

Educational Values in the Symbolic Meaning of the Baharin Traditional Ceremony among the Meratus Dayak Community in Mantuyan Village, Halong District, Balangan Regency

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Abstract: *This study examines the symbolic meaning in the traditional ceremony of the Dayak Maratus tribe which aims to describe the meaning and symbols used in the traditional ceremony of Baharin Dayak Meratus in Mantuyan Village, Halong District, Balangan Regency. This study uses a literary semiotic approach to systematically examine knowledge about signs or symbols, symbols, and the process of creation. The type of research is qualitative with descriptive method. The subjects in this study were people or community leaders who had experience or knowledge of Dayak traditional ceremonies in Mantuyan Village. The data collection technique in this study is a data reduction technique as an effort to process the focus of the study, abstracting, transforming data, and presenting data from the process of collecting and organizing. The results of this study are classified into two parts, namely the classification of meanings and symbols in the Baharin traditional ceremony. From the results of customary symbols there are two parts, namely: (a) Verbal symbols there are thirteen discussions, and (b) Non-verbal symbols have six discussions. Judging from the results of the meaning of verbal and non verbal symbols in the traditional ceremony of Baharin Dayak Meratus, 19 discussions.*

Keyword: *Meaning, symbolic, traditional ceremony*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in local and regional cultural traditions. These cultural traditions must be preserved in order to prevent their extinction amidst the rapid development of modern times. Fundamentally, culture originates from society, is utilized by society, and is preserved by society itself because culture plays an active role in human life and social communities (Istian et al., 2017; Riana, 2018). One form of cultural product is literature. Literature is a work of art that employs language as its medium. This is in line with the opinion of Sugiantomas (2020), who states that “literature emerges from creative activities expressed through language, both orally and in written form.” One example is the Baharin traditional ceremony, a cultural heritage inherited from previous generations.

The Baharin ceremony is a traditional ritual performed by the Dayak Meratus community residing in Halong Hamlet, Balangan Regency. This traditional ceremony is generally conducted after the rice harvest season, commonly referred to as *pabumaan* by the Dayak Meratus community (Hestiyana, 2020). The Baharin ceremony is also used to celebrate achievements in various livelihoods, such as livestock farming, fishing, trading, and other economic activities.

The Secretary of the Dewan Adat Dayak (Dayak Customary Council) in Balangan, Nabiring (2018), stated that “the Baharin tradition is a manifestation of gratitude and appreciation expressed by the Dayak Meratus community for the successful rice harvest they have obtained, thereby making it necessary to hold a celebration through the Baharin ritual.” Furthermore, Nabiring added that “the Baharin ceremony also serves to foster solidarity and togetherness within the community, strengthen social ties among all members of society, and represent a form of cultural wealth that deserves preservation” (Nabiring, 2018). In the Baharin traditional ceremony, various symbols possess specific meanings and interpretations. Symbols are signs or emblems that convey meaning based on structurally encoded aspects. This perspective is consistent with the opinion of Hendro (2020), who states that “symbols are part of signs associated with semiotics.”

Mantuyan Village was selected as the research site because it is a village that strongly preserves cultural values, customs, and traditions. One of the prominent community figures in Mantuyan Village is Mr. Anya, a customary leader who serves as a role model for the Dayak Balangan community and acts as the leader in the implementation of the Baharin traditional ceremony, assisted by other customary leaders in carrying out the ritual. These figures were used as the primary sources in this research. In addition, the researcher also sought original information from individuals directly involved in the Baharin traditional ceremony in Mantuyan Village.

Based on the issues described above, this research is considered necessary in order to further examine the symbolic meanings embedded in the Baharin ceremony. Accordingly, the title of this study is “*Symbolic Meanings in the Baharin Traditional Ceremony of the Dayak Meratus Community in Mantuyan Village, Halong District, Balangan Regency.*” The urgency of this research is further reinforced by government regulations stipulated in the 1945 Constitution, Article 32, concerning the advancement of Indonesian national culture (Purwanti et al., 2017), as well as Law Number 24 of 2009, Article 42, concerning “Language, the National Flag, the State Emblem, and the National Anthem,” which states that the government is obligated to foster, develop, and protect regional languages and literature in order to ensure their continued existence as part of Indonesian culture (Adri, 2020).

A. Theoretical Framework

Budiono Herusatoto (in Krisnawati, 2014) states that “etymologically, the term symbol originates from the word *symbolo*, which refers to a sign or characteristic that represents a certain meaning to others according to its Greek linguistic origin.” A symbol is also understood as a form of communication that explains or provides guidance, such as symbols found on maps indicating specific locations. Meanwhile, Victor Turner (in Krisnawati, 2014) argues that “symbols are considered representations of qualities that reflect reality or thought,” while Charles Sanders Peirce (in Pateda, 2001) states that “a symbol is something that represents humans or objects in relation to certain meanings.” Another scholar, Herbert Blumer (1962), explains that “symbols are signs that interact within human communication.”

