

Symbols in the ritual of Rampanan Kapa' in Tana Toraja Regency: A study of semiotics

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Abstract: The study researches the symbols in the Rampanan Kapa' ritual in Tana Toraja using the Roland Barthes semiotics approach. This ritual is part of Rambu Tuka', a thanksgiving ceremony that reflects the cultural values and social stratification of the Toraja people. By analyzing verbal and nonverbal symbols, this study uncovers the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings in these rituals. This research is qualitative descriptive research that aims to study verbal and nonverbal symbols in the Rampanan Kapa' ceremony through a semiotic approach. The approach is used to understand ceremonies as a system of signs that contain cultural and social meaning. The data in this study were obtained from the Rampanan Kapa' ritual event using the total sampling technique due to the homogeneous nature of the data. Data collection is carried out through several methods, namely the listening method, recording technique, and documentation. The results of the study show that Rampanan Kapa', as part of the wedding tradition of the Toraja people, contains a rich and layered meaning. Denotatively, the symbols in this ceremony, such as betel nuts and beads, have a literal meaning as objects used in rituals. The betel serves as a sign of respect and agreement, while the beads symbolize the jewelry worn by the bride-to-be. At the connotation level, these symbols not only serve as physical objects but also represent social and cultural values, such as the beauty, glory, and dignity of a woman in Toraja society. Furthermore, the myths in Rampanan Kapa' explain the origins and spiritual meaning of the use of these symbols, reflecting the community's belief in the protection of ancestors as well as the importance of preserving traditions. By understanding these three layers of meaning, it can be concluded that Rampanan Kapa' is not only a wedding ritual but also a form of preservation of the identity and cultural heritage of the Toraja people.

Keywords: *Rampanan Kapa', Semiotics, Symbol, Toraja Regency.*

1. Introduction

Language is one of the tools of communication and human interaction in life. Language is the bond between individuals and their social groups. Language is a characteristic of a social group that distinguishes it from other groups. This makes language and culture an inseparable part [1-3]. Culture and language grow along with the development of the society. With language, the people of a group express themselves. That is, language is used to express things that are felt or thought. Language is a tool to openly state everything that is implied in a person's mind, at least to show or show its existence [4-6].

One form of language use in society is also seen in traditional ritual ceremonies. According to Koentjaraningrat [7] a ritual ceremony is an activation system or a series of actions arranged by customs or laws that apply in society that are related to the kind of fixed events that usually occur in the community concerned. Ritual ceremonies have rules and procedures that have been determined by the community or group that creates the ritual, so that each ritual has differences, both in terms of implementation and equipment [8-10].

In the ritual ceremony, it seems that culture is firmly attached to each series. James Fox (in Ola [11]) reveals that language is used in carrying out traditional ritual ceremonies. However, the language used in traditional rituals is different from the language used in daily communication. Ritual language emphasizes the characteristics of the use of figurative language [12]. The characteristics of the ritual language in question are, (1) as an everyday language that is enhanced in form, function, and meaning; (2) have a shape and arrangement that tends to be fixed; (3) poetic and metaphorical; (4) often presents polysemities, homonyms, and synonyms; (5) its form and meaning are systematically related.

The implementation of traditional rituals can be attended by the community. During the implementation process, language is used that should be everyday language whose meaning is easy for the community to understand. But in reality, the ritual speech used in the traditional procession uses language that is difficult to interpret. The difficulty in interpreting the meaning is caused by the use of language that even though it is derived from everyday language, it is assembled and spoken in such a way that the meaning becomes completely different from everyday language. Thus, it is necessary to study or conduct in-depth research that can explain the meaning of language and also the philosophy of traditional ritual ceremonies carried out in a community group. In this case, the traditional ritual of Rampanan

1.1. Kapa' Is Carried Out by the Toraja People

Toraja (Tana Toraja and North Toraja) is one of the regions in the archipelago that is famous for its traditional rituals, namely Tuka' sign and Solo Sign' [13]. Literally Tuka' sign derived from the word Signs which means smoke and tuka' which means uphill or uphill. Traditional rituals old signs' It is usually done when the sun has not reached its peak or before noon. Tuka' sign own meaning kameloanor joy or happiness such as marriage or thanksgiving. As for Solo Sign' derived from the word Signs which means smoke and solo' which means down or down. This is because this traditional ceremony is carried out when the sun has begun to move west.

Rambu solo' itself means Kadakean or ugliness, namely a funeral ceremony. The traditional ritual of 'solo rambu' can be said to be the most famous ritual or ceremony from Toraja. Rambu solo', which is actually a mourning ceremony, is able to present thousands of people every day of its implementation. Therefore, the Rambu Solo' ritual as a form of last respect for the deceased family member, is carried out as luxuriously as possible, often even more luxurious than the Rambu Tuka' ritual which is a ritual of salvation or thanksgiving.

Rambu tuka' or commonly called aluk rampe matallo is a ceremony of salvation or thanksgiving. The tuka' sign ceremony includes a wedding party (rampanan kapa'), the ordination ceremony of the Tongkonan house (mangrara banua). However, in another concept, rampanan kapa' is said to be aluk mangngola tangnga, meaning that in the ritual rampanan kapa' the rite can be carried out both during the day and at night. The implementation of the rampanan kapa' ritual consists of three sequential processes, starting from rampo kampung, basse situka', ma' besen or ma'pasule barasan.

