



THE POSITION OF BORU DIAMPUAN IN THE CUSTOMS OF THE BATAK TOBA ETHNIC GROUP IN SIALANGUAN VILLAGE PANGURURAN DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the position of *boru diampuan* in the customs of the Toba Batak ethnicity, analyze the challenges faced by the *boru diampuan* in the customs of the Toba Batak ethnicity. This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The location of the research was conducted in Sialanguan Village, Pangururan District, Samosir Regency. The data collection technique in this study was through participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and field notes. The results of the study showed that the son-in-law who lived in his wife's village was caused by economic limitations while living in Perantaun so he chose to return to his wife's village. There are three positions of *boru diukah* in customs, namely low social status, playing the role of *parhobas* (servants of traditional events), and not having the right to the inheritance of the in-laws. The position of *boru diampuan* in customs poses several challenges faced by *boru diampu*, namely disadvantaged social status, psychological challenges, and conflicts in agricultural land use. The phenomenon of *boru diampuan* in Sialanguan Village results in gender inequality because it shows a more dominant role and requires sacrifice from the *boru diampuan*, namely the son-in-law of the man who lives in his wife's village. Gender inequality can be seen when prioritizing men (*hula-hula*) and placing *boru diamukah* as a member of *parhobas* (servants) or who are always marginalized in the in-laws' families.

Keywords: Toba Batak Ethnicity, Boru Diampuan, Dalihan Natolu, Boru Diampuan's Role, Gender Inequality

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INTRODUCTION

The Toba Batak ethnic group is found in the area around Lake Toba, Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. The pattern of residence is a place that has one clan because it adheres to the patrilineal kinship system. Usually, the place where the Batak Toba people live is a place inhabited by one clan and there are still family ties. So, the newly married family lives together on the husband's or husband's side (Sihombing 2020). The Toba Batak ethnic group also has a clan that will regulate a kinship system called *dalihan natolu*. *Dalihan Natolu* is a very important law in the Toba Ethnic Nation with a strong bond between three main elements: *hula-hula* (the bride-giver), *boru* (the bride-giver), and *dongan tubu* (the clan sister). *Dalihan natolu* is very important to regulate social relationships, behavior, and behavior in the family and in society. Every activity of the Batak Toba community is always regulated by *the dalihan natolu* (Firmando 2021).

Hela is the son-in-law of the Toba Ethnic and is considered a *boru* in the family. If a son-in-law (*hela*) who lives abroad is unable to earn a living, then the wife (in-laws) will invite him to live in his wife's village, then the *hela* is called *boru diampuan*. Through the Batak Toba kinship system, *hela* is considered a *boru* who always plays the role of a *parhobas* (volunteer) in every *hula event* (Manullang 2023). *Hula-hula* is described as "*mata ni ari binsar*" in the sense of giving life, including *sahala* (authoritative) who gives blessings to *the boru and must be upheld or respected by the boru* (Napitupulu 1997).

The Toba ethnic group in Sialanguan Village, Pangururan District, has 5 *boru diampuan*. The background of the son-in-law living in his wife's village in Sialanguan Village is the inability of the son-in-law (*hela*) overseas to earn a living so he has to live in his wife's village. *The hela* did not have land to build his own house in his wife's village, so he stayed on his in-laws' land or *his hula*. *The livelihood in the village is mostly as farmers, so the family also uses the land from their in-laws to survive. The position of boru diampuan, often gets a very heavy role because he has to listen to the orders of his hulas. One example is that in traditional events, hela has to leave her job to serve her hula-hula*

events. In this case, hela serves the traditional hula-hula event, not only the brother of his wife, but all the same clans as his wife in the village. Hela must be a prompt waitress until the event is over. In addition, the right to all wealth or inheritance is not given to hela because his position in the family is boru.

