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# 1 Reification of The Signified and Consumerization of Wedding Receptions Receptions “Sintê Mungêrjê” in The Gayo Lot Society in Central Aceh District

## 12 Reifikasi Petanda dan Konsumerisasi Resepsi Pernikahan Sintê Mungêrjê pada Masyarakat Gayo Lôt di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah

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### 1 ABSTRACT

Gayo customs emphasizes the values of mutual cooperation and religiosity. The ritual of "sintê môrep" illustrates this reality. However, consumerism has threatened an identity and social integration, such as at wedding receptions. This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the changing process of the kenduri "sintê mungêrjê" into a party culture in wedding receptions at the Gayo Lôt community. The study reveals reification has encouraged changes in the meaning of Gayo traditions. The shift occurred from the denotative level to the connotative level. The consumption culture of weddings developed as a design of consumerization by wedding organizer in Central Aceh District and was supported by party simulations through television and social media. Simulacrum works because Gayonese prefer to call "party" to "sintê mungêrjê" (the local term). The party culture was triggered by the weakening of the village structure supported by degradation of understanding of the Gayo customs, the Gayo language that has gradually been abandoned by native speakers, urban development, information technology, the strengthening of money logic, the changing in the type of work from agrarian to formal, and cultural assimilation and acculturation.

<sup>1</sup> **Keywords:** Consumerization, Gayo, Reification of the Signified, Wedding, Sintê Mungêrjê

### ABSTRAK

Adat Gayo pada dasarnya sangat mengedepankan nilai-nilai communal work dan relijiusitas yang tercermin dalam ritual "sintê môrep". Namun identitas dan integrasi sosial ini terancam oleh konsumerisme yang merasuk ke dalam tatanan kehidupan masyarakat, salah satunya pada kegiatan resepsi pernikahan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif guna menggali proses terjadinya perubahan pemaknaan kenduri "sintê mungêrjê" menjadi budaya pesta dalam ritual resepsi pernikahan pada masyarakat Gayo Lôt. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perubahan pemaknaan didorong oleh terjadinya reifikasi petanda (proses pelupaan asal-usul makna) di tingkat denotatif sehingga menggeser makna asli dari adat Gayo di tingkat konotatif. Proses tumbuh dan berkembangnya budaya konsumsi pesta pernikahan merupakan hasil kerja konsumerisasi para pelaku industri pesta di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah yang didukung oleh simulasi pesta melalui program televisi dan media sosial. Simulacra bekerja karena orang Gayo lebih suka memakai istilah "pesta" ketimbang sebutan aslinya dalam bahasa lokal, "sintê mungêrjê". Budaya pesta dapat bersemi di tengah masyarakat Gayo Lôt dipicu oleh melemahnya struktur kampung yang didukung oleh degradasi pemahaman adat, bahasa Gayo yang mulai ditinggalkan penutur, perkembangan perkotaan, pemanfaatan teknologi informasi yang salah, menguatnya logika uang, perubahan jenis pekerjaan dari agraris ke formal, serta asimilasi dan akulturasi budaya.

**Kata Kunci:** Gayo Konsumerisasi, Pernikahan, Reifikasi Petanda, Sintê Mungêrjê



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## INTRODUCTION

Getting married as one of the life cycles in Gayo community bio-psychologically is a sign of maturity, while sociologically it means getting ready to become a responsible individual (Ghufron, 2016). Getting married is a social action with spiritual nuances as a symbol of implementing God's commandments, which is fulfilled by 'walimahan' (marriage contract) or wedding reception. However, nowadays the wedding reception in some of the Gayo Lot community has tended to express a materialism culture. This wedding reception is aimed not only to announce to the public about the marital status, but furthermore to show publicly their social status. Veblen<sup>1</sup> (2007) mentions this action as a *conspicuous consumption* where a wedding reception has become a symbol of status.

In each wedding reception session a number of cost components must be dealt with, from appearance, decoration, food, to entertainment with modern *tete-a-tete* touch. The wedding reception has unavoidably become very costly. This activity certainly costs up to hundreds of million rupiah a day. This is done only in order to get an 'appropriate' status in the social environment. Interestingly, the responsibility of the reception which previously was the burden of the extended family and *sudêrê* (village community) has now shifted to the responsibility of the nucleus family. Memori Informan YS, the Head of the Gayo Customs Community, an elderly man who was born in 1947 reminds us about this social reality that has changed, as can be seen in the following statement:

“So in the past everything was carried out together. If there was a shortage, then it would be obtained from home. Now everything comes from home..... In the past there were a lot of facilities. Now everything changes, we must buy everything...”

In line with the social changes, marriage business has flourished. Party commodities can be accessed easily from home since nowadays gadget is a common thing to own. Other “*sintê môlep*” parties such as circumcision and birth have also blended into this style; everything is enlivened and celebrated by a certain group of community.

The word “party” (or *fiesta*, in Portuguese) is commonly stated by modern Gayo people. The use of this word has left the original term “*sintê*” or what is known nationally as “feast” which has a different meaning from party. The problem appears when this life style of rich people is adopted by those of low economy. The impacts can be realized after the party is over; they become heavily indebted. The social contribution from the extended family and “envelopes” from the invited guests are not comparable to the money they have spent. Almost all the wedding receptions held by the low-income community end with “debts”. Gossips and ridicules are often heard after the party is over.

This attracts attention to be researched, especially to find out and comprehend the change of meaning of ‘wedding feast’ from “*sintê mungêrjê*” in Gayo Lot community to express feelings of gratitude and togetherness (Selian, 2007) to become a sign of contest (Baudrillard, 2015). Based on the above background, this research is trying to answer the question “How does the process of changing the meaning of “*sintê mungêrjê*” to become a party ritual in the wedding reception in Gayo Lot community happen?”

Study of Lukmantoro (2004) has led us to understand the reality in Indonesian community where religious rituals have been interpreted as “justification” and “legitimation” to express a consumptive life style. In other words, “religious rituals have been sublimated into shopping rituals” so that it is hard to distinguish between a sacred aspect and a profane one. In relation to this theme, marriage contract is no longer a religion recommendation, but an exhibition of commodity. This is similar to what has been unveiled by Hendariningrum & Susilo (2008) because people are weak when they face a global capitalism attack. Economic global and media industry are the capitalists’ means that have an ability to capitalize human tendency for style and appearance. Mode and life style have stimulated dramaturgy hedonism and consumerism in individual (Suciptaningsih, 2017) which is encouraged by mimicry culture on idolized celebrities (Marisa, 2017).

Consumerism has also spread in Aceh. Study by Mujib & Abdullah (2013) describes the local identity in Aceh that can hardly resist markets because of imbalanced relation between actors. After the tsunami in Aceh, consumerism flourished due to service commercialism. This condition has changed the pattern of working together (communal work) in community to become “*cash for work*” based on

<sup>4</sup> Classic work of Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, first published in 1899.

transactional ethos. Destruction of culture and people's solidarity can also be felt in Gayo Plateau, especially during the wedding celebration.

The previous study by Siregar (2019) said that consumerism has spread to Batak Toba, seen from the cultural change, borrowing Koentjaraningrat's idea, that is a notion/idea (from togetherness to become differentiation and individualism), action (from regularity and circumspection to become 'fast' and 'instant'), and materials (from simple to luxurious). Dominant factors that affect consumerism are, among others, globalization, life style, popularity, and lack of understanding the meaning of culture.

