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## Momuhaboi (Meminang) Ceremony of Kadazandusun Society

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### Abstract

*Momuhaboi (meminang)* ceremony in the Kadazandusun community requires the arrangement of civilized words to enable negotiation to be done in the complete way of gracious manner. However; this tradition is increasingly forgotten because it is less used during *merisik*. If this situation persists then the legacy of the chosen words used exclusively for this ceremony will disappear. This is a major loss to the Kadazandusun generation as the bearer and conservator of the nation's heritage. Therefore, this study was carried out to collect the words that are often used during negotiations in *momuhaboi (meminang)* ceremony by Kadazandusun community. Data is obtained through fieldwork by interviewing and recording the old generation who have gone through the *merisik* rites in the past. The researcher also attended several *merisik* ceremonies at this time for collecting data. The data were analyzed using cognitive semantic theory for categorizing words with elements of euphemism. Then, the data is reported in descriptive form. The data analysis found that the Kadazandusun community used words of euphemism so that the communication process can be carried out in a civilized manner. This makes the negotiations to know the background of both parties, determining the resources and customs so that it is conducted in a harmonious atmosphere. The study found that the Kadazandusun community was rich in euphemism in negotiations during engaged. The legacy should be preserved in order that the culture can be inherited by the next generation.

**Keywords:** Kadazandusun, Euphemism, Momuhaboi and Custom

### Introduction

*Momuhaboi* or *meminang* in the Dusun community is an important ceremony before marriage. In this ceremony, the negotiation is a very important scene so that the agreement was reached for marriage. According to Haron Din in Noriati Rashid (2007), the engagement is a preamble for a wedding, which is called the *Khitbah*. The ceremony is held in a closed and not announced like a wedding. That is why it only involves the nearest family. This process is carried out by sending a representative who always consists of a close relative such as an uncle or close family friend who serves as a spokesperson. The use of the representative in this ceremony is considered as polite and decent way (Hashim, 1996).

However, in the Kadazandusun community, manners in this ceremony have been far different from today's practice. The young generations who are involved in this engagement ceremony are more prone to follow outside cultures until their own cultural virtues are fading away. This led the researchers to conduct research related to manners in merisik as well as the engagement rites of Kadazandusun community to show the nation's heritage. Courtesy in the negotiation ceremony was the focus of this study to enhance the civilization of the nation so that it was not immersed in the era of globalization.

### **Literature Review**

Meminang means the man's family or his representative voiced their desire to marry a woman. Proposal is a process for finding and obtaining a woman's consent to marry (Kadir, 2002) says that a woman is entitled to agree with the proposal if she gives her consent. If the proposal is rejected, then the man should be willing to look for another candidate. In other words, the purpose of the proposal is to ensure that the woman you want to propose is not the other person's fiancée. In the event of a proposal on the other person's fiancée, the proposal shall not be continued (Ismail, 2013).

Din (1991) explains that the proposal is when the man tells the woman about his purpose and wish. This event is held privately and not announced such as weddings. Engagement only involves the immediate family. This is because the proposal ceremony is a private family matter. The ceremony aimed to propose the girl officially and the proposal should be known and endorsed by the families of both parties. This means the man's desire for the woman has been officially informed to the family. According to Rashid (2007), a well-prepared event of proposal is a clear indication that the girl has a perfect dignity and self-esteem. In addition, this ceremony illustrates the noble values of society that adheres to religious teachings as it is done in complete manner by both parties. The engagement ceremony also marks the beginning of the preparation for marriage (Yusuf, 1984). In this regard, Yusoff (2000) explains that the engagement ceremony is a custom because it is bound by more formal rules and complete arrangements. The arrangement of the Malay engagement ceremony made this ceremony to have a systematic structure as described by Rashid (2007).

