

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF MALAY PROVERBS FROM SAMBAS, WEST KALIMANTAN

Makna Simbolik Peribahasa Melayu Sambas, Kalimantan Barat

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan simbol dan makna peribahasa Melayu Sambas Kalimantan Barat. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan semiotika. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini didapat dari informan yaitu budayawan, tokoh adat, dan tokoh masyarakat yang merupakan penutur asli bahasa Melayu Sambas yang berjumlah 12 orang. Adapun teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan yaitu Teknik wawancara, observasi, analisis dokumenter, dan *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD) dengan Teknik analisis data yaitu (1) reduksi data, (2) penyajian data, dan (3) penarikan simpulan/verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peribahasa Melayu Sambas diklasifikasikan, sebagai berikut: (1) simbol-simbol anatomi manusia, yaitu anggota tubuh seperti siku, rambut, kepala, tangan, wajah, dan lain-lain, serta sifat, watak, dan perangai manusia; (2) simbol-simbol hewan, seperti ayam Jantan, tikus, hiu, monyet, ular, sapi, dan lain-lain; (3) simbol-simbol tumbuhan, seperti daun tebu, tempurung, tunggul kayu, tuba, keladi, dan lain-lain; (4) Simbol-simbol alam, seperti air, tanah, siang, malam, dan lain-lain.

Kata-kata kunci: makna, simbol, peribahasa, semiotik, Melayu Sambas.

Abstract

Amidst the rapid onslaught of modernisation and globalisation offering popular culture, Sambas Malay proverbs face the challenge of remaining relevant and understandable to the younger generation. Every day, the younger generation is presented with external content that is far removed from their own cultural roots. This phenomenon is truly concerning because it is feared that it will erode local culture. Therefore, it is considered necessary to conduct in-depth studies on the oral traditions of the community, including proverbs, especially in uncovering the layers of symbolic meaning contained within proverbs. This study aims to describe the symbols and meanings of Sambas Malay proverbs from West Kalimantan. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative with a semiotic approach. The data sources in this study were obtained from informants, namely cultural observers, traditional leaders, and community leaders who are native speakers of the Sambas Malay language totaling 12 people. The data collection techniques used were interview techniques, observation, documentary analysis, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with data analysis techniques, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions/verification. The results of the study show that Sambas Malay proverbs can be classified as follows: (1) symbols of human anatomy, namely body parts such as elbows, hair, head, hands, face, etc., as well as human nature, character, and temperament; (2) symbols of animal's symbols of animals, such as roosters, mice, sharks, monkeys, snakes, cows, etc.; (3) plant symbols, such as sugar cane leaves, coconut shells, tree stumps, tuba, taro, etc.; (4) natural symbols, such as water, earth, soil, day, night, etc.

Keywords: meaning, symbol, proverb, semiotics, Sambas Malay.

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INTRODUCTION

A proverb is a group of words or sentences that have a fixed structure, usually conveying a certain meaning (previously proverbs also included thimbles, expressions, parables); Proverbs can also be interpreted as concise, concise expressions or sentences, containing comparisons, parables, advice, life principles or rules of behavior. Proverbs do have a unique structure that is related to the elements or constituents that form them. Problems related to proverbs are interesting to study further because proverbs have an important role and position in controlling individuals and society in their behavior, character, behavior and character in everyday life (Masfufah, 2016). In short, proverbs function to describe situations, attitudes, character, character, behavior and human behavior in social life.

One of the proverbs still used by the community today is the Malay proverb. Malay proverbs are one of the most rich and beautiful intangible cultural treasures, not simply words to enhance conversation, but rather archives of local wisdom rich in symbolic meaning. Malay proverbs are passed down from one generation to the next, through communication between residents, both in everyday interactions and at traditional events such as weddings and other traditional ceremonies. Meanwhile, (Omar (2019) emphasized that Malay proverbs are not only a means of language, but also reflect the value system, morals, and customs of the Malay people. Proverbs are used in various contexts—whether in education, advice, or social criticism—which makes this language rich in implicit meaning.

According to Piah (2020), the power of proverbs lies in the beauty of the language and its ability to convey sarcasm or advice in a subtle but sharp manner. Therefore, proverbs are often used as rhetorical tools in speech, literature and everyday conversation. Through understanding proverbs, we not only learn the language, but also understand the way of thinking and way of life of the Malay people who uphold moral values, good manners and local wisdom. The Sambas Malay tribe in West Kalimantan uses proverbs to communicate between community members as teaching and advice to convey values, norms, politeness and customs. In everyday life, proverbs are often encountered, not only as 'decoration' of words but also contain deep symbolic meaning.

