

SIRIH AS A SYMBOL OF VERBAL AND NON VERBAL MESSAGES IN ACEH COMMUNITIES

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Abstract— *This present study seeks to examine communication based on “sirih” as the symbol related to the message contained verbally and non-verbally appears and develops in the city of Banda Aceh. The targets studied are the essence, function and meaning of the symbols contained in the message as communication media in the phenomenon of social and cultural life. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach that is packaged in phenomenology. This approach, seeing that phenomena must be carried out and understood holistically, prioritizes process over outcome. Obtained results showed that “sirih” into a community tradition has reflected a variety of symbols from the messenger by ignoring the meaning of the recipient of the message, especially in the meaning of betel in various official ceremonies and in daily life as traditions and customary traditions that become the inculcation of values and norms carried out and trusted and believed can bring blessings in human life in social life, although not all people are able to understand and interpret the message contained therein.*

Keywords— *Communication, message, symbol, sirih, Aceh.*

I. INTRODUCTION

When humans are born, it is not only their talents and instincts that become special values attached to them, but also the mind that makes humans different from other creatures. Through the mind, humans then develop a culture that shapes the characteristics and identity of their own lives. Culture was born as a result of the development of habits found or taught to him. Culture is a matter of the how and what (of what and how) of social interaction in dealing with and solving common problems, which are then strongly attached and passed down from generation to generation. Culture universally serves as a reference for carrying out and organizing ongoing social activities and processes [1], [2]. One function of communication in the social system is to advance culture by spreading cultural and artistic products with the intention of preserving the legacy of the past. The people of Aceh are one of the people of Indonesia who try to maintain and preserve values, norms, and habits in daily life.

For the people of Aceh, communication is the main media in knowing culture and all forms of creative symbolic expressions that have meaning and function in human life. Culture can also be expressed as a variety of steps and ways humans communicate through human communities or social groups, this communication uses verbal and non-verbal symbols that have their own meanings and functions articulated in socio-cultural groups. Symbolic interaction experts such as George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and Charles H. Cooley (1845-1929) focused their attention on interactions between individuals and groups [3]. The use of symbols in communication that has been mutually agreed upon, approved, popular, and systematically structured, means that communication that has been accepted and recognized by

its existence in the community as a standard of communication has been lifted from shared values and aesthetics. Communication symbols that have been agreed upon are generally found in the local culture. Local culture also functions as a national cultural identity, because it must always be explored, preserved and developed so that it can take root more real in the struggle of human life behaviour [4], [5].

In Aceh province, “*sirih*” is a habit that is carried from generation to generation in people's daily lives. Intra-cultural communication can be used as an indicator to measure the effectiveness of sending, receiving and achieving understanding of symbols that contain meaning and function in them. *Sirih* is one form of intra-cultural communication media, both verbal and non-verbal that is spoken through symbols. Verbal communication is a word, phrase or sentence spoken and heard, while the process of non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture and body movements, touch, clothing, artefacts, silence, temporality, and so on [3], [6], [7]. In the community there is a message delivered through symbols which are a reflection of the way the community understands the message conveyed and understand the values and norms in the *sirih* treat.

In this study, we attempted to study the problems or phenomena that exist in Aceh society through understanding the message conveyed through betel as a habit that contains norms, and values. The researcher draws a picture of the community under study. The process of interaction that occurs in both verbal and non-verbal communication which contains the symbolic meaning and function of tradition is a form of message delivery that is carried out within indigenous communities.

Symbolic interaction is a theory that is widely used for qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. Symbolic interaction theory is currently felt to be developing rapidly, in tune with the depletion of belief in quantitative research or the theory of functionalism [8], [9]. Symbolic interactions can interpret symbols according to the subjective conditions of communication actors in society that the symbolic interaction perspective seeks to understand human behaviour from the subject's perspective. Perspectives suggest that human behaviour must be seen as a process that enables forming and regulating their behaviour by considering the expectations of others who are interaction partners. Definitions given to others, situations, objects, and even themselves determine their behaviour. They cannot be classified as needs, impulses, cultural demands, or role demands [10], [11].

Symbolic interactions understand humans based on the view of the subject itself. That is, the subject determines his condition and the environment based on the symbol he has. They themselves explain and determine the behaviour, not people outside of him. In giving birth to and developing symbolic interaction theories many scientists have a role especially in students and followers of the understanding of the interaction. In the symbolic interaction theory, humans act on the meaning of the subject or object [10], [12], [13]. In addition, the meaning or symbol is a process of the results of interactions that occur in humans that are interpreted by humans that involve individuals in the community itself.

