



Form, function, and meaning of symbols in traditional ceremony of Sayur Matua of the Simalungun Community

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Abstract

The sayur matua ceremony is a traditional death ceremony. This ceremony will be carried out if someone who dies has grandchildren from sons or daughters. People who die with this status are considered to have lived a perfect life. Therefore, a series of burial processions must be carried out with traditional ceremonies. The main elements of the community are the tolu sahundulan and the five saodoran, often abbreviated as Tohunlidoran. Tolu sahundulan 'three elements in one position' are: tondong, sanina, and anak boru. Lima saodoran 'five elements in one unit' is the addition of two elements from the three main elements, namely suhut and anak boru (mintori). These five elements act according to their respective positions, functions, and roles in the traditional ceremonies carried out. At the time of the death ceremony, speech appears accompanied by objects as symbols. The presence of these symbols is absolute in traditional ceremonies. The symbols are in the form of objects derived from animals, plants, and other living equipment objects. Each object has a function and meaning. This traditional ceremony is full of meaning. Therefore, this traditional ceremony needs attention and revitalization. The appropriate theory used in analyzing the problem is semiotic theory. Based on the results of the research, it is known that there are 25 stages of traditional ceremony activities. However, not all of these activities present symbols. The symbols that can be identified are: demban, porsa, gotong, bulang, batu demban, pinggan, boras, apei, white cloth, bulung, pisou pangolat, tinombu, hiou sintakan, untei pangir, and dayok binatur. Some of these symbols are present with speech, but some are present without speech. All of these symbols are absolutely present in the sayur matua traditional ceremony. The research method used in this study is analytical descriptive method, which is by structurally describing the series of events and then analyzing them based on semiotic theory. The semiotic theory used refers to Charles Sanders Peirce, where the sign is something that functions to represent something else by presenting something that it represents. Each sign can be described in terms of its form, function and meaning. The sayur matua traditional ceremony found in the Simalungun community is a form of local wisdom of mutual cooperation and togetherness that can realize the peace of life.

Keywords: Sayur matua, local wisdom, discourse, semiotics

Introduction

Every ethnic group in North Sumatra Province has a traditional ceremony. These ceremonies appear in the life cycle of the community, starting from ceremonies in the cycle of birth, marriage, and death. In addition to these three cycles, there are other ceremonies carried out such as entering a new house, digging up the bones of ancestors, and adopting a son or daughter. These traditional ceremonies are carried out for generations by their supporters.

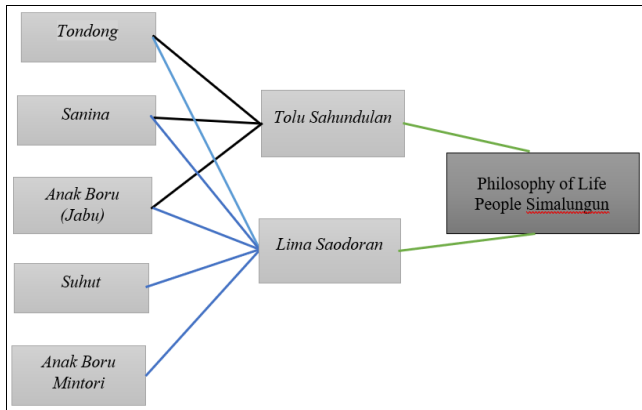
The Simalungun ethnic group is one of the five Batak sub-ethnic groups. The Batak ethnic group consists of the Toba Batak, Angkola-Mandailing, Karo, Simalungun, and Pakpak-Dairi. Geographically, the Simalungun ethnic group is located in the Simalungun Regency. Until now, the Simalungun community still exists to carry out traditional ceremonies. One of the traditional ceremonies that receives very serious attention in the Simalungun community is the death ceremony. Death is called marujung goluh 'passing away'.

There are several types of death in Simalungun society, namely:

- Matei manorus, ai ma matei sanggah body 'death at birth';
- Matei dakdanak, ai ma age up to 12 years 'died as a child';

- Matei marlajar garama/marlajar anak boru 'died as a teenager';
- Matei garama/an boru 'died as an adult';
- Matei matua/matalpok 'died after settling down but none of the children have settled down yet';
- Matei sari matua 'died after settling down but not all of the children have settled down';
- Matei sayur matua 'died after all the children were married and had obtained grandchildren from both sons and daughters';
- Matei layur matua, 'dies after having a great-grandchild' (Sinaga, 2013:132) ^[13].

