



## Original Research

# Collegial Success: Interpreting the Toba Community Through Plant Lexicon Metaphors in Proverbs

Abdurahman Adisahputera, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Eronnd Litno Damanik, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Wisman Hadi, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Suci Pujiastuti, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Syndy C. Sinaga, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

**Received:** 07/24/2025; **Accepted:** 02/02/2026; **Published:** 03/20/2026

**Abstract:** This study aimed to investigate the attachment of community character through plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs. The core focus is on the cognitive processes and conceptualization of plant lexicons as metaphors for cultivating values, norms, and ideologies within the Toba community in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The results showed that proverbs based on dicotyledonous lexicons served not only as advice and social control but, most importantly, as primary tools for internalizing communal family life expectations. The expectations contrast with those associated with monocotyledon plants, viewed as symbols of selfishness and individualism. In conclusion, traditional proverbs are active cognitive training aligned with verbal intelligence for achieving modern success and not merely passive folklore. The findings of this study indicate a communal ascent that presupposes the metaphor of the lexicon of dicotyledonous plants rather than an individual that presupposes monocotyledonous plants. The cognitive process and positive conceptualization of dicotyledonous lexicons in metaphorical expressions, continuously conveyed through ceremonies, rites of passage, folklore, and song lyrics, are marked by qualities such as strength, exemplarity, goodness, and integrity. Therefore, plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs represent a moral vision grounded in moral statements and practical principles for collective success, reflecting attitudes and preferences. Plant lexicons in proverbs are metaphorical expressions used to internalize values, norms, and ideals, having magical power over all consequences of life.

**Keywords:** *Metaphor, Lexicon, Plants, Proverbs, Toba*

## Introduction

The Toba community in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is known for its tenacity in pursuing education to the graduate level, and many of its members hold strategic positions throughout the Republic of Indonesia, including civil servants, military personnel, police officers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, lecturers, priests, scientists, and even entrepreneurs. Despite their limited financial resources, they do not hesitate to go into debt just to pursue an education. Even when malnourished, living on only cassava every day, they persevere, working hard to pay for their children's education. They do not mind that their homes are shacks, but the walls are covered with graduation photos. In fact, the four regencies that make up the Toba ethnic region—North Tapanuli, Toba, Samosir, and Humbanghasundutan—are not only

known as barren and lacking economic potential but are also included in the national poverty map. The soil is rocky and sandy and is only suitable for certain crops, even lacking superior commodities. Despite this, as of December 2024, this community is known to have the highest population of graduates in Indonesia, at 18.02% (Central Bureau of Statistics [*Biro Pusat Statistik*, BPS] 2025). This phenomenon underpins this research, which aims to understand the determinants of life success. The fundamental question is why the Toba community tends to achieve success and even has the highest number of graduates in Indonesia. This article explores this success from the perspective of the plant lexicon metaphor, summarized in “collegial success.”

The plant lexicon metaphor is associated with collegial success. This topic has not been widely explored. Available studies tend to focus on the role of European-style education, initially introduced by German missionaries (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* [RMG]) (Aritonang 1988; Schreiner 1994; Pedersen 1970; Parkin 1978), including Dutch colonial education (Joustra 1910; Kozok 2010; Gabriel 1921; Duuren 1983; Castles 1972), in elevating Batak society. It is argued that the spread of education among the Batak community resulted from encounters with Europeans, particularly the Dutch, Germans, and Italians, who also introduced Protestantism and Catholicism (Jones 1976; Lempp 1976). In our opinion, this statement is not entirely accurate, as other factors have been identified that instill the importance of education in life, such as motivation and guidance that provide stimulation for each individual. In this study, we focus on plant lexicon metaphors, which are always displayed during moments of joy and sorrow in ceremonies and rituals. On the one hand, ecological plant metaphors are necessary to facilitate the delivery of messages, norms, and meanings based on tropical plants, while on the other hand, these metaphors demonstrate the importance of conservation.

The Toba community, who live around Lake Toba, still adheres to their ancestral heritage, especially in using proverbs (*umpasa*) by adopting plants as metaphors in conveying messages, norms, and the meaning of life. Many of the proverbs use plant lexicon metaphors based on three fundamental considerations: (1) typical ethnobotany according to the ecological environment of the mountains and waters, (2) widespread recognition of plants that grow evenly in various regions, and (3) usefulness as sources of food, medicine, and cosmetics, as well as raw materials for equipment and living supplies. The adoption of plant lexicons in proverbs serves as a form of social control, conveying messages and impressions, and often softening harsh words or sarcasm to describe character or instill ideology. Settlements around Lake Toba reflect the ecology of the mountains and waters, which are closely related and influential to the community.

The attachment of the ecological environment to the semantic domain in linguistic phenomena is explained through plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs, which are often used in rites of passage, folklore, and song lyrics. This study explored and analyzed two fundamental problems: (1) identifying plant lexicons used in proverbs and (2) understanding

the cognitive processes and metaphorical conceptualization through proverbs that affirm values and norms, describe character, and internalize the ideals of the community. Although metaphorical, these proverbs reflect real-life situations in the community and are believed to have both immediate and long-term impacts. Therefore, the consistent use of ecologically relevant tropical plant metaphors in this proverb not only facilitates understanding and provides guidance and motivation but also offers cognitive benefits. In this case, cognitive metaphors relate to cognitive tools for shaping social thinking.

Metaphorical representations of plants emerge during both joyous and mournful ceremonies, including rites of passage. The entire sequence is always interspersed with proverbs, whether at the beginning, during, or even at the end, all of which appear to be reciprocal proverbs. The ritual leader, who connects the parties in the triangular kinship (*dalihan na tolu* [DnT]), initiates this intention through metaphor. In fact, all parties and audiences involved respond to each other with metaphors containing statements and affirmations of messages, norms, and meanings that need to be considered and internalized. The DnT is a patrilineal social institution that relates three social structures and relationships: *bulabula* (the wife-giving family, to be honored), *boru* (the wife-receiving family, to be persuaded), and *dongan tubu* (relatives of the same clan, to be respected) (Siahaan 1982; Damanik et al. 2023). These three structures and relations are mutual, beginning with marriage and extending throughout life, in both joy and sorrow (Levi-Strauss 2017). In many cultures, this triangle concept is expanded into a pentagon to involve larger, mutual participants, as seen in the Pakpak and Simalungun communities in North Sumatra (Damanik and Ndona 2022; Damanik 2021). All the structures and relationships reflect a deep intelligence in communication, where reciprocal proverbs are used to convey feelings, hopes, and prayers.

The use of plant metaphors in proverbs is frequently repeated in ceremonies, folktales, song lyrics, and even rites of passage. At all ceremonies and rites of passage, various structures should speak, interspersed with proverbs, to convey ideas, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. For example, during a wedding ceremony, *bulabula* uses proverbs to convey advice, instructions, mechanisms, and strategies for navigating life to the bride, as well as to the groom's family and relatives. Conversely, *boru* responds to the message with proverbs, including the *dongan sabutuha* directed at both families. The narrator or customary spokesperson (*raja parhata*), who controls the event, not only connects all the involved parties but also masters every topic of conversation, including the skill of shifting topics through proverbs. Moreover, many song lyrics and pieces of folklore are enriched with plant lexicon proverbs as metaphorical expressions, containing advice, instructions, hopes, prayers, and satire and indications of misfortune. All of these metaphors convey messages, advice, and guidance on how to think, behave, and act, which require wisdom and life skills (*marbisuk*). The ultimate goal is to achieve life's mission, which consists of wealth (*hamoraon*), procreation (*hagabeon*), and honor (*hasangapon*) (Pelly 2013).

