

## **Excavating Values and Character through *Angkola-Mandailing* Proverbs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It has been undeniable that language variety makes Indonesia world-widely recognized as a unity in diversity country. Language itself is projected to build harmony among other through social interaction. In Indonesia, such interactions are commonly beautified with the existences of cultural-based proverbs. As an ethnic group, *Angkola-Mandailing* (AM) society has been known with its uniqueness in conducting the proverbs in any traditional event, both joyful celebration (*siriaon*) and condolences one (*siluluton*). Even, in any casual interaction among the citizen. AM proverbs are highly considered as philosophical and culturally valuable. This research is pointed to describe the functions of proverbs and excavating values and character within AM proverbs. Descriptive-qualitative was conducted to analyze the data. Further, ethnographic content analysis was also employed to interpret the substances of data analysis. The findings show that AM proverbs are functioned to address advice, to admonish, and to satirize. Moreover, the findings also display that brotherhood, togetherness, patience, hard-work, sincerity, and respect other people are values and characters could be drawn within. To be concluded, the findings are worthwhile to be internalized at present.

**Keywords:** *Angkola-Mandailing, proverbs, social functions, interpretations*

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The diversity of ethnic groups is represented in North Sumatera province and *Angkola-Mandailing* (hereafter written as AM) is one that particularly inhabit in the southern area of the province. Nasution (2005:3) explains that wandering, religious, critical, adaptive, and shameful (*parsulaha*) are some natures owned by AM society. This ethnic group is also distinctively known as cultural-based rich one, ranging from dance to food even from various ceremonies to oratory performance. Most of these cultural events are preserved and conducted until present. Oratory is obviously manifested in the existence of proverbs or traditional sayings (*hata-hata umpama*) that commonly performed by AM society in any customary events either joyful (*siriaon*) or condolence (*siluluton*) event. According to Harahap and Nasution, proverbs are similarly with parables for AM society. Further, AM proverbs are highly considered as philosophical and culturally valuable. Religiosity, kinship, love, unity, descendants, glory, honor, and respect are values and character that can be harvested from AM proverbs. Therefore, proverbs have been internalized within the AM society and inherited from one to the next generation.

In other side, the convergence of rapid development of internet-based information and technology has resulted new challenges, such as the rise of uncivilized citizen. Hostility, disrespect, hate, bully, and any other corrupted behavior and attitude have now become the very emergent agenda to be accomplished by us. The situation requires the need for building values and characters that, indeed has been started in Indonesia since couple of decades ago. All stakeholders have taken roles in achieving this national agenda. Fortunately, the availability of numerous local wisdoms in Indonesia opens another option to excavate the values and characters. Those local wisdoms offer many worthy things to cure all aspects of life in Indonesia. *Hata-hata umpama* or proverbs that originated from AM society is one out of many which potentially significant to be explored.

Proverbs have been, are and will always be timeless. According to word-web dictionary, proverbs are condensed but memorable sayings embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people. Furthermore, proverbs are similar to metaphors, they are sayings or stories intended to assist learning, either formal learning or in informal, family or folk learning. This characterizes proverbs as an acceptable form of communication in and out of cultural contexts. Meanwhile, Miedier (1993) defined proverb as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation”. Proverbs bring out the essence of a

given phenomenon, code of conducts, advice or give direct orders, prohibitions and are commonly used in communicating important and deep meanings in Africa and almost everywhere else.

From the viewpoint of linguistics, proverb is a source of figurative language and metaphor. It has also been described as the “core of verbal interaction in Africa” (Oduaran and Oduaran, 2006) and “the palm oil with which words are eaten”. Contrastively, Archer Taylor considered that proverb 'As a guide to life's problems, the proverb summarizes a situation, passes a judgment, or offers a course of action. It is a consolation in difficulties large and small and a guide when a choice must be made. It expresses a morality suited to the common man' (Miedier, 2008). He also pointed out that collections of proverbs are read to reflect on the world and life. Proverbs are also often used to describe the characteristics of a country or its inhabitants. Passing judgments is also done by means of proverbs and because of that, they often appear in legal contexts (ignorance is not an excuse at law, curiosity killed the cat, the fly that refuses to heed will be buried with corpse). Based on the details above, researcher concludes that proverbs will remain timeless and will keep on shedding light to warn us against pitfalls & will show us the correct way. Generally using them in a best possible way will make you feel more confident than others speaking normal language.

