Traditional Practice of Bapanteh in Marriage in Traditional Society of Kerinci Dictrict: Victor Turners Symbolic Analysis

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Abstract

The Bapanteh tradition is a pre-wedding ritual practiced by the Hiang Village community in Sitinjau Laut District, Kerinci Regency. This tradition is not merely ceremonial, but reflects deep cultural values such as kinship, solidarity, and cultural preservation. This study seeks to investigate the symbolic meanings embedded in the Bapanteh tradition, explore the actual practices involved, and understand the reasons behind its preservation amidst modernization. Utilizing a qualitative research approach with Victor Turner's symbolic analysis as the theoretical lens, data were collected through in-depth interviews with local elders, community members, and traditional leaders, as well as through participatory observation. Findings reveal that Bapanteh serves as a social mechanism to reinforce communal ties and express collective identity. It involves community cooperation in borrowing long batik cloths as symbolic offerings, which are then used to decorate the bride's home, symbolizing interconnectedness among families. Although contemporary influences have led to adaptations such as reduced collective participation and the use of modern decorations, the symbolic essence of Bapanteh remains resilient. This study highlights the importance of preserving such traditions as they carry profound cultural meaning and serve as a unifying force in society. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the function of ritual and symbolism in maintaining cultural identity in an era of rapid social change.

Keywords: Bapanteh, Tradition, Symbolic.



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INTRODUCTION

Society and tradition are two inseparable entities. Humans are born into systems of inherited customs and cultural practices, which shape their worldview and daily conduct. Although humans have the ability to innovate and transform culture, they remain inherently connected to the traditions handed down by previous generations (Nur et al., 2023). These traditions evolve with time but retain their essential values, especially in the form of ceremonial expressions (Sukiman et al., 2024). Ceremonies mark important transitions in a person's life birth, marriage, and death and serve as communal acts that prepare individuals to assume their roles within society. Such ceremonies are more than ritual acts; they are symbolic bridges between the past and present, reinforcing identity and social cohesion (Sahabuddin et al., 2024).

In the context of marriage traditions, the *Bapanteh* ritual stands out as a unique cultural practice among the people of Hiang Village in Sitinjau Laut District, Kerinci Regency. This tradition involves borrowing long batik cloths from extended family and neighbors to decorate the bride's house several days before the wedding ceremony. The cloths are arranged in intricate, interwoven patterns, symbolizing interconnectedness, affection, and the unity of both

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families. This practice is not merely aesthetic but carries profound social and cultural meaning. It embodies cooperation (*gotong royong*), kinship, and communal identity, reinforcing the idea that marriage is not only a personal affair but a collective endeavor involving the entire community.

Despite its cultural richness, the *Bapanteh* tradition faces serious challenges in the era of modernization and globalization. Contemporary influences have shifted societal values toward practicality and efficiency, leading to a preference for modern wedding decorations and reduced community participation (Bunyamin et al., 2024). As a result, some families in Hiang have begun to abandon traditional rituals in favor of services provided by wedding organizers. This gradual shift raises concerns about the erosion of cultural heritage and the weakening of intergenerational bonds within the community. However, there are still many families who continue to uphold this tradition, signaling its resilience and adaptability.

Several previous studies have examined marriage traditions and symbolic rituals in various Indonesian communities. Research on the Merariq tradition of the Sasak people and the Rebo Kasan ritual in West Java has demonstrated how symbolic rituals play crucial roles in expressing moral values, social order, and spiritual beliefs(Ilmalia et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2017). These studies often employ semiotic and anthropological approaches to uncover layers of meaning embedded in ceremonial practices (Suharto et al., 2025). However, scholarly research focusing specifically on the *Bapanteh* tradition in Kerinci particularly using Victor Turner's symbolic framework is limited. This gap necessitates a focused exploration into how symbols function within the *Bapanteh* ceremony and how the tradition endures amidst cultural shifts.

Victor Turner's theory of symbolic anthropology provides a useful lens for analyzing the *Bapanteh* tradition. According to Turner, rituals function as mechanisms of social cohesion and transformation, with symbols serving as carriers of meaning that unite the past, present, and future(Sendaja, 2008). The *Bapanteh* tradition, when viewed through this framework, can be understood not only as a cultural form but as a dynamic process through which the Hiang community negotiates identity, continuity, and change. This study thus bridges theoretical insight and ethnographic reality by placing *Bapanteh* within the broader discourse of symbolic anthropology.

