from the social and cultural dynamics of the life of the people who are inhabited there.⁶ Hence, there are two inseparable aspects such as the pattern of land use and road network, the diversity of architectural styles, and the activities of community life in the city.¹⁷ Katrinka Ebbe refers to the regional structure which gives the sense of place and identity for the city residents.¹⁰ In fact, a city is consisted of more than one village, which can be constrained and regulated as one aspect that must be considered in understanding the changing urban society. Urban space is not merely a "location" for social change to occur (as Weber tends to emphasize).¹

Nevertheless, the existence of *Bentor* cannot be separated from the growth of Gorontalo City, which used to use the *Bendihorsepower* vehicles. For example, the development of transportation in Indonesia was experiencing rapid development following the demand of consumers based on human needs which are very dynamic following the development of the socio-cultural life of community. In the evolution of human life, the mode of transportation has moved from means of transportation that use animal power to become a mechanical or technological power⁶. In the past, many people used transportation such as horses, now they used a vehicle equipped with a digital technology for human needs. A name for the horse-drawn carriage in Indonesia are various due to its region. In Yogyakarta, its name is *Andong;Kahar* or *Keretek* in Sunda; *Cidomo* in West Nusa Tenggara; *Bendi* in Padang, and so on. In general, the development of transportation can be divided into three categories, namely land transportation (cars, motorbikes, motorbikes, buses, and so on), sea transportation (ships, boats, catering and so on), and air transportation (airplanes, helicopters and so on).¹²

The development of transportation move along with the socio-cultural life of the community in their way to utilize the urban transportation facilities.⁵ This development is anthropologically interesting to be studied because of the mode of transportation cannot only be seen from technological and economic perspectives.

Bentor is a modification of transportation facilities as a result of cultural creativity, and becomes a vital public transportation, especially in Gorontalo City and its surroundings. *Bentor* as a public transportation can be found in other places such as the city of Medan, Makassar and other cities. In Medan, people are also familiar with the term *Bentor*

which is the development of a paddle rickshaw using human power, then replaced by a mechanical vehicle called the *Beca*.¹³ Like the horse-drawn carriage, the pedicab and other means of transportation have also changed. There are bumps with the position of the motorbike on the side, a there is also a position on the right side, but there is also the position of the motorbike behind the conveyance like a pedicab in general. This change in shape is interesting to study. These changes can be caused by adjusting the needs based on the human physical shape, loading capacity, or the effectiveness or efficiency of the *Bentor* as a means of transportation.

2. Research Method

This research was conducted in Gorontalo City in a span of three months from August to November 2020. Researchers conducted three field visits during the 2019 period, each for 3-5 days. The research was conducted using the ethnographic method by living with the informants, through in-depth interviews and observations.⁵

The focus of the search for field data is to answer questions about the *bentor* business and its existence in Gorontalo City. As an area that was once a location where the majority worked as fishermen, it has distinctive characteristics among the community that make *bentor* a favorite mode of transportation. The mode of transportation is said to have its own characteristics compared to other cities. This particularity is one of the things we explore and discuss in this paper.

All of informants from the owners and drivers of the *bentor* as well as the community who use the *bentor* were interviewed to obtain data on the types of *bentor* businesses and the reasons for choosing *bentor* as a mode of transportation. To complete it, the researcher also interviewed figures who have the competence to tell traditions in Gorontalo City. Meanwhile, to complete the context of daily life, related to how the existence of *bentors* in Gorontalo, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with four informants in the research area.¹⁸

3. Bentor Controversy in Gorontalo

The presence of *bentor* as a means of transportation in Gorontalo City has become a polemic until now. Read Id news release (5 March 2019) that *bentor* is a typical Gorontalo public transportation, it is like a human, gender is not clear. The reason is, it does not yet have an official permit from the central and regional governments, as a proper public transportation. So many considerations, such as being part of local wisdom and helping

the Provincial, Regency and City Governments to reduce unemployment, have allowed this illegal public transportation to operate.¹³

