

# The Incantation of “*Tonggo ni Harbue*” for Ricefield Farming in Toba Batak Society: An Anthropolinguistic Study

Yessy Octavianna, Robert Sibarani, Hamzon Situmorang, Nam Syahot Hasibuan  
Student of Doctoral, Post-Graduate Department in Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Science,  
Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Keywords: Oral Tradition, Anthropolinguistics, Martonggo-tonggo, and Local wisdom.

Abstract: The purposes of this article are to (1) finding the function of the incantation of “*tonggo ni harbue*” for rice field farming, (2) describing the types of local wisdom in the incantation of “*tonggo ni harbue*” for rice field farming. This article was made on the basis of anthropolinguistic analysis with the model is ethnography, which used three components. The components are performance, indexicality and participation that can be considered effective in the assessment to text, cotext and context of local wisdom. The analytic parameters for this research are interconnection, evaluability and sustainability. Based on the research finding, it is found the function of incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* is asking the blessing (*hatuaon*) of *dainang* (mother of gods). The function of this blessing is asking for long life, having many offspring, asking for healthy, fullness of life, convenience and no have enemy. There are the cultural values that contained on the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* which is used in the tradition of planting rice field can be formulated as 1) hard work, 2) diligence, 3) discipline, 4) togetherness, 5) mutual cooperation, 6) mutual help, 7) politeness, 8) caring for environment, 9) thanksgiving, and 10) healthy life.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, the ancestor of Toba Batak had the tradition of incantation, that is called “*martonggo-tonggo*”. It is used starting from beginning until finishing a religious ritual, mores and other events. It can give the convenience and kindness in an event or feast. In delivering the incantation of *martonggo-tonggo* is devoted to the ruling of *banua ginjang* that is called *Ompu Mula Jadi Nabolon* (the highest gods).

The incantation of *martonggo-tonggo* is the language spoken with the rhythm of language which contain the prayer/request, compliment, recognition and submission to gods who is trusted by the community. The incantation of *martonggo-tonggo* that the writer discussed is the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue*. It is the traditional prayer for rice field. This prayer tells about how human interact to rice field. When the rice straw is small, human must nurture the rice field as like as their daughter in order to live and grow well. But when the rice straw has become big, this rice give life for humans like their mothers (*dainang na hupagodang, dainang na pagodang ahu on*).

Right now, the tradition of *martonggo-tonggo* for planting rice field almost do not use anymore because the new types of rice field from government is not suitable used in this ritual that giving a great influence to the agricultural system of Toba Batak community. They do not use the rice field that they plant as usual because the emergence of government programs. They have to change the types of rice field what they plant. They said that the new types of rice field is not suitable for this tradition because the rice field is produced by chemicals and if it is soaked in *homban* (wellspring) will damage the spring itself. Besides its impact on springs, the biggest impact is the new types of rice field is not suitable with the Toba Batak’s calendar (*parhalaon*). In Toba Batak’s calendar, it has been determined the rice grows every time. When the harvest is faster, the utilization of Toba Batak’s calendar does not work anymore. Besides, the use of chemical fertilizers is also a big problem, where the rice field that they usually plant does not need chemical fertilizer. They only use organic fertilizers like buffalo, cow and chicken droppings and also the straws that obtained at the previous harvest. The using of chemical fertilizers make Toba Batak people do not believe for the

blessings that obtained from *boras pati ni tano* (the blessings from land). It means that Toba Batak people systematically and massively leave the old ways and follow the new ways. They prefer the chemical fertilizers than *boras pati ni tano* (the blessings from land). Moreover, there is a cultural shift in Toba Batak society where there is no have the effort of inheritance to the next generation.

The incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* contained the values of local wisdom which must be explored deeply. The local wisdom is the prevailing values in society which is believed to be true and become a reference in daily behaviour. The local wisdoms contain the elements of intelligent, creativity and local knowledge of elites and the community is the one who determines the development of society's life. The local wisdoms and local community's knowledge can be utilized for increasing and creating prosperity and peacefulness in society.

The illustration above gives a way to explore and describe the local wisdoms of Toba Batak which are inherited orally and find in cultural tradition of the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* in farming the rice field in Samosir, North Sumatera Province. This article attempts to answer two basic questions, they are : what is the function of the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* in rice field farming? and what types of local wisdoms in incantation of *tonggo ni harbue*?. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach with ethnography model. The qualitative approach with ethnography model apply twelve steps both of observation and interview. The data collection in this study applies the observation and interview methods. The observation method was conducted with direct and participatory observation and interview method was conducted with open-ended and in-depth interview to informant who knows about the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* deeply as well. The data collection of interview was conducted with ethnographic record, structural questions, and contrast questions, while the observation data collection was conducted with making descriptive observation, making focused observation and making selected observation.