Humans in interacting with other individuals can use the ability to think to interpret the meaning that is around him. Through human meaning can communicate internally the scope of a particular culture to continue its action in society and its environment. Humans change the symbols and meanings that are around them based on their own interpretations. Humans are

able to modify the change because of the ability to think and interact through stages that pay attention to the advantages and disadvantages of his actions. Through interactions that are formed and evolved to form a community [7], [14]. To understand the meanings, symbols and actions that are hidden according to symbolic interactionism require qualitative methods. The nature and natural conditions of the subjects studied, for example by giving them a chance or letting them talk or behave as they wish for the emergence of this hidden behaviour. This symbolic interaction theory is the basis for explaining how the meanings or symbols agreed upon and thought by traditional leaders and the community in determining their actions [15], [16]. The meaning of the symbol that they agreed on would be more perfect if the interaction between fellow communities and other communities. The symbols that are created, thought about and agreed upon by them are the language of delivering messages through betel that can describe an individual's actions and behaviour.

II. METHODS

This study requires a holistic description of facts and data in the field, so to be more precise the researcher uses a descriptive method, because it has the aim to describe, describe, describe systematically [17], factually and accurately about facts, properties related to the phenomena under study, then an approach is used. qualitative, because this study reveals a phenomenon that concerns the reality of the lives of the people of Aceh against the content of the message conveyed through *sirih*.

Researchers try to understand the social facts that exist in the field in accordance with the actual reality in this case the researcher also makes in-depth observations of social phenomena as carefully as possible. To express the symptoms that exist in society, researchers use a qualitative approach that is descriptive, using a humanistic approach [14], [18]. In general, descriptive research describes an event. In other word, this study wants to understand the culture that exists in society, in this case the writer will describe social phenomena related to culture, both in the form of customs, habits, norms and values of the Acehnese people in Banda Aceh City.

The approach using descriptive research method is a method in examining a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of present events [8]. The purpose of this research is to make a systematic, factual and accurate description, picture or picture of the facts, properties, and relationships between the phenomena investigated.

This study uses a purposive technique, which aims to find as much information as possible. This kind of purposive withdrawal technique is very useful considering that qualitative research is more directed towards research that is concerned with the process rather than the results. From the explanation above, the informants in this study will consist of community leaders (religious leaders, cultural leaders, intellectual leaders, traditional leaders and others who can provide accurate and accountable information.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of informants used as subjects in this study were 81 people. In this study, researchers conducted in several sub-districts in the region that shelter in the city of Banda Aceh, namely the researchers consider to be a cultural and representative central area in the

Province of Aceh and for several considerations, as for the number of sub-districts sample, there were nine districts, from each sub-district only three villages were selected, and each village was represented by three people as informants, so that the total informants were 81 people and were added with 2 government institutions. As for the informants in this study, not only men, but there are some women, but almost all informants are above the young age, with the consideration that all the informants are truly people who are directly involved in the implementation of traditional culture and people who have experienced the procession of traditional marriage rituals.

In the people of Aceh, *sirih* or betel plants are often used as a communication tool both verbally and non-verbally. Betel plants have the highest position and become excellent and a mainstay for the community. In these plants many meanings that can be symbolized in the social life of the community. Betel in the eyes of the people of Aceh as a whole is considered as a very effective communication tool in delivering messages both verbally and non-verbally. Both in daily life and at traditional wedding ceremonies and respect for official guests, because the people of Aceh see betel as a symbol in the delivery of messages that have social values and aesthetic values and ethical values in life and are a reflection of people's attitudes and behaviour.

The Acehnese people in general are very well acquainted with plants that are named with *ranub* or betel, some Acehnese people are fond of chewing *ranub* or betel, including children, teenagers, or adults and parents. All of them like to eat *ranub* or *sirih*, they consider it to be a variety of medicines, one of which is as a tooth brace. According to the people of Aceh that *Ranub* or betel is a sign of honour or a symbol of glory when receiving guests. When guests arrive, they are always presented with a *ranub* or betel as a sign of glorification, if the arrival of guests is not included with the treat it and *sirih* in front of him, then it can be concluded or a sign that the host is not happy with the presence of the guest. As for the *ranub* or betel as a symbol of breeding, because in the *ranub* or betel there is chalk, areca nut, *gambier*, all of which have a soft taste, so that of the four kinds of elements, after chewing, the color will change to one colour (green coloured betel or betel, white chalk, *gambier* orange and yellow areca) from the four different colours when chewed it turns into one color that is red, one taste and one shape. So the meaning contained in the use of the four kinds of materials that symbolizes intimacy, unity. This means that the Acehnese are very happy to assume that the cord of friendship should be made into a brotherhood, so through the *ranub* or betel can be symbolized as a meaning of glory between each other.

