

Function and Meaning of Symbols in the Simalungun Ethnic *Mangalop Parhorason* Traditional Ceremony

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ABSTRACT

This article is entitled Function and Meaning of Symbols in the Simalungun Ethnic *Mangalop Parhorason* Traditional Ceremony, which aims to describe the implementation process, form, function and meaning of symbols contained in the Simalungun Ethnic *Mangalop Parhorason* traditional ceremony. The theory used to analyze data is semiotic theory, namely symbols proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with field research techniques. The results obtained from this research consist of two stages of implementation, namely: (1) Pre-implementation of custom (2) Implementation of custom. There are five categories of symbols used, including: (1) Traditional food symbols (2) Traditional equipment symbols (3) Time symbols (4) Status marking symbols (5) Place and position symbols. The function and meaning of the symbols used are to obtain blessings, abundant sustenance as well as completeness and order in life. Through regular living and positive thinking, it is hoped that the mother's pregnancy can be maintained well until the baby is born, and the father is also expected to always support and strengthen the mother during pregnancy. Everything will be in order as expected if you have an orderly life.

Keywords: *Function, Meaning, Symbol, Mangalop parhorason, Semiotics*

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional ceremonies represent the traditions of a traditional society which are still considered to have values that are highly relevant to the society's motherhood. Traditional ceremonies can be interpreted as one of the traditions possessed by traditional communities where there are very strong maternal values in them. There are various types of traditional ceremonies

in the Simalungun community based on the time of implementation. These ceremonies are carried out in a series of manners with very diverse rituals, such as child birth ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, new homecoming ceremonies, priesthood ceremonies, and many other traditional ceremonies.

Mangalop parhorason is a traditional ceremony carried out by families to greet the fetus in the mother's bed. This traditional ceremony is an expression of the family's gratitude for the fetus carried by the mother. The term "*mangalop parhorason*" means "pick up blessings" in Indonesian. In this case, the parents of the baby-to-be who come to the *tondong* house will pick up a blessing from the parents of the child. This traditional ceremony is carried out by related families such as: *tondong*, *sanina* and *boru/anak boru*. In the Simalungun *mangalop parhorason* community, it is a set of obligations that must be carried out at a mother's first pregnancy in accordance with the wishes of custom and the agreement of the family.

Tondong is a collection of the wife's family and brothers. In this case, the *tondong* referred to is the uncle (mother's brother) of *Tondong* who has the most special position compared to the position of other humans in the traditional Simalungun community. *Tondong* is considered a God on earth who is very noble and respected. In the *mangalop parhorason* traditional ceremony, *tondong* plays an important role. If the *tondong* is not present, the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony will not take place. In Simalungun society, *tondong* functions as a "*pangalopan podah*" (a place to ask for advice).

In this article the author uses the semiotic theory put forward by Charles Sanders Peirce, this is due to the suitability of the data used. Charles Sanders Peirce divided his concept into three parts called the trichotomy. The trichotomy relationship is the relationship between object, representation, and interpreter. The relationship between trichotomies can be divided into three types, namely the sign relationship based on the similarity (identity) between the elements referred to which are called icons, the sign relationship based on the presence or absence of the element which is used as reference material which is called the index, and the sign relationship seen according to the convention between reference materials called symbols.

A symbol is a relationship that shows the signifier and the signified in a natural way, Sobur (2013:42). Peirce formulated that based on objects, symbols always refer to references. Each symbol always has its own function and meaning. Therefore, in Peirce's concept, a symbol is defined as a sign that points to a certain object besides the sign itself. The relationship between the sign, the signifier and the signified is a conventional relationship. Based on these conventions, the user community can interpret the characteristics and relationships between symbols and the objects they refer to. This will be seen in several stages of the Simalungun ethnic *mangalop parhorason* traditional ceremony. In each stage of implementation there are several processes carried out, from these processes symbols are found. According to this theory, the customs and society of Simalungun give arbitrary meaning to what they want to express or apply according to their customs. This is also based on adaptation to their daily forms and habits.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