Amidst the ever-strengthening currents of globalisation and modernisation, local cultures face serious challenges in maintaining their existence. One aspect of culture that is threatened by the rapid influence of global popular culture is the Sambas Malay proverbs, which form part of the oral heritage of the Malay community in West Kalimantan. These proverbs are not merely a series of beautiful words, but an important medium for conveying values, norms, and local wisdom that reflect the way of thinking, acting, and interacting of the community. The phenomenon of declining understanding of the meaning of proverbs among the younger generation raises concerns about the fading of the noble values that form the basis of the social life of the Sambas Malay community.

The main problem statement faced in this context is the decline in understanding and use of Sambas Malay proverbs in everyday life, which has implications for the weakening of the inheritance of the community's symbolic culture. In a situation where local culture is being marginalised by the tide of global culture, there is an urgent need for research that can reinterpret the symbolic meaning of proverbs as representations of the identity, morality and value system of the Sambas Malay community.

Previous studies have examined Malay proverbs from various perspectives. Annisa, (2017) conducted an inventory of the types and functions of Sambas Malay proverbs and found that they have social functions such as giving advice, making satirical remarks, and embellishing communication. Djarot (2024) reviewed Sambas Malay proverbs from an ethnolinguistic and semantic perspective, showing that proverbs reflect the worldview and moral principles of the community. However, previous studies have not highlighted the

symbolic layers of meaning hidden behind the linguistic structure of Sambas Malay proverbs. This is where the research gap lies, which this study aims to bridge.

Based on symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer, 1986) state that "The use of symbols consists of designating something to another person and to oneself. A symbol is an object that stands for something else, but it is also a social product in that its meaning is shared through the process of mutual identification and interaction." in line with Blumer's opinion, Barthes (1967) cultural semiotics theory also said that "symbols are a medium for representing social meanings that are agreed upon in a particular cultural context." In Malay proverbs, symbolism often appears in the form of analogies to nature, animal behaviour, or social customs. For example, the proverb *tatak aek ndak puttus* ("chopped water will not break") represents the values of brotherhood and social unity. These symbols not only beautify the language, but also shape the collective mindset of Malay society.

The study of symbolic meaning is relevant because it opens up new understandings of how language mediates cultural values. Symbolic meaning transcends literal meaning and contains a system of knowledge that regulates social actions. In the context of Sambas Malay, linguistic symbolism reflects a philosophy of life that emphasises harmony, wisdom, and respect for customs. Thus, this study seeks to reveal how the Sambas Malay community constructs and interprets symbolic meaning through proverbs as representations of local wisdom.

Some of the latest research literature has found several studies that examine the same object, but use different analyses. Annisa (2017) examined the Malay Proverb Sambas: An Inventory and Analysis of Types and Functions. The results of the research are that there are 300 Malay Sambas proverbs obtained using field and library techniques. These proverbs are classified based on their types, namely *bidalan*, *adage*, *number*, *parable*, *priest's tongue*, *figure of speech*, *simile*, and *simile*. The function of proverbs is also classified, namely as *advice*, *satire*, *praise*, and *diplomatic language*, as well as to *decorate essays or conversations*. Further research was conducted by Djarot (2024) who examined "Exploring Meaning in Sambas Malay Proverbs: An Ethnolinguistic and Semantic Review." The results showed that Sambas Malay proverbs have historical connections and serve as life principles for the Sambas Malay community. Many proverbs convey advice and cultural symbols in the Sambas Malay community. From a semantic perspective, the messages conveyed imply advice that can be implemented by everyone.

The concept offered in this study is a semiotic approach combined with a symbolic interaction perspective to analyse the meaning structure of Sambas Malay proverbs. This approach allows researchers to explore the relationship between symbols, meanings, and the cultural context that gave birth to them. *The novelty* of this study lies in its attempt to explore the symbolic meaning of Sambas Malay proverbs in depth as an expression of cultural identity and an instrument for teaching moral values in the contemporary era.

METHOD

This study uses a hermeneutic qualitative approach to examine the symbolic meaning in Malay Sambas proverbs, West Kalimantan. According to Van Manen (2023), "qualitative hermeneutics is the art of reading phenomena to uncover the hidden meanings in human life experiences. "The hermeneutic approach was chosen because it emphasizes in-depth interpretation of the meaning of the text by taking into account the surrounding cultural, historical, and social experiences, as well as interpreting symbols as carriers of cultural values. Hermeneutics views understanding as a dialogical process between the interpreter and the text (Ricoeur, 1981). The researcher does not only read the text literally but is also involved reflectively in interpreting the meaning contained therein. This method is in line with the principles of hermeneutic

phenomenological research, which places interpretation as a repetitive process between parts and the whole of the data to understand a broader and more contextual meaning (Dibley et al., 2022).