Whereas in terms of comfort, it is very threatening the safety of passengers, whose position is in front of the driver. On the other hand, it is very inviting traffic jams, because any parking is in public areas and parking is prohibited. The legality of *Bentor*, which is not feasible to operate, has been since the leadership of President Megawati Sukarno Putri, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to the current President Joko Widodo. It has been in operation for 19 years starting from around 2000 ago, the issuance of a *bentor* permit has only come to a mere review. In terms of regulation, there are three rules that overshadow this public transportation. Among them, *Perda No. 6 of 2006*, *Pergub No. 18 of 2006*, and *Perwako No. 1 of 2007*. The rest are waiting for the revision of Law 22/year 2009 on LLAJ, as an amplifier of *bentor* as a means of transportation in urban areas.

Then in 2017, the Gorontalo Provincial Government and the Gorontalo Provincial Transportation Service had proposed a revision of Law 22/2009 concerning LLAJ to the Indonesian Ministry of Transportation, but the Ministry of Transportation was still conducting a study because it was related to passenger safety that did not meet the requirements. The Indonesian Ministry of Transportation had suggested to change the design of the building or the *bentor* frame⁹.

Although still in conflict with central government regulations, the efforts made by the Gorontalo Provincial Government continue. It is no exception to propose the implementation of a study related to *bentor* through the 2020 state budget, in order to obtain a proper building design according to standards, including the standard of passenger vehicle eligibility. Meanwhile, the proposed discussion for the revision of Law 22/year 2009 has been submitted to the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia. In terms of traffic rules, with the number of collisions increasing every year, the police, especially the Traffic Unit of the Gorontalo City Police, are also unable to control the collisions. Moreover, *Bentor* is a contributor to traffic accident cases in the jurisdiction of Gorontalo City which is caused by excess passengers and the driver is often found to have consumed alcoholic beverages. *Bentor* is one of the livelihoods of the people of Gorontalo, although *bentor* does not yet have an official permit from the relevant Ministry, efforts to control it continue to be carried out by the Gorontalo City Police Traffic Unit. Efforts have been made ranging from sweeping to providing understanding to *bentor* drivers, to obtaining a driving license (SIM), and their vehicle registration certificate. Up to now, the efforts that we have made have brought good changes, because almost all of the *bentor* drivers already have a valid driving license

and vehicle certificate. However, when they are found to be in violation, they will still be fined. On the other hand, *Bentor* is the largest contributor to Regional Original Income (PAD) in Gorontalo, such as through vehicle taxes. *Bentors* even really help the local government in reducing the unemployment rate in the area, because it is used as a livelihood by the community. Regarding the safety standards of *bentor* transport vehicles, they do not meet the criteria for transporting people and goods as required by Law Number 22 of 2009 concerning Road Traffic and Transportation. However, it turns out that there are several regions in Indonesia that provide *bentor* operating permits, as is the case in Dairi Regency which issued Dairi Regency regional regulation No. 16 of 20200 challenging public transportation businesses regarding motorized tricycles (*bentor*) operating permits. A similar permit was also granted by the City of Tebing Tinggi by issuing the Tebing Tinggi Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2007 concerning Retribution for Permits for Establishing a company and operating a motorized rickshaw. Things are different in DKI Jakarta, DKI Jakarta Regional Regulation No. 8 of 2007 concerning Public Order, in article 2 paragraph (6) states that every person or entity is prohibited from making, assembling or operating public transportation vehicles of type four with two-stroke engines. What is meant by types of motorized vehicles with 2 (two) stroke engines are Bajaj (two strokes), tricycles (*Mobec*), and the like. The difference in views makes it interesting how the policy can be different even though if it refers to the Traffic Law, such vehicles are clearly not allowed.

