



Ethnographic Study of the *Marosok* Tradition in the Payakumbuh Community Using Pierce Semiotic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The *marosok* tradition is a tradition of buying and selling livestock carried out using hand movements and facial expressions in the bargaining process. The *marosok* tradition has denotative and connotative meanings associated with Minangkabau culture. The purpose of this study was to determine the meaning of denotation and connotation of the *marosok* tradition with an ethnographic approach using Symbolic Interactionism Theory and semiotic analysis of Pierce. This research method is qualitative by conducting literature study and interviews using snowball sampling technique to M. Azhadi Dt. Bosa as key informant who directs researchers to Desmon Korina and Hadiyati who understand the *marosok* tradition in the Payakumbuh community. This study shows that the tools, hand movements and expressions in the *marosok* tradition have meanings that must be understood by the parties involved in the transactions. The sarong is a covering tool that shows *marosok* tradition is only carried out by men. Finger gestures indicate digits up to millions, increasing, or decreasing bidding. Expressions indicate approval or rejection of the offered price. The *marosok* tradition ends with handshake and smile between the seller and the buyer. The *marosok* tradition creates healthy competition where the prices are only known by the parties concerned. However, this process is not transparent, the buyer can only estimate the weight and condition of the livestock by seeing and touching the livestock directly, so the buyer must be very careful in choosing livestock with good quality. The *marosok* tradition must be maintained so that the media is needed to teach how to do *marosok* to the younger generation. Apart from being a buying and selling transaction, the *marosok* tradition can be used as an attraction for tourists to come to Payakumbuh.

1. Introduction

Indonesia has various traditions originating from various regions, one of which is the *marosok* tradition originating from Minangkabau. The word *marosok* in Indonesian means to feel or hold something without seeing the item (Regina, 2017). The *marosok* tradition can be interpreted as a tradition of buying and selling animals (*taranak*) by sellers with buyers where the bargaining process is carried out by shaking hands covered in sarongs or hats without any verbal communication. Bargaining activities are carried out through hand movements behind the sarong or known as *basangkuik*, these hand movements have meanings that are understood by sellers and buyers. This tradition is carried out in all *taranak* markets spread across Palangki, Kota Baru, Sariak River, Muaro Paneh, Payakumbuh, and Cubadak areas (Fatanti & Happy, 2019). In the midst of growing technology and communication developments, the *marosok* tradition is still maintained by the Minangkabau people, especially Payakumbuh.

The *marosok* tradition is carried out using hidden hand movements aimed to reducing competition between sellers so can create healthy trade. However, according to Yasmine (2018), the validity of transactions in the *marosok* tradition has weak legal force so that mutual trust is needed between the seller and the buyer. Mutual trust can grow from verbal and nonverbal communication processes that take place during the transaction process. According to Mulyana (in Fadhilah & Dewi, 2017), verbal messages can be interpreted as all symbols that use words while non-verbal messages are all signs that are not words. In the *marosok* tradition, communication is dominated by nonverbal communication through hand movements, eye gaze to silence which has meaning because it is a cultural component because nonverbal expressions have many similarities with language (Hsb., 2015).

Nonverbal communication is more dominantly used in everyday life than verbal communication. Mehrabian in Mayasari (2019) states that nonverbal communication plays a role of 55% in the communication process. Nonverbal communication is conveyed through eye contact, hand movements, facial expressions and standing postures which are often done during the *marosok* process. The index finger indicates the value 1, 10, 100 and so on while the index and middle fingers indicate the value 2, 20, 200 and so on. Wrinkling of the forehead or closing the eyes means that someone is thinking or contemplating (Fadhilah & Dewi, 2017). In addition, silence in the *marosok* tradition also has the meaning of thinking or considering.

