

An Analysis of the Significance and Religious Purpose of Upah-Upah Tondi Tradition Contained in Batak Mandailing Tribe

Elvi Fauziah¹, Aissyah Octaweni², Rahmawati³

^{1,2,3} English Literature Study Program, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara

E-mail: elvifauziah99@gmail.com¹, aissyahoctaweni@gmail.com², rahmawati@sastra.uisu.ac.id³

Correspondent : rahmawati@sastra.uisu.ac.id³

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this descriptive qualitative research is to analyze the significance and religious purpose of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition contained in the Batak Mandailing tribe. The data for this research are from the literature. The data sources of this research are journals, books, and articles about the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition. There are significant differences in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition. They can be divided into the materials used and behavioral processes. The materials used in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition are customized according to the level of illness. Ordinary illnesses typically involve the use of boiled eggs. Symbolically, a round egg, consisting of a yolk and white, represents the wholeness of the spirit and body. Severe illnesses usually affect chicken and goat heads. Chicken is the most important requirement in this tradition because it symbolizes hope in the recovery process from the illness. Therefore, the behavioral process in Upah-Upah Tondi, like the rotation of the tray to the right, symbolizes goodness. Batak Mandailing people believe that good things come from the right, whereas the rotation of the tray to the right symbolizes goodness. The religious purpose of the Upah-Upah tradition includes the value of faith, gratitude, and connecting relatives.

Keywords : Significance, Religious, Upah-Upah

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country in the world. It has a diverse tribe and culture, such as Mandailing, Javanese, Minangkabau, and Chinese. Each of the tribes has a different culture, with various customs, languages, values, and traditions. These customs, values, and traditions regulate various aspects of life such as social relationships, religion, beliefs, myths, and cultural sanctions that apply within society.

Customs can reflect the spirit of society and constitute their personalities. Modern civilizations and lifestyles cannot erase and replace rooted behaviors and customs within society. Customs are related to existing societal traditions in society (Ragawino, 2008).

The Batak Mandailing tribe has a famous tradition named upah-upah. Upah-upah is a traditional ceremony to pray for good things. The upah tradition is divided into several categories, including:

- a. Regular Upah-upah
Regular upah-upah is the tradition of giving the celebration to general celebrations such as weddings and the birth of the baby.
- b. Mangupa/Upah-upah Magondang
Upah-upah Magondang is the tradition of celebrating a man who has just gotten a job.
- c. Upah-upah Tondi
Upah-upah tondi is the tradition of giving prayers, advice, and encouragement to help someone restore spirits and health after getting ill or an accident.

However, in this research, the researcher is interested in analyzing upah-upah tondi. Upah-upah tondi was examined from the perspective of its purpose. This ceremony can restore the spirit of someone who has just gotten ill by giving words of encouragement and advice (R. I. Nasution, 2016). The Batak Mandailing tribe believes that when people get ill or an accident, they will lose their spirit. Therefore, the upah-upah tondi is needed to restore the spirit. This tradition is carried out by giving prayers, advice, and encouragement.

Upah-upah tondi, a tradition of the Batak Mandailing tribe community, plays a role in religious purposes. This tradition involves a tray containing yellow sticky rice, chicken, vegetables, goat's head, and two eggs. The tray is then circled around the head of the person who gets the ill or an accident while reciting the prayers and chanting advice. Each food item on the tray has a specific meaning and symbol. For instance, eggs are used for simple illnesses and goat heads are used for more serious illnesses. However, tradition has shifted. For serious illnesses, which traditionally used a goat's head, only one chicken egg and one chicken were used. Similarly, for ordinary illnesses, which traditionally only used chicken eggs, it only used chicken.

Batak Mandailing community perceptions about Upah-Upah tradition as a legacy from their ancestors, which naturally contains cultural values, interpreted as a sense of caring for sick people, and can be considered a social value. Beyond its social value, there is also a religious value within the Upah-Upah tradition, which the general public interprets as a prayer to God to recover and restore the spirit to life (R. I. Nasution, 2016).