The research data, in the form of Sambas Malay proverbs containing cultural symbols, was obtained through a documentary study of written sources and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews with key informants, such as traditional leaders, cultural figures, and members of the community leaders who are native speakers of the Sambas Malay language totaling 12 people which name is Rokhmah, Ahmadi Rais, Mariani, Sholihin, Dendey, Zaidah, Rusmiati, Walimah, Sudirman, Aminah, Ipik, dan Isak. Informants were selected purposively, considering their experience and knowledge of the Sambas Malay cultural tradition, in accordance with the principle of purposeful sampling in interpretive qualitative research (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). The research data consisted of oral information (words), written information, actions, videos, and photographs. These data types were collected from various sources, including informants, events, direct observation, and documentation. The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observation, documentary analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Data analysis refers to the opinion of Miles dan Huberman (2018: 15-21) which consists of three stages that must be carried out, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions/verification. Data analysis was conducted through circular hermeneutic interpretation stages following the concept of the hermeneutic circle. The analysis process began with a general understanding of the proverb as a whole to obtain its initial meaning (pre-understanding). The next stage was to analyze parts of the proverb by identifying symbols, metaphors, and diction that contained cultural meanings. In-depth interpretation is then carried out by linking these symbols to the cultural values, worldviews, and social background of the Sambas Malay community. This process is repeated between the parts and the whole text until a coherent and comprehensive understanding of meaning is obtained (Palmer, 2020; Ricoeur, 1981).

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation and theory triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of the interpretation of proverbs with information from informants and relevant literature sources. Theory triangulation is carried out by utilizing more than one hermeneutic perspective to strengthen the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of proverbs. In addition, researcher reflexivity is applied by being aware of the position and horizon of the researcher's understanding in the interpretation process in order to minimize subjective bias and increase the credibility of the research results (Schwandt, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The symbols used in Sambas Malay proverbs can be classified as follows : (1) human anatomical symbols, namely body parts such as hands, chins, faces, etc., as well as human traits, characters, and behaviours; (2) animal symbols, such as rats, sharks, chickens, monkeys, snakes, cows, and others; (3) plant symbols, such as pumpkins, rice, wood, tuba, taro, and others; (4) natural symbols, such as soil, day, night, water, rain, heat, clouds, moon, stars, and others . The following is the analysis.

The Symbolic Meaning of Human Anatomy

Symbols of human anatomy in Sambas Malay proverbs include body parts such as hands, feet, elbows, chin, head, hair, body, and others. They also include traits, character, and behaviour. The following is an analysis of Malay Sambas proverbs that use human anatomical symbols.

Siko' and Jago'

The diction used relates to human anatomical symbols, namely *sikko'* and *jago'*. The proverb "Begararak siko' baro' begarak jua' jago" originates from the Sambas region of West Kalimantan. This expression is part of the oral literature or proverbs of the Sambas Malay community. The elbow is a *synovial* joint in the upper limb that connects the upper arm and forearm. This joint consists of three bones, namely *the humerus* in the upper arm and the radius and ulna in the forearm. Meanwhile, the chin is the front part of the lower jaw in humans, located below the lower lip. Thus, the chin is part of the face located below the mouth. For more details, please see table 1 below.

Table 1. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Human Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Indonesian	Symbol	Meaning
1	<i>Begararak sikko' barok begarak juak jago'</i>	Move the elbow, then the chin will move	<i>Siko' dan jago'</i>	If you want to eat (get results), you must work

Source: Rokhmah (63 years old) Kampung Lorong Sambas.

The phrase *begarak sikko'* can be interpreted as working, while *begarak jago'* means chewing (eating). Thus, in a narrow sense, the proverb *begarak sikko' baro' begarak juak jago'* can be interpreted as if you work, then you can eat (if you want to eat, you must work). It cannot be denied that the abundant natural resources had a slight influence on the relaxed character of the Malays of the past. As (Sandy, 2019) argue, in the past, the Malay people did not need to think hard about earning money because the natural resources provided by the sea were sufficient to support themselves and their families. Because it was so easy to obtain the necessities of life provided by nature without having to work hard for them, the Malay people were perceived as 'lazy'.

The proverb *begarak sikko' baro' begarak juak jago'* at least breaks the stereotype of the Malay people as lazy, and at the same time serves as advice for the Malay people not to be complacent. This proverb shows that Malay society actually has a work ethic based on coordination, efficiency, and leadership, not just sitting around doing nothing. In general, the meaning of this proverb is not just 'eating' but has broader implications, namely success or achievement in life, whether in business, work, education, or other aspects of daily life. This proverb reflects the principle of dedication that requires sincere effort and perseverance, that success must be achieved through hard work, effort, trust in God, and prayer. Success cannot be achieved instantly or through laziness.

