

The Meaning of The Cockfighting Tradition Among the Talang Mamak Tribe in Rantau Langsat Village, Indragiri Hulu

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the tradition of cockfighting among the Talang Mamak tribe in Rantau Langsat Village, Batang Gansal District, Indragiri Hulu Regency, Riau Province. The method used in this research is qualitative method. The data collection techniques obtained from observation, interviews, documentation and literature studies related to the research problem. Data analysis was carried out using symbolic interpretive and functional structural theories. The findings in this study are that there is a meaning given by the Talang Mamak community to the tradition of cockfighting as a religious rite and identity that is contained in its implementation. From this meaning, social, political and economic stratification emerges as well as functional and dysfunctional in the tradition of cockfighting.

Keywords: Cockfighting, Meaning, Stratification

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INTRODUCTION

Riau Province consists of various ethnic groups and cultures. The Malay community claims its main personality identity is Malay customs, Malay language, and Islam. While humans and culture are an inseparable unity, because culture is born from human activities and habits. A culture is a reflection of human life in the community. A habit owned by a community and carried out from generation to generation as a legacy of ancestors so that these habits become the original culture in a community. By mutual agreement a group of people call it tradition.

In general, Malays who are strong in carrying out the customs of the Malay tradition. There are ethnicities known as inland tribes that inhabit Riau land such as the Talang Mamak tribe. The Talang Mamak tribe is an inland tribe that is scattered in various regions in Riau Province, precisely in Indragiri Hulu Regency. The Talang Mamak tribe is an ancient Malay or old Malay group, which means the first tribe to come to Indragiri and as a community that has the oldest culture. Every community of this inland tribe has considered their group as a Malay tribe and embraced Islam. However, in their social life

they are still strongly attached to the traditions and traditional ceremonies that have been accepted for generations, which they call the *Islam Langkah Lama*.

One of the ceremonies performed by the Talang Mamak community is the *begawai* or Talang Mamak wedding ceremony. In the *gawai* ceremony, there is a procession that must be carried out, namely the game of cockfighting. Cockfighting is only carried out at certain times, namely during wedding ceremonies, death ceremonies and the birth of children. Cockfighting must be carried out because it is a tradition of the village community. Therefore, cockfighting plays an important role as part of a series of events at the traditional ceremony of the Talang Mamak community.

Cockfighting is a practice that is still carried out even openly and is considered a common thing by cockfighters. Cockfighting is an activity carried out by pitting the courage and combat power as well as the guts of chickens against other people's roosters. Cockfighting is usually carried out in a cockfighting arena prepared by the community in mutual cooperation. Fights between two chickens are pitted using small knives or commonly called spurs as weapons, which are attached to the legs of the chicken to kill their opponents quickly.

The meaning given to cockfighting by the Talang Mamak community causes the tradition of cockfighting to remain a game that still exists today. Understanding the meaning of cockfighting involves understanding the values, norms, beliefs and practices that make up their cultural identity. In addition, the cockfighting tradition creates social stratification among cockfighters or people who have something to be valued, namely when the chicken wins.

On the other hand, cockfighting is used as a gambling forum so that the view of cockfighting is more negative. This assumption is due to deviations by certain individuals who change the basic function of the cockfighting tradition. Therefore, the cockfighting tradition gets a negative view by some people because cockfighting is considered a gambling arena.

Research on cockfighting is important so that it can provide new information, related to the emergence of a form of stratification among cockfighting players, how a tradition is able to create a social class among its users. As well as uncovering the meaning behind cockfighting including actions, symbols, and rituals in cockfighting, it will gain deeper insight into the perspectives, values, and norms that govern life and shape people's identities. Thus, researching the meaning of a culture is an important step to deepen understanding of different societies, as well as to build more harmonious relationships between different cultural groups and strengthen cultural identity, and preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

METHOD

The method that will be used in this research is a qualitative research method by going or going directly to the field. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others and by means of descriptions in

the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2011: 6).

Research methods are steps owned and carried out by researchers in order to collect information or data and investigate the data that has been obtained. The research method provides an overview of the research design. The purpose of qualitative research is to explain a phenomenon in the deepest possible way by collecting the deepest possible data, which shows the importance of the depth and detail of the data under study. Qualitative research is an activity to describe a phenomenon prioritizing a natural setting that does not produce statistical analysis or other quantification.