According to Sugiyono (2018:2) research methods are scientific ways of collecting data for certain purposes and uses. Research methods are also theoretical analyzes of a method or approach. Research is a systematic investigation that aims to advance a certain body of knowledge to study a problem that requires an answer. The basic method used by the author in this article is a qualitative

descriptive method to study symbols in the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony of the Simalungun ethnic group. To fulfill the data, the author conducted research in Dalig Raya Village, Raya District, Simalungun Regency on 14-24 September 2023. To support the results of this research, the author used data collection methods by (1) Observation method, namely the researcher came directly to the field and carried out observations. Regarding the object of research (2) the interview method is carried out with village heads, traditional activists and local communities. The interview uses a question guide that has been prepared and made beforehand. (3) Literary methods, namely the collection of data through information that is different and closely related to scientific research. The data analysis method used by the author in this article is (1) Classifying data according to the problem (2) Eliminating data that does not match the problem (3) Data that has been eliminated is then analyzed according to the shape of the symbol, function and meaning (4) Drawing conclusions from the research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

Based on the data obtained, the author will discuss the research results described in the Implementation Stages, Form, Function and Meaning of Symbols used in the implementation of the *Mangalop Parhorason* Traditional Ceremony.

Discussion

A. Stages of Implementation of the *Mangalop Parhorason* Traditional Ceremony

The implementation stage will be divided into two stages, namely pre-implementation of customs and implementation of customs.

1. Pre-implementation of Customs

Before the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony takes place, a nuclear family meeting is first held to discuss all preparations and reach an agreement. During the meeting, the family will discuss several things such as when the traditional ceremony will take place, what tools and materials will be used, and

who will be invited to the traditional ceremony.

a. Execution time

The implementation of the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony will be determined based on the *ari-ari namadear* and adjusting the appropriate time to perform the traditional *horja adat* on Simalungun beliefs. Likewise, the implementation is carried out in the morning (*sogotni ari*). Because there is confidence that at that time you will always receive blessings.

b. Equipment

Equipment is the tools and materials needed in traditional ceremonies to ensure that the ceremony is carried out well according to expectations. The equipment needed is: *dayok nabinatur*, *kalapa mumbang*, *nitak siang-siang*, *hinasumba*, *galuh namabei*, *boras tenger*, *hiou na marrambu*, *untei mungkur*, *amak bontar and demban*.

c. Invitation

In this activity the invitations given are limited. This means that only close family members of both husband and wife are invited to this event. The two families in question are (*tondong*, *sanina*, *boru/anak boru*) in the Simalungun ethnic kinship system.

2. Implementation of Customs

a. *Manurduk Demban*

In this process, the parents of the baby-to-be together distribute betel (*marsurdukan demban*) to the parents and families present. The tradition of *manurduk demban* (giving betel) is a Simalungun ethnic tradition that has long been part of the customary law. *Manurduk demban* contains *demban* (betel), *pining* (betel nut), *gambier*, *timbangou* (tobacco) and *hapur* (lime). *Manurduk demban* should be given in the right amount so that the message you want to convey can be conveyed. The order of giving betel starts from mother, father and other family members. In the traditional ceremony, *Manurduk Demban mangalop parhorason* will be given twice. The first *demban*, namely *demban tangan-tangan*, will be given to all families present. The second *demban*, namely the *batu ni demban*, will be given specifically to *tondong* as a form of thanks.

b. *Manurduk Dayok Nabinatur*

After the *manurduk demban* has been completed, the next process is the *manurduk dayok nabinatur*. In the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony, the *dayok nabinatur* is given directly by *tondong* with both hands and then both parents of the baby receive it. In the *manurduk dayok nabinatur* process, *kalapa mumbang* and *untei mungkur* will also be given. After the *manurduk dayok nabinatur* process is carried out, the next process is to eat with the family present in the house. *Mangan Riap* is also a tradition that should not be missed in every traditional ceremony (*horja adat*).

c. *Manurduk Batu Ni Demban*

After the meal together (*mangan riap*) is over, the baby's parents-to-be give the *manurduk batu ni demban* to the *tondong*. *Batu Ni Demban* is betel with complete spices such as gambier, lime and tobacco placed on a plate (dish) which is served to *tondong* with *panindih demban*. The nominal value of the stones given is usually an even number, for example : *Rp. 240,000*.

d. *Mambere Hiou Na Marrambu*

After eating together, the next process is *mambere hiou na marrambu*. Giving *hiou* (*mambere hiou*) is a tradition in the Simalungun community as a symbol of giving warmth and affection to those who receive *hiou*. At the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony, *hiou na marrambu* will be given *tondong* by spreading the *hiou* cloth and then placing it on the shoulders of both parents of the prospective baby.

e. *Mamborastenger*

After *mambere hiou*, the next process is to place rice on the heads (*mamborastenger*) of the parents of the future baby and scatter it up to the ceiling three times while saying *umpasa*. Rice placed on the head is usually called "boras tenger".

f. *Mambere Podah*

The last customary implementation is *mambere podah* (giving advice). In this case, *tondong* will provide advice to the baby's prospective parents. *Mambere podah* is a process that cannot be missed in every traditional ceremony. *Mambere podah* is intended so that the parents of the

prospective baby can live in harmony and support each other.