Study on consumerism on wedding is also carried out by Sallehuddin et al. (2020) on Malay Melayu people in Kuala Lumpur. Better welfare rate of Malay people has encouraged couples who are going to get married to have a glamorous party with unique theme (result of creativity that is different from others). This concept has evolved the types of traditional Melayu wedding because of hybrid marriage with western culture. The focus of the study is to study some commodities of marriage that have transformed from traditional into modern ones. They are, among others, decoration of garden with color theme, location (generally outdoors), canopy, delivery goods, souvenirs, the use of henna, and invitation cards. This waste concept is based on the motive of demonstrating social status through social emulation scheme or imitating the consumption status higher than the original one.

Literature on Gayo study that is relevant to this research is very limited. So far, special study on semiotics in "*ngérjê*" marriage in Gayo land has been carried out by Selian (2007) using Saussure's perspective. The analysis on a special chapter about banquet party and entertainment gives us an understanding that wedding party in Gayo Land is a connotation of "togetherness and working together to make a traditional event successful". In the second connotation it means "expression of gratitude to God". However, this study did not see the shift of meaning of wedding reception in the contemporary Gayo community. As far as the present researcher is concerned, there has not been any study on ritual consumerism in Gayo Lot community "*sintê mungêrjê*". This is a novelty (state of art) in this study.

### **Reification and Consumerism**

The theoretical framework developed in this research is based on the theme of consumerism. Consumerism existence has degraded humans to become hedonists and individualists from their original entities as "social creatures" (Putra, 2018). This is according to Baudrillard (dalam Bakti et al., 2019) because human life has been dictated by objects and consumptive materials. In consumptive community consuming objects is an order of manipulating signs, a social logics, and even a morality. Consumption is a type of level in distinguishing oneself (Baudrillard dalam Fadhilah, 2011) or a means of identifying a social position (Warde, 2017). Consumerism culture is the media (Piliang, 2011). Undoubtedly the existence of humans is determined by the materials, and cultural fight is carried out in a legitimated war of social status (Mahyuddin, 2017).

Consumerism mindset is formed in the process of getting meaning. To understand the process of getting meaning, Barthes in his work *Mythologies* (first appeared in 1957) introduced the term '*order of signification*.' Previously Saussure had introduced the concept '*signifier*' and '*signified*' that only focused on denotative level (the first level). Barthes developed further the concept by introducing connotative level (the second level and so on in the order of signification) (Yan & Ming, 2015).

According to Barthes (1972), a dominant group is able to naturalize and universalize its interest as the interest of all members of a community through the characteristics of signification called myth which is a connotative level. To understand Barthes' argumentative aspects is it necessary to understand the polysomic nature of sign (Storey, 2017). The social meaning is intentionally inserted into the object that has been separated from its benefit-value by a small group of people such socialites and designers. This has shifted the original meaning in the denotation level to a new meaning in the connotation level. In the signifier level there is a process of fetishation, while in the signified level there is a process of reification or forgetting the commodity's origin (Permana, 2012).

The concept of reification was first proposed by Georg Lukács. Reification is a specific form of alienation. Reification can be seen as a process where the thinking capacity of human is colonized widely by the commodity production process and modern capitalism. This results in a reality dimension that stresses awareness and makes the logic of modern capitalism system become the only

structural principle that further dominates and determines every social relationship so that there is depersonalization of the existing social structure in the middle of previous community (Wasterman, 2019).

Edward Said (in Bewes, 2002) equalizes reification and colonization of meaning. In practice, reification has eliminated some or all meaning of local culture (Bewes, 2002), and the replaced it with a new norm of global scale. The new norm transforms social and cultural relations into objects or commodities that can commercialized so that it can be said as a fake awareness. As a result, reification makes market laws become very dominant in all aspects of human relationship (Syas, 2014).

Reification process is carried out intensively, smoothly, and tends to be general. People are not aware that reification is a creation of stakeholders. In the long term, the new norm implanted through a reification process will be strongly rooted in the community and it will be considered as a necessity or a fixture (Aji & Asnawi, 2020).

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach to understand the complexity of social life in details and in depth (Hendrarso dalam Suyanto & Sutinah, 2015) by considering various dimensions (Graue & Karabon dalam Trainor & Graue, 2013). This research was carried out in Central Aceh District. The location was selected because in the last five years the development of wedding receptions has shown a significant party commodity. Statistical data gave initial information that all the needs for a party have occupied the great six position of non-food consumption (P. K. Central Aceh, 2018). The key informants were selected purposively, consisting of traditional leaders joining in Majelis Adat Gayo, Central Aceh District. Moreover, there are also additional informants that support the process of data collection that are determined randomly, consisting of *Sarak Opat* (village apparatus), party businessmen, intellectuals, and academicians. Data were collected using live-in method, observation, in-depth interview, and document study. Informal interview/chatting was carried out especially to party businessmen. Data Analysis used Neuman technique (2014) in which data that had been collected were processed by sorting and classifying. The raw data in the form of interview transcripts were made verbatim or fully typed as the original (some interview was carried out in the local language/Gayo which was typed and translated into Indonesian). The results of documentation and observation were narrated into notes. Every single data was given a special code. The researcher then compressed the facts and interpreted the statements given by informants or obtained from observation notes. Further data analysis was carried out using a probing technique so that the interview with key informants was carried out several times. The data were then categorized according to the aim of the research, and then interpreted and elaborated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The meaning of *Sintê* in Gayo Customs

The life cycle of Gayonese is put into order in a term called *sintê*. The existence of *sintê* is to ensure the social relationship among generations can last with full of love and responsibility. *Sintê* can be divided into two: namely *sintê môrep* and *sintê matê*. In summary, *sintê* can be understood from the following explanation given by one of the management in Majelis Adat Gayo:

“... So *sintê môrep* is: (1) given a name, slaughter the goat... (2) then... if a boy is circumcised... (3) send to school... (4) marry off.... While *sintê matê*... taking care of the dead body....” (Interview excerpts with informant JM N).

*Sintê* manages human life cycle. The life starts from birth, teenager, adult, old, and finally die. This rhythm is arranged by religion and the implementation is arranged by customs in such a way that it becomes a bonded social fact. *Sintê* is bonded so much that the procession of *sintê môrep* is considered as an “obligation” that must be carried out by parents to their children. On the other hand, *sintê munerjê* or marrying off children is the last obligation of parents which means to release life obligation (*muluahi sintê*). This is the peak of the *sintê môrep* cycle in Gayo customs.



### Wedding Feast *Sintê Mungerjê* in Gayo Lôt Community

Essentially after the procession of *turunmani* (the first *sintê môrep*), the child symbolically belongs to *Rêjê* and village community. When the child is grown up, celebrating his wedding becomes the responsibility of the community. In the past, village solidarity went on very well because this understanding was still instilled in the community collective awareness.

“... so there would be *mujulé mas* ... the family called *Sarak Opat*... handed in... if he had been handed in...that *bujang bêrama bêru bêrinê* it means moving closer....” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

The explanation above shows that Gayo Lôt community are accustomed to sitting together to prepare for a certain activity. They show solidarity through *pakat sara inê* and *pakat sudêrê* activity. In the meetings they discussed communal work to share the burden by giving contribution materially and spiritually. Then they formed a committee for the feast. According to the Head of Majelis Adat Gayo, in the past the preparation for wedding was coordinated by *Rêjê* through an activity called *pakat sudêrê*. This is based on the convention that wedding party is a village collective activity or a part of an organization. The feast is seen as a cultural activity that exists because of a strong solidarity in the village. The Head of Majelis Adat Gayo said:

“...in the past the aisle was natural, using existing living materials...like leaves, wood trees, anything that could be turned into beautiful things, but natural. Nowadays, it is permanent, rented and just built-up? In the past the married couple sat on a mat and soon, decorated, and it was the responsibility of the village girls. When they made benten (wooden hut)...it was the responsibility of the boys. About kitchen...it was the boys’ (responsibility). Now we use stoves. In the past they used firewood. The boys would collect the wood (Interview excerpts with informant YS).

