



## Semiotics in the Martumpol Traditional Ceremony in the Toba Batak

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the forms of symbols, their semiotic meanings, and their functions within the martumpol tradition among the Toba Batak community. A qualitative method with a descriptive approach was employed, involving data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using a semiotic perspective to understand the system of signs present in the martumpol procession. The results of the study indicate that the martumpol tradition encompasses various forms of symbols, such as verbal, nonverbal, material, ritual actions, and relational symbols. These symbols are interrelated and form a cohesive system of meaning within the cultural context. In semiotic analysis, the meaning of symbols in martumpol is divided into three levels: denotative, connotative, and ideological. At the denotative level, these symbols are interpreted literally, while at the connotative level, they reflect cultural values such as love, respect, and solidarity. At the ideological level, the symbols depict the norms, values, and social structures of the Batak Toba community, particularly within the dalihan na tolu kinship system. Furthermore, the symbols found in the martumpol tradition play a significant role in social life, including serving as a means to legitimize relationships, strengthen solidarity, build trust, and act as a medium for social control and cultural education. This tradition also demonstrates an adaptive nature in response to changing times without losing its fundamental meaning. Thus, martumpol functions not only as a traditional ritual but also as a tool for preserving the cultural values and identity of the Batak Toba community.

*Keywords: semiotics, Martumpol traditional, ceremony*

## Semiotika pada Upacara Adat Martumpol dalam Batak Toba

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bentuk-bentuk simbol, makna semiotik, serta fungsi simbol dalam tradisi martumpol di kalangan masyarakat Batak Toba. Metode yang dipakai adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif, melalui pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan memanfaatkan sudut pandang semiotika untuk mengerti sistem tanda yang berada dalam prosesi martumpol. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi martumpol mengandung berbagai bentuk simbol, seperti simbol verbal, nonverbal, material, tindakan ritual, dan relasional. Simbol-simbol tersebut saling berkaitan dan membentuk sistem makna yang utuh dalam konteks adat. Dalam analisis semiotik, makna simbol dalam martumpol terbagi menjadi tiga tingkatan, yaitu makna denotatif, konotatif, dan ideologis. Pada tingkat denotatif, simbol tersebut diartikan secara langsung, sementara pada lapisan konotatif, simbol mencerminkan nilai budaya seperti kasih sayang, penghormatan, dan kebersamaan. Pada tingkat ideologis, simbol menggambarkan norma-norma, nilai-nilai, serta struktur sosial masyarakat Batak Toba, khususnya dalam sistem kekerabatan dalihan na tolu. Selain itu, simbol yang terdapat dalam tradisi martumpol memiliki peranan yang signifikan dalam kehidupan sosial, di antaranya sebagai sarana untuk melegitimasi hubungan, memperkuat solidaritas, membangun kepercayaan, serta sebagai medium pengawasan sosial dan pendidikan budaya. Tradisi ini juga menunjukkan sifat yang adaptif terhadap perubahan zaman tanpa menghilangkan makna dasarnya. Dengan demikian, martumpol tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ritual adat, melainkan juga sebagai alat untuk melestarikan nilai-nilai budaya dan identitas masyarakat Batak Toba.

*Kata kunci: semiotika, upacara adat, Martumpol*

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## INTRODUCTION

Customs are a form of cultural manifestation that is crucial in developing a community's identity, values, and social structure (Adha et al. 2021). In the context of the Toba Batak community, customs are not simply a collection of inherited rules or traditions, but rather a living system of meaning that is continually updated in daily life. Customs contain symbols with profound meaning, serving as a tool for social communication, strengthening shared identity, and as a means of legitimacy in various life events, including marriage (Marhandra, 2020).

As a cultural system, Toba Batak customs are inseparable from the social order and underlying values (Sihombing, 2018). Every customary practice contains rules, norms, and symbols that play a role in maintaining social order. In this regard, customs not only control individual behavior but also serve to build and maintain social relationships among community members (Mubarrok, 2015). Therefore, a thorough understanding of customs is necessary, not only from a practical perspective but also from the symbolic meanings they contain.