3.1. Study on Bentor

Studies on *bentor* as a means of transportation have been carried out including by Jamal Nganro about *bentor* vehicle transportation which is one of the local transportation facilities created by the innovation of the Gorontalo community¹⁵. If you refer to this statement, there is an interesting word, namely the work of innovation. Innovation can be interpreted as 'doing new things' or doing or creating something new. The existence of *bentor* in Gorontalo certainly has a large enough impact on the lives of the people of Gorontalo. This can also be seen from the growth of *bentor* vehicles which is quite high at an average of 20%. This fairly large growth, of course, the government must regulate the existence of the *bentor*. The existence of *bentor* culturally is an unavoidable need for the people of Gorontalo.

Several studies on the operation of the *bentor* in the City of Gorontalo were carried out by Mudana & Dwi (2016), who compiled recommendations regarding the operation of the *bentor* in terms of regulatory and safety aspects. Based on the research, it shows

that the operation of the *bentor* in terms of safety is still lacking, this condition requires the local government's efforts to socialize the operation of the *bentor* so that it prioritizes safety. *Bentors* operating in Gorontalo City are quite large, amounting to 11,000 units, including those from other regions. On the other hand, urban public transportation is not yet strong, so *bentor* is a necessity for the people of Gorontalo. Several policies that have been set by the provincial and city governments have not been effective because the content of the policies regulates bends such as official transportation, such as periodic tests. *Bentor* excels in providing door to door services capable of accommodating more than one passenger, absorbs labor, is of interest to service users, operates on all road networks and the weakness of *bentor* is that the passenger is placed in front of the driver and brakes only one rear brake, while the standard *bentor* is the passenger. placed behind the driver and brake the front and rear wheels so each wheel has a brake. The population of *bentors* continues to increase because public transportation services are not optimal, the ease of getting *bentors* and the existence of *bentors* are accepted by the community.

In addition, a study conducted by Katili & Tueno states that *bentor* is a modification between *becak* and motorcycle which has become a characteristic of public transportation vehicles or modes of transportation for the people of Gorontalo.¹⁰ *Bentor* can operate from one place to another, it can even take its passengers to the stairs of the house, this cannot be done by other public transportation. This advantage makes most of the people of Gorontalo choose it as the main transportation because it operates 24 hours. The purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis of the implementation of policies for regulating the operation of *Bentor* vehicles as a mode of transportation based on the Gorontalo Provincial Regulation Number 6 of 2006. action is taken by the relevant apparatus, the coordination between the officers of the Department of Transportation and the Police in carrying out their duties has not been well established, so that violations continue to occur; and the supervision of the relevant agencies on the officers in the field in implementing local regulations is still low, due to the lack of officers who will be assigned as field supervisors.

3.2. Bentor and Space Contest in Gorontalo City

So far, *bentor* as a mode of local transportation is considered marginal compared to other means of transportation, it actually gets legitimacy from the people of Gorontalo City. This is the theme of the research that I will be doing regarding the power relations developed by *bentor* as a cultural practice so that it is functional in the structure of

society. In line with this, I use the approach of Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, who argues that it is necessary to develop a theoretical knowledge mode with the term "practice" to cover the lack of a phenomenological mode of theoretical knowledge and theoretical knowledge that is phenomenological. Objectivity³. The last two modes of theoretical knowledge according to Bourdieu cannot capture the most important essence in human behavior, namely the subject and agency factors. Therefore, there needs to be a shift in the subject matter of the discipline of anthropology from the study of rules to the study of strategy. Or, in other words, from a model mechanism to a dialectical strategy in observing the behavior and actions of the perpetrators of clashes in the community structure of Gorontalo City.

Regarding the struggle for space in the structure of Gorontalo City, it is relevant to what is described by Danilyn Rutherford (2003) in his study of *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners*, about the Biak people in Papua. Rutherford describes how Papuans, especially those in Biak, can take over various symbols, attributes, institutions, and so on, which are considered to represent "Indonesianness", but at the same time Rutherford is shown that things that are considered by Papuans as something that is in the realm of "foreigners" (or *amber* in the local language), so that culturally they have legitimacy.