1. Types of Symbols

Peirce (in Pateda, 2001) classifies symbols into ten types, namely: icon, index, qualisign, rhematic indexical sinsign, iconic legisign, dicent sinsign, rhematic indexical legisign, dicent symbol, argument, and direct indexical legisign.

2. Definition of Meaning

Ogden and Richards (in Sudaryat, 2009) state that “meaning is an indirect symbol, while the relationship between symbols and referents is direct.” In addition, A. S. Hornby (in Mahadian, 2019) defines meaning as “what we mean or intend.” Other scholars such as Alek A and Djajasudarma (2011; 2012) explain that “meaning is an intrinsic element of language itself and

can be interpreted as the concept contained in a word.” Thus, meaning and objects are closely interconnected, as words would not have significance without reference. The interpretation of symbolic meaning reflects an attempt to produce understanding or response (Pateda, 2001). Other scholars argue that meaning is strictly intra-linguistic (Kinanti & Astuti, 2021).

3. Types of Meaning

According to Pateda (in Chaer, 2014), meaning is classified into 25 types, including denotative, affective, descriptive, extension, emotive, reflected, grammatical, intensional, ideational, cognitive, figurative, connotative, collocative, conceptual, constructional, lexical, broad, contextual, thematic, pictorial, central, narrow, propositional, stylistic, and others. Yayat Sudaryat (2009) classifies meaning into two main categories: lexical and structural meaning. Lexical meaning consists of direct meaning (general and specific) and figurative meaning (connotative, stylistic, affective, collocative, reflective, and idiomatic meanings). Structural meaning includes grammatical and thematic meanings. Meanwhile, Wijana and Rosmadi (in Serliana, 2022) classify meaning into eight types: lexical, grammatical, denotative, connotative, literal, figurative, primary, and secondary meanings.

4. Traditional Ceremony

A traditional ceremony is a cultural activity passed down from generation to generation within a community. Etymologically, “ceremony” refers to a series of activities performed by a group of people to establish rules in accordance with specific objectives, while “custom” refers to behavioral norms that regulate social conduct. Koentjaraningrat (in Embon, 2018) defines traditional ceremonies as “activities or sets of customs regulated by prevailing social laws that are closely related to events occurring within society.” Traditional ceremonies also reflect social behavior that demonstrates awareness of past cultural history. Through these ceremonies, people can trace the origins of ethnic groups, places, objects, and natural events that shaped human life in the past. Traditional ceremonies are closely related to culture. This is supported by Wicaksana and Sudiatmi (2021), who state that culture is closely linked to local wisdom and can be used as learning material because it encompasses knowledge, morals, law, arts, customs, and habits practiced by culturally developed societies. Each region has different customs according to its traditions, such as birth, death, and marriage ceremonies. Traditional ceremonies are cultural heritage preserved from generation to generation.

5. Types of Traditional Ceremonies

Traditional ceremonies can be classified into several types, namely:

a. Rice Harvest Ceremony

Indonesia has a strong agrarian cultural tradition, where many cultural events are associated with ritual practices, especially during rice cultivation, both pre-planting and post-harvest stages. Pre-planting rituals are performed to ensure good harvest outcomes, while post-harvest ceremonies express gratitude for abundance and blessings from the Creator. One example is the *Nyadran* tradition in Ngimbrang, Temanggung, Central Java. Soniatin (2021) states that “*Nyadran* is a symbol representing a relationship with ancestors.” The tradition includes communal meals accompanied by prayers led by religious leaders, and symbolic food items are distributed or contested by participants as a form of blessing for future harvests.

b. Traditional Marriage Ceremony

A traditional marriage ceremony consists of cultural rituals conducted to honor and celebrate marriage as an important life event. Marriage ceremonies are considered sacred and may be performed in traditional, modern, or combined forms.

1) Traditional Ceremony

Traditional marriage ceremonies are conducted according to local customary rules. Indonesia’s cultural diversity results in different marriage traditions among ethnic groups. For example, in Central Kalimantan, there is a customary obligation known as *adat payment*, performed before customary elders (*Mantir*) (Lastaria & Fajeri, 2023). Similarly, in Betawi culture, *pantun* (poetic exchange) is performed before the groom enters the bride’s house.

2) Modern Ceremony

Modern marriage ceremonies follow contemporary practices influenced by external cultures, often resembling European-style weddings. However, they may still be adapted to Islamic principles or local customs.

3) Death Ceremony

A death ceremony is a ritual associated with burial, cremation, or other funeral practices. It reflects cultural beliefs and practices used to honor the deceased through monuments, rituals, and prayers. Each community performs death ceremonies according to its traditions.

4) Birth Ceremony

A birth ceremony is a symbolic expression of gratitude for the blessing of childbirth. In Javanese culture, for example, the *Brokohan* tradition is performed one day after birth as a prayer for the baby’s safety, health, and blessings.

5) Coronation Ceremony of Tribal Leader

A coronation ceremony is performed to officially appoint or install a tribal leader. For example, the *Kaba Tusi* ritual is conducted to grant authority and leadership legitimacy to a tribal chief, symbolizing wisdom, power, and responsibility in leading the community.