The meaning of the *marosok* tradition can be interpreted with an ethnographic approach. According to Kamarusdiana (2019), the ethnographic approach focuses on culture in a society or a nation. The *marosok* tradition is a culture formed in Minangkabau that produces symbols that are understood by the local community. These symbols can be interpreted using Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Pierce semiotic analysis. According to Maulani et al. (2021) symbolic interactions interpret actions related to other human activities. Meanwhile, Zoest in Wulandari & Siregar (2020) defines semiotics as the study of signs and meanings. Semiotic analysis was put forward by many experts, one of them by Pierce which divides the concept of semiotics into three or commonly called a trichotomy consisting of representamen, interpretants and object (Wulandari & Siregar, 2020).

The *marosok* tradition occurs through symbolic interactions between sellers and buyers. The form of symbolic interaction itself consists of symbols that have meaning including the fingers used when buying and selling in the *marosok* way (Maulani et al., 2021). The *marosok* tradition consists of objects that have meaning that can be analyzed using Pierce's analysis. The objects are tools, movements and expressions used during *marosok* activities. The meaning of objects in the *marosok* tradition are interesting to study so the researchers conducted a study entitled "Ethnographic Studies of the *Marosok* Tradition in the Payakumbuh Community Using Pierce Analysis". The purpose of this study was to determine the meaning of the objects in the *marosok* tradition through an ethnographic approach using Symbolic Interactionism Theory and semiotic analysis of Pierce.

Regina (2017) conducted a research on the *marosok* tradition with the title "The *Marosok* Tradition in the Sale and Purchase of Livestock Transactions at the Livestock Market of Payakumbuh City, West Sumatra". The results of this study indicate that the *marosok* tradition is carried out by sellers, buyers and brokers with the aim of respecting fellow traders, maintaining heritage and as a tourist attraction. In addition, the finger is used as a symbol to symbolize the nominal price. This study did not use an ethnographic approach and Pierce semiotic analysis so that it is different from the study conducted by the researcher. Another study was conducted by Maulani et al. (2021) entitled "The Symbolic Interaction of the *Marosok* Tradition in the Sale and Purchase of Livestock Transactions in Nagari Cubadak, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra Province". The results of this study indicated that the five fingers covered in a sarong are symbols that have different meanings, namely mutual respect, tolerance and solidarity between others. This study did not use Pierce semiotic analysis so that it did not delve deeply into the meaning of the objects in the *marosok* tradition. Another study was conducted by Fatanti & Happy (2019) entitled "The Cultural Meaning of *Marosok* Traditions". The results showed that the *marosok* tradition contains the values of confidentiality, solidarity, and maintaining harmony through the spirit of *raso jo pareso* or tolerance. This study did not use Pierce semiotic analysis so that it did not delve deeply into the meaning of the objects in the *marosok* tradition.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. According to Sugiyono in Maulani et al. (2021) qualitative methods emphasize meaning rather than generalizations based on inductive data analysis. The ethnographic approach is an approach that looks at the way people think, live and behave.

To obtain research data, researchers conducted interviews using snowball sampling which is a method for identifying, selecting and taking samples in a network or continuous chain of relationships (Nurdiani, 2014). Snowball sampling is a sampling technique of data sources, which initially are small in number, but gradually become larger. This is because the number of data sources that are small in number has not been able to provide satisfactory data, so look for other people who can be used as data sources. So that the number of samples of data sources will get bigger, like a rolling snowball, over time it gets bigger (Sugiyono, 2013). Interviews were conducted with M.

Azhadi Dt. Bosa as a key informant who directs researchers to Desmon Korina and Hadiyati who understand the *marosok* tradition in the Payakumbuh community. In addition, researchers also conducted a literature study to determine the meaning of any objects in the *marosok* tradition. The results of interviews and literature studies are then processed to produce data reduction, display data and conclusion data to obtain research results.