Communal work pattern was also applied when collecting food stuffs for the feast *sintê mungêrjê*. The people would contribute a little bit of their garden product collectively to be harvested by the committee. This can happen because they (*Rêjê* and the villagers) have made an agreement in the committee meeting called *pakat sudêrê*.

“... then vegetables... nowadays these must be bought from the market, in the past....No..... Girls and boys would go to another vegetable garden, because in the meeting one of the villagers said, “...in our garden there were chilies, please take some,” then the boys would take some. After that they would go to take turmeric, lemon.....until everything is available. Sometimes there were a lot of taros in the swamp, and the boys would go down....They would catch fish...since there was no meat. Fish was easy to get. The boys would catch fish for a day and night, until they got three cans and brought them home (Interview excerpts with informant YS).

“... they formed their own committee....I still got this experience here. Thus, the host would feel comfortable because everything was carried out by the village. Therefore, in Gayo there is *kêramat mupakat bêhu bêrdêdêlê*. That’s the philosophy. Our togetherness was for our sanctity. Consensus was our strength... The *bêru-* kid had chopped the spices, right? So what should be done? Cleaning the house and decorating it... This was the previous social activity in Gayo... Now.... no more...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

The above pattern is then shifted in line with the strength of money logic when people contribute something during the wedding event. As can be seen in the following explanation:

“... In the past the extended family might be involved by contributing one sack of vegetables, now it can no longer be done. Automatically, the contribution will be in the form of money. Why? Because the host has said that everything has been taken over by an event organizer. In the past the contribution varied such as coconuts, sugar, or anything else... Even one would bring chickens....last time...no more...” (Interview excerpts with informant AP).

Meanwhile, in order to reduce costs for printing invitation cards which became more and more expensive, Gayonese had their own system to invite guests to *sintê mungêrjê*. This system is called mangô. As can be seen from the explanation below:

“Now the invitation is printed. In the past there was a term *Mangô* ... meaning someone appointed would go to house by house...except special people would be invited with written invitation. It was in the past; now almost everyone uses an invitation card, right?” in the past we didn't use invitation cards. We called it ‘Pick-up invitation’... (Interview excerpts with informant YS).

Doing a *mangô* system means visiting every villager that would be invited by telling them orally about the wedding feast. Betel would be given to the guest-to-be as a symbol of honor from the host. Inviting someone with *mangô* system makes the obligation to accept the invitation becomes higher, because *mangô* encourages direct hospitality/ face-to-face and opens space for communication or talks. The above condition has changed since the last three decades. The method for inviting guests becomes more practical, from *mangô* into an invitation card. This new method has long been through a commodification process in another part of the world. The effect has come to Gayo Land and becomes dominant, and even substitutes the old one. An invitation card is a party commodity. In the capitalism system the use-value of invitation cards has dominated by money as an exchange-value. This means that the signified has been dominated by the signifier. It means in the people's awareness the component of wedding invitation cards needs special expense as an exchange-value because it has become a commodity. In this stage there is a reification process introducing a new norm, i.e. an invitation component “must be bought”, something that was not common at that time.

According to Baudrillard, in this era the world has far more developed and we are in the era of simulation. In this era the price or benefit is no longer a major consideration when buying a commodity. Consumption rationality has led to a symbolic meaning that exists behind it. Baudrillard (in Pawanti, 2013) uses the terms *sign-value* and *symbolic-value*. In the case of wedding invitations, the price of one piece of a wedding invitation in Takengon City can be Rp. 25.000, which no longer represents the usage but the luxury. Umanilo et al. (2018) confirms that this situation happens because one's substantial emotion has taken over his logic of needs. The consumer's weak emotion is exploited by a certain party supported by easy access to become consumptive. Sometimes “narcissi” elements, the term used by Freud referring to “a symptom where someone is obsessed by himself”, are purposively aroused. Damayanti's study (2010) reveals the reality that design of a wedding invitation has exposed the picture of the wedding couple with certain attributes.

### **The shift of meaning from *Sintê Mungerjê* to become a Party Culture**

Nowadays, Gayonese are accustomed to using the term wedding party or wedding reception both in their daily conversation and in an invitation card. The use of the term ‘party’ is not actually relevant if it is connected to the wedding tradition in Gayo Land, because as has been described previously marrying off is the parents' obligation in the life cycle called *sintê*. Then celebrating the wedding is an expression of togetherness held by the community in one village. Thus, *sintê* is not the same as party because it is not identical with a joyous activity. Previously, a piece of work on Gayo written by a colonial anthropologist, Hurgronye (1996) also used the term wedding party. According to the writer, Hurgronye still saw a colonized community from the Western point of view that had been in the era of consumerism. Gayonese, on the other hand, in that era was still of traditional type. The following explanation given by an intellectual can further describe the difference between party and *sintê*:

“.... *sintê* is a celebration. To celebrate the situation. There are *sintê matê*, and *sintê môrep*. This *Sintê môrep* ... celebration in the life cycle.... While *sintê matê* is related to something bad, especially death. It gathers a crowd...merely just to eat together...Thus technically the party itself does not exist in the customs. I cannot see ....cannot mention there is a similarity between party and *sintê*, why? Because if it is a party, death does not belong to it.... So the term party itself...there is a name for it “*bêrêriah bêgêgurê*”... which means joyful.... While *sintê* does not always mean joyness....but it invites people to the feast, and there is life and also death.” (Interview excerpts with informant AP).

“... If *sintê* is closely related to conduct an obligation or precisely to release it... Party is an absorbed word. And that’s only people of today use it...It has been acculturated, hasn’t it? The real name is actually *sintê*. *Sintê mungêrjê*... if we want to make them the same, looking for synonym .....it’s very much different (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

To get the meaning of a “wedding party” nowadays creates a social action. Wedding party will look more luxurious when it is held in a party building or hotel. Although the cost is relatively expensive, a lot of people hold a wedding party in such a place. As an illustration, the amount of money spent on a wedding party offered by one of the party industries in Kampung Kemili can be seen on the table below.

Table 1. Some of the Wedding Party Sub-component Cost

No.	Sub Component	Amount	Cost (Rp.)
1	Aisle	1 set	25,000,000,-
2	Photo booth	1 set	3,000,000,-
3	Rented chairs	400 x 6,000	2,400,000,-
4	Rented round tables	6 x 200,000	1,200,000,-
5	Rented buffet table	2 x 200,000	400,000,-
6	Rented aqua table	2 x 100,000	200,000,-
7	Rented fruit table	4 x 200,000	800,000,-
8	Building	1 day x 1 package	5,000,000,-
9	Rented keyboard	1 set	2,000,000,-
10	Rented photographer and printed photos	2 albums	4,000,000,-
11	Shooting the event	1 set	2,500,000,-
12	Catering	1,000 x 50,000	50,000,000,-
13	Snacks		10,000,000,-
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>107,500,000,-</b>

Source: a chat with “Istana Pengantin” business owner at Kampung Kemili, reprocessed data.