Based on the background above, this research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the symbolic meanings inherent in the *Bapanteh* tradition of Hiang Village? (2) How is the *Bapanteh* ritual implemented in practice? (3) Why does the Hiang community continue to preserve this tradition amid modernization? The objectives of this study are: to describe the ritual practices of *Bapanteh*, to analyze its symbolic meanings using Victor Turner's framework, and to explore the underlying factors contributing to its preservation. The results of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of local traditions in the age of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research method to explore the *Bapanteh* tradition as practiced by the Hiang community in Kerinci Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of cultural phenomena through direct interaction with informants and observation of ritual practices. The research was conducted in Hiang

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Village, Sitinjau Laut District, which was selected as the research site due to its strong preservation of the Bapanteh tradition. The main data sources included local community members, traditional leaders (ninik mamak), and families directly involved in the implementation of *Bapanteh*. These participants were selected purposively because of their cultural knowledge and active participation in the rituals. The study was carried out over a period of several weeks, during which the researcher was immersed in the community to gain contextual insights.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and participant observation. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured formats to allow flexibility while still focusing on relevant themes, such as the meaning of symbols, the function of the tradition, and the reasons for its continuity. Interviews were directed primarily at elders and cultural actors who were either participants or organizers of Bapanteh events. The observational method was equally important, as it enabled the researcher to witness firsthand the sequence of the ritual, the materials used (such as long cloths), and the communal interactions that occur throughout the preparation. Data analysis was performed using descriptive qualitative analysis, following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by (Sulistyawati, S.Si., MPH., Ph.D, 2023) This method ensured that the findings reflected the authentic voice of the community and the cultural depth of the tradition under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bapanteh Tradition of Kerinci Regency

Society and tradition are two things that cannot be separated. Within certain limits, humans change and shape their culture. Although humans change and shape their culture, tradition remains a stable foundation (Endayanti, 2021). Culture is a dynamic process that continues to develop but with a solid basis from existing traditions. Traditions are often carried out in the form of ceremonies and rituals. These ceremonies such as marriage, birth, and death have deep meaning and help people understand their role in social and spiritual life. Traditions grow and develop in the life of society and are carried out by society from generation to generation. Every tradition that is considered important in human life is usually commemorated with various forms of ceremonies that have been customary in the life of society (Nurdin et al., 2019). The ceremony is held as a symbol to prepare members of the community to face their lives and play their proper roles in society. This ceremony is part of the tradition in every society that lives and develops and is maintained by the local community, carried out in the context of the transition from one level of life to another also known as the term transition ceremony (rites de passage). In Kerinci, there are also various traditions, one of which is the Bapanteh tradition.

The Kerinci community in general has long upheld the Bapanteh tradition, especially in the context of wedding ceremonies. Every village in Kerinci historically practiced Bapanteh as a central cultural component of marriage. However, along with the advancement of education, exposure to broader cultural influences, and the growing influence of modernization, significant changes have taken place. The shifts in tradition are not due to a rejection of values but are more closely tied to changes in lifestyle and social structure. Many communities in Kerinci have had direct contact with modern urban areas, where efficiency, practicality, and aesthetics have influenced social practices (Astoni, 2018)). As a result, the Bapanteh tradition, although still respected, has gradually been replaced in some settings by modern and ready-made

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wedding decorations that are more accessible and less labor-intensive. This transition highlights a broader cultural negotiation between heritage preservation and adaptation to contemporary demands.

Bapanteh Tradition Practices in Kerinci Regency

The Bapanteh tradition practiced by the Hiang community is a customary ritual that has been passed down for generations, particularly as part of traditional wedding ceremonies (Sadek & AH, 2022). It takes place approximately five to seven days before the wedding contract (akad nikah) at the residence of the bride's family. The central meaning of Bapanteh lies in its role as a symbol of family unity, community cooperation, and shared responsibility. All members of both families contribute to the event, reflecting that a marriage is not solely about the union of two individuals but also the merging and collaboration of two extended kinship groups. The Hiang community cooperates to borrow long cloths from relatives and neighbors, which are later used for decoration. The act of borrowing and decorating becomes a symbolic demonstration of affection, solidarity, and social harmony. These cloths—varied in motif and color—are woven into the aesthetic of the bride's home, reinforcing both familial and artistic values (abdurrahman, 2024; Saputra, 2024). Furthermore, Bapanteh functions as a cultural mechanism for preserving identity in the face of modern influences.