3. Result and discussion

History of *Marosok* Tradition

Marosok is one of the traditions of the Minangkabau community in conducting transactions of buying and selling livestock through symbols that are conveyed by shaking hands under a sarong, hat, shirt, or other cloth between the seller and the buyer. The *marosok* tradition is related to the high culture of the Minangkabau community. In ancient times, livestock was part of the inheritance that was left from generation to generation. Some Minangkabau people are forced to sell their livestock to meet various needs, but from the Minangkabau community's perspective, selling and buying heirlooms is a family disgrace. Because if they sell their inheritance at a low price, they will be considered to be degrading the inheritance, while if it is sold at a high price, it will be called taking advantage of the family inheritance (Umassari, 2017). For this reason, bargaining in the sale and purchase of livestock is carried out in secret through *marosok*.

Based on the interviews, the interviewees did not know for sure the history of the *marosok* tradition. Hadiyati, as the cultural sub-coordinator of Payakumbuh City, explained that there is no written source that mentions the origins of the *marosok* tradition. The three interviewees also stated that the *marosok* tradition is a hereditary tradition since the time of the ancestors, and this tradition must be maintained because it is part of the culture of the Minangkabau people.

“Ha tu yo kurang pas apak baa sejarahnya tu, tapi lah dari dulu, lah turun-tamurun”(interview with M. Azhadi Dt. Baso, May 24th 2022).

The *marosok* tradition can be found in almost all livestock markets (*pasa taranak*) in Minangkabau, one of which is the livestock market in Payakumbuh which can be categorized in the periodic type, because market days there only held once or twice a week (Pica-Ciamarra et al., 2010). The livestock market in Payakumbuh is held every Sunday, located in Payobasung, Payakumbuh. The sellers, buyers, *toke*, and brokers from all over the Minangkabau realm gather to carry out the *marosok* tradition.

In the *marosok* tradition, there are several roles in transactions, namely sellers, buyers, *toke*, and brokers. The sellers wear cowboy hats and sling sarongs that will be used as tools for transactions with buyers during *marosok*. Animal buyers will go around the livestock market while estimating the weight and price of the livestock. If the buyer has determined the livestock according to what he wants, then he can immediately carry out a *marosok* bargaining process with the trader. If the bidding process is successful, then the buyer can proceed by paying the down payment with the waived nominal, as a sign

that he is serious to buy the livestock. *Toke* are people who come to the market to buy livestock which are then resold to other areas or markets. Brokers are people who help buyers when they want to buy livestock at the Payakumbuh livestock market but they do not know the procedures for buying and selling with the *marosok* tradition. These brokers can directly offer their services to prospective buyers, or be recommended by other people to the prospective buyers. In the Payakumbuh market, the compensation is given to the brokers at least Rp. 25,000, or in accordance with the price agreement between the broker and the buyer or the broker and the seller.

The Process of Symbolic Interaction of *Marosok* Tradition in the Payakumbuh Community

Payakumbuh cattle market is the largest place to buy and sell livestock in West Sumatra. Every Sunday, people will come from the morning until the market closes in the afternoon to transact livestock. Before making a sale and purchase transaction of livestock, the seller who brings the livestock usually pays a market levy to the livestock market officer in the amount of Rp. 10,000 per head of livestock. Only then can the seller market the livestock he brings.

Meanwhile, buyers who come generally do not buy immediately, but will go around first to select the desired livestock, while profiting or estimating the size, weight, and selling price of the animal. If the estimate is in accordance with the livestock sought by the buyer, then the buyer can continue the process of asking for prices and bargaining with *marosok* or touching hands with livestock sellers, which is carried out covered under the intermediary of gloves, clothes, or hats, while exchanging symbols. on the finger that shows the sale and purchase price of the livestock.

In transactions with *marosok*, sellers and buyers of livestock will exchange the finger symbols above. Meanwhile, in the bargaining process, there is another symbol, namely if one party asks for an increase in price, the finger will be pointed up. Meanwhile, to request a price reduction, the finger will be directed downwards.