Traditions that have become ingrained in our culture will serve as a source for us to develop morals and good character, as humans, in their actions and in observing the realities of their surroundings as an effort to adapt, even though the individual may already have their own motivation for behaving accordingly (B. Arifin, 1984).

The changes in the Upah-upah Tondi tradition are natural cases. This happens because culture is not static. Every culture is constantly growing and being developed by the community (Alo, 2003). However, the increasingly widespread shift in the Upah-upah Tondi tradition has also led to a shift in the meaning of symbols within the Upah-upah Tondi tradition, causing them to no longer be properly understood. Furthermore, considering that the Upah-upah Tondi tradition is a cultural heritage that must be preserved, it is important to elucidate the meaning of Tondi Upah-upah symbols as a way to explore, examine, and develop the values behind the meaning of the Upah-upah Tondi tradition that cannot be directly observed.

The Upah-upah Tondi tradition contains important values that encompass religious, social, and physical aspects, such as the tools and equipment used, and the chanting of prayers by elders among the Batak-Mandailing community who participate in the Upah-upah Tondi tradition. Therefore, the researchers aim to analyze the significance and religious purpose of the upah-upah tondi tradition contained in the Batak Mandailing tribe.

Based on the background of the problem, the following research questions are formulated :

1. What is the significance of the Upah-upah Tondi tradition contained in the Batak Mandailing tribe?
2. What is the religious purpose of the Upah-upah Tondi tradition contained in the Batak Mandailing tribe?

II. METHOD

In this study, we used a qualitative research method with a descriptive analysis approach. Qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups relate to a social human problem. There are five different types of qualitative methods: phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and narrative research (Creswell, 2012).

The data of this research are taken from the literature on the significance and religious purpose of the upah-upah tradition contained in the Batak Mandailing tribe. Data sources were journals, books, and articles.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The significance of Upah-Upah Tondi tradition contained in Batak Mandailing tribe

Interactions between individuals occur consciously and involve body gestures, vocalizations, sounds, and expressions, all of which have a meaning known as symbols (Kuswarno, 2009). These symbols are also found in Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, where the symbols represent the food and equipment used in Upah-Upah Tondi tradition also the events that occur within it like prayers and advice by the Elders and circle around the tray on the head by saying "Mulak tondi tubadan." The physical objects in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition are the tools and materials used during the traditional process, which are offered as offerings to the Tondi spirit. These offerings include several things, such as chicken, which is used for severe illnesses, such as stroke, liver cancer, and kidney cancer. Chicken is the most important requirement in this tradition because it symbolizes hope in the healing process of the illness and is offered to the Tondi spirit (spirit) so that this hope is felt by the Tondi spirit, and it is hoped that the spirit will be restored.

Furthermore, a boiled chicken egg is also used in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, which is used for ordinary illnesses such as fevers and teething babies. Symbolically, a round egg, consisting of a yolk and white, represents the wholeness of the spirit and body. The intention is for those who are sick to recover their health status. Therefore, the ingredient used in this tradition is the liver. The liver is used as a complement in the "upah-upah tondi" tradition for every level of illness, whether ordinary or severe. The liver must be used. Symbolically, the liver reflects patience intended for those who are ill in facing the illness.

For those with advanced illnesses, the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition uses a goat's head curry, which is a delicious dish. This is intended to revive a person who has just had an accident and help them forget about the incident. This goat curry is expected to ward off the disaster, so that the accident will not befall them again. In the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, yellow sticky rice often serves as an offering to the Tondi spirits, used as a complement to treat any level of illness. Yellow sticky rice itself has a life philosophy, symbolizing a person's ability to live well and righteously, and to be kept away from anything that could harm them. The last ingredients offered to the Tondi spirit are vegetables, which have the same function as the liver and yellow sticky rice. Vegetables are also used for any level of illness, representing the balance of nature and a form of gratitude to God for creating nature. This balance means that humans must maintain a balance in their use of animals and plants, because all of God's creations are useful.

