

Agriculture Products in Mengket Rumah Mbaru Tradition as Karonese's Symbols of Local Wisdom and Sustainable Agriculture: A Linguistic Anthropology Study

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Abstract: The use of materials such as the young coconut leaf, ripe banana, rice, brown sugar, and also traditional cloth etc. in *Mengket rumah mbaru* tradition or entering a new house ceremony. The using of those things as reflection that Karonese is an agricultural society. Agriculture is the biggest source of income for Karo people. It is already be the part of their life and cultural activities. It is because the lush soil and also a good climate of Karo land can support their life from the agriculture sector. Most of those materials presented during the ceremony is interested to be observed because it has a cultural value and local wisdom as the heritage from their ancestor and also has the economics value. The objectives of this paper is to find out the meaning of the agriculture product used in the *Mengket Rumah Mbaru* tradition or entering a new house tradition among the Karonese as one of the local culture and also a part of the sustainable agriculture . This research uses the qualitative research design. The research perform the researcher by involved directly to the event. The research is qualitative research. The researcher directly involved in ceremony to collect some data during the ceremony. Based on research which conducted it is concluded that each of the materials used in the ceremony is a symbol of hope and prayers so that people entering the new home will be given happiness prosperity and a better life in the future. This understanding as part of the local wisdom of Karonese that passed down since ages ago, as well as to fulfil their needs of food. This implementation of *Mengket Rumah Mbaru* tradition is a kind of tradition preservation and all the products used in the ceremony as one of agricultural sustainability attempt.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since Karo regency situated in the Barisan Mountain in the Province of North Sumatera. This area famous for the fresh farming products such as vegetables and fruit. The extensive and fertile agricultural land as it is in between two active volcanoes, mount Sinabung and mount Sibayak, as well as supported by good mountain climate, making the Karo land well known as the supplier of high quality crops. The main livelihood of the Karonese society as a farmer, because the majority of the people live from agriculture, that is why Karo Land be the center of horticulture in North Sumatera. Their crops are produced from many kinds of horticulture, such as flowers, potatoes, cabbage, leek, tomatoes, onions and so on, as well as coffee, chocolate, candlenuts, and bananas.

Agriculture is the identity of Karonese society since long time ago. Managing and processing farmland, as well as the crops are the culture learned and passed down from their ancestors. Various local crops are present in the Karonese tradition ceremonial. One of the ceremony is *Mengket Rumah Mbaru* (entrance to a new house) which symbolizes the expression of gratitude to God and the sharing of happiness among family members and relatives. This tradition is meant to pray for God's protection toward the house and its inhabitants from any wickedness of genie and humans; so they will be blessed with abundance of sustenance, health and happiness in a new house (Perangin-angin, 2018). This tradition is part of the local culture inherited since long ago as the local knowledge. All of the agriculture products have the purpose of fulfilling food needs as well as to increase the welfare of the

Karonese society. They explore the potentials in the nature and use them well for the continuity of food.

Sustainable agriculture adopts productive, competitive and efficient practices, while protecting and improving the environment and the global ecosystem, as well as the socio-economic conditions of local communities in line with human dignity (Hani, 2007).

Agriculture commodity in the *Mengket Rumah Mbaru* tradition are such as golden banana (*Musa acuminata*), coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), palm sugar, betel (*Piper betle*), areca nut (*Areca catechu*), tobacco (*Nicotianatabacum*), rice (*Oryza sativa*), young palm leaves (*Arenga pinnata*) called *lambe* in Karo language, *singkut* leaf, water *nira*, pandanus leaves, and some processed ingredients made from rice flour into a traditional foods called *cimpa*. Several kinds of *cimpa* are such as *berasreme-reme*, *cimpa unung-unung*, *cimpa gabor-gabor*, *cimpa matah*, *cimpa rambe-rambe*.

The kinship between the Karo people are a crucial element that integrates with cultural life. Such kinship also shows care and love, it makes the Karonese people as one family. This kinship is formed as the result of inter-clan marriages, or between a clan and a sub-clan that results in the birth of the descendants. They form a new family. In a marriage, the groom is named “*Anak beru*” by the bride’s family. As for the bride’s family, they are named “*Kalimbubu*” by the groom’s family, siblings with the same family name is called *senina*. These factors are the reason for the increasing brotherhood in the Karo tribe. As a result, a system of kinship is formed, known as *Sangkep Nggeluh* or *Sangket Sitelu*. *Sangkep nggeluh* means the completeness of life. It is also often known as *sangkep sitelu*, which means the completeness of the three family elements *senina*, *Anak beru*, and *kalimbubu*. *Sangkep nggeluh* is about a work plan, involving the activities in a family, such as holding a traditional event or a discussion of the matters of a big family.