Culture is the totality of human ways of thinking, behaving, and creating, acquired through learning and passed down from one generation to the next (Veronika et al., 2021). In the context of the Toba Batak community, culture is understood not only as a pre-existing heritage but also as a guide to life that regulates social interactions, values, norms, and shared identity. One concrete example of this culture can be found in the Martupol tradition, which plays a central role in the traditional wedding process.

One crucial stage in the Toba Batak wedding tradition is the martumpol. Martumpol is an official engagement ceremony conducted in the presence of relatives and usually also involving religious institutions (Aturan et al., 2016). In practice, martumpol is not simply a statement of agreement between two people intending to marry, but also a form of social recognition that encompasses broader kinship ties. Therefore, martumpol has

highly complex social, cultural, religious, and symbolic dimensions.

In its implementation, martumpol involves various parties with their respective roles and functions, such as the hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru. The interaction between these parties does not occur spontaneously, but follows rules and procedures established by custom. Every action, utterance, and symbol that emerges in this process has a specific meaning that can only be understood within the context of Toba Batak culture. In other words, martumpol can be viewed as a structured and meaningful communication system.

From a cultural perspective, martumpol can be seen as a social text rich in signs and symbols. Every element involved in this procession, be it objects, actions, utterances, or the structure of the interaction, carries a specific meaning that is not always immediately apparent. For example, the presence of family members from both sides is not merely formal but also symbolizes recognition and legitimacy of the relationship to be formed. Similarly, the use of traditional language, the giving of ulos (traditional clothing), and the method of conveying messages all contain profound cultural values.

A semiotic approach is highly relevant in examining this phenomenon, as semiotics is the study of signs and the process of meaning-making. In semiotics, a sign is understood as something that represents something else, consisting of a signifier and a signified. With this approach, the various elements within martumpol can be analyzed as a system of signs that collectively construct meaning. Thus, martumpol is not simply interpreted as a traditional ritual but also as a complex system of symbolic communication.

Furthermore, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory emphasizes the consensual and unbound relationship between signifier and signified (Erlangga et al., 2021). This means that the meaning of a symbol in martumpol does not emerge spontaneously but is formed through a pre-existing cultural consensus. On the other hand, Charles Sanders Peirce's perspective, which categorizes signs into icons, indices, and symbols,



provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the various types of signs present in martumpol.

Furthermore, a semiotic approach also provides researchers with the opportunity to explore how meaning exists not only on the surface but also at deeper levels, namely connotative and ideological meanings (Romdhoni, 2019). In this regard, the symbols in martumpol not only convey clear messages but also reflect values such as honor, responsibility, and power relations within the Toba Batak social structure.

In the context of Toba Batak society, the symbols in martumpol are closely linked to a kinship system called *dalihan na tolu*. This system regulates the relationships between *hula-hula* (women who give gifts), *dongan tubu* (relatives within the clan), and *boru* (women who receive gifts), each with a specific role and position in each traditional ceremony (Simbolon, 2017). Therefore, every action in martumpol carries more than just symbolic meaning but also reflects the existing social structure.

The existence of *dalihan na tolu* (the traditional belief) in martumpol demonstrates that this customary practice is not merely ritualistic but also structured (Guna, 2003). This means that martumpol serves as a tool to reaffirm each individual's social position within society. This can be seen in how communication occurs, who speaks, and how decisions are made during the process. With changing times, martumpol practices have undergone many dynamics and variations. Modernization, globalization, and technological advances have impacted the way communities practice customs. For example, communication that previously took place face-to-face can now take place through digital media. Furthermore, some customary symbols have also undergone simplification or even changed meaning due to the influence of external cultures.

