

Presentation of Socio-Cultural Values in the Traditional “Martumba” Game of the Toba Batak: An Anthropolinguistic Study

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Abstract

Toba Batak is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia that has a very diverse cultural diversity, including in the form of traditional games. This research aims to describe the representation of socio-cultural values contained in the traditional game Martumba played by the Toba Batak community. This game is seen not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a medium to pass on a culture rich in symbols and moral messages. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a contextual and anthropolinguistic approach to analyze language elements, social interactions, and symbolism contained in the poetry and practice of the Martumba game. Data were collected through literature study, documentation, and analysis of poems from traditional games. The results show that social values such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, art and aesthetics, religiosity, and cultural identity are explicitly represented in the language structure and practice of Martumba. In addition, this game also encourages cooperative and educative social interaction patterns between generations. By using the Toba Batak language in the form of rhymes and songs, Martumba strengthens the role of language as a medium for transmitting cultural values and preserving the cultural identity of the Toba Batak community. These findings emphasize the importance of preserving traditional games as a space for inheritance.

Keywords: Martumba, social value, anthropolinguistics, Toba Batak, traditional game

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as the largest archipelago in the world has a very rich cultural diversity, including in the form of traditional games. Etymologically, Koentjaraningrat (in Zuhriy, 2011) explains that the word ‘culture’ comes from the word budhayah in Sanskrit, which is the plural form of the word buddhi, meaning budi or reason. Thus, culture can be understood as “things related to the mind and intellect.” One form of cultural diversity in Indonesia is traditional games. Traditional games are an ancestral heritage that not only functions as entertainment but also contains social values and local wisdom that are very important to preserve (Andriani, 2012: 132).

The Toba Batak community, one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia, has various types of traditional games. One example of such a game is Martumba. Aritonang et.al. (2022) explained that the Martumba game was first organized in Sianjur Mula-Mula Village, Sianjur Mula-Mula District. It is estimated that this game began to appear in the 1930s, or during the Dutch colonial period. Martumba is a game that combines singing and dancing, accompanied by chanting rhymes, as an effective means of expression and communication in conveying messages that symbolize struggle, enthusiasm, requests, and expressions of the heart (Aritonang et.al., 2020).

Game rules, interactions between players, language, and symbols used in traditional games often reflect the social values that exist in society. In the context of the Toba Batak community, the Martumba game is not just an entertainment activity, but to represent existing social values. These social values are not only reflected in the way the game is carried out, but also expressed through texts, songs, and typical expressions used during the game. As an important component of the game, language plays an important role in spreading these values and strengthening Toba Batak cultural identity. The Martumba game is one of the platforms where Toba Batak cultural values can be taught and practiced for generations. The following is a poem from the Martumba game (in Hirza, 2023).

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Tangan Do botohon dainang

(This is our hand everybody)

Ujungnaima jari jari dainang

(The end is the fingers)

Jongjong hamidison

(We stand here)

Jumolo hami marsattabi dainang

(First of all, we allow and respect)

Rege rege, rege dainang

(Slide it, slide it, everybody)

Tartukkani tartukkanonma ho ito

(Slide there, slide here, everybody)

Rege rege, rege

(Slide it slide it)

Tartukkani tartukkanonma ho ito....

(Slide there, slide here, everybody)

Sian Samosir Rodo hami dainang

(We came from Samosir everybody)

Marhite gokkon jou jou da amang

(To fulfill the invitation to our brother)

Marlasni roha hami pangeol gotting

(We rejoice while stretching our bodies)

Padenggal tangan da inang

(With your hands and fingers open everybody)

Aha ma dameam meam ni dahalak hita

(What is our game)

Natinggal dihuta da

(People who live in the village)

Adongma sada meam-meam ni da molo

(There is a game)

Poltak bulan i martumba do

(At the time of the full moon)

Tumba do...eeee Tumba do....dipoltak bulan i martumbado

(That is, Tumba, during the full moon in Martumba)

Urdotni tumba tung asing do tahe

(The Tumba movement is different from the others)