The Toraja community in the implementation of each ritual always refers to the position in society based on the social stratification they have. According to Sumbung [14] the structure of Toraja society consists of 1) Tana' Bulaan (aristocracy), 2) Tana' Bassi (ordinary aristocracy), 3) Tana' Karurung (ordinary people), and 4) Tana' Kua-Kua (Servant Class). In this regard, the rituals that will be studied are based on the four groups. The higher the group, the livelier the ritual will be.

Based on the results of literature studies and initial observations, it is known that in the implementation of the ritual of Rampanan kapa' there are symbols both verbal and nonverbal. To study the symbols contained in the implementation of the ritual, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used as a ground theory. Of course, Barthes' semiotics have a limited range to answer cultural phenomena in the ritual of Rampanan kapa'. For this reason, other fields of science are used as auxiliary science.

Similar to other traditional rituals, the Rampanan kapa' has a language and also certain symbols in its implementation. Language and other symbols have or represent a meaning. This message is

implemented through the ritual of Rampanan kapa'. This is the reason why the researcher studied "Symbols in the Ritual of Rampanan Kapa' in Tana Toraja Regency: A Semiotic Study."

The theory used in examining the object of research related to the ritual of rampanan kapa' in the Toraja Society, the researcher uses the Semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. Semiotics is the science or study that studies signs and symbols and how they are used to convey meaning. In semiotics, each sign consists of two main elements, namely signifiers and signified. A marker is the physical form of a sign, such as a word, image, or gesture, while a sign is a concept or meaning that the marker represents. Semiotics also studies how the signs are understood in specific social and cultural contexts. In other words, semiotics focuses on the relationship between signs and the way humans give meaning to those signs in everyday communication.

2. Literature Review

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is one of the most influential frameworks in the study of signs, language, and culture. Building upon the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes expanded the understanding of semiotics by emphasizing not just the structure of signs but also how they interact with culture and ideology to produce meaning. According to Barthes [15] semiotics is not just about interpreting signs in isolation, but understanding how they operate within a broader cultural context. By delving into the ways in which meaning is generated, Barthes provided an analytical tool for deconstructing how texts and images carry cultural significance, often beyond their immediate or literal representations. In Barthes' view, the world is full of signs that convey layered meanings, with each layer constructed by cultural and societal influences.

At the core of Barthes' semiotic theory is the distinction between denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal or direct meaning of a sign—the straightforward, dictionary definition that is generally accepted. This is the first level of meaning that individuals encounter when they encounter a sign. For example, a picture of a dog simply denotes the animal itself. Denotation is often the starting point in understanding a sign, but Barthes argued that this alone is insufficient for grasping the full meaning of a cultural sign.

Beyond the denotative meaning lies connotation, which involves the second layer of meaning. Connotation refers to the associations, cultural meanings, and emotional responses that a sign elicits. These meanings are shaped by historical, social, and ideological factors, and can vary across different groups or societies. A sign's connotative meaning is not fixed but is influenced by the cultural context and the personal experiences of the individuals interpreting the sign. For instance, the image of a dog may not only represent the animal itself (denotation), but it could also evoke emotions like loyalty or companionship, depending on the viewer's cultural background and personal feelings towards dogs.

Barthes' theory introduces the concept of "myth," which takes connotation a step further. Myth, in Barthes' terms, is the process through which connotative meanings are transformed into culturally accepted truths or ideologies. Myth involves the construction of meaning that seems natural or unquestionable, although it is, in fact, a product of cultural and social forces. Myths shape the way individuals understand and interpret the world, often reinforcing dominant ideologies. For example, advertisements often use images or messages that go beyond selling a product's denotative qualities. A car advertisement might not just depict a vehicle but also associate the car with values such as freedom, success, or masculinity. The car thus becomes a symbol of power, status, and autonomy, and this "myth" about the car influences how people view not only the product but also the social meanings attached to owning such an item.

In Barthes' view, myths operate as powerful tools for cultural influence and ideological reinforcement. They create narratives that present certain ideas as natural or self-evident, often without the viewer realizing the ideological forces at play. By analyzing myths, Barthes believed one could uncover how ideology is embedded in everyday life and the media. For instance, the myth of the "ideal family" in media representations, often portrayed as a white, nuclear family

living in a suburban home, reinforces societal norms about family structures, class, and race. This myth is not just a portrayal of an ideal family but a cultural construct that supports the dominant values and social norms of a particular society.

Barthes' semiotic theory allows for a deeper understanding of how signs function not just in terms of their immediate meaning but also in how they perpetuate cultural values and ideologies. Through the lens of denotation, connotation, and myth, one can dissect the hidden messages embedded in media, advertisements, and everyday communication. This approach invites individuals to critically engage with the signs that surround them, questioning the taken-for-granted meanings and exploring how they are shaped by power dynamics and cultural narratives. In this way, Barthes' theory continues to be a vital tool for understanding the ways in which culture constructs and communicates meaning in contemporary society.

3. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative descriptive research. This qualitative descriptive research is used to research the natural condition of objects. This research uses a semiotic approach, namely an approach that views the object of research as a sign system. This study uses a semiotic approach to look at symbols, verbal and nonverbal and their meanings in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony.

The source of data in this study is from the ritual event of *Rampanan kapa'*. Because the data is homogeneous, sampling is carried out on a total sampling basis. The data in this study were collected by: 1) Listening Method, The Simak method is a method used for data acquisition by listening to the use of language [16]. In a sense, researchers try to obtain data by tapping the language users of a person or several people who are informants. According to Sudaryanto (1993, p. 133), the listening technique is the provision of data that is carried out by listening to data on language use. In accordance with this view [17].

