

Meaning, Symbols and Functions of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* of Toba Batak Ethnicity: Hypersemiotic Study

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Abstract

This study discusses the meaning, symbols, and functions of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in Batak Toba culture through a hypersemiotic approach. *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is one of the traditional Batak Toba cloths that has philosophical, social, and spiritual values in people's lives. The development of digital media and popular culture has caused the *ulos* symbol to undergo a transformation in meaning so that it is not only understood as a traditional cloth, but also as a representation of the visual identity of Batak culture. This study aims to describe the symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, explain its socio-cultural functions, and reveal changes in the symbolic meaning of *ulos* in modern society. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a hypersemiotic approach by Yasraf Amir Piliang. Research data were obtained through observation, literature study, and documentation of the use of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in traditional ceremonies and digital media. The results show that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has symbolic meanings related to family ties, respect, prayer, and hopes for a harmonious life. *Ulos* also functions as a medium of cultural communication in the *Dalihan na tolu* system of the Batak Toba people. From a hypersemiotic perspective, the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol has undergone an expansion of meaning due to visual reproduction through social media, the fashion industry, and popular culture, creating a cultural hyperreality. Nevertheless, the Toba Batak people maintain the philosophical value and traditional function of *ulos* through the inheritance of traditions, the implementation of traditional rituals, and the strengthening of local cultural identity. This research confirms that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* remains a symbol of Toba Batak culture that adapts to changing times without losing its philosophical value in modern contemporary society.

Keywords: *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, Toba Batak, hypersemiotics, cultural symbol

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country with a diversity of cultures, languages, customs, and local traditions spread across various regions. This diversity plays a vital role in shaping national identity and demonstrates the richness of the archipelago's culture, passed down through generations. One ethnic group that still maintains its cultural identity today is the Toba Batak people of North Sumatra. Toba Batak culture encompasses various forms of material and non-material cultural heritage, such as language, traditional houses, traditional music, kinship systems, and traditional cloth called *ulos*. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), culture is the entire system of human ideas, actions, and works acquired through the learning process within a community. In the context of Toba Batak society, *ulos* is a cultural symbol that holds significant value in the community's social, customary, and spiritual life.

In Toba Batak culture, *ulos* serves not only as a covering for the body but also as a symbol of respect, affection, prayer, and social identity. The use of *ulos* is always

associated with traditional ceremonies, such as marriage, birth, death, and rituals of respect for relatives. One type of *ulos* that holds an important position is the *Ulos Ragi Hotang*. This *ulos* is generally used in Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremonies as a symbol of bonds and hopes for a harmonious household life. The word "*hotang*" in Batak means rattan, which symbolizes the strength and bond of family relationships. According to Clifford Geertz (1973), cultural symbols function as a system of meaning that people use to understand their social and spiritual lives. This symbol shows that the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has a philosophical meaning that is closely related to the cultural values of the Toba Batak people.

The symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is also evident in the motifs and colors used in the woven fabric. Red symbolizes courage and zest for life, black represents steadfastness and dignity, and white represents purity and sincerity. Furthermore, the geometric motifs on *Ulos Ragi Hotang* demonstrate order and harmony in the social life of the Toba Batak people. These symbols demonstrate that *ulos* is not merely a material object, but also a medium of cultural communication containing moral messages and life values. According to Roland Barthes (1977), cultural symbols have denotative and connotative meanings that shape social understanding within a community. Therefore, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* can be understood as a cultural symbol representing the Toba Batak people's outlook on life.

In the Toba Batak community, giving *ulos*, or *mangulosi*, has a crucial social function. *Mangulosi* is not merely a ceremonial act, but a form of cultural communication used to convey prayers, blessings, respect, and affection to the recipient. This tradition demonstrates the close relationship between *ulos* and the *Dalihan na tolu* kinship system, the foundation of the social structure of the Toba Batak people. According to Emile Durkheim (1995), cultural symbols serve a collective function in strengthening solidarity and social integration. In this context, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves as a symbol of social ties and family solidarity within the Toba Batak community.

