Language Semiotics: the Symbolic Meaning of Traditional Minangkabau Food in Custom Ceremonies

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Research Article

Keywords: traditional food, traditional ceremonies, and symbolic meaning

Posted Date: October 12th, 2023

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2989091/v1

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Minangkabau traditional cuisine is food or beverage commonly consumed by the Minangkabau people with a distinctive taste from other food in Indonesia. Its distinctive taste implies a symbolic meaning (Elliott 1994, Hodder 2012, Siregar 2012). The study aims to describe the types and symbolic meanings of traditional Minangkabau food at traditional ceremonies in the tanah darek. The study uses semiotic theory with qualitative research methods. Data collection applies methods of observation, interviews, and literature study. Data is processed by reduction, interpretation, and triangulation methods. The results of the data analysis found that the traditional food of the alek marapulai traditional ceremony consisted of the main course and kawa drinking food. The main courses include rice, beef rendang, chicken rendang, omelet, keripik tunjuk ikan teri, cubadak kicuah, gulai lobak kuah putih. Kawa drinking food consists of galamai, batiah, dakak-dakak, wajik, lembang, pinyaram, bareh randang, and sikunyik. Rendang symbolizes patience, wisdom, and perseverance. Beef rendang, chicken rendang, omelet, and keripik tunjuk ikan teri symbolize equality, batiah symbolizes the unity between people, especially between two families bound by marriage; and pinyaramsymbolizes the sacredness of marriage and the importance of the loyalty of two people bound by marriage.

INTRODUCTION

The Minangkabau ethnic group resides in the Bukit Barisan highlands, encompassing a significant portion of the West Sumatra province. In the cultural framework of the Minangkabau society, the region situated in the elevated terrains of Bukit Barisan is referred to as the darek or luhak region. Conversely, the regions beyond this area are denoted as the rantau region, encompassing both the coastal and inland areas. Additionally, the term ikua darek kapalo rantau describes the boundary between the darek and rantau regions, symbolizing the transition from the core to the periphery of the land.

The darek area is the core area of Minangkabau nature. Its territory includes the area of luhak nan tigo consists of Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Limo Puluh Koto. Each of these areas has its characteristics and uniqueness. In the Tambo Alam Minangkabau (Diradjo, 2018), the three areas are described in different expressions. In the context of Luhak Tanah Datar, a local proverb encapsulates the essence of the area as follows: “Buminyo lambang, aianyo tawo, ikannyo tawo, ikannyo banyak.” This proverb conveys the notion that the soil in this region is abundant in nutrients, the water is pure, and there is an abundance of fish. The feline creature serves as the emblematic representation of Luhak Tanah Datar. In the context of Luhak Agam, a proverb is commonly used: “Buminyo paneh, aianyo katuh, ikannyo lia.” This proverb metaphorically describes the prevailing conditions in the region, suggesting that the ground is scorching, the water is murky, and the fish are wild. The emblematic representation associated with Luhak Agam is that of a tiger. According to the proverb of Luhak Limo Puluh Koto, it is expressed that the land possesses a cool climate, the water is characterized by its purity, and the fish are tamed or domesticated. The emblematic representation associated with Luhak Limo Puluh Koto is the caprine mammal commonly referred to as the goat (Diradjo, 2018:3—5).

The proverb describes the natural conditions, culture, and character of people in each luhak. The distinctiveness is also evident in the variety of culinary offerings. Luhak Tanah Datar is famous for its traditional food like sambal lado tulang, pangek simawang, sate didong, pangek ikan sasau, dadiah, lamang tapai, randang balui, katupek pitalah, dakak-dakak, and others. Luhak Agam is famous for its special food, such as cubadak kicuah, ttiak lado iau gulai ayam naneh, anyang dagiang (asam padeth), sayua lobak santan putih, karupuak tunjuak or karupuak rauik, kallo/ sampadeh dagiang, gulai toco, vegetable fritters, gulai lokan, palai rinuak, lelan asam durian, lamang, karak kaliang, galamai, and others. Meanwhile, Luhak Limo Puluh Koto is famous for its special food, such as pongek mitujuh, gulai palaik, gurami mudiak, bongko, batiah, kue kareh lapanlan, galamai, lomang, and others. In addition to primary culinary offerings, various geographical regions can produce exclusive local delicacies that exhibit distinctive flavors influenced by the specific environmental conditions in their respective areas, particularly beverages. This food is referred to as kawa drinking food in the darek area, while in the Rantau area, it is called parabuang. These traditional foods are created in response to the community’s needs and the ingredients’ availability in their respective regions (Aisyah 2017).

Traditional cuisines refer to the dietary choices that were prevalent among indigenous populations across various regions during ancient times (Bessière 1998, Rasjid 2004, Trichopoulou, Vasilopoulou et al. 2006, Alalwan, Mandeel et al. 2017, Solin 2018, Fibri and Frost 2019). Besides, food and beverage traditions originating in both terrestrial and aquatic sources are significant components of indigenous communities’ cultural heritage, historical background, way of life, and economic structure. The culinary practices of a region are profoundly shaped by the cultural characteristics of its inhabitants, encompassing their expertise, ingenuity, customs, and preferences. As the cultural sophistication of a group increases, there is typically a corresponding expansion in the diversity of culinary offerings, accompanied by a heightened intricacy in the techniques employed for food preparation. Consequently, how these gastronomic creations are presented tends to become more intricate and elaborate. Traditional cuisine serves as more than just a source of sustenance; it also functions as a mechanism for fostering connections among individuals, as well as between individuals and higher powers such as deities or ancestral spirits, and the natural world (Baiquni, Harmayani et al. 2018).