2) Record, the recording technique is a way used by researchers to record the research process, either in the form of video or audio recordings. According to Junaini [18] it is stated that the record recording technique is a data collection technique by recording informants who are native speakers of oral literature. 3) Take notes, according to Sudaryanto (in Faruk [19]), the note-taking technique is a set of ways or techniques to conclude the facts that are in the research problem. The note-taking technique is an advanced technique that is carried out when applying the *simak* method with advanced techniques [19]. Documentation, the documentation in this study is carried out by taking pictures in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ritual to see the details of the images and motifs in the background of *Rampanan Kapa'* which will then be analyzed more carefully.

4. Results of the Study

In the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory which consists of denotations, connotations, and myths in *Rampanan Kapa'*, the method used is semiotic analysis, where every symbol and meaning contained in a Toraja traditional wedding ceremony is researched and interpreted based on the existing layers of meaning. Barthes' semiotic theory helps us understand how the symbols in the *Kapa' Rampanan* convey messages at various levels, both literal and cultural.

The first stage of this method is denotation, which is the literal or direct meaning of the symbols used in the *Kapa' Rampanan*. For example, in the *pangngan* symbol, the denotation of this symbol is a physical object in the form of betel leaves and areca nuts that are handed over in a wedding ceremony. At this stage, the symbol is understood in its physical form without involving a deeper meaning. The next step is the analysis of the connotation, which is the cultural or emotional meaning that accompanies the symbol. For example, *pangngan* is not only understood as a physical object, but also as a symbol of unity and agreement between two families. At this stage of connotation, the symbol is understood through the cultural values and beliefs of the Toraja people. Connotations provide a richer additional meaning, which usually contains customary values and traditions. The final stage is the

analysis of myths, which are ideological meanings or deeper meanings related to broader social and cultural values. Barthes used the concept of myth to describe how cultural and historical meanings turn into common truths in a society. In the context of *Rampanan Kapa'*, symbols such as *tongkonan* can be interpreted as a myth that represents family, ancestors, and the continuity of generations. This mythology creates the perception that marriage is not just the union of two individuals, but the union of two extended families in the Toraja community and social order rooted in customs and ancestors. The symbol of beads and *rara' manga'* which symbolizes beauty and social status, is a myth that reflects the identity of Toraja women as noble and respected figures in society.

The following is an analysis of the denotations, connotations, and myths in *Rampanan Kapa'*.

4.1. *Pangngan 'Betel'*

In Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, *pangngan* or betel in the *kapa' rampanan* in Toraja reveals three layers of deep meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each of these layers depicts the various symbolic and cultural dimensions inherent in the use of betel in traditional Toraja wedding ceremonies. Denotatively, betel is a leaf used in wedding rituals, serving as an important physical element in the ceremony. On a connotative level, betel symbolizes various values such as harmony, approval, respect, and health, reflecting the intentions and commitments of the two families involved. In the realm of mythology, betel nut depicts purity, blessings, unity, and reverence for ancestors, suggesting a connection between marriage rituals and broader spiritual and cultural aspects. Thus, betel in the context of *rampanan kapa'* serves as an important symbol that unites physical, social, and spiritual aspects in Toraja traditional wedding ceremonies, reflecting the deep values and expectations in the culture.

4.1.1. *Denotation*

Denotation in the context of Roland Barthes' semiotics refers to the literal and direct meaning of an object or action. In the case of *pangngan* or betel in the *rampanan kapa'* ceremony (traditional wedding of Toraja), the denotation refers to the physical shape of the betel itself, namely as the leaf of the betel plant. Literally, betel is a plant whose leaves have practical and symbolic uses in cultures in Southeast Asia, including in Toraja.

At this level, betel leaves are used concretely in wedding ceremonies, where betel leaves are often chewed by both sides of the family, or given as an offering in a series of traditional rituals. The physical use of betel nut in *kapa'* wreaths serves as a ritual element that connects the various stages of the ceremony, from introduction to family unification. This denotation not only emphasizes the role of the betel as part of a formal ritual, but also as a visual symbol that is immediately recognized by the participants of the ceremony, without the need to involve deeper meaning or interpretation.

The use of betel in *kapa' rampanan* is rooted in traditional traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. Physically, betel is provided in the form of its green, fresh leaves, and is often supplemented with lime and areca nut as part of a traditional package for chewing. This habit of chewing betel nut involves a simple physical act, but it has broader social and cultural implications, which are only recently revealed in layers of connotations and myths. However, at the level of denotation, betel is only understood as a tangible object used in wedding rituals as part of a long-standing traditional tradition in Toraja society.

4.1.2. *Connotation*

Connotation in Roland Barthes' semiotics involves a deeper additional meaning of a sign, which goes beyond its literal or denotative meaning. In the context of betel *pangngan* in *rampanan kapa'* (traditional Toraja wedding ceremony), the connotation involves social, cultural, and spiritual aspects related to its use. Betel is not only seen as a physical element, but it also has a rich symbolic layer that reflects various cultural values.

In the rape of *kapa'*, betel symbolizes harmony and agreement between two families who will be

united through marriage. Chewing betel nuts together by both parties is a symbol of the harmony created after discussion, negotiation, and approval in the proposal process. This confirms that the two families have reached a strong agreement to continue the relationship through the marriage of their children. The act of chewing betel nuts together means that both parties have good intentions, sincerity, and deep commitment in binding this family relationship.

