

## Symbolic Meaning of Debus Performance in the Belief of the Community of Sintuk, Lubuk Alung, Pariaman

### Makna Simbolik Pertunjukan Debus di dalam Kepercayaan Masyarakat Sintuk, Lubuk Alung, Pariaman

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#### Abstract

This study aims to explain the symbolic meaning of the Debus performance in the belief of Sintuk community which is still firmly held today. This study belongs to qualitative research. The data were obtained from key informants, interviews, and documents. The collection of the data was conducted through participant observation and documentation. The data analysis technique consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusions/verification making. The results of this study show that in the Debus performance, there is a performance structure which must be carried out. It contains elements of the performance, the completeness of the performance, and the behaviors of showing immunity which means rejecting misfortunes as believed by the Sintuk community.

*Keywords: symbolic meaning, Debus performance*

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan makna simbolik pertunjukan Debus dalam kepercayaan masyarakat Sintuk yang hingga saat sekarang masih dipegang teguh. Penelitian ini menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh dari informan utama, wawancara, dan dokumen-dokumen. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipan, dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan terdiri dari reduksi data, display data dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa dalam pertunjukan Debus terdapat struktur pertunjukan yang harus dilaksanakan yang di dalamnya berisi unsur pertunjukan, kelengkapan pertunjukan dan beberapa perilaku yang memperlihatkan kekebalan tubuh yang memiliki makna sebagai tolak bala sebagaimana yang dipercayai oleh masyarakat Sintuk.

**Kata kunci:** *makna simbolik, pertunjukan debus*

#### Introduction

Some traditional arts in Minangkabau, especially in Padang Pariaman District, are a cultural heritage and identity of the Pariaman community. As a cultural heritage of people in Pariaman, they maintain and use these arts until today in various cultural events in Pariaman. Arts oriented to past cultural values become monumental and is often seen as past art so art is now a cultural heritage. Some of these cultural heritages are still preserved from the aspect of use, value, function, and role. However, it is not uncommon for those who have been abandoned or even marginalized that their sustainability is endangered.

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One of the traditional arts in the Pariaman area, especially in Sintuk village, is Debus performance. Debus art includes traditional folk art which has been around for a long time and is still being preserved today in society. As a cultural product, Debus is a human complexity itself. It consists of interests, social, political, and even religious needs. Historically, the existence of Debus is inseparable from existence of Islam (Hakiki, 2017). It belongs to folk traditional art. From the process and implementation of the performance, Debus is closely related to Islam because it consists of *Tarekat* rituals which have become Islamic traditions (Feranisa et al., 2017). For the Sintuk community, Debus is shown at the closing of some events such as *Alek Nagari* event. In addition, it is performed in praying events for people who die after 100 days (for those who can afford it). Both of these activities can be said to be large-scale feasts. Many people are invited so it is feared that it will bring misfortunes. Thus, Debus performance is believed to be able to resist the misery.

Debus art belongs to the local culture and is included in the learning materials. Education and culture are included in the learning, affective, psychomotor, and cognitive aspects of learning (Muhamad Yusuf Sulaeman, 2019). Debus player performance accompanied by the sound of a tambourine is very closely related to the *Tarekat Rifai'iyah* which has a weird upbringing and considers its adherents perfect and sacred when God has blessed them with various miracles, including being immune, not being injured by sharp weapons, not being burned in a fire, etc. The practice of injuring self along with its miracles signifies that the student is truly mortal, and because of his remembrance of Allah, there is no feeling and sense anymore (Andar, 2002: 194). According to records, the history of Debus itself has something to do with the *Tarekat Rifai'iyah* which in its continuation reached Minang area and in Minang it is known as Debus (Tradisi et al., 2016). In the Islamic tradition, Debus is closely related to *tarekat*, especially the *Rifa'iyah* and *Qodiriyah*. The two tarekat have a very important influence on the play of Debus (Study & Communication, 2018).

