

The Representation of Batak Toba Family Values in the Mangongkal Holi Tradition: A John Fiske Semiotic Analysis of *Tulang Belulang Tulang*

Nacha Wahyu Micha Sitompul¹, Augustin Mustika Chairil²

¹Departemen of Communication Science Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur, Jl. Raya Rungkut Madya, Surabaya 60294 East Java Indonesia, nacamichas@gmail.com

²Departemen of Communication Science Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur, Jl. Raya Rungkut Madya, Surabaya 60294 East Java Indonesia, augustin.mustika.ilkom@upnjatim.ac.id

Corresponding Author Email: nacamichas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

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Mangongkal Holi is traditional ceremony to pay final respects to deceased ancestors by transferring their bones and reuniting them in a family monument or *batu na pir*. The Batak Toba greatly respects and protects their families, which play a very important role in traditional customs and social life. *Dalihan Na Tolu* forms the basis for regulating social roles, traditional positions, kinship, and conflict resolution within Batak Toba families. The three main pillars of *dalihan na tolu* are *hula-hula*, *boru* and *dongan tubu*. The film *Tulang Belulang Tulang* is a cultural product that presents the reality of the Batak Toba persistence in maintaining Batak Toba customs to improve the social class (prestige) of their families order to obtain *hasangapon*, *hamoraon*, and *hagabeon*, as well as the challenges faced by Batak Toba families in returning from their travel to their hometowns in Batak land (*Bona Pasogit*). Therefore, this study conducted to analyze in depth how the values of the Batak Toba family are represented through the Mangongkal Holi tradition in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang* using qualitative research methods with a constructivist paradigm. Twenty-two shots were analyzed using John Fiske's three-level analysis technique of "Television Code" namely the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology. The result of this study found that Batak Toba families highly values social and family honor in the eyes of their community. The rise in social class or prestige of Batak Toba families is reflected in the activities and customs carried out by the family. The film *Tulang Belulang Tulang* actualizes the reality of Batak Toba families in the Batak Toba cultural community, which still binds families through their social class and status, as reflected in the actualization of Batak Toba traditional celebrations. The realization of the philosophy of *hamoraon*, *hagabeon* and *hasangapon* is a benchmark for assessing the success and prosperity of Batak Toba families, which will be considered successful and respected (having authority) in practicing "*namar adat*".

INTRODUCTION

Batak Toba families have customary rules that are an important characteristic for determining the roles and functions of each family member (Parinduri & Haryati, 2022). The family system in Batak Toba

customs is governed by the concept of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which refers to the three generations in a Batak Toba family, namely parents, children, and grandchildren, so that harmony and solidarity between generations in the Batak family are maintained. There are three main pillars in *Dalihan Na Tolu*, namely

hula-hula, *boru* and *dongan tubu* (Gaol, 2024). *Dalihan Na Tolu* regulates and balances social roles, relationship, kinship, and conflict resolution within the Batak Toba family. *Dalihan Na Tolu* also regulates relationship within the Batak Toba family, such as the position of the husband, wife and the husband's or wife's family, which fosters respect, responsibility, and mutual care for the another.

Batak Toba culture believes that the *tulang* or om from the female side, can bless their *bere* (nieces and nephews) in terms of marriage, work, and other aspects of life. The Batak Toba tribe greatly respects and protects their families, as can be seen from the persistence shown by the Batak Toba community toward their relatives and families. The family structure in traditional *customs* is know as the husband's side (*boru*), the wife's side (*hula-hula*), and close relatives of the same clan (*dongan tubu*). In Batak Toba families, moral values, customs, and traditions have been taught since childhood through traditional activities, thereby strengthening kinship and family values in Batak Toba culture.

Batak Tob family values emphasize honor, respect, solidarity among relatives, moral values, and cultural customs. Batak Toba culture has nine cultural values that influence customs in everydy life. The nine cultural values of the Batak are kinship, trust, *hagabeon*, *hasangapon*, *hamoraon*, *hamajuon*, law (*patik dohot uhum*), protection, and conflict. Batak Toba traditions and customs constitute a philosophy of social life. The three cultural values used a philosophy of life are *hamoraon*, *hagabeon*, and *hasangapon*. These three Batak Toba cultural values mean that the Batak Toba people must work hard to achieve success so that their descendants can enjoy a prosperous and honorable life.

