

# The Local Wisdom Values of Gondang Music in the Batak Toba Traditional Marriage Ceremony of Pematang Siantar

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## ABSTRACT

Gondang music, as a heritage, is preserved and passed down from generation to generation. It has a unique ethical value that it becomes the local wisdom of the Batak Toba people. The purpose of this study is to identify the social values of Batak Toba traditional marriages, and the rules of the Gondang music played at traditional wedding ceremonies. This article analyzes the symbols in the Batak traditional wedding ceremony. Symbols such as language, myths, music, and dances that contain social values namely rules, norms and ethics of traditional wedding ceremonies. The results show that 1) Customary marriage upholds the value of respect to several parties involved in traditional ceremonies, 2) Customary marriage emphasizes prayer and hope for the future of the bride and her extended family, 3) The role of Gondang music is as a bridge of prayer and praise to God, 4) Gondang music is a tool used by the family to express joy and happiness over the traditional marriage by means of tor-tor, 5) Tor-tor dance that is accompanied by Gondang music is a way of making a bond between two new families bound by clans.

**Keywords:** *Gondang, Tor-Tor, Batak Toba, traditional marriage*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional marriage ceremony is one of the requirements for a couple to marry in Batak Toba. It is the identity of Batak Toba people. Only those who have gone through traditional marriage ceremonies are recognized as a member of the Batak tribe [7]. Traditional marriage ceremony allows individuals to give advice in the family clan events and to marry their children in the same way [7]. *Gondang* music is used as a procession accompaniment such as *mangulosi* and other stages of traditional marriages [8]. There is a social identity that the community get from traditional marriages which gives them a special right to participate in other traditional ceremonies [7]. The symbols in the traditional marriage procession can be interpreted and then presented in the form of rules, norms, and ethics.

## 2. THE PROCESSION OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

In the procession of traditional marriage ceremonies, *Raja Parhata* (customary elder) has the authority to lead the traditional ceremonies. The stages of the marriage have been passed down for generations by the previous *Raja parhata* [9].

### 2.1. Pre-Marriage Ceremony

#### 2.1.1. *Manjalo bohini sinamot*

The process of asking permission (blessing) from *tulang* (the eldest male brother of the groom's mother) is in the form of having meal together. The groom's family brings the *namarmiak-kmiak* (pork with the best quality), and the *tulang* presents a goldfish as a symbol of prayer at the time of presentation. After the meal, the *tulang* presents *bohini sinamot* (dowry money) as a sign of blessing to continue to the next stage. In this event, the dowry is partially given as a sign of agreement. Then, the parties discuss the capacity of the groom in regards to providing *sinamot* to the bride.

#### 2.1.2. *Mahori-hori dinding*

*Amang boru* (the husband of the groom's father's sister) from the prospective bridegroom is dispatched to the prospective house of the bride's parents to convey the wishes of the groom's family regarding the wedding plan. This is the process of negotiating the *sinamot* with the bride's parents until reaching an agreement.

### 2.1.3. *Marhata sinamot*

At this stage, there is a discussion regarding *sinamot* by traditional custom means such as conveying the intent and purpose by using *umpasa-umpasa* (traditional rhymes, using Batak Toba local language). The communication between two parties is represented by *Raja Parhata*. After that, the groom's family will present the dowry in advance (*bohini sinamot*).

### 2.1.4. *Marpudun saut*

In this stage, the exact time of the next procession is discussed. Then, it is ended by concluding all of the agreements discussed in the previous process. The agreement in question is the number of *ulos* (the local traditional fabric), the required funding, and others.

### 2.1.5. *Martuppol*

*Martuppol* is the engagement of the bride and groom in a church. In this procession, the bride and groom will make a sacred promise before the priest in order to continue to the next stage which is the blessing of the church.

## 2.2. *The Blessing of the Marriage*

### 2.2.1. *Marsibuha-buhai*

In this stage, a meal is provided in the morning by the family of the groom's father's female sibling (*boruni hasuhuton paranak*). This procession ends with a prayer that is delivered by one of the male siblings from the bride's mother (*tulang*).