In addition to its social and cultural functions, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* also has a spiritual dimension in the lives of the Toba Batak people. The Toba Batak believe that *ulos* contains prayers, protection, and good wishes for the recipient. Therefore, the use of *ulos* in traditional ceremonies is considered an integral part of the values of belief and respect for ancestors. According to Mircea Eliade (1959), symbolic objects in traditional societies are often viewed as having sacred value, connecting people to belief systems and the spiritual world. In the context of Toba Batak culture, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves as a sacred symbol that strengthens cultural identity while maintaining the community's traditional values.

The development of communication technology and digital media has caused cultural symbols to experience a shift in meaning in modern society. *Ulos*, previously used only in traditional contexts, is now represented through social media, the fashion industry, digital photography, and popular culture. This phenomenon has resulted in *ulos* no longer being understood solely as a traditional symbol, but also as a visual identity and product of modern culture. According to Marshall McLuhan (1964), media has a significant influence in shaping communication patterns and how society understands cultural symbols. In this context, social media has become a new space that produces and disseminates the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol widely to modern society.

The transformation of cultural symbols can be understood through the hypersemiotic approach developed by Yasraf Amir Piliang (2019). Hypersemiotics explains that signs and symbols in modern society experience excessive reproduction, creating cultural hyperreality. In this situation, symbols dominate over the actual cultural

reality. *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is now frequently used in digital content as a visual symbol of Batak culture without a thorough understanding of its philosophical values and traditional functions. As a result, modern society recognizes *ulos* more as an aesthetic product than as a cultural symbol with profound spiritual and social meaning.

Previous research on the Toba Batak *ulos* has been conducted extensively using various cultural studies and semiotic approaches. Research by Sinulingga, Tampubolon, and Siahaan (2024) examined the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* motif through a social semiotic approach and found that the *ulos* motif represents the cultural values of the Toba Batak people. Another study by Rusting and Sinaga (2023) examined the semiotics of *ulos hela* in Toba Batak wedding customs, focusing on the symbolic meaning of *ulos* within kinship relationships. Furthermore, Hariati and Purwarno (2024) examined the symbolic representation of *ulos* from a cultural ecolinguistic perspective. This research demonstrates that *ulos* holds a significant position as a cultural symbol of the Toba Batak people.

However, research specifically examining *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through a hypersemiotic approach is still very limited. Most previous studies have focused on conventional semiotics, customary functions, or the symbolic meaning of *ulos* in traditional societies. Few studies have examined the transformation of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*'s symbols in the era of digital media and popular culture. Yet, developments in communication technology have transformed the way society produces, distributes, and consumes local cultural symbols. This research gap provides an important basis for conducting a hypersemiotic study of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in contemporary Toba Batak culture.

Based on this description, the research questions in this study include: what is the symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in Toba Batak culture, what are the social and cultural functions of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in the lives of Toba Batak people, and how the symbol of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has transformed from a hypersemiotic perspective. This study aims to describe the meaning, symbols, and functions of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* and explain the changes in its symbolic meaning in modern society. This research is expected to provide theoretical benefits in the development of cultural studies, semiotics, and hypersemiotics as well as practical benefits in efforts to preserve Toba Batak culture amidst the development of digital media and popular culture.

Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a hypersemiotic approach to examine the meaning, symbols, and function of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in Toba Batak culture. Qualitative methods were chosen because this research aims to understand cultural phenomena in depth through interpretation of the symbolic meanings contained within the research object. According to Lexy J. Moleong (2018), qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena holistically through verbal descriptions in a natural context. In this study, qualitative methods are used to explain the symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* and the transformation of cultural signs in contemporary Toba Batak society.