Rambut

The proverb "*Bagai begantong rambut sallai*" originates from the Sambas region of West Kalimantan. This expression is part of the oral literature or proverbs of the Sambas Malay community. The human anatomy referred to in this proverb is hair. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), hair is a type of fur that grows on human skin (especially on the head). Hair, often referred to as fur, is a thin thread-like organ that grows on the skin of humans and animals, especially mammals. The proverb *bagai begantong rambut sallai* means being in a very dangerous situation, or experiencing extreme fear, anxiety, and worry. The symbol of *rambut* used in this proverb means fragile (not sturdy). One can imagine that if someone were to hang onto a strand of hair, they would surely fall because the grip is so thin. Hair in this proverb functions as a rope to hold on to (depend on). So, in general, the meaning of this proverb is something that is very fragile and thin (like hair), which is used as a place to lean on or rely on. For more details, please see table 2 below.

Table 2. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Human Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Indonesian	Symbol	Meaning
2	<i>Bagai bergantung rambut sallai</i>	Like hanging by a thread	rambut	Anxiety, worry, and overwhelming fear

Ahmadi Rais (Long amat) (37 years old) Semalagi Kecil, Sambas Regency.

Proverbs tend to be similar between regions. Almost all proverbs have a simple word structure but a deep meaning (Akbari, 2020). One proverb that is widely used in various regions in Indonesia, especially among the Malay community, is 'bagaikan bergantung pada rambut sehelai' (like hanging on a strand of hair). For example, in the Banjarmasin region, which uses the Banjar language, the proverb is *asa bergantung di rambut sallai* (feeling like hanging on a single strand of hair). (Akbari, 2020) mentions that this proverb refers to the mood of someone who has just gone through a tense (frightening) moment. The description of this situation is reinforced by the image of holding on to a single strand of hair. Why is it likened to a single strand of hair? This is closely related to the belief that in the end times, humans will cross a bridge that is only a single strand of hair. This means that there is an effort to convey the image of the turmoil that humans will face in the future, so that they need to prepare themselves in their lives .

Kepala'

The proverb 'Ambe' kayu mangkong ke kepala" originates from the Sambas region of West Kalimantan. This expression is part of the oral literature or proverbs of the Sambas Malay community. This expression is part of the oral literature or proverbs of the Sambas Malay community. The human anatomy used in this proverb is *kepala'*, namely *ambe' kayu mangkong ke kepala* (hit your head with a piece of wood). The head is the part of the body above the neck (in humans and some animals, it is the location of the brain, the centre of the nervous system, and several sensory centres). The meaning of head is not only the part above the neck but can also have connotative meanings such as leadership and an important or essential part. Why does this proverb use the symbol of the head? Because the head is the concrete form of the centre of control, dignity, and honour of humans. For more details, please see table 3 below.

Table 3. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Symbols of Human Anatomy

No	Proverb	Translate into Indonesian	Symbol	Meaning
3	<i>Ambe' kayu mangkong ke kepala'</i>	Take a piece of wood and hit your own head	Kepala' (Head)	To act or do something that is harmful to oneself.

Source: Mariani (37 years old) Subah, Sambas Regency.

The symbolic meaning of the head is a symbol of the throne of goodness, the centre of control, leadership, reason, intelligence, and knowledge. For the Malay people, the head is not only a symbol of greatness, but also a symbol of authority, wisdom, identity, and cultural identity. Therefore, the Malay people like to wear accessories on their heads, such as *tanjak*, *tudung*, *headbands*, and *kopiah* or *songkok*. (Wulandari, 2023) say that the *tanjak* is worn on the head, pointing upwards. It carries the implied message to use reason before acting.

Thus, the proverb *ambe' kayu mangkong ke kepala* (take wood and hit your head) means to do something that is harmful or destructive to oneself. If analysed, the person's action is to take wood with the intention of hitting (*mangkong*), but instead, it is their own head that is hit. It is a foolish act that does not consider the consequences of one's actions, which can cause the head to become bruised, bleeding or even cracked. If the wood is hit on one's own head, it is oneself who feels the pain. If the head is a symbol of honour, it means that one has brought shame upon oneself. This proverb is a satire, as well as serving as advice (in the form of a prohibition) to people who act recklessly and harm themselves. This proverb is a lesson from the Malay people to be wise in one's actions and to carefully consider all the consequences of one's actions so that they do not have fatal consequences that harm and endanger oneself. For

example, someone who recklessly jumps into a deep pool, even though they have only just learned to swim or cannot swim at all, will certainly drown. Another example is making a bad investment, resulting in the loss of all one's wealth.