Similarly, Dakung (1982), defined that *hata-hata umpama* is the exemplification from tree or animals in the vicinity. This definitions is confirms that *Hata-hata umpama* covers the metaphors to describe, or convey something with exemplified to objects such as animal or other objects that surrounding AM society. It is a need for AM society to perform these proverbs to represents many feelings that sometimes could not be realized literally. Something would be more well-described, expressive and appropriately delivered by the speaker. Researcher thinks that *hata-hata umpama* could also be a literary work, as seen the following example; “*Siala ulu mangimpal tala, palu-palu, mangulap rap margulu, malamun saulak lalu*. It can be interpreted that “be of a single word, of a single agreement. “*Muda na tarpaingot piongoton*” means that anyone who could not advisable would be beaten by toxoids insect (*piongot*). The two examples above clarify that the requirements of poetry as a literary work.

Masita (2012:305) addresses that local wisdom is part of cultural construction. Local wisdom refers to various cultural riches that grow and develop in a society that is known, trusted and recognized as important elements that can strengthen social cohesion among citizens. Most of local wisdom is dominantly characterized by traditional values such as how a social group carries out the principles of conservation, natural resources management and exploitation. The realization of the local wisdom form which is a knowledge system reflection that originates from cultural values in various regions in Indonesia, indeed many have been lost from the memories of their communities. However, in some circles of the community even though it is incomplete or has been

acculturated with new changes from the outside, its characteristics still appear and function as a living guide for the community.

According to Mieder 'By employing proverbs in our speech we wish to strengthen our arguments, express generalizations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioral patterns, satirize social ills, poke fun at ridiculous situations' (1993: 11). Proverbs are used in all societal settings, particularly in Africa, speaking to a plethora of matters such as daily living, history, morality, spirituality, attitudes and behaviours and teaching of community (Boateng, 1983). Further, proverbs contain observations gathered from common everyday events and experiences concerning the nature, life and behaviour of human beings as well as of animals, birds, plants and other natural objects, and even supernatural objects and beings" (Kudadjie, 1996, p.8). Other functions are stated hereunder:

- a. It is a figurative expression, a stylistic device used to achieve a desired semantic force.
- b. They express intellectual and emotional attitudes e.g. intention, sympathy, apology, regret, warning, congratulations, attract attention, approval etc.
- c. It is a powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another.
- d. It reflects the ethnography of the people.
- e. It provides insight to a people's way of life, their philosophy, and criticism of life, moral truths and social values.
- f. Proverbs to the continuity of the given society and the individual who lives in it or adopts it.
- g. Proverbs strengths tradition of a society 8. It is used to illuminate and buttress the wisdom of the traditional code of conduct

Along with the development of many research about the substances within the proverbs, scholars found that character is one of the most important thing can be taken out from the proverbs. Character can be understood as a reliable inner disposition to respond any situation in a morally good way (Thomas Lickona, 1991: 51). Moreover, character has three interrelated parts; moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. Besides, Lickona adds that noble character (good character) includes knowledge about goodness (moral knowing), then raises commitment (intention) to good (moral feeling), and finally it really does good behavior (moral behavior). In other words, character refers to a series of knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (attitudes), and motivations (motivations), as well as behaviors and skills. The explanation above confirms that character is human behavior that contains with universal values that encompasses all human actions, either to God, Almighty, within him/herself, or to all living things on earth. Researcher also sees that values and character could be transferred through educational activities.

Values and character can be constructed through vocabulary of all languages in the proverbs. Every single word implies meaning to represent an object or things it represents. This is in line with Grice and Bolinger (1988:52) viewpoint that meaning is the relationship between language and the outside world which has been agreed by the users of language so as to mutually understand. Thus, it can be said that the meaning is significance or purpose. Searle (1980:xi) adds that in terms of freedom or attachment and in terms of self-reliance or dependence on the context, the meaning is divided into two parts, namely; context-free meanings, it is also called as semantic meaning, and context-dependent meaning. Further, it is known as pragmatic meaning. In analyzing the interpretation of *hata-hata umpama*, both of the groups are used. Semantic meaning is used in the sense of connection between the delivery of meaning by means of grammatical and lexical (Tarigan, 1990:7), which in this study is used in the term of literal meaning, whereas the pragmatic meaning is used in the sense of connection between *hata-hata umpama* and figurative meaning

Drawing on this brief review, one would assume that the interest in the exploration of values and character through *Angkola-Mandailing* proverbs is growing and possibly worthwhile to be applied in the era of revolution industry 4.0. Thus, the study focuses on proverbs (*hata-hata umpama*) presented in cultural events of AM society. Specifically, this study seeks to contribute to the discovery of local wisdom-based values and character as another options to enrich and sharpen the civilization of the nation.

