



Analysis of The Meaning of Dayok Nabinatur Food as Local Wisdom In Batak Simalungun Cultural Wedding Events (Semiotic Study)

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Abstract

This study analyzes the meaning of Dayok Nabinatur as local wisdom in Batak Simalungun wedding ceremonies through a semiotic approach. Dayok Nabinatur, a traditional dish, is studied not only as a culinary element but also as a bearer of cultural and philosophical signs. Using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, this study explores the symbolic meaning contained in each ingredient and the preparation process of Dayok Nabinatur. Data was collected through ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews with community leaders and culinary experts. The results of the study reveal that Dayok Nabinatur functions as a signifier of harmony, prosperity, and family ties in the Batak Simalungun community. The components of the dish and its preparation methods are interpreted as icons, indices, and symbols that reinforce cultural values and social relationships. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional foods embody and communicate cultural meanings in the context of Batak Simalungun weddings..

Keywords: Analysis, Meaning, Food, Dayok Nabinatur, Wisdom, Local, Marriage, Culture, Batak Simalungun (Semiotic Study)

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a nation rich in culture, traditions, and local wisdom. Each region has its own cultural characteristics passed down through generations, one of which can be seen through the symbols and meanings contained in traditional foods. Food is not only understood as a biological need, but also has philosophical, social, and religious values that reflect the identity of a community. Simalungun is rich in various culinary delights, one of the most popular is the traditional Simalungun dish "Dayok Nabinatur". In the Simalungun language, "dayok" means chicken, while "nabinatur" means arranged. When translated into Indonesian, "dayok nabinatur" means "chicken that is prepared in an orderly manner in such a way that it exactly resembles the shape of a chicken when it was still alive." During the Simalungun kingdom, "dayok nabinatur" was only served to kings and nobles, and the chefs had to be men (Harvina, 2018). However, over time, this dish can now be enjoyed by ordinary people, and even women can prepare it as chefs. In the Batak Simalungun community, one traditional dish rich in meaning is "dayok nabinatur." Dayok Nabinatur is a dish of chicken, arranged whole and decorated, served during traditional

ceremonies, particularly weddings. For the Simalungun people, this dish is more than just a dish; it carries symbolic meaning, conveying prayers, hopes, and blessings for the bride and groom as they embark on their married life (Siregar et al., 2025).

The presentation of dayok nabinatur also reflects local wisdom, namely cultural values that emphasize togetherness, respect for ancestors, and strengthening family ties. Through the symbols contained in its arrangement and presentation, philosophical meanings about life, happiness, and the continuity of generations are implied (Rajagukguk, 2020). Thus, dayok nabinatur serves not only as a traditional dish, but also a cultural communication medium rich in semiotic meaning. However, with the development of the times and the influence of modernization, the existence of this tradition has begun to shift. Many younger generations only view dayok nabinatur as a tradition without understanding its inherent meaning. If this condition continues, the noble values contained in dayok nabinatur have the potential to be lost and no longer be passed down to the next generation. Therefore, it is important to conduct a more in-depth study of the meaning of dayok nabinatur in traditional Batak Simalungun wedding ceremonies (Simatupang, 2019). This research is expected to uncover the symbolic values contained therein, as well as strengthen the community's understanding of the local wisdom that is part of Simalungun cultural identity (F A Purba & Slamet, 2018). Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Hisarma Saragih, the perfect chicken to be used as dayok nabinatur is a truly healthy male kampung chicken of medium size, not too old and not too young, usually a chicken with a medium weight between 1.2 kg to 1.3 kg per head. Processed dayok nabinatur can be done by grilling and currying, in the Simalungun local language it is called "iloppah". Dayok nabinatur is found in small pieces of meat (tok-tok). Then, in the front there is the head (ulu) supported by the breastbone (tuppak). On the left and right edges are placed the thigh base (tulan bolon) and thigh (tulan parnamur) parallel to the wings (habong) and chicken feet (kais-kais). At the back is the tail (ihur). In the middle is the neck (borgok) followed by the head (ulu), then the part of the chicken's body that produces egg cells (tuahni), and gizzard (atei-atei or dekke bagas) (Rahmadani & Erlinda, 2019). When serving, it is best to keep edible parts of the chicken intact and intact. Based on the background above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the meaning of Dayok Nabinatur food as local wisdom in Batak Simalungun cultural wedding ceremonies through semiotic studies. Observing these differences in customs becomes interesting because each Batak sub-ethnic group has its own symbols and meanings in traditional rituals, including the food served. In the Simalungun community, Dayok Nabinatur (a whole chicken cooked, then cut into body parts and served in an arranged form) is a central symbol in traditional celebrations, especially weddings. This food is not just a dish, but a symbol of prayer, blessings, advice, and kinship ties. When marriages occur between Batak Simalungun and Batak Toba people, the choice of customs used also influences the cultural symbols displayed, including whether Dayok Nabinatur remains present or is replaced by symbols from Toba customs. In Toba customs, for example, the more dominant is the provision of dengke (arsik carp) as a symbol of fertility and survival (Situngkir & Herlina, 2022). This phenomenon shows that marriage between Batak sub-ethnic groups is not only a union of two families, but also a meeting of two cultures, which sometimes results in negotiation, adjustment, and even cultural syncretism. Thus, analyzing the meaning of Dayok Nabinatur in this context is important, because it can show how Simalungun local wisdom is maintained, negotiated, or even adapted in inter-Batak sub-ethnic marriages (Febrina Athylata Purba & Slamet, 2018). Research on the

