

Islamic Communication in Mandailing Culture: Unveiling Elements of *Da'wah* within *Markobar* Tradition

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between *markobar* and Islamic communication, particularly to unveil the elements of Islamic proselytizing (*da'wah*) within *markobar* tradition. The method employed in this study was a qualitative approach. Data was collected through literature review, observations, and interviews with key informants. The observation was conducted at funeral ceremonies and traditional Mandailing weddings. The collected data from the field and documents was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings illustrate that there are Islamic communication styles embedded within *markobar* tradition, namely *qaulan sadida*, *qaulan baligha*, *qulan ma'rufa*, *qaulan karima*, *qaulan layyinan*, and *qaulan maysura*. Additionally, this Mandailing culture is also considered to represent a means of *da'wah* and to contain *da'wah* messages to promote goodness and discourage bad deeds (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*).

Keywords: Islamic communication, markobar, Mandailing culture, *da'wah* message.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji keterkaitan antara markobar dan komunikasi Islam, khususnya untuk mengungkap unsur-unsur dakwah dalam tradisi markobar. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kajian pustaka, observasi, dan wawancara dengan informan kunci. Observasi dilakukan pada upacara kematian dan pernikahan adat Mandailing. Data yang terkumpul dari lapangan dan dokumen dianalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat corak komunikasi Islam yang tertanam dalam tradisi markobar, yaitu *qaulan sadida*, *qaulan baligha*, *qaulan ma'rufa*, *qaulan karima*, *qaulan layyinan*, dan *qaulan maysura*. Selain itu, budaya Mandailing ini juga dianggap sebagai sarana dakwah dan mengandung pesan-pesan dakwah yang mengajak kepada kebaikan dan mencegah keburukan (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*).

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Introduction

One of the cultural heritages in Mandailing Natal district is *markobar*. *Markobar* refers to delivering a welcoming speech or a few words related to the event being held. The *markobar* event is a universal event in Mandailing culture and practiced in various occasions, including *Siriaon* (wedding parties, housewarming ceremonies, bestowing surnames, etc.), *Siluluton* (funeral rites), as well as apologizing, reconciling and welcoming dignitaries to show respect and provide protection for guests. The role of *markobar* in inherited traditions involves community leaders (*harajaon*, *hatobangon*, *namoranatora*, and *haguruon*).

There is no fixed rule regarding the duration of *markobar*. Whether long or short, it still called *markobar*. The length of speech depends on a person's skill in conveying the message. The more skilled they are, the more words and stories they include, which in turn makes the speech longer. The *markobar* tradition has been practiced by ancestors for generations and continues to this day. Each family member speaks in turn, starting with the youngest and ending with the father as the head of the family. The essence of the message conveyed focuses on key points for all family members, especially the parents and siblings. After that, other family members continue the session. Oftentimes, the *markobar* session is filled with emotions, sometimes bringing tears. Each family member expresses their deepest feelings about their relationships within the family. If there has been any unresolved issue in their heart, *Markobar* provides the moment to express everything.

Markobar is part of Mandailing oral literature and is considered local wisdom that should be preserved. In the past, the oral tradition thrived in the Mandailing community. This, of course, is closely related to the language attitude and language skills of the Mandailing people in utilizing an established form of speech (*pantis marata-ata jana raot marumpama*). Given this context, *markobar* conveys emotions, ethics, values, and norms that are closely related to the concept of Islamic communication.

This study explores the relationship between *markobar* and Islamic communication, particularly to unveil the elements of Islamic proselytizing (*da'wah*) within *markobar* tradition.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative method. Data was collected through literature review, observations, and interviews with the Daily Chair of the Customs and Culture Stakeholder Agency in Mandailing Natal Regency, Mr. Payungan Pulungan (*Degree Mangajara Pinayungan Pulungan*), and the Chair of the FPK National Assimilation Forum in Mandailing Natal Regency, Mr. Erwin Syahputra Nasution (*Mangajara Degree Gunung Pandapotan Harajaon Siantar City*). The observations were conducted to analyse objects with the aim of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon based on prior knowledge and ideas, in order to obtain the necessary information and proceed with investigative process. In this study, researchers observed the *markobar* process at funeral ceremonies and traditional Mandailing weddings. The collected data from the field and documents was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

Findings and Discussion

In terminology, *markobar* can be interpreted as a speaking skill used to convey certain ideas and information by using words and sentences. In Batak Mandailing culture, *markobar* refers to an official conversation held during traditional *Batak Mandailing* ceremonies, both in *siriaon* (a celebration in a joyful atmosphere) and *silulutan* (a celebration in a mourning atmosphere). This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and is commonly practiced on various occasions, especially sacred events such as weddings, religious holidays, and funerals.