The following is the process of implementing the Bapanteh tradition which begins a few days before the wedding day:

1. Initial preparation

The Bapanteh process begins with preparations several days before the marriage contract is carried out, which is around 5 to 7 days before. In this early stage, the family of the prospective bride is the most active party in carrying out the preparation tasks. They are responsible for inviting close relatives and neighbors to participate in this tradition (Atikha Dwi Saputri et al., 2023) .The family of the prospective bride will go around visiting other family members to provide information about the upcoming wedding plans (Ulfiah, 2016). In addition, they also borrow long clothes from relatives and neighbors to be used in the Bapanteh event. The use of these clothes is a symbol of kinship and cooperation between families because everyone who provides clothing is considered to have participated in the success of the event (Muh. Alam Khadafi et al., 2023).

2. Selection and collection of materials

The main material used in the Bapanteh tradition is a long cloth with various patterns and colors. This cloth is usually made of cotton and has a batik motif, with a length of about two meters and a width of about one meter per piece. In addition, other supporting materials such as bamboo to support the cloth are also well prepared. Collecting this cloth is not just a matter of borrowing cloth, but also involves a strong social element. Every family that lends clothes for this event shows their commitment to the values of togetherness and cooperation that exist in society. In this tradition, the more cloth that is borrowed, the wider the social support received by the family of the prospective bride(Ahmad et al., 2024)

3. Fabric installation and decoration

After all the materials are collected, the process of installing the cloth begins. This stage is the most crucial part of the Bapanteh tradition. The clothes that have been collected

from various relatives will begin to be arranged on the wall of the bride's house, which will later become the backdrop for the wedding dais on the wedding day. The clothes that have been collected will be neatly arranged on bamboo supports installed on the wall of the bride's house (Rindani, 2021). This process is carried out carefully so that the cloth not only looks beautiful but also neat. Each cloth that is about two meters long will be folded lengthwise, usually to a width of about 10 cm, before being hung on the bamboo. These cloths are then crisscrossed or woven on the wall in a certain pattern, creating a neat and artistic decoration. The arrangement of the cloth is carried out in stages, following the arrival of family and relatives who bring their cloth. This process often takes several days because family and relatives do not always come together(ahmad us, 2024) .Each time the family comes with the cloth, the fitting process is repeated, which shows the dynamic social interactions that occur during the days before the wedding.

4. Role of family and community

In addition to the bride's immediate family, the role of relatives and neighbors is very important in the implementation of the Bapanteh tradition. Relatives, both from the family of the prospective groom and bride, will also help in the process of installing this cloth (Aziz, 2017). This reflects the high value of cooperation among the High community. Neighbors and the surrounding community are also involved in this process, from helping to install the cloth to providing advice on the decorations to be used (Abdullah, 2020). They not only come to bring the cloth but also help in the technical process, such as folding the cloth, hanging it on the wall, to ensuring that the decoration looks neat and beautiful.

5. Final decoration

After all the fabrics are installed, the final step in the Bapanteh process is to tidy up the fabrics that have been arranged. At this stage, the bottom of the fabric is sewn so that it does not come loose so that the entire decoration looks sturdy and neat. The stitches at the bottom of the fabric serve to ensure that the fabrics that have been carefully arranged do not come loose during the event. In addition to sewing the bottom of the fabric, additional lace fabric measuring around 20 cm is often used to cover the bottom of the long fabric arrangement. This lace not only functions to tidy up the decoration but also adds beauty to the pelamin or wall where the event is taking place. The decoration with fabrics arranged in layers then becomes the background of the pelamin where the bride and groom will sit on their wedding day (Brenda, 2017). The colorful batik fabrics symbolize the bonds of love between families, as well as a symbol of close unity between the two parties. This installation process takes place collectively, showing how important the contribution of each individual is in this traditional event (MA'RIFA, 2019).

Meaning/Symbolic Values of Bapanteh Tradition in Marriage

Cultural values in the Bapanteh tradition carried out by the Hiang Village community reflect various important aspects of local social life and customs. Some of the main cultural values that can be identified in this tradition include:

1. Mutual cooperation

Mutual cooperation is one of the core values in the Bapanteh tradition. The entire process of this tradition, from preparation to implementation, is carried out together by

family, neighbors, and the surrounding community (Rolitia et al., 2016) .Activities such as borrowing clothes, decorating the bride and groom's house with long cloth, to implementing the event are carried out voluntarily and in collaboration. This spirit of cooperation shows high solidarity among the Hiang community, where everyone helps each other and shares the burden (Dewanti et al., 2023). In the context of Victor Turner's symbolic anthropology, this collective labor reflects the concept of *communitas*, a social bond formed in liminal rituals that temporarily dissolve hierarchical distinctions.