This research was conducted in Rantau Langsat Village, Batang Gangsal District, Indragiri Hulu Regency, Riau Province. Research related to cockfighting was conducted using the techniques of observation, interview, literature study and documentation.

The analysis in this study is: 1) Data collection, 2) Data Reduction, 3) Presentation of Data, and 4) Data verification or conclusion drawing.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. The Meaning of the Adu Ayam Tradition Among the Talang Mamak Community

Cockfighting is a phenomenon played in different time and space that has meaning visualized through various signs. The sign system contained in cockfighting is present and plays a role in providing meaning related to player behavior. In the tradition of cockfighting, one can reinterpret what is meant by the sign.

Traditions often contain symbolism and deep meaning for the community. This can include honoring ancestors, marking time or natural cycles, or conveying cultural values that are considered important. Strong traditions are usually maintained through repetition and adherence to associated rules or norms. This continuity helps communities maintain their cultural identity from generation to generation. In interpreting the cockfighting activity as a tradition of the Talang Mamak community, some of these meanings include:

a) Cockfighting as a Religious Rite

A rite is a series of actions or ceremonies that are regularly carried out in a particular way by a group of people or in a particular religious, social, or cultural context. Rites can include different types of activities, such as prayers, offerings, songs, dances or sacrifices, which have a specific purpose often related to honoring gods or spirits, commemorating important events or strengthening social ties in communities still affected by animist beliefs.

Based on this, cockfighting is interpreted as a tradition ordered by God so that the Talang Mamak community respects and appreciates this game. This understanding has become such a strong belief in the Talang Mamak community that none of the Talang Mamak people have the heart to abandon the cockfighting game in every traditional ceremony. This is important for the preservation of the cockfighting game that is held in every traditional ceremony so that it will never disappear.

The community interprets cockfighting as a way for them to get closer to God in their Old Step Islamic religious beliefs. According to Tafsir, culture clearly emphasizes the role of symbols that must be read, translated, and interpreted (Geertz, 1992). In addition, there are beliefs that are believed by the community for generations. People believe in cockfighting as a procession that serves to divert the attention of the jinn so as not to interfere with the *gawai* ceremony.

Cockfighting as a religious rite is a phenomenon that exists in certain cultures, although the practice is often controversial and considered unethical in many modern societies. The practice of cockfighting is often linked to spiritual or religious aspects, especially in some animist traditions or traditional beliefs in different parts of the world. Some of the beliefs underlying cockfighting as a religious rite include:

In the Talang Mamak community, which still adheres to the old-step Islamic beliefs, chickens are considered to have a deep symbolic or spiritual meaning. Cockfighting can be seen as a way to honor or worship certain gods or spirits that are believed to be present in the chicken or through the race. The Talang Mamak people interpret cockfighting as a cultural heritage that has existed for centuries. The practice has been preserved and passed down from generation to generation as part of their cultural identity. It is important to understand that while cockfighting may have religious or cultural meanings in the context of traditional Talang Mamak ceremonies.

One anthropological figure who discussed rituals was Victor Turner. According to Turner, the rites held by a society are an appearance of religious belief. The rites that are performed encourage people to perform and obey certain social orders. Rites also provide motivation and values at the deepest level. According to Victor Turner, rites have several roles, among others: 1) Rites can eliminate conflict. 2) Rites can limit divisions and build community solidarity. 3) Rites unite two conflicting principles. 4) Rites provide new strength and motivation to live in everyday society (Syam, Eva Yenita, 2021:254).

Referring to Turner's concept above, it can be concluded that cockfighting as a religious rite has an important role as a gathering place. Adu ayam marks or celebrates the identity of a group or community. Through participation in shared rites, group members feel more connected to each other and feel a deep sense of togetherness. Adu ayam as a rite often involves collective emotional expression, such as joy, sadness or emotion. This helps to deepen the emotional bonds between individuals in the group. Rites often involve the exchange of stories, knowledge and experiences between community members. This enriches interpersonal relationships and strengthens the sense of knowing each other.

In addition, cockfighting as a rite often reinforces and affirms social norms and values that are considered important in a community. This helps to encourage behavior that conforms to those values. Cockfighting involves honoring elders or ancestors and perpetuating traditions that are preserved from generation to generation. It reinforces a sense of appreciation for the cultural heritage that has been passed down.