The heirs in the Toba ethnic family are *hula-hula*. Land used by the son-in-law (*hela*) is only used for a while and should not be the property of the *hela* (Firmando 2021). If *boru* wants to plant plants long-term or annuals such as candlenuts, coffee and mangoes, then permission must be given to *hula-hula first*. Because *boru* can only use it temporarily and cannot be a property. An event of *hela* that hitchhikes on the land of *his hula-hula*. When his parents had passed away, *the hula-hula* expelled the *hela*. The land that has been cultivated by *the hela* is withdrawn by *the hula*. *This results in disharmony in communication between hula-hula and boru.*

Previous research related to a son-in-law who lives in his wife's village which focuses on problems in his household (Altafiah 2024). From a number of previous research results, it shows that the source of conflict that occurs between sons-in-law and in-laws is in-laws who often intervene and always comment on their children's household problems. In-laws also often make decisions within their family. But few studies have addressed the challenges of sons-in-law living in his wife's village. Through this research, it will focus more on the position and also the challenges that *are boring in the customs of the Toba Batak ethnicity.*

This study will examine the position of *boru diampuan* and also its challenges in his wife's family in Sialanguan Village, Pangururan District. The purpose is to analyze the position of *boru diampuan* in the customs of the Toba Batak ethnic group and analyze the challenges of *boru diampuan* in the customs of the Toba Batak ethnicity. This research will contribute to the family, gender, and customs of the Toba Batak ethnic group in Sialanguan Village, Pangururan District.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to analyze the position of boru diampuan in the ethnic customs of the Toba Batak in Sialangan Village, Pangururan District. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and field notes. The selection of informants consisted of *boru diampuan*, the wife of *boru diampuan*, and the community in Sialangan Village. The main informant in this study was the boru diampuan, namely a girl (boru) who was protected by the hula-hula and lived in the hula-hula village (in-laws). The data analysis techniques in this study consisted of ethnographic interview analysis, domain analysis, and taxonomic analysis using the Spradley (2015) ethnographic model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Position of *Boru* in the Customs of the Toba Batak Ethnic in Sialangan Village, Pangururan District

The son-in-law who returns from overseas and lives in his wife's village is due to his inability to survive overseas due to his unsettled job, bankruptcy, and the cost of living abroad is more expensive than in the village. Therefore, *Boru was supported* and his wife chose to return to his village rather than linger overseas but was unable to continue living.

The reason why the son-in-law lives in his wife's village, as explained by the informant, Gell Situmorang, is: "I now live in the village of Hula-Hula because I used to work for a cooperative, but it went bankrupt. I looked for job vacancies but there were none, so my mother-in-law told me to return to my wife's village, because there I could farm. If you think about it, living away from home would involve a lot of expenses, such as having to pay rent, whereas in the village where I live, it's free, I just need to find food." (Interview, May 13, 2025)

Boru diampuan and his wife chose to return to their village rather than stay abroad, where they were unable to continue their lives. He decided to return to his wife's village because his in-laws would provide him with farmland to meet his daily needs in the village. So, it can be concluded that the son-in-law returned from abroad due to economic constraints and lived in his wife's village, which is called boru diampuan.

2. Low Social Status Among *Boru Diampuan*

As a person who hitchhikes in his wife's village, boru diampuan will affect his position in customs such as low social status in boru diampuan. An informant said:

"If you live in Hula-hula Village, you must be respectful, because riding is not my right because I live in this village. So far, I also feel underestimated as hula-hula, maybe because I don't have this money, right? If the Batak people have to be with us, then we are also valuable in the family."

This statement was reaffirmed by Ganda Situngkir who is a traditional leader in the village:

"Indeed, boru is supported because being boru in this village is still not in a good position compared to her husband who lives in her own village. Why do I say that, because of the position that is in his in-laws' village. I can't like it because it's close to my in-laws, close to my hulas."