Now, film have become a cultural genre, visualizing cultural identities that result from the social realities of communities in their cultural practies. As a cultural genre, films represent tangible form of culture, supported by cinematography, storytelling, language, music, traditions, cultural values, and symbols that reflect cultural identities. Films contribute to preserving, developing, and exploring culture within society based on cultural norms (cultural roots) that are implemented in the form of codes of convention and cultural ideology. The social reality depicted in films is supported by the use of cinematography, ideology, traditional clothing, customs, habits, language, characterictics, art, and

social organization, which are supporting factors in film (Eduar, 2024).

The film *Tulang Belulang Tulang* strongly depicts the sacrifices made by the Batak Toba people for their families and traditional customs. The film features various symbols of Batak Toba cultural identity, such as cultural customs, traditional houses, clothing, food, dance, and language, which are deeply rooted in their culture. Not only does it highlight the Mangongkal Holi tradition, but the film also depicts the struggles, sincerity, and persistence of the Batak Toba people for their families and in realizing their customs.

The film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*, as a symbols of Batak Toba culture, spreads the identity, cultural values of the Batak Toba, and family values. The film provides a rich visualization of the culture that is formed and exchanged during the communication process between the filmmakers, the culture of origin, and the film audience, which conveys cultural meaning through signs that are implemented within the socio-cultural context (Putri Dinda et al., 2023).

The film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*, which explores the culture of the Batak Toba people, is the work of Sammaria Sari Simanjuntak. It represents Batak Toba culture by showcasing family values, cultural values, myths, and the social life of the Batak Toba people through their customs, and traditional practices that are still observed today. This film depicts the persistence of Bata Toba families in realizing their customs in Batak land (*bona pasogit*) through struggle. This depiction of Batak Toba culture is supported by the ideology conveyed through the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*, which address family conflicts, social class, and the challenges often faced by Batak Toba families in realizing and implementing their cultural values and traditional customs.

This study differs from previous studies in that it is novel and unique, representing the Batak Toba family in the Mangongkal Holi tradition using John Fiske's semiotic analysis to determine the meaning of family values based on a three-level coding system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Film as a Cultural Product

Undang-Undang No. 33 of 2009 on film explains that film is a work cultural art resulting from the social institution of mass media, in which films are made based on applicable cinematographic rules. Film is not only a medium entertainment, in the cultural

sphere, film is a representation of culture that reflects cultural values, cultural identity, and cultural elements that contain moral message. Film contain ideologies that form a series of ideas and values that underlie films in visualizing social, cultural, or moral realities in their works (Swetasurya, 2020). Popular culture makes film a form of mass media that plays a very important role in constructing media reality. The cultural characteristics becoming supporting factors in the film (Eduar, 2024). Culture in films provides an appreciation of cultural heritage, which is one of the efforts to strengthen cultural values, ideas, norms and social systems that develop within a culture (Christina & Lim, 2020). Film are a very important part of culture in preserving and respecting cultural origins.

The Batak Toba Family

The family plays an important role in introducing and passing on cultural values. The family is a place to learn traditions, customs, and cultural norms. The Batak Toba tribe attaches great importance to family roles and values, which are applied in daily life, whether in social, cultural, or educational matters. A distinctive feature of the Batak Toba family is the patrilineal family system, where lineage is traced through the father's side, so that each family has a distinct family identity. Family honor is a very important aspect that must be upheld by the children in the Batak Toba family, because they will become the successors of the family in terms of traditions and culture customs.

The Batak Toba family is known for its devoutness, hard work, and moral ethic. The element of kinship in the Batak Toba family is closely related to honor or respect for parents. The Batak Toba family actively participates in activities and customs that show respect and kinship toward their family and ancestors. Batak Toba families play a pivotal role in maintaining the continuity of their family lineage and cultural heritage of the Batak Toba (Firmando, 2021). The socio-cultural role of the kinship system is a reference point in family relationship, and the family customs system is governed by *dalihan na tolu* as a guideline for moral ethics that regulates family relationship with other extended families in customs.