Therefore, research is scrambling for space for *bentors* in Gorontalo City, in the research I will be doing is an effort to understand the forms of culture and power relations built and developed by *bentors* in order to give them justification for various actions to utilize and at the same time take advantage of space. social, cultural, and economic in Gorontalo City. The act of utilizing space changes in certain contexts into a form of resistance to the structure of the City of Gorontalo (including the rule of law and other institutions) which is contrary to the existence of *bentor*. I understand that the scramble for space practiced by the *bentor* is a dynamic collective reconstruction of 3 (three) main elements, namely (1) symbols and awareness; (2) resources; and (3) domination or hegemony. In this aspect, I hope that this research can contribute to theoretical studies of power relations and anthropological studies regarding modes of transportation in urban areas.¹⁴

The city is the center of life that can be seen from various perspectives and scientific approaches. People's lives in urban areas are manifested in their behavior, actions, and life activities which become access to anthropological studies. People's lives can also be seen from the physical aspects of urban areas that will contribute to their socio-anthropological behavior (humans and their social structures).

Ansy'ari defines a city as an urban area that is different from a village or *kampung* based on its size, population density, importance or legal status.² Several definitions

(etymologically) of "city" in other languages are quite appropriate with this sense, such as in Chinese, *kota* means wall, and in Dutch (old): *tuijn*, can mean fence. Thus, the city can be interpreted as a territory or limited space. Furthermore, urban communities are often referred to as urban communities. The definition of urban society is more emphasized on the nature and characteristics of life that are different from rural communities.

More specifically, Spreiregen states that 'culture' can also be defined as the level of a person's or society's ability to formulate and create provisions for the regulation of his life, in relation to the social and natural environment, as well as the level of a person's or society's ability to obey and obey the law. those provisions²⁰. Thus, the urban community can be said to have a high intensity of 'culture' progress. Urban communities are more oriented to material and rational things so that relationships become impersonal and secondary, no longer 'relationship based emotional oriented'. Individuals become atomized and anomized so that each individual is required to create a path of life existence.

There are so many and varied demands in behaving and acting as community members who are goal-oriented and achievement-oriented, so the lifestyle of the urban community is more directed at physical appearance and physical quality so that it looks civilized. Another symptom in urban communities is the tendency of people to become mass society which tends to cause individuals to lose their personal identity (self identity).

As a center of power, economy, knowledge, innovation, and civilization, it is certain that the city becomes an arena for the contestation of power. The expansion of the concept and meaning of power opens up opportunities for various disciplines, including anthropology. Previously, power was only a domain of political science, as in the last Weber concept, power has also been studied in sociology, anthropology, and archeology. The basic difference in anthropology tends to use Michael Foucault's concept of power, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus model, and Anthony Giddens' structuration.³

3.3. Bentor and Space Contest in Gorontalo City

Space does not originate only from a collection of objects (as is often conceptualized by architectural historians), or a collection of ideas (as is often conceptualized by mathematicians), or a collection of people (as is often conceptualized by social historians), but the inter-action set or dynamics of these three areas¹⁹. Based on this, Lefebvre formulated these three aspects (physical, mental, social) as: building spaces and between buildings (physical), ideas and concepts of space (mental), space as part

of social interaction (social). From this, Lefebvre reduced his spatial theory into the triad of 'perceived,' 'conceived,' and 'lived.'

What is meant by Lefebvre at this level is material activity or more to spatial practice¹¹. It is everyday life and activity, which occurs in functional spaces, ranging from individual spaces and single buildings to the footprints of larger urban spaces (such as those involving transportation systems) that form parts of the 'material production of space.' This spatial practice can occur and roughly equivalent to what is the basis of the economy and the aspect of materiality, producing spatial forms according to different productive and reproductive activities. Architectural projects and planning at this level play a role in providing 'material life' for the city, through the buildings that are perceived ('perceived') around us.