These changes pose challenges in maintaining the symbolic meaning of martumpol. On the one hand, communities must adapt to the times, while on the other, they are also responsible for preserving traditional values. In this context, a

process of negotiation of meaning is interesting to examine using a semiotic approach.

This phenomenon demonstrates that customs are not fixed, but rather dynamic and adaptable to change. Therefore, semiotic research on martumpol is crucial for understanding how cultural meanings are produced, maintained, and negotiated in the current context. Through this analysis, we can assess the extent to which the Toba Batak people are able to maintain their cultural identity amidst global change.

Furthermore, this research also plays a crucial role in cultural preservation. By understanding the symbolic meaning of martumpol, it is hoped that the younger generation will better appreciate and preserve existing traditions. This is increasingly crucial, especially given the declining understanding of customs among the younger generation due to the influence of modernization and changing lifestyles.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to explore the semiotics of the Martumpol tradition among the Toba Batak people. The main focus of this research is to identify the symbols present in the martumpol procession, analyze their meanings, and understand their social functions (Hutagaol & Nurussa'adah, 2021).

The research questions are as follows: (1) What forms of symbols are present in the martumpol tradition among the Toba Batak people? (2) What is the semiotic meaning of these symbols? (3) How do these symbols play a role in creating and maintaining social relationships within the community?

Based on the issues raised, this research has the following objectives: First, to identify and explain the various types of symbols present in the martumpol tradition of the Toba Batak community. This objective aims to comprehensively understand the various symbols that appear in traditional ceremonies, including verbal and nonverbal, material, ritual, and relational. Second, to analyze the semiotic meanings contained within these symbols. This analysis aims to uncover the meaning of symbols at various levels—denotative, connotative, and ideological—so that the cultural values hidden

behind each symbol in the martumpol tradition can be identified. Third, to explain the function of symbols in building and maintaining social relationships among the Toba Batak community. This objective focuses on how symbols in martumpol serve as tools of social legitimacy, strengthening solidarity, building trust, and serving as a medium for social control and cultural education.

In theory, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of science, particularly in the fields of semiotics, cultural anthropology, and the study of cultural communication. Furthermore, the results of this study can serve as an academic reference source for future researchers who wish to explore symbols and their meanings in traditional traditions, particularly in the context of Toba Batak culture.

This research can help the community, especially the younger generation of Toba Batak, better understand the symbolic meaning of the martumpol tradition, which in turn can increase their awareness of the importance of preserving and maintaining traditional culture.

The findings of this study can be used as food for thought in efforts to maintain and develop traditional practices so that they remain relevant to changing times without losing their core meaning.

The results of this research can be used as teaching materials or learning resources in the fields of cultural studies, language, and semiotics, particularly those related to local wisdom and traditions in Indonesia.

This study can serve as an initial reference for further, more in-depth research on symbols, cultural meanings, and the dynamics of customary change within the community.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods. This approach was chosen because the research focused on the meaning of symbols and the interpretation of cultural phenomena that cannot be measured quantitatively.

The data used in the study were obtained through several methods, namely observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted by directly observing the martumpol process in the Toba Batak community. Researchers recorded various visible symbols, including objects, behaviors, and the language used. Interviews were conducted with informants deemed to have a deep understanding of the martumpol tradition, such as traditional leaders, parents, and couples participating in the ceremony. The interviews used a semi-structured format to delve deeper into the meaning of the symbols.

Documentation studies were conducted by examining relevant literature, such as books, articles, and customary documents related to martumpol and semiotics. The purpose of this study was to strengthen the theoretical foundation and provide broader context for the research findings.

The data analysis process involves several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selects data that aligns with the research focus. The data is then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on a semiotic interpretation of the analyzed data.

The analytical framework in this study is based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure's approach is used to understand the relationship between signifier and signified, while Peirce's approach is used to categorize signs into icons, indices, and symbols (Wulandari & Siregar, 2020).