Sinematografi Film

In film production, there are two elements that play a very important role, namely cinematography and

narrative. Cinematography and narrative are interrelated, thereby creating a film (Panjaitan & Hasanah, 2022). Narrative elements are a collection of ideas that form the story of a film, involving events that determine the characters and figures, while cinematography elements are filmmaking techniques that enable the ideas in the narrative elements to be presented effectively in audiovisual form.

Cinematography is the technique of capturing and combining images into an audiovisual sequence that can convey and communicate the meaning of a story (Sari & Abdullah, 2020)s. Cinematography techniques utilize the reflection of light that hits objects as the main source of lighting. Cinematography techniques are used to control motion capture in image, lighting, and the resulting visualization (Eka Maulana, 2022). Cinematography has various supporting elements, namely:

- a. *Camera Angle*
The viewpoint or *camera angle* in shooting greatly influence the meaning conveyed. There are five *camera angle*: *bird eye view*, *high ngle*, *eye level*, *low angle*, and *frog eye view*.
- b. *Shot*
Shot are a technique for capturing image that can convey meaning. *Shots* consist of *close-up*, *medium shot*, and *long shot*.

Cultural Representation

Representation is a conceptual framework used to understand the meaning and interpretation of culture in the world (Sholichah et al., 2023). Representation can be used to explain or describe a meaning. The meaning contained in this representation is usually in the form of symbols, images, and signs that can reflect perception and identities in a cultural studies and artistic representations to understand and interpret culture. Representation take the form of words, image, and stories that describe ideas, emotions, and facts (Pratama et al., 2022). In the era of modernization, representations take the form of culture that realizes ideas or realities in a medium to represent what has been reflected. Cultural representation is a process of cultural meaning that is influenced by cultural background and the cultural elements that are displayed. Cultural representation conveys something that can be interpreted in relation to the reality of the meaning that is depicted, providing a reflection or

realization of cultural values, norms, conflicts, cultural history, and the reality of social life in society. Cultural representation is a unique and interesting aspect because it displays a realistic visualization of cultural products in collaboration with other cultures presented in films. Cultural represent culture. Every culture has an implied meaning that can influence people's lives.

John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics is the study of events, object, and cultures as signs (Yanti Trianita, 2023). According to (Sobur, 2009), semiotics is a field that studies signs that form a unity of meaning or significance so that the recipient of the message can understand its meaning (Kemalasari et al., 2021). John Fiske developed a theory about "The codes of television:" (Tuhepaly & Mazaid, 2022). According to John Fiske, semiotics is the study of signs within a system of signs whose meanings are formed through texts from various media and how signs are conveyed as form of meaning in communication. In John Fiske's semiotic analysis of television codes, there are three levels of reality, namely:

- a. Reality Level
Codes (signs) that can be directly perceived by the human senses, namely appearance, dress, make up, environment, and behavior.
- b. Representation Level
Code (signs) related to technical aspects, namely camera work, cinematography, videography, lighting, editing, music, and sound. There are conventional codes in the form of narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting and casting.
- c. Ideological Level
Social codes of individualism, feminism, race, class, materialism, and capitalism (Shavira et al., 2023)

In these three levels, the meaning of codes or symbols in films is not only a social aspect but can also be viewed from a cinematographic perspective (Shavira et al., 2023).

Batak Toba Traditions and Customs

Batak Toba traditions are deeply rooted in social, cultural, and spiritual values. According to Book Tujuh Suku Di Sumatera Utara (Seven Tribes in

North Sumatera), published by Jejak Publisher, the Batak Toba tribe has traditional customs for weddings, funerals, and births (Siahaan, 2024). Traditional customs for funeral ceremonies the Batak Toba believe that if a marriage is conducted according to customs, then when someone dies, it is acceptable to conduct the funeral according to custom. Traditions to honor and elevate the status of ancestors or family members who have passed away include *saurmatua*, *sarimatua*, and *mangongkal holi*. The Batak Toba have nine cultural values that influence aspects of social life, consisting of kinship, religion, *hasangapon*, *hamoraon*, *hamajuon*, law, protection and conflict (Firmando, 2021). These nine cultural values are:

- a. Kinship
Primal tribal relationship and affection based on blood ties and family harmony. *Dalihan Na Tolu* includes kinship within the clan (*dongan tubu*), *hula-hula*, *anak boru/boru*, *pisang raut* (anak boru from boru), and *hatobagon* (wise people).
- b. Religion
Religion beliefs govern the relationship between the creator, humans and the surrounding environment.
- c. *Hagabeon*
Hagabeon means having many descendants and a long life. The Batak Toba people believe that children are the most precious treasure.
- d. *Hamoraon*
Hamoraon or wealth encourages the Batak Toba people to be enthusiastic in seeking the most valuable possessions.
- e. *Hasangapon*
Hasangapon, or glory, authority, and charisma, is a driving factor behind the success of the Batak Toba people. It refers to success in terms of rank or anything that brings glory, authority, charisma, and power.
- f. *Hamajuon*
Hamajuon, or progress, is achieved by traveling far away to pursue the highest level of education possible. *Hamajuon* encourages the Batak Toba community to strive for a better social life for themselves and their children in the future.

- g. Law
The legal system is divided into traditional law (*rules from the God*) and formal law, which governs human relations. This is reflected in *patik dohot uhum* (ubedience to the applicable law (Firmando, 2020).
- h. Protection
Protection means providing security and welfare for others.
- i. Conflict
Challenges become a source of strength in the lives of the Batak Toba people, training them to face various problems and struggles with enthusias and to never give up in any situation in order to mode forward and achieve progress (Firmando, 2020:62 dalam Sianturi & Gono, 2024).

Mangongkal Holi

The Mangongkal Holi tradition involves exhuming and transferring the remains of deceased relatives who ere buried abroad and reuniting them in a family grave or tomb, which is then formed into a *batu napir* stone (family monument). The mangongkal holi traditional ceremony is a belief in ancestors that existed before religion, so every success encourage people to express their gratitude according to their beliefs (Vioreza & Lumban, 2024).

The Mangongkl Holi tradition requires careful planning and adequate financial reources. This planning begins with discussions and decisions made by the *hasuhuton bolon* (the person who carries out the tradition), discussion with the *hula-hula* (ancestors), inviting family members of the same clan (*dongan tubu*), and holding a traditional ceremony. The Mangongkal Holi tradition requires a fairly long process, from prepatation to the day the traditional ceremony is held. The grand traditional ceremony in the Mangongkal Holi tradition od excavating bones and the traditional ceremony to return the bones to the monument are generally not held not held on the same day but are held the following day.

This monument was built by the Batak Toba community as a form of respect dor their ancestors (Purba et al., 2020)p. Family honor is a very important asses that must be maintained. In the Batak Toba tribe, honor is obtained through privileges, celebrations, and participation in various traditional activities. The Mangongkal Holi ceremony is believed that through

this tradition, they will obtain *hagabeon* (long life), *hasangapon* (honor) and *hamoraon* (wealth). They believe that their ancestors will bestow many blessings upon their descendants, in the form of success, career advancement, long life, wealth, and prosperity.

METHOD

The research approach used in this study is qualitative, namely to find accurate interpretive facts in examining issues occurring in society through the interpretation of codes from various phenomena that occur (Amelia et al., 2021). Qualitative research methods were used in this study to examine the reality of Batak Toba family values through the Mangongkal Holi traditions as contained in symbols, signs, codes, text and images that have implied meanings.

The constructivist paradigm studies social reality through direct observation, whereby reality is constructed differently by each individual and reflects the construction of reality in each individual's life. In the constructivist paragim, each individual has different experiences and knowledge. This parafigm not only observes and studies social reality but also bases the truth of reality beliefs, facts, and credibility, so that truth can be developed with an emphasis on objectivity.