According to Levi-Strauss's view, low social status due to limited economic resources can affect interactions between individuals and between individuals and other groups. Levi-Strauss's view is that there are high and low statuses within the social structure, which shape a person's position in society, as experienced by Boru Diampuan. Just like the housewife in Sialangan Village, whose position is merely a passenger in his wife's family, or who is unable to meet his family's living needs (impoverished), this determines his social status within the family and in society, namely, low social status.

Boru diampuan *social status* was low because his family thought that *Boru was given* as a passenger and used the gift of in-laws only temporarily. The informant thinks that he is underestimated because he feels that he has nothing. Through this phenomenon, economic factors have a great impact on a person's social status. So *the position of boru diguu*, has a lower social status compared to a husband who lives in his own village. The Batak Toba people, if we have enough money, are considered valuable in the family. If supported by an underprivileged economy, the impression is that *boru* is empowered to play a maximum role and is considered less valuable in customs.

Research by Priska Manullang (2023) also supports these findings. His research revealed that his son-in-law and in-laws had a bad relationship due to economic pressure, which caused problems between the son-in-law and his wife's family.

Overall, it can be concluded that the position of a boru diampuan has a lower social status than that of a husband who lives in his own village. This occurs because the boru diampuan lives in his wife's village. A son-in-law who is unable to provide for the family's needs significantly affects the social status of the family. His wife's family. Sometimes they are looked down upon by the hula-hul and the wife's other family members. Informants said that in the Toba Batak community, only if you have sufficient money is considered valuable within the family. If you are supported by a low income, the boru diampuan appears less capable of playing a full role and is considered less valuable in the tradition. Therefore, it can be concluded that the main reason why the boru diampuan is less valuable is due to material economic inadequacy, which affects his social status within his wife's family and within the community of Sialanguan Village.

3. Acting as Parhobas (Traditional Ceremony Servants)

Furthermore, the position of boru is to play the role of a parhobas (servant of traditional events). Boru is expected to respect the customary rules in the Batak family in Sialanguan Village. There are also traditional obligations such as servants in every traditional hula-hula or dongan tubu event in his wife's village. Time and energy must be sacrificed in every traditional event as a sign of respect for hula-hula. This was said by Glen Sinaga:

"If there is a hula-hula event, you must be ready to serve the event. So you have to get up at 4 am and have to go to the hula-hula house to serve. Because it's the son-in-law who has to cook the meat and do everything. The work in the fields had to be abandoned, because the son-in-law had to be ready until the event was over."

Boru is supported in the concept of kinship of the Toba Batak as "boru" must be quick to become a traditional servant and must give his time, thoughts, and energy to help the process of traditional event activities until the end of the traditional event. The role of boru is very much needed by the wife's family (hula-hula) for the continuity of the event. This role shows the position of boru diampuan as a parhobas (servant of traditional events) and a sign of respect for his in-laws and hulas in accordance with the customs in Sialanguan Village. In the author's research, boru diampuan must be a prompt parhobas in the village because all are the family of his wife, so all clans that are the same as his wife must be served by

boru diampuan.

This finding is strengthened by research by Rigitta (2021) who said that the role of boru is expected to participate in traditional event activities carried out by the wife's family such as serving traditional events held by hula-hula. The role of the son-in-law as a traditional servant is determined through the dalihan natolu which is a Toba Batak kinship system that has not changed to date.

The Toba Batak kinship concept, dalihan natolu, aligns with Levi-Strauss's theory, which views social structure as shaping individual and group identity. Boru diampuan is defined as a boru who lives in a village. His wife's obligation as a parhobas (servant) in the traditional hula-hula ceremony demonstrates her position in the social structure. Levi-Strauss's binary oppositions, such as rich/poor, low/high, show that the boru are held at a low level because they must serve the hula-hula, while the hula-hula are held at a high level due to the social structure of the Toba Batak community, namely Dalihan Natolu.

