

The Meaning and Historical Value of *Gorga* in Batak Toba's Traditional House

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the historical value, meaning and function of the "Gorga" ornament in the Batak Toba traditional house which was reviewed with a Semiotic Study. The method used in this research is descriptive method. Descriptive method can be interpreted as a problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing / describing the state of the object / research subject (a person, institution, community, etc.) at the present time based on the facts that appear as they are. The results of field research show that ornaments have a very influential relationship with the social life of the Batak Toba people, where these ornaments are used as guidelines to assess an action taken by one person against another or serve as material for living a harmonious life. This can be seen from the understanding that is revealed in the field where the meanings that appear are closely related to the actions that are often carried out by the community. The conclusion of this study is that Gorga or traditional sculptures which are usually found on the outer walls of houses and the front of traditional houses or also called ornaments that contain mystical elements that repel reinforcements and have philosophical values of Batak culture. The output of this research will be published in an international journal indexed by sinta.

Keywords

Gorga batak; historical value; meaning and function



I. Introduction

Ornaments or decorations are cultural heritages of our ancestors, which are still commonly found in all corners of the country, usually in their manifestations associated with religious matters. Ethnicity as one that sustains a sense of primordialism is often interpreted as a social group in a social or cultural system that has a certain meaning or position because of heredity, customs, religion, language, and so on (Angkat, 2018). This culture can be found in various aspects and scope, such as economics, education, law, and politics (Wayan, 2020). Toba Batak tribe from ancient times until today still retains the traditional values inherited from their ancestors, although sometimes they are contrary to religious teachings but are still maintained (Napitu, 2020). The general term for ornament in Indonesian is ornamental variety and has the same meaning as *Gorga*. So according to Warneck (in Beheri Goltom, 2010: 8), in the 2001 Batak Toba Cultural Dictionary book Indonesia "*Gorga* is a variety of carving, coloring the walls of the house with three basic colors, for example: red, black, and white". Various writings that have been done, in general, *Gorga* Batak Toba can be classified into six types, namely *Gorga* in the form of humans (*Gorga* Adop-adop), animals

(Boraspati, Manuk), giants / fantasies (Jenggar, Gaja Dompok, Lions, Ulu Paung) , plants (Sitompi, Dalihan Natolu, Simeol-eol, Simarogung-ogung, Sitagan), geometric (Ipon-ipon, Iran- iran), and nature or the cosmos (Simataniari, Naualu Village).

Likewise, Ruma Bolon / Ruma *Gorga* "The art of carving the Batak Toba Traditional House", has various types of ornaments. Each of these ornaments has a different form, function, and meaning. Ruma Bolon Batak Toba is often found in the Balige area, Simanindo Village, Samosir Regency, Tarutung City, and others.

The Batak Toba people also know the ornamental culture which has its own meaning and function. These ornaments have various kinds of patterns including plant patterns, equipment / tools / means of life, animal patterns, and others. One example of an ornament found in Ruma Bolon is the Head of a Buffalo which is carved on the wall of a traditional house, which means a symbol of glory. Buffalo is seen as a kind of mighty animal. Do not carelessly disturb humans, only people who interfere will be in the horns.

Rumah Bolon (big house) in the ethnic Batak Toba is a traditional house of the Batak tribe in North Sumatra which is a symbol of the existence of the Batak community, has a characteristic in its shape, which is rectangular, like a house on stilts with pillars made of wood as high as 1.75 meters and with a diameter of more than 40 centimeters. To unite the parts of the building, a lock system is made between wood, and rattan and fibers are used as binding materials for building materials.

The traditional house for the Batak Toba people is not just a place to shelter and shelter from the rain and the hot sun, but is actually full of philosophical values that can be used as a way of life. Various understandings and noble values are inherent and contained in traditional traditional houses that should be interpreted and held as a view of life in the order of daily life, in the context of inter-individual interaction. The traditional house for the Batak people is a cultural product that has a very high value because for the Batak people the house is a place or container where we will start behavior that we will later apply to the outside world or the community environment, then in the case of the Batak people teach social values that Both must start from the house, namely the family, and the social values taught by the Batak community cannot be separated from the Batak Toba traditional house which is symbolically depicted in the traditional house or called Ruma Bolon.