Debus performance at Sintuk Pariaman, West Sumatra (Minangkabau) is an art performance that is still maintained until now. The Debus show is believed by the community to be able to resist the incoming misfortunes after holding the event. The continuation of Debus show in the context of rejecting misfortunes is seen in the behavior of communities. This behavior is in the form of symbols manifested in certain procedures according to their understanding, by sprinkling water (mixed with two ingredients of medicinal leaves that have been washed on the wounds of the performers after the performance) around the rice fields and around their houses.

That Debus Performance is a presentation of an art performance always has a symbolic meaning from all the elements of its presentation. As stated by Jacqueline Smith in the book *Dance Composition: A Practical Guide for Teachers* (1985: 29), the term presentation is symbols or signs on a stage. It is also explained that the symbol comes from the Greek word "Symbolos" which means a sign that gives something to someone else. According to Herusatoto (1983: 11-14), symbols are an outward form having meaning while meaning is its content. Symbolic values aim to be conveyed to the public to be understood by the community.

The Sintuk community's understanding of Debus as a rejection of misfortunes is not the same as that found by Andar (2002) a previous researcher on Debus in the Talogon and Kuraitaji Pariaman communities. It was explained that Debus was the result of certain people's learning of religious teachings (Islam) through the *Rifa'iyah*

order which had an uncommon upbringing that considered its adherents perfect and sacred when it was blessed by God with various miracles such as protecting oneself by a sharp weapon, fire, and so on. Furthermore, it was explained that Debus in the Talogon community had shifted its function. Debus is no longer tied to the educational process in dealing with God (the process of self-beliefs), but Debus tradition is more oriented as a show demonstrating immunity to various interests, ceremonies, entertainment, and traditional culture. The important thing seen in the study results is that no study leading to the meaning of Debus performance by Talogondan community. However, the results of this previous study are very useful related to Debus research in Sintuk as initial information to obtain data about the form of Debus performances that demonstrate immunity with the completeness of the performances consisting of symbols. When Debus is shown around Nagari Sintuk, it has its meaning in the beliefs of the people.

It can be seen that there is few research on Debus from various aspects especially in West Sumatra. Some research on Debus has been conducted for a very long time, but there is still not much discussion about the symbolic meaning and other aspects of Debus performances. Through research on the symbolic meaning of the Debus performance, it is expected that it can add people's insight about the Debus performance and serve as a documentation of cultural activities existing in the community's belief in a performing art that has religious values.

It can also be seen that Debus performance in Sintuk outwardly symbolizes something and contains a very deep meaning for the people. Until now, the Debus performance is still held. It is trusted by the people as a show to reject misfortunes after carrying out a big event. In other words, this Debus performance is a traditional art that has been entrenched and ingrained in the Sintuk community. Debus performances in the Sintuk community are not only to be enjoyed as a spectacle but also to be linked to the habits and life of the community due to the continuity of the life of traditional art that cannot be separated from the supporting community (Irawati, 2014).

Research on Debus from various aspects, one of which is from the aspect of meaning called symbolic meaning, is expected to provide information that people interpret Debus as a performance which has religious values based on the mystical understanding adopted by the community, in this case the Pariaman community in general who understands Islam in *Tariqat (Sattariyah)*. Thus, what exactly is the symbolic meaning of the Debus performance in Sintuk Village, Pariaman? How do people believe and interpret the performanc so that it is still maintained until today?

## **Method**

This research was conducted in Nagari Sintuk, Lubuk Alung, Pariaman, West Sumatra Province. This area was chosen because it is one of the areas in Pariaman where the community still adheres to culture and customs. One of which is Debus performance. The data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation was made to obtain primary data by directly seeing Debus performances; the interview was conducted by giving several questions based on interview guides to the main informants; while the documentation was conducted to obtain secondary data in the form of photos and videos of Debus. The data analysis

techniques used were data reduction flow, data display and conclusion drawing/verification making (Miles and Huberman in Rohidi, 1992: 16-20).