At this second level, Lefebvre proclaims the existence of a conscious representation of space¹¹. Its manifestation comes from the conception of space that is codified or becomes a certain type by an abstract understanding of the space itself, such as through planning knowledge, mathematical space or the architectural design process. Representation of space, both as knowledge and belief, is necessary for spatial practices or production relations to take place, and therefore fundamentally becomes something ideological in character. Architectural and planning projects at this level play a role in providing an understanding of the city, as well as giving shape and spatial orientation to the city. Examples that can be given here are maps or lay-outs of cities, maps of transportation routes, or even images that appear on postcards that are informational. These examples are something that is not only functional in nature and helps us orientate and move through urban space, but also ideological in terms of the image of a city and the fundamental foundations for us to think about cities and how we live in them.

The third level of understanding space is what Lefebvre calls representational spaces. This level is the most difficult stage of Lefebvre's theory of the triad formulation of space, because this level refers to the sub-conscious experience of space through images and symbols that are considered equivalent to the influence of reality in conditioning the possibilities for action (action)¹¹. This then means that on the one hand the experience of space is ideological, namely in terms of forming imaginary relationships in which humans seek to exist between themselves and real life, while on the other hand this kind of spatial experience is something creative and 'liberating' (liberatory) in terms of resistance and criticism of the dominant social rules. In other words, representational spaces are conditions that we absorb and experience, as well as new and imaginative activities that allow new and different spaces to emerge.

Specifically, this third level refers to the space that is inhabited and experienced by those who are not directly involved in producing buildings (spatial practices) or ideas about space (representations of space), but at least use space, and therefore help in produce and reproduce it. It is clearly seen here that there has been a conflict between those who are responsible for producing space (the production of space) and those who play a role in making that space reproduce in a sustainable manner.

Basically these three levels act dialectically, so our attention should not only be on each level, because in reality these levels never exist alone. So when we consciously look at a spatial representation (second level), such as a floor plan of a building, we should also consider the spatial practices (first level) intended by the plan to represent and organize something, as well as critical and imaginative rethinking. (third level) which offers an idea or a kind of life (living) that might occur in it at a certain time if the space is built.

In the case of *bentor* as a mode of transportation that fights for space in Gorontalo City, the arena (road) as the space they occupy is not a ready-to-use product (already given), but is a form of abstract space that is actually in an urban structure, not allowed to operate because it contradicts several legal rules and several institutions, but its development has gained legitimacy with various cultural logics of the people in Gorontalo City.

On the other hand, the cultural response of the people of Gorontalo City strengthens the position of the *bentor* so that there is a dialectic between the *bentor* which is not supposed to operate, but the fact is that in all spaces (road sections) in the City of Gorontalo it is seen that the *bentor* dominates the space in the structure of the City of Gorontalo which has become the culture of the city community. The spatial behavior carried out by the *bentor* territorially influenced by cultural factors is very strong to maintain the space it has. The Gorontalo City Government's policy in the form of a Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) as a manifestation of the representation of space and the behavior of space for *bentors* as a form of representation space (Spaces of Representation) turns out to make *bentors* as the dominant group in transportation modes in Gorontalo City.

4. Conclusion

A city that gives space to *bentors* despite the violation of several formal rules and other institutions as a response to the meeting between representation space and space representation as proposed by Lefebvre in the theory of production of space

(production of space) due to community legitimacy that makes *bentor* as a mode of transformation that many used in Gorontalo City.

The presence of *bentor* as a means of local transportation in Gorontalo City is accepted as a favorite transportation because it is in accordance with the socio-cultural conditions of the Gorontalo community and provides comfort for passengers so that it gives legitimacy to the existence of *bentor*. On the economic side, economic income is very supportive of the economy because it provides jobs for the community. Politically, the large number of *bentor* owners and drivers often become political tools and channels so that they become a medium for strengthening power for the political elite in Gorontalo City.

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