Ikkon makkutur daging i sude
(must sway all limbs)
Gottingna pe ikkon dauk gale.
(Even the waist must be flexible)
Doge doge tarsongoni do hape
(That's what Martumba look like)
Metmet dope sikkoru dainang
(The plant is still small)
Danungga dihadapang hadangi dainang
(But, it has been fenced)
Metmet dope siboru dainang
(The girl is still little)
Danungga di handanghandangi
(but it has been tempted)
Sengko sengko dainang
Sengko sengko dainang
Sengko sengko dainang
Sengko inang sengko sengko (2X)
Trila..la...Tri..ala
Siregerege tumba inang sengko sengko
Trilala..tri..lala
Sirege rege tumba sirege rege tumba inang sengko sengko
Tole ma martumba nadialaman on
(Let's Martumba on this page)
Baen hita marlasni roha dibodarion
(Let us rejoice tonight)
Poltak ho bulan o bulan na di ginjang
(The moon rises in the sky)
Sumondangiamion nadi alaman on
(Illuminate those of us on this page)

Along with the times and modernization, traditional games such as Martumba began to lose their place in people's lives, especially among the younger generation. This resulted in the social values contained in the game being increasingly marginalized. In fact, these values have a very important role in shaping individual character and personality and maintaining social harmony in society.

Several researchers have previously studied traditional games in Indonesia. For example, Ramadhani (2018) examined the character education values contained in traditional children's games, such as “cim-ciman” in Central Java, and found that the game was able to instill the values of honesty, discipline, creativity, independence, responsibility, social care, hard work, enthusiasm, respect for achievement, friendly or communicative attitude, peace love, and the spirit of deliberation. In line with that, Hamapu (2023) highlighted the value of cohesiveness and mutual cooperation reflected in the “jong boat” game in the Malay coastal community of Riau Islands. This study specifically illustrates the strong local wisdom in maritime communities, where solidarity is key in achieving common goals.

Meanwhile, Aritonang et al. (2020) highlighted the potential of the Martumba game in shaping children's character, especially in instilling the values of responsibility and discipline through social interactions and existing game rules. However, most of these three studies still focus on aspects of character education in general and do not examine in depth the role of language and symbolic interaction in the process of inheriting social values, especially in the context of Toba Batak culture. There are still few studies that explicitly examine the representation of social values in the Martumba game through an anthropolinguistic approach. This approach, as explained by Meisuri (in Pattiasina & Aziz, 2025), focuses on the mutual interaction between language and culture in various societies, where language not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a manifestation of the belief system, social values, and identity of a community group. Therefore, the study of this traditional game is very important, because it can help preserve the Martumba game and allow the community to understand the meaning and values contained in it. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of science, but also to the preservation of culture and social identity of the community.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a contextual and anthropolinguistic approach to analyze the representation of social values in the traditional Martumba game of the Toba Batak. According to Waruwu (2023), qualitative methods focus on understanding social phenomena through a holistic approach, by exploring the meanings, experiences, and perspectives held by individuals or groups in a particular cultural context. This method allows researchers to analyze the values that develop in society through cultural practices, such as traditional games.

The anthropolinguistic approach was chosen to assess how the language in the Martumba game reflects the social values that exist in the life of the Toba Batak community. Anthropolinguistics, as explained by Siregar (2021), combines language studies with cultural studies, allowing a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping and transmitting social norms in a community.

The data for this research was obtained through literature review and analysis of various written sources related to the Martumba game, such as oral texts, folklore, typical expressions and elements of Toba Batak culture connected to this game. The data collection process is carried out by utilizing written sources, documentation, and available recordings, which allow researchers to examine the elements of language and symbolism contained in the Martumba game. Basri (in Ardiyanto, 2019) concluded that qualitative research focuses on the process and meaning of the results. In this approach, the main attention is given to human elements, objects, and institutions, as well as the relationships or interactions that exist between these elements. Qualitative research aims to understand events, behavior, or phenomena in depth, by paying attention to the context and dynamics that exist in its Mohamed, Abdul Majid, & Ahmad (in Ardiyanto, 2019).

