

# ***The Manopot Hula-Hula Tradition as a Toba Batak Cultural Communication Strategy in Requesting Blessings***

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## **Abstract**

*The manopot hula-hula tradition in the Toba Batak community is a cultural communication practice that functions as a mechanism for requesting blessings and gaining social legitimacy in the dalihan na tolu kinship system. This tradition places the hula-hula as a source of honor and a customary decision maker, so that the process of requesting blessings is not only personal, but also has a social dimension that determines the harmony of relations between families. This study aims to describe the form of cultural communication strategies in the manopot hula-hula tradition and identify the verbal and nonverbal elements used in conveying the intention of requesting blessings. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a library study approach through analysis of anthropological literature, folklore, cultural communication, and Toba Batak customary studies. Data were analyzed using descriptive-interpretive techniques by grouping themes of verbal communication, nonverbal communication, ritual structure, and the social function of tradition. The results show that manopot hula-hula uses verbal communication strategies in the form of polite speech, umpasa, and indirect language that function to maintain politeness and avoid conflict. Nonverbal strategies are demonstrated through gestures of respect, body positions, and the use of traditional symbols such as ulos, which reinforce messages of sincerity. This tradition also has a multi-stage ritual structure that emphasizes communication as a collective process, while also reinforcing solidarity and social hierarchy within the dalihan na tolu tradition. This study concludes that manopot hula-hula is a form of ritual communication that plays a vital role in the continuity of Toba Batak cultural identity, despite its adaptations in the context of modernization. This study recommends field research to strengthen the empirical findings and local variations in practice.*

**Keywords:** *manopot hula-hula, cultural communication, oral tradition, Toba Batak*

## **Introduction**

Oral traditions are a vital part of intangible cultural heritage, living through spoken language, rituals, symbols, and social interactions passed down across generations. Oral traditions are not simply knowledge of the past, but rather a cultural system that serves to maintain community identity through distinctive communication patterns. UNESCO affirms that oral traditions are a key element of intangible cultural heritage because they serve as a means of transmitting values, norms, and social knowledge (UNESCO, 2003). In the context of the Toba Batak community, oral traditions exist in various forms, such as umpasa (traditional songs), tonggo-tonggo (traditional speech), traditional narratives, and even ritual communication practices accompanying marriage and kinship ceremonies. These traditions form a communication structure that not only conveys messages but also maintains social order through symbols of respect and recognition of status within the extended family (Sibarani, 2012).

One important oral tradition in the Toba Batak community is the manopot hula-hula, a procession seeking blessings from the hula-hula, representing the woman's family. In the Toba Batak social system, hula-hula is seen as a source of blessing and respect due to its high position in the dalihaan na tolu structure. This relationship makes blessing not only an emotional aspect, but also a social and moral legitimacy for the continuation of a customary decision, especially in marriage events. Koentjaraningrat stated that the kinship system in traditional Indonesian society plays a strong role in determining patterns of social interaction and communication rules, so that each customary ritual functions as a bond of solidarity and a regulator of social norms (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Thus, manopot hula-hula can be understood as a cultural communication strategy that combines oral tradition, social ethics, and customary symbols to achieve acceptance and agreement.

From a cultural communication perspective, the practice of manopot hula-hula demonstrates that communication occurs not only through verbal language but also through shared social symbols. Hall explains that cultural communication is a system of meaning exchange shaped by social context, so that messages are not only expressed through words but also implied through actions, expressions, and the cultural rules that govern them (Hall, 1976). In the Toba Batak tradition, actions such as conveying requests, respectful gestures, and symbolic gifts are part of the cultural language that emphasizes hierarchical relationships. Geertz also emphasized that culture is a web of meaning woven by humans, so traditional rituals must be understood as a system of symbols that have an interpretive function for social life (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, the tradition of manopot hula-hula is not merely a formal ritual, but rather a symbolic communication space that represents the values of politeness, respect, and social negotiation within kinship structures.

Communication practices in the Toba Batak oral tradition are powerful because they contain complex social functions. Oral traditions do not merely convey information, but also shape social relations and regulate the legitimacy of community actions. Carey explains that communication in culture is not always about transmitting messages, but also about rituals, namely collective actions that affirm shared identity through social participation (Carey, 1989). In the context of manopot hula-hula, ritual communication is evident in the collective involvement of the extended family in the process of requesting blessings. This action serves as a means of establishing understanding and strengthening social bonds between clans. This shows that Batak oral traditions live not only in speech but also in social processes that contain customary norms and values that are collectively adhered to (Situmorang, 2018).