METHOD

This study employs a literary semiotic approach to examine systematic knowledge related to symbols, signs, and the processes of their creation, as proposed by Jabrohim (2015), who states that “semiotics is the study of signs. Semiotic studies are considered part of social phenomena in society that are related to signs.” In general, semiotics is understood as a philosophical theory concerning signs and symbols that function as a coding system used to communicate both visual and verbal messages.

This research is classified as a qualitative study using a field research approach to describe conditions and provide detailed explanations. According to Rachmat Kriyantono (2006), “field research is a type of research used to observe phenomena directly without intermediaries.” The research subjects are community figures who have experience and knowledge of Dayak traditional ceremonies. The research location is Mantuyan Village, Halong District, Balangan Regency, South Kalimantan Province. The selection of this site is based on the authenticity of the culture, its relevance to the research topic, and the strong preservation of local traditions that remain largely uninfluenced by external cultures.

List of Research Informants

No.	Name	Age	Description
1	Gupen	50 years old	The researcher selected the informants
2	Anyaa	60 years old	listed here because they are native residents

of Mantuyan Village, Halong District, Balangan. They are traditional elders actively involved in customary ceremonies and possess extensive knowledge of the Dayak Meratus traditions.

Research Indicators

The focus of this study is based on indicators related to the issues being investigated. The indicators are presented in the following table:

No.	Aspect Studied	Indicators
1	Verbal symbolic meaning	Mantras, dance, procession
2	Non-verbal symbolic meaning	Offerings, statues, rice, buffalo horns, rice grains

These indicators are used to facilitate the research process in data collection so that it aligns with the research objectives. Furthermore, the study also formulates the following data collection procedures:

1. Observation related to the Dayak Meratus Traditional Ceremony in Halong District, Balangan Regency.
2. Documentation through photographs and videos as a method for recording field data conducted by the researcher.
3. Document analysis used as a reference in analyzing the data, such as semiotic theory books.
4. Note-taking as a supporting technique in research; in addition to audio recording of informants, important findings identified by the researcher are written down as reference material.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings obtained from several informants or respondents, the researcher presents the results in the form of symbolic elements derived from multiple sources. The first informant was the Dayak Meratus tribal leader, identified as G, aged 48 years. He plays an active role in the implementation of the Baharin traditional ceremony. From the interview with this first informant, 13 symbols were identified in the Baharin ceremony, as follows:

Table 1. Symbols Identified from Informant G (7–9 July 2023)

No.	Data	No.	Data
1	<i>Panayaraban</i>	8	<i>Bakapur Baminyak</i>
2	<i>Balapas Basar</i>	9	<i>Mantra Ngundang</i>
3	<i>Manjanji Balai</i>	10	<i>Tandik Manta</i>
4	<i>Tandik Bakanjar</i>	11	<i>Tandik Masak</i>
5	<i>Bamamang</i>	12	<i>Tandik Bahedap</i>
6	<i>Batatabusan</i>	13	<i>Puja Nining Bahatara</i>
7	<i>Bapalit Liur</i>		

The second informant was a customary leader identified as H, who is actively involved in the implementation of the Baharin traditional ceremony in the surrounding area. Based on the interview with this second informant, six symbols were identified, namely:

Table 2. Symbols Identified from Informant H (7–9 July 2023)

No.	Data
1	Mandau
2	Offerings
3	Gelang Hyang
4	Ringgitan
5	Gandang
6	Balai Baharin

Data Analysis and Discussion

The Baharin traditional ceremony contains two types of symbols, namely verbal and non-verbal symbols. Verbal symbols are obtained through direct communication, either oral or written, including gestures, dances, songs, hand movements, and other forms of expression. In contrast, non-verbal symbols are symbols that do not use language directly and include all forms of expression that do not involve words, such as objects, statues, incense, offerings, images, and other material cultural elements. Non-verbal symbols are products of culture; therefore, understanding them requires an appreciation of cultural context as well as the surrounding or cross-cultural environment.

Non-verbal symbols can be learned gradually and through repeated exposure. Knapp and Hall state that perception of non-verbal symbols is shaped by cultural conditions, education, and individual experience (Mark, 2014).

A. Analysis of Verbal Symbols

1. Panayarahan

Panayarahan is a traditional ritual performed through the recitation of mantras, locally known as *bamamang*. The *bamamang* is recited by Guru Jaya while sprinkling incense, known in the Meratus community as *marabun dupa*. During this process, mantras are spoken to convey messages to Nining Bahatara, Hyang Putri, Sangkawang, Sangiang, and ancestral spirits, informing them that the Baharin ceremony will be held.

2. Balapas Basar

The *Balapas Basar* ritual is conducted after *Panayarahan*. In its implementation, participants rub both palms over incense smoke, symbolically represented by the *umbun-umbun* (household head), who acts as a representative of the entire family participating in the ritual.

3. Manjanji Balai

Manjanji Balai is one of the requirements that serves as evidence that the *umbun-umbun* (head of the household) is ready to conduct the ceremony. In this ritual, all family members provide monetary offerings (*ringgit*) which are then handed over to Guru Jaya as a sign that the family is prepared to fulfill all customary obligations until the completion of the ceremony.