The social significance of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition includes behavior in the form of movements, prayers recited by the bamou, the social situation of the family of the person receiving Upah-Upah Tondi, and the timing of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition. Bamou is an Elder who leads prayer. In the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, the bamou's hand is moved to the right while holding an offering the tray neatly arranged on the right side, then continuing to the left. The movement was performed above the head, symbolizing absolute life. This means that the head is the most important part of the human body because all five senses such as listening, seeing, speaking, smelling, and tasting are located in the head; thus, all sources of human life are in the head. Rotation of the tray to the right symbolizes goodness. Batak Mandailing people believe that good things come from the right, whereas the rotation of the tray to the right symbolizes goodness.

In the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, prayers recited by a bamou have a special meaning, namely hope. The hope expressed by the person who gets ill or an accident, family, and friends for recovery and return to health and enthusiasm for life. In the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, the significance for the people who get the ill or an accident is this tradition as a medicine to recover and restore the spirit and health. They also interpret this tradition as a legacy from their ancestors that contains cultural values. Furthermore, they interpret this tradition as a place to gather and socialize with family and close and distant relatives. It includes social values and togetherness.

The religious purpose of Upah-Upah Tondi tradition contained in Batak Mandailing tribe

The Religious values found in the Upah tradition include aqidah and moral values. The value of faith is found when reading prayers and reciting the Al-Qur'an. Moral values exist when giving good advice, which is clearly visible when tradition takes place. Religious purposes in the Upah-Upah tradition include the value of faith, gratitude, connecting relatives, etc.

- a. Gratitude. The religious purpose of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition is to show gratitude to God as a sick person will get better.
- b. Prayer. Prayers and reciting the Qur'an are offered to ask for the recovery and restoration of the spirits.
- c. Silaturahmi (Togetherness). Silaturahmi in the Upah-Upah tradition, as one of the religious goals, is to foster togetherness. Silaturahmi was a good moral practice. During the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, families who have not seen each other for a long time are reunited.
- d. Faith. In Upah-Upah Tondi tradition there are values of faith that are taught to people who are getting sick or an accident through the advice given by Bamou. Faith in Islam is called aqidah, which includes beliefs about Allah who must be worshiped, and tradition includes actions in the form of worship by praying and reciting the Qur'an.

Advice is a discussion of truth and virtue with the goal of encouraging the individual to avoid danger and guiding them on a beneficial path that will bring them happiness (M. H. Nasution, 2020). An advice is a teaching, sentence, or expression that contains good values. In the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, advice must

be applied to the recipient so that they can find happiness through the advice given during the Upah-Upah Tondi ceremony (Zamili, 2019).

Prayer is a form of communication with God and serves as an encouragement for individual praying to overcome all of life's problems. Prayer is the most fundamental spiritual need for every human being and is an inseparable part of various human activities. In conclusion, prayer is a humble request to God for goodness, benefits, and happiness (Malik & Subagiyo, 2020). Prayers are obligatory at the end of the Upah-Upah tradition. This prayer is a request for the fulfillment of one's hopes and is a form of gratitude to God.

In other words, the purpose of the Upah-Upah tradition is to restore tondi (spirit) as a form of gratitude to God. Therefore, researchers conclude that one of the da'wah values in Upah-Upah Tondi is fostering togetherness and requests for healthy people by praying and reciting the Qur'an.

IV. DISCUSSION

Linguistically, "Upah-Upah" means "gift," while in terms of terminology, it is a ritual in which individuals pray for someone who gets ill and an accident to receive goodness and recover the health and spirits. The Batak Mandailing tribe believes that when a person suffers calamity or accident, their soul or spirit is separated from their body. Thus, the soul must be retrieved. Upah-upah provides moral encouragement to individuals to be grateful to God (M. Arifin, 2018). The word "Tondi" comes from South Tapanuli. This refers spirit, energy, and psychological strength. Tondi has strength, soulful enthusiasm, steadfastness, hardness, and energy, and can maintain harmony in an individual's life (Sulistyo, 2018).