However, the dynamics of modernization and social change have also influenced the continuity of oral traditions in the Toba Batak community. Changing lifestyles, urbanization, and the increase in inter-ethnic marriages have led to adjustments in form and function for some traditional traditions. Sibarani stated that oral traditions in Batak society face challenges because the younger generation tends to view customs as symbols of a complex past, resulting in simplified and even diminished meaning in traditional speech practices (Sibarani, 2012). This phenomenon suggests that traditions such as the manopot hula-hula dance need to be scientifically understood not merely as cultural heritage, but as a communication system that can explain how a society maintains its identity amidst change. In anthropological studies, change in tradition does not mean a loss of value, but rather a transformation of social function to adapt to the new context (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

Numerous studies have been conducted on Toba Batak traditions, particularly regarding the structure of *dalihan na tolu*, the symbolism of *ulos*, and the role of marriage rituals in maintaining social solidarity. Some studies emphasize tradition as a social system and cultural norm, while studies that specifically consider *hula-hula manopot* as a cultural communication strategy are relatively limited. This creates a research gap because the tradition is actually a complex communication event, involving rhetoric, politeness, and meaningful social symbols. Gudykunst emphasizes that intercultural communication and communication within traditional communities need to be viewed from the value structure that underlies speech behavior, because cultural meaning emerges through regular communication practices (Gudykunst, 2004). Thus, this research is relevant because it fills a gap in studies that have not yet discussed *hula-hula manopot* from the perspective of cultural communication as part of an oral tradition.

Based on this background, this research focuses on how the *manopot hula-hula* tradition functions as a Toba Batak cultural communication strategy for seeking blessings. The study also focuses on the communication elements that emerge in this practice, both verbal and nonverbal, as well as the social functions they generate within kinship relationships. This approach is important because oral traditions do not essentially stand alone but rather serve as social mechanisms for building acceptance and legitimacy. Turner explains that rituals are symbolic arenas that unite communities through meaningful actions, thus rituals contain not only religious aspects but also function as a means of social communication (Turner, 1967). Therefore, the *manopot hula-hula* tradition can be analyzed as a ritual communication practice that affirms the Toba Batak social structure.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method based on literature review because the primary objective of the study is to describe cultural phenomena through the interpretation of scientific literature. Literature review allows researchers to systematically examine concepts, theories, and previous research findings to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of oral traditions. Creswell emphasized that a qualitative approach is highly relevant for interpreting sociocultural meanings because it emphasizes understanding the context, symbols, and value constructions that exist within society (Creswell, 2014). In this study, data were sourced from Batak anthropology books, cultural journal articles, and scientific documents discussing the kinship system and rituals of the Toba Batak. The data were analyzed using descriptive-interpretive techniques to explain the relationship between cultural communication and oral traditions in the context of requests for blessings.

Theoretically, this research utilizes ritual communication theory, which views communication as a social process that maintains togetherness, not simply the exchange of messages. Carey asserts that ritual communication emphasizes collective participation that reinforces shared values, thus understanding communication as a process of cultural maintenance (Carey, 1989). Furthermore, symbolic theory in cultural anthropology is used to explain how customary symbols such as supplications, gestures of respect, and customary gifts acquire meaning within the Toba Batak community. Geertz emphasized that cultural symbols are a primary medium for understanding social action, as symbols not only represent reality but also shape how society views the world (Geertz, 1973). Based on this foundation, the *manopot hula-hula* tradition is understood as a symbolic practice that affirms identity and social structure.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to position the *manopot hula-hula* tradition not merely as a customary ritual but as a systematic cultural communication strategy for building persuasion and social legitimacy. To date, discussions of Batak

traditions have tended to focus on the function of customs as social rules, while aspects of cultural communication involving speech strategies and symbols of respect have not been analyzed in depth. By combining the perspectives of oral tradition and cultural communication, this study offers a new understanding that the process of seeking blessings in Toba Batak society is a communication act that combines language, symbols, and the structure of social relations. This perspective is relevant because cultural communication not only describes the form of tradition but also explains how society maintains its value system through ritual practices that are continuously passed down (Sibarani, 2012).