### **Research Methodology**

This study uses qualitative method by conducting literature and field studies. The literature study is conducted as a basis for reviewing the aspects to be studied. Through this study, the authors obtained the early data relating to the selection of theories which is considered appropriate for the study. This method also enables authors to improve and enhance their knowledge in certain areas through the readings. Then the author conducts a field study to collect the required data. This is based by Leah's oral tradition study guide (1949: 398-339) and Osman (1987:5). Researchers also implement the guide from Rahman (1987: 106-111) for the collection process and using Larson's translation strategy (1984) for the translation process which is the precise translation that expresses the same meaning as the meaning contained in the source text to Malay as a translation language. The data analysis process applies the qualitative data analysis guide by Lebar (2012: 164-170) and Tesch (1990: 142-145) which includes transcription, translation, data arrangement, data understanding, categorizing, coding and subsequently presenting data. The data are presented in the form of descriptive reports.

### Theory of Study

Euphemism is the expression of words that are taboo or perceived abusive with other words that are more direct or supposed to be more subtle (Syahdi, 2011: 46). According to Matsumoto (1998: 405 and Mao, 1994: 453) in Rashid (2007: 46-47), the context of the Malay community emphasizes the concept of politeness involving sacrifices and being gentlemen that disregard their own interests and feelings in order to fulfill the demands of the society and its Islamic-based culture. In this study, the concept of euphemism is used to understand the ways of the Bundu ethnic group Kadazandusun community to express words that are considered harsh, scary, insulting, offensive or taboo in a more subtle, gentle, polite, less straightforward way to avoid offending the listener. The Model of Language Modesty by Leech (1983) is used to define the maximity of politeness in the language expressed through *talaala* poetry. Maxim of such politeness includes prudence, gentleness, modesty and consent.

### Findings

The negotiation in the Customs of Momuhaboi (Meminang) in the Kadazandusun community gives full attention in manners of uttering words. This is because the importance of safeguarding and maintaining good and truthful words is strongly emphasized among the Bundu ethnic groups, especially in negotiating involving customs as in the engagement. Usually this conversation uses *talaala* poetry as a medium of communication with the use of good words that are polite and gentle as well as stating what is right. This conversation is practiced in the engagement ceremony for the Bundu ethnic group with several stages, namely *mihaboi-haboi (merisik)*, and *momuhaboi (meminang)*. According to informants of Bundu ethnic traditions, the couple's choice is determined by the parents. Any dealings of choosing a partner, *merisik* until the wedding are managed by the parents without the knowledge of both partners. The couple will recognize their husbands or wives on the day of the wedding. *Talaala* is used as a medium of communication to express the desire of the heart, giving a response whether to accept or reject or providing an excuse. All these *talaala* are communicated by parents or representative of the family members of the male or female. This *talaala* conversation is done during the *merisik* and propose (**meminang**) ceremony as in the next discussion.

### **Monguhot or mihaboi-haboi (Merisik)**

Monguhot or mihaboi-haboi is the stage of the man's parent asking the woman's parent about their desire to marry their son with his or her daughter. This activity is done when both parents meet at tamu, in a reception or during the gotong-royong. The following is the *talaala* that can be expressed for the purpose of *monguhot or mihaboi-haboi*:

<i>Piak oku piak oku,</i>	I am chicken, I am chicken,
<i>Mongoi oku togok-togok,</i>	I am calling
<i>Mokititinduk ii daa,</i>	Begging for food
<i>Turawung do siladon.</i>	Unripe paddy

(Source: Kiting Gusiang)

The verse *talaala* described that the *togok-togok* is the sound of a chicken that is looking for food. This is a metaphor for a man who is looking for a partner. The man conveys the intention to

propose if the woman is not married. Usually when being asked for proposal, the woman's side will give a humble answer that their child has nothing special as life-time security after marriage as in the following *talaala*:

<i>Ombolog oi ombolog oi</i>	Oh bird, oh bird
<i>Kada sako tindai dogo</i>	Do not perch on my place
<i>Sumako tindai wokon</i>	Perch on somebody's place
<i>Tu kiraan do pintodon</i>	Which has a branch to step

(Source: Kotirin Guntamas)

According to informants, the woman's side who is being proposed strives to keep the custom with not being too eager to accept when someone comes to ask for her hand in marriage. Therefore, the above mentioned *talaala* means that the woman's side humble themselves by saying that their daughters have no skills such as doing work on the farm or making handicrafts that can be used as source of income. Sometimes the poem is the words of euphemism that a woman's family does not agree with the man who comes to propose her. Therefore, the arrangement of the chosen words in this *talaala* verse as a way of rejecting politely so as not to offend the entourage.