After the bargaining process with *marosok* is complete, if the seller and buyer of livestock agree on the negotiated sale and purchase price of livestock, then both parties will shake hands. Then the buyer is obliged to give a down payment as a sign that he bought from the seller of livestock. While the nominal amount of this token money is not specified, it is released according to what the buyer wants to pay. Buyers can give this token even if it's only Rp. 5000 or IDR 10,000. By providing an advance by the buyer of livestock, the seller is not allowed to trade or offer the selected livestock to others. After that, traders and buyers will go to the livestock market officer to get a letter of sale and purchase of livestock. With this letter, the buyer feels safe and the merchant gets valid evidence (Regina, 2017).

The *marosok* tradition also reflects the teachings of Islam in the practice of buying and selling. This is in accordance with the philosophy of the Minangkabau community, the *Basandi Syara'*, *Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* tradition (customs based on religion, religion based on the Koran), which is based on the principle of buying and selling in Islam, that

objects that are being offered by other people should not be sold or sold. offered to other people, when the seller and buyer have agreed on the sale and purchase price of livestock, and the buyer has given a down payment as a token of the purchase of livestock.

If the buyer has paid the payment to the seller, then the buyer and seller can make an agreement regarding the remaining payment for livestock. Sellers and buyers of livestock in the Payakumbuh cattle market also have a high sense of trust in each other. This is because, even though the new buyer pays the sign-up fee, the buyer is allowed to bring the livestock home.

The marosok tradition is carried out through the interaction of symbols that can be grouped based on non-verbal messages as follows (Rakhmat, 1994; Kusumawati, 2016):

1. Kinesics Messages

The kinesics message in *marosok* activities is conveyed in the bargaining process through finger symbols covered by cloth or other tools.

2. Facial messages

Facial messages or expressions in the *marosok* tradition can be seen during negotiations. The seller or buyer will frown if they disagree or are thinking and will smile if they agree.

3. Gesture Messages

The gestural messages that can be seen during *marosok* activities are such as nodding in agreement, shaking the head in disagreement, patting the back of the hand or shoulder of one party when reaching an agreement.

4. Proxemic Messages

The proxemic message or the distance between the *toke* or the seller of livestock in the livestock market is closer than the distance between the seller and the buyer.

5. Artefactual Messages

The artefactual message of the *marosok* tradition is the use of buying and selling tools such as sarongs, hats, and cloth.

6. Touch Message







The message of touch in the *marosok* tradition can be seen when shaking hands and touching the other person's finger when submitting the desired buying and selling price. The movement is carried out using the right hand as a form of politeness and mutual respect (Maulani et al., 2021).










Semiotic Analysis of the *Marosok* Tradition in the Payakumbuh Community





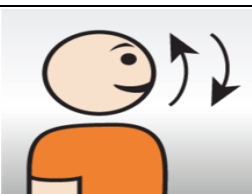
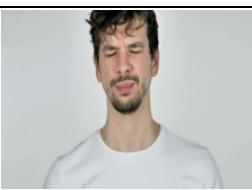
Attributes and movements of *marosok* tradition have general meaning which can be understood by the seller and buyer. Meaning always includes many understandings, aspects of understanding that are shared by communicators (Sobur in Maulani et al.,

2021) If there is a difference meaning in the interpretation of the Marosok tradition, there will be misunderstanding between the seller and the buyer. The meaning of the sign (S), object (O), and interpreter (I) of the tools, movements and expressions in the *marosok* tradition identified using Charles Sander Pierce's semiotic analysis are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Meaning of Tools, Movements and Expressions in the *Marosok* Tradition