The approach used in this research is the hypersemiotic approach proposed by Yasraf Amir Piliang (2019). Hypersemiotics is the study of the development of signs, symbols, and meanings in modern society influenced by technology, mass media, and consumer culture. This approach is used because *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is not only present as a traditional cloth in Toba Batak cultural rituals but also undergoes visual reproduction in social media, the fashion industry, and digital popular culture. With a hypersemiotic

approach, this research can examine how the *ulos* symbol has experienced an expansion of meaning to form a cultural hyperreality in modern society.

This research is descriptive-interpretive. Descriptive research aims to describe cultural phenomena systematically and factually, while interpretative research is used to interpret the symbols and meanings contained within the research object. According to Sugiyono (2021), qualitative descriptive research is used to describe the natural state of an object without manipulating research variables. In this study, the researcher describes the symbolic form of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, the socio-cultural function of *ulos*, and the transformation of *ulos* symbols in the digital era based on the interpretation of hypersemiotic theory.

The object of this research is *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, a traditional Toba Batak cloth that holds symbolic value and socio-cultural functions in community life. The research focuses on the symbolic meaning of *ulos* motifs, the traditional function of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, and changes in its symbolic meaning in modern digital culture. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), cultural symbols are an important part of a society's cultural system because they contain values, norms, and outlooks on life that are passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is seen as a cultural symbol that represents the identity of the Toba Batak people.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observations of the use of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies and its representation in social media. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained through literature review in the form of books, scientific journals, cultural articles, and previous research related to *ulos*, semiotics, and Toba Batak culture. According to Burhan Bungin (2015), primary data is data obtained directly from the research object, while secondary data is obtained through documents, archives, and other written sources that support the research.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through observation, literature review, and documentation. Observations were conducted by observing the use of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in various Toba Batak traditional ceremonies and its use in digital media. Observations aimed to gain an understanding of the social and symbolic functions of *ulos* in community life. According to Suharsimi Arikunto (2016), observation is a data collection technique carried out by systematically observing the research object to obtain information relevant to the research objectives.

The literature review technique was conducted by examining various scientific references related to Toba Batak culture, *ulos*, semiotics, and hypersemiotics. The references used included books, national journals, scientific articles, and previous research results relevant to the research topic. According to Mestika Zed (2018), literature review is a data collection technique carried out through the search and analysis of various written sources to obtain the theoretical and conceptual basis of the research. This technique was used to strengthen the interpretation of data regarding the symbols and meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*.

In addition to observation and literature review, this research also employed documentation techniques. Documentation was conducted by collecting photos, images, social media screenshots, and other visual documents related to *Ulos Ragi Hotang*. Documentation was used to support visual analysis of Toba Batak cultural symbols in both traditional and digital contexts. According to Sutopo (2017), documentation is a data collection technique using archives, images, and written documents that can support the validity of qualitative research.

The primary instrument in this research was the researcher herself, acting as the human instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a direct role in collecting, processing, and interpreting research data. According to Nasution (2017), the researcher in qualitative research serves as the primary instrument because of her ability to deeply understand the social and cultural context. In addition to the researcher as the primary instrument, this study also utilized supporting instruments in the form of observation guidelines, field notes, documentation formats, and research data classification lists.

The data analysis technique in this research employed the interactive analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2014), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by selecting data relevant to the research focus on the meaning, symbols, and function of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*. Data presentation was done in descriptive form to facilitate the process of interpreting cultural symbols. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn based on the results of data interpretation using Yasraf Amir Piliang's hypersemiotic theory.

The validity of the data in this study was carried out through source triangulation and theory triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing observational data, documentation, and literature studies to obtain valid and consistent data. Meanwhile, theory triangulation was carried out by comparing semiotic and hypersemiotic theories in the process of analyzing cultural symbols. According to Norman K. Denzin (2012), triangulation is used to increase the credibility of the research by examining data from various sources and theoretical perspectives. Thus, the results of the study are expected to provide a deep understanding of the meaning, symbolism, and function of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in contemporary Batak Toba culture.