In the Simalungun community, the type of death that is carried out by traditional ceremonies is the death of sayur matua, while the traditional death ceremony of layur matua is very rarely carried out because the person who died did not have great-grandchildren. In general, those who die are parents who have grandchildren from sons or daughters. At the time of sayur matua's death, the tohunlidoran element (tolu sahundulan lima saodoran) 'three groups of one seat, five groups in line' will be present and act according to their respective positions. In general, it can be said that there are 25 series of activities carried out in connection with this sayur matua traditional ceremony (Sinaga, 2008: 136) ^[12].



The groups shown in the chart above are: tondong 'the party taking the wife', sanina 'the surname group', suhut 'the party organizing the activity; the host', anak boru jabu 'the biological in-laws, sons-in-law, nephews of the party organizing the activity', and anak boru mintori 'the in-laws of the in-laws organizing the activity'. The following will describe in more detail the parties in the tolu sahundulan and five saodoran elements, namely:

- a. Tondong 'the woman's giver; the wife's family of origin', functions as an advisor, a place to ask questions, and the leader of the spiritual program.
- b. Sanina 'brother of the surname; brother of the suhut', functions as the host of the ceremony, as the representative of the suhut who controls the ceremony.
- c. Suhut 'host', who is the central point of a traditional ceremony, who carries out the traditional ceremony, he does not play an active role because he has been represented by his sanina.
- d. Anak Boru Jabu 'biological in-laws, sons-in-law, and nephews', function as technical executors of traditional ceremonies.
- e. Anak Boru Mintori 'sister-in-law of the suhut', assisting the role of Anak Boru Jabu.

All of the above elements plan a series of traditional events, starting from notification to the tondong, sanina, and boru parties to the final event called panutupi horja. In order for this whole series of activities to be carried out, all elements must work together in accordance with their respective functions and positions. Thus, the whole series of events will be carried out based on the principles of togetherness and mutual cooperation of all elements in the Simalungun community. Every element in the community will carry out its duties with sincerity and without coercion. This has become a provision and part of the local wisdom of the community.

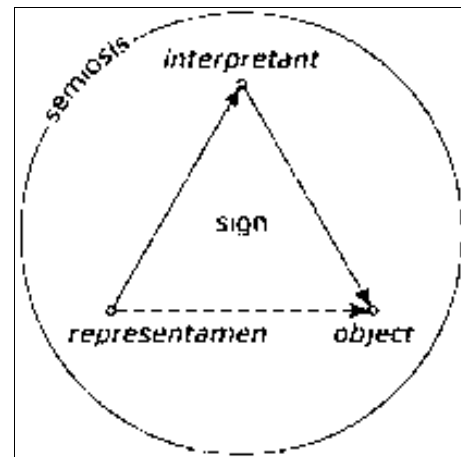
The implementation of the traditional death ceremony of sayur matua takes a relatively long time, which is between 2 to 4 days. For Simalungun people who embrace Islam, usually the implementation of this traditional death ceremony is carried out in a short time. In each series of events there will be communication or dialog. This dialog will produce oral text (oral discourse) that contains meaning. In addition to verbal communication, several objects will accompany the conversation. Objects such as demban 'betel', tangkuluk 'hat', gotong 'destar; headband', and others will be presented. Each object used will have a meaning.

The emergence of various oral texts and cultural symbols makes this traditional ceremony of sayur matua death

interesting and worth documenting. The structure of this text or discourse will be described and the meaning of each symbol will be explained. Therefore, the appropriate analysis used is discourse structure analysis and semiotics. From these two theories, a good description of the whole ceremony will be produced.

The sayur matua ceremony and other traditional ceremonies that exist today in the Simalungun community must be maintained. If these traditional ceremonies disappear from the community, this will practically be a factor in the loss of an ethnic civilization and will certainly eliminate the identity of each ethnic group. Therefore, a study of various traditional ceremonies, especially the traditional ceremony of sayur matua, needs to be carried out and the results will be used as a reference for future generations.

In accordance with the title of this study, the problems raised are: (1) what are the forms of symbols used, (2) what are the functions of the symbols used, and (3) what is the meaning of the symbols used in the sayur matua traditional ceremony. The approach used to the object is a semiotic approach with Charles Sanders Peirce's symbol theory. According to Peirce, a sign is something that functions to represent something else by presenting something that it represents. Peirce divides the sign system into three elements that have been contained in the triangle theory, namely the sign (sign), the sign reference (object), and the use of the sign (interpretant). In other words, the symbol can be used as a representative or something that represents the intention, as shown in the following figure.