This Rp. 107,500,000 amount does not include the cost for making invitation cards, sewing family uniforms, souvenirs (thanking note to the guests), renting flower boards, traditional dancers and *didong jalu* club. The above cost is relatively high because it does not include the cost for dealing with every stage of wedding procession. The cost for conducting a wedding procession as a whole can become much more swollen especially for the groom because they have to prepare a dowry, demand for the furniture in the bedroom, and forfeited money.

“... sometimes they must spend one hundred million rupiah. Last time in the Sports and Arts Building I heard about two hundred million rupiah....anyway he is a coffee producer...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

The phenomenon of having a wedding party in a party building that has started to flourish Central Aceh District can be divided into two parts. The first, development of settlement in towns that becomes crowded makes it difficult for people to have a wedding reception in their small house. Using a party building is considered more practical. In another case, choosing a party building as a place for a wedding reception is due to the visual image that they want to perform. Unlike the first case, the host families in general are rich people. Based on the observation, there are quite many higher rank families and businessmen that hold a wedding reception for their children in the party building, with foods ordered specially and prepared by a catering business.

Having a wedding reception in a party building with a modern decoration touch is the work of a party industry player. Promotion strategy is carried out with information technology such as social media to expose visual image that can turn desire into needs. Furthermore, direct persuasion is also quite effective to attract consumers. Party luxury has become a model for others so that they will also do the same. In spite of that, there are many stories in the community, which imply that such a party tends to be exaggerating. This kind of party model is carried usually out by social climbers (see Mahyuddin study, 2017), although their financial condition is in fact the opposite.



“... so now the one that is carried out by people is only a visual image. Yes. Therefore, now it is only a packaging..... It looks that the present people are materialists. That’s it.” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

In its development, visual image as mentioned by Veblen (in Ridha, 2013) has become a “new appropriateness standard”. As soon as it is accepted as a fixture, it will “attack social safety” and “become a burden” to other community members, so it is called an “offensive consumption”. Offensive consumption from the party player will lead to “defensive consumption” from the next party players in order to prevent themselves or adapt themselves so it becomes a party contest that rolls over and over (Heath and Potter in Ridha, 2013). As a result, there are many people who will finally be attracted to this consumption competition whirlpool.

Another interesting thing that needs to mention here is that in their conversation sometimes there is also an insinuation “trading in a wedding party”. The term is used to mean that there is a change in their mindset about the essence of *sintê mungêrjê* from “parent’s obligation to their kids” to “an arena for searching profit”. As can be seen in the following excerpts:

“... And now there are some people....only I said many. It seems that wedding party ...has become a business. When they open an envelope and souvenir, ‘yea, this is not *keh Aman* that Polan, just gave us this’ ... That means they expect profit. Sometimes they will say ‘our investment fails’, ‘we lost’ they said. It means that they do not interpret *sintê* as an obligation... parent’s obligation to kids...they mean it as searching profit. This what happens to us nowadays.... We become materialists... we prefer number to value....” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

Having a wedding reception in a party building in reality has deconstructed togetherness in Gayo Lôt community. Solidarity has shifted and the role of the program executor has been taken over by a party industry player. This can be seen from the informant’s statement:

“.... Because this is held in a party building, there is a little or maybe loss of feeling of togetherness. For example, usually if it is carried out at home, there are some activities carried out by the extended family, like washing dishes...taking out dirty dishes,,and even some activities in the kitchen, and that also involves the big family. If it is carried out in the party building they will hire catering, and the involvement of the big family can hardly exist....” (Interview excerpts with informant AP).

“... that’s it. It is clearly diminishing. They don’t want to get hectic...dishes....and so on. If they hire a catering....like the one in Kampung Kayu Kôl, how many guests? 2,500 persons, preparing 2,500 dishes. No need for washing... It is a common thing right now.” (Interview excerpts with informant AB).

### **Factors that motivate the growth and development of Party Culture**

Party culture grows and develops because of the Gayonese people who cannot understand fully the meaning of *sintê mungêrjê*. This makes the implementation of *sintê mungêrjê* now become exhibiting entertainment rather than a customs procession. According to the informant, there are some factors that motivate the growth and development of party culture in Central Aceh District. One of them is the introduction of materialist culture by those who come from outside Gayo. One of *Sarak Opat* officers tells a story that has happened recently:

“... now at least ... 10 to 25 million for loving money. There are one two....have you ever heard about X ...almost one billion, right? It was two years ago. It is only one hundred one million two..... Such a moment..... The groom-to-be was from outside. (There is also another event) the money was 120 million. From outside.... from Medan. The dowry was 130 grams (gold)....” (Interview excerpts with informant R).



Source: (Lintasgayo.com, n.d.)

Figure 1. Shocking News “Dowry, 1 billion”

In 2017, people were shocked with the news about a Gayonese girl who was proposed with one billion dowry money. Ironically the shocking news that attracted local media was only a trick given by the groom-to-be to the local community and government. This is presented by the informant:

“It was a problem... a fraud mode... So far it has been handle by the police. In fact the man is already married... all the documents have been faked. We, the Religion Affairs Office of Bebesen, have been swindled, because our tool is very limited... especially because the bride family had agreed... He even had come to the Regent. He also faked his degree certificate. Thus he is actually a heavy criminal...the money actually did not exist. He only mentioned it... in Renggali Hotel. According to the information, he had not handed it in all... We assumed that he was important because he had a lot of money. That’s the story. If we see people driving an expensive car we believe it completely...” (Interview excerpts with informant AP).

Nowadays, materialism is assumed to have spread in Gayo Lôt community. The indicator can be seen in the ownership of the materials and profession a person bears, which often becomes the foundation for being accepted when a man proposes. This uneasy feeling is sounded by the following informant.

“... Where do you work? What do you do? ... In the past in our place... I would interview... they said we should evaluate his morals, descendant, and courtesy... That’s what we evaluate, not where he works. How much his wealth is? No, not that. This has shifted now...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

Besides materialism is strengthening, people’s awareness of their surrounding has also become worse. Gayonese basically like togetherness or if we borrow the term used by Ferdinand Tönnies,

*gemeinschaft*. However, now there is a tendency for Gayonese to mind their own business. According to JMN:

“... Previously, solidarity was enough... eager to help when there was an activity... Now sometimes when there is a death in one area... people in another area still open their business. In the past they would close...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

If we dig further, in fact individualism is not the only one that makes solidarity fader in Gayonese community. People’s profession has also changed from agrarian sector into formal sector. In the past, some Gayo Lôt community worked where they would be able to control the time. This can be seen from the positions that were known in Gayo Lôt community which expressed the economic regulation at that time.

Table 2. List of Positions in Traditional Gayo Lôt Community

No.	Position Name	Field	Duty
1	<i>Kêjurun Bêlang</i>	Agriculture	in charge of determining the time to go to rice field in food crop agriculture
2	<i>Pêngulu Rêrak</i>		obliged to take care of water source
3	<i>Pêngulu Uwêr</i>	Animal Farm	in charge of taking data on the number of livestock (buffaloes, horses) in his area and leading livestock growth
4	<i>Pêngulu Utên</i>	Forestry	in charge of mapping and handling forest problems
5	<i>Pawang Dêrêt</i>		in charge of leading and watching animal hunting and taking care of animals
6	<i>Pawang Lôt</i>	Fishery	in charge of taking care of fish conservation in Lôt Tawar Lake

Source: Syukri (2006), reprocessed data.