Overall, it can be concluded that the boru diampuan has an obligation to serve (marhobas) at every traditional event held by his wife's family as a sign of respect for her husband's family. This obligation is stated in the dalihan natolu (somba marhula-hula), so the boru diampuan must respect his husband's family. In the author's research, the boru diampuan must be a responsive parhobas in the village because everyone is his wife's family, so all members of the same clan as his wife must be served by the boru diampuan.

a. No Rights to the In-Laws' Inheritance

The position of boru in the last is that he does not have the right to the inheritance of his in-laws. Batak Toba custom in Sialanguan Village, inheritance rights are usually given to boys (hula-hula) not to girls (boru). Boru was given the right not to inherit his wife's family or his hula-hula family because his position was boru in the family. This was conveyed by Ganda Situngkir who is a traditional leader in the village:

"It is customary in this village if there is an inheritance of the parents, all to the boys. Not to his daughter or son-in-law. If there are parents who have died first and have not shared it with their children, well, the child will make an event together, usually the first child will convey about his parents'

inheritance and also his brother's agreement."

Boru was given the right not to inherit his wife's family or *his hula-hula family* because his position was *boru* in the family. In the village, *the siampudan* (last) child also has the right to his parents' house. All the land belonging to his in-laws will be inherited to the son (*hula-hula*). However, if his parents have jewelry, it will be given to *Boru*. If his parents give a house or agricultural land to *the boru diampu*, it is only temporary and cannot be a property.

In line with these findings, dewi's (2020) research revealed that *boru* could not be the heir to his in-laws' inheritance. In Toba Batak custom, *boru* is also not given the right as an heir. However, *Boru* was given the right to use agricultural land and also land used to build his hut but only temporarily.

Likewise, Wati's (2021) research said that sons-in-law do not have rights to their in-laws' inheritance. However, the son-in-law is expected to participate in each of his wife's families. In line with the author's research, *boru diampu*, who has contributed to his wife's activities, still does not have all his in-laws' inheritance. All inheritance is given only to *hula-hulas*.

In line with Levi-Strauss's structuralism theory, the phenomenon of the *boru diampu*, who lack inheritance rights for their in-laws, can help us understand the social position of the *boru diampu*. In Toba Batak culture in the village of Sialangan stated that the *boru diampu* has no rights to their in-laws' inheritance. This statement indicates that social structure influences the power of inheritance rights, which can differentiate between kinship groups.

Levi Straus's theory of structururalism states that social structures greatly influence positions in customs. *Dalihan natolu*, which is a social structure in the Toba Batak ethnic community, will affect how the interaction, role, rights, and obligations between *hula-hula* and *boru* are controlled. Thus, the position of *dalihan natolu* in Levi Strauss's view is a system that will regulate the role and responsibility of the Batak Toba community according to customs.

3. The Challenge of Boru Being Supported in Customs in the Toba Batak Ethnic Group in Sialangan Village, Pangururan District

The position of *boru* in the Toba Batak community in Sialangan Village poses social challenges in his daily life. Through the challenges faced, *Boru Dimangu* must continue to carry out his obligations as a *boru* who hitchhikes in his in-laws' village. His attitude and actions must remain harmonious to his in-laws and *hula-hula*

Based on interviews with informants, there are three challenges faced by *boru diampu* in customs, namely unfavorable social status, psychological challenges, and land use conflicts.

a. Less Favorable Social Status

Through the social structure of the Toba Batak community, *boru* is allowed to get a disadvantaged social status. This is due to his position as a *boru* in the village so that he must be ready to become a *parhobas* (servant) in every traditional activity and other activities in his in-laws' family.

Lévi-Strauss's structuralism theory links power relations that can indicate social position within a society, as seen through social structure. Among the Toba Batak ethnic group, the social structure is based on the kinship system, namely the *dalihan natolu*. A higher social position is given to the *hula-hula*, while a lower position is given to the *boru*. This can be seen in the *boru*, who must respect and submit to their *hula-hula*. The highest authority is seen in the *hula-hula*. Through this theory, social structure greatly influences the position of the *boru*, who occupy a lower position within the family.