This study uses John Fiske's semiotic analysis to analyze and understand meaning in depth through the representation of Batak Toba family values depicted in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*. "Television Code" uses three levels of coding the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology to understand meaning through messages in social codes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 95 minute film *Tulang Belulang Tulang* present the conflicts and challenges of social life, family, and the actualization of Batak Toba traditions that occur within Batak Toba families. This film shows the struggles and challenges of Batak Toba families living abroad who return to Batak Toba land (*bona pasongit*) to carry out the traditional death ceremony of Mangongkal Holi. Implementing Batak Toba customs is not easy. This struggle begins with the Laterina family and *tulang ucok*, who bring the bones of their elders to be honored in the Mangongkal Holi ceremony in Batak land (*bona pasogit*). The struggle

of Laterina's family and *tulang ucok*, who brought the old man's remains from abroad to Batak land, was not easy. There were various difficult challenges that they had to face, risking the dignity and honor of the old man's family in the eyes of their relatives.

The challenge is not only the enormous cost but also maintaining and elevating the social status of the within the clan. This rise in social status or honor for Batak Toba families can be achieved through the successful execution of a lively traditional celebration, so that the elders will be seen as successful execution of a lively traditional celebration, so that the elders will be seen as successful and will have a higher level of honor and prestige.

The author has analyzed the representation of Batak Toba family values through the Mangongkal Holi tradition in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*. This analysis was conducted based on John Fiske's "Codes of Television" coding levels, which are divided into the reality level, the representation level, and ideology level. There are twenty-two shots with a total of twenty-three scenes in the film whose signs or symbols have meaning related to Batak Toba family values through the Mangongkal Holi tradition. These findings were obtained through the author analysis, supported by data from journals, books, and the internet resource.

Level of Reality

At the level of reality, the author describes this level in terms of several codes such as appearance, expression, behavior, costume, environment, and dialogue. The values of the Batak Toba family are represented through several codes that convey the meaning of Batak Toba family values in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*:

a. Appearance

In the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*, there are twenty-two shots that will be analyzed by the researcher. One of the codes at this level of reality is appearance. Appearance in the film is a strong supporting factor in the delivery and interpretation of Batak Toba cultural messages. In twenty-two shots that convey the values of the Batak Toba family through the Mangongkal Holi tradition, the author found that the implementation of the traditional Batak customs in Batak Toba families reflects a distinctive Batak Toba cultural appearance when attending traditional ceremonies. This can be seen in the appearance of Batak Toba

women (the parboru side) Laterina, Opung Tiolin, and Haasian, who are dressed in kebaya complete with songket and brocade fabrics, bold make up dominated by bright red lipstick, and high hair buns. Not only women, but women in Batak Toba also have a special appearance that becomes their identity, namely a shirt with a tie, complemented by a suit and loafers. The appearance portrayed in this film reflects the reality of the appearance norms of Batak Toba families when performing traditional activities.



b. Expression

The realization of tradition requires a long series of processes. In traditional ceremonies the parboru are the one who become *parhobas* (those who assist with the event). In this film, Laterina's gestures appear relaxed as she performs a series of traditional ceremonies involving the removal and cleaning of old bones carried out in exile. Laterina's body language shows her fatigue as she wipes her forehead while cleaning the old bones with turmeric and kaffir lime.



c. Behavior

This film depicts various behaviors exhibited by each family in the Batak Toba tribe, behaviors that are generally inherent in Batak Toba society. *First*, talkativeness, in Batak Toba families, women tend to be talkative, Batak Toba mothers are often seen as very talkative women who pay close attention to their families, *Second*, anger, the Batak Toba people are known for being emotional, quick-tempered, and loud (assertive). The behaviors are often exhibited by the elderly family members. Laterina often reacts to the situations they are experiencing. *Fifth*, resigned and sad, Laterina reluctantly said that

she would sell the necklace given to her by her elders to cover the urgent expenses of her family while in their hometown. With sadness, they had to continue pursuing their ambition, which was to ensure that the traditional ceremony of the elders would continue and not fail, so that their family could achieve *hamoraon* (wealth), *hagabeon* (success) and *hasangapon* (recognition from others). *Sixth*, calm and arrogant, behind *ucok* relaxed behavior, he tried to remain calm in response to the critical situation facing his extended family. *Ucok* arrogant behavior was an attempt to honor and show appreciation to *Opung Tiolin*, who had saved money and worked for 25 years without a single day off so that the Mangongkal Holi celebration of his extended family could still be held.