Geerts clearly defines "culture is an organized system of meanings and symbols. In the sense in which individuals define their world, express their feelings and give their

judgments; a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbolic forms through which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes towards life; a collection of symbolic tools for regulating behavior". Since culture is a symbolic system, the cultural process must be read, translated and interpreted (Geertz, 1992).

Thus, rites are not just a series of formal or symbolic actions, but also a powerful means of strengthening social relations and togetherness in a community group. Religious rites can strengthen social ties and solidarity among communities. Joint participation in these rituals strengthens group identity and a sense of interdependence among the Talang Mamak community.

b) Cockfighting as an Identity of the Talang Mamak Community

Identity implies similarity or unity with others in a certain area or matter (Rummens, 1993: 157-159 in Budi Santoso, 2006). Based on the concept, the tradition of cockfighting is considered a cultural identity among the Talang Mamak community, especially since this practice has been passed down from generation to generation. Adu ayam has been around for many years and has a strong historical value for the local community. For the Talang Mamak community, cockfighting is a symbol of local identity. It can reflect values such as courage, strength, or skill in combat and even religion that is valued by the community.

Cockfighting is often associated with certain rituals or ceremonies in Talang Mamak culture. For example, cockfighting can be part of religious celebrations or important community events. For the Talang Mamak people, cockfighting is a way to teach cultural values, skills and traditions to the younger generation. It also plays a role in maintaining and preserving a unique cultural heritage.

In relation to the cockfighting symbol, it is in line with Geertz's symbolic interpretive theory that examines religion and culture. Interpretive is a view. A symbol according to Geertz is something that needs to be captured or interpreted for its meaning. So symbols are objects, events, sounds, speech or written forms that are given meaning by humans. Geertz (Sudikan 2007:38). The view that cockfighting is part of the social identity among the Talang Mamak tribe, which adds to its attractiveness in the eyes of outside communities. Therefore, the cockfighting tradition helps to maintain intergenerational ties and strengthen the sense of membership among the Talang Mamak community.

Traditions help to strengthen individual identity within the context of the wider social group. By following traditions, individuals feel connected to their group and are recognized as part of it. Therefore, cockfighting traditions often have strong symbolism that distinguishes one community from another. Although traditions are usually considered inherited practices, they can also undergo adaptation and innovation over time. This process helps communities maintain their cultural identity while remaining relevant and responsive to social, political and economic changes. As such, traditions are not only a set of practices or rituals, but also a strong foundation for a society's cultural

identity. They play an important role in shaping worldviews, values and ways of life that distinguish one group of people from another.

B. Social Stratification in the Cockfighting Tradition among the Talang Mamak Community

Social stratification is also a form of classifying members of society into classes based on certain characteristics. According to Max Weber, social stratification is based on social, economic and political dimensions, (Rizqon Halal Syah, 2015:37). In the implementation of cockfighting, the social stratification that has an impact on the Talang Mamak tribe is as follows:

1. Social Stratification

Every society always has social ladders called social layers that distinguish the high and low of a person's position or position in society. Differences in the height and low position of the source vary, some are caused by differences in a person's ability to compete to occupy the top rank in the social pyramid and also stem from factors of wealth, social value, power/intelligence, descent and piety and so on, (Denti Depita, 2019:15). Accordingly, for the Talang Mamak community, cockfighting is a way to maintain the values of bravery and prowess in their local traditions. Social respect can affect social stratification which is the social status, honor that a person has in his life and has elements that are higher than other people around him. Individuals or groups are considered respected if they have a higher social status. In this case, a cockfighting actor will learn a lot to get a victory, it will prove a victory means when the actor is good at caring for and training chickens and knowing the weaknesses of his opponent's chicken then they will continue to win. This will raise their social status among cockfighters. They will be respected by others for being the winner in the cockfight and dubbed as the champion bachelor.

2. Politic Stratification

Cockfighting as a cultural practice in the Talang Mamak tribe can lead to political stratification in the communities involved in this practice. In relation to symbols, when the owner's rooster wins, the owner feels great pleasure. With an excited mood, he feels that he has received pleasure, namely by being recognized for his honor. People who win cockfights or have successful cocks often gain respect and higher social status in societies that value cockfighting. They can become important figures who have political and social influence in their communities.

