

## Myth Analysis of Umpasa Batak Toba: Roland Barthes Semiotics Study

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### **Abstract:**

*This study aims to analyze the terms and describe the lexical meaning contained in the term marriage of the Toba Batak tribe. The author uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The results of the analysis of myths in the umpasa above, it can be concluded that it is an oral literary work that comes from reason or the thoughts of previous ancestors. That is why the Toba Batak umpasa cannot be separated from the myths of the past. The myths that are still very developed in society, especially in umpasa, are a). Hula-hula has the highest authority in the Toba Batak culture. This myth applies depending on the context. Where realistically hula-hula is basically the same as other positions. There is no dominant position. All are equal before the law. b). Sahala is identified with magic, security, wisdom, and harmony. Where if judging in reality sahala is a spirit that has no control and supernatural powers. c). Padan is associated as a sacred covenant. The assumption that Padan is sacred because it is believed will bring disaster if it is not kept. d). Children are a symbol of wealth. The Toba Batak people fully believe that having many children will also have a lot of sustenance. This belief is no stranger to the ears. Those who do not have children will be considered poor by the local community, because no one will continue the lineage*

### **Keywords:**

*Myth; Umpasa; Batak Toba culture*

## I. Introduction

Semiotics is a branch of linguistics that studies signs. Roland Barthes then developed the theory of connotation and denotation put forward by Ferdinand de Saussure. According to Saussure in (S, Guguh, 2020) the signifier and the signified are like two sides of a coin. This means that the sign has a meaning that is attached directly to the object, the signifier and the signified are attached and interrelated. However, if we look back, this concept also begins with an abstract concept that refers to a particular object.

Semiotics is the study of sign systems. It explores how words and other signs make meaning. In semiotics, a sign is anything that stands in for something other than itself. This lesson focuses primarily on linguistic signs.

The word 'semiotics' dates back to ancient Greece, but its use in modern linguistics was propelled in the 19th century with the research of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure was a Swiss linguist who contributed greatly to the study of semiotics, also sometimes referred to as semiology.

Daniel Chandler (2007: 2) defines semiotics, as signs which take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. According to Umberto Eco (1986: 7), semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. So, we can conclude that anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as „signifying“, something-referring to or standing

for something other than itself. It means, every existing thing in our life is looked as a sign, that is something that we should give them meaning.

Sobur in Gumono (2017: 79) state that semiotics is a science or method to analyze signs. According to Eco (1986: 7), semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. Actually, there are two popular models of semiotics: the dyadic model by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the triadic model by the American philosopher Peirce. Chandler (2007: 14-15) says that the Saussure's dyadic model of signs defines a sign as being composed of a „signifier“ (significant) and a „signified“ (signifié). Within the Saussurean model, the sign is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified and the relationship between the signifier and the signified is called signification.

Roland Barthes found the existence of myth in semiotics. Myth can be understood as culture or understanding. Myth according to Barthes is a "communication system ... a message" (Barthes 1972:109). Myth is a form of message or speech that has been believed but cannot be proven true. Myth is not a concept or idea but a way of giving meaning. Etymologically, myth is a type of speech, of course, not just any speech. One thing that must be considered is that myth is a communication system, namely a message. But myth is not defined by the object of the message but by the way in which the message is told.

There are many semiotics traditions. On one side there are semioticians like Ferdinand de Saussure or Algirdas Greimas, directly connected to the 'verbal' side of semiotics, or how words (what Saussure would call a signifier) produce meaning (signified). On the other hand, you have semioticians, like Charles Sanders Peirce and Charles Morris, that attempted a 'deeper' approach to the process of meaning, looking beyond the linguistic meaning ("how does the sound of a camera shutter means 'photography' or 'picture' asks Peirce). Although the second branch of semiotics does not deal with 'verbal' meanings only, it cannot be said to be less 'linguistic'.