The research belongs to qualitative research with descriptive narrative analysis. The descriptive analysis approach is used to describe fundamentally the findings in the field. Qualitative research according to Bogdan & Biklen (1990) reveals that the instrument in this study is the person (human instrument) or the researcher herself. The instrument used in qualitative research aims to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the symbolic meaning in Debus performances.

This type of research was chosen because researchers can find detailed, clear research results and describe in more depth the findings of the research conducted, and the symbolic meaning of Debus performances, through descriptive qualitative research. The data were collected through observation process. The researchers directly came into the field and conducted interviews with Debus experts, khulifah, and the performers of Debus performances in Sintuk community who believe in the teachings of the *Tariqat* and enjoy the Debus performance.

The data analysis was done simultaneously with the data collection process. The activities were also carried out during and after collecting the data. The process was then followed by summarizing the data obtained and selecting which data is following the research focus. Finally, the researchers conclude so that the results of the research are as expected.

### Results and Discussion

As previously described, Debus performance held in the community in Nagari Sintuk, Lubuk Alung, Pariaman is a performance performed at the closing of some events, such as *Alek Nagari* and praying for the dead after exactly 100 days together (for people who can afford it). People who pray together are called '*urang siak*'. This event itself, which is held in groups, is commonly called '*mengaji maulid*'. At the time of the event, both *Alek Nagari* and '*mengaji maulid*' event could be said as large-scale feasts inviting many people. In the community's understanding, every event attended by many people cannot avoid the mistakes made by community members through behaviors violating customary and religious rules, especially when the events are held at night. Thus, it is feared it can bring misfortunes. Because of this fear of the coming misfortunes, Debus performance was shown at the end of the event as a closing which is intended to reject them. This is in accordance with what was said by Syahril (interviewed on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019), one of the leaders of the Sintuk community, that:

"If the event is attended by many people and is held at night, like *Alek Nagari*, there will always be problems that come from the behavior of people, especially the behavior of young people. They indeed come to watch the show, but some take advantage of the situation to do bad things. Therefore, this event was closed with the performance of Debus to avoid unwanted events due to deviant behavior, such as doing immoral activities in dark places."

Sudirman added that every time *Nagari Alek* event was held, there were unwanted incidents, such as pickpockets at the venue, and theft at the resident's house because it was left. In addition, there are members of the public who are not married and commit lewd acts in a dark place around the edge of the venue. Therefore, it is

better if after every event the crowd is closed with Debus (*badabuih*: the name of the Sintuk community) to reject misfortunes, so that this village is clean (interviewed September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019).

In this debus performance, the preparation to the time of the show should not be careless. This means that there are requirements to meet for the performance. They include the provision of potion and incense. The other pieces of equipment are attraction equipment and its supporting equipment including the performance venue. The equipment must be provided before the show. The requirement – potion – is provided by the host or the committee. It also includes the provision of wood and coconut shells which will be burned to heat the iron chain. The venue for the show as well as the provision of potion ingredients is also prepared by the host or committee. While the provision of attraction equipment, such as sharp objects (small pieces of iron with a stem), thorny wood (*rukam*) with a diameter of approximately 3 cm and a length of about one cubit, and iron chains are provided or carried by the Debus group of players.