Presently, the Minangkabau community retains a profound comprehension of the symbolic significance embedded within the customary cuisine served during traditional ceremonies within their region. Nevertheless, the preservation of this symbolic significance associated with the delectable nature of this customary cuisine cannot be assured for future generations. A symbolic meaning is a signifying interpretation representing or embodying something else (Kemdikbud 2018). The symbolic significance cannot be discerned from the appearance and flavor of the food. It will be evident from objects, activities, relationships, incidents or events, gestures, and the location of a ritual. All events, actions, thoughts, ideas, and emotions can be comprehended through the meaning of symbols or signs, making them crucial to social processes. Similarly, the traditional Minangkabau food served at the alek marapulai, or wedding ceremony in the darek region is laden with symbolic significance.

Many people have researched traditional Minangkabau cuisine. Research entitles “Food: Form, Variation, and Function, and the Way of Serving it in West Sumatra” by (Zaidan 1991). In his research, he concluded that, despite differences in the formulation of food, the term food refers to everything that can be contributing to the unique taste of Minangkabau traditional cuisine.
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The problems in this study are (a) the various types of traditional cuisine typically offered during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony in the darek region (b) What are the symbolic connotations inherent in each of these customary culinary items? This study aims to describe the types of traditional food served during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony in the darek region. Additionally, it aims to explore the symbolic meaning associated with these traditional dishes’ delectable taste. The ultimate objective of this research is to contribute to preserving Minangkabau culture as a form of local wisdom.

The darek region is the focus of research on the symbolic significance of traditional cuisines in alek marapulai ceremonies. Each luwak has many nagari. Therefore, it was constrained to one nagari due to the darek area’s size and other restrictions. Semiotic theory, which views social phenomena (society) and culture as signs, is used to analyze the symbolic significance of traditional food at the alek marapulai traditional ceremony. Social and cultural occurrences serve as indicators that language presents. Understanding culture as local wisdom is greatly aided by the presence of language through these signs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic Meaning

The word symbolic or symbol comes from Greek, namely from the word symbols, which means a sign or characteristic that conveys a social phenomenon (Herasatoto 1984). Meanwhile, symbols are objects, events, speech sounds, or written forms given meaning by humans (Saifuddin 2005). Symbols are everything created jointly by humans and used as guidelines for their social life. These symbols also give each symbol formed meaning. The traditional Minangkabau food served during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony, also incorporates this symbol into their cultural identity. The language intended to be communicated is implied by the symbols.

The primary form of human symbolization occurs through language. However, humans also communicate using signs or symbols through dance, painting, music, architecture, and food (Saifuddin 2005). To convey their desires to others, humans use symbols. These social interactions will affect how symbols are interpreted in social interactions (Sterelny and Hiscock 2014, Saputra and Salam 2019). The development of an object or symbol's meaning is related to symbolic interactions. The symbols can be interpreted only following the community-shared convention (Narwoko and Suyanto 2004). Symbols will be perceived through ritual sites, activities, relationships, events, and objects (Preucel 2018, Irwadi 2020).

Humans can be classified as animal symbolism. Symbolic thought and behavior are inherent human attributes, and the advancement of human culture is fundamentally reliant on these qualities. Humans are inherently cultural beings, and the realm of human culture is replete with various symbolic representations (Endraswara 2006). Meanwhile, Cassirer, as quoted by (Herasatoto 1984), said that humans engage in cognitive processes, experience emotions, and exhibit actions through symbolic expressions. Human beings have never directly observed or comprehended the world. The utilization of symbols facilitates the human perception and understanding of the world. A symbol is an external manifestation that serves a distinct function.

Semiotics concept

Semiotics is a theoretical framework that examines social phenomena and culture through understanding signs (Rath 2016). This concept posits that all elements within the realm of human existence are regarded as symbols or signs, necessitating the attribution of significance to them. Signs serve as instrumental means for navigating and orienting oneself within the complex realm of human existence and interaction. Signage can be found ubiquitously. Various forms of signs can be observed in everyday life, such as verbal communication through words, non-verbal communication through gestures, and visual signs like traffic lights, flags, and other similar indicators. In addition to examining symbols or signs, semiotics encompasses investigating systems, regulations, and conventions that facilitate the attribution of meaning to these signs (Kridl, Folejewski et al. 1974).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) are widely recognized as the pioneers of semiotics. Both individuals coexisted during the same historical period, yet they were not acquainted with one another. In addition, Saussure formulated his theory within the linguistics framework, whereas Peirce grounded his theory on pragmatics and logic. According to Peirce, an entity cannot be considered a sign unless it is subjected to
According to Ferdinand de Saussure, language can be understood as fundamentally operating as a system of signs. Saussure posits that language comprises a multitude of signs interconnected within a systematic framework, allowing for diverse organizational possibilities. Hence, the signifier and the signified lack a direct correlation. This association is commonly referred to as an arbitrary connection. Language functions as a semiotic system within human communication, as it serves as a medium for facilitating the exchange of information and ideas among individuals (Kaelan 2009).

**Traditional food**

The Revitalization Workshop of the Center for Traditional Food Studies in Yogyakarta in 2003 concluded that traditional food refers to culinary preparations that utilize locally sourced ingredients and are processed using techniques and technologies that are well-known and practiced by the local community. Traditional cuisine is characterized by its recognizable visual, gustatory, and olfactory qualities, which are widely appreciated and even nostalgically yearned for by the local populace. The consumption of traditional cuisine has evolved into a defining characteristic for the cultural group from which the cuisine originates (Baquni, Harmayani et al. 2018). According to scholarly discourse, traditional food can be defined as cuisine that utilizes locally sourced ingredients, possesses distinct characteristics, and is regarded as a local delicacy (Xiaomin 2017). The distinctiveness of taste and aroma arises from the unique combination of raw materials and seasonings employed in the preparation process. From an alternative perspective, traditional cuisine refers to the culinary practices observed by specific ethnic communities within regions. It entails the utilization of natural resources found in the local environment as food ingredients, combined with recipes transmitted across generations within the community (Marwanti 2006).