Unlike the present condition, the number of inhabitants who work as officers is quite many, both in the government sector and in the private sectors. There are 5,471 civil servants in the government sector (B. Aceh Tengah, 2020), excluding exempt employees. Each office requires each employee to be disciplined. This situation applies mainly to those who work in a bank/ private company. The new profession becomes one of the factors of solidarity degradation because the working system is binding. The informant explains:

“... Now, it’s because of demand from job’s world... (in the past workers were not as many as the present... in the past there were many farmers. Coffee farmers, rice field... only one or two civil servants in one village... But some people I met in the market said, ‘eh... in your village there was a red flag?’ ‘Yes, someone died, what should I do? I feel uneasy’, he said. ‘If I don’t go to the office, I will be scolded’... that kind of feeling still exists in these people... Only because of work’s demand...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

The growth of party culture in Gayo Land coincides with consumption contest. Gayo tribe actually has the highest value system called *mukêmël* (pride). This value is expressed in a norm called *bêrsikêmêlên* (competition) (Melalatoa, 1985). However, it seems that this value in some people has shifted in meaning, from positive *mukêmël* into negative *mukêmël*, as can be seen in the following explanation:

“... if the *mukêmël* is positive... why can that child do it? If he eats rice, we also eat rice... if the *mukêmël* is negative... how can others respect to us? It means the orientation returns to oneself... So I give it a negative symbol because it is personal. It’s not togetherness. But it still belongs to *bêrsikêmêlên*...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

Negative *Mukêmël* is related to the willingness to be respected as a successful person. In a wedding party this willingness can be measured by at least two aspects, namely the number of guests and the number of flower boards expressing congratulations. Ironically, this sometimes pushes some families to compete to show off the flower boards in their wedding party. Based on the experience, informant said:

“... Now that is a shame. I found two persons. It turned out that the flower boards were actually ordered by the host, under somebody’s name...So sometimes up to 10 flower boards, right. They spent money. This is actually just to get a good image....So if we see this, we think it is pathetic...” (Interview excerpts with informant JMN).

According to informant JMN, a party culture can flourish because of a number of factors. Firstly, modernism values are introduced by elite newcomers from outside Gayo. Secondly, there is a change of lifestyle of Gayonese who are becoming modern. Thirdly, the Gayonese themselves have forgotten their own culture. The process of forgetting Gayonese culture started a few decades ago, in line with a number of Gayonese youth who wandered out of town to pursue further studies. After they finished their studies, many of them returned home and brought with them new values and performance. Interaction with people from Medan City in the Province of North Sumatera might introduce keyboard as an entertainment during the marriage contract event. Furthermore, Gayonese people have been accustomed to music, although some customs associate singing and dancing in the wedding event as *jahiliyah* (ignorance) customs (Arfiansyah, 2020).

Another factor is the influence of a party industry player. <sup>3</sup> A party culture exposes fashion as a signifier. This is considered as an effort to make oneself as the center of attraction (Hendariningrum & Susilo, 2008). Make-up business in Takengon City is still dominated by transgender. Party industry players usually do not care for tradition matters, because their main interest is esthetics and business that will always develop in line with the mode cycle with reference to the wedding parties held by Capital City artists.

Another factor that supports the growth and development of a party culture is degradation of *Rêjê* dignity. *Rêjê* is actually very significant to keep the village solidarity; however, village democratization that is identified with the direct and national village head election with a design “*one man one vote*” has disturbed the stability that has so far been kept well. Gayo itself is basically a democratic tribe. Gayo has never known feudalism where the social stratification is divided into classes on the basis of nobility and common people (Fasya, 2018). Hurgronye (1996) in his research in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century called the village government in Gayo as “patriarch republic”. In reality the adoption of western democracy in the village level in the last few years has left a number of problems such as money politics and social division in the village community.

Besides that, the shift of *Rêjê* leadership model from charismatic into legal-formal has resulted in a democratic residue in the village level. As a result, now *Rêjê* is positioned more as a bureaucrat rather than a dignified figure in the village. Furthermore, the availability of village fund from the Central Government has caused *Rêjê* position to be politicized by certain individuals in order to reach power in the village level where political economy motive often becomes the reason behind it. When this happens naturally, culture is no longer the main focus. Tradition is not an interesting matter anymore for a *Rêjê*. Some local politicians will grab the *Rêjê* position as a stepping stone before they plunge into the legislative election.

### <sup>1</sup> Reification of the Signified and Ritual Consumerism of *Sintê Mungêjê*

The meaning system of Gayo culture does not recognize the term party, but feast or *sintê*. The meaning of party by contemporary Gayo Lôt actually explains the reality that has been changing in Gayo land. Gayo Lôt people start to leave, or precisely to have a forgetfulness process about the origin and meaning of Gayo customs. Slowly but surely, Gayo Lôt people experience an alienation from their cultural identity and lose their critical thinking so they are carried away with the meaning of party that forms “one dimension person”, borrowing Mercuse’s term (in Marandika, 2018). This situation happens as an impact of reification process of the signified.

Reification makes the youths who will get married are interested to plan their own marriage concept. The concept they choose tend to imitate the wedding commodity inspired by European culture that becomes the center of party doers in Jakarta and Medan and this has influenced party doers in Gayo Land. This condition is certainly contrary to the local tradition where previously a wedding feast is considered as a village activity. This contradiction causes some youths to reject an original tradition procession, and they even call it “out of date”. The scared tradition procession is replaced by a party ritual, making artificial values dominate the authentic ones. Development of times makes an

individual seldom think about the truth of his culture so he becomes easily victimized or drawn by the game of sign. This is reflected in a party culture which tends to show a reflected action minus reflection. As a result, the culture they present has no deep meaning nor personality (Boden, 2003). The culture that appears is more dominated by global impacts as a result of reification.

Nowadays Gayo Lôt people are “forced” to live in a simulation world (see Baudrillard, 1983). The *infotainment* program shown on television is a simulacra that gives a reference how a party should be conducted or in other words it demonstrates how to consume a party appropriately. Mentioning the word “party” or “reception” by Gayo Lôt people trap them into a language term that is packed with ideology, namely consumerism. This lasts beyond their awareness. In line with the study by Sulistyningtyas & Jaelani (2017) about consumerism website of elite understanding as a media of “ideological call”, an infotainment program is actually the same as building consumerism discourse mildly. Furthermore, infotainment program itself gives more sensation rather than ethical value and a nation culture (Karlina, 2014), whereas sensation is a commodity that is very much in demand because it puts a celebrity as an agent of socialization.

In the level of signified, between party or reception and Gayo culture called “*sintê mungêrjê*” there is a big difference in meaning and objective. Using the word party or reception invites a simulation in daily life. Television as a main media of popular culture (Kurniawan, 2014) has certainly a very wide range. Presented every day, television program is very effective to instill new values of global nature together with capitalism agenda that has been inserted, hypnotizing the audience’s sub consciousness. Moreover, aggression of social media as a digital culture as a consequence of postmodern life has pushed the change in knowledge structure and consumerism culture (Supriansyah, 2019). The impact is traditionalism is contaminated with hedonism (Sabariman, 2019) and customs ritual is sublimated with party ritual (compared with the study by Lukmantoro, 2004). The indigenous people themselves, with simple facilities, are not able to stop this global influence.