Another one that needs negotiation in momuhaboi ceremony is when dealing with a woman with many siblings. When the man is asking (*mongohut*), the woman's side will ask again to the man's entourage which one of her daughters that he wants to be his wife. Then the man's side will give an answer saying that they will choose a mature girl as well as the following characters such as hardworking, polite, beautiful, friendly and so forth by conveying the following *talaala*:

<i>Ponduran minipalud</i>	A bamboo cross fountain
<i>Sopinum-inumai</i>	I try to drink both
<i>Honggo nopo toomis</i>	Which is sweet
<i>Sorosopon ku yudan</i>	I will drink until to the spring

(Source: Kiting Gusiang)

The above *talaala* use several fountains to portray that there are many females in the sibling. The water metaphor refers to the family ties that cannot be separated. In this case the girl has a family bond that cannot be separated by the similar characteristics. Metaphor of sweet water refers to maturity such as sweet and delicious fruit to be eaten after it is ripe. This is a description of the suitability and advantage of choosing a mature wife as a candidate. In addition, there is a custom in the Kadazandusun community for woman who married before their older sister or brother. This custom is called '*kosoguluanan*'. According to the custom, a man or woman who is married before his or her brother or sister is obliged to give money or gift to his unmarried sister or brother. The value of this gift is not determined but according to the negotiation and capability of the giver.

When the consent is given when in a *miuhot-uhot* or *mihaboi-haboi* (*merisik*), then the man will promise to come to the house of the woman for *momuhaboi* (*meminang*). The *talaala* used in negotiation in proposal will be discussed later.

### ***Momuhaboi (Meminang)***

*Momuhaboi* means sending a messenger for proposal to the woman's house. Usually in the Kadazandusun engagement, the man sends their entourage to the woman's house. The entourage consists of adults who are experienced in Kadazandusun customs and have a relationship with the

man so that it becomes easier to identify the brotherhood bond in future negotiations. Among the most important of the entourage is the village chief or custom leader, both the male parent or the closest aunt and uncle. Likewise with the members who need to be present on the female side.

This is followed by *talaala* that is expressed as an honour to the guests. Following is the *talaala* which is a question about the purpose of the entourage as follows:

<i>Nung aiso paha toomis</i>	If there is no sweet honey
<i>Aiso i sodom do muntun</i>	No ants around
<i>Nung aiso o kinomulok</i>	If there is no drink
<i>Nga aiso tulun rumikot</i>	No one will come
<i>Nga siou nopo dokoyu</i>	But I apologise
<i>Tu kouyu oku do muhot</i>	Because bravely asked
<i>Do haro doti hontolon</i>	Surely there is a purpose
<i>Dokoyu do tuminimbaba</i>	You are coming

(Source: Kiting Gusiang)

The entourage of the man will respond with the following *talaala*:

<i>Piak oku piak oku</i>	I am chicken, I am chicken
<i>Mongoi oku togok-togok</i>	I want to ask for food
<i>Ulan kanto potindukon</i>	Hopefully given food
<i>Turaung do siladon</i>	Unripe paddy

(Source: Kotirin Guntamas)

The above *talaala* is a statement of the purpose of entourage, namely as a chicken who hopes to peck a new, sweet and delicious rice. The new rice which is definitely fragrant and delicious is a metaphor for the maiden while the pecking chicken describes the man who comes to propose the maiden.