### 2.2.2. *Blessing of the Church*

This procession is led by a priest who then prays and ties the sacred promise.

## 2.3. *The Process of Marriage Ceremony*

### 2.3.1. *Mangalu-aluhon Gondang*

It involves the act of worshipping God, greet the guests who reside at the location of the traditional wedding party (*Sipukkah huta*), and respect the deceased (*tu habonaran ni huta on*). *Raja Parhata* always makes a request using traditional language and *umpasa* to the music players for a *gondang* as a traditional ensemble music to be performed.

### 2.3.2. *Gondang mula-mula*

It is a God-worshipping procession in the form of a *tor-tor* (the local dance) dance performed by the groom's family (*hasuhuton paranak* and *boruni hasuhuton paranak*). The *tor-tor* dance is performed by following the rhythm of the *gondang* music with a worshipping hand posture.

### 2.3.3. *Gondang liat*

The *tor-tor* dancers move in round three times (*hasuhuton paranak* and *boruni hasuhuton paranak*). It is an act that worshipping God and is meant to uphold the values and determination to God when living a new life.

### 2.3.4. *Olob-olob*

It involves giving a prayer and blessing from *hula-hula* (*hasuhuton paranak*) to *pamoruan* (*boruni hasuhuton paranak*). *Boruni hasuhuton paranak manortor* with a worship posture while approaching the *hasuhuton paranak manortor* with both hands open downward.

### 2.3.5. *Gondang hasahatan dan sitio-tio*

It is the closing of *tor-tor* of the *hasuhuton paranak* event and the *boruni hasuhuton paranak* which is presented to God in order to accompany the custom event. At the closing ceremony song, *horas* is uttered three times while lifting the *ulos* on top of the shoulder.

### 2.3.6. *Manomu-nomu hula-hula*

This stage welcomes the *hula-hula* by way of a *manortor* (the local dance). The first things to be welcomed are the *hula-hula* from *hasuhuton parboru* (the bride's family). *Hula-hula* from *hasuhuton parboru* is parents, the bride's *tulang* (brother of the bride's mother), *Bapa Tua* (eldest brother of the bride's father), *Bapa Uda* (the youngest brother of the bride's father), and *namboru* (sister of the bride's father). The next *hula-hula* is *hula-hula* from *hasuhuton paranak*. *Hula-hula* from *hasuhuton paranak* is groom's *tulang* (*tulang sijalo tintin marangkup*), *tulang* from the groom's father (*bona tulang*), *tulang* from the groom's grandfather (*tulang bonani ari*), *tulang* from the groom's mother (*tulang rorobot*). The music played in this procession is *gondang somba* (the kind of *gondang* for the using of praising God) that is presented to *hula-hula* and to give a blessing to its *pamoruan*.

### 2.3.7. Pasahat tudu-tudu sipanganon

*Pasahat tudu-tuduni sipanganon* refers to a group lunch. *Hasuhuton paranak* presents *namarmiak-miak* to the *hasuhuton parboru*. *Hasuhuton parboru* presents Batak Toba's specialty dish, *arsik* goldfish, to the bride, parents, *Bapa Tua*, *Bapa Uda*, *naboru*, and the groom's eldest brother.

### 2.3.8. Marhata adat

In this procession, the two sides of *Raja Parhata* talk about custom using traditional custom language to present the *umpasa sinamot* which has not been fully given before. Thus, at this stage the *umpasa sinamot* is presented in full amounts which is called *manggohi nahurang gok*.

### 2.3.9. Pasahat tintin marangkup

In this stage, the *pasahat tintin marangkup* presents a plate of rice that contain money (part of *sinamot*) to the groom's *tulang* or the male sibling of the groom's mother. At this stage, the presentation is carried out by *hasuhuton parboru*. This procession means that the bride has become a *boru* (daughter) of the groom's *tulang*.