Markobar has a set of procedures for using language to speak which is part of the agreement with the Mandailing Batak community. In practice, although there are some variations in

the process of speaking or pronunciation, the substance and essence of the message conveyed are the same. This cultural heritage has an important role in the preservation of sacred things in Mandailing culture because it is like listening to a sermon at Friday prayers so that no one is allowed to speak until the message is delivered to the end.

Along with its development, *markobar* is also known as *marhata-hata* which is a traditional agreement among the Mandailing people and is strongly guarded by their traditional leaders. This habit fosters an exemplary attitude in compiling and arranging words and language as well as providing examples of sacred politeness in showing the essence of speech based on social systems. *Dalihan Na Tolu* (philosophy or socio-cultural insight concerning Batak society and culture) which is used as the basis for the procedures for carrying out Batak Mandailing traditional ceremonies. Thus, the derivative of *Dalihan Na Tolu* This results in social norms that form the order of customary speech as well as a variety of languages for other formal meetings. The core of Dalihan Na Tolu's teachings is the moral code containing the teachings of mutual respect (*masipasangapon*) with the support of the moral rule: mutual respect and help (Aritonang, dkk., 2006). *Dalihan Na Tolu* is a medium that contains objective legal principles. Dalihan Na Tolu is a framework for tripartite relations which includes kin relations [blood](#) and relationship [marriage](#) that binds one group (Vergouwen, 2204).

The urgency of understanding Mandailing Batak customs, especially *markobar*, requires deep patience and perseverance because it has its own charm. This is especially true for those who do not have social relations or relatives familiar with Mandailing Batak customs; they must explore more deeply the benefits of *markobar*. The first impression when watching *markobar* is that it seems very boring, takes up a lot of time, and revolves around a single topic. However, in essence, from the perspective of Mandailing Batak customs, this activity represents affection, known as *olong*, which signifies that every family member plays an important role in conveying messages and advising one another for the sake of goodness.

Markobar is part of Mandailing oral literature and is considered local wisdom that should be preserved. In the past, the oral tradition thrived in the Mandailing community. This, of course, is closely related to the language attitude and language skills of the Mandailing people in utilizing an established form of speech (*pantis marata-ata jana raot marumpama*). (See table 1).

Table 1. Types of Spoken Language Mandailing Culture

No	Type of Spoken Language	Use
1	<i>Grumpy</i>	Describing a bad mood with a hum
2	<i>Marmayam</i>	Various types of children's games that use language as a means of play
3	<i>Maralok</i>	Delivering customary talks arrangements and introductory speakers at traditional ceremonies
4	<i>Marbue-bue</i>	Mothers singing/humming sadly while putting their babies to sleep
5	<i>Mangaleben manga</i>	The tradition of giving upa-upa (prayer) to the daughter who is getting married
6	<i>How about</i>	The tradition of giving upa-upa (prayer) to a boy who gets married, when he escapes a disaster, or after getting a graduation, rank etc
7	<i>Manjeir</i>	Traditional/religious singing that accompanies Mandailing traditional tor-tors
8	<i>Maronang-onang</i>	Song for youth and youth tor-tor dance accompaniment
9	<i>Marsitogolljengjeng</i>	Humming complaints accompanied by a flute or uyup-uyup
10	<i>Marburas</i>	Telling jokes/anecdotes at coffee shops, in crowded places, and in bed before bed
11	<i>Markobar</i>	Speeches held at traditional ceremonies
12	<i>Marturi</i>	Storytelling/telling folk tales

No	Type of Spoken Language	Use
13	<i>Mangabat</i>	The ceremony prevents the bride from being brought to the groom's house
14	<i>Mangadung</i>	A traditional song that implies lamenting and lamenting like a wife who has lost her husband, a girl who will go to her husband's house after marriage

The rapid development of past linguistic activities cannot be separated from the well-established and orderly order of people's lives. The Mandailing ethnic group has a script that serves as the origin of the script for the entire Tapanuli area and its surroundings. The Mandailing language consists of seven different dialects. The same richness is found in the arts, livelihood systems, and other cultural aspects.

Before the rise of the Mandailing kings, an increasing number of competent community leaders had already emerged to manage these matters. These figures, known as *datu*, were scholars in their respective fields. For instance, *Datu Parlidung* was a linguist, *Datu Pangupa* was an expert in mangupa (giving prayers), *Datu Pandaoni* was a healer, *Datu Paruning-uningan* was a specialist in music, and *Datu Parkalaanie* was an astrologer (Pulungan & Hasibuan, 2021).