Traditional food refers to food or beverages frequently consumed or savored by a specific community, characterized by a unique flavor and scent passed down from one generation to another. In addition to its unique flavor profile, traditional cuisine is also shaped by the indigenous community's customs, social structures, and cultural practices (Syamsurizal 2021).

Based on the definitions, it can be inferred that traditional cuisine refers to food and beverages that are frequently consumed or savored by an ethnic group, characterized by a unique flavor and fragrance that has been passed down through successive generations. These culinary traditions are shaped by the customs and sociocultural frameworks of the respective community (Zalmansyah, Herlina et al., 2022).

**METHODS**

The study employed a qualitative methodology to investigate the symbolic significance of traditional Minangkabau cuisine, adopting an interpretative descriptive paradigm. Qualitative research was an investigative approach that sought to comprehend the phenomena encountered by individuals participating comprehensively. It included their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions, elucidated through descriptive narratives expressed in words and language. This type of research was conducted within specific natural settings and employs methods that aligned with the inherent characteristics of the phenomena being studied (Moleong 2007). Qualitative research was characterized by its utilization of a natural environment, its organic development, and its avoidance of manipulation by researchers. Moreover, the presence of researchers was purported to have no impact on the dynamics of the subjects under investigation. The primary objective of qualitative research was to comprehend the phenomenon being studied using describing data through verbal expressions and linguistic constructs (Sugiyono 2014).

This study encompassed three distinct strategic stages that researchers undertake. The concept of strategic stages can be comprehended as the sequential phases of problem-solving, thereby facilitating the attainment of desired outcomes in research endeavors with enhanced efficiency. The initial phase of problem-solving focuses on data collection. The subsequent phases of the strategic process, as outlined by (Sudaryanto 1993), involve the examination of data and the subsequent presentation of the findings derived from data analysis. The three strategic stages encompass the initial phase of data.

Throughout the phase of data collection, researchers utilized a range of methodologies, encompassing observation, interviews, and literature review. The research encompassed the examination of traditional Minangkabau cuisines during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony in the Luhak Nan Tigo region, specifically Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Limo Puluh Koto (Safitri 2008, Wongso and Idid 2014). Additionally, interviews were conducted with traditional leaders from various regions to gather information regarding the culinary offerings at the Alek Marapula traditional event and the symbolic significance associated with each dish. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to supplement the data collected during the field research.

Once the data had been gathered, the subsequent step involved data analysis. The study incorporated various data analysis methods, including data reduction, interpretation, and triangulation. Data reduction was a crucial process involving sorting, selecting, and organizing data that facilitated drawing and verifying conclusions. The study employed data triangulation as a means of ensuring the credibility and reliability of the data. It was achieved by cross-referencing the findings from interviews with the research subjects. In addition to assessing the data's veracity, data triangulation enhanced the data and scrutinized its validity (Nasution 2003).

The collected and analysed data are then presented using formal and informal descriptive techniques. The formal method is a technique for presenting the outcomes of data analysis using signs or symbols. While the informal method is a method of presenting the results of data analysis using everyday language, including the use of technical terminology, it is distinct from the formal method. The use of everyday language results from the development of informal methods (Sudaryanto 1993).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

1. Types of Traditional Cuisine in Traditional Ceremonies
The *alek marapulai* traditional ceremony in the *darek* region features the presentation of various traditional Minangkabau cuisines. The culinary traditions encompass a variety of culinary offerings, including appetizers, main courses, desserts, and beverages. The desserts are occasionally offered as mementos for tourists who visit the region. The traditional Minangkabau cuisine served during the *alek marapulai* traditional ceremony, as described in the interviews with Ninik Mamak in Nagari Panta Pauh, Matua District, Agam Regency, and in Nagari Batupayuang, Limo Puluh Koto Regency, comprises two distinct categories: the main course and a beverage known as *kawa*.

### 1.1. The main course

The principal dish is presented during the customary nuptial celebration. The *alek adat* is a traditional ceremony that involves *Ninik Mamak* (custom leaders), the chief, Apak (paternal uncle), *rang sumando* 'brother-in-law', and other male relatives who have already married. The omission of customary food in the *pasambahan* traditional ceremony may give rise to inquiries or scrutiny. Typically, the primary components of the meal include rice, chicken rendang, beef rendang, omelet, cassava chips, fried anchovies, jackfruit curry, *kalo dagiang*, minced meat, *sampadeh dagiang*, *sampadeh* fish, fish curry, grilled fish, toco curry, date curry, fried fish, and various additional dishes. During the traditional *alek adat* ceremony, serving various main courses in multiple villages within the Minangkabau region is customary. The findings from the data identification and analysis indicate that the *alek marapulai* traditional ceremony in the Luhak nan Tigo area necessitates the inclusion of various traditional foods in its culinary offerings. The following examples are provided.

#### 1.1.1 Randang Dagiang

*Randang dagiang* is rendang prepared using meat as the primary ingredient. It is a traditional Minangkabau dish served during the *alek marapulai* traditional ceremony in the Minang domain. *Randang* can be found in the *darek* area and the *Rantau/pasisia* area. Including rendang is an essential component of a comprehensive wedding meal menu. The Minangkabau people commonly designate *rendang* as *kapalo samba* or main course. *Randang* holds a prominent position within a hierarchy of culinary dishes. Based on insights provided by a traditional leader in Luhak Limo Puluh Koto, it is important to note that the term *rendang* does not refer to a specific culinary creation but rather denotes a particular cooking method known as *marandang*, which conveys the concept of gradual and deliberate cooking. This concept pertains to the duration required for the cooking process of *rendang* resulting in the attainment of a desiccated meat texture, an aromatic bouquet of spices, a deep brown hue, and a delectable flavor (Fig. 1).