The potion which is called *Paureh* is a mixture of various leaves consisting of four kinds of leaves: *Sitawa*, *Sidingin*, *Cikumpai*, and *Cikarau* leaves. All these leaves are cut into small pieces of approximately two centimeters. The cut leaves are put in a bucket and/or a pan and then poured a little bit of water the same size for washing hands. This *paureh* is provided not only in one bucket but also consists of several because it will be used to wash the hands of the injured Debus players (blood) when performing the attraction of sharp objects. Likewise, *Paureh* water is used to soak (cool) the iron chain that has been used for attractions by Debus players which is previously burned until it turns red. Incense is provided sometimes by the host or the event organizing committee, and sometimes it is prepared or brought by a group of Debus players. Other pieces of equipment that support the performance are wood and coconut shells which must be provided before the show. They are placed on the edge of the performance area also by the host or committee. The venue for the performance is also provided with a relatively large location, such as in the yard or in the field because the actors performing the attraction mostly form a wide formation with rather large footsteps and jumps. Likewise, a rather large location is needed for this Debus show, which requires a place to burn wood and coconut shells which are used as fuel for burning iron chains that will be used by Debus actors in attractions. The seats of the performers are in the front and covered by mats. In front of the seats of the performers, the performance equipment and requirements are placed such as pots or buckets for *Paureh*, *Dulang* (round tray) for incense, and attraction equipment.

In addition, the Debus performance is certainly inseparable from the elements contained in it - the actors. In Debus performance, there are several roles of actors including a community called *Khulifah* (head of the prayer reader for immunity), performers of attractions, and musicians who play a large tambourine (*Rapa'i*). Performers of attractions consist of several people and can be up to twelve. Based on what was observed during the performance of several attractions, it was seen that the ability of the actors to display their immunity was in stages. Following the sequence of performances where the first to demonstrate immunity is the attraction of being immune to sharp objects stabbed in the inner arm of young players. The players performing sharp objects on the arm are more than the players of other attractions. They consist of about five people. After that, the attraction of immunity to sharp

objects punctured on the ears and legs performed by two people and followed by the attraction of immunity to being hit by hard objects (spiked wood, namely *rukam*) performed by two people, as well as the attraction of immunity to being hit with hard objects (wood) by the two players while squeezing broken glass from two beer bottles. For the attraction of immunity to hot objects—a burned iron chain—which is carried on the nape of the neck, it is carried out at the end by one performer only. In terms of the sequence of performances, it can be seen that the age level of the actors, where the actors who perform the early part of the attraction—pre-adolescent age—and those who perform the later attractions are already adults. It can be assumed that their immunity ability is also graded at least in terms of the number of immune mastery. Likewise, the performer for playing music consists of six to eight players. The one who sits in the middle of the line of music players is the head of the prayer reader for immunity called '*Khulifah*'.

The structure of Debus performance from beginning to end is arranged in such a way according to certain sequences or rules. Starting from the time of the performance which is held at night after the evening prayer time is held. First, the organizing committee of the event holds or spreads mats as a seat for the performers. Then, it is proceeded with providing water equipment (bucket). This preparation may be carried out by the executive committee. When the *Paureh* ingredients have been prepared, the assistant *Khulifah* (*Nurdin*) cuts the leaves while putting them in pots or buckets arranged horizontally. After that, the committee will fill the buckets with water. At the front, which is slightly closer to where the musicians and *Khulifah* sit, is a tray filled with crushed incense. Close to the place where the incense and *paureh* is placed, pieces of equipment are arranged by *Khulifah*'s assistant and the performers such as pointed iron rods that have been given a handle, iron chains that have not been heated, *rukam* wood, and broken glass beer. The following is a complete explanation of the original study about the sequence of Debus attraction performances.



Picture 1. Debus performance preparation Filling several buckets with water for a mixture of leaves called *Paureh* which will be used to wash the wounds of performers who are believed to be antidote (pain reliever)  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11th 2019



Picture 2. Cutting lime to add to the *Paureh* mixture as a wound cleanser which is essentially to remove toxicant from sharp iron and broken glass.  
Dokumented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 3. *Khulifah* (on the right side of the picture) and her companion are preparing broken glass from beer bottles to be used for immunity attractions. With solemnity, the *Khulifah* recited a prayer while holding a broken glass, believing that the broken glass would not hurt the performers.

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 4 Performance equipment: on a tall tray is white cloth (4 cubits in length, the others are called *sakabuang*) as a symbol of purity (clean and spiritual, according to *Tarekat* studies) in offering prayers to Allah the almighty, and on a plate is incense to be burned before the show.