| Sign (S) | Object (O) | Interpreter (I) |
|---|--|--|
|  | Cowboy Hat | The cowboy hat is the identity of sellers or <i>toke</i> . The cowboy hat is also a tool for <i>marosok</i> to cover the hands of sellers and buyers during bargaining process for livestock. |
|  | Sarong | The sarong is usually slung over the shoulder of the seller and used to cover the hands during the bargaining process. Sarong is used as a prayer cloth for men in Minangkabau. The existence of the sarong shows that the <i>marosok</i> is implemented based on Islamic tradition. |
|  | Index finger | The index finger shows the price with a prefix of 1. When the index is held by the buyer or seller of livestock, it means that it shows offers such as 100, 1000, 10,000, 100,000, 1000,000, and so on. |
|  | Index finger and middle finger | The index and middle fingers held indicate prices with a prefix of 2, such as 200,000, 2000,000, and so on. |
|  | Index finger, middle finger and ring finger | The index finger, middle finger, and ring finger that are held show the price with the leading 3 digits, such as 3000, 300,000, and so on. |
|  | Index finger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger | The index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger that are raised together and held show the number 4, which means the bids are made for 400, 4000, 40,000, and so on. |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p>Five fingers cupped and held together</p> | <p>The five fingers that are locked and held together show the number 5, which means the bids made for the price of 500, 5000, 50,000, and so on.</p> |
|  | <p>Bent index finger</p> | <p>The index finger is bent, pointing to the number 9, which means that the bids submitted for the price of 90, 900, 9000, 90,000, and so on.</p> |
|  | <p>Bent index and middle finger</p> | <p>The bent index and middle fingers represent the number 8, 80, 800, 8000, and so on.</p> |
|  | <p>Bent index finger, middle finger and little finger</p> | <p>Indicates the number 7, so this symbol refers to a multiple of 10 of the number 7, such as 70, 700, 7000, 70000, and so on.</p> |
|  | <p>Bent index finger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger</p> | <p>The four index fingers, middle fingers, ring fingers, and little fingers bent downwards together are symbols for the number 6, 60, 600, 6.000, 60.000, 600.000, and so on.</p> |
|  | <p>Thumb</p> | <p>Show offers in multiples of 10 of 25, such as 25, 250, 25000, and so on</p> |
|  | <p>The five fingers held and wiggled</p> | <p>Bid half price</p> |
|  | <p>Finger pointing up</p> | <p>Asking for additional price</p> |
|  | <p>Finger pointing down</p> | <p>Request a price reduction</p> |

| | | |
|---|-------------|---|
|  | Shake hands | shake hands means the bargaining process has been completed |
|  | Smile | The sale and purchase price has been agreed and the bidding process is complete |
|  | Frowning | Thinking or disagreeing with the purchase price of livestock |
|  | Close eyes | Thinking |
|  | Nod | Shows an agreement of the purchase price of livestock |
|  | Shaking | Shows disagreement purchase price of livestock |

The *marosok* tradition is a tradition of buying and selling livestock in which sellers and buyers communicate non-verbally through symbols using seller's and buyer's fingers and expressions. The process of bargaining in *marosok* is carried out in a closed manner, so that those who know the prices and offers of the livestock are only the sellers and buyers who do *marosok*. This is done in order to establish harmony and mutual respect between fellow sellers and buyers. Based on the explanation from Hadiyati, if the sale and purchase transaction of livestock is not carried out in a closed manner, there will be price competition between livestock sellers which can trigger conflicts if one of the buyers finds out that the seller is offering lower prices to other potential buyers. This is because other sellers and buyers already know the bidding process beforehand (Fatanti & Happy, 2019). The *marosok* tradition is also related to politeness, where parties other than the seller and buyer who are transacting do not get intervention and avoid third party opinions which may not be acceptable to the seller or buyer. This statement is in accordance with the results of Fatanti & Happy (2019) research which shows that the symbol in the *marosok* tradition aims to maintain harmony in society. Regina (2017) added that the *marosok* tradition emphasizes solidarity and mutual respect between traders. The *marosok* tradition has advantages in maintaining harmony between livestock

sellers. However, the sale and purchase of livestock with *marosok* is not transparent because the buyer does not know concrete information about the weight and condition of the animal. Buyers can only estimate by seeing and touching the condition of livestock directly. So the buyer must be very careful in choosing livestock with good quality