#### 1.1.2 Gulai Cubadak Kicuah

*Gulai cubadak kicuah* is a *samba* (gula) variant prepared using jackfruit that has been thoroughly cleaned and cut into sizable portions. The cooking process of *gulai cubadak kicuah* resembles the preparation method employed in *rendang*. If the drying process is executed flawlessly, this curry has the potential to maintain its quality for one month. This particular food item is considered an essential component of the culinary offerings expected to be presented during customary rituals in Nagari Salangka, a region close to Maninjau Lake within the Agam Regency (Fig 2).

#### 1.1.3 Beef Rendang Daging, Chicken Rendang, Omelet, and Cassava Chips Kripik Singkong Maco Kaciak

The dishes found in Nagari Panta Pauh, Matur District, Agam Regency include beef rendang, chicken rendang, omelet, cassava chips of Maco Kaciak, and spicy salted anchovies. The dishes are served on a plate with a spoon. It becomes one of the obligatory traditional cuisines of *alek marapulai* prepared during ceremonial rituals, as depicted in Fig. 3. Following established etiquette norms, it is generally advised against turning over spoons, as this gesture may discourage guests from participating in a meal.

In the context of traditional weddings, it is customary for families to include five distinct types of food on a single plate, as depicted in the accompanying image. This practice is observed regardless of the family's socioeconomic status. These five types of food should encompass all essential nutrients without any deficiencies. When the five food types are unavailable, *mamak tungganai* will duly prompt the individual responsible for the ceremony to ensure its completion before providing said food. Like salted anchovies, salted fish must also possess a head, as it is an essential characteristic that cannot be absent. If one of the components is absent, it is anticipated that complications may arise during the execution of the *pasambahan* custom.

#### 1.2 Food-Beverage Kawa

##### 1.2.1 Bareh Randang

In the *darek*, two primary variations of *bareh randang* or rendang rice can be observed, namely *bareh rendang* as a staple food and *bareh rendang* as a nibble. *Bareh* rendang refers to a culinary preparation in which rice is transformed into rendang. In the market snacks, *bareh randang* emerges as a notable variety. The snack is crafted from processed rice flour that undergoes a thorough roasting process until it reaches a state of dryness. Subsequently, it is combined with liquid sugar and cooked coconut milk to achieve its distinctive taste and texture. The outcome of this amalgamation yields a pale mass characterized by a supple consistency, albeit possessing a coarse exterior. The cohesive mass is subsequently positioned within a planar receptacle and shaped into either a circular or rectangular configuration, possessing a width of approximately one centimeter. Subsequently, the *bareh randang* is dissected both horizontally and vertically, rendering it prepared for presentation. *Bareh randang* is typically served as a post-meal snack to the guests. When accompanied by rice, curry, or other complementary dishes, the main course is served (Fig 4).

*Bareh randang*, a traditional culinary delicacy, holds a significant cultural value in various villages situated in the region of Luhak Limo Puluh Koto. It is customary for the host to include this dish as an essential component of their culinary offerings, serving it alongside other dishes to enhance the overall dining experience. When the host fails to provide or inadvertently neglects to provide, this matter will be addressed subsequently during the customary *pasambahan*. Nevertheless, there are also nagari that do not necessitate the host to provide *bareh randang*.
Rendang rice, known as bareh randang in another variant, is a type of rice dish that is prepared using roasted rice. The rendition of rendang rice serves a dual purpose, as it not only serves as a culinary delight but also holds significance in traditional customs and practices. The traditional practice of welcoming the bride and her companions involves the ceremonial act of sprinkling bareh randang, a type of rice rendang, onto the two brides and their companions.

1.2.2 Batiah

Batiah, also known as botiah, is a traditional culinary delicacy from Payakumbuh City, specifically from the Lima Koto District in the Minangkabau region (Fig. 5). Batiah holds significant cultural importance for the inhabitants of Payakumbuh, as it is considered an essential component of traditional ceremonies and wedding rituals, particularly during the marurai and anak doro ceremonies. The snack, which takes the shape of crackers, is produced by molding glutinous rice to cooking within a pot. During the initial stages of its production, glutinous rice undergoes a winnowing process to eliminate husks or any other impurities that may be present. Subsequently, the glutinous rice is thoroughly rinsed and immersed in a saline solution for a brief duration. Subsequently, the glutinous rice is prepared utilizing cooking it in a pot. The cooked glutinous rice is subsequently shaped into a spherical form, approximately resembling the dimensions of a chicken egg, and subsequently compressed to achieve a flattened appearance. Once kneaded and flattened, the glutinous rice is subsequently molded to sun-drying to remove moisture. Subsequently, the desiccated glutinous rice is molded to frying in a skillet of slightly greater dimensions to ensure uniform cooking. The fried batiah is subsequently combined with melted brown sugar to achieve a pleasant flavor profile.

1.2.3 Dakak-dakak and Bungo Durian

Dakak-dakak and bungo durian are among the traditional culinary offerings of the Minangkabau community, commonly presented during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony in the darek region. Dakak-dakak and bungo durian are representative culinary offerings from Tanah Datar's region, specifically from Tabek, Simabua. Dakak-dakak and bungo durian are prepared by combining rice flour with various spices. The size of quail eggs has been altered by dakak-dakak, utilizing a perforated coconut shell as a mold. When the dakak-dakak dough is pressed into this mold, it results in floral noodle-like pieces (Fig 6).