In general, significant language skills have contributed to the high number of community members who pursue careers as lawyers, prosecutors, judges, academics, priests, human specialists, or other professions requiring public speaking skills. These individuals are accustomed to using spoken language to express ideas and knowledge, carefully selecting words, including plant lexicon preferences. Although this theme is essential as one of the prerequisites for success in the Toba community, no studies have attempted to relate plant lexicon metaphors with proverb skills to interpret the character of the community. Most available studies focus on the manual procedures for carrying out rites of passage without further explanation (Manihuruk 2022; Napitupulu and Hutauruk 2008; Sihombing 1989, 2000; Sibarani 1979; Sinaga 2011). In this study, metaphors are interpreted as figures of speech comparing two different entities to create a new, meaningful entity based on human characteristics. Furthermore, proverbs are understood as short expressions in spoken language used to convey the ideas and beliefs held by the community.

Biologically, plants are living organisms within the kingdom Plantae, including monocotyledons and dicotyledons, characterized by autotrophy, multicellularity, cellulose walls, and chlorophyll. Communal abundance in this study refers to the success of life within the internal nuclear family, while the community is an ethnic group, particularly the Toba, whose origins lie to the north of Lake Toba. This concept assumes that life success is a communal, not an individual, ascent. This collective ascent presupposes dicotyledonous plants, not monocotyledons, which are absorbed through metaphors in proverbs containing advice, teachings, norms, and meanings that are continually conveyed through ceremonies and rites of passage. This sustainable effort not only fosters awareness of tropical plants but is sometimes considered sacred by community members, in harmony with their ecological environment. Ultimately, the transmission of these plant metaphors is ingrained in each community member and serves as motivation and guidance in achieving life success. This study draws on the language repertoire, particularly proverbs, as two ecolinguistic phenomena (Kovecses 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 1980a, 1980b).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In communities around the world, the use of plant lexicon metaphors is common (Rastall 1996). As a systematic expression of human ideas, thoughts, and actions, metaphors are not merely linguistic expressions but, more importantly, universal cognitive expressions used to convey virtues, beauty, blessings, and emotions (Rui 2022). According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2025), metaphors are figures of speech that imply a comparison between two different entities, typically marked by the words “like” or “as,” confirming a qualitative leap to compare rational objects or integrate two different objects to create a new entity based on characteristics. Metaphors are topical issues that encapsulate and respond to messages and impressions, playing a role in the mind and language by drawing from the knowledge base

on physical and social experiences to understand various subjects (Deignan 2005; Gibbs 2008). Generally, metaphors are persuasive in showing ideological effectiveness that is cognitively reasonable, as well as evoking emotional responses (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a, 1980b). Metaphors can provide insight into cognitive motivation and expressive connotation, bridging traditional and cognitive semantics with pragmatic methods (Charteris-Black 2004).

Therefore, metaphors create fundamental understandings of experiences that shape perception and action unconsciously (Kovecses 2002). Plant lexicons are derived from facts and coding information about plants, psychological processes, linguistic strategies, scientific and folk taxonomy, botany, history, society, and culture (Krischke 2010). Their use as metaphors is adapted based on physical and social observations and experiences of the ecological environment to convey messages and impressions or to soften harsh words or satire with more gentle, impressive language to describe personal or communal characteristics (Adams and Goff 2020). Monocotyledonous and dicotyledonous plants are represented holistically through lexicons or by referring to parts such as seeds, roots, stems, branches, leaves, fruits, or flowers to describe strength, goodness, abundance, exemplarity, simplicity, praise, and even signs of negativity (Gallagher 2014).

Proverbs are a complex and interdisciplinary subject of investigation, particularly in ecolinguistics and cognitive semantics, as seen in this study. Ecolinguistics reflects the interaction of language with the environment, comprising all clues about the world, the index of which is conveyed through language (Gibbs 2008). Meanwhile, cognitive semantics refers to the study of the relationship between conceptual systems, structures, and human experiences as manifested through language (Evans and Green 2006). From an ecolinguistic perspective, living language, both spoken and written, represents facts about nature, society, and culture, with linguistic lexicons related to humans (Fill and Muhlhausler 2001). Proverbs are expressions in spoken language used to communicate concise ideas and beliefs based on general truths about life (Manser 2007). In various communities, differences in proverbs, including the choice of plant lexicons, reflect the core of wisdom based on sociocultural and linguistic diversity. The content and issues addressed include rhetorical structures and features, moral development, pedagogy, corporal punishment, economic justice, and even sociocultural identity (Bellis 2022). Proverbs emphasize the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom, intending to form a moral self and community based on God's character, an unending journey of life rather than simply arriving at a destination (Balentine 2018). Therefore, proverbs transcend mere pearls of wisdom, providing a concrete context for viewing the various components of discourse (Ansberry 2011).

Proverbs are universal and relevant for all ages, serving those who wish to grow personally, collegially, within the ecological environment, and even in relation to God. These four elements are interconnected resources encouraging healthy interactions, a proper understanding of conflict, an appropriate perspective on wealth, and the respect and honor of others, an important process in education within families and communities for character

formation (Bland 2015). Essentially, proverbs are not only sources of advice but also mechanisms of social control, prayer, and expectations for social life, including work, education, household, neighborhood, friendship, and broader social relations. The aim is to instill cultural nobility, local wisdom, and intergenerational guidance (McNaughton 1988). Therefore, metaphors in proverbs serve as practical principles for daily life and moral statements to express attitudes and preferences. For the Toba ethnic group, proverbs are not only a cultural heritage passed down through generations but have also become an inseparable part of rituals, transition ceremonies, folklore, and song lyrics that are continuously chanted (Saragih and Mulyadi 2020). Although considered a linguistic phenomenon, proverbs contain truths that describe societal cases and create specific effects or serve as social control for community members. In the language repertoire, proverbs describe the semantic field or domain, the speaker's conceptual field, the language system, or the reality of a particular universe through a set of lexical elements whose meanings are interconnected. However, the accuracy of the imperative meaning is often contested based on the views and social status that influence the interpretation of both the speaker and the listener (Palmer 1996).

As an important element in the thinking process integrated into language, metaphors represent a conceptualization of human experience (Siregar 2014). Metaphorical expressions are produced through cognitive processes in the realm of thought and are shown through conceptualization based on physical, social, functional, and character experiences in the source realm that correspond to the target (Nirmala 2014). Lastly, the conceptual metaphor (Kovecses 2002) and cognitive (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a, 1980b) theories referred to in this study present a way of thinking metaphorically. The cognitive role allows an individual to talk about a concept as an abstract target and another concept as a concrete source realm. Both abstract and concrete concepts correspond and are used as a comparison or analogy of the lexicon, showing the format of the metaphor. The way of thinking was used in this study to interpret the character of the community spread throughout Indonesia, including qualities such as curiosity, hard work, diligence, and perseverance, accompanying Indonesia's journey from before independence to the present. This community highly praises and idolizes education, with 18.02% of its population being graduates, the largest proportion among all communities in Indonesia (Suryanto 2025). Finally, the use of metaphor in proverbs is a cognitive exercise, a traditional verbal communication tool for understanding, interpreting, and shaping the social world and positioning oneself within society. The metaphor of the plant lexicon is thus a powerful tool for building communal motivation.

## **Method**

In accordance with the study's objective, the analysis of plant lexicon metaphors in the proverbs of the Toba community was conducted qualitatively (Creswell 2014) using a linguistic field method from native speakers to explore, interpret, and understand the

community (Vaux and Cooper 2005; Bower 2008). Furthermore, data on proverbs using plant lexicon metaphors were collected through a literature review of procedure manuals referenced in rites of passage, song lyrics, or folklore. Some of the sources were available on the internet and YouTube, facilitating tracking, while others were collected from various libraries. Based on these references, a study and recording of proverbs using plant lexicon metaphors were carried out.