4.1.3. *Myths*

Myths in Roland Barthes' semiotics include cultural narratives and ideologies that go beyond literal meanings. In the traditional Toraja wedding ceremony, *rampanan kapa'*, betel (*pangngan*) symbolizes purity, blessings, and spiritual relationships between humans, ancestors, and the cosmos. Marriage is seen as a cosmic event that requires balance, and betel plays an important role in symbolizing ancestral blessings and harmony between families. In addition, betel symbolizes unity and prosperity, becoming a hope for happiness and harmony of a new family. In Toraja mythology, marriage blessed by ancestors is believed to bring good luck, healthy offspring, and prosperity. Betel also has a history as a medicinal plant, strengthening its meaning in maintaining health and a harmonious life. More than just a ritual, the use of betel nuts affirms the continuity of Toraja's cultural heritage. Chewing betel together reflects a commitment to preserving ancestral traditions, connecting the past and present, and strengthening the cultural and spiritual identity of the community in each marriage.

4.2. *Kalosi Kalebu 'Betel Nut'*

In Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis, betel nut fruit as a symbol of sincerity of heart in the procession of *rampanan kapa'* or Toraja traditional wedding ceremony has three layers of meaning that can be understood through the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. These three layers provide an in-depth explanation of how areca nut is not only seen as a physical object, but also loaded with cultural, social, and spiritual significance in the context of Toraja marriage.

4.2.1. *Denotation*

Denotatively, areca nuts are physical objects in the form of seeds from the areca nut plant that are often used in traditions and traditional ceremonies in various Southeast Asian societies, including in Toraja. This areca nut is usually combined with betel leaves and lime to chew. In the context of the Toraja wedding ceremony, areca nuts play an important role in the procession of the *kapa's* procession. Literally, betel nut is used by male families as part of offerings in the proposal process, marking a formal symbol of their intention to unite the two families through marriage.

Betel nuts are also consumed together by both families as part of traditional rituals, which signify the beginning of the process of unification between the groom and bride's families. In the layer of denotation, areca nut is a physical element in the ceremony that is literally presented and used according to tradition. Its existence cannot be ignored because it is part of the traditional apparatus that must be completed in the formal procession.

4.2.2. *Connotation*

At the connotation level, areca nut gives rise to a deeper and symbolic meaning that goes beyond its function as a physical object. In the *rampanan kapa'*, betel nut symbolizes the sincerity, commitment, and goodwill of the male family. By offering areca nuts to a female family, the male family shows that they sincerely and seriously want to establish a closer family relationship. The areca nut here is a symbol of sincerity and willingness to work together and respect the bride-to-be's family.

The areca nut also symbolizes agreement and harmony between the two parties. When both families chew betel nut together, this is a sign that they have reached harmony in their intentions. This act of chewing together is not just a physical habit, but also indicates that the agreement between the two families has been established in a harmonious and sincere way. The agreement reached through betel nut reflects a commitment to support each other and maintain good relations in the upcoming marriage.

4.2.3. *Myth*

On the layer of myth, betel nut fruit plays an important role in the larger narrative and ideology of Toraja culture. In Toraja mythology and belief, the areca nut symbolizes purity, unity, and blessings. When betel nut is presented in a wedding, it is not just a symbolic act, but also carries a deeper spiritual meaning. The areca nut fruit is believed to have the power to unite two families in a sacred bond, blessed by ancestors and the protective spirits of the family.

Betel nuts are also associated with luck and well-being. In the Toraja tradition, weddings that are carried out with the right procession and by using traditional symbols such as areca nuts are believed to bring blessings to the married couple. The marriage is considered to run harmoniously and be endowed with health, wealth, and happiness. The areca nut in this case is a symbol of the spiritual connection between humans and their ancestors, which gives blessings and blessings to couples who are about to get married.

Another myth associated with areca nut is the belief that this fruit has magical powers to strengthen relationships and maintain fidelity in marriage. In Toraja cultural myths, betel nut fruit is not only seen as a ritual element, but also as a symbol of the unbroken bond between married couples as well as between two extended families. The areca nut is considered to be able to maintain loyalty and commitment in marriage, and by presenting this fruit in the wedding procession, the family hopes that the married couple will have a strong and lasting relationship.

4.3. *'Bolu' Betel Nut*

In Toraja culture, *Rampanan Kapa'* or traditional wedding ceremonies have a series of symbols that are full of meaning. One of the important elements in this ritual is *bolu* or betel fruit. The use of sponge in this customary context can be explained through three different semiotic approaches: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each aspect gives this symbol a deeper layer of meaning in the context of Toraja culture and wedding rituals.

4.3.1. *Denotation*

Denotation refers to the literal or basic meaning of an object, in this case *bolu* or betel fruit. Literally, sponge is the fruit of the betel plant (*Piper betle*) which is often chewed with areca nuts and lime in the traditions of people in many regions in Indonesia, including Toraja. Betel is commonly known as part of the betel chewing tradition, which has health benefits such as refreshing the mouth and maintaining healthy teeth, but in a cultural context, sponges have a function that is more than just a daily habit.

In *Rampanan Kapa'*, sponge is part of the symbolic offering handed over by the groom's family to the bride. Its use in this ceremony is very ritualistic, with the meaning that sponge is not just a fruit, but a symbol of physical presence in the series of rituals. Denotatively, sponge is a seemingly simple element, but its presence in every stage of the ceremony underscores the importance of this tradition.

4.3.2. *Connotation*

The connotative meaning of sponge in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony brings a more cultural and symbolic dimension. In Toraja society, sponge is not only seen as a physical object, but also as a symbol of bond and unity. Chewing betel nut together with areca nut is a ritual that is often carried out socially at various traditional gatherings. This act has the meaning of unity, where sponge symbolizes the union of two different but complementary things—just like two people in a marriage. Chewing betel nut together between the bride and groom symbolizes that the two individuals, although different, are willing to unite in one sacred marriage bond.