The techniques of analyzing data that collected from interviews was done by analyzing ethnographic interview, domain analysis, and componential analysis, while analyzing data that collected from observation (direct, participatory observation) also was conducted by making analysis domain, making a taxonomic analysis and making a componential analysis. And then, the continuance of data analysis was conducted by discovering and taking cultural themes as the result of interpretation to draw

conclusions about the function of the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* and the types of Toba Batak's local wisdoms. Because of this research is in the range of linguistic anthropology, the text, co-text and context in relation to local wisdoms that deal with ceremonial of life cycle and verbal tradition as well as with performances, indexicality and participation as the components of anthropology linguistic which are paid attention. And the target for this research is interconnection, valuability and sustainability the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* for agriculture.

## 2 CONCEPT HEADING

### 2.1 Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is the values that apply in society which is believed and become a reference in daily behaviour. The local wisdom contains the elements of intelligence, creativity and local knowledge from elites and society who determines the development of people's civilization. Local wisdom is the values of life or society's life behaviour in interacting with the environment where they live wisely. Each tribe do not have the same local wisdoms. It is caused by the natural challenges and various of life necessities, so that their experience in fulfill their life necessities bring up the various of good knowledge system which is related to social environment.

The farmers of Toba Batak have local wisdoms in rice field farming which is still running until now and also the activities of farming that abandoned. The one of wisdom is already abandoned in farming is rice hijacking by using a buffalo. The farmers do not use a buffalo again to plowing but switched it by using the handtractor. They use it because it is faster and easier in planting and plowing the fields.

The rice field is one of plants that highly glorified by Toba Batak people because they think that the rice field is the spirit (*tondi*) of human. Toba Batak has the local wisdoms in glorify the rice field. In farming the rice field, Toba Batak people have a unique tradition. It starts from the process of seed sowing that is known as the ritual of *manabur boni* (seed sowing) until harvesting. The ritual of *manabur boni* (seed sowing) consists of the ritual *marsungkun*. The ritual of *marsungkun* is the discussion held by the kings of *bius* (area) who leads by the king of *Ijolo* to determine the types of seedings' use, the time to cultivate agricultural land, the starting in cultivation the agricultural land, when starting the farming. After that, they started to

determine the good day in process of farming. It is called *maniti arie*. After they know when the good day in farming the rice field, they start to soak the seeds in the place to be sown, it is called *mangengge bone*. And the last step is *manabur boni*. It is sowing seeds in the nursery.

This local wisdom is a part of oral traditions or cultural traditions that have to be inherited for the next generation and utilized for the prosperity of the community. In cultural traditions or local traditions contain a lot of cultural values and norms as the heritage and have the function to structure the community's social life. These local wisdoms can be classified into two kinds of core local wisdoms that have the function is to uplift the welfare and create the peacefulness. The local wisdoms of welfare contain are 1) hard work and study, 2) diligence, 3) discipline, 4) creativity and innovation, 5) self-reliance and thriftiness, 6) educating, 7) healthy life, 8) mutual cooperation, 9) caring for environment, 10) loving for culture, and 11) pro-gender, while in the local wisdoms of peace contain are 1) trustworthiness, 2) honesty and fairness, 3) politeness and respect, 4) solidarity, 5) harmony and tolerance, 6) self-control, 7) commitment and responsibility, 8) care and compassion, 9) friendly and communicative manners, 10) positive thinking, and 11) thanksgiving (Sibarani, 2018).

The types of local wisdoms should be explored through the study of the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue*. This study is focused to the function of the incantation *tonggo ni harbue* and the types of local wisdoms in the incantation *tonggo ni harbue*.

## 2.2 Linguistic Anthropology

This research was done by using linguistic anthropology approach. Linguistic Anthropology is the study of humans and culture as a whole. Where the humans as the creator of culture, and the culture as the creates of humans according to the environment. So that, it intertwined the close relationship between humans and culture.

Anthropological examines the structure and kinship relationship through the kinship terms, the concept of colors, childcare patterns, or study how the member of community communicate with each other in certain situation like in traditional ceremonies and associated with the concept of culture. Through anthropological approach can be understood what people do with language and speech produced, silent and gesture associated with the context of its appearance (Duranti, 2001).

Sibarani (2018) states linguistic anthropology has three scopes of studies, namely the study of language, the study of culture and the study of other aspects of human life. These scopes are studied from the framework between linguistic and anthropology.