Symbolic Meaning of Animals

Animal symbols in Sambas Malay proverbs include rats, sharks, chickens, monkeys, snakes, cows, and so on. The following are animal symbols in Sambas Malay proverbs.

Ayam Jogok

The proverb '*Usah nak bawak ayam jogok ke kampung urang*' originates from the Sambas region of West Kalimantan. This expression is part of the oral literature or proverbs of the Sambas Malay community. The symbol used in this proverb is *Ayam jogok* (rooster). As is well known, the rooster is a symbol of strength, courage, masculinity, hard work, and struggle. Rachmat (2018) say that the symbolism of the rooster is inseparable from the meaning of the nature and character of the rooster, which represents bravery and victory. In the minds of agrarian and coastal communities, particularly in Sambas, the "jogok" (rooster) is a territorial ruler. It is unyielding, aggressive, and always seeks to dominate the other chickens in its flock. Using this term automatically conjures up images of someone with a large ego, power, or high status.

However, if courage or strength is used excessively or even misused, it will appear arrogant and haughty. This trait is certainly not good for a person to have, especially when in someone else's village. If this trait is maintained, it will cause hatred from many people, which can be detrimental to oneself. For more details, please see table 4 below.

Table 4. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Animal Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Indonesian	Symbol	Meaning
4	<i>Usah nak bawak ayam jogok ke kampung urang</i>	Do not bring a rooster to someone else's village	<i>Ayam jogok</i> (rooster)	Don't act cocky (arrogant/haughty) when you're in someone else's village

Source: Sholihin (79 years old) Semparuk Village, Sambas Regency

Arrogance and haughtiness are far from the characteristics of the Sambas Malays, who are known for their politeness and noble character. Since ancient times, the Sambas Malays have upheld the values of politeness. This is reflected in their refined behaviour and speech, both at home and abroad. Ashsubli (2018: 131) states that the friendly, warm and spontaneous nature of the Malay people in communication is actually a reflection of the values of politeness that are revered by the Malay people. This opinion is supported by Syed Husin Ali (Ramli, 2016), who states that the Malay people are characterised by their gentleness and eloquence. Language is always associated with manners, which is why it is always referred to as "tact" (manners of speech).

Thus, a person's level of manners is also measured by their words. Refined manners are assessed based on refined manners of speech. In general, Malay people are refined in nature. They usually feel reluctant to express something directly and vulgarly, therefore they use metaphors, whether through rhymes, proverbs, sayings, and poems.

Tikus

The animal symbol (i.e. the mouse) used in this proverb is a rodent pest whose behaviour can cause structural damage and spread disease. Mice belong to the class *Mammalia*, *order Rodentia*, family *Muridae*. The basic nature of mice is always associated with destructive and dirty things. Rats often symbolise filth, poor hygiene, crime, disease, misery, and even death. This is a contributing factor to the symbolic relationship, so that rats are often used to represent individuals who are pretentious and act like heroes when they are actually losers. For more details, please see table 5 below.

Table 5. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Animal Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Indonesian	Symbol	Meaning
5	<i>Tikus mbaikkek labu</i>	The mouse is repairing the pumpkin	<i>Tikus</i> (mouse)	The trait of someone who acts know-it-all but actually causes more harm

Source: Dendey Zeny Dhiafahri (23 years old) Setapak Besar, North Singkawang

If we analyse the diction used in this proverb, we find *tikus* (destructive pest), *naikkek* (pretending to know how to fix things), and *labu* (an object or thing to be fixed). Logically, it is impossible for a rat, whose nature is to destroy fruit, to actually fix the gourd. As a result, instead of the pumpkin getting better, it gets worse and is destroyed. (Djarot, 2024) says that the proverb *tikus mbaikkek labu* can be interpreted as a satire directed at someone who pretends to know everything but actually knows nothing at all. In the Sambas Malay community which places great emphasis on manners and knowledge, rats are considered to be creatures that lack "dignity" because they live off scraps and destroy other people's property.

The item being repaired does not become good again, but instead becomes severely damaged. The lesson taught is that as humans, we should not feel that we know everything and should not talk too much.

Iyok

The animal symbol in this proverb is *iyok* (shark). Sharks are known as *apex predators* in the ocean that help maintain the balance of the marine ecosystem. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a shark is a marine fish of the chondrichthyes class, which eats fish and other marine animals. It is torpedo-shaped, has cartilaginous bones, no scales, but small spines pointing backwards, and a mouth located on the lower part of the head with many teeth. There are many types of sharks, such as whale sharks, hammerhead sharks, great white sharks, and others. For more details, please see table 6 below.