Bolu can also be interpreted as a symbol of strong social relationships. In the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony, marriage is not only the union of two individuals, but also the union of two extended families. The betel fruit brought by the groom is a sign of respect for the bride's family, and by accepting this sponge, the bride's family also shows their acceptance of the groom. Symbolically, sponges symbolize

respect, acceptance, and cooperation between the two parties.

4.3.3. *Myth*

In traditional Toraja society, sponge is also filled with very important mythological meanings. The myth surrounding sponges in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony is related to the belief that betel fruit has magical powers and protection. The Toraja people believe that sponges bring blessings, luck, and prosperity to newly married couples. Therefore, the use of sponges in this ceremony is considered to be able to provide spiritual protection for the bride and groom and their families.

In indigenous beliefs, sponges are often associated with the power to ward off evil spirits and protect newly formed households from bad influences. Thus, when sponges are used in wedding ceremonies, it is not just a physical ritual but also a prayer and hope for a harmonious, prosperous, and protected life from all dangers. Bolu is believed to be able to bridge the relationship between the human world and the world of ancestors, and its use in marriage is considered a way to ask for blessings from ancestors, so that the marriage carried out gets their blessings and protection.

Bolu or betel fruit in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony is not only part of the physical ritual, but also a symbol of a deeper meaning. In terms of denotation, sponges are an essential element in ritual offerings, whereas in terms of connotations, they symbolize unity, acceptance, and harmony between two extended families. At the level of myth, sponges have a deeper spiritual role, where they are believed to bring blessings, protect, and guarantee good luck for married couples. This shows that in Toraja culture, symbols such as sponges not only have an aesthetic function, but also serve as markers of broader social and spiritual relationships in people's lives.

4.4. *'Kapu' Kapur Sirih*

In *Rampanan Kapa'*, a traditional Toraja wedding ceremony, *kapu'* (betel lime) plays an important and meaningful role. Betel lime is used as one of the important elements in traditional offerings that have a deep symbolic meaning. To understand the meaning of *kapu'* in this event, we can analyze it through three semiotic approaches: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each of these aspects shows how *kapu'* is not just a physical object, but also loaded with cultural, social, and spiritual meanings.

4.4.1. *Denotation*

Kapu' or betel lime, denotatively, is a lime material made from shells or limestone that have been fired and crushed. Physically, this lime is usually used in conjunction with betel leaves and areca nuts in the tradition of chewing betel nuts. In the Toraja tradition, betel lime is one of the main components of '*mapa'pak'* (chewing betel), which is performed at various traditional events, including weddings.

Literally, *kapu'* is a lime powder that is placed in small amounts in betel leaves before being chewed. Betel lime serves to provide a spicy taste and chemically interacts with betel leaves and areca nuts to produce a refreshing effect for chewers. In the context of the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony, *kapu'* is an important component of the symbolic offerings that mark the sacredness of this ceremony.

4.4.2. *Connotation*

Connotatively, *kapu'* in the *Rampanan Kapa'* event has a deeper meaning than just ingredients to chew. In the context of Toraja culture, betel lime symbolizes purity and harmony. Kapu' is often interpreted as a symbol of purification and purification, which is symbolically used to purify the relationship between the bride and groom.

In this traditional wedding ceremony, the use of *kapu'* with betel and areca nut depicts a harmonious unity between the bride and groom. These three elements, namely betel, areca nut, and *kapu'*, work together to create a well-rounded taste and chewing experience, which symbolizes that marriage is a union that complements each other and works together. Kapu' symbolizes the union of different elements, which, although they have their own roles, produce harmony when combined.

4.4.3. Myths

Kapu' in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony also has a strong mythical meaning. The myth attached to betel lime in Toraja culture is related to the belief that betel lime has magical and spiritual powers. The use of *kapu'* in traditional ceremonies not only serves as a symbol of respect, but also as an element that protects the bride and groom from negative influences and evil forces.

In traditional Toraja beliefs, *kapu'* is believed to have the power to ward off evil spirits and provide protection to those who wear it or who are around its use. When *kapu'* is used in wedding ceremonies, it is believed to be a form of exorcising negative energies, creating a sacred and safe space for the bride and groom to start a new life. Kapu' also symbolizes safety and blessings that will accompany couples on their wedding journey.

In addition, *kapu'* is also considered a symbol of connection with ancestors. The Toraja people highly value spiritual ties to their ancestors, and *kapu'* is used as a way to establish such relationships. In the context of marriage, the use of *kapu'* can be seen as a way to ask for blessings from ancestors so that this marriage can run smoothly and be protected by the power of the ancestors.

4.5. Tongkonan

Tongkonan, the traditional house of the Toraja tribe, has a rich and profound meaning in the life of the Toraja people. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, we can understand the generalization of three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each of these levels brings a different meaning related to this traditional house in the context of Toraja culture.

4.5.1. Denotation

Denotation is the direct or literal meaning that a sign has. On a denotative level, *tongkonan* is a traditional house in Toraja that is uniquely shaped with a curved roof that resembles a boat. The house is made of natural materials such as wood, bamboo, and reeds. Physically, *tongkonan* is used as a residence for large families or clans, and is the center of social and religious activities of the Toraja community. The shape of the *tongkonan* roof that resembles a boat can also be considered a denotative meaning because this is the most prominent visual aspect of the building. *Tongkonan* is physically an architectural sign that is easily recognizable, symbolizing the identity of the Toraja people in a tangible form.