B. Description of the Form, Function and Meaning of Symbols in the Mangalop Parhorason Traditional Ceremony

1. Traditional Food Symbols

a. Dayok Nabinatur

Dayok nabinatur (regularly arranged chicken) is a male village chicken that is cut and processed with special spices then arranged on a plate in a regular arrangement like the body structure of a chicken when it is still alive. *Dayok nabinatur* functions as a prayer and good hope for the parents of the future baby so that after the *mangalop parhorason* takes place, it will remain intact. *Dayok nabinatur* has the meaning of showing gratitude for a mother's pregnancy.

b. Kalapa Mumbang

Kalapa mumbang (young coconut) is a coconut that is harvested when it is still young and has not yet become an old coconut (*matoras*). *Kalapa mumbang* functions as drinking water which is believed to facilitate the sustenance and livelihood of those who drink it. The meaning of *kalapa mumbang* is hope and good luck and one's fortune is increasing or increasing (*ase mumbang ma tongon pansarian*).

c. Nitak Siang-Siang

Nitak siang-siang is a traditional food made from the basic ingredients of rice flour, galangal, roasted grated coconut, brown sugar and pepper, then all these ingredients are mixed and mashed using a mortar. *Nitak siang-siang* serves as an accompaniment to giving *dayok nabinatur*. *Nitak siang-siang* has a meaning so that people who get and eat the *nitak* will later get a life that looks bright and sustenance that is clearly visible (*siangma pansarian*).

d. Hinasumba

Hinasumba is made from half-cooked chicken meat, cut into small pieces and mixed with ground spices and chicken blood that has been added with *sikkam* water. *Hinasumba* is served together with *dayok nabinatur* which is placed on the left or right side in the same container. *Hinasumba* functions as a special complement to serving *dayok nabinatur*. *Hinasumba* has the meaning of completeness of sustenance and life.

e. Galuh Namabei

Galuh namabei is a perfectly ripe banana. The types of bananas used are usually *pisang sibarangan*, *pisang siomas* or *pisang raja*. *Galuh namabei* functions as a dessert which aims to eliminate the bitter taste of other foods. *Galuh namabei* has the meaning that the person who receives it and then eats it, should think about things carefully first and not rush, so that the life of the whole family is always harmonious, happy and sweet (as sweet as a banana).

2. Traditional Equipment Symbols

a. Untei Mungkur

Untei mungkur (kaffir lime) which is drunk by parents of babies has the function of drinking water which is believed to have many benefits and can maintain the body's immunity. *Untei mungkur* means that the body of the person who drinks it will be protected from negative energy and evil spirits, and is believed to protect the body from all diseases.

b. Hiou Na Marrambu

In the traditional *Mangalop Parhorason* ceremony, the *hiou na marrambu* type of *hiou mangiring* is used. *Hiou na marrambu* functions as a symbol of warmth and protection from the cold, and is part of the identity of the Simalungun ethnic community. *Hiou na marrambu* means that people who receive it will always be bound, united, help each other and strengthen each other.

c. Boras Tenger

The type of rice used is *boras tabar* (plain rice). *Boras tenger* in the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony has the function of strengthening the soul of the pregnant mother, so that her soul is always given strength during pregnancy. Rice that is spread over the entire body has the meaning of guaranteeing good wishes and obtaining abundant sustenance.

d. Demban

Demban (betel) has a spicy taste and is usually chewed together with complementary spices, namely areca nut, lime and gambier. *Demban* traditionally has a function and meaning as a symbol of respect and an expression of gratitude to *tondong* and invited guests for their willingness to participate in the *mangalop parhorason* event being held.

e. Amak Bontar

Amak bontar (white mat) is a seating mat used by parents of prospective babies. The mat has a warming function so that you don't sit directly on the floor. White mats have the meaning that anyone who sits on the mat can always sit safely, comfortably and makes those sitting on the mat feel calm.