meaning of Dayok Nabinatur food as local wisdom in Batak Simalungun cultural wedding ceremonies using Pierce's semiotic approach is expected to provide a significant contribution in efforts to preserve and revitalize the values of local wisdom of Batak Simalungun culture for future generations (Wartono, 2018). Through an in-depth analysis of the icons, indexes, and symbols contained in this tradition, we can uncover hidden meanings that may not have been previously realized. Based on the explanation above, the author is interested in researching "The Meaning of Dayok Nabinatur Food as Local Wisdom in Batak Simalungun Cultural Wedding Ceremonies".

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research type with a descriptive method. According to Sugiyono (R. Purba et al., 2024), qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic research methods because the research is conducted in natural conditions (natural settings), also called ethnographic methods because initially this method was more widely used for analytical research in the field of cultural anthropology is called a qualitative method, because the data collected is more qualitative. By using qualitative methods, researchers can observe in depth and dig up detailed information about the Batak Simalungun culture regarding the meaning of food as local wisdom in Batak Simalungun cultural wedding ceremonies (semiotic studies) (A. Purba, 2024).

This research location is conducted anywhere to obtain research data. This research will be conducted in Simalungun Regency in October 2025. Based on the research title "The Meaning of Dayok Nabinatur Food as Local Wisdom in Simalungun Batak Cultural Wedding Ceremonies (Semiotic Study)", data sources or research participants that can be involved include (Barus & Barus, 2019):

1. The Batak Simalungun community was chosen as the primary focus of this research because they are the owners and direct participants in traditional wedding traditions. They possess a deep understanding of the values and meanings inherent in their practices. Indigenous communities can also provide perspectives on their experiences, challenges, and the benefits they experience in wedding ceremonies.
2. Traditional elders or parhata are the main sources in this research because they have in-depth knowledge about the rules in carrying out traditional wedding ceremonies.
 - a) Mr. Riston Antoni Purba ST (Lecturer at Simalungun University)
 - b) Mr. Lerman Sinaga
 - c) Mr. Duaman Purba

According to Sugiyono (Shannia, Djokosujatno, & Restoeningroem, 2021) in qualitative research the main instrument is the researcher himself, but after the research focus becomes clear, it is possible to develop a simple research instrument, question focused and selection stage, conduct data collection, analysis and draw conclusions. From the title "Analysis of the meaning of Dayok Nabinatur food as local wisdom in Batak Simalungun cultural wedding ceremonies (Semiotic Study)",

According to Sugiyono (Zaka, 2023) data collection techniques are the most important step in research, because the main goal of research is to obtain data. Without knowing data collection techniques, researchers will not obtain data that meets the established data standards. Data collection can be done in various settings, various sources, and various methods. When viewed from the setting, data can be collected in natural settings, in laboratories using experimental methods, in schools with educational and educational staff,

at home with various respondents, at a seminar, discussion, on the street and so on (Patriansah, Sapitri, & Nugraha, 2023). When viewed from the data source, data collection can use primary sources, and secondary sources. Primary sources are data sources that directly provide data to data collectors, and secondary sources are sources that indirectly provide data to data collectors, for example through other people or through documents (Puspita & Nurhayati, 2019). Furthermore, when viewed in terms of methods or data collection techniques, data collection techniques can be carried out through observation, interviews, questionnaires, documentation and a combination of the four. Data analysis in qualitative research is conducted during data collection and after completion of data collection within a specified period. During the interview, the researcher analyzes the interviewee's answers (Ariani, 2018). If the interviewee's answers are deemed unsatisfactory after analysis, the researcher will continue the questioning until credible data is obtained. According to Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono 2019: 321-329, qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until complete, so that the data is saturated. The activities in data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Data Source 1