Dakak-dakak and bungo durian molded are then fried in hot oil until they are yellowish. *If stored in a closed place, dakak-dakak cakes and bungo bungo last for one month. Apart from being a traditional food, dakak-dakak and bungo durian are also often used as souvenirs from Tanah Datar. In each nagari in Tanah Datar, dakak-dakak has different forms and functions. It is caused by the Salangka Nagari custom of 'Selingkar Nagari tradition,' the different depths of the fish, different nagari, and different customs. For people whose alek is alek adat or established tradition, the presence of dakak-dakak in the dish is an obligation. If it is not presented, there will be customary sanctions in the form of social sanctions from the community. The label is uncivilized people. In addition to social sanctions, families who do not serve dakak-dakak at traditional events will also be fined. The fine depends on the outcome of the deliberations of the ninik mamak in the nagari.*

1.2.4 Galamai/Kalama

Galamai daris prepared by combining glutinous rice flour (pulut), brown sugar, coconut milk, and a desired amount of salt. The ingredients undergo culinary preparation within a substantial receptacle, wherein they coalesce into cohesive masses of clay-like consistency and acquire a brownish hue (Fig. 7). The lumps will undergo cutting and shaping procedures before the dough gets cool. During ancient times, the production of galamai was achieved through effective collaboration between both genders. Women undertake the provision of ingredients, whereas men perform the task of stirring the cauldron. The technique commonly referred to as mangacau galamai is employed to stir it in a specific manner. The galamai should be handled carefully, as excessive disarray may result in the dispersion of galamai particles. Conversely, it will aggregate like goat excrement in the absence of disorderliness. Hence, the production of galamai necessitates incorporating balance, wisdom, prudence, and patience. It is customary to incorporate roasted peanuts into the galamai dough to achieve a distinctive flavor profile characterized by a savory and crispy texture.

Consuming cooked galamai while they remain within the cauldron is not feasible. It is necessary to pour the galamai onto a plate. Once the galamai has reached a slightly lower temperature, it can be divided into smaller pieces using a sharp knife. It is crucial to ensure that the knife possesses sufficient sharpness, as failure to do so may result in the galamai pieces being unable to be separated effectively. Galamai is a traditional cuisine commonly served during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony and other traditional ceremonies, particularly among the inhabitants of Payakumbuh, Luhak Limo Puluh Koto, Luhak Tanah Datar, and Luhak Agam. Including galamai in traditional ceremonies is regarded as an essential component of traditional culinary practices, and these ceremonies are only complete if they are complete.

1.2.5 Lamang

It is a customary culinary delicacy of the Minangkabau people, typically enjoyed during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony held in the region of Luhak nan Tigo or, more broadly, within the Minangkabau community. Lamang, commonly called lemang, is traditionally offered as a supplementary accompaniment to the primary culinary selection (see Fig. 8). In the Nagari Panta-Pauh of Luhak Agam Regency, lamang is recognized as a culinary item traditionally consumed alongside kawa or parabuang beverages. The traditional Malay dish lemang is typically presented alongside other delicacies such as pinyaram, galamai, and wajik on a single serving plate.

The sliced lamang is typically portioned into three pieces for men's servings and two pieces for women's servings. In addition to the three portions of lemang, a pinyaram is positioned atop, followed by galamai and wajik surrounding it. This type of composition is commonly referred to as one jamba composition.

1.2.6 Pinyaram or Paniaram

Pinyaram or paniaram represents a customary culinary delicacy of the Minangkabau community, traditionally offered during the alek marapulai ceremonial event within the darek region. Pinyaram is a traditional delicacy that combines fried rice flour with palm sugar. Pinyaram exhibits a morphology characterized by a central region that is relatively thick and bulging, while its periphery is comparatively thin (Fig. 9). Pinyaram represents the profound significance
attributed to the institution of marriage, emphasizing the essentiality of fidelity and commitment between two individuals united in matrimony. The perspective is upheld by conventional stakeholders within the Minangkabau community. *Pinyaram* is commonly offered as a supplementary item on food menus, known as *kawa* or *para*, in the*darek* region, which is considered a form of disposable sustenance.

In the context of Nagari Panta Pauh, *pinyaram* is offered as a *kawa* beverage or snack in the *alek marapulai* customary ritual. In the depicted image, a plate contains *pinyaram* accompanied by three portions of *lemang*, *wajik*, and *galamai*. The Panta-Pauh community attributes symbolic significance to the *pinyaram* cake representing a chief. The three portions of *lemang* are associated with the*tali tigo sapilin: ninik mamak*, scholars, and smart *cadik*.

In the context of Minangkabau culture, *galamai* and *wajik* encircling the *lemang* serve as symbolic representations of subordinates or individuals belonging to the clan who find themselves encompassed by the elements associated with Minangkabau leadership. Guests will have the opportunity to indulge in traditional Malay desserts such as *galamai*, *wajik*, and *lemang*, following the consumption of the main course. However, individuals possessing knowledge of the cultural practices in Nagari Panta-Pauh exhibit a reluctance to handle or consume *pinyaram*. In Nagari Lareh Halaban, traditional dishes such as *pinyaram*, *lemang*, and *galamai* are prepared and served as *kawa* beverages. It implies that *pinyaram*, *lemang*, *wajik*, and *galamai* are each served on separate plates. It has been observed that *pinyaram* serves as a symbol representing the ability of the family patriarch to guide and govern his household effectively.

### 1.2.7 Wajik or Simanih

*Wajik* is a customary accompaniment to *kawa* consumption, a beverage commonly served during the *alek marapulai* indigenous ritual in the *darek* or Luhak nan Tigo region. *Wajik* is a traditional Indonesian delicacy prepared using glutinous rice, *saka* or brown sugar, and coconut milk as its primary ingredients (Fig. 10). The glutinous rice undergoes a process of washing and steaming. Subsequently, a mixture of brown sugar and coconut milk proceeds to prepare, diligently stirring the concoction until it reaches a desired level of thickness. Subsequently, the steamed glutinous rice should be introduced into the mixture of coconut milk and brown sugar, which is currently undergoing the process of solidification. During the period of high temperature, the glutinous rice, which has been immersed in a mixture of coconut milk and brown sugar, is transferred into a mold constructed from triangular coconut fronds or onto a baking sheet covered with banana leaves. The pressure is applied during the compacting process until the material reaches a thickness of two centimeters. It is advisable to allow the object to cool down before dividing it into smaller sections.