A sign is something that appears, refers to something, is able to represent the relationship between the sign and the recipient of the sign which is representative and leads to interpretation. The conditions for something to be called a sign are if something can be captured, points to something, replaces, represents, presents and has representative properties, which have a direct relationship with interpretative properties.

Furthermore, Peirce said that a symbol is a sign in which the relationship between the sign and the denotatum (marker) is determined by a generally accepted rule or mutual agreement (convention). In accordance with this theory, the form, function, and meaning of each symbol used in the sayur matua traditional ceremony are analyzed based on the concept of community agreement. In this scientific article, the method used is analytical descriptive method. All symbols used in the sayur matua traditional ceremony are described from the form, function, and meaning.

Discussion

In this discussion, three problems are described at once so that the relationship between the form, function, and meaning of the symbols used in the sayur matua death ceremony by the Simalungun community can be clearly seen, as follows.

Symbols are representative of empirical facts. The symbols used in the sayur matua traditional ceremony of the Simalungun community can be identified. All existing symbols are meaningful signs and their presence is very important to complement oral discourse and cultural activities. The meaning attached to symbols is conventional. As culture develops, symbols can be maintained, but the form of symbols may change. For example, the change in the use of banana leaves with paper. If this happens, it will practically change the lexical elements of the language forming the discourse.

The following will describe the function and meaning of symbols used in the traditional ceremony of sayur matua of the Simalungun community.

Betel (demban)

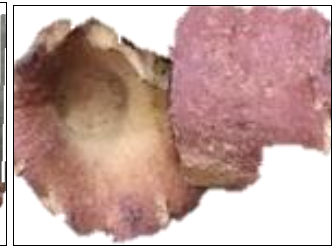


In general, people are familiar with betel leaves, and the Simalungun community is no exception. For the Simalungun people, betel leaves (piper betle) are known as demban. Betel is a plant native to Indonesia. In the Simalungun Regency, betel grows on tree trunks or even on the walls of houses. This plant is very easy to grow and propagate. Therefore, betel nut can be used as a unifying tool, because when a neighbor does not have this plant but needs it, the neighbor who has it will voluntarily give this betel nut to everyone in need. This atmosphere is still very visible in rural communities. For the people of Simalungun, especially the elderly, betel is needed in daily life because it is used as chewing. The community believes that betel will strengthen the teeth.

Betel is present and used in various traditional ceremonies so that some people call it a "traditional plant". For the Simalungun community, before a traditional ceremony (sorrow and joy) begins, the first thing to be presented is betel nut. The betel nut will be arranged in an orderly manner with the folded position and the surface of the betel nut facing downwards. This will then be placed on a pinggan (ceramic plate) and covered with banana leaves. These betel leaves will be complemented with areca nut, gambier, lime, and tobacco. Betel leaves for the Simalungun people are considered supernatural.



Areca nut (*pinang*)



Gambier (*gambir*)



Lime (*hapur*)



Tobacco (*timbangou*)

Time Symbol Usage Betel (Demban): This symbol appears when: giving news of grief to the tondong, asking boru to work, asking the gonrang and serunai blower to perform their respective activities, martonggo raja 'deliberate'. Symbol function betel in Simalungun custom, betel (demban) must be included in every ceremony, whether it is a happy ceremony (wedding party, entering a new house) or a sad event such as death. To start and close a conversation in a traditional event, betel (demban) must be presented.

In the sayur matua ceremony, betel serves: to inform or (patugahhon) convey the news of condolence to the tondong party, namely the male side of the mother's brother or wife's brother. The betel given is called demban tugah-tugah. This betel nut giving has a procedure, namely a sheet of betel called sekapur sirih. If the deceased is a man, it will be accompanied by a hat or (gotong) from the person who died. If the deceased is a woman then it must be accompanied by a woman's head covering (bulang) and handed over to the tondong party. as a sign of notification that the panagolan or child of his sister has died. Symbol meaning betel The Simalungun community highly values and respects the tondong (the male side of the mother or the wife). The betel nut (demban) that is given means: mutual respect, a sign of respect from the boru (the party taking the daughter) to the tondong (the party giving the daughter or brother from the mother or wife). as evidence that the afflicted party really hopes for guidance and direction in the implementation of a series of traditional ceremonies from the beginning until the body is buried. the presence of the tondong in the ceremony is expected.