Data Source I

Husband's name : Yacob Ondo Saragih

Wife's name : Yeni Sri Damayanti Purba

the Dayok Nabinatur food giving event for the Simalungun Batak wedding : Balai Bolon GKPS JL. Pdt J Wismar Saragih, Siantar Martoba District, Pematang Siantar City, North Sumatra Province

Data Source II

Husband's name: Rinto Saragih

Wife's name: Lana Kristen Purba, A.Md

Location of the Dayok Nbinatur food giving event for the Simalungun Batak wedding: Simpang Naga Pane Presidential Elementary School, Purba District, Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province

Data Source III

Husband's name: Zeptha Andreas Purba

Wife's name: Pepy Tri Marina Sinaga

Location of the Dayok Nabinatur food giving event for the Simalungun Batak wedding: Durian Banggal, Raya Kahean District , Simalungun District, North Sumatra Province

Resource Person Profile

The following is a profile of the informants in this study, including their names, ages, and occupations, based on the classification conducted by the researchers, divided into academics and community leaders (*Raja Parhata*). A brief profile of each informant can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Profile of Resource Persons

Source person	Name	Age	Work
Academics	Ancient Riston	51 Years	Lecturer

King Parhata	Lerman Sinaga	78 Years	Farmer
King Parhata	Ancient Duaman	68 Years	Teacher

Research Data

Research Data 1



Wedding Photos



Dayok Nabinatur (Chicken meat arranged neatly on a plate) Galuh (Banana)



Photo with the bride and groom

Research Data II



Wedding Photos



Dayok Nabinatur (Chicken meat arranged neatly on a plate)



Photo with the bride and groom



Source: (Researcher Documentation, Simalungun Regency 2025)

Research data III



Wedding Photos



Results and Discussion

Table 1. Results and Discussion of Research 1

No	Types of Cultural Elements	Semiotic Meaning
1	Dayok Nabinatur (Chicken meat arranged neatly)	<p>Icon : Iconically, chicken meat represents fertility and prosperity due to its ability to lay eggs. The whole chicken can also be interpreted as a hope for quick offspring and a healthy family.</p> <p>Index : The presence of chicken indexically signifies an important celebration in the life cycle, particularly a wedding. Its distinctive cooking process (<i>diloppah</i>) and the use of specific spices are hallmarks of the inherited Batak Simalungun culinary tradition.</p>

No	Types of Cultural Elements	Semiotic Meaning
		<p>Symbolism : Chicken meat symbolizes the hope of blessings and good health for families awaiting offspring. The way it is served and distributed during traditional ceremonies also has symbolic meaning related to kinship ties and the blessing of ancestors.</p>

The results and discussion in this first study are supported by the opinion of community leader Mr. Riston Purba, a Batak traditional figure with the surname Purba. Dayok Nabinatur is one of the typical Batak Toba culinary delights that has high cultural value and taste. This study aims to examine in more depth the manufacturing process, ingredients used, and the philosophical meaning contained in Dayok Nabinatur food (Lantowa, Marahayu, & Khairussibyan, 2020). Based on interviews with several community leaders and Batak culinary craftsmen, including Mr. Riston Purba, information was obtained that Dayok Nabinatur is not just food, but also has an important role in traditional ceremonies and family celebrations (Wulandari, 2022). Mr. Riston Purba, a traditional figure and observer of Batak culture, explained that Dayok Nabinatur is often served at important events such as weddings, births, and funeral ceremonies. According to him, the choice of chicken as the main ingredient has its own symbolism, namely as a symbol of fertility, courage, and new life. In addition, the spices used in Dayok Nabinatur also have philosophical meanings (O. Simbolon, 2019). For example, the use of andaliman as the main spice gives a distinctive spicy taste, symbolizing the challenges and trials in life. Turmeric, which gives the dish its yellow color, symbolizes nobility and blessings. The process of making Dayok Nabinatur also requires special skills and precision. The chicken used must be fresh, high-quality free-range chicken. The spices must be ground perfectly to achieve optimal flavor (F. T. B. G. P. Simbolon, 2022). The cooking process also requires a long time to allow the spices to fully penetrate the chicken.