Almost every ethnic group in Indonesia has a characteristic spoken language which is often accompanied by proverbs, such as the Karo Batak tribe in North Sumatra. Proverbs are always different from the development of the regional language of each tribe in its cultural development. Proverbs are sometimes used to express certain meanings, with utterances (phrases) or phrases that contain figurative meanings that have become ethnic cultural traditions in Indonesia. (Azhar, 2019). Tradition is something that is passed down from the heritage of the ancestors to the next generation in a relay descends performed by the indigenous communities that have become deeply entrenched the culture in life. (Purba, N. 2020)

Myth will not be separated from culture. Different cultures will also have different myths in society. One of them is the Toba Batak tribe. Batak Toba is an Indonesian tribe that is rich in literary works. One of the literary works that is very well known to the public is umpasa. Umpasa if translated into Indonesian is called pantun. Umpasa is a traditional poem that is delivered orally where the contents of the umpasa usually contain a wish, a request, or a blessing. The array pattern in the umpasa, both the sampiran array and the content array is identical to the Malay pantun (Sitanggang, 1996). In line with the opinion (Sinaga. et al, 2021) umpasa is included in the old type of poetry which consists of two lines. The first line is the sampiran and the second line is the content. Because the mark on the umpasa is located on the sampiran.

Based on the definitions of the experts above, it can be concluded that umpasa is one type of oral literary work, namely pantun. Umpasa is included in the category of old poetry types. In general, umpasa is believed to be a prayer or request to God that is delivered during a Batak Toba traditional ceremony. Umpasa itself has been passed down by the ancestors of the Toba Batak tribe, so that until now the umpasa is still used in various traditional ceremonies. Both wedding ceremonies, death ceremonies, birth ceremonies and other ceremonies.

There are several previous studies that have discussed the umpasa and semiotics of Roland Barthes' theory, including:

1. Research conducted by Mawaddah (2015) entitled "Analysis of Semiotics Opening Doors at the Wedding Ceremony of the Teluk Rampah Village Community, Torgamba District, South Labuhanbatu Regency".
2. The research conducted by Amsari (2018) is entitled "Pantun Young People in Malay Society: Semiotic Studies".
3. Research conducted by Pasaribu (2017) entitled "Umpasa Semiotics in Toba Batak Marriage".
4. Research conducted by Simamora (2017) entitled "Umpasa as a Reflection of Toba Batak Cultural Values: Anthropology Studies".
5. Research conducted by Sinaga, et al. (2021) entitled "The Semiotics of the Toba Batak Language: The Roland Barthes Approach".

Several previous studies examined umpasa with different problems. If viewed and analyzed again, there are still many umpasa studies that can be used as research topics. However, in this study, the author has not found a myth with the study of myth according to Roland Barthes' theory. Therefore, the author is interested in analyzing the Batak Toba example, then the author will focus his research on the study of myths according to Roland Barthes' theory. The title of this research is "Analysis of Myths in Toba Batak Umpasa: Roland Barthes' Semiotic Study".

## **II. Research Method**

According to Djajasudarma in (Sinaga, 2021) research methods are a series of procedures, tools, and techniques used to conduct research when collecting data. The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research method. The data collection technique used is document study. According to (Damayanti, 2022) document study is a data acquisition technique by searching various sources that are predicted to contain data that will be needed in a study. The primary data presented in this study is an example of the Toba Batak language. Collecting data by collecting data, classifying the data and then analyzing the data to find out the myths contained in the umpasa. The data analysis technique that the author uses in this study is to use Barthes semiotic analysis to find out the myths contained in the Toba Batak umpasa.

### III. Result and Discussion

Based on the author's analysis, the following results were obtained:

- a. *"hula-hula mata ni ari binsar, simanumpak do tondina Sipanuabi ia sabalana, dinasa pomparanna"*  
(*hula-hula* is the rising sun, the spirit is the bestower of blessings)  
(Sahalalah giver of fortune, to all his children and grandchildren)