There are three the parameters of linguistic anthropology analysis, namely interconnection, valuability and sustainability. The connectivity shows a linear relationship either vertically or a horizontally formal relationship. This parameter determines the 'grammar or structure' of text, context, and context internally or externally. The parameter of valuability shows the meaning or function, value or norm, and local wisdom of linguistic anthropological objects, that is called language. These are the aspect of significant layers, where the meaning and function is the outer layer, cultural values and norms are the middle layer, and local wisdom is the core layer. And the last parameter is sustainability. It shows the existence and inheritance of the object under study including their cultural values and local wisdoms. Revitalization and conservation are the two important concepts in sustainability (Sibarani, 2018).

## 2.3 Martonggo-tonggo

The incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* is the traditional prayer of rice field. This prayer tells about how human interact to rice field. When the rice straw is small, human must nurture the rice field as like as their daughter in order to live and grow well. But when the rice straw has become big, this rice gives life for humans like their mothers (*dainang na hupagodang, dainang na pagodang ahu on*).

The incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* is one of a good traditional prayer both of contents and structures on the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue*. The word of *tonggo* means 'call' and *martonggo* means 'call out'. The incantation of *tonggo* is more often used on the context of rite and also in the opening of Toba Batak's traditional prayer. When Toba Batak pray, they call out the transcendent, namely gods, ancestral spirit and natural spirit. Then, in some sense the incantation of *tonggo* means prayer. The language of *tonggo* is religious language. Therefore, sometimes the meaning of a few words in *tonggo* need more explained so that it can be understood.

### 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 The Function of the Incantation *Tonggo ni Harbue* in Rice Field Farming

In incantation of *tonggo ni harbue*, the word of *harbue* has the same meaning with the word of *parbue*. The terminology of *parbue* is used for all kinds of fruit, including rice field. And the word of *harbue* is used only for rice or rice field. So the word of *harbue* becomes the incantation for rice field or rice.

*Tonggo ni harbue* does not explain about how the rice field processing, how to make rice fields land (*batangi*), how the process of inserting water so that the soil becomes soft, how the process of hoeing the soil, and how the process of refining the soil and preparing the soil for planting. This incantation of *tonggo* is started with sowing seeds in the rice fields. Therefore, we can state that Toba Batak people live from rice field farming.

The incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* is intended to asking the rice seeds to be sprout, bear fruit and mature. Therefore, this incantation of *tonggo* is not used at harvest time but it is used at the beginning of rice planting. The functions of *tonggo ni harbue* is asking the blessing (*hatuaon*) of *dainang* (mother of gods). The function of this blessing is asking for long life, having many offspring, asking for healthy, fullness of life, convenience and no have enemy. So if the people want this happen, the mother of gods (*dainang*) must guarantee a good harvest for people. It can be seen in this parable of incantation :

1) *I rungga ma pongki, bark trees are in the twigs*

*I bahulbahul porsalongan, a vegetable bag is in a rice basket*

*I ruma ma tondinami, hopefully our soul is at home (body)*

*tongtong marsigomgoman! And we always help each other!*

The parable above shows us the most important parts of the ecological aspects of rice field. Toba Batak community is aware of dependence on rice. Rice is their staple food. The rice field (*harbue*) is used as the barter for other things that are desired by them (function as money). The rice fields also has the important role in the rite of Toba Batak, namely, 1)

as the food (health source), 2) as a source of giving and 3) as a means of blessing.

Therefore, Toba Batak people recognize and honor for the existence of rice field. Their relationship is a personal relationship. Toba Batak farmers know at least 21 types of rice fields including their nature. They know exactly how to get along with the types of rice fields certainly.

#### 3.2 The Types of Local Wisdom on the Incantation of *Tonggo ni Harbue*

Local wisdom is a form of environmental wisdom that existing in the lives of local communities on interacting with the environment. The development of local wisdom is the result of people's habits as a form of adaptation towards nature and environment. Toba Batak community also have the local wisdom. It is expected to maintain the truth which becomes a local tradition between the sacred of beliefs that existing on society itself.

The incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* has the basic norm that is social norm of Toba Batak people, both individually and in groups. The basic norm of Toba Batak is the relationship between supernatural beings, the relationship between humans because has the relationship with clans (*marga*) and including the relationship between ancestors or humans with natural. Human pray and give offerings to gods for getting blessings (*pasupasu*). The blessings (*pasupasu*) is manifested in livestock breed, abundant harvest and prosperous society (*sinur napinahan, gabe naniula and horas jolma*). Basically, the core of incantation of *tonggo* and the purpose of Toba Batak's offerings is to get blessings which is synonymous with their life. Then, Toba Batak communicate to gods (*debata*) and to natural spirit through the good words or good sentences because they believe that the good and beautiful words have power or strength for giving alive (*hata na danggan*).