As an impact of a party in a marriage contract event is the space that must be available sometimes gets more attention than the sacred customs procession in Gayo wedding. At present when the Takengon youths are asked what they have in mind about the term “*kêrjê*”, some spontaneously answer materials and party rituals, such as wedding dress that will be worn and keyboard/orchestra that will be performed or the wedding concept that will be used. In other words, their mind – if we can borrow the idea of cultural reflection by Koentjaraningrat (2015), tend to be about cultural artefacts rather than the main value of the culture itself. Reification has degraded the meaning of “*kêrjê*” so it makes the real signified scattered from the people’s collective memory. Gayonese people become suffer from amnesia concerning their real identity. They have not remembered anymore that there used to be a wedding feast that became the responsibility of the village community.

Reification works in the denotative level, changing the real meaning of *sintê mungêrjê* into a wedding party in the connotative level. If such a condition is accepted as an objective reality, the consumerism propaganda can penetrate easily into the people’s heart. Gayo customs undergoes a cultural commodification. The party industry players are successful to make and change *sintê môrep* ritual into a commodity. This signifier contest has probably elected the party business doers as the winners, because their ideology gets a major position in a place called globalization; besides, there are a lot of simulacras that keep isolating Gayo culture.

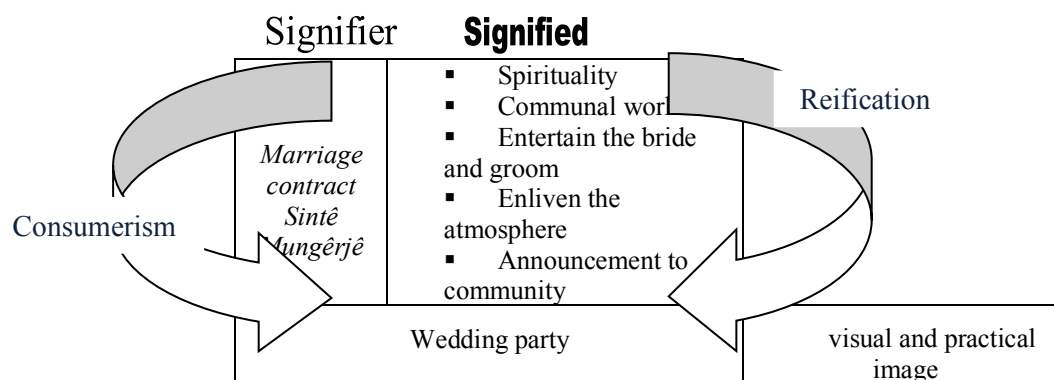


Figure 2. Reification of the Signified and Marriage Contract Consumerism of *Sintê Mungêrjê*



Reification of the signified also affects the central value of Gayo culture. Gayonese competitive nature as a manifestation of *bêrsikêmêlên* culture has been successful to make a lot of progress, especially in education. It has been a long time farmers support their kids to continue their studies until university. The problem is how this long-term investment will not be a waste. The profession of the child as an achieved status becomes important to be publicized. One of the means to communicate this message is through a wedding party. If a child graduates from the Faculty of Medicine, for example, the marrying-off must be held on a large scale. The important point is it must be in the class where we belong to. Life is identified with materials, and finally consumption becomes a new measure.

The fundamental change about a shame-culture viewpoint (*mukêmêl*) in Gayo community mindset can be expressed through an individual attitude. The shift of the meaning 'competitive' (*bêrsikêmêlên*) has distorted an essential quality from Gayonese real shame-culture. This has affected the social actions of some Gayonese who are in fact contra productive with the spirit of *fastabiqul khairat*. It is a common knowledge that we often find some Gayo people who should have got competitive culture value become those who adopt "taking care of" attitude in aspects of life. In a number of cases there are individuals who even sell their assets just to bribe a certain party in order for their children to get what they want. Sometimes this is expressed unashamedly because it is considered as a common feature. A shame-culture has been interpreted wrongly and covered with a new form, i.e., "It is a shame if it fails".

Basically, Gayonese shame-culture is not "it is a shame if we are not successful", nor "it is a shame if we make mistakes" like that of Japanese. The central value of Gayo culture is to compete in good deeds as has been taught in Islam, so the culture is "It is a shame if we do not carry out good deeds". However, the simulation has aroused one's individualism ethos, so one's achievement culture and individual acknowledgment is more important than the affective culture. Unfortunately, unlike Western romanticism (Campbell, 2018) that tries to arouse a new spirit with a variety of real works that have been widely accepted, some Gayonese, on the other hand, are trying to "show off their his greatness" by imitating consumptive activities. Life can hardly be interpreted other than materials (Mulyono, 2011). There are even some people that interpret the amount of dowry, *têniron* (request), and forfeited money as a measurement of symbolic pride. A row of flower boards also become a sign of prestige or a symbol of the family status.

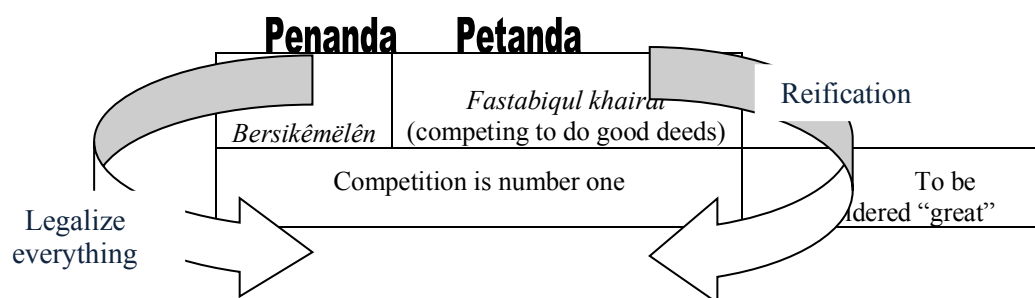


Figure 3. Reification of the Signified *Bêrsikêmêlên*

An arena also determines the change of the meaning *sintê môrep* to become party consumption culture. In the previous era, Gayo as a structure known as its togetherness is still strongly rooted. Gayonese customs that is still the villagers' main guide does not give a space for consumerism because it is considered as something contradictory with the symbolic meaning of the system they are sure of.

In Gayo Lôt citizens, the unity of villagers called *sudêrê* is fading. Blang Kolak I village, for example, has been occupied with newcomers from various places with their own different culture. This condition causes the village arena which was previously bound with blood-line or genealogy to accept a new life together with 'new friends'. Although some of the newcomers can adapt themselves with the local tradition, others in fact introduce a new culture. Acculturation degrades further the influence of village structure on Gayo Lôt community. Besides, assimilation through a mixed-marriage process more or less makes a room for identity ambiguity in the new generation. The decreasing use of

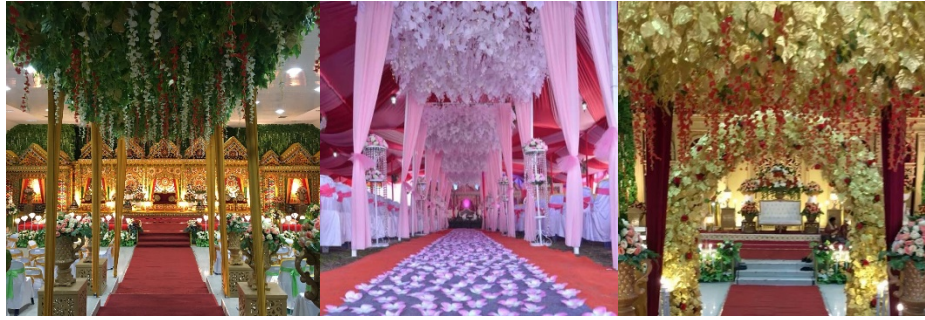
Gayonese language in terms of quantity, quality and intensity is one of the indicators. (Al-Gayoni, 2012).