Practically, this research is expected to provide benefits for the preservation of Toba Batak culture by strengthening the younger generation's understanding of the meaning of oral traditions in the context of social communication. Furthermore, this study can also serve as a reference for local cultural research aimed at strengthening the identity and sustainability of intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO emphasizes that cultural preservation is not only done through documentation, but must be accompanied by an understanding of the values and socio-cultural functions of the culture in the lives of the community (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, this study seeks to demonstrate that manopot hula-hula is a tradition that contains communication strategies relevant to the formation of social ethics, solidarity, and awareness of Toba Batak cultural identity amidst the dynamics of modern society.

## Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review design to describe the manopot hula-hula tradition as a cultural communication strategy for the Toba Batak people to seek blessings. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding meanings, symbols, and cultural contexts that cannot be explained through numbers or statistical measurements. Creswell emphasizes that qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena based on the perspectives of participants or the cultural meanings inherent in the community (Creswell, 2014). A descriptive design was used because this study does not test hypotheses but rather systematically describes the forms of verbal and nonverbal communication in the manopot hula-hula tradition based on interpretations of relevant scientific sources.

This research is library research, focusing on the analysis of scientific documents related to the Toba Batak oral tradition, the dalihan na tolu kinship system, and cultural communication theory. The literature review was chosen because the manopot hula-hula tradition has been widely described in anthropological, ethnographic, and folklore literature, enabling the researcher to build a strong conceptual synthesis through the review of written sources. Zed explains that library research is a research method that utilizes documents as the primary data source through searching, critical reading, and systematic analysis of relevant literature (Zed, 2014). Therefore, this study utilizes scientific texts as the primary data for interpreting cultural communication strategies in the practice of manopot hula-hula.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data consist of scientific books and academic works that directly discuss Toba Batak customs, oral traditions, and communication structures within the Batak kinship system, particularly the concept of dalihan na tolu and marriage ritual practices. Secondary data consist of national and international journal articles, proceedings, research reports, and official documents regarding intangible cultural heritage relevant to oral traditions. Moleong states that data sources in qualitative research can come from written

documents containing authentic and verifiable information to build an in-depth understanding of sociocultural phenomena (Moleong, 2018). Therefore, all data sources were selected based on their academic credibility, topic relevance, and direct connection to the manopot hula-hula tradition.

The subjects in this study were not individuals or field respondents, but rather documents and academic texts containing information about the manopot hula-hula tradition. In library research, the units of analysis are generally texts, concepts, and narratives, which are analyzed to identify patterns of meaning and information structure. Bowen explains that documents can serve as the primary data source in qualitative research because they provide contextual, historical, and interpretive information that can be analyzed in depth (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, the subjects of this research include books on Batak anthropology, studies of oral traditions, cultural communication research, and literature explaining Toba Batak traditional symbols and narratives in the process of requesting blessings.

The sampling technique used purposive sampling of documents, which involves selecting sources based on specific considerations relevant to the research needs. The criteria for selected documents included: (1) containing discussions of Toba Batak customs and the practice of seeking blessings in marriage, (2) discussing the relationship between hula-hula and the dalihan na tolu system, (3) containing descriptions of cultural communication or oral traditions, and (4) published by reputable academic institutions or journals. Sugiyono emphasized that purposive sampling in qualitative research aims to obtain the most relevant and information-rich data sources according to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2019). This technique allows data collection to be directed toward literature that truly supports the analysis of cultural communication strategies in the manopot hula-hula tradition.

The research instrument in this study was the researcher herself, with the assistance of supporting instruments in the form of data recording guidelines and data classification tables. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument, responsible for selecting, interpreting, organizing, and constructing meaning from the data obtained. Moleong stated that the researcher is the primary tool in qualitative research because the data analysis process relies heavily on interpretive skills, theoretical sensitivity, and a keen understanding of the sociocultural context (Moleong, 2018). To enhance the accuracy of the analysis, this study used a data matrix format that records information such as source title, year, main concept, relevant quotations, and its relevance to the theme of cultural communication in the manopot hula-hula tradition.