4. Tandik Bakanjar

Tandik Bakanjar is a traditional dance performed as an expression of joy by all participants welcoming the guests. This dance is performed by male participants, including both family members and invited guests, while circling the *lalayang* (stage). The dance begins by moving clockwise around the stage, with dancers facing the center at all times, and involves stamping their feet in rhythm with the accompanying traditional musical instruments, particularly drums (*gendang*).



Figure 1. Tandik Bakanjar

5. Bamamang

The *Bamamang* ritual is performed at 19:00 Western Indonesian Time (WIB) during the opening of the ceremony, which is locally referred to as *arub balian*. This ritual is conducted by Guru Jaya while reciting mantras (*bamamang*) together with a representative of the *Balian*, who acts as a counterpart or dialogue partner to Guru Jaya.

The *Bamamang* ritual can be understood as a symbolic act of calling upon or inviting all living beings as well as metaphysical entities. The language used in *bamamang* consists of the local Dayak language, serving as a symbolic form of preserving the linguistic heritage passed down from ancestors.



Figure 2. *Bamamang* Ritual Process

6. Batatabusan

Batatabusan is a ritual of atonement for anything that has been taken, whether intentionally or unintentionally, which is symbolically replaced through the offering of a black chicken's blood. Based on an interview with a customary leader, he explained that *batatabusan* is performed to replace everything that has been taken with something new, including the dwelling places of living beings (metaphysical entities), which may be affected when land is cleared for agricultural purposes.

Therefore, communication with metaphysical beings is necessary as a form of respect toward other creatures. In addition, this ritual serves as an act of compensation for unintended harm to animals that may have been accidentally killed during land clearing for ritual purposes. In this agreement, the ritual owner agrees to compensate for all losses by offering black chicken blood as a symbolic substitute.

7. Bapalit Liur

This ritual is performed after *batatabusan*, in which participants take saliva and apply it to the side of the traditional leader's basket. All participants are required to perform this act as a form of registering their identity before the heavens, witnessed by the supreme celestial authority, signifying that those who take part in the *Bapalit Liur* ritual are formally involved in its implementation.

8. Bakapur Baminyak

Bakapur Baminyak is a ritual conducted before the opening ceremony led by Guru Jaya. The *Balian* sit in a circle with coconut oil and betel lime placed in the center. Guru Jaya then performs the *bamamang* (recitation of prayers or mantras). After the recitation, coconut oil and betel lime are applied to the bodies of participants and *Balian*, including the forehead, both hands, chest, and feet.

9. Mantra Ngundang

The *Mantra Ngundang* is a prayer or incantation recited by Guru Jaya during the opening of the ceremony.

Mandak tarung ta'am huang balai ina, maeh lakiani, waweyan, maeh hi matueh De sabab ta'am mandak diya ta'am na undang diya puhun

Sa umbunan sa kawan nie gawean Baharin hi lajang na undang kan here ari harta panjana Udiari hambula sikau bangkau tetet rantau soal gantang kampong lain na insing bulih na bungkar ada

Yawe ambungkar balei here ina iharaga 120 real danda anggunan gaduhan 24 real.

10. Tandik Manta

Tandik Manta is a dance performed in a seated position while reciting mantras and shaking *gelang hyang* (sacred bracelets) at the edge of the ceremonial space facing the *lalaya* (stage).

11. Tandik Masak

This dance is performed while standing and circling the *lalaya* (stage) in a counterclockwise direction, accompanied by rhythmic stomping in accordance with the traditional drum (*gendang*) music. The movement begins with the right foot, symbolizing that all actions should begin from the right side as it is believed to bring goodness, such as when traveling to the fields or leaving the house, where the right foot should step first.

12. Tandik Bahedap

Tandik Bahedap is a paired dance performed face-to-face with another dancer. The movements begin with the right foot followed by the left foot, in accordance with the rhythm of the drum. This dance symbolizes communication established between the *Balian* and the *Pinjulang* (customary guide), representing that human social relations contribute to balance and harmony in life both in this world and the hereafter.

13. Puja Nining Bahatara

Puja Nining is a type of dance used in the Baharin ritual, performed by alternately swinging both legs forward toward the *lalaya* (stage) with relatively fast movements.

B. Analysis of Non-Verbal Symbols

1. Mandau

Mandau is a traditional weapon that carries a mystical element and is used only in specific ritual contexts, such as warfare, headhunting practices, and traditional ceremonial purposes. In the Baharin ceremony, the *Mandau* is used for the slaughtering of buffalo.

The *Mandau* functions as a symbol of honor and identity for customary leaders during the implementation of the Baharin traditional ceremony, representing authority, dignity, and cultural legitimacy within the Dayak Meratus tradition.