This study identified 102 proverbs, consisting of fifty-five standard proverbs, forty-one emphasized in song lyrics, and six in folk tales. The fifty-five proverbs were obtained through a careful reading of the seven most common procedural books on traditional ceremonies: (1) *Panduan acara adat Batak Toba sejak lahir sampai meninggal dunia* (Guide to Toba Batak traditional ceremony from birth to death) (Manihuruk 2022), (2) *Pedoman praktis upacara adat Batak* (Practical guidelines for Batak traditional ceremonies) (Napitupulu and Hutaeruk 2008), (3) *Jambar bata: Dongan tu ulaon adat* (In words: Customary procedures) (Sihombing 1989), (4) *Filsafat Batak tentang kebiasaan-kebiasaan adat istiadat* (Batak philosophy among customs and traditions) (Sihombing 2000), (5) *Umpasa, umpama, dan ungkapan dalam bahasa Batak Toba* (Proverbs, similes, and expressions in the Toba Batak language) (Sinaga 2011), (6) *Adat Dalihan na Tolu: Prinsip dan pelaksanaannya* (Triangular custom: Principles and implementation) (Siahaan 1982), and (7) *Umpama Batak dohot lapatanna* (Batak proverbs and their meanings) (Sibarani 1979).

Additionally, we found 108 song titles that emphasize educational enthusiasm by incorporating metaphors from the plant lexicon. The lyrics to these songs are easily found on YouTube and the internet through various keywords: *podah* (advice), *baringin* (banyan), *pinasa* (jackfruit), *hariara* (cypress), *jabi-jabi* (*Koompassia excelsa*), *gaol* (banana), *subat* (taro), *eme* (rice), and others. In general, the songs have a melancholic rhythm filled with advice, for example, “*Anakku naburju*” (my dearest child), “*napuran sakkababa*” (eat betel once), “*jujung goarhi amang*” (carry my name, my child), “*Sijujung baringin*” (carry the banyan tree), “*Sai anju ma au*” (Persuade me), “*Borhat mada Inang*” (Go my daughter), “*Marparbuei do lojam*” (Your energy is successful), “*Alani tangiang*” (Blessings from prayer), “*Gabema ho boru*” (Make success for my daughter), “*Napuran sakkababa*” (betel for one meal), and others. All proverbs using plant metaphors were recorded in a logbook and classified according to dicotyledons and monocotyledons.

Interviews were conducted with several expert sources, particularly the customary spokesperson (*raja parhata*), linguistic lecturers who were purposively selected, and as many community members as possible who were chosen randomly. Fortunately, throughout the study conducted in 2024, two funerals and seven marriage ceremonies took place. The events provided an opportunity to listen to and record all plant lexicon metaphors used by the customary spokesperson and all the structures and relations involved. Observations were made to directly examine the ecological environment, especially the plants mentioned in the proverbs. In addition to the above mechanisms, data collection was also conducted through

a one-day focus group discussion (FGD) on May 12, 2024, at a hotel in Samosir. The FGD involved forty-one participants, including eleven traditional spokespersons (*raja parhata*), seven cultural figures, five local songwriters, six lecturers, four teachers, and eight representatives from clan associations (*punguan marga*), who were given the opportunity to speak for ten minutes. In addition to serving as a source of research data, the FGD also served as a source of data confirmation and clarification through interviews, observations, and book reviews. All key points from the discussion were recorded by a research assistant.

All plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs were studied and grouped by recording and selecting according to characteristics: (1) dicotyledonous or monocotyledonous plants; (2) the use of plant parts in proverbs, such as seeds, roots, stems, branches, leaves, fruits, or flowers; (3) the orientation of meaning, whether strength, weakness, commendable qualities, signs of fortune, simple living, or negative omens; and (4) the orientation of values, norms, principles, and morality. All plant lexicons were presented in the local languages and Indonesian, as well as, where possible, in the scientific language of the kingdom Plantae. All data were transcribed verbatim manually. The analysis process was carried out according to Mahsun (2005) and was performed in narrative text, interpreted based on six steps: (1) lexical choice of plants in proverbs, (2) the basis for selecting plant lexicons, (3) persuasive devices used, (4) grammatical accuracy in proverbs, (5) sentence structure in proverbs, and (6) the use of active or passive constructions in proverbs (Siregar 2014; Sudaryanto 2008). The final step in the process was compiling conclusions, theoretical and practical recommendations, and acknowledging the limitations of the study. In this study, all informants were fully informed about the aims and objectives through the study guidelines and outline, as well as consent for data publication. Mitigation was achieved through the use of pseudonyms. Although plants were used as research subjects, no laboratory testing was performed, and no plants were cut or removed.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Based on analysis, the first reference that recorded the Toba community, currently known, came from the book of William Marsden, first published in 1783. Although inconsistent, Marsden (1986) recorded several populations: “*Mandeling*” (Mandailing), “*Ankola*” (Angkola), “*Pappak Deira*” (Pakpak Dairi), and “*Tubba*” or “*Tubbak*” (Toba), who settled on the west coast of Sumatra. This source differed from Junghuhn (1847), who only recorded “*Batta*” (Batak) without noting population diversity. In the mid-nineteenth century, Anderson (1971), on his journey in 1823, recorded population diversity such as “*Caraw*” or “*Carraw-Caraw*” (Karo), “*Semilongan*” or “*Semalongan*” (Simalungun), “*Mandeling*” (Mandailing), “*Ankola*” (Angkola), and “*Tubba*” (Toba). The tendency during the work of the German Rhine Missionary Association (RMG) since 1861 and Dutch colonialism since 1907 was to homogenize the

population, referred to as “*Batak*” in the interior and “*Malay*” on the coast (Perret 2010), two concepts whose origins are still debated today, including the ethnicity depicted.

Several authors, like Marsden, Junghuhn, and Anderson, did not encounter Lake Toba despite living there for quite a long time. The recording of the largest tectonovolcanic lake in the world atlas (Globe) was made possible by Van der Tuuk (1971), the first European to see Lake Toba and the first reviewer of the Toba language grammar in 1849. As a note, the lake’s formation occurred from three eruptions that formed a caldera (Chesner et al. 1991). In 1925, a language map of the population around the lake appeared (Collet 1925), which was not much different from the ethnolinguistic homeland (Reid 2009). The only difference was that the “*Batak*” region had shifted, initially located on the east coast of Aceh in 1515 and the west coast of North Sumatra in 1550, and finally concentrated around Lake Toba in 1925. Figure 1 shows the recent “*Batak*” region in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

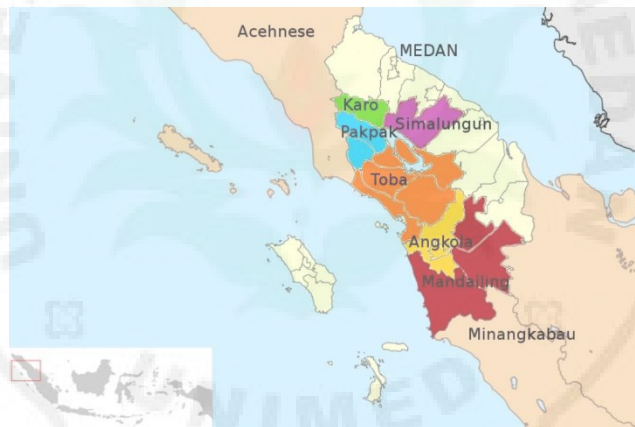


Figure 1: The Recent “*Batak*” Region in North Sumatra, Indonesia

Source: Research documentation, 2025

Language diversity reflects population differences recognized by many anthropologists (Naroll et al. 1964), including around Lake Toba, which has long been debated (Smith-Kipp and Kipp 1983; Damanik 2017, 2022; Hidayat and Damanik 2018). More specifically, the Toba community has long been in contact with the outside world, as seen in the script (*surat Batak*), a group of *Brahmi* scripts from India (Kozok 2009), which gave rise to the *Nagari* and *Palawa* scripts used in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia (De-Casparis 1975). The script reflects abugida, a combination of syllabic and alphabetic writing, and it is phonetic, where each sound of the language is symbolized accurately. The script and language represent consonants, while vowels are attached to the script as diacritics (Kozok 2009). The main settlements (*bona pasogit*) of the Toba community currently comprise four regencies located north of Lake Toba. Although the area has a tropical climate, characteristic of the equator, it is barren, temporarily has little economic value, and is one of the reasons for the diaspora (*marserak*).