In the *marosok* tradition, there are several tools to cover the hands namely sarong and cowboy hats. Sarongs and cowboy hats, can also be the identity of livestock sellers at the livestock market. Besides being a hand covering in the *marosok* tradition, the sarong is also commonly used as a blanket or cloth for praying at the surau for men in Minangkabau. So that the sarong in Minangkabau is interpreted as a cloth used by Minangkabau men for daily activities. In Minangkabau only men wear sarongs in their daily lives, even if only to go to coffee shops, to the fields, to the surau or mosque, or to the cattle market (Umassari, 2017) The usage of sarong shows that *marosok* only can be done by men, because interaction in *marosok* between men and women is not allowed, especially by touching. This is related to the prohibition of the teachings of Islam which is the religion of the majority of the Minangkabau community (Maulani et al., 2021). These results are in accordance with Regina (2017) research which states that the *marosok* tradition is identical with men so that they use sarongs as a transaction medium.

The sale and purchase of livestock is carried out by a bargaining process through finger gestures covered in a sarong or cowboy hats. Each finger represents the numbers 1-9 and 25 which can be interpreted in multiples of tens, hundreds of thousands, millions, to billions. When the bargaining process takes place, the hands of the seller and buyer of livestock will look like shaking hands under the sarong, holding, and shaking up or down. If an agreement on the sale and purchase price has been reached, both parties will shake hands or put a smile on their faces.

During the bargaining process there are also some facial expressions given by the seller to be interpreted by the buyer and vice versa. The expression shown by the seller or buyer when they reach an agreement on the price and when negotiation process is successful, they generally smiling and nodding their heads. On the other hand, when the seller or buyer does not agree with the offered price, the expression that appears is shaking his head. Meanwhile, when the seller or buyer is thinking about negotiating a price, the expressions shown are generally frowning or closing their eyes. These facial expressions are facial messages from non-verbal communication carried out in the *marosok* tradition.

Based on Pierce's semiotic analysis, the Minangkabau people have high consideration in maintaining their speech and behaviour, so they do not offend others. Through buying and selling with the *marosok* tradition, the Minangkabau people can maintain harmony and mutual respect between fellow sellers and buyers of livestock, so that buying and selling transactions can run in harmony. The *marosok* tradition is closely related to the nature of the Minangkabau people who have *raso jo pariso* (taste and check) namely considerations about what should or should not be done when interacting with other people (Oktavianus, 2006). Fatanti & Happy (2019) explained that *raso jo pariso* is an attitude of tolerance during the bargaining process so that it creates mutual respect.

4. Conclusion

The *marosok* tradition is a hereditary tradition in the process of buying and selling livestock at the livestock market in Minangkabau. The *marosok* tradition is carried out using tools, hand movements and facial expressions that have meanings that must be understood by both parties. Tools such as sarongs and hats are tools to cover the hands of sellers and buyers. The movement of the hand indicates the value for money that is being offered. Hands are also used to raise or lower bids. Expressions indicate approval or rejection of the offer given. The *marosok* tradition aims to create a healthy buying and selling process so as not to cause unhealthy market competition. However, because of its non-transparent nature, the seller or buyer will have difficulty if there is a problem so that it can only be resolved in a familial way.

The researcher provide the following suggestions: as the original tradition of the Minangkabau people, the *marosok* tradition must be preserved and passed on to the next generation. The *marosok* tradition can not only maintain harmony between sellers and buyers, but can also be an attraction for local tourism with its uniqueness. With the rapid flow of globalization, this *marosok* tradition should not be lost with the times. The *marosok* tradition is a culture that must be passed on from generation to generation so that media is needed to teach the *marosok* method to the younger generation. This media can be given in schools so that the younger generation feels closer to the *marosok* tradition.

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