The construction of a house in various regions in Indonesia, especially in the Batak Toba people, varies both in terms of materials and architecture, each of which has its own style. However, in the times, the ornaments found on the walls of traditional houses are considered as decorations that beautify the building. Therefore, this *Gorga* is a cultural asset that needs to be preserved and preserved. This article is entitled "Historical Value, Meaning and Function of *Gorga* in Ruma *Gorga* Batak Toba Society."

II. Research Methods

Research is an activity to search, record, formulate and analyze, up to compiling reports. So, the research method is the science of the path that is passed to reach an understanding. According to Maryaeni (2005:58), "Method is a method taken by researchers in finding understanding in line with the focus and goals set. The term method often qualitative research is research that is descriptive in nature and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more highlighted in qualitative research. The theoretical basis is used as a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts on the ground. In addition, the theoretical basis is also useful for providing an overview of the research background and as a material for discussing research results.

According to Sibarani, (2014: 25), qualitative methods seek to explore, find, reveal, and explain the "meaning" (meaning) and "patterns" of the object of research that is studied holistically. This qualitative research follows the steps of Miles and Huberman (Sibarani, 2014: 24-27), namely

- a) Data collection (data collection), namely collecting data in the form of words by means of interviews, observations, document digests, recording, and recording.
- b) Data reduction, namely summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns and "setting aside" unnecessary ones.
- c) Data display (data presentation), namely showing data, classifying data, presenting it in the form of narrative text or charts.
- d) Conclusion drawing/verification, namely drawing conclusions and verification so that researchers can formulate the findings of the researcher.

Data collection method is a research method in reviewing data both from literature review and field research. The data collection methods in qualitative research are: Observation and interviews.

III. Discussion

3.1 The Historical Value of *Gorga* in Batak Toba Community

Traditional *Gorga* is a variety of two-dimensional carvings that adorn the Batak Toba traditional house. As a decorative carving, the traditional *Gorga* is synonymous with the king's house or the house of the rich. In addition to the Batak Toba traditional house, the traditional *Gorga* is also found in urging devices (musical instruments), hunting-gathering equipment, and craft objects. That is, the most complete application of traditional *Gorga* is found in the Batak Toba traditional house. The traditional *Gorga* heritage in the Batak Toba traditional house is found in the areas of Samosir, Lumbanuulu, Porsea, Silimbat, Balige, and Bakara. Judging from its history, the Samosir region is believed by the Batak Toba people to have the oldest power compared to other regions. They have passed down from generation to generation the insight of the traditional *Gorga* and values to be passed on to the next generation, because there is a sense of pride in them for the traditional *Gorga* that once existed in the Batak Toba traditional house. According to them, traditional *Gorga* forms contain aesthetic elements that are inherited directly by their ancestors. That is, the traditional *Gorga* grew as a consequence of the communication that the Batak Toba community had inherited to families who had clan attachments and closeness.

Traditional communities communicate by building mental and spiritual strength, so that they can give life to its citizens in achieving their goals and hopes. According to the Batak Toba people, the traditional *Gorga* in the Batak Toba traditional house contains symbolic meanings as a medium for communicating with ancestral spirits who still reside in the world. Therefore, any communication related to ancestral spirits is always associated with the traditional *Gorga*. The symbolic meanings of the traditional *Gorga* in the Batak Toba traditional house are reflected in its motifs. According to the Batak Toba people, motifs that resemble humans, animals, giants, and the cosmos contain symbolic meanings that are sacred. In addition, plant and geometric motifs contain symbolic meanings that are profane. Based on its symbolic meaning, traditional *Gorga* compositions occupy structured areas, starting from the top, middle, and bottom. The symbolic meanings that are sacred in nature make the socio-religious status of the traditional *Gorga* occupy the highest position compared to the profane carvings.

Therefore, the Batak Toba people from generation to generation still preserve the traditional *Gorga* as an ornament of their traditional house. They believe that the existence of the traditional *Gorga* in the Batak Toba traditional house is empowered to ward off evil spirits that are around it, and become a way of life. This is in accordance with Sirait's statement (1977:17), that the traditional *Gorga* in the Batak Toba traditional house is intended as a medium for guarding the safety of its inhabitants, because the traditional *Gorga* contains high spiritual values and strong aesthetic values.