In *Mengket Rumah Mbaru tradition*, involves all the *sangkep nggeluh*. One who can build a house is one kind of success for Karonese because a house has a very important meaning for the Karo people for it is a symbol of prosperity and the actualization of someone who is already married.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of “sustain” from a Latin word *sustinere* (*sus-*, from below, and *tenere*, to hold), to keep in existence or maintain, implies long-term

support or permanence. As it pertain to agriculture, sustainable describe farming system that are ‘capable of maintaining their productivity and usefulness so society indefinitely. Sustainable agriculture is balance management system of renewable resources include soil, wildlife, forest, crops, fish, livestock, plant genetic resources and ecosystem without degradation and provide food, livelihood for current and future generation without endangered the sources. The understanding of the Karo society about the culture of entering a new house, and the yields of agriculture included in the process of the event is an interesting subject to discuss from the point of view of an anthropolinguistics. Anthropolinguistics usually is to provide understanding of the many aspects of language as a set of cultural practices. There are a lot of local wisdom in the cultural practices. Local wisdom can be local knowledge, local skill, local intelligence, local resources, local process, local norm, and local custom. The value and norm that are believed to be true become the reference for the daily behaviour of local people (Sibarani, 2018). Anthropolinguistics that is consisted of the concept of performance, indexicality, and participation, is built with theories that support it without ignoring the parameters of the anthropolinguistics analysis, that is as Sibarani (2004) stated, interconnection, cultural values, and continuity.

The implementation and all of the completeness in the event provide a picture of how Karonese society fathoms the condition of their surrounding nature really well as a potential to increase the welfare and also as an attempt to preserve cultures and the agricultural sustainability. Sustainable agriculture and cultural continuity are two things that cannot be separated by the environmental development management. The concept of local wisdom in environmental management was described by Berkes (1993) with the terminology of traditional ecological knowledge. The term means a collection of knowledge, practices and beliefs that evolved through adaptive process (adjustment) passed from generation to generation through culture, associated to the relationship between living beings (including humans) with the surrounding environment. Local wisdom is formed to be the eminence of the local people as well as geographical conditions in a broad sense. Local wisdom is a product of past cultures that is worth to be a guide to life. From this definition, using the products of agriculture as unique characteristics of an area is one form of the local wisdom of the society to increase their welfare. Sibarani (2018) stated that local

wisdom is useful to increase welfare including (a) hard work or study, (b) diligence, (c) discipline, (d) creativity and innovation, (e) independence and thrift, (f) education, (g) health, (h) coordination and cooperation, (i) gender management, (j) cultural conservation and creativity, and (k) environmental concern. Local wisdoms that are useful to make peace are (1) politeness (2) honesty, (3) trustworthy, social solidarity, (4) harmony and tolerance, (5) self-control, (6) commitment, (7) concern, (8) friendship and hospitality, (9) positive thinking, and (10) gratitude.

Local wisdom is capable of expressing the symbols meant by nature and plants as symbols of ceremony. These symbols are understood by the society based on concepts and values inherited from long time ago. Foley (2001) explained that the meaning he meant is not limited to the linguistic practice only, also according to Geertz (1973) that symbols of anthropology are as the basics of cultural practice. In this case, humans have a variety of signs in various aspects of their lives.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher was directly involved during the process of ceremony which took place in Kutabuluh Si Mole in Karo regency. The data were collected through direct interview with knowledgeable informant, and also with the people who still perform this tradition and involved in the ceremony that time. The data also collected from documents, picture, video and book.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mengket rumah mbaru starts early in the morning at around 5 a.m. like the Karonese proverb "even before flying birds go out from their nests or before the sun rises". It is believed that doing something early in the morning means that the sustenance of the host rises as the time goes by, is like the sun rising higher and higher. There is a shift concerning the ritual time that normally it starts at around 6 or 7 a.m. depending on mutual agreement. The implementation of the *mengket rumah mbaru* tradition can be classified into the following: (1) event planning discussion; (2) printing and giving out invitations; (3) preparations for ceremony; (4) leaving to the new house (*berkatku rumah mbaru*); (5) spreading mats to sit (*erimbang anak kundulen*);