2. Kinship and friendship

The Bapanteh tradition strengthens kinship ties between the extended families of the bride and groom. The process of borrowing clothes from family members or relatives is not only about getting items for decoration but also a form of reaffirming social ties. Through this activity, relationships between families are reinforced, and marriage is seen not only as a personal matter but also as a collective familial and communal event. From Turner's view, this interaction strengthens liminality by fostering new roles and solidarities among participants (Harahap & Pulungan, 2024).

3. Mutual help

In the Bapanteh tradition, mutual assistance is visible in every stage of the implementation. The community helps each other selflessly in preparing for the event, by lending clothes, arranging decorations, and providing food or other assistance. This value of mutual help enhances the spirit of unity and solidarity. Through this cooperation, the ritual becomes a symbolic space for reaffirming communal bonds and shared cultural identity (Efendi et al., n.d.).

4. Unity and solidarity

The Bapanteh tradition also teaches the importance of unity and solidarity in the community. In the Hiang community, marriage is not only a personal event but a shared responsibility for the entire community. All parties—families, relatives, and neighbors—contribute to ensuring the ceremony runs smoothly. Symbolically, the shared labor reflects Turner's notion of *communitas*, where individuals are united through equal participation in ritual acts (Fauziah, 2017).

5. Preservation of customs and culture

Bapanteh has an important role in preserving local customs and cultural heritage. This tradition is an ancestral legacy that continues to be maintained by the Hiang community, even amidst the challenges of modernization. According to Turner, rituals like Bapanteh function as symbolic reinforcements of continuity, maintaining identity through repeated social performances.

6. Beauty and aesthetics

The long cloth decorations borrowed from relatives and neatly arranged on the walls of the bride and groom's house symbolize not only visual beauty but also harmony and refinement within familial relationships. Batik cloths with elegant motifs and colors decorate the space while conveying emotional depth and symbolic meaning (Nursilah et al., 2024). In Turner's symbolic lens, the cloth becomes a *multivocal symbol*—its beauty reflects cultural pride, unity, and celebratory transformation.

7. Symbolism of cloth in marriage

The cloth used in the Bapanteh tradition is not just for visual beauty but holds deep symbolic meaning. Each piece of cloth represents familial ties and enduring relationships between giver and receiver (Bangunjiwo, 2019). Through Turner's concept of symbols, the cloth serves as a condensation symbol—an object that encapsulates multiple layers of meaning: kinship, love, generosity, memory, and cultural continuity.

Reasons why bapanteh tradition in marriage is still maintained

Changes and adaptations in the Bapanteh tradition reflect how the Hiang community tries to maintain ancestral traditions while adapting to the times. Modernization, social change, and other external influences have caused some elements of this tradition to undergo adjustments to remain relevant amidst the increasingly dynamic life of society (Afdhal, 2023).

• Factors causing change

1. Modernization and globalization

Modernization has a significant influence on people's way of life, including how to hold wedding ceremonies (Permatasari & Wijaya, 2018). Modern decorations that are practical, efficient, and simpler replace some aspects of tradition such as Bapanteh which requires a lot of time and energy to prepare. In many places, modern pelaminan are now preferred because they are easily accessible and do not require the participation of many people (Juditha, 2018).

2. Lifestyle changes

The increasingly busy lives of society also have an impact on the Bapanteh tradition. With limited time, many families choose more practical ways to prepare for their weddings, such as hiring modern decoration services rather than manually decorating their homes with long fabrics that involve many people. In addition, the younger generation tends to prefer practical and instant wedding celebrations rather than traditions that require effort and a long time (Aini, 2014).

3. Interaction with other cultures

The interaction of the Hiang community with other areas, especially with more modern cultures, also influenced changes in Bapanteh traditions. People who have lived or interacted with big cities often bring new ideas that are more modern and efficient, resulting in a shift in the way they celebrate weddings (Supriadi, 2023).

Form of adaptation in the Bapanteh tradition

1. Use of modern decoration

One of the most obvious adaptations is the use of modern decorations instead of traditional long cloth decorations. Many families now prefer to rent a *pelamin* with more practical decorations, such as plastic flowers, decorative lights, and other ornaments. Although some elements of the Bapanteh tradition are still maintained, this modern decoration is considered more efficient in terms of time and energy (Widiana, 2020).