Data validity is ensured through triangulation techniques, namely by comparing data from various sources and methods. Furthermore, the researcher also conducted membership checks by requesting confirmation from informants regarding the interpretations made.

This research is expected to contribute to the advancement of science, particularly in the realm of cultural semiotics. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for future research and as a consideration in efforts to preserve Toba Batak culture.



## RESULT

Based on research conducted through observation, interviews, and document analysis regarding the implementation of the martupol tradition among the Toba Batak people, it was discovered that this procession contains various complex symbols with layered meanings. This research is structured around three main focuses: (1) the types of symbols found in the martumpol tradition, (2) the semiotic meaning of these symbols, and (3) the function of symbols in building and maintaining social relationships within the community.

First, in terms of symbol form, the research shows that symbols in martumpol can be categorized into five main types: verbal symbols, nonverbal symbols, material symbols, action symbols (rituals), and relational symbols. These five types of symbols are interconnected and form a unified meaning within the martumpol procession.

Verbal symbols emerge in the use of the Toba Batak traditional language during the procession. This language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for conveying values, norms, and hopes. Umpasa (traditional pantun) is the most prominent type of verbal symbol, where each expression contains prayers, advice, and hopes for the couple about to marry. The language used is formal, rich in figurative language, and follows a predetermined customary structure.

Nonverbal symbols can be observed through various body movements, facial expressions, and attitudes displayed by those involved in the procession (Khotimah, 2017). For example, orderly seating, polite speech, and gestures of respect toward certain parties reflect values of politeness and social hierarchy. These nonverbal symbols reinforce the verbal message and demonstrate adherence to customary norms.

Material symbols also play an important role in the martupol procession. Research reveals that objects such as the ulos (traditional cloth), traditional food, and other traditional paraphernalia have deep symbolic meaning (Simbolon, 2019).

The ulos, for example, serves more than just a cloth; it also symbolizes affection, protection, and blessings from the family. The food served reflects togetherness, prosperity, and the hope for a harmonious life.

Furthermore, symbolic actions or rituals are present at each stage of the martumpol procession. From the opening, through the delivery of the purpose, to the closing, everything is carried out according to procedures that have been passed down through generations. Each action has its own meaning, such as conveying intentions that reflect seriousness, and agreements that demonstrate commitment from both parties.

Finally, relational symbols are connected to the social structure of the Toba Batak people, namely the dalihan na tolu system (Firmando & Agama, 2021). This study clearly demonstrates the roles of the hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru in the martumpol procession. Each group has a function and position that cannot be interchanged, creating balance in social relations.

Second, regarding semiotic meaning, the research results indicate that the symbols in martupol have three levels of meaning: denotative, connotative, and ideological.

At the denotative level, symbols have literal meanings or meanings that can be directly seen. For example, ulos is a traditional cloth, food is a food, and language is a means of communication. These meanings are superficial and easily understood by everyone.

At the connotative level, symbols have deeper meanings and are related to cultural values. Ulos is interpreted as a symbol of affection and protection, food as a symbol of togetherness and solidarity, and traditional language as a means of conveying prayers and hopes (Nasuxon, 2019). These connotative meanings indicate that the symbols in martumpol function not only practically but also emotionally and socially.

Meanwhile, from an ideological perspective, the symbols reflect the values, norms, and social structures existing in Toba Batak society. For example, respect for the hula-hula indicates a kinship system that places certain groups at a

higher level. This indicates that symbols not only represent meaning but also support the social structure and cultural ideology.

Furthermore, according to semiotic categories, symbols in martumpol can be divided into icons, indices, and symbols. Icons are visual representations that resemble social structures. Indexes are demonstrated through actions or behaviors that indicate a direct connection to meaning. Symbols are signs whose meaning is determined by cultural agreement, such as ulos and traditional language.