(6) breakfast or *ngukati*; (7) wearing traditional clothes (*ose*); (8) installing the furnace (*majekken daliken*); (9) pay the workers (*eggalari pande*); (10) giving the speech from *kuh sangkep* (Kata *Pengalokuh sangkep*); (11) giving out betel and cigarettes (*nduduri belo ras isap*); (12) dancing (*landek*); (13) preparing food for workers (*erbansangkep*); (14) eating together.

Before the event starts, distant relatives are already gathering for the preparations of the event. The following are the preparation for the things in the event. *Anak beru* will look for grinding stones by the river, preparing *manok megersing* (hen) and finding limestone or *boroh* that are made into a cooking stove or *daliken* that will be brought by *kalimbubu si majekkenaliken* in the main event. *Daliken* is found and made by *Anak beru*, and will be the present or *luah* from *kalimbubu simajekken daliken*.

Some *Anak beru* and host will go to the woods to find and pick *bulung-bulung simelias gelar* or can be translated as leaves with good names. Those leaves are *bulung sangketen*, *padang teguh*, *sanggar*, *mbertuk* along with the twigs. All of those will be tied with tree skin *ambat tuah*, a type of tree of which the skin is used as a rope. As time approaches closer to the event day, *Anak beru* prepares cultural clothes that will be stuck to house poles (*binangun*) wrapped with *uis arinteneng*. *Uis arinteneng* is also stuck to the ceilings of the house and hunged on the walls of the house. *Anak beru* also prepares a vessel for valuables (*baka*), a vessel for water that is made from bamboo (*kandi-kandi*), cooked palm water (*tengguli*) that is put inside *kandi-kandi*.

Kalimbubu simajekkenaliken prepares *luah* or present of one and a half kilos of white rice (*beras meciho*), one chicken egg, one rooster (*manuk Megara*), one piece of brown sugar, and a comb of golden banana, mat, and mattress. *Kalimbubusingosei* prepares *ose* or cultural cloth for the hose of the party. *Kalimbubu* prepares rice, a chicken egg, a chicken, sugar, coconut, mattress, mat, *pandan*, and banana. *Anak beru* prepares rice that is put into the rice cooker (*nakan dem*) as breakfast in the new house tomorrow or *ngukati*. *Kalimbubu si majekkenaliken* (*kalimbubu nini*) prepares the furnace made from lime soil (*boroh*) and *molded* into a three stacked square shape that used as a cooking furnace (*daliken*). Next, *Anak beru langkip* sticks the young *nira* leaves (*lambe*) around the terrace and the backyard of the house, as well as building a tent on the backyard as a place for gathering and dancing or *gendang*, sometimes the

event is held in the backyard of the house or in *los* or a hall if there are a large number of relatives and the house cannot hold them all.

The things needed for the event that *kalimbubu* brings are such as *luah* or gifts that consists of *beras meciho* or rice, *naruh manok mbentar* (chicken egg), *amak tayangen* (mattress and mat), *gula tualah ras galuh* (sugar, coconut, and banana), *manok Megara* (a rooster). As for *Anak beru*, he brings food like *beras berna-bena* (rice soaked in coconut milk added with brown sugar and black pepper), various cakes (*cimpa*) consist of *cimpalepat*, *cimpa rambe-rambe*, *cimpa unung-unung*, *nakandem* (full of rice) complete with the side dishes like chicken curry, *nuring sebakut* (catfish), *gulai kurung* or cricket cook with traditional cooking spices. Crickets are called *kurung* which etimologically means covered or sheltered. Therefore, it symbolizes prayer for all blessings, welfare and health which are hoped to be available in the hosts' house and in the houses of the relatives who participate (*pulung metunggun*).