Over time, various aspects regarding the traditional *Gorga* have changed. The Batak Toba people's belief in the sacredness of the traditional *Gorga* has faded. Eliade once asserted that the religious meaning of the cosmos was lost because the sacred perspective changed as a whole to become useless and meaningless (Eliade, 2002: 108). This causes the Batak Toba people to develop more progressively and gradually have separated themselves from traditional rules. Now, traditional *Gorga* artifacts in Batak Toba traditional houses are no longer found in Samosir district. The architecture of the Batak Toba traditional house is still preserved, but the traditional *Gorga* motifs have been replaced with 'new' *Gorga* motifs. In addition, the arrangement of the patterns is also not as complete as in the traditional *Gorga* even though the layout of the traditional *Gorga* motifs has shown evidence of the intellectual intelligence of the Toba people.

3.2 The Meaning and Function of *Gorga* for the Batak Toba People

a. *Gorga Singa singa* Ornament Sign Shape

When viewed from the origin of the word *Gorga Singa Singa* comes from the word lion which means a wild animal that becomes the king of the forest. But the form of *Gorga singa singa* is not like the shape of a real lion. *Gorga singa singa* have more resemblance to a human face with a squatting attitude. The head is made big and the feet are small and the eyes are wide, the head is decorated with a three-color cloth, namely red, white, black and the feet kneel just below the head. Located above the right and left pillars of the Toba Batak traditional house.

Functions of the *Gorga singa singa* Ornament Sign

- Represents the attitude and existence of one's wealth, power, wisdom. *Gorga singa singa* means strength, sturdiness, and authority, so everyone who occupies the house is a person who is powerful and wise in making decisions in a problem.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of the *Gorga singa-singa* Sign

Gorga singa singa symbolize strength, sturdiness, authority in the village. Lions are wild animals that eat anything (omnivores) and are found in the forest. *Gorga singa singa* consists of a human face with a tongue that sticks out almost to the chin. The head is decorated with three color cloth 'three colors', namely red, white, and black and the attitude of the feet kneeling just below the head.



Figure 1. Ornamen Gorga Ulu Paung
(Source: Dokumentasi Pribadi)

3.3 The Sianrebale Age (zero culture)

Gorga Ulu Paung is a giant ornament in the form of half human and half animal, often found in the form of a human head with buffalo horns. It is located at the top end of the Toba Batak traditional house. Ulu Paung is basically the same as Jenggar/Jongrom, namely an ornament in the shape of a buffalo head. The difference is only in the matter of its location.

a. Functions of the *Gorga Ulu Paung* Ornament Sign

- Demonstrate an attitude of alertness, agility in the face of various kinds of trials or distress. *Gorga Ulu Paung* symbolizes might. So, everyone who occupies the house is a person who is alert and quick to face all the trials and dangers that come.
- As a decorative symbol to beautify the Toba Batak traditional house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of the *Gorga Ulu Paung* Ornament Sign

Gorga Ulu Paung is a symbol of strength to protect the household from demons. In some areas, the Ulu Paung is still made from the original buffalo head. In ancient times Ulu Paung was equipped (content) with supernatural metaphysical powers. In addition to beautifying the house, Ulu Paung also functions to fight the begu "ghosts" of the fields that come from outside the village. In ancient times, the Batak people were often attacked by black forces from outside the house to create disputes within the house (family) so that they did not get along between husband and wife. Or make the residents of the house difficult to sleep or fear and also physical pain and various kinds of disharmony. From the meaning of *Gorga Ulu Paung* above which means a symbol of strength to protect the whole house from demons?