Besides the lake waters, this area is part of the steep, sandy, and rocky Bukit Barisan mountains, with only a few flat areas. The plant life is primarily savanna, with species like *Imperata cylindrica* and *Themeda gigantea*. The most well-known hardwoods are *Toona sureni*, *Arenga pinnata*, banyan (*Ficus benjamina*), *K. excelsa*, cypress (*Casuarinaceae*), *Parkia speciosa*, *Archidendron pauciflorum*, jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), *Artocarpus integer*, *Durio zibethinus*, mango (*Mangifera*), frankincense (*benzoin*), and pine (*Pinus merkusii*), which was imported from Europe and planted in 1925 to green the lake (Damanik 2018). Other plants include bamboo (*Bambusoideae*), rattan (*Calamus*), fern (*Tracheophyta*), *Coix lacryma-jobi*, and *Morinda citrifolia*. Flat and sloping areas are used for settlements or agriculture with various commodities such as rice (*Oryza sativa*), coffee (*Coffea*), taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), papaya (*Carica papaya*), chayote (*Sechium edule*), pumpkin (*Cucurbita*), banana (*Musa paradisiaca*), jicama (*Pachyrhizus erosus*), and others.

The most well-known spices are chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), torch ginger (*Etlingera elatior*), shallots (*Allium cepa*), red chili (*Capsicum annum*), andaliman (*Zanthoxylum acanthopodium*), lime (*Citrus aurantiifolia*), candlenut (*Aleurites moluccanus*), and coconut (*Cocos nucifera*). Moreover, betel (*Piper betle*) is widely known and highly consumed by women. The ecology of waters and mountains provides a variety of plants widely absorbed as metaphorical expressions in proverbs. This study found 102 proverbs, consisting of fifty-five standard proverbs repeated in ceremonies and rites of passage, especially in marriage and funerals, while forty-seven others were affirmed in song lyrics and folklore. Table 1 presents examples of the affirmation of plant lexicons in proverbs used in implementing rites of passage.

Table 1: Plant Lexicons in the Most Common Proverbs in Rites of Passage

Proverbs	General Understanding	Plant Lexicons
<i>Martantan songon Baringin, marurat songon Jabijabi.</i>	Grow like the banyan and root like the <i>Koompassia excelsa</i>	<i>Ficus benjamina</i> ; <i>K. excelsa</i>
<i>Songon Eme sitabbatua parlingoman ni siboro.</i>	God who guides and blesses along	<i>Oryza sativa</i>
<i>Songon tubuan laklak, tubuan Sikkoru.</i>	Blessed with sons and daughters, friends through old age	<i>Coix lacryma-jobi</i>
<i>Jolo tiniktik Sanggar babenon huru-huruan.</i>	Know your lineage to understand kinship ties	<i>Themeda gigantea</i>
<i>Songon Pinasa ni siantar si godang rambu.</i>	Speaking little, but leaving a lasting impression	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>
<i>Marsitukkol-tukkolan songon Subat di robean.</i>	Like taro that support one another	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>
<i>Marsiamin-aminan songon lampak ni Gaol.</i>	Like banana leaves that greet each other	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>

<i>Hotanghotang sodohon Ansimun sibolaon.</i>	Not all information is meant to be shared	<i>Calamus; Sechium edule</i>
<i>Sinuan Buluh di parbantoan.</i>	Fulfill your duties without delay	<i>Bambusoideae</i>
<i>Napuran tano-tano rangging marsiranggonan.</i>	Though far apart, always close in heart	<i>Piper betle</i>
<i>Bagot namadungdung tu pilo-pilo namarajar.</i>	Rejoice always and do not dwell in sorrow	<i>Arenga pinnata</i>
<i>Ijuk di parapara Hotang di parlbian.</i>	The wise speak firmly, the foolish lack knowledge	<i>Calamus</i>
<i>Harambir naung masak madekdek tu bonana.</i>	Like a coconut falling from a tree	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
<i>Niduda Bangkudu sadasada tapongan.</i>	Like debts that double when left unpaid	<i>Pachyrhizus erosus</i>
<i>Hariara madungdung, madungdung tu bonana.</i>	Like a lush cypress tree protecting its roots	<i>Casuarinaceae</i>
<i>Songon mapultak Gambiri</i>	Like a cracked candlenut	<i>Aleurites moluccana</i>
<i>Songon mangallang andaliman</i>	Like consuming <i>Zanthoxylum acanthopodium</i>	<i>Z. acanthopodium</i>

Metaphorical affirmations not only use the specific plant lexicons in Table 1 but also their parts: (1) roots (*urat*) in “like hanging on rotten roots” (*maraugraung di urat burbur*), which means fragile foundations; (2) seeds (*lata*) in “seeds that grow in the field are controlled by their owners” (*lata natubu di porlak, parpollak do nampunasa*), which means self-understanding; (3) branches (*dakka*) in “big trees, also with big branches” (*balga hau balga dakka*), which means life development; (4) thorns (*suga*) in “like flesh pierced by thorns” (*tudos suga bagas sibuk*), which means feelings of confusion; (5) leaves (*bulung*) in “growing like torch ginger leaves” (*jojor bona songon bulung ni siala*), which means steadfastness of principle; (6) flowers (*mutik*) in “like wilted flowers” (*songon sigalagala namar-mutik nasoratan dibonana*), which means success in life; and (7) fruit (*boras*) in “like recognizing fruit from its tree” (*ale boras ditanda bonana*), which means usefulness.

The most frequently absorbed plant lexicon variations as introduction (the first couplet) or content consist of rice (*eme*) with seven mentions, banyan (*baringin*) with twenty-seven mentions, *K. excelsa* (*jabijabi*) with twelve mentions, cypress (*hariara*) with twenty-one mentions, banana (*gaol*) with six mentions, *Manihot utilisima* (*gadong*) with nine mentions, *C. lacryma-jobi* (*sikkoru*) with five mentions, jackfruit (*pinasa*) with ten mentions, and betel (*napuran*) with fourteen mentions. Based on this information, banyan, cypress, *K. excelsa*, betel, taro, and jackfruit are the plant lexicons most widely absorbed in proverbs. A total of 102 proverbs use plant lexicon metaphors, consisting of fifty-seven dicotyledons and forty-

five monocotyledons. The eight most commonly used dicotyledon lexicons are banyan (twenty-seven), cypress (twenty-one), *K. excelsa* (fourteen), betel (twelve), jackfruit (ten), *M. utilisissima* (nine), *Aleurites moluccana* (nine), and *Z. acanthopodium* (five). Conversely, the eight most commonly used monocotyledon lexicons include rice (eleven), banana (eight), taro (seven), *C. lacryma-jobi* (seven), *A. pinnata* (seven), bamboo (six), *Calamus* (six), and *C. nucifera* (four). As a note, the numbers in brackets show the quantity of variation in their use in proverbs. Table 2 shows the lexicon of dicotyledonous and monocotyledonous plants that are most frequently used as metaphors in proverbs.