### 2.3.10. Mangulosi

This stage involves presenting *ulos* by way of a *manortor* using Batak Toba pop song with a theme of joy. The first one to present is *hasuhuton Parboru* or the bride's parent *mangulosi passamot* (the groom's parents). Next is *hasuhuton parboru* or the bride's parent *mangulosi hela* (bride) by tying the cloth (*ulos*) *hasuhuton parboru* or the bride's parent *mangulosi pamarai* (old father) the groom. After that, *hasuhuton parboru* or the bride's parent *mangulosi haha ni hela* (the groom's eldest brother), *hasuhuton parboru* or the bride's parents *mangulosi siutti ampang* (*naboru* groom). Then, the *hasuhuton parboru* or the bride's parents *mangulosi boru i jabu* (the bride's sister), and finally the *hula-hula* from the *hasuhuton paranak mangulosi* bride. The event was closed with the *sijalo tintin merangkup mangulosi* of the bride while leading to the *bagani tongani* (wedding aisle) accompanied by a *gondang liat* and ended with a *gondang sitio-tio*.

### 2.3.11. Manikkir tangga

In this procession, *hasuhuton Paranak* presents *Namarmiak-miak* to the parents of the bride while *Hasuhuton Parboru* or the bride's parents presents a goldfish to *Hasuhuton Paranak* called "*Paulakune*".

### 2.3.12. Penutupan Acara Adat

The wedding is closed with *Raja Parhata* presenting the plate of money and rice to *Raja ni huta*, an expert of local custom of the area where the party is held. *Raja ni Huta* accepts and closes the party by playing *Gondang sitio-tio* as *Hasahatan* and ends it by uttering *Olob-olob* three times and *horas* once.

## 3. THE SYMBOLS IN THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The procession of traditional marriage ceremony is meaningful. These meanings are represented in the symbols that appear throughout the event. Based on the symbolic anthropology of Greetz [1], there are four symbols, each of which contains rules, norms and ethics, including:

### 3.1. Language

All activities in each stage of the traditional ceremony are carried out using traditional language. According to KBBI online (2019), custom refers to a custom that has been practiced since time immemorial. This provides a space for traditional languages to be used as a standard language in traditional marriage ceremonies. Traditional language is used in the marriage ceremony to open all the stages of the ceremonies and request the *gondang* music player to play music according to the needs of the event. It also represents the prayers and hopes expressed by the family through *umpasa*. *Umpasa* is a typical Batak poem whose meanings are different depending on the needs of their use. *Umpasa* is a type of traditional bound rhymes that are interconnected between one and the next double so as to form a complete discourse [6].

*Umpasa* is used as a formal language in a series of traditional processions. This is in accordance with the rules of Indonesian language namely using standard language in formal events [5]. *Umpasa* is a language with hidden meanings. It is delivered in certain circumstances such as when asking a *Gondang* music player to play a type of *gondang*. Another example is when asking *tor-tor* with the first *gondang* music and *gondang mula-mula* and *gondang sombah* "*Mauliatema pande name, nungga dibaen hamu nasapangidoan nami naengma padanggal tangan hami marhite uning-uningan mi*" (permission). *Sianjur mula-mula sianjur mula toppa, baenma gondang Mula-mula, laos padomu ma tu gondang somba (umpasa)*". The meaning of this speech is to thank the music player for the completion of the previous processions. *Umpasa* in the traditional language above means "Allah created, Allah who gave, call the early *gondang* and *gondang* worship for us to be able to *manortor* praise the name of God". The rule in delivering this *umpasa* is that it must be initiated by thanking the *gondang* players as a form of appreciation. After that, the core request can be conveyed as a form of

courtesy. This is a form of language norms that is referred as language ethics. Using good norms means it is in accordance with morals [2].