Figure 3. Mandau Traditional Weapon

2. Offerings (Sesajen)

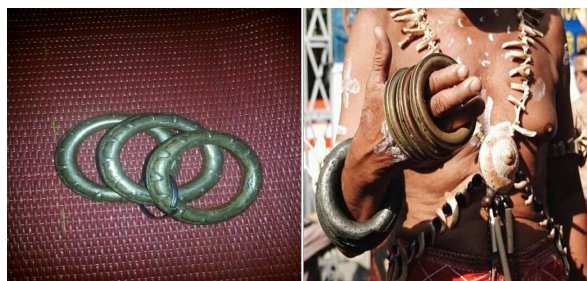
The first type of offering in Dayak traditional ceremonies includes red sticky rice, white sticky rice, rice, bananas, *cucur* (traditional cake), chicken eggs, *parapah* (a roasted chicken skewered with bamboo), white cloth, *lemang* (glutinous rice cooked in bamboo), and a machete. Rice offerings are placed in a bamboo container (*dibumakan*), along with sticky rice or regular rice, *ringgitan*, and *giling pinang*. *Ringgitan* refers to a type of decorative plant element made from young palm leaves (*janur*) derived from the sugar palm tree, combined with several flowers tied together. The presence of *giling pinang* in the offerings consists of betel leaves filled with areca nut, wrapped again with betel leaves and symbolically treated as a form of “traditional cigarette.” The *giling pinang* cigarette symbolizes masculinity, while the areca nut represents femininity.



Figure 4. Ritual Offerings (Sesajen)

3. Gelang Hyang

Gelang Hyang is one of the properties used during ritual dance performances. It is made of yellow metal shaped into a circular form resembling a donut, consisting of three rods. This object is not worn on the wrist; instead, it is held in the palm by inserting four fingers into the circular opening, while the thumb is used to grip and shake the bracelet. The *Balian* (ritual practitioners) are required to possess and use the *Gelang Hyang* during *batandik*



(dance performance). The movement of the *Gelang Hyang* is synchronized with the stomping rhythm of the *Balian*, serving as an integral component of the ritual dance expression.

Figure 5. Gelang Hyang Ritual Bracelet

4. Ringgitan

Ringgitan is one of the properties used in ritual dance performances. It is made from young shoots of the sugar palm (*pucuk daun enau*) and decorated with several types of flowers, including red rooster comb flowers (*bunga jengger merah*), basil flowers (*bunga kemangi*), and *bunga gemetir*. *Ringgitan* symbolizes purity and the sanctification of the soul among the Meratus community. Each household conducting the Baharin ceremony is required to prepare *ringgitan* as a prerequisite for the *Balian* to offer prayers for those performing the ritual. This object is considered sacred and is treated as a representation of spiritual knowledge.

5. Gandang

Gandang is a musical instrument used in *batandik* (dance performance) that functions as a rhythmic accompaniment during the ceremony. The community believes that *gandang* embodies the spiritual essence of the dance. The drum rhythm symbolizes the peak spiritual state of the *Balian*, known as *Mandiwata*. In the Baharin ritual, the musical accompaniment originally included not only drums but also gongs, *sarunai* (flute), *kerunding*, and other traditional instruments. However, due to cultural changes over time, only the drum (*gandang*) has been preserved to the present day. According to Damang Ayal, “*karena yang tukang gongnya sudah kadada lagi lawan panip sarunainya sudah kadadaan lagi makanya kada dipakai lagi,*” meaning that there are no longer people who can play the gong or blow the *sarunai*, leading to their disappearance. The drum remains the primary musical instrument in the ceremony, not only because of this cultural decline but also because it is considered the most essential instrument for accompanying ritual dances.

6. Balai Baharin

Balai Baharin is the place where the Dayak Meratus community conducts the Baharin traditional ceremony. It should be distinguished from *lalaya* (stage), as *balai* refers to the entire ceremonial area, while *lalaya* refers specifically to the stage located within the *balai*.

Meaning of Verbal Symbols in the Baharin Traditional Ceremony

1. Panayarahan

Panayarahan means “to submit” or “to present.” In this context, it refers to the act of extending an invitation to all participants attending the Baharin traditional ceremony. The ritual is led by Guru Jaya, who performs prayers requesting protection for all participants during the ceremony and throughout its implementation. The *Panayarahan* process can also be understood as a ritual invitation to metaphysical beings to attend the ceremony. This reflects the sincerity and seriousness of the community in conducting the Baharin tradition.

2. Balapas Basar

Balapas Basar can be interpreted as a “major cleansing” or large-scale purification ritual. A customary leader stated during an interview:

“pambukaan kami bapanyarahan dabulu, baundangan lawan para rob-rob, hanyar balapas basar supaya bala-bala kaluaran yang ada dalam balai, hanyar bajanji balai”

This means that at the beginning, the community performs *Panayarahan* by inviting spirits, followed by *Balapas Basar* to remove misfortune from the ceremonial space, and then continues with *Manjanji*

Balai. Balapas Basar is performed to purify both individuals and the ceremonial space so that no misfortune or impurity affects participants inside the *balai*. The Meratus people believe that misfortune can be carried away by the wind, dissolved in river flows, or attached to trees. Therefore, participants are prohibited from leaving the ceremonial area, going to rivers, or picking leaves from trees, as these actions are believed to bring disaster. This ritual is led by Guru Jaya through *bamamang* (chanting mantras) while burning incense and rubbing hands over the smoke, followed by all *umbun* (household heads). *Balapas Basar* can also be interpreted as a form of *warding off evil (tolak bala)* performed collectively under the guidance of customary leaders.