Research Results and Discussion 2

Table 2. Results and Discussion of Research 2

N o	Types of Cultural Elements	Semiotic Meaning
1	<i>Dayok Nabinatur</i> (Chicken Meat Neatly Arranged)	Icon : The Dayok Nabinatur's icon can be seen from its shape, which resembles a whole chicken arranged

N	Types of Cultural Elements	Semiotic Meaning
o		<p>in a specific way. This arrangement can be a visual representation of hopes for fertility, prosperity, and harmony in marriage.</p> <p>Index : Dayok Nabinatur, as an index, shows a cause-and-effect relationship or causal relationship with what it signifies. Its presence at a wedding indicates celebration, respect for tradition, and good wishes for the couple.</p> <p>Symbol : Dayok Nabinatur, as a symbol, has a culturally agreed-upon meaning among the Batak people. This food can symbolize family ties, blessings, and the continuation of the lineage. Each ingredient and method of preparation may have its own symbolic meaning passed down from generation to generation.</p>

The results and discussion in this second study are supported by the opinion of community leader Mr. Lerman Sinaga, a Batak traditional figure with the surname Sinaga. Dayok Nabinatur is not just food, but also a symbol of togetherness, unity, and kinship (Sobur, 2017). According to him, this food is often served at important events such as weddings, births, and other traditional ceremonies as an expression of gratitude and hope for blessings. Mr. Lerman Sinaga explained that each ingredient and the process of making Dayok Nabinatur has a deep philosophical meaning (Fitri, Ichsan, & Yunita, 2024). For example, the use of free-range chicken as the main ingredient symbolizes strength, courage, and independence. The spices used, such as andaliman, Batak onions, and chilies, symbolize the diversity of flavors and life experiences that must be faced. The process of cooking Dayok Nabinatur also involves mutual cooperation and collaboration between family or community members (Asti Suci Rahmadani, 2024). This reflects the values of togetherness and solidarity that are highly valued in Batak Simalungun culture. Dayok Nabinatur has the potential to become a culinary tourism attraction that can improve the local economy (Mahruf, Boer, Sucipta, & Agustian, 2024). By promoting Dayok Nabinatur as part of the Batak Simalungun cultural heritage, it is hoped that it will attract tourists to come and enjoy the natural beauty and cultural richness of this region.

Table 3. Results and Discussion of Research 3

N o	Types of Cultural Elements	Semiotic Meaning
1	<i>Dayok Nabinatur</i> (Chicken Meat Neatly Arranged) 	<p>Icon : As an icon, Dayok Nabinatur represents something through resemblance or imitation. In Simalungun culture, Dayok Nabinatur is presented with each chicken organ separated and rearranged in an orderly manner to resemble a live chicken, from the head, neck, wings, legs, thighs, claws, back, and tail. This visual form of a whole, neatly arranged chicken can ironically symbolize wholeness, fertility, and the hope of a complete and harmonious new life for the bride and groom.</p> <p>Index : An index is a sign that has a direct or causal relationship with what it signifies. The presence of Dayok Nabinatur in traditional Batak Simalungun celebrations, including weddings, indexically indicates that the event is an important celebration that follows customs. This food is central to every traditional Simalungun celebration. Therefore, the presentation of Dayok Nabinatur indicates the presence of a sacred traditional ceremony and respect for ancestral traditions.</p> <p>Symbol : As a symbol, Dayok Nabinatur has a meaning that is arbitrarily or conventionally agreed upon within a culture. In Simalungun culture, Dayok Nabinatur symbolizes group unity with all its cultural values. The careful preparation and presentation process, with each organ being rearranged, symbolizes respect for and maintenance of traditions inherited from Simalungun ancestors. This food can also symbolize hopes for blessings, prosperity, and longevity for the married couple, as well as strengthening family and community bonds.</p>

The results and discussion of the 3 Dayok Nabinatur studies demonstrate that Dayok Nabinatur is not just an ordinary dish, but holds profound significance in the lives of the Simalungun Batak people (Amara, Kusuma, Sos, & Kom, 2022). He explained that Dayok Nabinatur is often served at important events such as weddings, births, traditional ceremonies, and family celebrations. "Dayok Nabinatur is a symbol of togetherness, unity, and blessings," said Mr. Duaman Purba. "This food is a means to strengthen relationships between family members and the community, as well as to ask for blessings from God Almighty." Mr. Duaman Purba explained that each ingredient and the process of making Dayok Nabinatur has its own symbolic meaning. For example, the use of free-range chicken as the main ingredient symbolizes fertility and courage (Fadillah & Sounvada, 2020). The spices used, such as andaliman, Batak onions, and turmeric, also have philosophical

meanings related to life and hope. The process of cooking Dayok Nabinatur also requires special time and attention (Harnia, 2021). This reflects the values of patience, perseverance, and mutual cooperation in Batak society. In addition, the neat and beautiful way of serving Dayok Nabinatur also shows respect and appreciation for the guest or recipient of the food (Paneri, 2019). In a modern context, Dayok Nabinatur remains relevant and is an important part of Batak cultural identity. Despite the emergence of many modern foods, the Batak people still maintain the tradition of cooking and serving Dayok Nabinatur at important events.