Table 2: Lexicon Metaphors of Dicotyledonous and Monocotyledonous Plants Most Frequently Used in Proverbs

<i>Dicotyledonous</i>	<i>Number of Mentions</i>	<i>Monocotyledonous</i>	<i>Number of Mentions</i>
Banyan ( <i>Baringin</i> )	27	Rice ( <i>Eme</i> )	11
Cypress ( <i>Hariara</i> )	21	Banana ( <i>Gaol</i> )	8
<i>Koompassia excelsa</i> ( <i>Jabijabi</i> )	14	Taro ( <i>Suhat</i> )	7
Betel ( <i>Napuran</i> )	12	<i>Coix lacryma-jobi</i> ( <i>Sikkoru</i> )	7
Jackfruit ( <i>Pinasa</i> )	10	<i>Arenga pinnata</i> ( <i>Bagod</i> )	7
<i>Manibot utilisissima</i> ( <i>Gadong</i> )	9	Bamboo ( <i>Buluh</i> )	6
<i>Aleurites moluccana</i> ( <i>Gambiri</i> )	9	<i>Calamus</i> ( <i>Hotang</i> )	6
<i>Zanthoxylum acanthopodium</i> ( <i>Andaliman</i> )	5	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> ( <i>Harambir</i> )	4

Based on this information, proverbs tend to use more metaphors from dicotyledon lexicons than from monocotyledons. Dicotyledon lexicons, especially banyan, *K. excelsa*, cypress, jackfruit, *M. utilisissima*, *A. moluccana*, and *Z. acanthopodium*, are affirmed to convey advice, hopes, and expectations, whether personal, generational, familial, or societal. Betel is considered a climbing plant with lush leaves that contain chlorophyll and are consumed by women, symbolizing fertility for procreation. Jackfruit is a widely known, large-fruited, fragrant plant that is a source of daily fruit and vegetables, especially young jackfruit (*gori*). In fact, this plant is considered the name of the village of origin or hometown (*bonani pinasa*). Furthermore, *M. utilisissima* is a staple food source, grown almost everywhere in community farmlands, where its leaves are used as a vegetable and its tubers are used as food (*manggadong*). *A. moluccana*, or candlenut, is a tall and large plant that is widely known by the community and produces fruit for oil and curry spices (*arsik*) for carp and tilapia, two types of fish that are found in abundance in Lake Toba. *Z. acanthopodium* is a thorny plant with small fruit that is widely known by the public because of its distinctive taste, like chili or pepper, which is widely used for carp or tilapia curry. Apart from jackfruit and candlenut, four other plants—the banyan, cypress, and *K. excelsa*—have strong roots to describe stance,

large and tall stems to describe success in life, long and sturdy branches to describe social cohesion, and lush leaves to provide protection (*pangusandean*). The six dicotyledon lexicons represent three social philosophies as well as cultural missions, namely wealth (*hamoraon*), procreation (*hagabeon*), and honor (*hasangapon*). Figure 2 shows the banyan, the cypress, the *K. excelsa*, and the jackfruit, four metaphors of the plant lexicon in Toba proverbs.



Figure 2: The Banyan, the Cypress, the *Koompassia excelsa*, and the Jackfruit: The Four Most Widely Absorbed Plant Lexicon Metaphors in Proverbs

Source: Research documentation, 2025

Dicotyledonous plants show growth that begins from a small seed, later blooms with two leaf petals protecting the stem, spreads with strong roots, grows larger with long branches, and flourishes with lush leaves (Silalahi et al. 2019a). Dicotyledon lexicons, based on physical and social experiences, are adopted in proverbs, reflecting that all descendants grow from simplicity, later expand, develop, rise, and become strong, where those below are protected. A person considered successful—achieving abundance, procreation, and dignity—not only enjoys these blessings personally but also benefits all family members and relatives. The Toba community believes that success is not a personal effort but rather the support of all relatives, both material and immaterial. Family or relatives are the cambium that lubricates individuals to grow rapidly. Individuals are expected to help and assist all family members and relatives. Moreover, the people are not individualistic, ambiguous, or asocial, unlike monocotyledons, which have seeds, leaves, single cotyledons, fibrous roots, and no branches (Silalahi et al. 2019b).

The eight monocotyledonous plants most frequently used in proverbial metaphors are rice, banana, taro, and *C. lacryma-jobi*. All four have fibrous, relatively short roots and are considered fragile. These plants are widely known and frequently used in proverbs, as they are considered the most common sources of food and fruit. Rice is the primary food source, included in ceremonies and rites of passage, while bananas are a dessert. As a staple food, rice is a divine blessing bestowed by the Goddess of Rice (*Dewi Sri*) and is the only crop that requires ceremonies during planting and harvesting, involving many workers. After the harvest, the rice harvest ceremony (*gotilon*) is held on the full moon (*tula*) as an expression of gratitude to God. This ceremony is common among many ethnic groups, such as the *Pariama*

in Simalungun, the *Guro-guro Aron* in Karo, and the *Pahiyas* in the Philippines (Damanik 2016a, 2016b). Not only are these ceremonies and rites of passage, but they also involve dispute resolution, preceded by a communal meal featuring rice (Damanik 2022; Damanik and Ndona 2022).

Although it is among the monocotyledonous plants used in proverbs, rice is considered vital and serves as a starting point for discussion and deliberation. Taro is a substitute for rice, usually boiled or roasted, both in the kitchen and in the fields. Bananas are multifunctional plants whose leaves are used as plates, traditional food coverings, wrappings, or even as rain shields. The fruit is a food source, and the young stem core is often used as a meat mixture. Despite their short, fibrous roots, these four plants are included in proverbial metaphors because of their vitality and positive function. Meanwhile, four other monocotyledonous plants—*A. pinnata*, bamboo, *Calamus*, and *C. nucifera*—are also included in proverbial metaphors. These four plants have fibrous roots and are considered disproportionate to their height, lacking the strength to support the plant. Therefore, although these four plants are often included in proverbs, they generally carry pejorative or negative connotations.

Conceptualization reflects the cognitive process of producing metaphorical expressions based on plant lexicons in 102 proverbs, consisting of forty-eight based on physical experience, thirty-seven based on social experience, and fifteen based on function. Proverbs based on physical experience represent direct interactions between plants and humans, including spices, food, being pierced or hit, or raw materials that reflect assumptions of self-understanding, simplicity, problems, and success, for example, “like consuming *Zanthoxylum acanthopodium*” (*songon mangallang andaliman*), which is obtained from the mouth. *Z. acanthopodium* is a local plant around Lake Toba with many flavors, namely, sour, spicy, mint, and bitter numb, a negative conceptualization showing indecisiveness of stance. Conversely, metaphorical expressions of social phenomena are based on plants with social experience, mostly oriented toward failure, conflicts, contradictions, and cases, but also reflecting strategies for achieving success. For example, “his words are like cracking candlenuts” (*songon mapultak gambiri*), which is derived from the sense of sight to express inconsistency between actions and words. Like a hard-skinned candlenut that requires another tool to crack the skin and extract its juice, this metaphor symbolizes the difficulty in reconciling words with actions.

Another metaphor shows the cognitive process and conceptualization of strength, weakness, popularity, success, and even failure, both personally and collectively. For example, “growing like *F. benjamina* and rooting like *K. excelsa*” (*martantan songon baringin, marurat songon jabijabi*), which is based on the sense of sight to symbolize integrity, idealism, and loyalty for all the brilliant achievements of life. Banyan and *K. excelsa* are two dicotyledonous plants with strong roots, large and tall trunks, long branches, and lush leaves. Both are not only places for birds to perch or honeybees to hang but also contain water that provides moisture for all protected below. Despite receiving an abundance of life, wealth and career, integrity, and loyalty are maintained with parents and the village, including a commitment

to support family members and relatives. Furthermore, the cognitive process and conceptualization of functions assume ideals, hopes, and even prayers, showing expectations in life, work, position, and school, for example, “like palm fiber on a loft and rattan on a roll of thread” (*ijuk di parapara hotang di parlabian*), where wise people become role models and fools are ignored, based on social experience.

During ceremonies and rites of passage, structure and relationships initiate a conversation and convey the main point, including closing the conversation, often interspersed with proverbs. During the ceremonies and rites, the prevailing situation is that participants respond to each other, whether conveying ideas, expressing feelings, or explaining situations. The implementation of ceremonies and rites, often complicated, complex, and lengthy, involves many participants, such as conjugal and extended families, making the use of proverbs customary for conveying the contents of the heart or emotions. Proverbs with plant lexicon metaphors are used to strengthen messages and impressions, as well as exemplify the magical effects of obedience and violation. For example, “each other reflects like banana leaves, each other supports like taro” (*marsiaminaminan songon lampakni gaol, marsitukkoltukkolan songon suhat di robean*) is a proverb most often spoken during the formation of a new nuclear family, the continuation of education, the building of friendships, or the development of careers. The magical power of plant lexicons is also embedded in folklore, such as the story of a mother who died and transformed into a fish, with *A. schoenoprasum* (*bawang Batak*) growing above the navel, one of the spices in curry (*arsik*), particularly with carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), and tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*), the three most common fish species in Lake Toba.