Table 6. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Animal Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
6	<i>Kapal paccah, iyok kanyang</i>	Ship wrecked, shark full	<i>Iyok</i> (shark)	Taking advantage of a chaotic or critical situation

Source: Zaidah (71 years old) Pemangkat, Sambas Regency.

The symbol of the shark can be interpreted as a ferocious and vicious animal, devoid of compassion and empathy as long as its desire to prey is satisfied. Although in a cultural perspective, sharks can be interpreted positively as strength, power, and strong instincts. However, in the context of this proverb, the meaning used is cunning, deceitful, hypocritical, and greedy. Sharks are interpreted as people who take advantage of chaotic or precarious situations, exploiting circumstances for their own gain.

Effendy, (2023) states that Malays, who are known as skilled sailors or fishermen, often experience accidents where their boats (sompans, junks, jong, boats) sink and break in the middle of the sea. All goods will be destroyed and fall into the sea, where they will be fought over by sharks and other creatures. This event gave rise to the proverb '*jong karam, hiu kanyang*' or '*kapal pecah hiu yang kanyang*' (shipwrecked, sharks are full). This proverb is associated with the behaviour of humans who fight among themselves (fellow trading partners, business partners, etc.), resulting in their wealth being fought over, exploited, and controlled by other parties. Thus, in general, the proverb *kapal paccah, iyok kanyang* means that in times of chaos and turmoil, there are people who benefit from the chaos.

This proverb also exists in other areas inhabited by the Malay community, such as Sumatra, the Riau Islands, and other areas, with slightly different diction but with almost the same meaning, for example, '*jung pecah, hiu kanyang*' (the boat is broken, the shark is full). Why are there similarities between Malay proverbs in different regions? Since the days of the ancient kingdoms, the Malay tribes have been closely related. This closeness is due to family

and kinship ties, resulting in similarities in culture, customs, traditions, arts, language, and oral literature (including proverbs) that have grown and developed within the community. Many people refer to the Malay kinship as the 'Malay World' civilisation, which includes Brunei, Peninsular Malaysia, part of Malaysian Sarawak, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia including Sumatra, and West Kalimantan and South Kalimantan (Anwar, 2011);(Jerome, 2016)).

(Wirawan, 2024) states that the dynamic concept of Malay culture must be reviewed from a holistic and comprehensive perspective in order to gain a true understanding of Malay kinship. History has recorded that Malay culture is the basis for the formation of a successful civilisation. Today, the erosion of the Malay people's awareness of their kinship is increasingly showing a worrying trend. Malay clans are scattered, and Malay communities are marginalised due to the development of capitalisation and globalisation.

The Symbolic Meaning of Plants

The plant symbols used in Sambas Malay proverbs include pumpkin, rice, tree stumps, tuba, taro, and others. The following are plant symbols in Sambas Malay proverbs.

Daon Tabbu

The plant symbol in this proverb *daon tabbu* (Sugarcane leaves). Sugarcane leaves are part of the sugarcane plant that are shaped like a bow or ribbon with a hairy surface, thorns around the midrib, a groove in the middle and parallel leaf veins, and no flower stalk. In the context of this proverb, it describes things that look good but contain hidden evil or danger. According (Afriyanti, 2017), *daon tabbu* (sugarcane leaf) in proverbs is interpreted as something that secretly opposes. When analysed, the diction used in this proverb is *undok-undok* (submissive), *daon tabbu* (sugarcane leaf), *merais* (hurt) and *padeh* (painful). For more details, please see table 7 below.

Table 7. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Symbols of Plant Anatomy

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
7	<i>Undok-undok daon tabbu, sekali merais padeh rasenye</i>	The sugarcane leaves bend down, once they are cut, it hurts	<i>daon tabbu</i>	A person who seems ordinary and tends to be underestimated, but once they act, they can be dangerous

Source: Rusmiati (60 years old) Semparuk, Sambas Regency

This proverb is a metaphor: although sugarcane leaves appear weak, drooping and harmless, if they scratch the skin, they can cause pain and even injury. The symbolic meaning of this proverb is that a person who appears simple, ordinary, quiet, and without influence can be dangerous and cause harm to others who disturb them because they have unexpected influence or power. The advice contained in the proverb *undok-undok daon tabbu, sekali merais padeh rasenya* is to be careful in judging someone because what appears ordinary may conceal hidden power.

Tempurong

The plant symbol in this proverb is *tempurong* (tempurong). The coconut shell is the hard part inside the coconut skin that protects the contents and coconut water inside, keeping them intact. Coconut shells are used for various purposes, such as fuel, handicrafts, and so on. According to (Yulyasa, 2017), the coconut shell refers to the hard inner shell from which the contents (coconut flesh) have been removed, but the hard shell remains intact without causing damage. The coconut shell refers to a narrow state or limitation, whether in terms of knowledge, thinking or worldview. For more details, please see table 8 below.