Results

1. The Symbolic Meaning of Ulos Ragi Hotang in Toba Batak Culture

Ulos Ragi Hotang is a type of *ulos* that holds a significant place in the lives of the Toba Batak people. This *ulos* is commonly used in traditional wedding ceremonies as a symbol of the bond between the bride and groom and their extended families. The word "*hotang*" in the Batak language means rattan, a plant known for its strength and flexibility, making it a symbol of resilience and unity in married life. In the context of Toba Batak culture, the rattan symbol in *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is interpreted as a hope that the husband and wife's relationship will remain strong in the face of life's challenges. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), cultural symbols represent social values passed down through generations in traditional societies.

The symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is also evident in the motifs and colors used in the woven fabric. Red symbolizes courage and zest for life, black symbolizes authority and steadfastness, and white symbolizes purity and sincerity. This color combination forms a philosophical representation of the balance of life in the Toba Batak people. Furthermore, the geometric motifs on *Ulos Ragi Hotang* demonstrate order and harmony in social relations. According to Yasraf Amir Piliang (2019), cultural symbols serve not only as markers of identity but also as a medium for communicating values and ideologies within society.

In the Toba Batak tradition, the giving of the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through the *mangulosi* ceremony is a form of symbolic communication between the giver and the recipient of the *ulos*. *Mangulosi* is not merely a ceremonial act, but rather a process of conveying prayers, blessings, and hopes to the recipient. Parents who give the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* to their married children hope that their household will be blessed with

happiness, children, and a harmonious life. According to Clifford Geertz (1973), cultural symbols contain profound meanings related to the value systems and worldviews of the communities that support them.

2. Social and Cultural Functions of Ulos Ragi Hotang

Research shows that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* plays a crucial social role in the lives of the Toba Batak people. *Ulos* is not only worn as traditional clothing but also serves as a means of strengthening kinship ties within the *Dalihan na tolu* system. This system places the relationship between hula-hula, dongan tubu, and boru as the foundation of the Toba Batak social structure. In traditional ceremonies, the gift of *ulos* symbolizes respect and recognition of one's position within the social structure. According to Selo Soemardjan (2011), cultural symbols have a social function in strengthening solidarity and community integration.

In addition to its social function, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* also has religious and spiritual functions. In the beliefs of the Toba Batak people, *ulos* is believed to bring blessings, protection, and spiritual strength to the recipient. Therefore, the use of *ulos* in traditional ceremonies is considered an integral part of the community's cultural life. This spiritual function demonstrates that *ulos* is not merely a material object, but also a sacred symbol associated with values of belief and respect for ancestors. According to Emile Durkheim (1995), sacred symbols in traditional societies function to strengthen collective consciousness and social solidarity.

The research also shows that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves a cultural identity function. The Toba Batak people use *ulos* as a symbol of ethnic identity that distinguishes them from other cultural groups in Indonesia. The use of *ulos* in traditional ceremonies, cultural festivals, and formal activities demonstrates that *ulos* has become a visual representation of Toba Batak culture. In the modern context, *ulos* is also used by the younger generation as a symbol of local cultural pride. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural identity is formed through symbolic representations that are continuously produced and maintained in the community's social life.

Furthermore, the economic function of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has also grown in the modern era. *Ulos* production is now not only for traditional needs but also to meet market demand in the fashion industry and cultural tourism. Many *ulos* artisans produce *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in the form of modern clothing, accessories, and decorative products. This situation indicates that *ulos* has undergone a transformation into a cultural commodity with high economic value. According to Jean Baudrillard (1998), cultural objects in modern society often undergo commodification, transforming their symbolic value into consumption value.