Male Headdress (Gotong)

Gotong is made of woven fabric with batik patterns with a size of 100X100Cm. Gotong is a male head covering that is perpendicular in the center. This gotong is worn during joyful ceremonies. If in a traditional ceremony of grief, especially in this traditional ceremony of sayur matua, then what is used is gotong porsa.

Gotong made of batik material at the death ceremony will be given to the tondong (the giver of the daughter or mother's brother).



Time symbol usage This symbol appears when: giving news to the retrieval party of the wife or male relatives of the mother (tondong)., the traditional death ceremony of sayur matua is performed. Symbol function topi The giving of this symbol serves as: a means of respectfully acknowledging the death of the panagolan (the son of a male relative). The delivery of this gotong must be accompanied by a demban tugah-tugah (betel nut notice). Symbol meaning topi This hat (gong) means: maturity for a boy., Every married man has the right to wear gotong., a symbol of modesty, this hat will be used on every occasion as a head covering. Symbolizes the leadership of a man. With the head covered, it will look authoritative.

Female Headdress (Bulang)



In the beginning, in Simalungun, this bulang was worn by housewives who would serve food so that their hair would not unravel and fall into the food. The women's head covering in Simalungun called bulang is made from woven hiou 'cloth'. The basic colors of this head covering are white, red, and black. There are two types of bulang: all-day bulang (bulang salalu) and traditional party bulang. Everyday bulang is used in daily activities both at home and in the fields. Meanwhile, the bulang used during traditional ceremonies or parties is the traditional party bulang, which consists of the following types:

- Bulang sulappei which is worn by young women at traditional parties.
- Bulang gijang worn by older women.

Bulang teget worn by the bride and groom or worn during the inauguration in various government events. Time symbol usage bulang This symbol appears when: Giving news to the wife's retrieval party or the mother's male relatives (tondong). The traditional ceremony of the death of sayur matua is carried out.

This symbol appears when: Giving news to the wife's retrieval party or the mother's male relatives (tondong)., The traditional ceremony of the death of sayur matua is carried out. The giving of this symbol serves as: a means of respectfully acknowledging the death of the panagolan (the daughter of a female relative). The delivery of this bulang must be accompanied by a demban tugah-tugah (betel nut notice). This hat (gotong) means: Maturity for a woman; Every married woman has the right to wear this bulang., Modesty; This head covering will be used on every occasion, whether at home, traditional ceremonies, or in the fields., and Symbolizes a woman's modesty; By covering the head, the woman's hair will not be loose.

Batu Demban

Etymologically, the word batu demban comes from the words batu and demban. Batu can mean 'stone'; 'seed'; 'fruit' while demban is 'betel'. However, in this context, batu demban is interpreted as 'money', which is money placed in a dish containing betel nut. The amount of money varies according to the ability of the suhut 'the person carrying out an activity of joy or sorrow'.

Usually the number of demban stones is always even, especially when expressing gratitude to all those who have helped. Evenness is used as a counterbalance to the results of hard work. This condition is a symbol of the giver's appreciation to the recipient for having totally used their eyes, ears, hands, feet and others, to help until the activity carried out by the suhut was carried out properly. This symbol appears at the time of: a. checking the coffin with the tondong. Symbolically, the tondong will check the perfection of the coffin as evidence of their affection for the deceased., b. asking the musicians for gonrang, which is during a traditional ceremony (giving advice) delivered by the family).

This symbol serves as: An effort to ease the costs that will be incurred by the tondong. Because the tondong party provides cloth in the implementation of the traditional ceremony., A means of explaining that the tondong is a place to mangalop podah or ask for advice, so it is not appropriate to be burdened with costs. This batu demban means:

- Respect from the suhut to the tondong, as a respected and advice-giving group.
- Although in an atmosphere of grief, the suhut does not want to burden the tondong as a respected group.

Kinship and cohesiveness are always needed in daily life so that every traditional ceremony can run well and smoothly.

Banana Leaf (*Bulung Galuh*)

In the daily life of the Simalungun community, banana leaves, also known as bulung galuh, play an important role. Banana leaves are considered a hygienic and practical means of wrapping food. To prevent tearing, banana leaves are usually roasted in a fireplace or dried in the sun before use. When used as a plate cover when giving batu ni demban to the tondong party, the position of the leaf on the

plate is adjusted to the direction of the leaf line from the base to the tip.