3. Manjanji Balai

Manjanji Balai symbolizes a binding agreement among the Dayak Meratus community to complete the ceremonial process until the end and to remain committed under any circumstances. This agreement is symbolically represented through *ringgitan*, which is later used in ritual chanting by Guru Jaya to request blessings. It also represents the commitment of the *umbun-umbun* (household heads) to fully participate in and complete the ceremony.

4. Tandik Bakanjar

Based on an interview with a Dayak Meratus customary leader, it was stated:

“Bakanjar itu kita menirukan burung yang menjaga angin gasan pabumaan kita”

This means that *bakanjar* refers to imitating a bird that protects the wind for rice cultivation. Based on this explanation, *Tandik Bakanjar* can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of birds in flight, reflected in the dance movements circling the *lalaya* (stage). This symbolizes participation in protecting nature and rice fields among the Dayak Meratus community, as well as strengthening social solidarity.

5. Bamamang

The *bamamang* ritual carries the meaning of prohibiting participants inside the ceremonial hall from speaking impure or inappropriate words. This is because they are believed to be in the presence of Nining Bahatara (deities), Sangkawang (spiritual entities), female spirits, and ancestral beings, including both benevolent and malevolent spirits. Therefore, all participants are required to maintain respectful speech, as improper words are believed to provoke the anger of the spiritual entities present during the ritual.

6. Batatabusan

Batatabusan is a symbol representing a “spiritual debt” that must be repaid through the offering of black-feathered rooster blood. This ritual is performed as an act of apology to the spirits of the underworld and forest when humans utilize forest land for agricultural purposes. If this obligation is not fulfilled, the spirits believed to inhabit the forest may cause disturbances or misfortune to those who break the spiritual agreement.

7. Bapalit Liur

All participants in the ceremony are required to perform *Bapalit Liur* (applying saliva). This ritual symbolizes active participation and presence in the Baharin ceremonial process. Saliva is considered a symbol of pure life energy within the human body. It is believed that saliva enables humans to experience the taste of food and drink, and without it, humans would not be able to survive except through breathing. Therefore, saliva is interpreted as a symbol of life essence and vitality.

8. Bakapur Baminyak

Bakapur Baminyak contains two symbolic signs, represented by the plus (+) and minus (-) symbols. These signs are referred to as *cacak burung*, which symbolize personal purity. Similar to religious worship, one must be in a state of purity before entering a sacred space; likewise, individuals entering the ceremonial area must also be spiritually clean. Thus, the *Bakapur Baminyak* ritual can be interpreted as a purification process that prepares individuals to enter a sacred ceremonial space and ensures that the ritual is conducted in a state of holiness.

9. Mantra Ngundang

The symbolic meanings contained in the *Mantra Ngundang* are primarily expressed through linguistic symbols. The mantra text is as follows:

- a) *Mandak tarung ta'am huang balai ina, maeh lakiani, waweyan, maeh hi matueh De sabab ta'am mandak diya ta'am na undang diya pubun.*
- b) *Sa umbunan sa kawan nie gawean Baharin hi lajang na undang kan here ari barta panjana.*
- c) *Udiari hambula sikau bangkau tetei rantau soal gantang kampung lain na insing bulih na bungkar ada.*
- d) *Yawe ambungkar balei here ina iharaga 120 real danda angguman gaduhan 24 real.*
- e) *Mandak tarung ta'am huang balai ina, maeh lakiani, waweyani maeh hi matueh.*

From a lexical perspective, the phrase “*mandak tarung ta'am huang balai ina, maeh lakiani, waweyani maeh hi matueh*” means “stop speaking, all of us inside the ceremonial hall, both men and women, children and elders.” This expression serves as an opening statement during the Baharin *Malem Manta* ritual and functions as a request for participants to remain silent during the summoning of Nini Uri or Sang Hyang Bahatara.

The phrase “*de ta'am mandak, diya ta'am na undang diya pubun*” means that everyone must remain silent to respect the ceremony organizers. The term *pubun* symbolizes the host or the person who organizes the ceremony, with the expectation that the ritual will proceed smoothly.

The phrase “*sa umbunan sa kawan nie gawean Baharin hi lajang na undang kanhere ari barta panjana*” means that the families conducting the Baharin ceremony are encouraged to invite guests from distant areas or economically disadvantaged backgrounds to participate and receive assistance or offerings. The term *panjana* symbolizes wealth or material resources shared with the less fortunate.

The phrase “*udiari hambula sikau bangkau tetei rantau soal gantang kampung lain na insing boleh ambungkar ada*” means that anyone who dares to disrupt or violate the customary rules will be fined 120 real as a form of customary sanction.