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the midst of globalization and modernization that are increasingly eroding local cultural practices, traditional games still function as symbolic spaces that reflect the values of local wisdom and the social structure of the communities that support them. Martumba, as one of the cultural heritages of the Toba Batak community, not only functions as a form of entertainment, but also as a form of value preservation, identity, and collective memory. As stated by Koentjaraningrat (2009), culture is a system of ideas and human actions that guide life in a particular social context.

The Martumba game is not just a physical event, but also a form of communicative practice that brings up many moral messages, social ethics, and interaction patterns that reflect the structure of Toba Batak society. Sibarani (2018) further explains that the cultural identity of local communities must continue to be formed and passed down through symbolic practices and collective narratives contained in oral traditions, performing arts, and folk games.

The following are the main results and findings from the research on the Martumba game, that is:

Social Values in Martumba Game

Aritonang et.al (2020), explained that the Martumba game is an effective means of shaping, educating, and developing children's character. The reason is because this game strengthens children's cultural identity early on, preserves ancestral heritage, and prevents cultural extinction in the modern era. In addition, this game also involves social interaction, so that children are trained to socialize, work in groups, and respect culture.

Martumba games reflect the culture and life of the Toba Batak people in various aspects of daily life. The following describes the social values contained in the martumba game.

Values of Mutual Cooperation and Colaboration

Martumba is a game played in groups, so it requires coordination and harmony of movements between players. This need reflects the value of gotong royong which is an important part of the culture of the Toba Batak people, where togetherness and cooperation are highly valued. This value is seen in the lyrics of the game, as in the verse:

"rege rege, rege dainang"

(slide it, slide it, everybody)

"tartukkani tartukkanonma ho ito"

(slide there, slide here, everybody)

the two lyrics invite us to move together simultaneously, without differentiating between each other. In addition, lyrics such as:

"tole ma martumba nadialaman on"

(let's Martumba on this page)

"baen hita marlasni roha dibodarion"

(let us rejoice tonight)

describes an atmosphere of togetherness that is full of joy and solidarity. These poems further strengthen the position of Martumba as a symbolic medium to instill and pass on the spirit of togetherness in the social life of the Toba Batak community.

Art and Aesthetic Value

Martumba games not only function socially but also reflect the artistic and aesthetic values that are unique to Toba Batak culture. One of the main aspects that illustrates this value is the flexible and dynamic dance movements, which become a form of collective expression of

the community towards togetherness, joy, and respect for tradition. In addition to the movement elements, Martumba is also accompanied by music and verses that are sung repetitively and rhythmically. The verses not only function as accompaniment, but also as instructions for dance movements delivered orally in the form of rhyming rhymes. This pattern creates a harmonious blend of vocal art, traditional music and dance, forming a multicultural aesthetic unity.

Religious and Spiritual Values

Martumba games are usually played at night, especially during the full moon. The connection between Martumba and the full moon moment shows a strong relationship with religious and spiritual values in the tradition of the Toba Batak community. This practice reflects respect for natural phenomena as part of a local belief system that is still alive and preserved.

The lyrics in Martumba clearly states:

“poltak bulan i martumba do”

(at the time of the full moon)

“tumba do...eeee Tumba do...dipoltak bulan i martumbado”

(that is, Tumba, during the full moon in Martumba)

The lyrics show that the Martumba game is not just a physical activity, but also part of a ritual or customary practice that is adapted to certain times that are considered sacred. In local traditions, the full moon is often seen as a symbol of the perfection of nature and the right time to gather and do activities together.

Cultural Identity Value

The Martumba game reflects the cultural identity of the Toba Batak people, especially those from the Samosir area. This identity is not only seen in the form of physical play, but also in the symbolism of the lyrics that accompany it. One of the poems that emphasizes this is:

“sian Samosir rodo hami dainang”

(we came from Samosir everybody)

The lyrics serve to emphasize the ethnic and geographical identity of the Batak people. Thus, Martumba is not just a traditional game, but also a means of expressing collective identity that strengthens the attachment to the ancestral land.