Data collection techniques were conducted through systematic documentation studies, including searching sources through digital libraries, national journal databases, university repositories, and Batak anthropology books. The documentation process involved critical reading, highlighting relevant sections, quoting important information, and compiling a conceptual summary based on the research focus. Bowen emphasized that documentation in qualitative research involves more than simply collecting documents, but rather critically examining them to discover meanings, patterns, and themes related to the research questions (Bowen, 2009). The data collected in this study included descriptions of the practice of manopot hula-hula, the speech structure of requests for blessings, traditional symbols such as ulos and customary gifts, and the social position of hula-hula within Toba Batak kinship relations.

The data analysis technique used a descriptive-interpretive analysis model with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage involved sorting relevant information and grouping data into categories such as

verbal strategies, nonverbal strategies, ritual symbols, and the social function of the manopot hula-hula tradition. Miles and Huberman explain that qualitative data analysis is conducted through a data reduction process that sharpens the research focus, then presents the data in narrative or matrix form, and finally draws conclusions based on the patterns found (Miles & Huberman, 1994). With this technique, literature data can be systematically processed to produce a structured understanding of Toba Batak cultural communication.

Furthermore, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes emerging from the literature. These themes included the concept of blessing as social legitimacy, ritual communication in supplications, and rhetorical strategies used to honor hula-hula. Braun and Clarke stated that thematic analysis allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report emerging thematic patterns in the data, thereby providing a comprehensive description of sociocultural phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this study organized the data based on themes aligned with the theories of ritual communication and cultural communication explained in the introduction.

Data validity in this study was ensured through source triangulation, which involves comparing various literature from different authors to ensure consistency of information. Triangulation was conducted by testing the correspondence between Batak anthropology books, cultural communication journal articles, and documents related to intangible cultural heritage. Denzin explained that source triangulation in qualitative research aims to increase the validity of findings by examining phenomena from multiple perspectives, resulting in stronger interpretations and a lack of bias based on a single source (Denzin, 1978). Therefore, this study places more than one source as a comparison so that the interpretation of the manopot hula-hula tradition is not only based on one academic narrative.

The data analyzed in this study is qualitative in nature, consisting of text excerpts, concepts, and descriptions of rituals found in the literature. These data include forms of speech requests for blessings, customary communication structures, and symbols of respect that accompany the manopot hula-hula procession. Hall emphasized that cultural communication operates through symbols shaped by social context, therefore, analysis of traditions must consider the implicit meanings contained in community communication practices (Hall, 1976). Based on this foundation, the data in this study are understood as a representation of cultural communication, demonstrating how the Toba Batak people manage kinship relations through the ritual of requesting blessings.

Through a descriptive qualitative method based on literature review, this research is expected to produce a comprehensive scientific picture of the manopot hula-hula tradition as a cultural communication strategy. Creswell emphasized that strong qualitative research must be able to present interpretations connected to theory and social context, so that findings are not merely descriptions but also explanations of broader cultural meanings (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this research method is designed to integrate literature data, thematic analysis, and interpretation of cultural communication theory to produce an in-depth understanding of the function of blessing in the Toba Batak oral tradition.

## **Results**

The results of this study indicate that the manopot hula-hula tradition is a cultural communication practice with a clear structure of speech, symbols, and social strategies within the Toba Batak community. This tradition is carried out as a process of seeking blessings and social legitimacy from the hula-hula, who are viewed as sources of blessings

in the *dalihan na tolu* system. From a Toba Batak cultural perspective, blessings are not merely personal, but also constitute social legitimacy that determines the smooth functioning of kinship relations in traditional ceremonies. This finding aligns with Sibarani's view, who asserts that Batak custom is a social communication system that regulates human relationships through speech structures and cultural symbols (Sibarani, 2012). Based on the literature analysis, *manopot hula-hula* can be understood as a communication strategy that combines verbal, nonverbal, and social structural aspects within a single ritual process.

The results of this study indicate that verbal communication in the *manopot hula-hula* tradition is dominated by the use of polite language, customary expressions, and rhetoric of respect directed toward the *hula-hula*. In several sources reviewed, requests are generally delivered through male family representatives, using language rich in metaphors, proverbs, and indirect speech. This speech pattern aims to maintain politeness and avoid the impression of being pushy in asking for blessings. Hall explains that cultural communication is strongly influenced by context, so that the meaning of the message is often not directly expressed, but is implied through language style and rules of politeness (Hall, 1976). Thus, the use of indirect speech in *manopot hula-hula* is a high-context communication strategy that is unique to Toba Batak culture.