Despite *wajik* primarily serving as a complementary food to accompany the consumption of *kawa*, its inclusion is greatly sought after during traditional gatherings and occasions. During the *pasambahan* meal, the guests, particularly the *ninik mamak*, may inquire about the absence of the *wajik* from the plate.

### 1.2.8 Sikunik or Kunik Rice

*Sikunik*, *kunik rice*, or *lamak kuniang* rice is a customary culinary dish from the Minangkabau region. It is typically prepared and served during the *alek marapulai* traditional ceremony, deeply rooted in Minangkabau culture. *Sikunik* is a traditional dish prepared using a combination of glutinous rice, coconut milk, salt, and turmeric. Preparing glutinous rice involves washing it thoroughly before soaking it for a period, then cooking it through the steaming method using a boiler. Once the glutinous rice reaches a partially cooked state, it is subsequently extracted from the heat source and allowed to cool. Subsequently, a mixture of coconut milk and turmeric essence is processed for cooking. The process involves combining coconut milk with turmeric water and stirring the mixture with cooled glutinous rice until it is yellow. In certain regions, a colloquial term is used to refer to this type of rice as *lamak rice*. Kunik or *lamak kuniang* rice is traditionally served alongside *singgang ayam* ‘gravy chicken’ (Fig. 11). *Kunik rice* serves as a culinary souvenir, symbolizing the host’s appreciation towards the guests who graciously accepted the invitation to the wedding ceremony. *Kunik rice* is commonly wrapped in banana leaves and accompanied by a slice of sponge cake or *lapek buligh*. This culinary tradition entails sharing the dish exclusively with specific guests.

<table>
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### 2. The Symbolic Meaning of Traditional Minangkabau Food

#### 2.1 Randang Dagiang
The savory flavor of rendang is associated with various symbolic connotations, specifically patience, wisdom, and perseverance. Including three essential properties is essential in the process of cooking rendang, encompassing the meticulous selection of high-quality ingredients to yield a delectable flavor profile. In addition to embodying qualities such as patience, wisdom, and perseverance, the delectable flavor of rendang also carries symbolic connotations of ninik mamak, represented by the meat, smart cadiak, symbolized by coconut, scholar, symbolized by lado or chili, and various other spices and cooking ingredients that collectively symbolize the entirety of Minangkabau society. Furthermore, rendang symbolizes the collective identity of the Minangkabau community, as they adhere to the traditional norms and cultural values prevalent within the Minangkabau society. The manufacturing process is characterized by its considerable duration, underscoring the necessity for patience.

### 2.2 Gulai Cubadak Kicuah

The symbolic significance of this delectable cuisine lies in its representation of the notion that the deceptive nature of the world should not lead us astray. The resemblance to rendang can be observed through its black shape. If proper caution is exercised, misidentifying the dish as rendang is safe. The dark hue and pigmentation of this entity, coupled with its palatable flavor, serve as a reminder that superficial aesthetics should not mislead one. The unsightly external features may not necessarily reflect an unsavory character but signify purity.

### 2.3 Rendang Daging, Rendang Ayam, Telur Dadar and Keripik Tunjuk with Anchovy

The findings from interviews conducted with Dt. Rajo Bulan, a ninik mamak in Nagari Panta-Pauh, indicates that the traditional cuisine represents unity, devoid of any differentiation based on socioeconomic status. Beef rendang represents a culinary expression of affluence, while chicken rendang represents a more modest economic status. Eggs and anchovies, on the other hand, are symbolic of lower socioeconomic standing. These three groups formed a collective alliance based on the shared identity of indigenous peoples, exhibiting a need for discernible distinctions among them. Including the head-on fried anchovies metaphorically represents the necessity for human cognition and intellectual engagement. Similarly, it is customary for the spoon to be positioned upright rather than facing downwards, as a symbolic gesture indicating the host’s genuine acceptance of the guest and extending an invitation to partake in the meal.

In Nagari Lareh Sago Halaban, located in Lima Koto Regency, a traditional dish known as beef rendang, chicken rendang, omelet, and maco kaciak (salted anchovies) are meticulously arranged on separate plates, all of which are then placed together on a single platter, forming a culinary ensemble known as jamba. The maco kaciak, commonly known as salted anchovy, is a variety of anchovy that retains its head, serving as a symbolic representation of the importance of cognitive abilities and the necessity for humans to employ their intellectual faculties.

### 3. The Symbolic Meaning of Kawa Drinking Food

#### 3.1 Bareh Randang

The act of using bareh randang as a culinary symbol serves to signify the welcoming of the bride and her entourage. It is achieved by sprinkling bareh randang onto the bride and her entourage, which serves as a gesture of hospitality and an invitation for them to ascend to the house. Therefore, it can be inferred that bareh randang symbolizes the host’s reverence towards his guests, particularly the prospective in-laws’ family.

#### 3.2 Batiah

According to the findings from an interview conducted with ninik mamak in Batupayuang, Sago Halaban, it has been ascertained that among the residents of Payakumbuh or Limo Puluh Koto, the batiah, a dish made from sticky glutinous rice, serves as a representation of solidarity among individuals, particularly when two families are united through marriage. This characteristic is evident in the structure, wherein the composition consists of cohesive rice grains that adhere closely to one another, forming a cohesive and indivisible whole. In addition to its representation of unity, batiah also serves as a symbol of prosperity. Moreover, the formation of a composite structure comprising multiple glutinous rice grains signifies unity.