Third, research findings reveal that symbols in martupol play a crucial role in building and maintaining social relationships (Pureklolon, 2016). Symbols serve as a means of social legitimacy, where a relationship between two people is deemed valid after going through traditional ceremonies accepted by the family and community. The presence of extended family members, the use of traditional language, and the performance of rituals are indicators of this social recognition.

Furthermore, symbols also serve to build trust between individuals and groups. Actions such as directly expressing intentions and giving ulos reflect the values of honesty and responsibility. This serves as the foundation for building strong and sustainable relationships.

Symbols also help strengthen social solidarity. Research shows that interactions during martupol, such as sharing food and collaborating in the ceremonies, create a sense of togetherness between families. Material symbols such as food and ulos connect emotions between individuals.

Furthermore, symbols function as a means of social control. The customary norms and rules reflected in the martumpol symbol regulate individual behavior to ensure it aligns with existing values. Violation of customary symbols or procedures can result in social sanctions, thus symbols play a role in maintaining social order.

Symbols also serve as a medium for cultural education. Younger generations involved in the martupol procession indirectly absorb cultural values through these symbols. This process

supports cultural preservation and strengthens the identity of the Toba Batak people.

Furthermore, this research also shows changes in symbol use due to the influence of modernization. Some symbols have undergone simplification or changes in form, such as the decline in the use of traditional languages. Nevertheless, the underlying meaning of these symbols remains intact. This demonstrates that the symbols in martupol are adaptive and able to adapt to changing times.

## DISCUSSION

The martumpol tradition among the Toba Batak people is a cultural practice rich with complex symbols and meanings. Based on previous research, this discussion will elaborate on the various forms of symbols, their semiotic meanings, and the role of symbols in building and maintaining relationships between individuals. This analysis utilizes a semiotic approach, focusing on the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, providing a clearer understanding of the sign system within the martumpol tradition.

Overall, martumpol can be viewed as an organized symbolic communication system (Evalina, 2017). Every element within it, be it language, actions, objects, or social interactions, functions as a sign that carries a specific meaning. From a semiotic perspective, a sign consists of a signifier and a signified. In the context of martumpol, the signifier can be an ulos (a traditional cloth), umpasa (a traditional garment), or body movement, while the signified is the meaning assigned to the symbol by the Toba Batak people.

First, an analysis of the symbol's form reveals that martumpol has a layered symbolic structure. Symbols in the form of words, for example, function not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for conveying cultural values. The use of umpasa (singing words) in the martumpol procession reflects a language system that not only conveys information but also has a performative character. This means that language



not only conveys messages but also creates social realities. When umpasa is sung, it indirectly reinforces values such as commitment, responsibility, and harmony.

Within Saussure's framework, the relationship between signifier and signified in umpasa is arbitrary, yet it has become a consensus within society. The meaning of umpasa can only be understood by those within the Toba Batak cultural context. This demonstrates that traditional language functions as a symbol that strengthens collective identity and distinguishes the community from other cultures.

Furthermore, nonverbal symbols in martumpol also play a crucial role. Body movements, facial expressions, and attitudes during the procession are part of a sign system that complements verbal communication. In Peirce's view, these nonverbal symbols can be categorized as indexes because they have a direct relationship to the meaning they represent. For example, bowing the head to the hula-hula indicates respect. This action requires no verbal explanation, as its meaning is already collectively understood.

This nonverbal symbol demonstrates that communication in martumpol occurs not only directly but also implicitly. This enriches the communication process by allowing for the conveyance of more subtle and profound meanings. Furthermore, nonverbal symbols also reflect the existing social structure, where each individual displays attitudes according to their position and role within the kinship system.

Physical symbols such as ulos (traditional cloth) and traditional food also play a significant role in martupol (traditional ceremonies). In semiotic analysis, these objects are categorized as symbols because their meanings are determined by cultural conventions (Handayani, 2019). Ulos, for example, is a powerful symbol in Toba Batak culture. Literally, ulos is a traditional cloth, but figuratively, it symbolizes love, protection, and blessings. Ideologically, ulos reflects family values and social solidarity.