The practice of cockfighting can create social and political networks among cock owners, cockfighters and cockfighting fans. These groups can form alliances or rivalries that influence political dynamics within their communities. Common interests in cockfighting can mobilize support for or against certain figures.

3. Economic Stratification

The economic aspect is also an important factor, with the betting and sale of fighting cocks becoming a source of income for some Talang Mamak

communities. Economic stratification, which is the differentiation of society based on material control and ownership, is also an everyday reality. In relation to cockfighting, among other things, the difference in community members based on the winner of the bet is based on the amount of the bet and the selling price of the chicken and creates community groupings according to each strata that has its own way of life in accordance with its (economic) position in society (Syarif Moeis, 2008:6).

As stated above, there are also social stratification systems that are deliberately organized to pursue common goals. Power in the cockfighting tradition is a special element in the stratification system in society. Cockfighting often involves large monetary stakes. The amount of the bet can reach hundreds to tens of millions of rupiah. Individuals or groups who have sufficient wealth to place high stakes or purchase higher quality fighting cocks, have greater influence in cockfighting practices. This can create economic stratification between those who can afford to engage in cockfighting and those who cannot.

People participating in cockfighting may bet significant amounts of money. This creates the opportunity for huge economic gains for those who successfully win the bet. Cockfighting owners often invest time, money, and other resources in preparing and training their cocks for competition. These costs can include grooming fees, special food, and medical expenses for the chickens. People who can afford to pay for regular and thorough care of their chickens tend to have an edge in cockfighting competition.

C. Function of Cockfighting Tradition

Robert King Merton in his structural functional theory provides a different view of function. Merton defines function as consequences that can be observed and made with the aim of adaptation or adjustment of a particular system. Adaptation and adjustment are always positive for the system. That is why Merton then introduced the concept of dysfunction to see the existence of consequences that actually damage or have a negative impact on the system. (George Ritzer 2010: 253). In research on the tradition of cockfighting among the Talang Mamak community, researchers refer to the theory of structural functionalism which is closely related to analyzing the function of cockfighting. Here are some functions of the cockfighting tradition, among others:

a. A Gathering Event

The Talang Mamak people view cockfighting as more than just entertainment or competition. They see it as a gathering place that strengthens the social and cultural ties between their communities. The game of cockfighting is interpreted as an activity that can strengthen friendship in the Talang Mamak community. The Talang Mamak community is spread across several areas in Indragiri Hulu, so with the *adu ayam*, they can gather at the same event.

The game of cockfighting was originally used as a gathering place for the Talang Mamak community facilitated by the *gawaian* owner and therefore the community also stepped in to help carry out and succeed the *gawaian* event by helping morally and

materially. Cockfighting can also be a forum where knowledge about chicken rearing and fighting techniques is exchanged between experts and enthusiasts. It is an opportunity to learn from others' experiences and deepen skills in caring for and training chickens.

b. Increase Solidarity.

Humans are social creatures because humans need other people in their lives and in humans there is an urge to interact with each other, therefore humans are said to be social creatures. In human social life there is an activity carried out by humans, one of which is the activity of playing cockfighting. Cockfighting is often an opportunity for the Talang Mamak community to gather regularly. It can strengthen social bonds between people in the community, allowing them to interact, share stories and strengthen a sense of solidarity.

The presence of cockfighting can be a way to show support and presence in the community. People from all walks of life, including the older and younger ones, gather around these events, which can strengthen bonds between generations and honor long-established traditions. The tradition of cockfighting has a manifest function in that it increases the sense of solidarity of the Talang Mamak community by helping each other out by donating chickens that have lost the game.

c. Entertainment

The cockfighters feel happy and there is inner satisfaction when the chicken is being fought and can win the fight. Cockfighting is used as its own entertainment by the perpetrators of cockfighting gambling. In addition, the cockfighting game also functions as a means of entertainment for the Talang Mamak community whose daily lives are busy with work in the fields, so that the cockfighting game becomes their own entertainment for the Talang Mamak community (Y. Dewi Andani, 2016:11).