Changes in Dayok Nabinatur Food in Simalungun Batak Tradition

All changes in social institutions within a society over a certain period of time in the form of changes in the way of life or patterns of life of the society caused by changes in geographical conditions, material culture, population composition and ideology as well as due to diffusion or discoveries in society (Rustandi, Triandy, & Harmaen, 2020). The change in Dayok Binatur is the existence of Simalungun people carrying out cross-marriage with other tribes. For example, a Simalungun person or a male family member (paranak) has married a Batak Toba person in a traditional ceremony, sometimes making food no longer Dayok Binatur replaced with pork.

CONCLUSION

Based on the in-depth analysis that has been carried out through a series of studies and discussions regarding the meaning of Dayok Nabinatur food as a representation of local wisdom in Batak Simalungun culture, which is reviewed through the lens of semiotic studies, the researcher draws the following conclusions:

Dayok Binatur is a traditional food of the Simalungun people which is made from Chicken meat that is cut into several pieces and then arranged in a certain way on a plate. To convey meaning in the form of advice, hopes, or guidance in traditional Batak Simalungun ceremonies, certain family members provide Dayok Binatur as a messenger.

to the recipient's family. The life values of chickens that are good to emulate and also chosen as a symbol of Simalungun traditional food:

1. A mother hen incubates her eggs. A hen incubates her eggs for 21 days, and during this time, she carefully guards them, protecting them from any potential damage. She continues to do this until they become chicks, enduring heat, cold, hunger, and attacks from small ants (tongou) for the success of her offspring. Simalungun people can emulate this by observing the chicken's behavior, so that they can emulate the chicken's diligence and discipline in caring for their chicks and raising them well.
2. When a hen is caring for her young (maranak poso), the mother hen constantly forages for food and then shares the worms she finds with her chicks. This demonstrates her hard work to provide for her offspring. This can be represented by the hard work of providing for her offspring and preserving their future generations. Likewise, the Simalugun people, as parents, must pay full attention to and assume full responsibility for their children, ensuring their physical and spiritual needs are met.

3. Mother hens typically peck or avoid their young as they grow older, when they are considered independent or are forced to become independent. For example, when chicks can forage for food on their own without following their mother. The Simalungun people then see the chicken's lifestyle as good and worthy of imitation. They can then emulate it to raise their children to become independent and mature in all aspects of life, not relying on their parents for the rest of their lives.
4. When a chicken drinks, its head is always lowered and then raised, facing the sky. This is a sign or reminder to remember God, its creator, and to be grateful to God for providing everything for humans.
5. In the early morning, a rooster always calls "martahuak" or crows. This is a sign that the day has begun. From the rooster's call or crow, life has begun and it's time to move on to work, meaning that humans return to their daily activities and embark on a new life. Therefore, the Simalungun people apply this as a message to make the most of this time. For example, laziness is to be avoided.
6. When a rooster calls out "martahuak", its head is always raised upwards. The head facing upwards depicts looking at the future or a more distant tomorrow. Try, work hard and be more active to prepare for tomorrow or the future so that the future is brighter or better.
7. Dayok Binatur is a dish made from chicken. Chicken is a religious food, so everyone can eat it. Therefore, it is interpreted as fostering good relations between religious communities.

Suggestion

Dayok Binatur is a traditional Simalungun dish with ancestral values and is a good place for future generations to learn. We urge all members of the community to inform and teach children who are unfamiliar with the meaning of Dayok Binatur in Simalungun customs. (Harvina, 2018) . To the traditional leaders, it is hoped that they will not get tired of teaching those who want to ask to know and provide knowledge about the customs in Simalungun, and it is hoped that they will create festivals to preserve them. To the Simalungun community who have been living abroad for a long time, they should continue to hold tightly to the Simalungun culture both in traditional events and the meaning of the function or use of Dayok Binatur and guide their children so that the customs and meaning of Dayok Binatur will not become extinct and will continue to develop so that they can be the successors of each era to era. To the younger generation my age, I hope to take the time to learn the meaning of Dayok Binatur in Simalungun customs because this has advice and messages from their ancestors so that it can be preserved.

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