10. Tandik Manta

Tandik Manta is symbolically interpreted as an unripe fruit. This symbolism is associated with the beginning of a spiritual journey toward the realm of spirits or the world of ancestral souls.

11. Tandik Masak

Tandik Masak literally means “ripe” or “mature.” This term symbolizes the maturity and readiness of the *Balian* to carry out the ritual as instructed by *Mamangan Wirid*, which is expressed through dance movements. Each movement begins with a step using the right foot, symbolizing that all actions should start from the right side in order to bring goodness, particularly for agricultural life. The circular movement around the *lalaya* (stage) represents a focused center of attention, reflecting spiritual concentration with the aim of reaching the *maborani* realm. *Maborani* is understood as a

spiritual state in which the human soul unites with the divine essence (*zat nur ilahi*). Therefore, this ritual process can be interpreted as a symbol of life that continuously moves in harmony with the cycle of time. It represents a life pattern that is bound by space and time and continuously evolving.

12. Tandik Bahedap

Tandik Bahedap is a dance performed face-to-face with the *Balian*. In this ritual, the *Balian*, who are believed to be possessed by spiritual entities, communicate with the *Pinjulang* (ritual mediator from the community). The *Balian* ask why they have been summoned, and the *Pinjulang* responds that the purpose is to invite ancestral spirits to fulfill their obligations so that the community may receive blessings in life through the performance of the Dayak traditional ceremony. The communication established between the *Balian* and the *Pinjulang* symbolizes that social relations can create balance and harmony within human life.

13. Puja Nining Bahatara

The dance movement oriented toward the *lalaya* (stage) symbolizes that the *lalaya* serves as a spiritual orientation point (*qibla*) for attaining a higher spiritual state. In addition, it functions as a symbolic expression of reverence and worship by all *Balian* toward Sang Hyang Nining Bahatara.

Meaning of Non-Verbal Symbols in the Baharin Traditional Ceremony

1. Mandau

Mandau is a symbol that represents honor and identity of customary leaders during the implementation of the Baharin traditional ceremony.

2. Offerings (Sesajen)

Sesajen is understood as an offering presented to Hyang Nining Bahatara or ancestral spirits, who are regarded as deities in the Baharin ceremony, as an expression of gratitude for successful harvests and agricultural prosperity among the Dayak community. Offerings hold sacred value for communities who believe that they function as a source of blessings (Ayatullah Humaeni; Eng Purwanti; Azizah Awaliyah; Romi, 2017). They are also interpreted as the “life breath” of humans, representing staple foods as the primary source of human sustenance. Therefore, *Pinjulang* is responsible for preparing food during the Baharin ritual. All offerings are arranged on a *nyiru* (woven tray) and placed around the *lalaya* (stage) for seven days and seven nights.

Rice placed in baskets on the stage is later examined after the ritual process to determine whether it feels cold or warm. The condition of the rice is interpreted as a symbolic sign: if the rice feels warm, it is considered a negative omen indicating that a family member of the rice owner may become ill, and therefore a prayer ritual (*mamang*) is conducted to prevent illness. In contrast, if the rice feels cold, it is interpreted as a positive sign indicating that everything will be fine.

The rice placed in the basket is not allowed to be consumed, as it represents human essence (*fitriah*) and may only be distributed to those in need. This reflects gratitude for agricultural harvests obtained by participants in the Baharin ceremony. The rice can only be distributed after the completion of all ritual stages.

Alfred North Whitehead (in Asis, 2020) states that “human thought functions symbolically when certain components of experience evoke awareness, feelings, beliefs, and images of other components.” The sequence of offering rituals also symbolizes the belief system held by the community as a manifestation of harmony between humans and supernatural beings. This symbolic system is manifested in the form of *arub ganal* (major ceremonial gathering).

3. Gelang Hyang

Gelang Hyang symbolizes a “caller” or spiritual summoning instrument. The three interconnected rings are used by the *Balian* (ritual leader) while dancing, with the aim of elevating spiritual consciousness to a higher level. Four fingers of the right hand are inserted into the ring, while the thumb holds the three rings together, forming a symbol of fertility. *Gelang Hyang* consists of two types: male and female. The circular form represents the female symbol, while the lingga-shaped form represents the male symbol.

The three stacked rings represent a cosmological invocation of three realms:

- a) the upper ring symbolizes the upper world,
- b) the middle ring represents the human world, and
- c) the lower ring symbolizes the underworld (*jatā realm*).

The Dayak Meratus community believes that harmony among these three realms reflects respect toward all beings created by the Supreme Being. This harmony is expected to bring fertility and success to agricultural activities in the future.

4. Ringgitan

Ringgitan is considered a sacred object with supernatural properties used as a medium for conveying prayers performed by the *Balian*. The belief in *ringgitan* arises from its materials, which consist of young sugar palm shoots and several types of flowers (red rooster comb flower, basil, and marigold), believed to be symbolic “tears” of Hyang Nining Bahatara. All plants used in *ringgitan* are regarded as sacred and represent divine glory. Additionally, sugar palm leaves symbolize the beginning and end of agricultural cycles: the beginning represents readiness to start farming again, while the end symbolizes the completion of agricultural activities through the Baharin ceremony before restarting in the following year. The flowers, often referred to as *bunga mangit*, are believed to be heavenly plants cultivated by the *Balian* as spiritual medicine. Both sugar palm leaves and flowers are used to bless the stage (*lalaya*) and the *Pinjulang* (customary guide) in order to obtain both physical and spiritual well-being.