3. The Transformation of the Ulos Ragi Hotang Symbol from a Hypersemiotic Perspective

The development of technology and digital media has caused the meaning of Toba Batak cultural symbols to transform, including the *Ulos Ragi Hotang*. Based on observations on social media, *ulos* is now frequently featured in modern photography content, TikTok videos, cultural tourism promotions, and the digital fashion industry. This visual reproduction means that *ulos* is no longer understood solely in a traditional context, but also as a symbol of modern aesthetics and lifestyle. According to Yasraf Amir Piliang (2019), this condition constitutes a form of hypersemiotics, namely the development of signs that produce hyperreality in contemporary society.

From a hypersemiotic perspective, the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol has undergone an expansion of meaning due to excessive media reproduction. *Ulos* is often used as a backdrop for photography, in modern clothing designs, and even as a visual identity in digital content without any explanation of its philosophical value. As a result, some people have come to recognize *ulos* solely as a visual symbol of Batak culture without understanding its traditional function and spiritual meaning. This phenomenon indicates that cultural symbols have undergone simulation, a condition where representation dominates over reality. According to Jean Baudrillard (1994), simulation makes it difficult for modern society to distinguish between reality and symbolic representation.

The transformation of symbols is also evident in the changing use of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in modern society. While previously worn only in certain traditional ceremonies, it is now worn in various non-traditional activities, such as entertainment events, art performances, and social media content. The younger generation of Toba Batak people utilizes *ulos* as a symbol of digital identity to demonstrate ethnic pride in the virtual space. According to Marshall McLuhan (1964), media has the ability to shape communication patterns and how people understand cultural symbols.

4. Efforts to Preserve the Meaning and Philosophical Values of Ulos Ragi Hotang

Despite experiencing a transformation in meaning in digital culture, the Toba Batak people continue to strive to maintain the philosophical value of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through various forms of cultural preservation. Based on research, preservation is carried out through cultural education, the inheritance of weaving traditions, the implementation of traditional ceremonies, and the promotion of local culture. Parents and traditional leaders continue to teach the symbolic meaning of *ulos* to the younger generation so that Toba Batak cultural values are not lost due to the influence of modernization. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), cultural preservation is achieved through the process of passing on values and traditions between generations.

Preservation is also achieved through the development of local culture-based creative industries. Many Toba Batak designers and craftspeople retain the traditional *Ulos Ragi Hotang* motif in modern products without losing its philosophical value. Furthermore, cultural festivals and the promotion of traditional tourism contribute to the wider public's understanding of *ulos*. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural representation can be an important means of maintaining community identity amidst globalization.

Research shows that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* remains a symbol of Toba Batak cultural identity, possessing profound meaning for its supporters. Although the *ulos* symbol has become hyperrealized in digital media, its traditional values and cultural philosophy are still maintained through the social practices and cultural rituals of the Toba Batak people. Thus, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* functions not only as a traditional cultural object but also as a symbol of identity that adapts to changing times.

Discussion

The research results show that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* holds a significant place in the lives of the Toba Batak people as a cultural symbol embodying philosophical, social, and spiritual values. From a Toba Batak cultural perspective, *ulos* is not simply a traditional cloth, but rather a symbolic medium of communication used to convey prayers, respect, affection, and hopes for a harmonious life. These findings demonstrate that the symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is closely related to the Toba Batak people's value system, which upholds kinship ties and social solidarity. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009),

cultural symbols are part of a cultural system used by society to convey meaning, norms, and outlooks on life collectively. In this context, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves as a cultural representation that demonstrates the identity and philosophy of life of the Toba Batak people.

The symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is evident in the use of motifs, colors, and woven shapes that are related to the Toba Batak people's concepts of life. Red symbolizes courage and enthusiasm for life, black symbolizes strength and determination, and white symbolizes purity and sincerity. This color combination demonstrates the balance of values in human life. Furthermore, the "*hotang*" or rattan symbol represents the strength of bonds within the household and social relationships. This finding aligns with Clifford Geertz's (1973) opinion that cultural symbols function as systems of meaning that shape how people understand their social and spiritual realities. Thus, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves not only an aesthetic function but also a philosophical symbol containing moral and cultural messages.