The custom or tradition of Upah-Upah is considered a spiritual touch between humans and God. Usually, Upah-Upah Tondi is carried out by the close family of the person who is ill or involved in an accident. Upah-Upah Tondi is part of a form of prayer or supplication to God so that the person who gets ill or an accident will be given mercy, blessing, and health in life (Imron et al., 2021). The Upah-Upah tradition is led by one of the family or community members. The event was opened by a leader or protocol (Bamou) and conveyed to the people about the purpose of Upah-Upah Tondi. The tray is then circled around the head of the person who gets the ill or an accident while reciting the prayers and chanting advice.

There are significant differences in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition. They can be divided into the materials used and behavioral processes. The materials used in the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition are customized according to the level of illness. Ordinary illnesses typically involve use of boiled eggs. Symbolically, a round egg, consisting of a yolk and white, represents the wholeness of the spirit and body. Severe illnesses usually affect chicken and goat heads. Chicken is the most important requirement in this tradition because it symbolizes hope in the recovery process from the illness and is offered to the Tondi spirit (spirit) so that this hope is felt by the Tondi spirit, and it is hoped that the spirit will be restored. However, this goat curry is expected to ward off the disaster, so that the accident will not befall them again. Therefore, the behavioral process in Upah-Upah Tondi, like the rotation of the tray to the right, symbolizes goodness. Batak Mandailing people believe that good things come from the right, whereas the rotation of the tray to the right symbolizes goodness.

The Religious values found in the Upah tradition include aqidah and moral values. The value of faith is found when reading prayers and reciting the Al-Qur'an. Moral values exist when giving good advice, which is clearly visible when tradition takes place. The religious purpose of the Upah-Upah tradition includes the value of faith, gratitude, and connecting relatives. Advice is a discussion of truth and virtue with the goal of encouraging the individual to avoid danger and guiding them on a beneficial path that will bring them happiness (M. H. Nasution, 2020). Prayer is a form of communication with God and serves as an encouragement for individual praying to overcome all of life's problems. Prayer is the most fundamental spiritual need for every human being and is an inseparable part of various human activities. In conclusion, prayer is a humble request to God for goodness, benefitss, and happiness (Malik & Subagiyo, 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

1. The symbolic meaning of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition consists of physical and social objects whose meanings are related to the philosophical and historical culture of the Batak-Mandailing people. The physical objects of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition consist of offerings presented to the Tondi spirit in a tray, including chicken, eggs, liver, goat head curry, sticky rice, and vegetables. The use of these offerings depends on the level of illness. Each physical object has its own meanings. The social objects of Upah-Upah Tondi include verbal and nonverbal behavior, including movements performed by Bamou and prayers recited by Bamou to the person being offered the Upah-Upah Tondi. Furthermore, the social

object of this tradition can also be seen in the social situation of the family of the person who gets ill or an accident. The presence of relatives, family, and closest friends in this tradition participates in preparing the offerings in a tray for Upah-Upah Tondi.. This fosters bonds of togetherness and solidarity among people, fostering mutual connections and cooperation. Upah-Upah Tondi is performed when someone is getting ill because, in the Batak Mandailing tribe, people believe that when someone is sick, their spirits for life are lost. To restore this spirit, the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition is necessary. This is done by summoning the Tondi spirit and returning it to the sick person's body, thereby restoring their health and spirit for life.

2. Religious purposes in the Upah-Upah tradition include the value of faith, gratitude, connecting relatives, etc. The religious purpose of the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition is to show gratitude to God as a sick person will get better. Then, prayers and reciting the Qur'an are offered to ask for recovery and restoration of the spirits. Silaturahmi in the Upah-Upah tradition, as one of the religious goals, is to foster togetherness. During the Upah-Upah Tondi tradition, families who have not seen each other for a long time are reunited. Furthermore, In Upah-Upah Tondi tradition there are values of faith that are taught to people who are getting sick or an accident through the advice given by Bamou. Faith in Islam is called aqidah, which includes beliefs about Allah who must be worshiped, and tradition includes actions in the form of worship by praying and reciting the Qur'an.

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