Dicotyledon lexicons relate to social philosophy and cultural missions, representing three personal, collegial, or communal ideologies that signify patterns of life success, namely wealth, procreation, and honor. These three elements represent the targets and aims of life, both throughout life and at its different stages, and are continuously echoed in all opportunities. The metaphorical use of plant lexicons in proverbs is not merely a linguistic tool but a medium for internalizing personal and collegial values, norms, and ideologies. Their conceptualization arises through a cognitive process that is often rooted in physical, social, and functional experiences. A series of cognitive processes, through empirical signs of strength and weakness, commendable attitudes, simplicity, and even badness, lead to conceptualizations absorbed in metaphorical expressions.

Based on analysis, proverbs that use plant lexicons are always directed toward integrity, loyalty, and communal commitment, echoed not only through ceremonies, rites of passage, and folklore but also repeatedly through song lyrics. As of December 2024, 108 song titles have been found that emphasize educational enthusiasm by incorporating plant lexicon metaphors, carrying messages and impressions aimed at attaining a certain status. The most popular ballads (*andung-andung*) are accompanied by flutes (*saruling*) and lutes (*hasapi*), two typical musical instruments that convey hope intertwined with heartbreaking cries. In the

lyrics of the song titled “*Poda*” (advice) by Tagor Tampubolon and “*Anak Buha Baju*” (eldest son) by Jonar Situmorang, the lexicon of *F. benjamina* is used to symbolize the eldest son’s role in elevating the dignity of the parents while helping the younger siblings. The same lexicon is found in the lyrics of the song titled “*Anak Naburju*” (Dearest Child) by Soaloon Simatupang, which uses banana leaves to symbolize mutual support and taro fruit to represent solidarity. The lyrics of the song titled “*Paima suda gogoki*” (Before death comes) by Iran Ambarita absorb the lexicon of cassava (*M. esculenta*), the most common vegetable plant, to emphasize sadness: “Be diligent in school, even though I only eat boiled cassava leaves with salt, my prayers are always with you, and your dreams will be achieved in the future.”

Compared to Lakoff and Johnson (1980a, 1980b), the affirmation of plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs is part of the cognitive process based on semantic fields that underlie thinking and action, serving as a tool to understand abstract concepts through physical and social experiences. The conceptualization process outlined in this study includes five basic points: (1) fundamental mechanisms of thinking; (2) the influence on thinking, understanding, and behavior; (3) general thought patterns that guide the understanding of a conceptual idea in the context of other ideas; (4) metaphorical expressions based on underlying concepts; and (5) understanding that these points are not merely linguistic expressions but part of a conceptual system. This thinking corresponds with Kovecses (2002), where plant lexicons are metaphorical expressions used to evaluate and connect complex ideas with familiar situations, making abstract concepts easier to understand through three basic points: (1) conceptual belief in a cultural community, (2) a systematic connection between domain and target structures, and (3) the availability of a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target.

Essentially, this study identifies cognitive metaphors associated with cognitive tools for shaping social thought, summarized in the concept of “collegial success.” This interpretation of “collegial success” stems from and focuses on the communal rather than individualistic attitude assumed by dicotyledonous plants compared to monocotyledonous plants. Although the metaphor tends to be dicotyledonous, monocotyledonous plants, including parasitic or invasive plants, cannot be ignored, as they presuppose an attitude of rejection or individual egoism. These phenomena and inconsistencies indicate the existence of unstable attitudes among some members of the community. Indeed, the conceptual contradiction of the binary distinction between dicotyledonous and monocotyledonous plants is another consideration in achieving modern success. The metaphor for rice, banana, taro, and *C. lacryma-jobi*, for example, is communalism or collaboration through shared eating during the planting and harvesting seasons, including ceremonies and rites of passage. Furthermore, while tall plants such as *A. pinnata*, bamboo, *Calamus*, and *C. nucifera* are said to bring wealth, procreation, and honor, fibrous roots are fundamental to avoiding these. Even if one tries to be selfish for one’s own success, when the time comes, they will return to the nuclear, conjugal, and extended family, including the clan association, where they will be accepted. This means that extensive knowledge, wisdom, and personal skills are necessary for achieving success, but

material, moral, and intellectual support from all family members is also crucial. In other words, above all personal ambitions or ideals, community support is crucial to achieving them, especially for families bound by the structure and function of triangular kinship. This communalism is reflected in the ability to analyze and refer to one's ancestors, who now number 20 to 22 generations.

The use of plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs is based on norms, values, principles, nobility, and morality. Metaphorical meanings describe similarities in character and cognitive processes that produce expressions by conceptualizing physical, social, and functional experiences for the community. Metaphorical expression is a process of cross-mapping ecolinguistic parameters with the proximity of biological characteristics to the ecological environment, recorded verbally and patterned in the order of social praxis dimensions. All proverbs are believed to have immediate or long-term effects manifested in success or failure, illness, and even death. According to this study, despite being part of the language repertoire, proverbs with plant lexicon metaphors serve as analogies or comparisons to facilitate the internalization of values, norms, and ideals, guiding collegial success. The persistent use of the dicotyledon metaphor in ceremonies, rites of passage, and folk songs is a concrete step in reinforcing the role of communalism in achieving success. The claimed link between traditional metaphors and "collegial success" applies not only to prominent and well-known Batak lawyers but also to all professions, including civil servants, the military, the police, health care, scientists, and even corporations. Indeed, this pattern ultimately resembles nepotism, but it is largely ignored by the selection-based recruitment processes now commonly used by every government agency, social institution, nongovernmental organization, and corporation.

The purpose of this article is to frame traditional proverbs as "active cognitive training" for modern success, rather than simply passive folklore. This study finds that the application of plant lexicon metaphors in proverbs constitutes cognitive training parallel to verbal intelligence in understanding the social world. Therefore, "collegial success" is a powerful tool for analyzing the social structure of Toba society compared to other societies, including Western ones. Its application pattern lies in the structural and functional relationship of triangular kinship, which is continuously maintained as a forum for cooperation, both in joy and sorrow. "Collegial success," therefore, is a communal, not an individual, ascent. This finding parallels the tropical environment with its diversity of plant species compared to other environments in various parts of the world. At the same time, this finding serves as an exemplary collective frame of reference where success is not solely an individual effort but a collegial effort that requires support from all parties, especially those united in kinship or clan associations.

Proverbs, when repeatedly conveyed during ceremonial moments or songs, are an effective means of acculturating messages and impressions. Over time, proverbs are not merely a magical form of social control but also help shape positive ideas, attitudes, and behaviors, creating a habitus that fosters a generation with integrity, commitment, and high loyalty in school, work,

and innovation. Typically, the enthusiasm and enculturation of education since colonialism have resulted in 18.02% of the community becoming the largest population of graduates in Indonesia (Suryanto 2025). Finally, metaphorical expressions based on the right plant lexicons, conveyed repeatedly during moments or songs, are often considered to have magical powers that motivate individuals to focus on achieving objectives and the abundance of life, not felt solely but also shared by the group. Examples include reflecting like banana leaves, supporting each other like taro fruit, having strong roots like *K. excelsa*, being sensitive and fragrant like *A. heterophyllus*, living colorfully like *P. betle*, and nurturing like *F. benjamina*. In addition to focusing on metaphors, this study emphasizes the importance of environmental conservation, where existing plants facilitate understanding for future generations. Sometimes these plants have been lost, necessitating re-conservation, including reforestation. As “active cognitive training” parallel to verbal intelligence, this study recommends the need for integration into local curricula at the elementary and secondary school levels. Therefore, all metaphorical plants, both dicotyledons and monocotyledons, need to be documented in expository works containing descriptions and images. This effort is a concrete step, not only to preserve traditional metaphors passively but also actively and pragmatically in the ecological environment. The implementation of the metaphor of the plant lexicon in proverbs served as analogies and comparisons carried out through a cross-mapping process of ecolinguistic parameters, relating the proximity of biological characteristics to ecology, recorded verbally and patterned in the practical dimension of order. Plant lexicons in proverbs were metaphorical expressions used to internalize values, norms, and ideals, having magical power over all consequences of life. In conclusion, traditional proverbs are active cognitive training aligned with verbal intelligence for achieving modern success and not merely passive folklore. The findings of this study indicate a communal ascent that presupposes the metaphor of the lexicon of dicotyledonous plants rather than an individual that presupposes monocotyledonous plants.