Social Interaction Caused by the Martumba Game

Social interaction is the main foundation in the formation of the social structure of society. Narwoko & Suyanto, 2014 (in Fahri, et.al, 2019: 153) state that social interaction is a process in which individuals with individuals, individuals with groups, or groups with groups relate to one another. The Martumba game not only functions as a means of entertainment, but also a medium for social interaction that applies in the life of the Toba Batak community. Through this game, various forms of interaction can be identified, among others:

Solidarity Interaction Pattern

Basically, solidarity is an attitude possessed by humans related to the expression of their feelings based on a sense of mutual support for other individuals and their own groups. The concept of social solidarity expressed by Emile Durkheim (in Dewi, 2021: 4), explains that solidarity is a form of association based on moral feelings and shared beliefs, which are strengthened by shared emotional experiences. This is reflected in the traditional game Martumba as a manifestation of this concept.

Based on the lyrics:

“sian Samosir Rodo hami dainang”

(we came from Samosir everybody)

The lyrics contain expressions that show a shared awareness as people who come from the same region, namely the Samosir region.

b. Cooperative Interaction Pattern

Martumba games produce cooperative patterns of social interaction, which are characterized by cooperation, coordination, and understanding among individuals in a group. This pattern is reflected in directive and collective oral communication practices, as seen in the following martumba lyrics:

“rege rege, rege dainang”

(slide it, slide it, everybody)

“tartukkani tartukkanonma ho, ito”

(slide there, slide here, everybody).

The utterances contained in the lyrics not only function as technical utterances in the game but also reflect the values of togetherness and cooperation embedded in the culture of the Toba Batak community.

The cooperative interaction pattern contained in the Martumba game serves as a reflection of the social structure of the Toba Batak community which upholds the principles of mutual cooperation and collective harmony. This game represents the social life of the Toba Batak community, where collective success is prioritized over individual achievement.

c. Interaction Pattern of Cultural Value Transmission

The Martumba game functions as a forum for intergenerational social interaction that allows for the transfer of existing cultural values. Based on the poetry, there are various moral advice, such as:

“metmet dope sikkoru dainan”

(the plant is still small)

danungga dihadap hadangi dainang”

(but, it has been fenced), and

“metmet dope siboru dainang”

(the girl is still little)

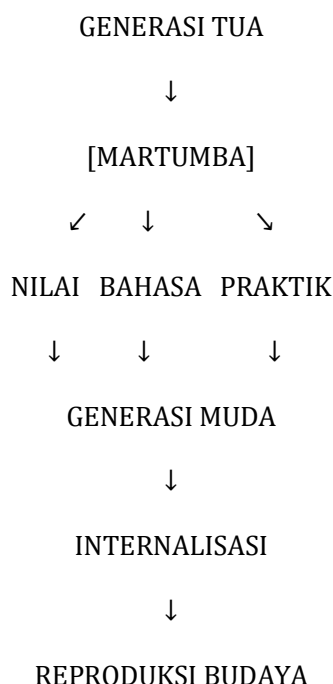
“danungga di handanghandangi”

(but it has been tempted)

The advice reflects the educational function of the game. The phrases in the poem use plant metaphors to convey messages about protecting the weak. These phrases function as a communication medium to convey moral messages and social norms transmitted directly by the older generation to the younger generation through the context of the game.

Martumba games are not just entertainment activities, but lead to a process of cultural socialization mechanisms that internalize ethical values, social responsibility, and community norms within the framework of daily social interactions.

Diagram of Value Transmission Process in Martumba



Social Attachment Interaction Patterns

Martumba games have an important role in strengthening social cohesion among the Toba Batak community, especially when played during ritual moments or certain events. This can be seen from the verse: attachment

“marhite gokkon jou jou da amang”

(to fulfill the invitation to our everybody)

The lyrics emphasize that Martumba is a means to build attachment and unite the layers of society as a whole. Through this martumba game, an atmosphere of joy and togetherness is created, so that social attachment becomes the basis for continued interaction for community life.

Patterns of Interaction with Environment and Nature

In the Martumba poem there is a form of interaction that occurs between the Toba Batak people and the natural environment around them. In the following lyrics:

“poltak ho bulan o bulan na di ginjang”

(the moon rises in the sky)

“sumondangiamion nadi alaman on”

(illuminate those of us on this page)

The lyrics imply a harmonious and mutually supportive relationship between humans and nature, which is an integral part of the social structure in the life of the Toba Batak community.