In ritual of *tonggo ni harbue* appear how they treat the rice field respectful as they treat as their own mother. This attitude does not only apply to rituals but also each process of tradition starting from choosing of seeds, soaking, planting, keeping the rice field, harvesting until consuming the rice itself. There is not the processing is missed from their respectful to rice field. This attitude appear because they think that rice field have soul (*tondi*). Toba Batak people have Toba Batak calendar (*parhalaon*) that is used to summarize all the concepts of Toba Batak's ecology religious. They use this calendar to see how nature relates to them.

When nature does not support their behaviour, they will not break it. It can be seen from the parable of Toba Batak :

2) *tu sanggar ma amporik, tu lubang na ma satu*

It means that may the rice bird goes to the reeds, and the rats step in the hole. They hope that the rice field will grow fertile without the interference from outside. The Toba Batak people will get a good fortune through the land and livestock raised. Therefore, Toba Batak farmers can harvest the rice field well and they savour it.

There are some benefits of Toba Batak farmers in maintaining the local wisdoms until now, namely: 1) it is useful for more tightening the kinship of fellow citizens, 2) awaken the Toba Batak's culture so that it disappear due to the entry of western culture. The new or modern technological progress can change the farmers' habits from using the traditional tools as their wisdoms, and switch it into modern tools.

Based on the description of the stages of the tradition of the cycle of livelihood starting from planting, managing and harvesting is described above, the cultural values that contained on the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* which is used in the tradition of planting rice field can be formulated as 1) hard work, 2) diligence, 3) discipline, 4) togetherness, 5) mutual cooperation, 6) mutual help, 7) politeness, 8) caring for environment, 9) thanksgiving, and 10) healthy life.

From the cultural values above can be applied to solve social problems on Toba Batak community in creating peacefulness and improving the welfare of Toba Batak community are the Toba Batak's local wisdoms. Most of Toba Batak local wisdoms can be utilized in creating peacefulness and partly that can be used to improving the welfare.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Based on the research finding, it is found the function of incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* is asking the blessing (*hatuaon*) of *dainang* (mother of gods). The function of this blessing is asking for long life, having many offspring, asking for healthy, fullness of life, convenience and no have enemy.

The cultural values that contained on the incantation of *tonggo ni harbue* which is used in the tradition of planting rice field can be formulated as 1) hard work, 2) diligence, 3) discipline, 4) togetherness, 5) mutual cooperation, 6) mutual help,

7) politeness, 8) caring for environment, 9) thanksgiving, and 10) healthy life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article was financially supported by my promoter. I would like to thanks him.

## REFERENCES

- Alfensius, Sayamar, E., 2016. Study Of Local Wisdom Paddy Rice Farmers in The Village Huta Gurgur II in The District Silaen Country Toba Samosir. *Jom FAPERTA UR*. 3(2).
- Duranti, A., 1997. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press. New York.
- Duranti, A., 2001. *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishers. Massachussets.
- Duranti, A. 2003. Language as Culture in U.S Anthropology: Three Paradigms. *Current Anthropology* 44(3). The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropology Research.
- Sibarani, R., 2004. *Antropologi: Antropologi Linguistik atau Linguistik Antropologi*. Penerbit Poda. Medan.
- Sibarani, R., 2014. *Kearifan Lokal: Hakikat, Peran, dan Metode Tradisi Lisan*. Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan. Jakarta.
- Sibarani, R., 2017. Batak Toba Society's Local Wisdom of Mutual Cooperation in Toba Lake Area: a Linguistic Anthropology Study. *International Journal of Human Right in Healthcare* 11(12):40-55
- Sibarani, R., 2018. The Role of Local Wisdom in Developing Friendly City. *IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 126. IOP Publishing.
- Sianipar, S.B., 1977. *Sejarah Batak*. Karl Sianipar Company. Balige. Sumatera Utara.
- Spradley, J.P., 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. United States of America.
- Spradley, J.P., 1980. *Participant Observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. United States of America.
- Sartini, 2004. Menggali Kearifan Lokal Nusantara: Sebuah Kajian Filsafati. *Jurnal Filsafat* 37(2).
- Sartika, W.L., 2013. Studi Etnobotani Keanekaragaman Pangan Etnis Batak Toba di Kecamatan Bakti Raja Kabupaten Humbang Hasundutan. *JUPIIS* 5(II): 20-25.
- Silvia, Okta, S., Sayamar, E., 2016. Strategy for Maintaining Local Wisdom in Rice Farming in The Simpang Raya Village Panei District Simalungun District North Sumatera Province. *Jom FAPERTA UR*. 3(2): 1-10.