Similarly, the traditional culinary delights served at the Martumpol ceremony serve not only

as a source of nourishment but also as a symbol of togetherness. The act of sharing a meal symbolizes the unification of two families in a single social relationship. In this context, material symbols serve as a bridge connecting the physical and symbolic aspects of social interaction.

Furthermore, the symbolic actions or ceremonies in martumpol suggest that each stage of the procession has a structured meaning. Rituals are not simply a series of actions, but rather a form of symbolic communication that conveys specific messages. For example, the communication of intentions from the man to the woman serves as a symbol of goodwill and seriousness. This action demonstrates that the relationship to be fostered is based on the values of honesty and responsibility.

From a semiotic perspective, rituals can be understood as cultural texts that can be "read" and interpreted. Each action in the ritual has interconnected meanings that form the overall narrative. Therefore, martupol can be viewed as a complex sign system, where meaning is not limited to a single symbol, but rather resides in the entire network of symbols.

Relational symbols associated with the dalihan na tolu system are also important elements in this discussion. This kinship structure is not only a social system but also a symbolic one. The positions of the hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru reflect relations of power and responsibility within society (Simanjuntak et al., 2021). Every interaction in Martumpol reflects this structure, making relational symbols a key aspect in understanding the social dynamics of the event. From a semiotic perspective, the dalihan na tolu system can be understood as a network of signs that represent social values. Each role and position has symbolic meaning that is inseparable from one's identity within the community. Thus, relational symbols not only indicate social relationships but also function to shape them.

Furthermore, an analysis of semiotic meanings shows that symbols in martupol possess complex layers of meaning. At the denotative level, the meaning of symbols is direct and observable.

However, this meaning is only the surface layer of the overall meaning system.

At the connotative level, symbols convey deeper cultural values. For example, ulos, as a symbol of affection, not only symbolizes emotional relationships but also depicts hopes for a harmonious life. The traditional language used in martumpol also contains connotative meanings in the form of prayers and hopes conveyed indirectly. At the ideological level, symbols reflect the system of values and norms existing within society. Respecting the hula-hula, for example, is not merely a polite act but also reflects a kinship ideology that places certain parties in a superior position. In this case, symbols function as a means of maintaining the existing social structure.

Furthermore, Peirce's classification of signs provides deeper insight into the symbols in martumpol. Icons, indices, and symbols each play a role in constructing meaning. Icons appear in the form of visual representations, indices relate to cause and effect, and symbols stand for cultural conventions. The combination of these three types of signs creates a complex and dynamic system of meaning.

Third, the discussion of the function of symbols illustrates that symbols in martumpol have a significant social role. One of their primary functions is as a means of social validation. Through a series of martumpol events, the relationship between two people is recognized by relatives and the community. The symbols used in these events signal that this relationship is socially recognized.

Furthermore, symbols function in establishing trust. Symbolic actions such as giving an ulos (a traditional Javanese cloth) and expressing intentions clearly demonstrate commitment and responsibility. This forms the basis for building strong and sustainable relationships.

Symbols also strengthen a sense of solidarity within the community. The presence of extended family and interactions during the event create a sense of togetherness. Activities such as eating together and collaborating in organizing the event play a role in strengthening social ties.

In the context of social control, symbols act as a means of regulating individual behavior. The norms and values reflected in symbols serve as a guide for action. Violation of symbols can be considered a violation of custom, thus symbols have the power to maintain social order.

Symbols also function as a tool for cultural education. Through involvement in martumpol, the younger generation directly learns about cultural values. This process supports cultural preservation while strengthening the community's collective identity.

As time changes, the symbols in martumpol experience dynamics and evolution. Modernization impacts the form and use of symbols. For example, traditional languages are becoming less common or rituals are simplified. However, these changes do not immediately erase existing symbolic meanings.