3. Time Symbol

a. Ari-Ari Namadear

According to the beliefs of the Simalungun people, good days are highly respected by the Simalungun people. *Ari-ari namadear* functions to determine the right day in accordance with the traditions of the Simalungun ethnic community. *Ari-ari namadear* has the meaning of making something good come true if done on a good day/date.

b. Sogotni Ari

The traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony is usually carried out in the morning (*sogotni ari*), which is a good time, namely around 06.00-10.00. *Sogotni ari* in the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony has a function as the time for the ceremony. The symbolic meaning of the time when the implementation of the custom begins on *sogotni ari* is so that the sustenance obtained will increase.

4. Status Marker Symbols

a. Tondong

Tondong is a collection of family and relatives of the wife or mother. *Tondong* has the most special position compared to other human positions in the traditional functions of the Simalungun community. *Tondong* is considered a God on earth who is so noble and respected (*Naibata na Taridah*). *Tondong* functions as a giver of advice and blessing (*pasu-pasu*) as well as advice to *Hasuhuton*. In the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony, *tondong* has a very important role. If the *tondong* is not present then the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony will not take place.

b. Sanina

Sanina is a sibling, blood relative, or other relative of grandmother, relatives of the same clan but not related by blood. *Sanina* has an important role in every Simalungun ethnic traditional ceremony, namely as the person who accompanies and supports the host (*suhut bolon*). In the Simalungun ethnic kinship system, *sanina* is a

pangalopan riah (place for deliberation) and is considered a brother who shares the same burden and suffering.

c. Boru/Anak Boru

Boru/anak boru is the role of the main assistant or *parhobas*, the *anak boru* is obliged to provide equipment and materials needed for every traditional party or traditional ceremony. *Boru/anak boru* has a meaning as a symbol of strength in family life.

5. Place and Position Symbols

a. Jabu Simada Horja

Jabu simada horja is the house of the owner of traditional events or ceremonies. In the context of the *Mangalop Parhorason* traditional ceremony, what is used as a *jabu simada horja* is the *tondong* house. The traditional symbol where the custom is carried out shows that the person receiving the blessing (*mangalop parhorason*) respects *Tondong* as their parent. The Simalungun ethnic *mangalop parhorason* traditional ceremony is held at the *tondong* house to show respect.

b. Luluan's Position

The *luluan* position is the seat that is considered the most special. This position is the place where the *tondong* party sits. *Luluan's* position is right on the right side of the front door of the house.

c. Talaga's position

The *talaga* position is a seat specifically for the *Suhut* (husband and wife couples who are prospective parents of the baby). The position of the *talaga* is right on the left side of the front door of the house or directly opposite the position of the *tondong*.

d. Tataring Position

The *tataring* position is the seat that will be given to the *parhobas*. The position of the *tataring* is in the direction of the kitchen. The position of the *talaga* is an area for *parhobas* who are tasked with preparing food for families who come because it is located close to the kitchen.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion regarding the function and meaning of symbols in the Simalungun ethnic *mangalop parhorason* traditional ceremony, there are two stages of implementation, namely: (1) The pre-implementation process of the custom,

which consists of implementation time, equipment and invitations (2) The process of implementing the custom, which consists of *Manurduk Demban*, *Manurduk Dayok Nabinatur*, *Manurduk Batu Ni Demban*, *Mambere Hiou Na Marrambu*, *Mamborastenger*, and *Mambere Podah*. There are five categories of symbols used, namely: (1) Traditional food symbols, which consist of 5 symbols, namely *dayok nabinatur*, *kalapa mumbang*, *nitak siang-siang*, *hinasumba* and *galuh namabei*. (2) Traditional equipment symbols, which consist of 5 symbols, namely *boras tenger*, *hiou na marrambu*, *untei mungkur*, *amak bontar* and *demban*. (3) Time symbol, which consists of 2 symbols, namely a good day for carrying out traditional ceremonies (*ari-ari namadear*) and the time to start traditional ceremonies (*sogotni ari*). (4) Status marker symbol, which consists of 3 symbols, namely *tondong*, *sanina* and *boru/anak boru*. (5) Place and position symbols, which consist of 4 symbols, namely *jabu simada horja*, *luluan*, *talaga* and *tatarang*. The symbol in the traditional *mangalop parhorason* ceremony of the Simalungun ethnic group has the function and meaning of obtaining blessings, abundant sustenance as well as completeness and order in life. Through regular living and positive thinking, it is hoped that the mother's pregnancy can be maintained well until the baby is born, and the father is also expected to always support and strengthen the mother during pregnancy. Everything will be in order as expected if you have an orderly life.

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