Table 8. Analysis of Sambas Malay ProverbsPlant Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate	Symbol	Meaning
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8	<i>Tempurong nye urang, bulannye kitte</i>	The coconut shell is what people say, the moon is what we say (people say coconut shell, we say moon)	<i>Tempurong</i>	People judge our work as bad, but we judge it as good. (People judge our partner as ugly, but we judge them as good or beautiful)
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Source: Walimah (Wan Limah, 79 years old), Setapak Besar Singkawang.

When broken down, the diction used is *tempurong* (shell), *bulan* (something beautiful), *nye urang* (according to other people), and *nye kite* (according to us). In this proverb, something that others consider bad, such as *tempurong*, we consider beautiful, such as *bulan*. The symbolic meaning of this proverb is the difference in perspective in assessing something, whether it be work or a partner. Often people assess work or partners through different lenses, causing them to appear bad. Malay society upholds ethics, manners, dignity, and Islamic teachings, which strictly forbid belittling others, including their jobs, partners, or other life choices. The advice in this proverb is a reminder and introspection to stay focused on work that one considers good, even if others judge it to be bad.

Buko' dan Ruas

The symbols used in this proverb are *buko' and ruas*, which mean harmonious, compatible or equal. The symbols of *buko' and ruas* are found on plant stems, such as sugar cane and bamboo. The two unite to form strength, so this proverb describes a strong compatibility, never separated because *buko* always has *ruas*. According to (Herningsih & Amir, 2019), the proverb *betammu buko' dengan ruas* is used to praise two things or people who are considered compatible, harmonious, balanced, or to state that there are two equally great opponents. For example, a man and woman who are soulmates have similar characteristics or similar facial features and are a compatible couple. For more details, please see table 9 below.

Table 9. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Plant Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
9	<i>Betammu buko' dengan ruas</i>	Meeting a book with a section	<i>Buko' dan ruas</i>	Harmonious, suitable, compatible

Source: Sudirman (58 years old) Roban, Central Singkawang.

The symbolic meaning of this proverb is that *books and ribs* cannot stand alone but need an equal partner or counterpart. In Malay society, this proverb is often used to describe compatible couples, suitable friends, or other things that have harmony. The advice contained in this proverb is that if someone has found a compatible, suitable, and equal partner, harmony and happiness will be created. Therefore, in order for life to be more harmonious, one must maintain harmony within the family, among friends, and in the social environment.

Symbolic Meaning of Nature

Natural symbols used in Sambas Malay proverbs include earth, day, night, water, rain, heat, clouds, moon, stars, and others. The following are natural symbols in Sambas Malay proverbs.

Tattak Aek

The symbol used in this proverb is *tattak aek*, which means cutting water. The term *tattak aek* has a very deep meaning because no matter how sharp the sword or knife used to cut the water is, it will not sever the liquid. A sword or knife can indeed pierce water, but once lifted, the water will reconnect without leaving a trace. This is how blood relations (siblings) should be. No matter what disputes arise, they will not sever the bonds of kinship. Although there may be a rift in the relationship for some time, there will always be a longing to reunite as before. For more details, please see table 10 below.

Table 10. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Natural Anatomy Symbols

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
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10	<i>Tattak aek ndak puttus</i>	Cutting/slicing water will not be interrupted	Tattak Aek	No matter what, siblings will never be severed/remain blood relatives, even if there has been a dispute.
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Source: Aminah/Cik Minah (45 years old), Desa Dalam Kaum Sambas

For the Malay people, brotherhood has a broad and deep meaning, not only for siblings but also for kinship relationships, even if the family hierarchy is distant (distant relatives). Therefore, the Sambas Malay community recognises the term 'bejereh', which means to share family genealogy, because through *bejereh*, family genealogy can be known and brought together.

The proverb *tattak aek ndak puttus* is advice and a lesson for the community, especially those experiencing family conflicts, not to hold grudges against blood relatives, let alone fight and sever ties. Whatever problems are faced should be resolved through deliberation and a cool head.

The majority of the Sambas Malay community embraces Islam, and the culture is known to be religious and obedient to Islamic law. The proverb *tattak aek ndak puttus* is very familiar in the community, passed down orally from mouth to mouth for hundreds of years. This proverb is an implementation of Islamic teachings that always encourage peace and brotherhood, as stated by the Prophet *Muhammad (peace be upon him)* in several authentic hadiths.

Tanah sijangkal

The plant symbol used in this proverb is *tanah*. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), *tanah* is the surface of the earth or the uppermost layer of the earth, a limited area of the earth occupied by a nation ruled by a state or forming part of a state. When broken down, the diction used in this proverb is *tanah* (symbol of ownership), *sijangkal* (something small) and *sehasta* (something bigger). For more details, please see table 11 below.