In addition to verbal communication, research findings also indicate that nonverbal communication plays a dominant role in constructing messages of respect. Actions such as lowering one's sitting position, bowing, and the presentation of traditional objects like *ulos* (traditional clothing) or certain foods are symbolic messages interpreted as expressions of sincerity and respect. In several anthropological studies, the presentation of *ulos* (traditional clothing) in the context of requesting blessings signifies kinship ties and recognition of the authority of the *hula-hula*. Geertz stated that symbols in cultural rituals are the primary means of constructing collective, shared meaning, so nonverbal actions in rituals are often more powerful than verbal utterances (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, nonverbal communication in the *hula-hula manopot* serves to affirm the legitimacy of the request.

The study also shows that the *hula-hula manopot* tradition has a systematic ritual communication structure. Based on the sources analyzed, the procession generally consists of an opening stage, a presentation of the intention, a symbolic negotiation stage, and a blessing stage. This structure indicates that the *hula-hula manopot* is not a spontaneous activity, but rather an organized communication within a traditional system. Carey asserted that ritual communication serves to maintain social cohesion and reinforce collective values through participation in symbolic actions (Carey, 1989). This finding confirms that the *manopot hula-hula* tradition is a form of ritual communication that maintains the cultural identity of the Toba Batak.

Further findings indicate that the communication strategies used in *manopot hula-hula* are persuasive and diplomatic. Requests for blessings are made by establishing an emotional atmosphere that honors the *hula-hula* as the decision-maker. This persuasive strategy is implemented through respectful language, acknowledging the role of the *hula-hula*, and conveying good intentions oriented toward family harmony. Gudykunst states that cultural communication in traditional communities often functions as a conflict avoidance mechanism, so language and behavioral strategies are designed to maintain balanced social relations (Gudykunst, 2004). Thus, *manopot hula-hula* can be understood as a communication strategy for building social consensus.

Based on document analysis, the primary social function of the *manopot hula-hula* tradition is to strengthen kinship solidarity and affirm social hierarchy within the *dalihan*

na tolu (religious order). This tradition positions the hula-hula as a source of honor, while the person requesting blessing demonstrates a respectful position as a form of cultural obedience. In the Toba Batak system, this structure is considered essential for maintaining balanced relations between clans. Koentjaraningrat explains that the traditional kinship system in Indonesia forms a social structure that regulates patterns of respect and obligation, making customary rituals an effective tool of social control (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). This finding makes it clear that the hula-hula manopot has a broader social function than simply asking for blessings.

The research also shows a shift in the form of the manopot hula-hula tradition in the context of modernization. Some literature suggests that in urban areas, this procession tends to be simplified by reducing the length of traditional speeches and shifting some symbolic functions to brief formalities. However, despite this simplification, the values of respect and the need for blessings remain at the heart of the tradition. Hobsbawm and Ranger stated that traditions in modern society often undergo reconstruction but retain their symbolic function as social legitimacy (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). These findings demonstrate that manopot hula-hula adapts to social change without losing its core values.

To clarify the findings, the following table summarizes the research results related to communication strategies in the manopot hula-hula tradition, based on the cultural communication categories analyzed.

Table 1. The manopot hula-hula tradition, based on the cultural communication categories

| Communication Aspects | Forms in the <i>Manopot Hula-hula</i> Tradition  | Cultural Functions                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Verbal                | <i>Umpasa</i> , polite speech, indirect requests | Politeness, diplomacy, legitimacy |
| Nonverbal             | Bowing, sitting position, giving of <i>ulos</i>  | Symbol of respect and sincerity   |
| Ritual                | Opening stage to blessing                        | Strengthening social solidarity   |
| Persuasive            | Acknowledgement of the role of <i>hula-hula</i>  | Consensus and harmony             |
| Social                | Effirmation of <i>daliha na tolu</i>             | Hierarchy and kinship stability   |

The table shows that the manopot hula-hula tradition contains a complex and layered communication strategy, encompassing the dimensions of speech, symbols, and social structure. Hall emphasized that cultural communication systems are constructed through collectively understood contexts and symbols, so that traditional rituals cannot be separated from their accompanying social meanings (Hall, 1976). Therefore, this tradition can be understood as a cultural communication practice that plays a crucial role in maintaining Toba Batak identity.