For the Talang Mamak community, cockfighting is a traditional form of entertainment and can strengthen social ties within the Talang Mamak community. The cockfighters feel happy and satisfied when their cock is being fought and can win the fight. Cockfighting is used as entertainment by the cockfighters themselves. In addition, cockfighting is part of a hobby, because to fill empty time, especially on holidays or during the dry season, the perpetrators do cockfighting gambling, (Firmanto, 2019:98).

d. Economic Function

Cockfighting is often associated with gambling activities. It can create a sizable market for bets that generate income for gamblers, cockfighting owners, and other involved parties. In line with (Firmanto, 2019:96) which states that for people with low social and economic status gambling is often considered as a means to improve their standard of living. As done by the perpetrators, they want to get income in an instant and with a very large nominal, when gambling they make bets ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions and the benefits are in accordance with the money they put.

Getting money instantly is what is expected by cockfighters so that they can improve their standard of living. This mindset is still held by the community so that more and more people are interested in betting on cockfighting games. The amount of bets in

this game is quite high, ranging from fifty thousand rupiah to tens of millions of rupiah. This nominal will be very profitable for those who can win the match.

From the cockfighting gambling game, it also has a positive impact on the economic income of the community, especially for cockfighting gamblers, not only that, the positive impact is also felt by the people who sell around the gambling arena, rooster breeders and the owner of the gambling arena, (Firmanto, 2019:97). For traders who sell around the cockfighting location such as selling mineral water, coffee, and cigarettes. As a practice that takes place in all its unique forms, cockfighting does not only produce what is called function. The continuation of cockfighting basically also presents dysfunction to its environment. In the beginning until now, it has experienced dysfunction or a shift in customary functions that are negative and detrimental, including: a) Gambling Behavior. Cockfighting has experienced a shift in function with a dysfunction, namely as a gambling event.

According to Kartono (2003: 51) explains that gambling is a deliberate bet that risks something of value, namely money through games, one of which is a cockfighting game. In line with cockfighting in the Talang Mamak community, the development of the times, the amount of money bet issued by the cockfighters. The number of cockfighters who come from outside Talang Mamak makes this tradition their opportunity to gamble.

The factors shifting the function of cockfighting are the loss of customary rules in the implementation of sabung and the entry of outside culture. This is due to the large number of mabung participants from outside or not Talang Mamak people. In its implementation because there are many participants from outside so that there are changes in the rules following the rules from outside. This is certainly a problem in itself for the existence of the Talang Mamak custom, gradually the function of mabung has shifted. On the one hand, participants from outside do not know the customary rules while participants from inside require the enforcement of customary rules (Agustar, 2022: 243).

The most immediate impact of gambling is the potential to lose money significantly. While it is possible to win money, most people experience financial losses because the odds of winning are usually lower than the odds of losing. With this, it is concluded that the function of the structural functional in this study is to analyze the social functions that are in the cockfighting environment among the Talang Mamak tribe. The function of a system that has been made runs according to its role in the Talang Mamak tribe. However, it also causes dysfunction in the cockfighting environment. In accordance with Dysfunction according to Robert K. Merton, it can be concluded that when a structure can make a positive contribution to the social system of society, it can also have negative consequences for other parts or social systems.

CONCLUSION

Adu Ayam is a series of religious actions or rites carried out regularly by the Talang Mamak community. For this reason, the Talang Mamak community highly respects and upholds this cockfighting. This understanding is a strong belief in the Talang Mamak

community. Cockfighting plays a very important role in strengthening community identity. Therefore, cockfighting can showcase its cultural heritage, unite members of a community, arouse emotions between members, promote diversity and provide positive social and economic impacts. This practice is influenced by various factors such as habit, limited education, limited knowledge, passion, kinship and economy.

The assumption that something has value, then the valuable object becomes the seed that gives birth to a multi-layered system of society. Cockfighting as a cultural practice of the Talang Mamak community can lead to stratification of the people involved in the practice, namely social, political and economic stratification.

In addition to functioning as a place for friendship, solidarity, entertainment and economic functions. Adu ayam also has a dysfunction in its implementation, namely gambling. However, through participating in shared traditions, people can build a sense of trust with each other. Trust strengthened by tradition can help prevent conflict. The rules contained in the cockfighting tradition can direct individuals and groups to act in ways that respect and pay attention to the social norms they recognize.

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