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 5. *Khulifah* (at the center) burns incense while blowing the fire. The smoke of incense burning spreads a smell around the performance area which for the participants (actors) it supports the solemnity in a religious atmosphere

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 6. Pray with the *Debus* participants before the show led by *Khulifah* who is believed to have a special ability to communicate supernaturally with Allah (*Tarekat* teachings) for salvation (immunity).

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 7. Respect for the teacher (*Khulifah*) before performing the essential attraction and asking for permission and consent to be protected from harm.

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 8. Immunity attraction using pointed iron to the body and limbs strongly. Even though they were injured, the performers did not seem to be in pain.

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 9. Immunity attraction by hitting the body using thorny wood.

Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019

After all the pieces of equipment are provided, the debus players enter the area and sit on the mats that have been provided. Then two men who were elders in the village as protectors and organizers of the event came to the seats of the performers in front of *Khulifah* to invite and hand over the performance of the show. After that, it is continued by burning incense by *Khulifah*. Along with the smell of incense smoke, the music for the accompaniment of Debus (a large tambourine) is played as a sign that the Debus show is about to begin. The beginning of this music is accompanied by the recitation of the verses of the Quran (sung together) which begins with the recitation of *basmallah* (bismillaahhirrahmaanirrahiim). After that, it was continued with the reading of the *al Ikhlas*, *Aa-Nas*, *al Fatihah*, and continued with the reading of the *al Baqarah* verse 1 to verse 6. After reading the short verses above, it was followed by reading the remembrance which read the sentence '*laaillah hailallah*'. The recitation of the remembrance of *Laailah Haillallah* sung together is read repeatedly accompanied by the sound of a tambourine beating with a certain motif to a level of solemnity (Andar, 2002: 194).



When the sound of the music continues, accompanied by remembrance of the song together, the Debus attraction begins with the performance of a small pointed iron that is stabbed by the performer to the hands. This stab attraction is also on the earlobe where the stabbing is done by Khulifah's assistant and or on the calf and knee skin (stabbed by the performer himself). This form of performance is performed several times by several Debus performers. There is one person who performs in one performance and there are two people who performed up to four repetitions by different people.

Then, it is continued with the attraction of hitting the body with *rukam*. Some were hitting their bodies themselves and some were beaten by other performers (Khulifah's assistant). After that, it is continued with the attraction of squeezing the broken glass and this was also performed several times by different actors. The last part was the performance of the attraction of wearing a red hot iron chain placed on the player's neck. Before the iron is carried, the iron is first burned with a big fire (wood and coconut shells) at the back of the performance venue. The burning of iron chains is not carried out by the performers of this show, but it is carried out by Khulifah's assistant who is assisted by several members of the event organizing committee. Before the performer bears a hot iron chain or while being burned, the actor in a sitting position in the middle of the performance area which is covered with a small layered mat (*lapiak lambak*) is led by Khulifah to make dhikr concentrate himself (in the Debus performance which is based on the study of the *Tarekat*, maybe this full concentration is said to be at the level of 'mortal').