Overall, the research findings confirm that manopot hula-hula is a cultural communication strategy that functions to seek blessings, establish social legitimacy, and strengthen kinship structures. This tradition demonstrates that Toba Batak cultural communication is not merely about conveying messages, but also a symbolic process that builds social solidarity and maintains harmony within the customary system. Carey emphasized that ritual communication is the primary means for communities to maintain togetherness through symbols and social participation (Carey, 1989). Thus, manopot

hula-hula can be understood as a form of ritual communication that has a strong social and cultural function in Toba Batak society.

## Discussion

This research discussion confirms that the manopot hula-hula tradition is a cultural communication practice that demonstrates how the Toba Batak people construct social legitimacy through symbolic and ritual mechanisms. This tradition contains a unique communication pattern, as blessings are not understood as merely personal actions, but rather as a form of social recognition that determines the acceptance of a decision within the kinship structure. The research findings reinforce Sibarani's view that Batak oral tradition functions as a social system that regulates relationships between individuals through language, symbols, and customary norms (Sibarani, 2012). Therefore, manopot hula-hula can be understood as a communication medium that bridges relations of power and honor within the *daliha na tolu* system.

The findings regarding the dominance of subtle and indirect speech indicate that communication strategies in manopot hula-hula are heavily influenced by high-context culture. Hall explains that high-context culture relies on implications, symbols, and social cues rather than direct statements, making politeness a crucial strategy for conflict avoidance (Hall, 1976). In the Toba Batak context, the use of *umpasa*, proverbs, and metaphors in requests for blessings serves as a way to convey meaning without offending the authority of the hula-hula. This demonstrates that communication in this tradition is not simply about conveying messages, but also about building harmonious social relationships through customary language rules.

Research demonstrating the importance of nonverbal communication reinforces symbolic theory in cultural anthropology. Geertz stated that cultural symbols represent collectively understood values, so traditional rituals must be read as social texts containing profound meaning (Geertz, 1973). In the manopot hula-hula ritual, the bowing gesture, sitting position, and the giving of the *ulos* (cloth) are not merely physical actions, but symbolic messages that signify humility, respect, and recognition of the hula-hula's status. These findings align with Turner's research, which states that rituals build social cohesion through symbols that represent societal structures (Turner, 1967). Thus, nonverbal symbols in this tradition can be understood as a communication strategy more powerful than words.

The research identifying the ritual structure in the manopot hula-hula ritual supports the concept of ritual communication in cultural communication studies. Carey asserted that ritual communication aims to maintain social order and strengthen group identity through collective participation, not simply to convey information (Carey, 1989). In the Toba Batak tradition, the gradual procession from the opening ceremony to the blessing signifies a structured customary communication, involving specific roles, such as the family spokesperson. This aligns with previous research on Batak marriage rituals, which places customary speech as a primary tool for establishing social legitimacy and strengthening ties between clans (Situmorang, 2018). Therefore, the manopot hula-hula tradition can be understood as ritual communication that unites the extended family within a shared cultural framework.

Findings about the social function of this tradition in strengthening hierarchy and kinship solidarity clarify that cultural communication cannot be separated from social structure. Koentjaraningrat asserts that traditional kinship systems establish patterns of obligation and respect that are passed down through rituals, thus enabling customary practices to function as social control (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). In the *daliha na tolu*

system, the hula-hula's position as the respected party creates a hierarchical communication structure while simultaneously maintaining social balance. This suggests that the manopot hula-hula tradition functions as a means of affirming social identity and as a communication strategy to maintain stable relations between clans. Gudykunst also emphasizes that cultural communication is often used to avoid conflict and build social consensus in communities with strong value systems (Gudykunst, 2004). Therefore, this tradition can be understood as a social diplomacy strategy in Toba Batak culture.

Findings regarding the simplification of traditions in the modern era indicate that oral traditions are dynamic and adaptive. Hobsbawm and Ranger explain that traditions in modern society often undergo reconstruction, but their symbolic core is maintained to maintain social legitimacy (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). In the context of manopot hula-hula, the simplification of traditional speech and the reduction of ritual stages does not mean a loss of meaning, but rather a form of adaptation so that the tradition remains relevant to modern life. This finding is also in line with UNESCO's view that preserving intangible cultural heritage does not always mean maintaining its original form intact, but rather maintaining its social values and functions so that it remains alive amidst changing times (UNESCO, 2003). Thus, changes in the form of tradition can be understood as a strategy for cultural sustainability.