Dicotyledonous lexicon proverbs were not only based on advice and social control but, most importantly, were primary tools and mechanisms for internalizing collegial expectations. The cognitive process and positive conceptualization of dicotyledonous lexicons produce metaphorical expressions, conveyed repeatedly through rites of passage, ceremonies, folklore, and memorable song lyrics, embodying admirable strength, exemplary goodness, and integrity. Therefore, the affirmation of dicotyledonous lexicons in proverbs represents a moral vision based on moral statements and practical principles of daily life, used to express attitudes and preferences. Since this study only explored plant lexicon metaphors, and for maximum results, further investigations should be conducted on animal lexicons in proverbs, including analyses of the psychological aspects of character formation, both individually and in groups. As an “active cognitive training” that parallels verbal intelligence, this study recommends the need for integration into local curricula at the elementary and secondary school levels, where all metaphorical plants, both dicotyledons and monocotyledons, are documented in expository works containing descriptions and colored

images. The use of plant metaphors in proverbs is an effort to preserve a sustainable environment, not only considering the community's territory bordering Lake Toba, but also the location where the plants are found. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of environmental conservation to facilitate understanding for future generations.

## **Acknowledgment**

The authors are grateful to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) and the principal of Universitas Negeri Medan for all the invaluable assistance and support during the completion of this study. The authors are also grateful to the study resource persons, colleagues, and all parties who cannot be mentioned for their encouragement and assistance.

## **AI Acknowledgment**

The authors declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were not used in any way to prepare, write, or complete this manuscript. The authors confirm that they are the sole authors of this article and take full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

## **Informed Consent**

This study was conducted with the informed consent of all participants.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## **REFERENCES**

- Adams, Samuel L., and Matthew Goff. 2020. *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Anderson, John. 1971. *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra in 1823*. Oxford University Press.
- Ansberry, Christopher B. 2011. *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*. Walter de Gruyter.
- Aritonang, Jan S. 1988. *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak: Suatu Telaah Historis Teologis atas Perjumpaan Orang Batak dengan Zending (Khususnya RMG) di Bidang Pendidikan, 1861–1940* [The History of Christian Education in Batak Land: A Historical Theological Study of the Encounter of the Batak People with Zending (Especially RMG) in the Field of Education, 1861–1940]. Gunung Mulia.
- Balentine, Samuel E. 2018. *Wisdom Literature*. Abingdon.

- Bellis, Aalice O. 2022. "Proverbs in Recent Research." *Currents in Biblical Research* 20 (2): 133–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X2111067160>.
- Biro Pusat Statistik. 2025. *Profil Suku dan Keragaman Bahasa Daerah Long Form Sensus Penduduk 2020* [Ethnic Profile and Regional Language Diversity 2020 Population Census Long Form]. Biro Pusat Statistik.
- Bland, Dave L. 2015. *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*. Cascade.
- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castles, Lance. 1972. *The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency: Tapanuli, 1915–1940*. University Microfilms International.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2004. *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chesner, Craig A., William I. Rose, Alan L. Deino, Robert E. Drake, and John A. Westgate. 1991. "Eruptive History of Earth's Largest Quaternary Caldera (Toba, Indonesia) Clarified." *Geology* 19 (3): 200–203. [https://doi.org/10.1130/0091-7613\(1991\)019%3C0200:EHOESL%3E2.3.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1130/0091-7613(1991)019%3C0200:EHOESL%3E2.3.CO;2).
- Collet, Octave J. A. 1925. *Terres et Peuples de Sumatra* [Land and Society of Sumatra]. Elsevier.
- Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2016a. *Nilai Budaya: Hakikat Karya dan Orientasi Hidup Orang Simalungun* [Cultural Values: The Essence of Work and Life Orientation of the Simalungun Community]. Simetri Institute.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2016b. *Ritus Peralihan: Upacara Adat Simalungun Seputar Kelahiran, Perkawinan, Penghormatan kepada Orangtua, dan Kematian* [Rites of Passage: Traditional Simalungun Ceremonies Related to Birth, Marriage, Respect for Parents, and Death]. Simetri Institute.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2017. *Rumor Kanibal, Menolak Batak, dan Etnohistori Sumatra Bagian Utara* [Cannibal Rumors, Rejecting Batak, and the Ethnohistory of Northern Sumatra]. Simetri Institute.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2018. *Potret Simalungun Tempoe Doeloe: Menafsir Kebudayaan Lewat Foto* [Simalungun Portraits: Interpreting Culture Through Photography]. Simetri Institute.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2021. "Dispute Resolution: Pentagonal Relationships in the Simalungun Ethnic Group." *Asia-Pacific Social Sciences Review* 21(1): 211–223. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1361>.
- Damanik, Erond L. 2022. "Ahap: Keywords for Social Tolerance in the Pluralistic Environment of Pamatangsiantar City." *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 17 (2): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-008X/CGP/v17i02/1-21>.
- Damanik, Erond L., Ratih Baiduri, Rosmaida Sinaga, et al. 2023. "Hanging on a Rope: The Current Triangular to Pentagonal Kinship Transformation in Simalungunese." *Qeios*. <https://www.qeios.com/read/K6NT0E>.

- Damanik, Erond L., and Yakobus Ndona. 2022. "Alignment: Conflict Resolution Through *Sulang-Silima* Among Pakpaknese, Indonesia." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 50 (2): 96–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2021.10.002>.
- De-Casparis, Johannes Gijsbertus. 1975. *Indonesian Paleography: A History of Writing in Indonesia from the Beginnings to C. A.D. 1500*. E.J. Brill.
- Deignan, Alice. 2005. *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics*. John Benjamins.
- Duuren, Max F. 1983. *Parmalims en Parhudamdandam: Twee Profische Bewegingen bij de Bataks Rond de Eeuwwisseling* [Parmalims and Parhudamdandam: Two Professional Movements in the Bataks Around the Exchange]. PhD diss., Instituut voor Cultuur Antropologie.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. 2025. "Metaphor." January 25. <https://www.britannica.com/art/metaphor>.
- Evans, Vyvyan, and Melanie Green. 2006. *Cognitive Linguistic: An Introduction*. Routledge.
- Fill, Alwin, and Peter Muhlhausler. 2001. *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology, and Environment*. Continuum.
- Gabriel, Karl. 1921. "Die National-Bataksche Bewegung (Hatopan Kristen Batak) in Sumatra Ihrem Varhältnis zur Mission and zur Hollandischen Kolonial-Regierung" [The National Batak Movement (Hatopan Kristen Batak) on Sumatra and Its Relationship to the Mission and the Dutch Colonial Government]. *Berichte der Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft* 78: 106–131.
- Gallagher, Andrew. 2014. "Metaphors of Plants and Trees." March 23. <https://www.politicalmetaphors.com/2014/03/23/metaphors-of-plants-and-trees/>.
- Gibbs, Raymond W. 2008. *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hidayat, and Erond L. Damanik. 2018. "Batak dan bukan-Batak: Paradigma Sosiohistoris tentang Konstruksi Identitas Etnik di Kota Medan, 1906–1939" [Batak and non-Batak: Sociohistorical Paradigms of Ethnic Identity Construction in Medan City, 1906–1939]. *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha* 3 (2): 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jscl.v3i2.19624>.
- Jones, Gavin W. 1976. "Religion and Education in Indonesia." *Indonesia* 22: 19–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350976>.
- Joustra, M. 1910. *Batakspiegel* [Batak Mirror]. S. C. van Doesburgh.
- Junghuhn, Franz W. 1847. *Die Battaländer auf Sumatra* [Batak Land from Sumatra]. G. Reimer.
- Kovecses, Zoltan. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Kozok, Uli. 2009. *Surat Batak: Sejarah Perkembangan Tulisan Batak Berikut Pedoman Menulis Aksara Batak dan Cap Si Singamangaraja XII* [Batak Letters: History of the Development of Batak Writing, Including Guidelines for Writing Batak Script and the Singamangaraja XII Stamp]. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia and EFEO.
- Kozok, Uli. 2010. *Utusan Damai di Kemelut Perang: Peran Zending dalam Perang Toba* [Messengers of Peace in the Midst of War: The Role of Missionaries in the Toba War]. Obor.