From the observations, it appears that the actors of this attraction in the show have indeed experienced ecstasy or reached a mortal level because in the next stage the actors are led to stand by Khulifah and continued by laying a red hot iron chain on the neck of the performer by Khulifah's assistant by lifting the iron chain from the coals of fire that connects both hands with wood while leading to the players of this attraction. Then the performer moves the upper body while striding rather quickly in the middle of the field (performance area) according to the sound of beating to the accompaniment of tambourine music. The attraction in the middle of the performance area is carried out in a few moments (about three minutes) always guided by Khulifah's assistant who is then led to the front. After the hot iron chain is inserted into the *paureh* pan, the performer goes straight to Khulifah. Each of the performers of the Debus performance will perform an attraction, always starting with respect for the teacher (Khulifah as prayer leader) and Khulifah's assistant while shaking hands tightly holding both the palms of the teacher. After that, retreat in a squatting position one or two steps near the incense that has been sprinkled on the fire and immediately smoke the hands and body. Thus, at the end of every performance of the attractions by the actors, they always go to the front of Khulifah and pay their respects and shake hands again. After shaking hands, the performers washed the bloodied body parts from stab wounds and upper wounds by squeezing the glass with *paureh* water which was accommodated with buckets. For the show or attraction of wearing a hot iron chain, the performer does not wash the body parts because there are no lacerations, but only the clothes on the front are burned. What is washed is an iron chain that is still hot by being plunged into a pot containing *paureh*. Each performer of the attraction finishes performing the performance which ends by using *paureh*, then each returns to sit on the mat (to the original seat).

## Darmawati, Makna Simbolik Pertunjukan Debus...

The attraction with the hot iron chain is the peak attraction and when the attraction is over, the show ends. When the last actor have sat back in his original position, the community members immediately entered the front of the performance area (this seemed spontaneous) near the buckets filled with *paureh* water and they scrambled to get the *paureh* water by putting it in small buckets and large bottles of mineral water to take home. As observed when fighting over *paureh* water, there are community members who fight because there are only a few who get it. The public understands that the *paureh* water is a symbol rejecting misfortunes because every Debus performer finishes showing the attraction of immunity, all wounds experienced are washed with *paureh* water. This is what understood by Debus presenters and the audience because both of them are humans who can communicate and interpret the communication made (Arisyanto et al., 2019). As explained by the informant (Supiak Piak Adih L), people who perform Debus tortured the body with sharp objects until they were injured, beaten with wood, and even put the hot iron on the body did not feel pain (this is because Khulifah and the others prayed constantly) and the wounds became fresh (cool again) after being washed with air *paureh* (interviewed September 10<sup>th</sup> 2019).



Picture 10. Immunity attraction by squeezing glass shards as well as beating them  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 11. The immunity attraction by bearing an iron chain that has been burned with  
great fire until it turns red in color  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 12. Soaking the hot iron with *paureh* water after using it for attraction  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 13. *Paureh* water, used for cleaning the wounds of the performers of immunity attractions, will be taken by the community and brought home to be sprinkled around the rice fields and the house  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 14. A member of the Sintuk Nagari community (Ambun Suri) pours *paureh* water around the house  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019



Picture 15. A member of the Sintuk Nagari community (Asmawati) pours *paureh* water into the rice fields  
Documented by Darmawati on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Discussion

As previously explained, a previous researcher (Andar 2002) has not found or discussed the symbolic meaning of Debus performances in the Talogondan community. Researchers can suspect that the Debus performance for the Talogondan community to this day also has its own meaning as well. However, this previous researcher can be expected to have not directed the study towards the meaning of the Debus performance. The researcher suspects that the Debus performance in Talogonda also has meaning for the people because this area is part of the Pariaman cultural area where the community generally adheres to the Islamic teachings of the *Syattariyah* order because Padang Pariaman is the strongest base of the *Syattariyah* congregation in West Sumatra (Fathurahman, 2008: 121). For the Sintuk community, the Debus performance is understood in terms of belief which has its meaning for immunity attractions which are expressions of the results of religious learning in the *tarekat*. The immune attraction in Debus is a gift from God (National & Pillars, n.d.)