The position of the base of the leaf usually leads to the recipient and the tip of the leaf leads to the giver. While at the top is the outer part of the leaf.



This symbol appears when:

1. Giving news to the wife's retrieval party or the mother's male relatives (tondong).
2. Deliberating, namely the distribution of tasks to all parties present.
3. checking the coffin to the tondong. Symbolically, the tondong will check the perfection of the coffin as proof of their affection for the deceased.
4. At the end of the ceremony, the suhut expresses their gratitude to all those who have made the ceremony a success.

This symbol serves as An attempt to cover what is inside the dish so that any flaws inside are not directly visible.

This bulung galuh means: Politeness, i.e. not showing directly what is in the given dish. Thus, when there are irregularities or imperfections in the material presented, it does not embarrass the recipient and the giver.

The giver always asks for guidance and direction from the recipient of the dish, in accordance with the direction of the leaf line from the base to the tip.

Pinggán (plate)

In the life of the Simalungun community today, the means used to place rice is a plate or dish. The plate is made from tin while the dish is made from pottery or ceramic. In traditional ceremonies today, especially when manurdukhon demban 'presenting betel nut' is used.



This symbol appears when Delivering sad news to the tondong., asking boru to work, martonggo raja 'deliberation'

of all elements in the community. This symbol functions as 1. the means or place where betel nut is placed., 2. Making the atmosphere of conveying the intention more harmonious because betel is not held directly.

This symbol means 1. giving in a respectful manner, 2. giving in private so that there is no visible deficiency in the betel nut giving activity., 3. giving something politely because it does not have to be known by others.

Destar (Porsa)

It has been a long-standing custom for men in Simalungun, especially married men, to wear a destar (porsa), a cloth wrapped around the head as a headband. This cloth also serves as a head protector. Usually the cloth used is batik-patterned. However, at the sayur matua death ceremony, the color of the cloth used as destar is white.



This symbol appears when 1. delivering the sad news to the tondong. The tondong immediately puts it on the giver of the news (his nephew)., 2. the stage of wearing the porsa, namely after the tondong gives the white cloth to the deceased., 3. the giving of advice from all elements to the suhut or the party affected by the disaster. This symbol functions as a sign that the deceased is already a vegetable or an old man who is considered perfect in life because his children are already married. This symbol means

1. sincerity, that all families have sincerely let go of their parents because they are considered successful in life.
2. purity, that is, parents who die are considered pure or have no shortcomings so that there are no obstacles to facing the Creator.
3. respect for the culture inherited by the predecessors so that it must still be used.

Rice (Boras Sipirni Tondi)

Simalungun Regency is one of the rice-producing areas. In fact, this district is used as one of the rice barns of North Sumatra Province. The community generally lives by farming, both in rice fields and fields. Therefore, the community has various traditions in the agricultural cycle that are still maintained to this day. Rice is used as a medium in ceremonies, both joy and sorrow. People who come will bring rice according to their ability to be given to the suhut 'person who performs traditional ceremonies'. This activity is a form of help and a high sense of brotherhood.

Aside from being a complementary medium in the delivery of betel nut, rice is also used as a means of reinvigoration and an expression of safety by placing a handful of rice on the head or sprinkling rice towards the people present at the traditional ceremony while saying the words "horas...horas...horas".



This symbol appears when:

- Delivering the sad news to the tondong. The tondong immediately puts it on the giver of the news (his nephew).
- the delivery of tasks in the ceremony (martonggo raja)
- asking the drum beater to beat the drum
- expressing gratitude to all parties after the event is over.
- the stage of requesting the wearing of the porsa to the tondong party

This symbol serves as: 1. a sign of prosperity, well-being, and health, 2. a means of fostering a sense of brotherhood, 3. a sign that the community values it as a staple food in continuing life. This symbol means: 1. not wanting to burden the suhut so bring their own food., 2. a prayer of hope for good, 3. a symbol of strengthening the spirit or soul, 4. respect for the culture inherited by the predecessors so that it must continue to be used.

Mats (Ampanan; Lagei)

In ancient times, especially when people's houses were on stilts, the means for families to sit were mats. The basic material of the mat is pandan us. The width of the mat will vary as needed. Mats are one of the primary needs. Therefore, a girl who is married will be equipped with a set of cooking utensils, rice and a mat. When guests come to the house, especially the tondong, mats will be spread out and they are invited to sit. When there is a death of a sayur matua, mats are also presented at the ceremony.