#### 3.3 Dakak-dakak and Bungo Durian

In the context of Tanah Datar, the cultural significance of dakak-dakak and bungo durian lies in their representation of interpersonal dynamics within social relationships. This phenomenon is exemplified by the individual responsible for preparing the dakak-dakak and bungo durian cakes during the alek marapulai traditional ceremony. The execution of the dakak-dakak procedure is performed jointly by the affinal kin from the respective lineages responsible for conducting the customary alek marapulai ritual. To facilitate the procedure, it is imperative to encourage the participation of both individuals who are related through marriage, commonly referred to as brother-in-law, to be included in the invitation to assist in making dakak-dakak cakes and durian bungo. The individuals are not extended an invitation; it is highly unlikely that they would attend, despite possessing prior knowledge of the presence of dakak-dakak and bungo durian preparations. The making of it suggests that the residents of Nagari Tabek, Simabua, recognize the importance of upholding social connections among individuals.

#### 3.4 Galamai/Kalamai

The findings from an interview with a traditional leader in Payakumbuh indicate that galamai is a supplementary food for alek. However, it is important to note that galamai implies several symbolic meanings. The galamai encompasses symbolic significance associated with equilibrium, sagacity, and forbearance. The balanced composition of galamai is evident through the precise measurements of its constituent ingredients, including glutinous rice flour, coconut milk, brown sugar, and salt, with no excess or deficiency observed. It signifies the necessity of maintaining equilibrium between the temporal realm and the afterlife in the human experience—the equilibrium between the pursuit of sustenance and the maintenance of religious devotion.
The concept of balance encompasses the expectation for the Minangkabau community, particularly their male members, to exhibit equitable treatment towards their offspring and nephews in a manner that upholds fairness. The proverbs "the child is on lap and the nephew is guided" refer to the traditional practice of providing special care and guidance to one's child and nephew, respectively. The concept of balance in the Minang domain encompasses the harmonious integration of the functions performed by ninik mamak, scholar, and smart cadik, collectively known as tigo tumang jagarangan ‘three parallel stoves’, to facilitate the holistic development of individuals within the community.

The significance of wisdom in galamai is evident through the enduring nature of galamai. Galamai, once cooked in a cauldron, necessitates a subsequent step of transferring it onto a plate before consumption. Moreover, allowing the galamai to cool before utilizing a sharp knife to divide it into smaller portions is imperative. It suggests that immediate detachment is not feasible despite its ripeness, and immediate ingestion is not possible despite its ripeness. In responding to a situation, it is imperative to exercise prudence. Rather than hastily discarding unpleasant experiences, avoiding immediately swallowing enjoyable ones is advisable. Its adage emphasizes the importance of exercising discernment and wisdom in one's responses, lamak ijan langsung dilulua, pahit ijan langsung dibuang ‘tasty do not swallow it immediately, bitter do not throw it away.’

Galamai, characterized by its resilient form, holds significance within the philosophical framework of Minangkabau culture, specifically as tagang bajelo-jelo and kandua badantiang-dantiang. Despite the challenges, the endeavor is characterized by sagacity rather than emotional biases. It is gentle yet resolute in its stance. In addition, galamai encompasses the principles of unity. The observation can be made based on the persistent flexibility exhibited by the object, which remains challenging to disentangle despite undergoing a cutting process.

Regarding the constituent material employed in making galamai, it bears a symbolic connotation, specifically emphasizing the imperative for the inhabitants of Payakumbuh, or the broader Minang community, to exhibit a capacity for altruistic endeavors. The utilization of coconut milk in the preparation of galamai is indicative of this observation. The roots of the coconut tree possess medicinal properties and can be utilized as a constituent in medicinal preparations. The stems of the coconut tree find application as structural supports, such as poles or flooring materials. Additionally, the leaves of the coconut tree are employed in making ketupat, a rice cake packed inside a diamond-shaped container of woven palm leaf pouch. Lastly, the sticks derived from the coconut tree are utilized to fabricate brooms. The coconut tree possesses a multitude of utilitarian properties.

The utilization of brown sugar in the production of galamai is accompanied by a symbolic connotation, wherein the sweetness of brown sugar reflects the amiable, cheerful, and egalitarian nature of the Payakumbuh (Minangkabau) community. It is unsurprising that within the context of The Tambo Alam Minangkabau, it is mentioned that aianyo joniah, ikannya jinak, buayo putiah daguak panjagonyo. This phrase translates to 'the water is clear, the fish are docile, the white-mouthed crocodile guards it.'

The utilization of glutinous rice flour in this context carries a symbolic connotation, specifically representing prosperity and the avoidance of arrogance, padi masak, jaguau maupiah, antimu mangarang bungo, taraan bakambang biak ‘rice is to be harvested, corn releases its petals, cucumber produces flower, breeding livestock’. This is a symbol that humans must be humble and not arrogant, if tall don't jump, if big (body) don't push/crash, if fat don't throw away fat, and if smart don't throw away your friends.

3.5 Lamang ‘Lemang’

The act of dividing the lamang into three portions on the plate symbolizes the shared consumption among three individuals within a single jamba. The two portions of lamang serve as a representation of the shared consumption between two female individuals. This type of composition is inherently devoid of errors and deficiencies. As an illustration, it is customary to serve two portions of lamang for male individuals or a single portion for female individuals. It is common for lamang to be served without the accompaniments of pinyaram, wajik, and galamai. In the event of such an occurrence, the alek tamu will raise inquiries during the subsequent pasambahar. Hence, before this occurrence, the host, serving as the head of the household, would discreetly inform janang about the scarcity, maminteh sabalun hanyuk conveying the message act promptly before the resources are depleted.