In Toba Batak traditional practices, the giving of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through the *mangulosi* ceremony demonstrates a powerful cultural communication function. *Mangulosi* serves as a means of conveying prayers and blessings from the giver to the recipient. This tradition demonstrates that the Toba Batak people use cultural symbols as a medium for strengthening social and emotional ties between relatives. This symbolic communication function emphasizes that *ulos* has a deeper meaning than simply a material object. According to Roland Barthes (1977), cultural symbols can be understood through layers of denotation and connotation that shape social meaning within society. At the denotative level, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is a traditional cloth, while at the connotative level, it symbolizes affection, respect, and solidarity within the Toba Batak family.

Beyond its symbolic meaning, research also indicates that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has an important social function within the *Dalihan na tolu* system. This social system places kinship as the foundation of Toba Batak life. In traditional ceremonies, the giving of *ulos* is based on specific social positions, thus reflecting the community's social structure. The social function of *ulos* is evident in its role in strengthening solidarity, maintaining family ties, and affirming cultural group identity. This finding aligns with Emile Durkheim's (1995) view that cultural symbols have a collective function in building social integration and shared awareness in traditional societies. Thus, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* plays a crucial role in maintaining the social stability of the Toba Batak people.

The research also shows that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has a spiritual and religious function in the lives of the Toba Batak people. The community believes that *ulos* contains prayers, protection, and blessings for the recipient. Therefore, the use of *ulos* in traditional ceremonies is inseparable from sacred values and respect for ancestors. This belief demonstrates that *ulos* serves as a connecting medium between humans, culture, and the spiritual values of the Toba Batak people. According to Mircea Eliade (1959), symbolic objects in traditional societies are often viewed as having sacred value, connecting people to belief systems and ancestral heritage. In this context, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* serves as a sacred symbol that strengthens the cultural and spiritual identity of the Toba Batak people.

Developments in technology and digital media have transformed the symbolic meaning of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in modern society. Research shows that *ulos* is now widely represented in social media, the fashion industry, digital photography, and cultural tourism promotions. This visual reproduction has led to an expansion of *ulos*' function from a traditional symbol to a lifestyle symbol and a modern visual identity. This phenomenon demonstrates a shift in how people understand cultural symbols in the

digital era. According to Marshall McLuhan (1964), media has a significant influence in shaping communication patterns and public perceptions of cultural symbols. In the context of this research, social media has become a new space that produces and disseminates the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol widely to the global community.

This symbolic transformation can be understood through the hypersemiotic approach proposed by Yasraf Amir Piliang (2019). Hypersemiotics explains that in modern society, signs and symbols undergo excessive reproduction, creating hyperreality. In hyperreality, symbols dominate over the actual cultural reality. The research results show that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is often used in digital content without explanation of its philosophical meaning and traditional function. As a result, some people only understand *ulos* as a visual symbol of Batak culture without understanding its inherent cultural value. This situation indicates a shift in meaning from sacred functions to aesthetic and commercial ones.

The phenomenon of hyperreality is also evident in the commodification of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* in the creative industry and popular culture. *Ulos* is produced in various modern forms such as clothing, accessories, decorations, and cultural souvenirs. This production demonstrates that *ulos* has become a cultural commodity with high economic value. According to Jean Baudrillard (1994), modern consumer society tends to transform cultural symbols into mass-produced consumer objects. In this context, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is no longer understood only based on its traditional and spiritual values, but also based on its market value and visual aesthetics that attract consumers' attention.

The research findings indicate that the Toba Batak people continue to strive to maintain the philosophical value of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through cultural preservation and the transmission of traditional traditions. Preservation is achieved through cultural education, traditional festivals, the use of *ulos* in traditional rituals, and the teaching of symbolic meaning to the younger generation. These efforts demonstrate that the Toba Batak people possess cultural awareness, striving to maintain their ethnic identity amidst globalization and modernization. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural identity is dynamic because it continually changes, but is maintained through symbolic representation and social practices.