4.5.2. Connotation

Connotation involves additional meanings that are influenced by culture, emotions, and social values. At the connotative level, *tongkonan* has a much deeper and symbolic meaning in Toraja culture. *Tongkonan* is not just a physical house, but also a symbol of kinship, unity, and family identity. *Tongkonan* is a place where extended families or clans gather for important events such as traditional ceremonies, rituals, and family gatherings. In this context, *tongkonan* symbolizes inter-generational bonds and blood unity among family members living in it.

Every family in Toraja has a *tongkonan*, and a person's status in society is measured by their position related to *tongkonan*. Therefore, *tongkonan* also contains the connotation of social status and honor. The bigger and more luxurious a *tongkonan* is, the higher the status of the family or clan in society.

Apart from being a symbol of kinship and status, *tongkonan* also has a spiritual meaning. *Tongkonan* is the center of religious ceremonies and ancestor worship rituals, especially in the *Aluk Todolo* faith. *Tongkonan* is a place that is considered sacred and has a close relationship with the spiritual realm and the spirits of ancestors. The boat-shaped roof is often associated with a spiritual journey to the afterlife, symbolizing the connection between the human world and the ancestral world.

4.5.3. Myths

Myth in Barthes' perspective is how connotative meanings are constructed in such a way that they

are considered natural or ordinary by society. The myth of *tongkonan* reflects the ideology and narrative hidden behind the greater cultural meaning.

In the context of myth, *tongkonan* is not only seen as a house or residence, but is also considered the center of life of the Toraja community as a whole. This myth serves to reinforce the value that *tongkonan* is a sacred heritage that connects humans with nature, ancestors, and gods. In Toraja mythology, the first *tongkonan* is believed to have been built by ancestors who descended from the sky, making this house a symbol of human origin and the sustainability of life.

Another myth that surrounds *tongkonan* is the view that *tongkonan* reflects eternity and life cycles. This house can never be demolished; if damaged, it must be repaired. The continuity of *tongkonan* symbolizes the continuity of generations and the eternal relationship between life that is still ongoing and that has ended. This myth created the ideology that as long as the *tongkonan* was still standing, the clan would continue to exist, thus emphasizing the importance of maintaining the *tongkonan* for the future of the clan and the Toraja society as a whole.

4.6. *Rara' Manga'*

In Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective, *Rara' manga'* or beautiful girl in the context of *rampanan kapa'* (traditional Toraja wedding ceremony) can be deeply analyzed through three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each of these layers of meaning provides a deeper insight into how the beauty of the girl is viewed and articulated in Toraja culture as well as its role in traditional marriages.

4.6.1. *Denotation*

Denotation is the literal meaning of the term *Rara' manga'*. Literally, *Rara' manga'* means beautiful girl. In the context of *rampanan kapa'*, this term is used to describe a bride-to-be who has an attractive physical appearance. This denotation relates to the physical qualities that are visible to the girl, including facial features, body shape, and general appearance. This physical appearance is often one of the aspects that is assessed in the selection of a partner in Toraja culture. Beauty as the main factor in this assessment reflects the aesthetic values that are valued in Toraja society.

4.6.2. *Connotation*

Connotation is an additional meaning or implication that goes beyond the literal definition of the term. In Toraja culture, *Rara' manga'* has a more complex connotative meaning that includes social, moral, and symbolic aspects: In Toraja culture, girls who are considered beautiful often come from families with high social status or respect. A girl's beauty can reflect her family's social status, and conversely, a girl's family social status can also increase the girl's value and prestige as a bride-to-be. Thus, beauty became a symbol of a higher social position in the community.

In addition to physical appearance, *Rara' manga'* also reflects the girl's moral qualities and modesty. In Toraja society, physical beauty is expected to be accompanied by good character, such as politeness, elegance, and the ability to adapt in a new family. This quality is important because marriage is not just about two individuals, but also about the integration of character and personality in a larger family relationship.

4.6.3. *Myths*

Myth refers to a larger cultural and ideological narrative constructed around connotative meaning. In Toraja traditional mythology, beautiful girls are considered to bring purity and spiritual connectedness. Beauty is not only seen as a physical attribute, but also as a symbol of deeper qualities that are considered sacred and blessed. A girl's beauty is often associated with the notion that she brings positive energy and blessings that will support the success and harmony of the marriage.

The myths surrounding *Rara' manga'* also involve the idea that beautiful girls are symbols of good luck and well-being. In many cultures, including Toraja, marriage to a beautiful girl is believed to bring

good luck to both families. Beauty as a symbol of positive things, such as happiness, success, and well-being, reinforces the belief that this marriage will bring good results for the couple and the community.

In addition, in the myth of Toraja culture, having a beautiful girl as the bride-to-be can provide honor and legitimacy for the male family. This reflects that male families are able to choose a partner who not only meets social standards but also brings prestige and improves their position in society. The beauty of the girl is an indicator of the ability of the male family to participate in a marriage that is considered good and meaningful.

4.7. *Simbolong Manik*

In Toraja culture, *Simbolong Manik* is one of the symbols used in various traditional rituals, including *Rampanan Kapa'*, or traditional Toraja wedding ceremonies. These symbols have deep and complex meanings, which can be analyzed through three semiotic approaches: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each layer of meaning shows how *Simbolong Manik* is not only a physical object, but also reflects social, cultural, and spiritual values in Toraja society.