- Krischke, Ulrike. 2010. *The Old English Complex Plant Names: A Linguistic Survey and A Catalogue*. Peter Lang.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980a. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980b. "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language." *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (8): 453–486. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2025464>.
- Lempp, Walter. 1976. *Benih yang Tumbuh: Suatu Survey Mengenai Gereja-gereja di Sumatera Utara* [The Seed That Grows: A Survey of Churches in North Sumatra]. Dewan Gereja Indonesia.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 2017. "The Culinary Triangle." In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan. Routledge.
- Mahsun. 2005. *Metode Penelitian Bahasa: Tahapan, Strategi, Metode, dan Tehniknya* [Language Research Methods: Stages, Strategies, Methods, and Techniques]. Grafindo.
- Manihuruk, Christianus. 2022. *Panduan Acara Adat Batak Toba Sejak Lahir Sampai Meninggal Dunia* [Guide to Toba Batak Traditional Events from Birth to Death]. Pena Persada.
- Manser, Marthin H. 2007. *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs: Meanings and Origins of More Than 1.700 Popular Saying*. Hermitage.
- Marsden, William. 1986. *The History of Sumatra*. Oxford University Press.
- McNaughton, David. 1988. *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics*. Wiley and Blackwell.
- Napitupulu, Paimin, and Edison P. T. Hutauruk. 2008. *Pedoman Praktis Upacara Adat Batak* [Practical Guidelines for Batak Traditional Ceremonies]. Papas Sinar Sinanti.
- Naroll, Raoul, Ronald M. Berndt, Frank D. Bessac, et.al. 1964. "On Ethnic Unit Classification [and Comments and Reply]." *Current Anthropology* 5 (4): 283–312. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/200501>.
- Nirmala, Deli. 2014. "Proses Kognitif dalam Ungkapan Metaforis" [Cognitive Processes in Metaphorical Expressions]. *Parole: Journal of Linguistic and Education* 4 (1): 1–13.
- Gary B. 1996. *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*. University of Texas Press.
- Parkin, Harry. 1978. *Batak Fruit of Hindu Thought*. Christian Literature Society.
- Pedersen, Paul B. 1970. *Batak Blood and Protestant Soul: The Development of National Batak Churches in North Sumatra*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Pelly, Usman. 2013. *Urbanisasi dan Adaptasi: Peranan Misi Budaya Minangkabau dan Mandailing* [Urbanization and Adaptation: The Role of Minangkabau and Mandailing Cultural Missions]. Unimed Press.
- Perret, Daniel. 2010. *Kolonialisme dan Etnisitas: Batak dan Melayu di Sumatra Timur Laut* [Colonialism and Ethnicity: Batak and Malay in Northeast Sumatra]. KPG and EFEO.
- Rastall, Paul. 1996. "Metaphor and the Names of Plants." *English Today* 12 (2): 30–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078400008993>.
- Reid, Anthony. 2009. "Is There Batak History." In *From Distant Tale: Archaeology and Ethnohistory in the Highlands of Sumatra*, edited by D. Bonatz, J. Miksic, J. D. Neidel, and M. L. Tjoa-Bonatz. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

- Rui, Yu. 2022. "A Study of the Plant Metaphors in Book of Poetry." *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 12 (8): 811–816. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5836/2022.08.004>.
- Saragih, Elza L., and Mulyadi. 2020. "Cognitive Semantics Analysis of Animal Proverbs in Toba Language." *Retorika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya* 3 (2): 217–224. <https://doi.org/10.26858/retorika.v13i2.12008>.
- Schreiner, Lothar. 1994. *Adat dan Injil: Perjumpaan Adat dengan Iman Kristen di Tanah Batak* [Custom and Gospel: The Encounter of Custom and Christian Faith in Batak Land]. Gunung Mulia.
- Siahaan, Nalom. 1982. *Adat Dalihan na Tolu: Prinsip dan Pelaksanaannya* [Dalihan na Tolu Custom: Principles and Implementation]. Tulus Jaya.
- Sibarani, Parda. 1979. *Umpama Batak dohot Lapatanna* [Batak Proverbs and Their Meanings]. Depdikbud.
- Sihombing, Tumpal M. 1989. *Jambar Hata: Dongan tu Ulaon Adat* [In Words: Customary Procedures]. Tulus Jaya.
- Sihombing, Tumpal M. 2000. *Filsafat Batak: Tentang Kebiasaan-Kebiasaan Adat Istiadat* [Batak Philosophy: Customs and Traditions]. Balai Pustaka.
- Silalahi, Marina, Endang C. Purba, and Wendy A. Mustaqim. 2019a. *Tumbuhan Obat di Sumatra Utara: Dikotiledon* [Medicinal Plants in North Sumatra: Dicotyledons]. UKI Press.
- Silalahi, Marina, Endang C. Purba, and Wendy A. Mustaqim. 2019b. *Tumbuhan Obat Sumatra Utara: Monokotiledon* [Medicinal Plants of North Sumatra: Monocotyledons]. UKI Press.
- Sinaga, Richard. 2011. *Umpasa, Umpama, dan Ungkapan Dalam Bahasa Batak Toba* [Proverbs, Similes, and Expressions in the Toba Batak Language]. Dian Utama.
- Siregar, Bahren U. 2014. "Keajegan Konseptual dalam Metafora" [Conceptual Constancy in Metaphor]. *Linguistik Indonesia* 32 (2): 165–178. <https://doi.org/10.26499/li.v32i2.24>.
- Smith-Kipp, Rita, and Richard D. Kipp. 1983. *Beyond Samosir: Recent Studies of the Batak Peoples of Sumatra*. Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Program.
- Sudaryanto. 2008. *Metode dan Aneka Teknik Analisis Bahasa: Pengantar Penelitian Kebudayaan Secara Linguistik* [Methods and Techniques of Language Analysis: An Introduction to Linguistic Cultural Research]. Duta Wacana University Press.
- Suryanto. 2025. "Statistik BPS Terbaru: Suku Batak Puncaki Daftar Lulusan Sarjana 2024" [Latest Statistics: Batak Ethnic Group Tops List of 2024 Bachelor Graduates]. *Antara*. January 30. <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/4614634/statistik-bps-terbaru-suku-batak-puncaki-daftar-lulusan-sarjana-2024>.
- Van der Tuuk, Herman N. 1971. *A Grammar of Toba Batak*. Martinus Hijhoff.
- Vaux, Bert, and Justin Cooper. 2005. *Introduction to Linguistic Field Methods*. Lincolnm GmbH.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Abdurahman Adisahputera:** Lecturer in the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Corresponding Author's Email: abas@unimed.ac.id

**Eronddamanik:** Professor in the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Email: eronddamanik@unimed.ac.id

**Wisman Hadi:** Lecturer in the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Email: drwismanhadi@unimed.ac.id

**Suci Pujiastuti:** Lecturer in the Department of German Language, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Email: pujiastutisuci@unimed.ac.id

**Syndy C. Sinaga:** Lecturer in the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Email: sinagasyndy@gmail.com