Other things needed for the preparation are cattle or *cerek*, a water container brought by *Anak beru*, *gendang-gendang* (a container for clothes) brought by *Anak beru* or *kalimbubu*, a container for rice or sweets brought by *Anak beru* or *kalimbubu*, *amak tayangen* (mat or mattress) may be brought by anyone. The egg symbolizes fertility (*narohken tendi ku rumah*) and it is wished that the hosts be given abundant sustenance and many children. Rice symbolizes honesty, balance and harmony. *Amak beru-beru* or *amak mbentar* or white *pandanus* mat around 1.5 meter long carried by *sukut* or female *sembuyak*. *Kandi-kandi*, water containers made from bamboo filled with *nira* (sap obtained by tapping of various palms used to make sugar), brought by a girl. *Gundur* or *kundur* (a large green melon shape fruit growing on vines and eating as a vegetable) is brought by a girl by carrying it with *uis arinteneng*. Cane is brought by a girl. *Rudang si meliasgelar* (plants) with good names are brought by a young girl. Millstones and miller are brought by *kalimbubu*, three pieces of firewood tied as one and each tied set is brought by some girls. The girl who carries the firewood is position in front and at the back must be a child with a name with good meaning.

Uncles or blood brothers from the mother orders *Kalimbubu si majekkendaliken* (*kalimbubu* the father of the new house) to set up the cooking furnace or *daliken* to the new house, and also orders *senina sipemereren* (cousin from the mother's family) to prepare *daliken* as a gift for *kalimbubu simbaba daliken*. *Daliken* is brought to the new house carried from the head and the base is covered with

uisarinteneng, or by carrying it by using *uis arinteneng*.

The preparations of the event has a sacred meaning to the Karonese society, such as the palm sugar, coconut, banana, piece of cane, symbolize a prosperous life and never lacks anything, a life as sweet as sugar and banana, sweet like coconut. The white *pandan* mat has the meaning of uniting the souls, so the house owner will always live in harmony and peace, one heart and soul, care for each other. Mattress means comfort. *Belo cawer*, the best flawless betel, as the symbol of pure heart and soul. *Nakan telupukul* (three head rice), *cimpa gabor-gabor* (rice flour with pepper and salt) means respect to the ancestors. *Belo bujur* (betel, arica nut, lime, and *gambir*), means respect to the big family, betel is also served as a snack during the event, betel is only consumed by women, giving betel to men only acts as a symbol.

Beras Jujungen or *beraspiher* is rice that is put on top of the head to give prayers to someone so that all hopes will come true, giving good fortune and health. About 11 stem bark of *kepok* banana or *musa acuminata x balbisiana* (its width around 3 fingers), magnet, *batang kempawa* (a kind of areca nut plants) and stepping on those one by one has the meaning of all evil thoughts will go away, so the soul or *tendi* of the people staying in that house will be as strong as iron, the house owner will be blessed with health and those who live in the house will be happy. *Kampil indong-indong* as a container of betel filled with tobacco, lime, *gambir*, *belo* (betel) around 50 pieces have the meaning of respect for the big family. *Lau pola* drink (*nira* water), *tengguli* (the process of *nira* water becoming half sugar) means hope and prayer so the life of *simada rumah* (house owner) will be sweet because of the good fortune living in the house.

Lada (pepper) symbolizes unity of all families. *Cimpa* snack (a kind of cake) some various *cimpa* prepared such as *cimpa lepat*, *unong-unong*, *cimparembe-rembe*, *gular ras talah* (palm sugar and coconut meat), *cimpa matah*, *cimpa jergok*, *beras duhumen*, means hope and prayer so the life of *simadakerja* (house owner) as well as the big family will be as sweet as all the food served, and also hope for good fortune and prosperity living in the new house. *Janur* (lambe), a kind of yellow *janur* from young palm tree leaves. The *Anak berulankip* is responsible for bringing *lambe*. Yellow *Janur* is paired at the top of the terrace as well as around the front of the house as a sign of a joyful party entering the new house and a form of happiness.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Karonese society represents those objects as the symbolization of hope and prayer so that the owner of the house will be blessed with good fortune, happiness, and good health in the new house. The use of local plantation preservation for prosperity is a part of the sustainable agriculture attempt and cultural continuity, and vice versa the attempt of preservation of the *Mengket rumah mbaru* tradition is an effort of agricultural continuity. For these two always complete one another. Agricultural continuity and cultural preservation are the responsibility of cultural actors and the joint responsibility of the society element by still preserving culture and taking care of the resources provided by nature. With the agricultural products present in this event, it is for the understanding of the Karo people of the values in the products inherited by ancestors.

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