In the umpasa expression above, it is generally conveyed by someone during traditional wedding ceremonies and also death. This Umpasa contains hopes and prayers to always be blessed by *sabala hula-hula*. *Sabala* can be interpreted as *tondi* or spirit. If analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory, there are myths in this umpasa, namely the words "*tondi*" and "*hula-hula*". The signifiers in this umpasa are "*hula hula*" (a call from Batak Toba to the wife's family) and "*sahala*" (a person's spirit). Signified (signified) "*hula hula*" in this umpasa means people who must be respected because they have the highest position and "*sabala*" has a sign as ke as charisma, magic, and nobility. So, the sign or myth on the word "*hula hula*" umpasa is the giver of blessings half of the sky (*sambariba ni langit, hula-hula mata ni ari binsar*). While the word "*sabala*" is synonymous with strength. The Toba Batak people in general strongly believe in *sabala* (spirit). They believe that a person's spirit will be able to guard our bodies at all times. *Hula-hula* in the Toba Batak society is symbolized as the highest position. This can be proven in *Dalihan Natolu's* motto: "*somba marhula-hula, manat mardongan tubu, elek marboru*".

- b. *"Togu uratni bulu, toguan urat ni padang togu hata ni uhum, toguan hatani padan"*  
(Stronger bamboo roots, stronger prairie roots; a type of grass)  
(Firm word of law, firmer word of match; promise)

Umpasa above is the umpasa used during the wedding ceremony. Usually the *oloan* (guests) will convey this umpasa to the bride and groom. This Umpasa gives a message that the bride and groom who have promised each other in front of God and in front of the guests must be able to build a good family. If analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory, "*hata ni uhum*" has a signifier as a rule that applies in the local area. Signified (signified) "*hata ni uhum*" namely customs. Furthermore, the Signifier on "*Hatani Padan*" is an agreement between one or two people, while the Signified on "*Hatani Padan*" is a ring, ulos, or some money. Sign on "*Hatani Padan*" which is a sacred debt. The Toba Batak community generally considers *Padan* to be something that cannot be violated. *Padan* is identified with sacred debt because basically they believe that someone who violates *Pada* will get punishment from *Debata Mula Jadi Nabolon* (God). It is believed that whoever is *siose* *Padan* (does not keep his promise) will live in misery in this world and in the hereafter.

- c. *"Bintang na rumiris, ombun nasumurop, Anak pe riris, boru pe torop"*  
(Many stars, cool dew)  
(Many sons, many daughters)

In general, this umpasa is used at the time of birth and wedding ceremonies. Overall, the messages and prayers contained in the umpasa above are that parents should be given daughters as well as sons. If analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory, "*Bintang na rumiris*" has a signifier as a star that appears in the sky at night. The signified in "*Bintang na rumiris*" is a beautiful girl. Then "*ombun nasumurop*" has a signifier as the dew that appears in the morning, while the signified is a wise boy there. The sign or sign on "*Bintang na rumiris, ombun nasumuro*" is identified with many children with lots of sustenance. The understanding of the Batak people in the past was that a family would be richer if it had many children. Therefore, it is

not surprising that parents used to have up to 13 children in one family. They believe every child will give and bring blessings. Especially in the Toba Batak tribe, boys are the proudest children because one day they will carry and continue the father's lineage. It is said that someone who does not have children will be considered poor (*mapogos*) by the local community. Because automatically no one will continue the father's clan. The Batak tribe is also famous for its motto "*anakkon ki do hamoraon di au*" which means my son is my wealth. Until now this understanding is still used by the Toba Batak people.

#### IV. Conclusion

From the results of the analysis of myths in the umpasa above, it can be concluded that it is an oral literary work that comes from reason or the thoughts of previous ancestors. That is why the Toba Batak umpasa cannot be separated from the myths of the past. The myths that are still very developed in society, especially in umpasa, are a). *Hula-hula* has the highest authority in the Toba Batak culture. This myth applies depending on the context. Where realistically hula-hula is basically the same as other positions. There is no dominant position. All are equal before the law. b). *Sahala* is identified with magic, security, wisdom, and harmony. Where if judging in reality sahala is a spirit that has no control and supernatural powers. c). *Padan* is associated as a sacred covenant. The assumption that Padan is sacred because it is believed will bring disaster if it is not kept. d). Children are a symbol of wealth. The Toba Batak people fully believe that having many children will also have a lot of sustenance. This belief is no stranger to the ears. Those who do not have children will be considered poor by the local community, because no one will continue the lineage.

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