4.7.1. *Denotation*

Denotatively, *Simbolong Manik* refers to black beads that are often used as jewelry in Toraja culture. *Simbolong* means black, and beads refer to beads, which in this context are usually made of natural materials such as stone or other specially decorated materials. Physically, the *Simbolong Manik* is worn as jewelry in important events, including wedding ceremonies. In the context of *Rampanan Kapa'*, the *Simbolong Manik* is often used as part of the ornaments worn by the bride or used as an offering in ceremonies. Literally, this is jewelry that serves to beautify and symbolize the social status and beauty of Toraja culture.

4.7.2. *Connotation*

Connotatively, *Simbolong Manik* which means "black beads" has a symbolic meaning that is closely related to the figure of women in Toraja culture. In the context of marriage, the *Simbolong Manik* worn by the bride symbolizes various aspects of a woman's personality, honor, and social status.

In Toraja culture, *Simbolong Manik* is often associated with a woman's natural beauty. Black as the basic color of these beads symbolizes simple but meaningful elegance. He hinted that the beauty of a Toraja woman is not only seen from her physicality, but also from her inner glory and moral nobility.

4.7.3. *Myths*

In the aspect of myth, the *Simbolong Manik* in Toraja culture is not just jewelry, but has a deep spiritual meaning. There are several beliefs and myths that have developed regarding these black beads in the context of women at wedding ceremonies.

In Toraja mythology, *Simbolong Manik* is believed to have magical powers that protect the wearer from evil spirits and negative energies. For a woman who wears them, these beads serve as a talisman that guards her from harm during wedding ceremonies and in her life journey as a wife. This is a symbol of protection that is believed to help maintain household harmony from external disturbances, both visible and invisible.

Simbolong Manik also has a close relationship with the ancestors in Toraja culture. Its use by women in marriage is believed to be a way to ask for blessings and support from ancestors. In Toraja mythology, ancestors have the power to influence human life, including giving blessings in marriage. By wearing the *Simbolong Manik*, the bride is considered to be in a spiritual relationship with the ancestors, pleading for this marriage to be blessed with prosperity, tranquility, and good luck.

In some myths, *Simbolong Manik* is also associated with fertility. These beads are believed to help the bride in carrying out her reproductive role as a wife, ensuring that she will be blessed with offspring. Fertility in this context is not only seen physically but also spiritually, where women are expected to

provide a meaningful new life for the family they build.

The connotation and myth of *Simbolong Manik* in the *Rampanan Kapa'* event provides a rich picture of the role and meaning of a woman in Toraja culture. As a symbol of beauty, strength, and purity, the *Simbolong Manik* not only adorns the bride physically, but also affirms the noble values she carries in her marriage. From the mythological side, *Simbolong Manik* symbolizes spiritual protection, ancestral blessings, and hope for a fertile and harmonious life. All of this shows that in Toraja culture, women are not only seen from their social role, but also have an important place in the spiritual world and tradition.

4.8. *Gayang*

In the traditional ceremony of *Rampanan Kapa'* in Toraja, *gayang*—a type of traditional machete or sword—has a deep and symbolic meaning, encompassing three main aspects: denotation, connotation, and myth. Each of these aspects offers a different perspective on the role and meaning of *gayang* in Toraja cultural life, especially in the context of marriage.

4.8.1. *Denotation*

Denotatively, *gayang* is a traditional tool or weapon in the form of a long sword or machete, with a straight or slightly curved shape. Usually, *gayang* is made of strong metals such as iron or steel, with handles made of wood or buffalo horns. In the daily life of the Toraja people, *gayang* is used as a multifunctional tool—ranging from a tool for farming, hunting, to as a self-defense weapon. Its use has become an integral part of the life of the traditional Toraja people, who live in a harsh and challenging natural environment. In addition to its function as a work tool, *gayang* is also used in various traditional ceremonies and ritual processions, including *Rampanan Kapa'*.

In the *Rampanan Kapa'* wedding procession, the *gayang* is carried by the groom or his representative as part of the traditional equipment. Physically, *gayang* is presented as a symbol of the presence of a man who is ready to enter a new world as a husband and head of the household. His dashing and strong appearance illustrates physical and mental readiness in facing the tasks and responsibilities that will be carried.

4.8.2. *Connotation*

Connotatively, *gayang* holds many rich and layered meanings. As a symbol in wedding ceremonies, *gayang* symbolizes strength, courage, and responsibility. In the Toraja tradition, a man is expected to possess these qualities in order to be able to protect and protect his family. When *gayang* is brought in the procession of *Rampanan Kapa'*, this indicates that the groom is ready to face all challenges that may arise in married life. This symbol reinforces the message that the groom is a brave and responsible figure to maintain the safety and welfare of his family.

In addition, *gayang* also symbolizes maturity and dignity. In Toraja culture, a man's courage and ability are often measured by his readiness to take on responsibility as a family leader. The presence of *gayang* underlines that the groom has reached a stage in life where he is ready to face everything related to marriage and social life. It is also a form of respect for traditional masculinity values, where physical and mental strength is the basis of the role of a husband and father.

More than that, *gayang* also has a connotation as a symbol of social status. In the indigenous people of Toraja, the ownership of a certain *gayang* can indicate a person's status in the community. *Gayang* made of high-quality materials or decorated with certain ornaments indicates that its owner is from a higher social class or has an important position in society.