As revealed by Junar Simanjorang (47), a *boru diampu* in Sialangan Village:

"So far, there has been no mutual respect for each other. When I first arrived in this village, I was always diligent in doing every event, but look now it is still not appreciated. Like not having a family, what about riding him in this village. (Interview May 6, 2025)"

This statement shows that his wife's family does not pay attention to *boru diampu*, and lacks awareness to respect each other for

their close relatives. Whatever is done by *boru diampuan* may not be satisfied with the *hula-hula* because considering his role in only serving and having the status of a passenger in the village. Through this phenomenon, informants always tell their children to be educated and aspire high to obtain a decent life. Because a high social status will be respected by his family so that there is no view that considers him low. For example, Sirait (2022) research shows that *sonduk hela* has full responsibility to his wife's family, but is often not appreciated by his *hulas* because his position is only as a *boru*.

b. Psychological Challenges

In addition to his disadvantaged social status, *Boru* was also given psychological challenges in his family. The role of *boru* is supported by *hula-hula* has an unequal position, because the burden borne by *boru* is certainly greater. Considered low due to economic limitations and underappreciated by *hula-hula* is also often experienced by *boru diampuan*. This is a psychological challenge for *Boru diampuan*. As *a boru* in the wife's family, the demand to respect her *hulas* by carrying out every command of her *hulas* is also a psychological pressure.

The statement was confirmed by Rudi Sihombing (53) who said:

"There are many responsibilities to the in-laws' families. Not only taking care of family, wives, and children, but also in-laws must also be taken care of. Especially now that my in-laws are sick, we are the ones who take care of it, keep taking care of my brothers, because they have rights. It's here but it's still us taking care of our parents every day."

The narration of *boru diampuan* and his wife revealed that not only took care of his nuclear family, but his in-laws also had to be taken care of by *boru diampuan*. The role of *boru* is very much needed in the family. When the parents are sick, it is still the first *boru* to be called to take care of even though there are *hula-hulas* in the village. *Boru* was given the opportunity to have psychological pressure because of the incompatibility with his wife's family. This happens because he lives close to his family and there must be conflicts in daily

life. The role that is so heavy and mandatory to be carried out by *boru dilawi* causes stress. In line with research (Firmando, 2021) which states that boys often assume that women have the obligation to take care of their parents when they are elderly or sick. Most parents who are already sick are cared for by girls.

Overall, the author concludes that the mother-in-law experiences psychological stress due to her close relationship with her in-laws and their *hula* dance. The burdensome and mandatory role of the mother-in-law causes stress. When parents become elderly, Both sons and daughters have the responsibility to care for their parents. Sometimes, the *hula-hula* always think that the *boru* plays the role of servant, so this is always carried over into the *hula-hula*'s thinking. Even though the *boru* is only staying at their in-laws' village, they are expected to maintain good and harmonious communication to avoid causing psychological stress for the *boru*.

c. Conflict Over Agricultural Land Use

The next challenge is the conflict of agricultural land use. In the Batak Toba customary system, land ownership rights are owned absolutely by *hula-hula*. Meanwhile, *boru* was given the right to use the land that had been given by his in-laws as long as the land was planted. However, the use of land by *boru* was forgiven causing conflict because it was withdrawn by his *hula-hula*, so that currently there is poor communication between the son-in-law and the *hula-hula*.

Levi-Strauss's views on structuralism have a significant influence on social status, inheritance, and relations. Through the concept The Toba Batak kinship system places *hula-hula* in a higher position than *boru diampuan*, allowing *hula-hula* to have power over inheritances, such as their parents' land. This creates land conflicts because the lower-ranking *boru* do not have inheritance rights but have significant obligations that must be fulfilled.

This was revealed by Melutar Sinaga (50) revealed:

"Likewise with the land that my in-laws have given to work, but the hula-hula came to pull it back. That is the bitterness if the in-laws

have died. There is a lot of in-laws' land in this village, but all of them belong to hula-hula. That's why when I pulled the hula hula of the land given by my in-laws, I rented the land of the people in this village."