3.4 Ornament Sign Shape *Gorga Sitompi*



Figure 2. Ornamen Gorga Sitompi
(Source: Dokumentasi Pribadi)

Gorga Sitompi is a *Gorga* in the form of a tool to tie a buffalo neck to a plow when plowing a field. This tool is made of woven rattan, so judging by the movement of the wicker, it becomes the basis for this *Gorga Sitompi*.

a. Functions of the *Gorga Sitompi* Ornament Sign

- As a means of cohesiveness and mutual help among the Toba Batak people to solve a problem or in a state of joy and sorrow. *Gorga Sitompi* means cultural ties, so that everyone in the house has a sense of helping others. Because mutual help produces cohesiveness among people and will produce harmony and peace.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of the *Gorga Sitompi* Ornament Sign

Gorga Sitompi is a symbol of cultural ties. In ancient times humans worked hand in hand (helping each other) in everything, so that in ancient times kinship and kinship were very close. From the meaning of *Gorga Sitompi* above which has a meaning as a symbol of cultural ties?

3.5 Sign *Gorga Desa Naulu*



Figure 3. *Ornamen Gorga Desa Naulu 'delapan penjuru mata angin'*
(Source: Dokumentasi Pribadi)

Gorga Desa Naulu in the form of the cardinal directions which are added with decorations. There are eight cardinal directions, namely: east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, north, northeast. This *Gorga* is usually placed in the upper, left and right corners of the Toba Batak traditional house.

a. *Gorga* Ornament Sign Function *Desa Naulu*

Demonstrate attitudes and behavior regarding ethics in carrying out activities, such as holding parties, traditional ceremonies and so on. *Gorga nauluis* said to be the cardinal direction, so that each cardinal direction shows a person's attitude and behavior in carrying out their daily lives.

- As a decorative symbol to beautify the Toba Batak traditional house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of Naulu Village *Gorga* Ornament Signs

Gorga Desa Naulu or it is said to be the direction of the wind is used as a symbol associated with ritual activities, farming season, fishing season and so on. There are eight cardinal directions, namely: east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, north, northeast. Of the eight cardinal directions that signify these symbols. From the meaning of *Gorga*, Naulu village above, which means a symbol of ritual activity, farming season, and fishing season?

3.6 Iran-iran *Gorga* Ornament Sign Shape



Figure 4. Ornamen *Gorga Iran-Iran*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

Gorga Iran-Iran is in the form of a type of human make-up material to make it look more beautiful. *Gorga Iran-Iran* is located on the left and right side of the Toba Batak traditional house.

a. *Gorga Iran-iran* Ornament Sign Function

- More shown to someone who has beauty, beauty and can be interpreted as someone who is holy. *Gorga Iran-Iran* means a symbol of beauty. So, everyone who occupies the house is a beautiful person in terms of face and behavior in their daily lives.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of *Gorga Iran-iran* Ornament Signs

This Iranian-iranian *Gorga* is considered a symbol of beauty. Humans if decorated will look beautiful. Likewise, the Toba Batak traditional house, each side of the traditional house is carved with ornaments that function to beautify the traditional house. *Gorga Iran-Iran* is located on the left and right side of the Toba Batak traditional house. From the meaning of *Gorga Iran-Iran* above, it is a symbol of beauty.

3.7 *Gorga Ipon-ipon*



Figure 5. Ornamen *Gorga Ipon-Ipon*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

3.8 *Gorga Manuk*



Figure 6. Ornament *Gorga Manuk*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

Manuk means chicken. Chickens are usually for the Batak people as pets placed under the Toba Batak traditional house. The chicken has two legs and is located under *Gorga Simataniari*. Located in the middle of the Toba Batak traditional house and below *Gorga Simataniari*.

a. Functions of the *Gorga Manuk Ornament Sign*

- As a person's attitude to remind about various advice. *Gorga Manuk* means a reminder to a child who wanders far away to remember his parents. So, the person who occupies the house if his child wanders away will always remember the good advice given by his parents and implemented in his overseas country.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. Meaning of *Gorga Manuk Ornament Sign*

Gorga Manuk means Panungguli "reminder" for his children who are far away overseas, still remembering the bona pasogit "homeland", so that his sustenance is abundant.