Table 11. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Symbols of Natural Anatomy

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
11	<i>Tanah cume sijangkal, nak dibuat siheste</i>	Land only a foot wide, to be made into a cubit	<i>Tanah sijangkal</i>	A person who pretends to be wealthy beyond what they actually possess

Source: Ipik Aswandi (56 years old) Sungai Bulan, North Singkawang

According to (Utari, 2014), *sijangkal* is a unit of measurement equal to the length between the thumb and little finger, while *sehasta* is a unit of measurement equal to ¼ depa (from the elbow to the middle finger). The symbol of *tanah* in proverbs has many meanings, one of which is the proverb *tanah cume sijangkal, nak dibuat siheste*, which means that a person who acts rich is not in accordance with what they have. This proverb describes the greed of a person who is never satisfied with what they have and always wants more after being given a little. (Jamil et al, 2018) state that for the Malay community, land and forests are not only natural resources, but also their rights and spirit, referred to as "tanah wilayah" or "tanah ulayat", which are regulated by customary law and respected by state law. If their rights and spirit are disturbed, their dignity will be disturbed.

Aek jarnih

The symbol used in this proverb is *Aek*. Water is one of the natural resources and environmental components that are very important for human life and the survival of humans and other living creatures. In proverbs, the word *aek* is used to represent various aspects of life. For more details, please see table 12 below.

Table 12. Analysis of Sambas Malay Proverbs Symbols of Natural Anatomy

No	Proverb	Translate into Inggris	Symbol	Meaning
12	<i>Aek jarnih, ikannye jinak</i>	Clear water, tame fish	<i>Aek jarnih</i>	A safe and prosperous area where the residents are friendly towards newcomers.

Source: Isak (68 years old) Pemangkat, Sambas Regency

The proverb *aek jernih, ikannya jinak* (Clear water, tame fish) describes a society and environment that is safe, prosperous, and whose people are friendly towards outsiders. Ma'ruf, (2024) says that the Sambas Malay community often prioritises harmony and generosity, upholding the values of kindness and mutual cooperation, which are part of the Malay tribal culture that cannot be ignored during weddings, celebrations, and other events. The values of deliberation, responsibility and care emerge regardless of whether the situation is happy or sad. The Sambas Malay community is accustomed to helping and benefiting others, strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between fellow community members.

The proverb "*Aek jernih, ikannya jinak*" is a very beautiful metaphor in Sambas Malay culture to describe the reciprocal relationship between the social environment and human character. '*Aek Jernih*' Clear Water (Symbol of the Environment/Leadership) Depicts a place, society, or government that is managed honestly, transparently, safely, and peacefully. '*Ikannya jinak*' Tame Fish (Symbol of the People/Society) Depicts a society that lives peacefully, obeys rules, is friendly, and is easy to manage because they feel comfortable. Logically If the water is clean and calm, the fish will not feel threatened and become wild. Likewise, humans; if their environment is good, their character will tend to be good.

CONCLUSION

Malay Sambas proverbs are an intangible cultural heritage that embodies the noble values of the Malay community in West Kalimantan. Through linguistic symbols and figurative meanings, proverbs serve not only as a means of communication, but also as a vehicle for moral education, social guidance, and a reflection of cultural identity. In the context of modernisation and globalisation, understanding the symbolic meaning of proverbs is crucial to preserving local values that are being eroded by popular culture.

This study confirms that symbols in Sambas Malay proverbs serve as representations of the community's knowledge system, worldview, and social norms. Each proverb contains a symbolic message that reflects the relationship between humans and nature, fellow humans, and the Creator. Using a semiotic and symbolic interaction approach, these meanings can be analysed and interpreted in greater depth. Based on the research that has been conducted, the results of the research show that Sambas Malay proverbs are classified as follows: (1) symbols of human anatomy, namely body parts such as elbows, hair, head, hands, face, etc., as well as human nature, character, and temperament; (2) animal symbols, such as roosters, mice, sharks, monkeys, snakes, cows, etc.; (3) plant symbols, such as sugar cane leaves, coconut shells, tree stumps, tuba, taro, etc.; (4) symbols of nature, such as water, earth, soil, day, night, etc.

Through research on analysis of the symbols and meanings of Sambas Malay proverbs, it is understood that Malay society has a mindset that places balance, harmony, and wisdom as the main principles of life. Therefore, the preservation and study of Malay Sambas proverbs is not only an effort to preserve the language, but also an effort to maintain the national identity and local wisdom that form the basis of the character of Indonesian society.

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