This is also justified by Rusli Sihaloho who said that:

"I take care of the land, diligently collecting buffalo dung to be used as fertilizer in the field. How is it that I have been using the land for a long time and it was suddenly withdrawn. So because of that, I had to be forced to rent someone else's land so that I could eat."

Boru was arrested in Sialanguan Village stating that there was a land problem because of his deceased father-in-law. *Hula-hula* took over the land that had been worked on by the *boru diampu*, while his in-laws were still alive. Now he has rented land belonging to someone else in the village. The soil that has been used is pulled by the *hula* and has been cared for for many years by collecting buffalo dung or fertilizer so that the soil used remains fertile. However, it is still taken by the *hula-hula* and has to rent agricultural land belonging to others to survive in the *hula-hula* village.

A similar study by Firmando (2022) states that the patrilineal culture of the Toba Batak ethnic group often causes conflicts related to customary lands. The conflict causes ongoing disharmony within the family. Likewise, the research of Rayyas et.al (2023) said that the patrilineal kinship system. Women do not have the right to their parents' inheritance and are often at a disadvantage related to the distribution of inherited land.

Levi-Strauss's theory of structuralism also affects inheritance, social organization, and also power related to structural analysis in society. As Levi Strauss said, social structures will form a network of power in society. *Hula-hula* that have power will place the *boru dihed* in a lower social position and will affect interactions in the family and in society. Through this phenomenon, it will cause challenges that occur to *boru diampudu* in his family.

Overall, it can be concluded that the position of the *boru diampuan* significantly

influences the relationship between the *boru diampuan* and the *hula-hula*. This subordinate position places the *boru diampuan* in a challenging role within the family. The *boru diampuan*'s freedom is very limited, unlike the *hula-hula*, where the *boru diampuan* merely serves as a companion. The *boru diampuan* must fulfill substantial obligations without demanding rights. Their role as servants of tradition requires sacrifice of energy, thought, and time.

Any inheritance used by the *boru diampuan* is only temporary and can be reclaimed by the *hula-hula* at any time. This will pose a challenge for the *boru diampuan*. The status of *boru diampuan* is indeed very difficult to achieve, but it requires good communication between the *boru diampuan*, his wife, in-laws, and the *hula-hula* to prevent prolonged conflict within the family.

CONCLUSION

The position of *boru dimanguan* in traditional events in the Batak Toba ethnic group in Sialanguan Village, it can be concluded that *boru dimanguan* has three positions, the first is low social status. When the *boru diampukan* is unable to build his own household or live independently, surely the family's view of the *boru diampuan* is low. Furthermore, the second is *boru diampuan* to play the role of *parhobas* (servants of traditional events). In traditional events in Sialanguan Village, the position of *boru* is indeed considered the lowest and is obliged to play the role of a *parhobas* or servant in traditional events involving the wife's family (*hula-hula*). *Boru* is empowered as a husband who lives in the village and his wife is obliged to show an obedient attitude and serve in his family. Then the third is that *boru diampuan* does not have the right to the inheritance of the in-laws' family. *Boru* was not allowed to get inheritance rights over his in-laws' property, especially land, houses, and other assets. The challenges faced are in the form of disadvantaged social status, psychological challenges, and conflicts in agricultural land use. *Boru's challenge is to be supported* by social status because economic limitations are part of the problem in his

household. *Boru will be seen as low* by his wife's family because he is unable to meet the needs of his family as the head of the household. Respecting the in-laws and taking on great responsibilities will create psychological distress due to the conflict between personal desires and cultural expectations in the village. The third challenge is related to the conflict *between boru diampu*, who has used agricultural land given by his in-laws and then withdrawn by his hula-hula, which will become a problem in the family. This problem results in a poor communication relationship between *boru and his hula*.

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