It is not surprising if the Acehnese when they want to start a conversation are always done with treats and chewing *ranub* or betel as an opening word, usually *ranub* or betel is the most leading element, when they want to receive guests, both official and ordinary guests who come home. If we want to propose to a girl before opening the conversation, we will be presented with *ranub* or betel, after eating them, we will start discussing the purpose and purpose of coming. *Ranub* or betel is a symbol of connecting the talks between the two parties, without the *ranub* or betel is not complete to express an intention. So a set of *ranub* or betel is symbolized as a symbol of seriousness to express the desired desire for a girl to be edited and will be made a wife, then the *ranub* or betel is something very important and has a very high value. When a girl is about to be proposed by the family of a young child as a *baro linto* candidate, then she must bring a set of *ranub* or betel wrapped in yellow cloth that is usually placed in a *ceurana*, this is a sign of honour. The set of *sirih* must be truly intact in all the

elements that exist, because if there is one element or element of this ranub or betel something that is lacking it is considered as an unpreparedness to express intentions and goals.

In ranub or betel, if we look at the elements that can be taken, the Acehnese people believe that have elements of peace, friendship, unity, health, economy, and beauty (beauty). In the term ethnology ranub or betel is believed to contain supernatural power because that treat ranub or betel is very important in carrying out traditional ceremonies, for example in marital customs starting from the initial stage of the *jak meulakee* stage to the marriage party always begins with innate ranub or betel as an opening act word and as a symbol of breeding. *Ranub* or betel cannot be replaced with anything even though the marriage has shifted in adat, so there are things that somehow in the marriage custom absolutely cannot be shifted or replaced because, *sirih* in Acehnese society has become a habit which has been attached to people's lives.

There are several kinds of names and arrangements of the ranub or betel as a symbol for the community, such as *ranub koeng haba*, *ranub urn* (the welcoming reception of great guests), *intat sign ranub*, *batee ranub*, *merante ranub*, all of it as a symbol of honour, every guest who came to be glorified by serving ranub or betel, so ranub or betel is very decisive as a special treat to one's self-esteem, if at a state guest visit after the event is finished usually the ranub or betel is distributed to families, relatives, guests of honour earlier as a sign of close friendship.

In the customary procession of marriage, ranub or betel paired with dowry, people interpret betel as a woman while dowry as a man, who is a husband and wife, so usually no one should be left behind one of them, if left behind it is interpreted by someone not being real in his intentions. Then finish the betel event usually distributed at the same time along with the default delivery in the form of cakes and so on. Those who receive the shipment have the right to come to the barara virgin house to find (give money in return) to the barara virgin. Ranub or betel can also replace as a messenger from those who have a celebration to invite attend the event that took place at his home, a messenger coming with a betel as a sign of a representative who has a celebration to convey a message, the contents of the message is a celebration invitation symbolized through betel.

In non-verbal discussion, ranub or betel can also be symbolized as follows, such as dislike, that is, if someone views a person who is considered impolite and less designable, then the betel treat is done without being accompanied by a series of devices, such as whiting, areca nut, areca nut, the treat signifies the owner's dislike of someone. While betel treats contained in a sense of likeness have the opposite of a dislike meaning the treat is usually betel complexed with the components that should be. There are also betel treats which are interpreted by coming or visiting not on time, meaning that someone is visiting someone's house but by chance the husband is not home, by the owner of the house not driving away his neighbours, even guests are welcome to enter, but when the owner of the house presents water for guests put a betel leaf in the water tray to be allowed to drink, with a betel leaf guests understand that it is not timely to visit or come home because at that time there was no husband, then the guest returned by himself. From the betel sheet, Aceh people can interpret that non-verbal communication that occurs is understood and interpreted, even as a reflection to send someone home indirectly. While the function of the ranub depends on each aspect of the ranub. Each message implicit in the appearance of ranub or betel has a meaning contained therein, the meaning is very influential on the symbol of glorification for the people of Aceh both in the elements of values, norms and habits in the culture of Acehnese society. Betel treats as a word opener are the

people of Aceh when welcoming guests both ordinary and in an event always begins with a betel treat to the guest as a word opener or as a symbol of guest glorification, after the betel is served then the host opens a conversation about what the purpose of the guest visit. Tunbuhan Betel is also believed by the people of Aceh to have aesthetic value or beauty and health, proven to cure several diseases and be a beauty value especially for women. No wonder that almost all Aceh people plant these plants in their home yards, because they can add to the family's economy, especially during the wedding ceremony.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Sirih is considered by the people of Aceh as a symbol that can provide information or messages both verbally and non-verbally with the aim that people understand and understand the contents of the message contained therein. The communication symbol contained in the betel leaf is a reflection that proves the seriousness and agreement of the community in maintaining and preserving the values and norms that have become the hereditary inheritance as one of the tools of control or control in social life. There are supporting and inhibiting factors in the current era in maintaining and educating the betel on the community so that they are not displaced or not lost. Supporting factors can come from internal communities and interact with fellow community leaders, while the inhibiting factor is the lack of understanding of some people of the values and norms contained in betel that has been believed by Acehnese people.

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