Seventh, *Opung Tiolin*, an elderly man who had contributed greatly to his extended family, appeared sad and sullen. Because of his kindness, his descendants were not looked down upon by their peers. In gratitude for his kindness, his descendants wanted to hold a lively traditional ceremony to show their respect, gratitude, and happiness to their ancestor, the elderly man, by elevating the social status of his family. *Eighth*, *Laterina* cried helplessly, resigned to the situation that had befallen their extended family. Their family had not yet found the remains of the elder, and they were risking the honor and reputation of the elder's extended family. *Ninth*, ambitious behavior was demonstrated by *tulang ucok*, who had to think of various ways to attend and manage the old bone ceremony. *Tenth*, traditional celebrations are the lifeblood of Batak Toba culture. *Opung Tiolin* was very angry with *Laterina* because she was late in bringing the old bones, causing the Mangongkal Holi traditional celebration to be extended by one day, which resulted in increased expenses for *Opung Tiolin*. In opposition, the Batak are known for their behavior of opposing wrongdoing by upholding, so that the honor of their family would remain intact in the eyes of their relatives.



d. Environment

In this film, the environment depicted is a visualization of the entire process of celebrating the Mangongkal Holi festival in Batak Toba culture. This environment shows the place where the old bones are buried in exile, the process of cleaning the bones carried out at the burial site, the festive atmosphere of the Batak Toba traditional celebration, the surroundings of the monument, the peaceful life in Batak land, and the natural beauty of *Bona Pasogit*.



e. Dialog

Conversations containing Batak Toba family values are found in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*, which depicts many dialogues at the level of reality. From twenty-two shots, the author describes conversations that are rich in Batak Toba family values through the Mangongkal Holi tradition. On the level of reality, there are many dialogues.

Scene	Keterangan
Scene 1	"In Batak Toba, a young uncle is called <i>tulang</i> , so you understand, right? I am called Great Grandparents (<i>Tulang Tua</i>) because I am Cian Great Grandparents, not because I have always been old".
Scene 4	"Bro, keep an eye on <i>Ucok</i> . He talks too much and won't stop. He'll ruin our ceremony", "This is your family ceremony. I can't interfere <i>hula-hula</i> , it's taboo".

Scene 7	“Do you want us to be cursed? It would be better for us to disappear than for our <i>tulang tua</i> to disappear”.
Scene 7	“The important thing is that the <i>tulang tua</i> ceremony must continue”
Scene 11	“Mom, you’ve been working 25 years. I’ve never seen you take a rest, and it’s all so that the <i>tulang tua</i> can receive his final respect. Come on, Mom, don’t hold back—just bury him tomorrow so that tonight’s party can go ahead and everyone will be amazed and say “ <i>Wow, the tulang tua descendants are all so successful</i> ”.
Scene 22	“Why don’t you take care of your husband? How could he faint? You should be grateful that you married Mondo and not some artsy guy with an uncertain future. It’s embarrassing.”
Scene 14	“The most important thing is the honor of the Cian family. Grandma has spent a lot of money, it’s embarrassing”.
Scene 15	“Cian doesn’t have any more money to hold a ceremony like this. If this fails, we will be embarrassed. If you really care about your <i>tulang tua</i> , don’t cause a commotion at the ceremony”.
Scene 22	“Great Grandparents misses gathering with his children, Mama. Imagine if it were our bones that could not be reunited”.

Scene 22	“Cian that’s right, Mom. Great Grandparents (<i>Tulang Tua</i>) wants to be buried with his child. We cannot continue with this event”.
Scene 22	“This is about the honor of the family - our shame, in Batak Toba says <i>Maila Hita</i> “.
Scene 22	“I have the power authority to stop this ceremony, so I have the right to stop this ceremony. Stop all of this, Ma!”.
Scene 22	“All my life, I have worked so that I could have this ceremony, and today I am ashamed. I would rather die”.

Level Representasi

At the representation level, the author describes several codes of meaning found at this level, which are strongly imbued with the values and meaning of the Batak Toba family as represented in the film *Tulang Belulang Tulang*.