3. Language Use in Martumba Games

The Martumba game in the Toba Batak tradition reflects a blend of expressive art and local language richness. In addition to displaying the beauty of dance movements, Martumba also contains verbal elements that are rich in cultural values. In practice, the game is often accompanied by rhyming songs that convey moral messages, wise advice, and ethical teachings that are passed down from generation to generation (Tobario, 2024).

The language used in Martumba, namely the Toba Batak language, functions as a means of cultural expression that strengthens the collective identity of the people who support it. This function is in line with Duranti's view, 1997 (in Sihombing, 2017) which emphasizes that language in cultural practices not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a place to pass on values and ideologies.

The structure of songs in Martumba is usually organized in the form of rhymes or rhythmic verses, which show patterns of parallelism, repetition, and the use of language typical of the Toba Batak. This pattern reflects a symbolic order that not only beautifies the delivery of messages but also represents cultural values that live in society. As explained by Sihombing (2015), oral traditions depend on certain agreements to maintain the continuity of shared understanding. This strengthens the function of Martumba as a medium in transmitting ancestral values and teachings ritually and symbolically from one generation to the next.

Furthermore, the use of language in Martumba also reflects the dynamics of social relations in Toba Batak society. Speakers who deliver songs in this game not only function as entertainers, but also as agents of conveying cultural values and social norms. This is in line with the concept of linguistic relativity which states that language structure affects the way of viewing and interpreting social reality Whorf 1956 (in Sibarani, 2018).

The Role of Martumba Games in the Preservation and Transmission of Cultural Values

Martumba, as a traditional art form, has an important role in the preservation and transmission of cultural values of the Toba Batak community. It combines elements of dance, music and oral literature that thoroughly reflect the social life and philosophy of the community. Through Martumba performances, the younger generation is invited to understand and appreciate basic values such as togetherness, cooperation, and respect for traditions that are the basis of a shared identity.

Besides functioning as a medium of cultural expression, Martumba also has an educational role in character development. The game provides practical experience for children and adolescents to foster an attitude of discipline, a sense of responsibility, and respect for fellow community members. Thus, Martumba not only preserves the aesthetic aspects of Toba Batak culture but also instills moral values that are important for the formation of social ethics and community cohesion (Sipayung, 2020).

Martumba practices show the complexity of interactions between language, symbols and rituals that function as a means of oral cultural inheritance. The use of language and rhymes in Martumba contains symbolic meanings that strengthen the identity and sustainability of traditions, while forming a collective community awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural heritage as the basis for sustainable social life (Harahap, 2019).

D. CONCLUSION

As a cultural heritage of the Toba Batak community, the Martumba game brings so many positive things. Martumba games not only function as entertainment but also become a forum for learning and preserving cultural values. The social values contained in the martumba game are 1) the value of cooperation and cooperation, 2) the value of art and aesthetics, 3) religious and spiritual values, and 4) the value of cultural identity.

The martumba game is also a medium for social interaction that applies in the life of the Toba Batak community. Through this game, various forms of interaction can be identified, for example, 1) solidarity interaction patterns, 2) cooperative interaction patterns, 3) cultural value transmission interaction patterns, 4) social attachment interaction patterns, and 5) interaction patterns with the environment and nature.

Judging from the use of language when practicing traditional martumba games, the Toba Batak community often includes rhyming songs that convey moral messages, wise advice, and ethical teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation. This pattern reflects a symbolic order that not only beautifies the delivery of messages but also represents the cultural values that live in society. the use of language in Martumba also reflects the dynamics of social relations in Toba Batak society.

Martumba has a role in the preservation and transmission of cultural values. This role includes, among others, as a medium of cultural expression and as an educational role in character development. Thus, Martumba plays an important role in maintaining cultural sustainability and shaping the character of the younger generation who are ethical and cultured.

For future research development, it is recommended to conduct research based on participatory ethnographic studies that involve the original Martumba actors in the field data collection process. This approach will provide deeper insights into the social context, symbolism, and actual dynamics of Martumba game practices. In addition, comparative analysis with other traditional games from different ethnicities can also broaden the understanding of value patterns and cultural representations in the context of folk games in the archipelago.

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