## **CHAPTER II METHODS**

Descriptive-qualitative was conducted to analyze the data. This method was pointed to examine the ongoing process of cultural systems and social systems in AM society in North Sumatera province. The method was focused on the excavating values in the proverbs of AM society. Further, ethnographic content analysis was also employed to interpret the substances of data analysis. In other words, it was employed to construct the values and character within the AM proverbs. The data were collected by using library research or document research techniques. In analyzing the data the researcher uses qualitative analysis techniques with steps of data exposure, data reduction, and conclusion drawing.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Having the data collected, researcher found that there were 120 utterances categorized as proverbs or *hata-hata umpama*. Then, all of the proverbs were interpreted to postulate the social functions and exploring the values and character within the proverbs. The followings are the description of the findings.

#### a. Social functions of proverbs

After analyzing the data collected, the researcher found that all the proverbs functioned to advice, to admonish, and to satirize. The elaboration of the three functions can be clearly seen from the expressions of proverbs in the next discussion below.

#### b. Values and character

1. Religiosity. This sense can obviously be seen from the proverb; “*Hombar do adat dohot ugamo*” (custom alongside religion) in his life.
2. Kinship. This value includes primordial tribal relationships, compassion on the basis of blood relations, harmony, the elements of na transfer of tolu (*mora, kahanggi, and anak boru*). It can be illustrated in the following; “*Somba marhula-hula, manat mardongan tubu, elek marboru. Angka na so somba marhula-hula siraraonma gadongna, molo so Manat mardongan tubu, natajom ma adopanna, jala molo so elek marboru, andurabionma tarusanna*”. The core values of Mandailing’s community kinship are mainly realized in the implementation of Dalihan Na Tolu (DNT), where this kinship relationship is seen in the greetings that are good because of the connection of blood and marital relations. This kinship value is very pronounced if the Mandailing and Angkola.
3. Descendants (*Hagabeon*). This cultural value means the hope of longevity, many descendants, sustenance, good behavior and education. This cultural value has a meaning as a hope for longevity, to have offspring to good children and grandchildren. The desire of elderly parents in the Mandailing-Angkola custom is to marry off all their children and obtain many grandchildren. The happiness of the Mandailing-Angkola people is if they have many offspring. What’s more if you have a son because the boy here functions to continue the idea of parents and continues the parents’ ancestry. Because if someone has a son and marries has a daughter from another clan, their descendants follow their father’s clan. “*Anakkonhido hamoraon diau*”

4. Honor (*Hasangopan*). It is glory, authority, charisma and strong power to achieve glory. This value gives even more impetus to the people of Mandailing and Angkola, in this modern age to gain positions and ranks that give glory, authority, charisma and power. This value is what drives many Mandailing and Angkola people who hold important positions in the government at the National, Provincial and City / Regency levels. “*Ndang di ahu, ndang di ho, tumagonan ma di begu*” that means “Tidak di aku, tidak di kau, lebih baik untuk setan”.
5. Wealthy (*Hamoraan*). Property wealth is a cultural value that underlies and encourages Mandailing and Angkola people to seek as much property as possible for the welfare of themselves and others. Hamoraan (honor) according to the customs of Mandailing and Angkola is located in the balance of spiritual and material aspects that exist in a person (the life purpose in the world and in the hereafter are both achieved). The Mandailing and Angkola communities are to get the happiness of the world in the form of property wealth, thus encouraging the spirit to seek wealth for the welfare of themselves and others.”*Anakkonhido hamoraon diau*”.
6. Progress (*hamajuan*)
7. Law and law enforcement (*Patik dohot uhum*)
8. Protector (*holong*) Love or holiness in Angkola society is a general picture showing a solidarity relationship to strengthen a kinship relationship within Angkola society. This can be seen in various customary activities either *siriaon* (joy) or *siluluton* (sorrow). Look at the example; “*Jagit-jagit tangan jau solom ni borumu da inang nadangolni andun*”.
9. Unity (*domu*). It can be exemplified in the following; “*holong manjalahi domu, domu manjalahi holong*” is known (love will foster a sense of unity, and unity will foster a sense of compassion).
  - a. Songon siala sampagul, rap tu ginjang rap tu toru ‘Like a spring of cekaka acid leave, both together up and together down’
  - b. Sabara sabustak ‘stable mates and slit up’
  - c. Muda madabu rap margulu, muda mayup rap tu julu ‘if fall together will be muddy if float off together will be into headwaters’
  - d. Salumpat saindege, sapangambe sapanaili ‘jump and a step of foot, swing a hand and see’
  - e. Manyuruk rap unduk, mangambur rap gas ‘Ducking are equally subject, jumping equally gas’ Tampal marsipagodangan ulang sayat marsipamenehan’ patched to each other do not raise mutual mutually insulting shrink ‘