If the table above is carefully examined in relation to the current state of the Mandailing oral tradition, it becomes clear how threatened this tradition is. Some aspects have even become completely extinct. In fact, the Mandailing oral tradition is an essential part of the ethnic culture that needs to be nurtured and preserved. This literary heritage is a national cultural treasure that requires serious attention to ensure it is not lost over time.

Islamic Communication Styles in *Markobar*

In various works of literatures on Islamic communication, we can find at least six types of speech or speech styles (*qaulan*) which are categorized as rules, principles, or ethics of Islamic communication.

The six principles of Islamic communication mentioned in the Quran are (1) *Qaulan Sadida*, (2) *Qaulan Baligha*, (3) *Qulan Ma'rufa*, (4) *Qaulan Karima*, (5) *Qaulan Layyinan*, and (6) *Qaulan Maysura* (Muis, 2001). These Islamic communication styles are found in the markobar tradition as follows:

Qaulan Sadida

Qaulan Sadida means correct speech or words, both in terms of substance (material, content, messages) and editorial aspects (organization language).

"And fear Allah those who if left behind them weak children, who they worry about (their welfare). Therefore, let them fear Allah and let them say Qaulan Sadida – the right words."(Surat an-Nisa: 9).

Based on the above understanding, *qaulan sadida* should convey the truth, factual, things that are true, honest –without lies, fabrication or manipulation of facts. Similarly, *markobar* requires every family member to communicate true and honest information when expressing ideas to others.

Qaulan Baligha

The word *baligh* means precise, suitable, definite, fluent, and clear in meaning. *Qaulan Baligha* in Markobar means to use say-words that are effective, on target, communicative, easy to understand, straight to the point, and not complicated or long-winded (Khalil, 2007).

"Those are people whose Allah knows what is in their hearts. therefore turn away from them, and teach them a lesson, and say to them Qaulan Baligha – words that have an imprint on their souls."(Surah An-Nissa: 63).

The effectiveness of *qaulan baligha* in *markobar* lies in the style of speech and the message conveyed, ensuring it aligns with the communicant's level of understanding and uses language that is easily comprehensible. When speaking in front of family, the language of

affection should be used, avoiding negative diction or prejudiced tones. Communication between generations should be adapted—elders should use language that the young can understand, and vice versa.

Qaulan Ma'rufa

Qaulan Ma'rufa means kind words, appropriate expressions, polite, using satire (not rude), and not hurting or offending feelings. *Qaulan Ma'rufa* also means conversation that is useful and causes goodness (*maslahat*). In *Markobar* activities, *qaulan ma'rufa* becomes the main support in expressing opinions or goals to be addressed.

"And do not hand over to people whose minds are not perfect, the wealth (those in your power) which Allah has made as the basis of life. give them shopping and clothing (from the proceeds of the treasure) and say to them Qaulan Ma'rufa – kind words."(Surat an-Nissa: 5)

Markobar is an activity to convey greetings in customary assembly forums, both at weddings (*horja*) parties, death and various other social activities. In the study of *qaulan ma'rufa*, *Markobar* provides an example for young family members to make an apology if they make a mistake and say thank you after being given something.

Qaulan Karima

Qaulan Karima is a noble word, accompanied by respect and exaltation, pleasing to the ear, gentle, and well mannered. In this verse, noble words must be done when talking to both parents. We are prohibited from yelling at them or saying words that might offend them.

"And your Lord has commanded that you worship none other than Him and that you should do the best to your parents. If one of the two or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them the word 'ah' and you do not yell at them and say to them Qaulan Karima - a noble word"(Surat al-Isra: 23).

Qaulan Karima discusses the substance of *Markobar* when communicating with parents or people we must respect. In the context of *Markobar*, *Qaulan Karima* means using polite words, not rude, not

dirty, and avoiding hurt feelings such as disgust, disgust, fear, and sadism.

Qaulan Layina

Qaulan Layina means speaking softly, with a pleasant voice, and full of friendliness, so that it can touch the heart. Layyina is a satire, not with words frankly or straightforwardly, let alone rude (Hefni, 2015).

"Then speak to both of you with Qaulan Layyina - gentle words..."(Surat Taha: 44).

The verse above explains the command of Allah SWT to Moses and Aaron to speak gently, not harshly, to Pharaoh. With *qaulan layyina*, Markobar will make the audience feel touched and move their souls to accept Markobar's message. Thus, in Markobar, harsh, loud and high pitched words and sounds (intonation) are avoided as much as possible.