In line with that, solidarity also undergoes a degradation process in the environment that keeps changing. Solidarity indeed still exists in the community, but it has shifted from the scope of *sudêrê* (*sara urang*) into an extended family; and it is getting weaker, and the rest becomes a burden to a nuclear family. The existence of family *arisan* (a uniquely Indonesian financial-scheme) is no longer related to Gayonese culture, instead it is an innovation of some community members who consider communal work is important to prepare for an expensive wedding party when the village structure is no longer adequate and attentive like in the previous era. In the past, villagers gave a small portion of their crops to be harvested by the committee for the sake of the wedding feast in the village. It was because they were aware that *sintê mungêrjê* was the responsibility of *Rêjê* and the village community.

People's participation is still present, something that cannot be denied. However, the contribution given by families, relatives or neighbors which used to be dominated by energy and goods that have useful values, now shift to contributing money (exchange rate) due to its practical logic. In some circles, the contribution given is recorded in a book. This, quoted Homans' idea, creates a relationship of real social exchange. Like a snowball, this relationship sometimes causes a rotating party as an expression of return or a compensation for the expense. There was a family who explained the motive for having a party; it was because they had spent a lot of money for others' party activities; thus it was time for them to get back what they had invested.

Meanwhile, the change in Gayo democracy mechanism as an impact of the effectiveness of Village Regulation – and it has been dwarfed by the New Era Policy – indirectly has caused people's solidarity shifted. The situation and structure of the village due to the village democratization makes the function of *Sarak Opat* finally modified and modernized like Western democracy. Now *Rêjê* position is considered, by some ambitious people, as a contest arena to fight over potential resources. Village politics that requires a lot of campaign fund, and sometimes it is accompanied by unhealthy means, makes *Rêjê*'s interest change a lot. Materialism included in the Village Head election can affect materialism of services. There are even some individuals who think a *sintê môrep* activity as a potential for generating income for village officials. In the past they were only involved with a symbol of *betel* and *coffee*, whose meaning is as bitter as its taste. This makes people regard *Rêjê* more as a bureaucrat rather than a charismatic leader used-to-be.

The popularity of consuming party symbol is because of the strategic business of the capitalists. The trace of capitalism in party business is very clear, especially because, in a party, fashion is the most outstanding component to be exposed. The influence of global capitalism can be seen from the bride's dress who often wears white (in line with the study of Arumsari, 2012). This kind of pattern is the work of designers popularized by a simulacrum called television and recently social media. Capitalism seduces people to imitate; moreover, their agents are public figures like successful businessmen and celebrities (film stars, singers, popular lawyers, and beauty queens). Thus, there is a "body colonization" (Misbahuddin & Sholihah, 2018). On the hand, the capitalists themselves are successful to make the trend cycle of party commodities become shorter. The study on *past fashion* that unites with dromology phenomenon or life acceleration is specially discussed by Shinta (2018). Meanwhile, Gayonese traditional costumes are also modified, tailored to the present taste and combined with Islamic norms, the same as what happens to Javanese traditional costumes (see the study by Meyrasyawati, 2013). The wedding aisle is a part of fashion too, intentionally designed, making it more fashionable and novel in order that people will not get bored easily with the trend that was popular previously. Global capitalism understands well that most consumers would be more interested in visual image rather than considering their critical common sense. Celebration is more important than necessities (Bakti et al., 2019). As a result, consumers just need to play their role based on the significance code that has been designed in such a way.



Source: Istana Pengantin (Instagram.com, n.d.)

Figure 4. The popular Aisle Sighting in Takengon

Prior to the popularity of having a wedding celebration in a party building and hotel, the signs of decreased village solidarity can be seen from the emergence of new professions such as a delivery man, dish washer, and cooks. This change is like the study in Padang City by Putri et al. (2019). They are freelancers who earn a living individually. Previously this activity was a communal work of the village youths who were “paid less”, then because of the development of times and the shift of village meaning, the activity is “paid”. Recently, there are some party industry players who can deal with everything, even small things in the wedding party. They build a system called *wedding-organizer*.

These party industry players work persuasively; they persuade customers directly and indirectly. Persuasion is carried out directly by introducing their newest products, to *fetish* the up-to-date commodities while underestimating other party commodities that are out of date. In other words, there is a systematic commodification of the needs and desire. The new needs of party commodities often occur or are intentionally created and presented because of expertise in communication. The impact is very big, especially on a customer whose emotional feeling is compulsive. Information technology that develops fast such as social media is also utilized in such a way, especially Instagram. The purpose is to get profit through a party commodity promotion by making the bride as an etalage of sign.

Local party industry doers also often play with a sign-value when they spread the superiority of their products and services. For example, they spread the news that there is a businessman on beauty salon who used to be an artist make-up. The myth rolls over, so people will use his service and get the feeling of being made-up by a professional one. To get an excellent result, they have to spend a lot of money, of course.

Another finding shows a party industry player in fact does not only manipulate a sign-value related to construction of identity and status, he also conducts activities of party consumption with a different motive from what Baudrillard said. The informant celebrated his daughter’s wedding on the basis of *kôl natê urang tuê têrhadap anak* (parents’ gratefulness towards their child), for example she is the only child in the family, the youngest daughter, and many other reasons. For the time being, the researcher calls it an affection-value. This must be further researched. As a summary, this type of consumption is not related to construction of identity and status. It can be compared with the phenomenon of a parent who bought a toy for his child (toy consumption) even when his financial condition is not stable. Thus, oftentimes we hear an expression “business related to kids is very profitable”.

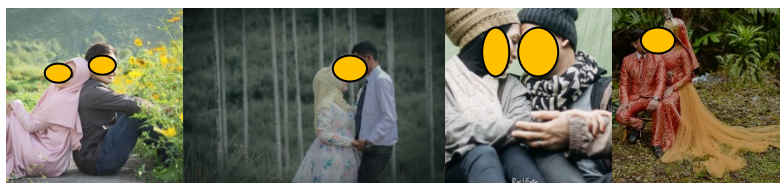
This case is relevant when we analyze *sintê mungêrjê* feast. When promoting a party commodity, a party industry doer is very much aware of this value. He will then capitalize and forward this to the bride’s parents, especially her mother, since women are the right targets for market commodities (Syafri, 2014). The consumption push is legitimized on the basis of giving the child the happiest moment in her life because *sintê mungêrjê* is the final parent’s obligation. This momentum is sold and packaged in such a way that an optimal profit can be obtained.

The party industry doers know that the living standard of contemporary Gayo Lôt community is increasing. The increasing rate of the people’s economy and welfare supports the growth of lifestyle. At present, brands, modes, and how to spend leisure time can be observed easily. This diagnose is very useful to identify community as party business market. Some people’s addict to hold a party is

supported with the availability of loans from a financial institution or put-off payment from the party industry doers themselves (such as paying the party expenses after the reception is over with the hope that they can pay it from the envelopes they will get from the guests).

Pre-wedding activities have also been introduced in the last few years, by offering a documentation of a memorable moment which is sometimes related to an identity construction (Mahameruaji, 2014). The study of Amanda (2019) considers the presence of pre-wedding photos is an expression of a “narcissi image” which shows “the bride’s polished image”. The image is an entity they are dreaming of, which shows the “couple’s individualistic position” which is “immortalized” in a picture frame.