- f. holong do maroban domu, domu maroban parsaulian (*kasih 97aying membawa keakraban, keakraban membawa kebaikan bersama*)
10. Be cautious (manat-manat).
- Ditampar lanok di saborang lautan diboto jantan sanga boru-boru ‘Slapped fly across the ocean known whether male or female’
  - Dapdap so dahopon ‘dadap tree that cannot be embraced’
  - Dapot ursa dibaen indegena ‘Can be damaged due to footing paw’
  - Dipaboa si boa do boana ‘Notified that brings news’
  - Pataridahon rigat (rotak) tu panopaan ‘Show crack to the plumber’
11. Advices (*poda*)
- Nada mago tua ni manuk manyuruk trauma ‘Not lost dignity to infest chickens under the house’
  - Unduk dapotan sere (natartar) gaggak halimponan ‘if down gets gold (stretching), if looked distraught’
  - Di toru tangan mangido ‘Underhand asking’
  - Hohom songon sere ling songon perak ‘Silence as gold, shrill as silver’
  - Mayup din a unong mago di na salang ‘Drifting in the calm water, lost in the open place’  
‘Dapot ursa dibaen indegena ‘Can be damaged due to footing paw’
  - Muda marsinambur bitis maraekma tololan ‘If it is known the morning dew, wet calf was esophagus’
  - Mate di ginjang jomur manguas di ginjang aek ‘Die on dried rice, thirst on the water.
  - Dangka manurang ‘Another branch of another branch’
  - Di aek dope langkitang, di tubis dope rorongon ‘Still in the river, still in bud’
  - Di jolo mangaliluhon, di pudi mangasup-asup ‘In front confuse, behind denounce’
  - Madabu sandiri songon tarutung na malamun ‘fall over themselves like a ripe durian
  - ‘Bele-bele markatimbang lupa mangusa ‘Absorbed swim forget to clean the body
12. Respect (*Marsisarian*). Marsisarian is mutual understanding, respecting, respecting, and helping each other. Marsisarian values are very important in the life of a community, because of course everyone has advantages and disadvantages, so what is needed is mutual understanding rather than looking for weaknesses.
- Margonti-gonti songon na maridi di pancur ‘Flit like a shower’
  - Sada huat tu jolo, dua huat tu pudi ‘One step forward two steps back’
  - Sadao ni obok-obok ujungna laing madabu tu tano ‘as far throw, eventually fall to the ground fixed’

- d. Sabagas-bagasni na busuk laing dianggo lanok ‘However it still smelled rotten by the flies’
- e. Pauk-pauk hudali pago-pago tarugi muda na tinggal diulahi, muda na sala dipauli ‘Pauk-pauk hudali pago-pago tarugi ‘if it’s good, please repeated if it’s wrong, please corrected.
- f. Diambungkun jait tu na potpot, nada nida mata tai ida roha ‘Throw needles into dense bush, it is invisible to the eye but visible to the eyes of the heart ‘
- g. Di jolo ayak-ayahon, di pudi painte-intehon ‘Be pursued at the front, in the back into the long-awaited’
- h. Tanda pamolusanna ‘Marks its path ‘

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

From the results of research as detailed above, researcher constructs the conclusions as follows:

1. AM proverbs commonly function to advice, admonish and to satirize.
2. Number of values and character possibly be found build from the substance of AM proverbs, ranging from religiosity, kinship, affection, unity, descendants, glory, honor, to be cautious, advices, and respect.
3. Indigenous peoples have high noble values and deep inner strength. These noble values and inner strength are indeed already imprinted and indeed are the souls of the customary law community itself. From that time, he was born until the end of his life these values flowed in his blood so that he could distinguish them from other indigenous peoples. These values are the ones that can shape the character of the indigenous people so that one tribe has a different character from other tribes. In the opinion of the author, this happens because of differences in the values instilled in their lives. Likewise, it is also the AM tribes, they certainly have noble values that have been passed down from generation to generation, so that the AM tribes have different characters from other tribes in North Sumatra and Indonesia.
4. From the research result, there are 120 of proverb that possible to hata-hata umpama to be existed which cannot be inventoried. From 120 of hata-hata umpama which can be inventoried, it can be classified to 10 topics, they are: a. Principle of Unity b. The importance of caution and read the situation in executing a job, c. The importance to respect the feelings of others, d. Character and good deeds that need to be avoided and consequently, e. The importance of hard work, f. A justice, g. Consequences (good and bad) of one's actions on others, h. The guidance of a good attitude, i. Advice to be humble, and j. Philosophy of life. The number of hata-hata umpama on each topic indicates how powerful the value of AM community, like described as follows: for the example: the principle of unity has 7 hata-hata umpama. It means that the togetherness is very important to AM community. It can be seen that the meaning of hata-hata umpama is very deep. There are many words used in hata-hata umpama that cannot be translated

into Indonesia language or others. It shows the specialization of things, actions, situations, and events exist only in Ethnic AM community.

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