5. Gandang

The accompaniment of *gandang* carries the meaning of the spiritual peak of the *Balian*, representing a process of unifying themselves with the ancestors, a state referred to as *Mandiwata*. The *gandang* (drum) is the most important musical instrument in the Baharin ceremony and is the only musical instrument in the ritual that has remained preserved and has not become extinct.

6. Balai Baharin

The orientation of the *Balai Baharin* is constructed based on three axes. These axes are believed to represent natural cosmic directions that function as spatial orientation markers, namely the mountain, the rising sun, and the river. The *Balai Baharin* serves as a place of worship as well as a communal space for deliberation; therefore, its construction carefully considers these three natural axes. The first axis is the mountain, which is believed to be the dwelling place of spirits before they transition to another realm (heaven). These spirits are later ritually guided by the *Balian* to their final resting place (*lennu tatau*). The second axis is the sun. The rising sun symbolizes a guiding direction or spiritual orientation for the spirits that previously resided in the mountain as a transitional place before proceeding to *lennu lian* (the gathering place of spirits). The third axis is the river. The river symbolizes the reflection of life for all living beings, as it supports daily human activities and serves as an essential source of livelihood. It is also considered a fundamental source of life for humans throughout their existence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion above, it can be concluded that there are two types of symbols in the Baharin traditional ceremony of the Dayak Meratus community, namely verbal symbols and non-verbal symbols. These symbols have their own meanings, which are closely related to the daily life of the Dayak Meratus people and function as guidance and cultural references for its followers. The verbal symbols in the Baharin traditional ceremony consist of thirteen elements: (1) *Panayaraban*, (2) *Balapas Basar*, (3) *Manjanji Balai*, (4) *Tandik Bakanjar*, (5) *Bamamang*, (6) *Batatabusan*, (7) *Bapalit Liur*, (8) *Bakapur Baminyak*, (9) *Mantra Ngundang*, (10) *Tandik Manta*, (11) *Tandik Masak*, (12) *Tandik Babedap*, and (13) *Puja Nining Bahatara*. Meanwhile, the non-verbal symbols consist of six elements: (1) *Mandau*, (2) *Offerings (Sesajen)*, (3) *Gelang Hyang*, (4) *Ringgitan*, (5) *Gandang*, and (6) *Balai Baharin*.

Meanings of Verbal Symbols

1. *Panayaraban* means “to submit” and represents a prayer for protection, safety, and smooth implementation of the ceremony.
2. *Balapas Basar* symbolizes a form of spiritual cleansing or *tolak bala* to remove misfortune during the ritual.
3. *Manjanji Balai* represents the commitment of all participants to complete the ceremony regardless of any risks.
4. *Bakanjar* symbolizes the imitation of a bird protecting the wind for agricultural fertility and serves as a symbol of social solidarity.
5. *Bamamang* contains a prohibition against speaking impolitely inside the ceremonial hall to avoid disturbing ancestral and spiritual beings.
6. *Batatabusan* symbolizes a spiritual debt that must be repaid, often through the sacrifice of a black chicken, as compensation for forest clearing and unintended harm to living beings.
7. *Bapalit Liur* symbolizes the presence and participation of individuals in the Baharin ritual.
8. *Bakapur Baminyak* symbolizes self-purification using lime and oil to ensure the sacredness of the ceremony.
9. *Mantra Ngundang* is a request for guests to remain silent during the invocation of Nini Uri or Sang Hyang Bahatara as a form of respect.
10. *Tandik Manta* symbolizes the beginning of the spiritual journey toward the ancestral realm.
11. *Tandik Masak* symbolizes the maturity and readiness of the *Balian* in performing the ceremony.
12. *Tandik Babedap* symbolizes social interaction and harmony through face-to-face dance movements, reflecting balance in both worldly and spiritual life.
13. *Puja Nining Bahatara* symbolizes reverence and worship toward Sang Hyang Nining Bahatara, with *lalaya* (stage) functioning as a spiritual orientation point.

Meanings of Non-Verbal Symbols

1. *Mandau* symbolizes honor and identity of customary leaders during the ceremony.
2. *Sesajen* symbolizes human basic needs and serves as an offering to ancestral spirits and Hyang Nining Bahatara as a form of gratitude for agricultural success.
3. *Gelang Hyang* symbolizes a spiritual invocation to request agricultural fertility in the future.
4. *Ringgitan* symbolizes hope for physical and spiritual well-being.
5. *Gandang* symbolizes the spiritual peak of the *Balian* in uniting with ancestors known as *Mandiwata*.
6. *Balai Baharin* represents a cosmological structure based on three natural axes: the mountain, the sun, and the river, each carrying symbolic meaning related to life and spirituality.

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