### 3.2. Music

Batak Toba traditional wedding is accompanied by *gondang* music. This music accompanies the processions, the *tor-tor*, the prayer, and the expressing of praise and joy. It has a joyous tune that is characterized by a tempo of approximately 140 Bpm. At the beginning of the *gondang* music performance, the type of song played is instrumental in which the main melody has a very tight tone style. *Gondang* music tends to use F is Do basic notes in its instrumental. Basically, the main melody is performed by playing *hasapi* instruments, but nowadays it is played using *sulim*. The *gondang* music only starts at the instruction of *Raja Parhata*, and begin to play when *Raja Parhata* finishes stating his request. The duration of the music depends on the procession. When *Raja Parhata* says *horas*, it is the sign that the music can stop. When the *gondang* players approve *Raja Parhata*'s request, the *tagading* player will play the music. This shows the etiquette of the *gondang* players that is carrying out what was instructed to show courtesy [2] at the request of *Raja Parhata* as the leader of the traditional ceremony. The interaction between *Raja Parhata* and *gondang* music player is defined as a part of the norm of politeness. This is in line with the definition of norms of modesty as a set of behaviour that are in accordance with the values of courtesy in the environment [2].

Gondang Hasahatan dan Si tio-tio



Figure 1 Gondang Hasahatan and Si tio-tio sheet music

### 3.3. The Dance

The dance at the Batak Toba traditional wedding is called *tor-tor*. The *tor-tor* is performed as an act of worshipping, praying, and greeting. One of the dance movements or called *manortor* is moving in round three times by following the tempo of the *gondang* music. This is performed by a row of *manortor* with hands in a "worship" posture. The second movement is walking towards a party with hands in a "worship" posture. Meanwhile, the approached party stand upright with open arms pointing down then touch the shoulders of the approaching party that go through the line. Another movement is surrounding the person to be ulos-ed three times, puts the ulos on the shoulder of the ulos-ed person,

puts a piece of rice on his/her head, and throws the rice up while saying *horas*. *Tor-tor* dance is a group dance namely a dance performed by several individuals in one solid choreography. This dance emphasizes harmony [4].



Figure 2 Manortor

When doing *manortor* to God, all parties put their hands in worship posture (attaching the palm vertically in front of the chest). The time of doing *manortor* and the position of *manortor* greatly affects the objectives of the performed dance. The norm contained in this procession is politeness. It is represented by all prayer, hopes and respect for certain parties that are carried out as customary obligation. The ethics in this procession is one of the customary ethics that is considered as a life principle for the Batak Toba people.

### 3.4. The Myth

Traditional custom marriage is a legacy that has mystical values embedded in it. One of the myths in the Batak Toba traditional wedding ceremony is the ritual of presenting a plate of money in rice and a plate of betel leaves served to the *gondang* players before the start of the event to give respect or ask for a customary permission. It is also practiced as a form of prayer to ward off evil spirits that might be sent by outsider to disrupt the customary marriage or even endanger the family of the bride. This ritual requires rice and betel leaves whose meanings are a major food source and strong hope.

This myth and ritual are customary norms that are derived from the traditional custom which refers to a habit in a community that can be added, subtracted, or even eliminated [3]. Ethically, this is a form of "belief" towards supernatural power such as the belief to God or other beings. Meanwhile, this act cannot be considered as good or bad in terms of moral because moral is those considered as bad and good [2] while the prayer and hope addressed to God or other beings to ward evil spirits can be considered as erroneous in the perspective of some religion.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The procession of traditional marriage consists of a series of customs whose meaningful symbols are believed to represent the customs of the Batak Toba people. These symbols are believed by Greetz [1] as entities that contain wisdom values in the form of beliefs, habits, and rituals. The symbols in the procession of the Batak Toba traditional marriage are language, music, dance, and myth. These four symbols have rules, norms and ethics which are part of the meaning of the processions. Based on the rules, norms and ethics of the four symbols that have been interpreted, the study reveals that: 1) Customary marriage upholds the value of respect for the parties involved in traditional ceremonies, 2) Customary marriage prioritizes prayer and hope for the future of the bride and groom along with their extended family, 3) The role of *Gondang* music is as a bridge of prayer and praise to God, 4) *Gondang* music is a tool used by the family to express joy and happiness over the traditional marriage by means of *tor-tor*, 5) *Tor-tor*, accompanied by *gondang* music, is a way to make a bond between two new families bound by clans.

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