This symbol appears when: tondong comes to the funeral home. This symbol functions as: a symbol of respect from the tondong to the corpse. This is in line with the hiou sintakan. This symbol is meaningful: a sign of separation between the family and the deceased parent. At the beginning of married life a mat, rice, cooking utensils are

bought. After death, the mat will be taken back. as a sign of separation between the family and the deceased parent.

White Fabric

As stated earlier, the Simalungun community recognizes three basic colors as symbols in traditional ceremonies, namely: white, red, and black. The combination of these three colors is often made with thread and tied around the hand of a newborn child. Some Simalungun people call it bonang martiga 'three forms of thread'. The combination of these three colors is believed to be able to drive away evil spirits or serve as an antidote to the evil intentions of others. The black color is interpreted as firm and has a strong character, the white color is interpreted as purity, while red means courage, strength, and wrath. Related to the giving of white cloth to the corpse at the sayur matua traditional ceremony, it supports certain meanings as well.

Fabric (*Hiou Sintakan*)

The Simalungun people have a distinctive hiou 'cloth' that is used in everyday life as well as in times of joy and sorrow. This hiou is woven by weavers with very good quality. Based on the research results, it can be explained that there are 13 types of hiou in Simalungun, namely: hiou Hati Rongga, Tapak Satur, Ragi Sapot, Suri-suri, Bulang-Bulang, Ragi Idup, Ragi Bintang Maratur, Sitoluntuho, Ragi Panei, Ipput Ni Hirik, Mangiring, Tappunei, and Simangkat-angkat.

The Hiou sintakan referred to in the sayur matua traditional ceremony is a cloth that will be jerked or pulled when the corpse will be put into the grave. The hiou used for this traditional event is Hiou Ragi Panei. This cloth is usually used by old men and women in traditional death ceremonies. This cloth is black in color.



11. Kaffir Lime (*Anggir*)

One of the activities carried out in this sayur matua traditional ceremony is the giving of anggir by the suhut to the boru. This anggir is a very fragrant kaffir lime. Therefore, for the Simalungun people, this orange is always associated with magical or sacred activities.

12. Chicken (*Dayok Binatur*)

One of the traditional Simalungun foods is dayok binatur. Etymologically, the word comes from the words dayok 'chicken' and binatur 'arranged'. Dayok binatur means chicken that has been slaughtered, cut into pieces, then cooked and after cooking it is rearranged like the arrangement of the chicken's organs when it was alive. Usually, the spices used for this chicken are bark juice, coconut milk, cayenne pepper, and ginger.



Conclusion

Based on the analysis carried out in accordance with the problem in this study, namely about the form, function, and meaning of symbols used in the sayur matua traditional ceremony carried out by the Simalungun community, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The death of sayur matua for the Simalungun community can mean that someone who dies has grandchildren from sons and daughters and all of their children have married. This traditional ceremony is carried out as an expression of gratitude to God and respect to parents for their services during their lifetime. To carry out this traditional ceremony, there are as many as 24 series of activities carried out. In the series of events, the elements of tolu sahundulan 'three main elements in decision-making' and five saodoran 'five elements involved in each series of activities' will be involved. Each element has a role in accordance with the customs that apply in the community.

There are 13 symbols that emerge from the entire series of traditional steam ceremonies: betel nut (demban), male headdress (gotong), female headdress (bulang), money (batu demban), banana leaf, pinggan, destar (porsa), rice, mat, white cloth, cloth (hiou sintakan), kaffir lime (anggir), and chicken (dayok binatur).

Overall, these symbols support their respective functions as described. But overall these symbols support the functions of means of communication, respect, prayer, and realizing the cooperation of all elements in the Simalungun community.

The meaning contained in each symbol is relatively different. But in general, the meanings contained in the symbols are mutual respect, authority or position in society, politeness, sincerity in work, respect for culture, helping each other in joy and sorrow, sincerity in accepting disaster, must foster cooperation, and appreciate every effort of others.

Closing

The application of the principle of cooperation created by the philosophy of life of the Simalungun people, namely tolu sahundulan and lima saodoran, needs to be preserved. The community is expected to keep up with the times, but must still maintain culture as a character-building foundation. In other words, technology must still support the existence of community culture or community culture must be maintained with technology.

All traditional ceremonies in the community must be preserved so that they do not become extinct, so that something can be passed on to the next generation. This can be used as a historical document as a comparison material for the development and change of civilization in the future.

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