Furthermore, the concept of lamang encompasses not only its literal translation but also conveys the significance of social connections, collective unity, and representations of cultural norms and beliefs. The practice of the malamang tradition, specifically the creation of lamang, enhances the bonds of kinship and fosters social cohesion among individuals who share familial connections. Both forms of kinship are established through biological relationships and the institution of marriage. The process of producing lamang requires a significant amount of energy, encompassing various tasks such as sourcing bamboo gutters from the forest, preparing the thinning beds, procuring banana leaves, acquiring wood for fuel, washing glutinous rice, peeling, and extracting coconut milk, filling bamboo tray sticks with the washed glutinous rice, and ultimately cooking the lamang. All tasks necessitate a significant amount of energy.

As a representation of cultural ideals, lamang embodies the significance of Minangkabau, Malay, and Islamic cultures. The malamang tradition is a local indigenous culture observed within the Islamic Minangkabau community. Lamang is a customary culinary dish originating from the Minangkabau region, which manifests the rich heritage and cultural practices of the Minangkabau civilization.

3.6 Pinyaram

Pinyaram represents the profound significance attributed to the institution of marriage, emphasizing the importance of the fidelity and commitment shared between two individuals united in matrimony. The perspective is upheld by conventional stakeholders within the Minangkabau community. Pinyaram is commonly offered as a supplementary culinary option, referred to as kawa or parabuang in the darek region.

3.7 Wajik or Simanih

Wajik, also known as simanih, serves as a symbolic representation of the diligent efforts exerted by both the bride and groom throughout their child’s development within the womb. The symbol underscores the crucial responsibilities of nurturing, providing care, offering guidance, and facilitating education
for the child until they reach adulthood and embark on their marital journey. The symbol implies that the husband will refrain from committing capricious actions toward his wife.

In the cultural context of Nagari Panta-Pauh, the wajik holds significance beyond its representation of the bride's parents' sacrifice. It also symbolizes the responsibility of caring for a nephew's child, which falls upon the mamak and the esteemed figures of tungku tigo sajarangan, scholar, and smart cadiak. During its creation, wajik also serves as a symbolic representation of the principles of cooperation, assistance, and unity.

3.8 SikunikorKunik Rice
In the Tanah Datar region, the alek marapulai ceremony is characterized by providing kunik rice to the attending traditional leaders as entertainment. Symbolically, the consumption of kunik rice signifies the transition of anak doro, "a single woman," to a married woman, as she embraces the role of a wife and mother. The yellow highlighting serves as an indication that the anak doro has changed color, no longer retaining its original white hue. Hence, the bride is already accompanied by her spouse. Kunik rice symbolizes the familial connection between the families of the anak doro, or bride, and marapulai, or bridegroom. On the contrary, the presence of singgang ayam signifies the bestowal of anak doro upon her life partner.

Conclusion
Based on the findings derived from data analysis of the symbolic significance of traditional Minangkabau cuisine served during the alek marapulai ritual in the Luhak Nan Tigo area, it is possible to draw the following conclusion.

a. Traditional Minangkabau cuisine is typically presented during customary rituals. The presence of this customary cuisine is obligatory. When a particular category of customary cuisine is absent from the customary ritual, attendees may inquire about its absence during the pasambahan customary, specifically during the pasambahan eating customary, which involves communal dining.

b. Traditional Minangkabau cuisine can be categorized into two distinct components: (a) main dishes consisting of side dishes such as curry, beef rendang, chicken rendang, omelet, and cassava chips accompanied by anchovies; and (b) supplementary dishes known as kawa beverage. The traditional kawa beverage typically comprises three portions: lemang, pinyaram, galamai, and wajik. The culinary item in question is delicately arranged on a dish intended for the consumption of three male individuals, referred to as a collective unit known as jamba. Additionally, the meal is accompanied by various other assortments of appetizers, including sponge cake, jelly, lapek bugih, bongko, dakak-dakak, batih, bareh randang, and sikunyik. Every nagari possesses its unique method of serving this special menu.

c. The traditional cuisine is imbued with a multitude of symbolic connotations, with rendang serving as a representation of virtues such as patience, wisdom, and perseverance. The inclusion of randang dagiang (beef rendang), randang ayam (chicken rendang), omelet, and keripik tunjuk ikan teri on a single plate serves as a representation of equality between individuals with varying economic statuses. This amalgamation signifies the harmonious coexistence of those with prosperous financial resources and those with limited economic means. Additionally, the presence of batiah on the plate symbolizes the unification of individuals, particularly in the context of matrimonial bonds.

Declarations
Availability of Data and Material
The data and materials available in writing this article is in the research area. The data and writing materials can be observed in every activity of the Alek Maraplai Ceremony in the Minangkabau area.

Competing Interests
There is no conflict of interest in this article.

Funding
There is no participation of funds or financial support in research, writing articles, and also financial support for financing publications from any party.

Author's Contributions
The author involved in writing the article is divided into two groups. The first is in charge of data collection, and the second is in charge of analyzing and interpreting it to traditional ceremonies in Minangkabau. All team members carried out the discussion and finalization of article writing through online and offline meetings.

Acknowledgments
Thanks are extended to the local government of West Sumatra and their community. They gave information about Minangkabau food and drinks to support this research, especially to all the author team in discussing and writing this article.

References

Figures

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Randang 'Rendang'

![Randang 'Rendang'](image1)

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Cubadak Kicuah

![Cubadak Kicuah](image2)

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Rendang Daging, Rendang Ayam, Dadar Telur, dan Kripik Singkong Maco Kaciak

![Rendang Daging, Rendang Ayam, Dadar Telur, dan Kripik Singkong Maco Kaciak](image3)

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