This phenomenon demonstrates the adaptive nature of symbols. The Toba Batak people negotiate meanings to adapt traditions to current conditions. From a semiotic perspective, this demonstrates that the meaning of symbols is flexible and constantly changing.

This adaptation is crucial for maintaining the continuity of traditions amidst social change. By adapting the form of symbols without losing their meaning, communities can maintain their cultural identity and adapt to modernity. This process demonstrates that the martumpol tradition is dynamic and constantly evolving.

Furthermore, symbols also function in conflict resolution. In social interactions, differences of opinion are commonplace. However, by using appropriate symbols, conflict can be managed gently. Polite and meaningful traditional language allows agreements to be reached without direct confrontation.

Symbols also create a sense of community. By sharing similar symbols, community members feel connected as part of a single entity. This is crucial for maintaining social cohesion, especially in societies with complex kinship structures like the Toba Batak.



Overall, this discussion demonstrates that martumpol is a rich and complex symbolic system. Its symbols function not only in rituals but also as a means of communication, social legitimacy, strengthening solidarity, social control, and a medium for cultural preservation. Using a semiotic approach, we can understand that the meanings within martumpol are layered and evolving.

Thus, the martupol tradition not only holds cultural value but also significant social significance in the lives of the Toba Batak people. The symbols within it serve as a tool for building, maintaining, and transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next.

## CONCLUSION

From the results and discussion of the signs in the martumpol tradition among the Toba Batak people, it can be concluded that martumpol is a cultural framework dense with symbols and meanings that are neatly arranged and play a role in social life. This tradition is not merely a series of ceremonial events before a wedding but also serves as a means of meaningful interaction that symbolizes cultural principles, social rules, and the structure of family relationships within the Toba Batak community.

First, the symbols in the martumpol tradition are diverse and interconnected, encompassing spoken and non-verbal signs, tangible objects, activities (traditional ceremonies), and relationships between individuals. Oral expressions called umpasa serve as a vehicle for conveying guiding messages, good wishes, and sincere wishes. Unspoken body language is expressed through gestures and positions that indicate norms of politeness and social standing. Tangible objects such as traditional cloth and traditional dishes reflect affection, unity, and prosperity. Furthermore, action cues are depicted in each meaningful part of the ceremony, while symbols of social relationships are evident in the *dalihan na tolu* (kinship structure) that determines each person's position and usefulness within the tradition.

Second, the meaning of symbols in martumpol has different levels of meaning, including literal, figurative, and meanings related to the main idea. At the literal level, signs are understood precisely as the visible form of the object or action. At a deeper level, signs convey feelings and group values such as love, appreciation, and a sense of togetherness. At the level of outlook on life, symbols represent a set of beliefs, rules, and social structures that govern the Toba Batak way of life. Therefore, the symbols in martupol serve more than just markers; they also serve as a means of preserving and revitalizing culture.

Third, the signs in martupol customs play a crucial role in people's social interactions. Signs serve as a means of social validation, strengthening the bond between two people through acceptance from relatives and the community. Furthermore, visual signs serve to foster trust, strengthen a sense of unity, and forge social connections between individuals and communities. In this context, signs serve as effective channels for maintaining harmony and stability in human interactions.

Furthermore, symbols serve as a societal oversight mechanism that guides individual actions to align with prevailing customary norms. Through visual markers, residents can instill traditional life principles in future generations, serving as a means of learning and maintaining inherited customs. The martumpol tradition, in other words, is the primary means of transmitting cultural worldviews from generation to generation.

Overall, it is evident that the martumpol tradition represents a complex and meaningful set of symbols for the Toba Batak people. The signs within it are not merely for ceremonial purposes, but also play a crucial role in shaping, maintaining, and sustaining societal structures and shared customs. Therefore, preserving and preserving the martumpol tradition is crucial. It serves as a marker of cultural identity and a way to preserve valuable local wisdom as the world becomes more advanced.

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