The shot was taken using a close-up camera angle. Close-up highlights facial expressions, significant movements, or objects (Ramadhani, 2024). The close-up in this scene emphasizes the process of cleaning old bones using kaffir lime and turmeric, which reinforces the mystical spiritual values of ancestral bones. Batak Toba culture holds that turmeric and lime are sacred. Batak Toba customs that the process of cleaning bones carries a high level of sacredness and spiritual significance concerning the honor, purity, and eternal spirit of the ancestors.

Traditional Batak *gondang* (*batak drum*) music from the Batak Toba has spiritual value related to ancestors and the God (Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon) (Tinambunan, 2022). *Gondang Batak* accompanies the *tor-tor* dance (*marnortor*). *Dison Adong Huboan Tuhan* is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God Almighty. This song is performed to offer thanks to Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon as an expression of gratitude for the blessings received and to present the best offering that God has provided.

In Batak Toba families, conflict often arise between children and mother. Patriarchy is deeply ingrained in Batak Toba culture, resulting in social inequality between women and men. In Batak Toba culture, the main role of women is to be gentle, meticulous, strong, and patient in serving their husband. Sons become the main pillars of the family, serving as the successors of the clan, inheritance rights, and customs, so Batak mothers tend to prioritize and respect their sons more. The patrilineal system in Batak Toba culture places daughters in a position that is not equal that of sons. Sons are considered more competent in maintaining their family's identity within the traditional system and cultural activities.

Conflict between Opung Tiolin and Laterina. (Ampun et al., 2024). Opung Tiolin, through Cian, told Laterina that the act of exchanging the old bones with fake ones to save the honor of their extended family was not right. The elder's spirit longs to gather and rest peacefully with his children and wife, which would not happen if the fake bones were buried. This belief holds that after death, a person's spirit (tondi) still exists and can feel and desire natural things such as sincerity, togetherness, and peace, which are connected to the soul (tondi). Traditional Batak culture believes that a human being consists of pematang (the body) and tondi (the soul or spirit), and tondi is granted by Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon or The Primordial Being.

Ideological Level

The backbone of the film is the representation of Batak Toba family values contained in the Mangongkal Holi tradition, which is then presented through narratives, action, and other supporting elements that have been carefully arranged. The values of the Batak Toba family through the Mangongkal Holi tradition are represented by the extended family of the elders, namely Opung Tiolin, Tulang Ucok, Laterina, Mondo, Hasian (Cian) and Alon. This film indirectly depicts patriarchy is still common in the customs and culture of Batak Toba families. The patriarchal system toward women remains prevalent in Batak Toba communities due to the patrilineal system adopted by the Batak Toba tribe. In this system, men inherit the clan name, property, and social status, resulting in women holding a lower position and having fewer rights in various aspects of family and traditional life.

The findings of this study confirm John Fiske's view that meaning in audiovisual texts is produced through three interrelated levels: reality,

representation, and ideology. At the reality level, Batak Toba family values are represented through appearance, costume, expression, behavior, environment, and dialogue. At the representation level, the film uses close-up shots, ritual scenes, traditional music, and dramatic conflict to intensify the meaning of sacredness, sacrifice, and family responsibility. At the ideological level, the film constructs Mangongkal Holi as a cultural practice that legitimizes family honor, social status, and customary authority. Thus, the film should not be understood merely as an entertainment product, but as a cultural text that communicates Batak Toba values through signs and symbols.

The representation of Mangongkal Holi in the film is closely related to the Batak Toba philosophy of hamoraon, hagabeon, and hasangapon. These values appear as ideological standards used to measure family success and social respectability. The film shows that a family's ability to hold a large and successful traditional ceremony becomes a symbolic indicator of prestige. This finding is in line with previous studies on Batak Toba society which explain that customary ceremonies are important media for actualizing social status, strengthening kinship solidarity, and preserving clan identity. Therefore, Mangongkal Holi is not only a spiritual ceremony for honoring ancestors, but also a social mechanism through which families negotiate reputation, dignity, and collective recognition.

From a critical perspective, the film also reveals that cultural preservation is inseparable from power relations. The patrilineal system in Batak Toba culture gives men a privileged position as clan successors and holders of customary legitimacy. Women, on the other hand, are represented as figures who must support the continuity of family honor, even when they experience emotional pressure and limited decision-making power. This shows that patriarchy operates not only through direct domination, but also through customary norms that are accepted and reproduced within the family. Therefore, the film provides an important critical reflection on how gender inequality can be maintained through cultural traditions that are considered sacred and honorable.