2. Reduction of collective participation

In the original Bapanteh tradition, the preparation process involves many people from the extended family and neighbors. However, in modern adaptations, the

collective role is reduced because decorations can be prepared by professional services. This reduces the social interaction that used to be an integral part of the tradition, although, on some occasions, families are still involved in symbolic preparations, such as borrowing clothes from relatives (Kurniawan, 2014)

3. Changes in the role of traditional figures

In Bapanteh tradition, the role of traditional figures is very important in providing direction and advice. However, with modernization, this role has begun to shift, especially in marriages that emphasize more on formal legal aspects than customs .Traditional figures are still involved, but their roles tend to be symbolic rather than active in the entire procession (Soedarwo, 2018).

4. A combination of modern and traditional elements

Many Hiang people combine modern and traditional elements in the implementation of Bapanteh. For example, more practical modern decorations are combined with traditional symbols such as the use of long cloth to decorate part of the *pelaminan* or room. This is a form of compromise to respect ancestral traditions while adapting to modern needs.

• The impact of change on traditional values

1. The value of mutual cooperation decreases

One of the impacts of this adaptation is the reduced spirit of mutual cooperation in wedding preparations. Decorations prepared by professional services reduce the direct involvement of extended family and neighbors in the preparation process, so that social interactions that used to occur through this tradition are increasingly rare.

2. Kinship values are maintained

Although the cooperation aspect is reduced, the kinship value is still maintained, especially through symbols related to the lending of cloth. This tradition is still carried out by several families as a form of respect for ancestors and a means to maintain kinship relations among extended family members.

3. Preservation of cultural identity

The Hiang community who still maintain traditional elements in their weddings shows that the Bapanteh tradition is still considered important as a cultural identity. Despite the influence of modernization, this tradition remains a symbol of family solidarity and togetherness in society.

• Challenges in preserving traditions

1. Young generation

The younger generation is often less interested in traditions that are considered too old or time-consuming. They prefer a more practical, modern approach. The biggest challenge is how to transfer these cultural values to the next generation so that the Bapanteh tradition does not die out.

2. Competition with global culture

With the increasing popularity of modern weddings influenced by foreign cultures, local traditions such as Bapanteh face a tough challenge in maintaining their relevance. Many people are now more interested in minimalist or international weddings that are more popular and considered more prestigious.

Changes and adaptations in Bapanteh tradition reflect how the Hiang people try to balance maintaining their cultural heritage with adapting to the demands of the times. Although many modern elements are now accepted, some important aspects of this tradition, such as kinship values and respect for ancestors, are still maintained. The biggest challenge going forward is how to ensure that this tradition remains alive and relevant amidst rapid social change (Hamim, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Bapanteh tradition in Hiang Village, Kerinci Regency, is a cultural ritual that plays a central role in pre-wedding ceremonies. It is characterized by the collective installation of long decorative cloths in the bride's home, involving extended families and neighbors. This practice not only prepares the venue for the wedding but also reinforces communal ties. Bapanteh reflects a social process rooted in local customs where collective labor and cooperation manifest through ritual participation and shared preparation.

In terms of symbolic meaning, the Bapanteh tradition embodies core cultural values such as kinship, mutual cooperation, solidarity, aesthetic harmony, and respect for ancestors. Through Victor Turner's symbolic lens, each stage of the ritual especially the borrowing and arrangement of cloth functions as a symbol of unity, liminality, and reaffirmation of social roles. The long cloths symbolize enduring familial bonds, with their arrangement representing collective identity and emotional attachment within the community.

The persistence of Bapanteh, despite pressures from modernization and global cultural influence, reveals the community's ability to adapt tradition without losing its symbolic core. While many technical aspects of the ritual have been simplified or combined with modern practices, key symbolic elements such as cloth borrowing and community involvement remain. These adaptations show that cultural resilience is achieved not through rigid preservation, but through contextual transformation. However, this continuity is also challenged by decreasing youth interest, time constraints, and the appeal of more modern wedding styles.

As a researcher, I recommend that local communities and cultural institutions in Kerinci document and publicly promote the symbolic meanings of Bapanteh as part of cultural education. Programs aimed at youth should focus not only on the form of the tradition but also on its values and social functions. Intergenerational engagement, creative revitalization, and collaboration with cultural tourism efforts may help ensure that Bapanteh continues to be practiced meaningfully and sustainably in the future.

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