3.9 Ornamen *Gorga Sitangan*



Figure 7. Ornamen *Gorga Sitangan*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

The hand is a small white box that serves to store betel, cigarettes, or other small objects. *Gorga Sitangan* is symmetrical like a box lid and is above *Gorga Gaja dompak*. Located above *Gorga Gaja dompak*. Toba Batak traditional house.

a. Functions of the *Gorga Sitangan* Sign Ornament

- As a place to store objects and things so that they are not easily lost and damaged. *Gorga Sitangan* means advice not to be arrogant to people who come to visit. So, everyone who looks after and takes good care of the items in his house is a sign of someone who is busy in receiving guests.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of the *Gorga Sitangan* Ornament Sign

Gorga Sitangan means advice to get rid of pride, especially when receiving guests. Ancestors used to always respect other people outside. *Gorga Sitangan* is symmetrical like a box lid and is above *Gorga Gaja dompak*.

3.10 Ornament of *Gorga Dalihan Natolu* Signs



Figure 8. Ornamen *Gorga Dalihan Natolu*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

Gorga Dalihan Natolu is in the form of intertwined tendrils. *Dalihan natolu* consists of three meanings, namely: *somba Marhula-hula*, *manat Mardongan tubu* and *elek marboru*. From the *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy above, the Toba Batak people practice it as a rule and norm in their daily life. In addition, the kinship relationship that the community has is very close. Located on the front wall of the Toba Batak traditional house.

a. *Dalihan Natolu Gorga* Ornament Sign Function

- As a sign of solidarity and a strong sense of kinship among the Toba Batak people. *Gorga Dalihan Natolu* symbolizes the life philosophy of the Batak people. So, everyone who occupies the house has a sense of kinship seen from that philosophy, namely *somba marhula-hula*, *manat mardongan tubu*, *daan elek marboru* so that the Toba Batak people have cohesiveness in their lives.
- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga*, without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. The Meaning of Dalihan Natolu's *Gorga* Ornament Sign

Gorga Dalihan natolu symbolizes the philosophy of Dalihan Natolu which is the philosophy of life of the Batak people in relationships with others, namely: somba Marhulahula, manat Mardongan tubu and elek marboru. everyday life. In addition, the kinship relationship that the community has is very close. *Gorga* Dalihan Natolu is usually found on the dorpjolo (front wall).

3.11 *Gorga Gaja Dompok*



Figure 9. *Ornamen Gorga Gaja Dompok*
(Source: Dokumenasi Pribadi)

Gorga Gaja dompok is shaped like a 'giant' jenggar which is located at the end of the corner of the Toba Batak traditional house. This *Gorga* Gaja dompok resembles a human with eyes, tongue and nose.

a. Functions of the *Gorga Gaja Dompok* Ornament Sign

As a source of rules and laws. *Gorga* Gaja Dompok is a symbol of truth, namely law. So, everyone who runs his life is based on laws that must be implemented and obeyed.

- As a symbol of decoration to beautify the traditional Batak Toba house. A house without furniture is not beautiful to look at, neither is *Gorga* , without these carvings the house will not be beautiful.

b. Meaning of the *Gorga Gaja Dompok* Ornament

Gorga Gaja dompok is a symbol of truth for the Batak people, namely the law that comes from Debata Mulajadi Nabolon. The law in the Toba Batak community is very strong. If the rules are violated, the punishment can be expelled from the village.

The meaning of the symbols in the Toba Batak ethnic traditional house (*Ruma Bolon*) are the hopes, ideals, and views of life that are represented in the traditional house, namely through the symbol of the shape of the house, the cosmology of the Toba Batak traditional house, the materials used to make the house, as well as decorative ornaments in the form of carvings that are used to make the house. called *Gorga* .

IV. Conclusion

At the end of this study the author will present several conclusions. In line with the formulation of the problem in this study, the intended summary can be seen in the following description:

1. The traditional *Gorga* in the Toba Batak traditional house contains symbolic meanings as a medium for communicating with ancestral spirits who still reside in the world. Therefore, any communication related to ancestral spirits is always associated with the traditional *Gorga*. The symbolic meanings of the traditional *Gorga* in the Toba Batak traditional house are reflected in its motifs.
2. The function of the *Gorga* ornament found in the Toba Batak traditional house shows an attitude of wisdom, power, wealth, cohesiveness, ethics, advice, kinship, warding off evil (mystical) spirits, love of culture, and overcoming all problems.

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