After the man's entourage mentioned the purpose of the entourage, the woman's side will ask the question regarding the seriousness of the man to propose the woman through the following *talaala*:

<i>Sada piara amu ii obolou doot do mato</i>	Pond fish is impossible to end the lust of the eye
<i>Mogot daa osimpod no o tupan</i>	Lucky if the fish was caught
<i>Okon ko iso no sada id kowoigan</i>	Not only one fish in the river
<i>Nga amu kou toi modosi do kotomboigan?</i>	However aren't you afraid of the ghost river

(Source: Kiting Gusiang)

*Kotomboigan* or river ghost shows the challenges and risks that may be encountered when looking for fish in the river. It is related to the challenges that may be encountered in manalakoi or momuhaboi (meminang) such as nopung (berian) that are requested beyond the ability that may cause the rejection of the proposal or the possibility that the woman's side is imposing heavy conditions so that the man find it is difficult and call it a day. Often the entourage who come for the proposal are ready to face the challenges and risks and are determined to pursue their intentions by expressing the following *talaala*:

<i>Nokobontol oku palanuk</i>	I meet a deer
<i>Maso ku do mongomot</i>	While I am harvesting
<i>Tapu-tapu nangku om kolonuk</i>	I will not surrender before I try

*Umbalan kasari ii bo do monguhot* Just try to ask

(Source: Kolindok Rombon)

*Talaala* is a statement of the man's entourage that they are aware of the challenges and risks they may face but the attempt to get the woman as a prospective daughter-in-law will continue and ready to accept the challenge until it succeeds. Like a lime, though it is said to cause burns but when it is used with appropriate quantities and the right way, it will not have a bad effect. Similarly, the effort of the man's entourage to propose if it is done with a wise and prudent negotiation, it will definitely get the expected results. After this negotiation, the woman's side will convey the following *talaala* as an agreement to the proposal;

<i>Sunsuyanai-sunsuyanai</i>	Make a bridge, make a bridge
<i>Bawang do misoborong</i>	To cross a river
<i>Ulan kanto om kopiromut</i>	Hopefully we can be united
<i>Turiding koliliang</i>	They are still young

(Source: Angar Aging)

*Sunsuyon (titi)* is placed at the river which connects both sides of the river. This expression is the figurative of the relationship between two families through marriage. The woman who agrees with the proposal will say build a bridge meaning that they are ready to bind the ties through marriage. *Turiding koliling* means a newly created musical instrument as a figurative to a young woman and man but compatible to get married.

Once the woman has given the consent to accept the proposal, the man's entourage will be invited to the house for further discussion until the ceremony is completed and the engagement custom is carried out. The engagement bond should be completed by the village chief after reaching an agreement of customary arrangements such as the number of *nopung (berian)*, expenses for weddings and the customs related to the marriage. Customary provisions in the Kadazandusun clan vary from place to place. Usually the custom is inherited from the father and mother of the girl. Among the customs that apply are family bond affairs.

After the negotiations of the custom and bond of engagements have been completed, the guests will be invited for a feast. The men's entourage will return to their house before sunset. This is to prevent unwanted events such as accidental deaths. Accidents may be caused by drunkenness when the event ended until late at night. If that happens, the engagement is automatically will be cancelled. Therefore, this situation should be avoided by governing such custom.

## Conclusion

The euphemism in the negotiation of engagement is an education in keeping and maintaining good and truthful words in the Kadazandusun community. This illustrates that this ethnic emphasise on language politeness during negotiations to establish family ties through marriage. The characteristics of good words can be seen through the attitude of mutual self-esteem. This illustrates that this ethnic community practices high self-esteem. Honesty and courage in expressing the wishes of the heart, namely the wish to propose show the use of good and truthful words because this kind of conversation is not merely a joke but has a definite purpose. Practicing negotiations to reach the consent of matching their children reflects the attitude of cooperation practiced by this ethnic group. The importance of the leader's role such as the village chief and the head of custom in this

engagement negotiation is an overview that this ethnic community practices patriotism.

This nobleness should be preserved to maintain the sanctity of the engagement as well as in accordance with religious teachings. Language politeness in negotiations is essential in educating the community in order to become courteous, respectful to people regardless of religion, race and position. The agreement in marriage allows the spouses to live their lives more comfortably because the reason for this marriage is to be respected by both parties and implemented suitably with local customs. Advice provided by families, custom leaders and village heads in negotiation become an important guidance for both partners to build a happy family. This custom preservation is in line with the Malay proverb 'let the child die, but do not let the custom die' which indicates the importance of respecting customs for the harmony of fellow human beings. This illustrates the attitude of the Kadazandusun community who love unity, peace and cooperation in life.

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