Compared with previous studies on Batak Toba cultural representation, this study contributes by showing that Tulang Belulang Tulang does not merely visualize tradition, but also reveals the ideological tension behind it. The film presents Mangongkal Holi

as a space where spirituality, kinship, economy, social status, and gender hierarchy intersect. This means that the meaning of family values in the film is complex: on the one hand, the film affirms solidarity, respect for ancestors, and cultural continuity; on the other hand, it also exposes social pressure, economic burden, patriarchal control, and inequality within the customary system. This critical reading strengthens the contribution of the study to semiotic analysis, cultural studies, and gender studies.

CONCLUSION

The Tulang Belulang Tulang strongly represents the values of the Batak Toba family contained in the Mangongkal Holi tradition, a practice of reuniting the bones of elderly family members, children, and wives who have passed away into a monument prepared by the descendants of the elders, namely Opung Tiolin, Laterina, Tulang Ucok, Mondo, Hasian and Alon. The Mangongkal Holi tradition serves as a final tribute that can elevate the social status or honor of ancestors in the eyes of their descendants.

The Batak Toba family places great value on family honor as the authority of family identity by prioritizing the values of *hamoraon*, *hagabeon* and *hasangapon*, which are embedded in every principle of the Batak Toba family and regulated within the *Dalihan Na Tolu* customary system that governs kinship relationship in the Batak Toba family. Family values are not only applied in daily life, but the Batak Tob family also maintains close ties to customs in traditional activities, which are like *wisa* applied in daily life and regulated by *Dalihan Na Tolu*, encompassing the relationship between *hul-hula*, *boru* and *dongan tubu*.

The honor of the Batak Toba family is closely linked to clan identity. To achieve *hasangapon*, *hagabeon*, and *hamoraon* for their families, the Batak Toba community strives in various ways to participate in traditional activities and carry out customs to elevate the family's honor. Family honor cannot be bought, but it can be attained through active participation in traditional activities and the successful implementation of traditional celebrations conducted as festively as possible.

Within Batak Toba families, patriarchy is still common, with this patriarchal culture being passed down from generation to generation within the family

sphere. It is influenced by the patrilineal system adopted by the Batak Toba tribe, resulting in inequality between the position of girls and boys. Men are considered the primary figures in continuing the family line, while women are positioned as supporting elements only (Valdo et al., 2025). Patriarchal actions against women in this film are depicted through Opung Tiolin behavior toward Laterina and Laterina behavior toward Hasian. Patriarchy has become a cultural tradition practiced by the Batak Toba people, which is highly restrictive for Batak women, as it prioritizes the position and role of men in all aspects and emphasizes the subordinate position of women within the family.

The film Tulang Belulang Tulang provides a realistic portrayal of how the Batak Toba people continue to view families through their social class and status within their own ethnic group. Traditional ceremonies serve as occasions for the Batak Toba people to actualize their social status through various rituals, ranging from those held before birth to those conducted after death (Firmando, 2022).

The rise in social status or prestige of the Batak Toba family is achieved through the privileges of *hamoraon*, *hasangapon* and *hagabeon*, as well as through their participation in traditional activities and the fulfillment of customs carried out by their families. The elevation of Batak Toba family's honorary status is reflected in the realization of the philosophy of *hamoraon*, *hagabeon*, and *hasangapon*, which is measured by the success and grandeur of the traditional ceremonies performed by their families. Thus, a family is regarded as successful and honorable (having authority) in terms of customs if it succeeds in holding magnificent traditional ceremonies.

Realizing a successful and festive traditional ceremony to elevate the social status of ancestors and their descendants certainly requires considerable preparation and sacrifice in terms of the family's economic resources and capabilities. The more money spent on funeral celebration, the greater the family's reputation and prestige in the community (Firmando, 2020). Honor cannot be bought with money, but it can be earned through a moral life, contributions to customs, and the family's ability to carry out traditions in a festive manner (Siburian et al., 2025).

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