Qaulan Maysura

Qaulan Maysura means easy speech, which is easy to digest, easy to understand, and understood by the communicant. Other meanings are words that are pleasant or contain things that are uplifting.

"And if you turn away from them to obtain the mercy from their Lord that you hope for, then say to them Qaulan Maysura - an easy word"(Surat al-Isra: 28).

Discussing markobar, of course, is bound by easy-to-digest speech because the listeners are of various ages and professions, so it is obligatory to use words and sentences that are easy to understand.

The *Markobar* Tradition as a Mean of *Da'wah*

According to Parinduri, most Mandailing people still regard the *markobar* tradition as an essential part of traditional ceremonies. This significance is evident in *the* execution of these ceremonies, from the smallest customary practices to large-scale rituals, all of which

incorporate *markobar* processions. Furthermore, the Head of the Art-Culture Customary Division of HIKMA (Mandailing Large Family Association) of North Sumatra categorizes *markobar* into four functions: *sacred*, *traditional*, *attractive*, and *artistic*.

The sacred function of *markobar* is considered to contain *da'wah* messages. This is because its main idea is to promote goodness and discourage bad deeds (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*). Additionally, *markobar* is primarily aimed at giving advice (*marsipaingot*). The *marsipaingot* tradition is passed down to newlywed couples, with guidance that aligns with Islamic teachings—encouraging obedience to Allah and His Messenger, upholding prayers, and showing respect and love for parents, relatives (*mora-kahanggi*), and *boru* (daughters or female relatives). Furthermore, for a child preparing to go abroad, *markobar* conveys advice to remain steadfast in prayer, be determined and persistent in seeking sustenance, uphold honesty and trustworthiness, and never forget their hometown.

Additionally, the *markobar* encourages the preservation of the tradition of kindness. It is considered a traditional activity because it has become a convention within the Mandailing community, whether residing in Mandailing or overseas. Naturally, it would feel awkward to hold a wedding ceremony without *markobar*, even if only for a few sessions. In some cases, the bride receiving advice may not understand the Mandailing language at all. The author has personally witnessed several *upa-upu* (prayer) events for Mandailing brides born in Medan City who did not understand the Mandailing language, requiring the messages to be translated into Indonesian. Surprisingly, it was they who requested the event, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

In *markobar* tradition is also found the aspect of Islamic communication, rethoric aspect in particular, through which the *markobar* actors can negotiate with others. It means the *markobar* become a means of Consensus. *Markobar* is as an attractive activity because in practice the *markobars* (*parhatahata*) act as negotiators who can influence the decisions to be taken. In this connection, *markobar* competition will be seen, for example in terms of *mangaririt* (resisting),

manyapai boru (applying), *pataru Batang boban* (delivering delivery). from the bride's side or from the groom's side will jointly display their skills in the customary trial. The ability to use charming words can expedite and smooth things over.

Furthermore, *markobar* is an artistic form of public speaking, as it incorporates literary language, including a distinctive style, choice of words, and intonation. Politeness in language is highly prioritized in this tradition. This emphasis on respectful speech is reflected in an old Mandailing Batak proverb: "*Angoluan rhyme, teas amatean,*" which means that speaking politely ensures a safe and peaceful life, while verbal abuse brings danger, harm, and even death.

Conclusion

Indeed true that *markobar* has remained an important instrument of the social system in Mandailing. The integration of Islamic communication in conveying the messages embedded in this cultural heritage demonstrates that *markobar* is still practiced as a social obligation amid the evolving dynamics of Mandailing society. However, according to recent research, there are only a few Mandailing people who are good at *markobar*. Therefore, The *markobar* culture must continue to be preserved in the world of education by involving the younger generation or *Nauli Bulung. Markobar* or *marhata-hata* should be included into the non-formal activities of the younger generation, so that they practice Islamic communication principles within the context of *markobar*.

Looking back over time, *markobar* has become a social phenomenon deeply ingrained in the identity of the Mandailing people. However, *markobar* skills are gradually fading, not only in big cities but also in Mandailing's ancestral lands. For example, *markobar* is still performed in traditional ceremonies such as *Manyapai Boru*, *Pasahat Utang Boban*, and *Mandokon Repeat Agoan (Hata Bow)*. However, for simpler traditional activities—such as expressing gratitude, performing *manyurdu burangir*, or inviting others to eat—

there is now often a need for the services of a *markobar* expert, known as a *parkobar*.

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