This research can also be compared with previous studies on Batak oral traditions, which emphasized the function of custom as the transmission of moral and social values. Sibarani emphasized that Batak oral traditions are always linked to character education and social ethics, so that customary speech practices function to shape the collective consciousness of the community (Sibarani, 2012). The results of this study demonstrate that manopot hula-hula contains values of politeness, respect, and recognition of hierarchy, all of which constitute forms of social education in Toba Batak culture. This finding also enriches previous studies by demonstrating that this tradition is not merely a transmission of values but also a persuasive communication strategy used to build social acceptance. Thus, this study fills a gap in previous research that focused primarily on descriptions of rituals without examining the communication mechanisms involved.

A limitation of this research lies in the use of secondary data based on literature, so the resulting interpretation depends on the completeness of the available literature. Bowen stated that documentary research has weaknesses such as limited access to the actual context and recent social changes that may not be recorded in documents (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, further research is recommended using field studies through direct observation and interviews with traditional leaders to obtain more up-to-date empirical data on the practice of manopot hula-hula in various Toba Batak regions. Nevertheless, a desk study approach remains relevant because it provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding the meaning of cultural communication in oral traditions.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the manopot hula-hula tradition is a cultural communication practice that combines verbal strategies, nonverbal symbols, ritual structures, and social functions within the Toba Batak kinship system. This tradition demonstrates that cultural communication cannot be understood simply as the exchange of messages, but rather as a symbolic mechanism that maintains the identity and social stability of a community. Carey asserts that ritual communication is the community's primary means of maintaining togetherness through symbols and social participation (Carey, 1989). Thus, manopot hula-hula is not merely a custom, but a cultural communication strategy that affirms social legitimacy in the lives of the Toba Batak people.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study confirms that the manopot hula-hula tradition in the Batak Toba community is a form of cultural communication that functions as a symbolic strategy for seeking blessings and gaining social legitimacy. This tradition is not only understood as a traditional ritual within a wedding ceremony, but as a structured ritual communication process through verbal and nonverbal elements. The verbal element is seen through the use of polite language, traditional expressions, and indirect speech strategies that demonstrate politeness and respect for the hula-hula as the holder of customary authority in the dalihan na tolu system. Meanwhile, the nonverbal element is manifested through gestures of respect, body positions, and the use of traditional symbols such as ulos, which emphasize sincerity and recognition of social hierarchy. This tradition plays an important role in maintaining social harmony, strengthening kinship solidarity, and emphasizing moral values such as respect, speech etiquette, and collective awareness in genealogical relationships. Thus, manopot hula-hula is not only a medium for inheriting oral traditions, but also a means of social communication that connects cultural values with the life practices of the Batak Toba community, while also serving as a social control mechanism that maintains the stability of relations between clans amidst the dynamics of modern social life.

This research also shows that the hula-hula ritual has a significant contribution to the sustainability of Toba Batak culture because it functions as an adaptive intangible cultural heritage. Although in the context of modernization there has been a simplification of the ritual form, the core of the tradition remains through the maintenance of the main values of respect and asking for blessings as social legitimacy. The sustainability of this tradition is determined by the ability of the Toba Batak people to maintain the symbolic and communicative function of the ritual, while adapting its practices to changing times without losing their meaning. Therefore, preservation efforts should not only focus on maintaining the processional form intact, but also on strengthening the younger generation's understanding of the meaning of cultural communication contained within the tradition. Further research is recommended to expand the study through field studies based on observations and interviews with traditional leaders to obtain more up-to-date empirical data on variations in the practice of hula-hula in urban and rural areas. In addition, research on cultural sustainability can be directed at examining the transformation of Toba Batak oral traditions in the digital space, including how traditional symbols and narratives are reproduced in social media as a form of cultural adaptation. Thus, the tradition of manopot hula-hula can continue to live as a cultural communication strategy that not only maintains the identity of the Toba Batak people, but also strengthens the sustainability of socio-cultural values in contemporary community life.

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