This research discussion demonstrates that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* holds significant symbolic meaning, social function, and spiritual value within Toba Batak culture. In the digital era, the *ulos* symbol has undergone a transformation in meaning due to media reproduction and consumer culture, creating a cultural hyperreality. However, the Toba Batak people continue to maintain the traditional values and philosophy of *ulos* through various forms of cultural preservation. This demonstrates that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* remains a symbol of Toba Batak cultural identity, adapting to changing times without losing its philosophical significance.

Conclusion

Research on the meaning, symbols, and functions of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* of the Toba Batak ethnic group through hypersemiotic studies shows that *Ulos Ragi Hotang* has an important position as a cultural symbol that represents the philosophical, social, and spiritual values of the Toba Batak people. *Ulos* is not only understood as a traditional cloth, but also as a symbolic communication medium that contains prayers, respect, solidarity, and hopes for a harmonious life. This symbolic meaning is reflected through the motifs, colors, and philosophy of "*hotang*" which symbolizes strong bonds in family relationships and the social life of the Toba Batak people. In traditional practices, the giving of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* through the *mangulosi* procession shows the function of *ulos* as a symbol of

affection, recognition of social status, and strengthening kinship relations in the *Dalihan na tolu* system. In addition to its social function, *ulos* also has a spiritual dimension because it is believed to bring blessings, protection, and prosperity to the recipient. The findings of this study indicate that the existence of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is an important part in maintaining the cultural identity of the Toba Batak people amidst the social changes of modern society. The hypersemiotic study in this study shows that cultural symbols are not static, but rather continue to experience developments in meaning according to social contexts and technological developments. In contemporary society, *Ulos Ragi Hotang* is no longer only present in the context of traditional rituals, but is also reproduced through social media, the fashion industry, digital photography, and popular culture. This condition causes the *ulos* symbol to experience an expansion of meaning and form a cultural hyperreality, namely a state where visual symbols are more dominant than their original cultural meaning. Symbolic reproduction in digital media makes *ulos* often understood only as a visual identity of Batak culture without a deep understanding of its philosophical values and traditional functions. Thus, this study confirms that the transformation of the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol in the digital era shows a shift from a sacred function to an aesthetic and commercial function, although the cultural values contained within it are still maintained by the Toba Batak people.

Although the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* symbol has undergone a change in meaning in digital culture and modern consumer society, this study shows that the Toba Batak people still have a strong cultural awareness in maintaining the philosophical value of *ulos* through the preservation of traditional traditions, cultural education, and the inheritance of values between generations. Preservation is carried out through the use of *ulos* in traditional ceremonies, teaching symbolic meanings to the younger generation, cultural festivals, and the development of creative industries based on local culture. These efforts prove that the Toba Batak people continue to maintain *ulos* as a symbol of cultural identity that has deep historical and philosophical values. In addition, this study also shows that the hypersemiotic approach can provide new understandings regarding the transformation of local cultural symbols in the era of digital media and globalization.

This study shows that cultural symbols can experience simulation, commodification, and hyperreality due to continuous visual reproduction in modern media. Therefore, this study provides a theoretical contribution to the development of cultural studies, semiotics, and hypersemiotics, especially in understanding the changing meaning of local cultural symbols amidst the development of communication technology. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a reference in efforts to preserve Toba Batak culture so that the younger generation will not only recognize *ulos* as an aesthetic product or visual identity, but also understand the moral, social, and spiritual values contained within. This research is also expected to encourage the public to be more thoughtful in representing local cultural symbols in the digital space so that their philosophical meaning is not lost due to the influence of popular culture and cultural commercialization. In addition, further research is expected to develop studies on Batak *ulos* through the perspective of digital culture, visual anthropology, or cultural communication so that understanding of the transformation of local cultural symbols in modern society becomes broader and deeper.

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