That is when the attraction of Debus immunity is as a symbol for the Sintuk community to reject misfortunes. This is different from what was explained in previous research, the Debus performance in Talogondan. It was still covered in immature attractions. The performances still paid attention to and followed the traditional rules from the past which also included supporting aspects and is now only performing art that serve as entertainment. The main thing is the immunity attractions in the Debus show, for the Sintuk people as a form of symbol which is interpreted as a resistance to something that is misfortune. The ability to protect oneself from harm is considered an act of rejection which is symbolized by immunity in the Debus performance attraction. The players cannot be injured by sharp objects and are not burned by fire, and this is what the community understands as a rejection of misfortunes. Based on what was stated above, there is a symbolic interaction between the symbols (immunity) when watching the attractions of the Debus performance in the formation of the meaning of a symbol. There was a communication in the Debus attraction as a message that has an impact on people's behavior (following up) by interpreting the symbol based on the community's understanding of trust as rejecting misfortunes by taking *paureh* water used for washing from the injuries of the actors of the attraction and washing hot iron chains used for attractions to be splashed around the rice fields and the house. People's understanding of belief in a supernatural power (God) in the rejection of something harmful which is a symbol of immunity. During the show, there is an indirect interaction between Debus performance and the audience. Thus, it means that there is a symbolic interaction as all things are interconnected with the formation of the meaning of a symbol in society (Siregar, 2016). The Debus show which is full of immunity attractions including various supporting elements, such as *paureh*, incense, and others is a form of symbol that contains values that can be used as communication and visual media from the symbolic messages contained in it (Munaf, 2015). The meaning of symbols as the meaning of messages is a must for a group of people towards religious activities and the belief system they adhere to. In the procession of each tradition, there is always the meaning of certain symbols on the stages and processions of carrying out the ritual of the tradition (Hanif, 2017).

The Debus show is indeed watched by the public, not only as an entertaining performance with attractions but also as something that has its value which has benefits for them in facing life's challenges. Debus performances have a very important role in realizing a symbolic role in expressing various values of life, especially religious values according to Islamic teachings about the power of Allah above all else. Allah has a special ability which in the performance is manifested by the recitation of remembrance which is said repeatedly and for a long time interacting in immune attractions (as a symbol when society experiences a disaster, both personally and as a group. It is said to have been overwritten by reinforcements which are believed to be a punishment from the Creator (God) as a result of human actions as members of society who behave in violation of customary and religious norms. According to the community's belief, the form of the misfortunes is the occurrence of fight in the household, a long dry period, and rice plants in the fields that do not produce adequate harvests because of pests. In principle, the plague for society is a catastrophe that makes life uneasy, which is believed to be the anger of Allah. Therefore, for the community to get out or avoid this catastrophe, an act of self-servitude to Allah is carried out (glorifying Allah) using dhikr repeatedly reading the sentence '*laillahhaillallah*'. The utterance of this sentence is understood as an acknowledgment that there is no god but Allah, and He owns as well as governs this world and everything in it. The behavior that has a common thread is essentially about God's servanthood in the Debus show. This is reflected in the accompanying music with a tambourine and chanting of remembrance sung together by Khulifah and other music players, so that the performers of the Debus attraction who perform self-torture do not feel pain, on the contrary, are immune. Thus, the form of the invulnerable Debus attraction is understood by the Sintuk community as a symbol of refusal. In this case, according to what the community understands, there is an act of anticipating or rejecting misfortunes which are commonly called '*tolakbala*'. The attractions are something that plays a role in realizing the symbolic meaning. The implementation of the Debus performance is closely related to public trust as a cultural activity (Danika & Santosa, 2020).

The general understanding of the Sintuk community about remembrance in other lives is when there is an outbreak of rice pests in the rice fields which is thoroughly experienced by the community, resulting in crop failure and this is a disaster for them (threatened to live). Therefore, the community holds remembrance together with the religious people (scholar) which the community calls '*ratik tolak bala*'. Likewise, the concept is also often used in other lives by the Sintuk community when the ritual prays for the dead so that their sins are forgiven. The ritual of prayer starts from the first day of death and continues at the next level (three days, seven days, fourteen days, and forty days) until one hundred days. Praying for the people who have died (even though the parents themselves for the child) are represented by religious people called '*urang siak*', namely people who are considered to have a stronger understanding of Islamic teachings. Every ritual of praying for the dead is always accompanied by remembrance which in the community's understanding is '*ratik*'. *Ratik* in Debus is a religious event, which is a process of expressing a special relationship with Allah SWT. *Ratik* is an awareness of the reality called inner wisdom as spirituality that has flowed in religion (Herkha Syah Putra, 2017). For this reason, the remembrance that is read over and over again for a long time is a prayer that is often