4.8.3. *Myths*

In the realm of myth, *gayang* has a deeper meaning, related to spiritual beliefs and ancestral stories. In Toraja mythology, *gayang* is often associated with the stories of past heroes who used this weapon to protect their land and families from enemy threats. Stories of the courage and strength of the ancestors

who swung the *gayang* against the enemy made this weapon more than just a physical tool—the *gayang* was considered to have magical and spiritual powers.

Some myths mention that the *gayang* that is passed down from generation to generation has spiritual energy that is able to protect its owner from evil spirits or negative energy. Therefore, in the context of *Rampanan Kapa'*, *gayang* not only serves as a symbol of physical courage, but also as a spiritual protection for the groom and the newly formed family. This belief creates the belief that *gayang* is able to keep the marriage from disturbances, both physical and metaphysical.

Gayang in the *Rampanan Kapa'* procession does not only function as a tool or weapon, but also carries a rich and diverse layer of meaning. Its denotation as a weapon reflects its usefulness in everyday life, while its connotation highlights the values of strength, courage, responsibility, and social status. Furthermore, through myths and traditional stories, *gayang* is considered a spiritual symbol that protects the family and strengthens the relationship with ancestors. Thus, the *gayang* in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony becomes more than just a cultural symbol—it becomes an integral part of the life philosophy of the Toraja people that upholds the values of courage, responsibility, and respect for ancestors and family.

4.9. *Lola'*

In the context of the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony in Toraja, *Lola'* has a rich and symbolic meaning, which includes three main dimensions: denotation, connotation, and myth. These three aspects help to understand the important role of *Lola'* in Toraja culture, especially in wedding ceremonies.

4.9.1. *Denotation*

Denotatively, *Lola'* is a traditional Toraja jewelry made of metal, usually of gold or silver, with a circular shape worn on the wrist. These bracelets are often decorated with specific carvings or motifs that reflect the typical Toraja art and culture. Basically, *Lola'* is an accessory that functions as a body decoration, especially for the bride in traditional ceremonies. Beyond its aesthetic function, physically, this bracelet is a form of jewelry that shows the richness and cultural taste of the Toraja people.

In the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony, *Lola'* is worn by the bride as part of the traditional clothes worn during the wedding procession. This bracelet is an important element in beautifying the bride's appearance and complementing the traditional dress that is rich in ornaments and symbolism.

4.9.2. *Connotation*

Connotatively, *Lola'* symbolizes beauty, elegance, and honor. The use of this bracelet in wedding ceremonies contains a symbol that the bride is a graceful and respected figure in society. *Lola'* serves as a symbol of social status. In the Toraja indigenous society which adheres to a stratified social system, the wearing of bracelets made of precious materials such as gold or silver shows the social status of the bride and groom's family. Noble families or people with high standing in society would usually use *Lola'* made of precious metals to show their status and prestige. This bracelet is part of a way to affirm social position in front of the people present at the wedding ceremony.

4.9.3. *Myths*

On the mythical side, *Lola'* is often associated with deeper stories and beliefs about spiritual protection and sacred powers. In the beliefs of the Toraja people, objects such as jewelry, especially those used in traditional ceremonies, are believed to have spiritual energy that can protect the wearer from the interference of evil spirits or negative energies. The *lola'* worn by the bride in the *Rampanan Kapa'* ceremony is often considered a talisman or an object that provides spiritual protection.

Some myths say that the *Lola'* worn by the bride brings ancestral blessings to the new family formed from the marriage. This bracelet is believed to strengthen the spiritual connection between married couples and their ancestors, providing spiritual support and blessings for their life journey.

together. The Toraja people view marriage as part of a tradition that is closely connected to the spiritual world, where jewelry such as *Lola'* becomes a bridge between the physical world and the ancestral world.

Apart from being a symbol of spiritual protection, *Lola'* is also associated with harmony and unity in marriage. Toraja myths often associate this jewelry with the hope that married couples will live in harmonious togetherness, complement each other, and maintain balance in the household. The existence of this bracelet is believed to be able to unite the positive energy of the two brides, creating a strong and lasting relationship.

10. Conclusion

Denotation refers to the literal or firm meaning of the symbols and elements contained in the *Kapa' Rampan*. For example, in a courtship ceremony, terms such as betel or beads have a direct meaning as objects used in rituals. The betel, in this case, is a leaf that is offered as a sign of respect and agreement, while beads are jewelry worn by the bride-to-be. This denotation includes a basic understanding of what is seen and felt in the ritual.

Connotation refers to the deeper and emotional meaning attached to the symbols. In *Rampanan Kapa'*, betel and beads are not just objects, but also symbols of beauty, glory, and dignity of a woman. The beauty of a woman represented by jewelry and ornaments also reflects social and cultural values, as well as people's expectations of women's role in the family and community. This connotation describes how these symbols convey a message about the traditions, identities, and values that are upheld by the Toraja people.

Myth in the context of *Rampanan Kapa'* is related to the narrative or story behind the tradition and practice. This myth can be related to the origin of the use of certain symbols, such as stories about ancestors who brought customs or explanations about the magical power of betel nuts and beads in tying the relationship between two families. The myth also reflects people's belief in spiritual forces that protect and bless the bride and groom, and emphasizes the importance of preserving traditions for future generations.

Rampanan Kapa' contains a complex layer of meaning that can be understood through the approach of denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation provides a basic understanding of the existing elements, connotations deepen the emotional and social meanings associated with these symbols, while myths describe the cultural narratives that underlie the practices and traditions in Toraja society. These three aspects are interrelated and form a complete understanding of the meaning and value contained in *Rampanan Kapa'*, as well as how this tradition plays a role in maintaining the identity and cultural heritage of the Toraja people.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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