Villagers can hardly resist the party industry doers who capitalize pre-wedding activities although it is contrary to the *sumang* norm. The *sumang* norm in Gayo Land, a moral system that avoids an action that is diverged from the conventional manners (Pinan dalam Syukri, 2017), no longer functions optimally because of the changing situation, and furthermore the village community are not as solid as in the past in maintaining the norm. Nowadays, having a date is a common thing in the process of introduction between a man and a woman before marriage, and the *sumang* norm is no longer an external structure, binding and even forcing an individual to be compliant with it, as Durkheim believed. The more a young man and a woman accustomed to going out together, the easier this pre-wedding business flourish.



Source: Instagram Delta Photography Takengon, Instagram Argal Otoy, and PublicInsta.com

Figure 5. Pre-wedding Photos of Today’s Culture

Meanwhile, the flourish of catering business to serve a wedding reception has also weakened the village solidarity until the lowest point. This makes the preparation work used to be handled by *Rêjê* together with the village community gone. In some parties held in a hotel, all the responsibilities are handed over to the hotel management by purchasing a certain package. Hotel indeed offers a prestigious image. The host does not need to be bothered, and that is the real difference between a party and a feast. In a party held in a hotel, all the family members wear makes-up and get well-dressed, while in a feast all the family members get together sweating but they really enjoy it, making fun of each other; sometimes you can hear a shout “*ahooooi wiw*”. In a party held in a hotel the guests will have foods and beverages, but they have a standing party, which sometimes arises a controversy on the basis of religion (Mardiastuti, 2016). In a feast, however, the people will sit face-to-face together enjoying the food, and sometimes their knees will meet (*dêmu uku*), although recently a buffet system has been introduced, and this system was at first insinuated by the elders with *mangan pë iakad* (just to eat, we need an agreement!) the appearance of the buffet system makes the term *batang êdang* forgotten by the Gayonese.

Observation in the field also shows an exposure of profession identity in a party held in a party building. During the marriage ceremony of an IPDN alumnus, both the groom and his friends are present wearing IPDN uniforms. The uniform signifies who they are and what their status is. In fact there are many IPDN alumni who are the local government officials’ children.

For the last note and also a criticism to Baudrillard, data in field shows that party commodities are bought because the sign-value or symbolic values as what Baudrillard thought cannot be generalized. When we observed the *sintê môrep* procession carried out by one Muhammadiyah disciple in Central Aceh, the religious group which is called *kom mudê* by Bowen (1993) was able to reject some of the external influences that were trying to get into the system of symbolic meaning or the signified that they have so far believed.



Some of the Muhammadiyah disciples in Central Aceh hold a marriage contract activity without keyboard. The problem does not lie in the entertainment, but the content of the entertainment does not comply with the religious values. The marriage contract activity is carried out according to the religion rules. Interestingly, some Muhammadiyah disciples still perform Gayo customs in a series of marriage procession. Historically, this situation was the result of the preaching the Gayonese religious leaders presented after the break-up regeneration of new religious leaders (Arfiansyah, 2020). On the other hand, other religious groups like Salafi do not only fiercely reject keyboard and party culture, but there is also a tendency to reject most of the procession in Gayonese culture itself.

Fatwa or legal opinion put forward by Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah is still likely to be heard because it is controlled and implemented collectively. The teaching that is maintained is having a marriage contract according to capacity, not arrogantly, nor exclusively. Consumption must be carried out in balance (*at-tawazun*), not stingy but not extravagant (*tabdhir*) nor superfluous (*israf*) in order to get benefits (*maslahah*) and avoid destruction (*mafsadah*) (Hasan, 2018). If it is seen from prophetic point of view, the Prophet Muhammad Saw, as an example of Muslims and especially Gayonese people, shows a simplicity in his daily consumption (Sahidah, 2012) including carrying out a marriage contract when he married his wives.

The Muhammadiyah people ignorance towards the *sintê môrep* activity is expressed in their family because they have a strong group norm in an entity called Muhammadiyah. In this case, Muhammadiyah is still considered as a membership group and also a reference group. It is certainly difficult for anyone to oppose consumerism individually.

## 9 CONCLUSION

Based on this study it can be understood that the change of meaning *sintê mungêrjê* feast into a party culture in Gayo Lôt community is because of the reification of the signified (the process of forgetting the origin of meaning) from the denotative into a connotative level, so the original meaning changes. The process of growth and develop of the wedding party consumption culture is the result of consumerism process carried out by party industry players in Central Aceh District which is supported by a party simulation through television and social media. The simulacra work together with modern Gayonese who prefer the term “party” to the original word in Gayonese, i.e. “*sintê mungêrjê*”. On the other hand, the party industry players have been successful to capitalize the parents’ love for their children by using *sintê mungêrjê* as a party commodity.

Party culture can flourish in Gayo Lôt community because of decreasing village structure and family solidarity in the *sintê mungêrjê* procession which used to be the responsibility of *sara urang* or *sudêre*, and it becomes the responsibility of *sara inê*. *Sintê mungêrjê* feast in a collective awareness is considered as a *Rêjê* and village community activity, and now it is considered as a family activity. This change is pushed by a village democratization that goes so far that it makes the position of *Rêjê* become stuck between a bureaucrat and politician rather than a charismatic leader that can unite the people. Besides, a party culture that is infiltrated into a ritual *sintê môrep* also results from a number of factors, among others: (1) degradation of understanding customs in Gayo community; (2) Gayonese language is gradually left by its users; (3) development of urban areas; (4) the wrong use of information technology; (5) educational curricula of the New Era that ignore Gayo philosophical ethics; (6) the shift of meaning of communal work from dominant materials and force into money logic; (7) the change of type of work that does not depend on agrarian sector any more, and more middle class people who work as workers/officers; and (8) interaction, transmigration, assimilation and acculturation. In spite of that, wedding party consumerism can be slightly retained by a minority group of Muhammadiyah disciples who still comply with their religion and Gayonese culture when carrying out the ritual *sintê mungêrjê*.

This study is recommended to the Regional Government through Majelis Adat Gayo and Education and Culture Office, so the use of the local language will be encouraged, especially when using the term *sintê mungêrjê*. The use of the word party or reception should be left behind. People should be continuously given enlightenment, reminded of their awareness, and internalized with local values by involving the *Sarak Opat* officers so that Gayo can maintain the cultural originality and do not easily become the target of capitalism that potentially threatens the Gayonese custom values.



Furthermore, Majelis Adat Gayo needs to have a serious conversation with the central government as well as the local government to recommend the idea of elaborating the requirements for electing *Rêjê*, since *Rêjê* has a big role and function to keep solidarity. Before *Rêjê* election is carried out directly, it is important to enliven the local wisdom by providing a room for *Sagi Pendari* (traditional leaders, religious leaders, and village elders) to carry out *fit* and *proper test* for the *Rêjê* candidates who want to register themselves, so the elected *Rêjê* is the one that will truly understand and care for Gayonese traditional identity.

Changing is inevitability. However, the local Government is required to take care of locality aspects, especially how to manifest the motto “*agama ôrôm êdêt lagu zêt ôrôm sipêt, agama munôkôm êdêt mubêda*” (religion and customs are like substance and character, Islam judges right or wrong, and customs distinguish good and bad) or “*agama ken sênuwên, êdêt ken pêgêr*” (religion is like a plant, custom is the fence). This must be manifested through synergizing with related entities. This synergy is very important in order to fight against the common enemy called consumerism.

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