used in life, such as praying for everyone who dies, and in an unspecified period it is also used when experiencing a catastrophe of rice harvest failure in the fields which is manifested in collective prayer (dhikr) '*ratik tolak bala*'. From the public's understanding of this remembrance which is often used in life, the behavior of remembrance in the implementation of Debus becomes identical by the community with other prayer behaviors, such as in '*ratik tolak bala*' ritual. It strengthens the public's understanding of the concept of remembrance of Debus until now which is interpreted as a symbol to reject misfortunes.

In every sequence Debus performance, it is always washed with *paureh* water which is understood to be cooling. In other life events experienced by people in Sintuk, *paureh* is also used as a traditional medicinal herb to treat fever. In this case, *paureh* has been used by the community in the past until now as a cooling drug when experiencing high fever. Therefore, when *paureh* is in the realm of Debus performance, community members can already understand the role of the *paureh*. It is used to relief pain. From this, it can be said that *paureh* is a complementary symbol in the Debus performance to reject misfortunes. Thus, the whole Debus performance for the Sintuk community has its own value which is believed to be rejecting misfortunes - to be able to avoid hardship. Debus performance in Sintuk community is not only to be enjoyed as entertainment from its attractions but has a relationship with habits in people's lives, immunity attractions as symbols. Symbols are simplifications of aspects in human life at the level of reality and at the level of ideas that are used as a connector to understand something (Irawati, 2014). Thus, the symbol serves to lead the understanding of the subject to the object. In certain meanings, symbols have deep meanings, which are the most valuable concepts in people's lives (Lestari, 2013). This is manifested in the understanding of the members of the Sintuk community by taking *paureh* water that has been washed on wounds and soaking hot iron by the performers of the Debus performance to take home. The next day this water is sprinkled around the house and their fields which are believed to be able to resist misfortunes so that their houses are comfortable. There are no fights, and their fields produce abundant harvests.

### Conclusion

Debus performance is a show that has become entrenched for the people of Sintuk which contains deep meaning in the form of symbols. It is trusted and believed by the community as a show to avoid misfortunes after the implementation of crowd events such as *Alek Nagari* and the 100 days of the dead. This Debus show has procedures and performance rules that must be carried out sequentially from beginning to end. Starting from the preparation of the Debus performance to the performance, the performances are carried out starting from the simplest performances to the peak attractions. This Debus show shows the immune attraction of the Debus actors who are believed to have reached a mortal level and united with their Lord. Then it ends with washing Debus' equipment with *Paureh* water which contains leaves such as *Sitawa* leaves, *Sidingin* leaves, *Cikumpai* leaves and *Cikarau* leaves which are believed to be able to heal the wounds suffered by Debus players. This *Paureh* water at the end of the show will be taken by the community to later be splashed around their houses and fields to reject misfortunes or diseases in their

houses and fields (plants). Until now, the Debus show still exists and is preserved by the people of Sintuk as a form of their regional cultural performance.

At the time the research was conducted, the researchers experienced obstacles or limitations where the performance of Debus was not always available, in other words, there are no regular schedule about the time when Debus is performed. Instead, it is carried out in accordance with the context of the show, which has a background of activities that invite many people who are associated with the belief in the occurrence of misfortunes. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that readers or other researchers can continue research on Debus from other perspectives because there is very limited writing or research on Debus, in the Pariaman area in particular and in West Sumatra in general. Thus, there will be a lot of research and writing about Debus from various aspects that can be known and studied.

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## Darmawati, Makna Simbolik Pertunjukan Debus...

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