



TORTOR DANCE: PRESERVING INDONESIAN CULTURE

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Abstract - Indonesia is a multicultural country. It has many tribes, languages, rituals, and even traditional dances. One of the traditional Indonesian dances is Tortor. Batak Toba people usually perform this dance on a special occasion like wedding ceremonies. This study aims to discuss how the Tortor dance symbolizes the identity of the Batak people. In order to help the authors doing the analysis, the qualitative method was applied. To support the observation, the authors used Cultural Identity theory from Stuart Hall. The data was taken from Official Instagram account of Cultures and Tourism Office of Samosir @disbudparsamosir, @festbudayabatak and other literary works. The result shows that some posts in the above Instagram accounts attempted to portray how Batak people preserve their culture, Tortor dance.

Keywords: Batak, Cultural Identity, Instagram, Tortor dance

I. INTRODUCTION

The richness of Indonesian culture originates in its cultural diversity and regional customs, which must be preserved and protected. In Indonesia, dance is a primary artistic and cultural artefact shared by all ethnic groups. The Batak tribe is a tribe composed of numerous ethnic groups, namely Toba Batak, Mandailing Batak, Pakpak Batak, Simalungun Batak, and Angkola Batak. It is known that the Batak tribe in ancient times consisted of only the Toba Batak tribe. However, the Toba Batak tribe splintered into several ethnic groupings over time. Batak Toba is a tribe with a distinctive dance. In Toba Batak culture, dancing is referred to as Tortor, while dancers are typically called Panortor (Ginting, 2021).

The most profound of its motions demonstrated that Tortor is a means of communication (Maully Purba, 1989, p. 64). Tortor dance in the wedding ceremony begins with the bride and groom's entrance into the structure where the *na gok* (or complete custom) ceremony is performed. Marriage ceremonies are considered *na gok* (full custom) if the conventional processes are carried out according to the customary procedures. This is evident at the Batak ethnic wedding party in the Tangga Batu Village area, where the Tortor is no longer a communication medium. When we pay attention to the meaning of each symbol for the movements in Tortor, it can be seen that Tortor is an art that can entertain and enliven the party (Ginting, 2021).

To see how Indonesian culture especially Tortor dance is performed and preserved, people can easily access and know it through media. New media is a form of communication used in everyday life. Knowledge relying on internet-connected digital devices is the objective of new media (A. J. Udoudo et al., 2016). With new media, prospects can be more significant, more affordable, and less complicated. The media convey information efficiently and quickly (Sihombing & Lestari, 2022).

Social media is currently one of the most extensively used New Media. It is a collection of Internet-based applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content and are founded on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0. (J. van Dijck and T. Poell, 2013). Students who seek information, news, education, insights, and long-distance contacts continue to utilize social media. People that utilize social media can now converse and exchange information, including any news, without cost, location, or time constraints (Soliha, 2015).

Instagram is a social networking site for sharing photos and videos. Other Instagram users can access every photograph and video post. Typically, Instagram posts include a caption or photo explanation and a hashtag. Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms (Renata, 2021). Thus, in this study, the authors are interested in analysing the posts from Official Instagram account of Cultures and Tourism Office of

Toba Samosir @disbudparsamosir, @festbudayabatak.

In order to help the authors with the analysis, Cultural Identity from Stuart Hall was applied in this study. According to Hall (1991:21), "identity is a structured representation that achieves its positive only through the narrow eye of the negative." It must pass through the eye of the needle of the other entity before it can assemble itself. Identity is always a transitory and unstable consequence of relations that define identities by high lighting distinctions.

Individuals create their identities through interaction with society. The subject retains an inner core or essence that constitutes "the real self," yet this is continuously changed and modified by "outside" cultural settings and the identities they confer (Hall et al., 1990). Identity becomes a movable feast: it is continually formed and modified in response to how we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems in which we participate (Hall, 1987). Hence, in this study, the authors focused on how Tortor dance depicted on Instagram posts as the way to preserve identity of Batak people.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the authors applied a qualitative approach. This study focused on the posts of Official Instagram account of Cultures and Tourism Office of Samosir @disbudparsamosir and @festbudayabatak. There are several stages that we did in

this study. First, the authors selected the feed of @disbudparsamosir and @festbudayabatak that symbolize Batak culture especially Tortor dance. Second, the authors analysed the feed and correlated it with the theory of Cultural Identity from Stuart Hall. The last, the authors concluded the whole observation by revealing that the posts or feed symbolize the identity of Batak people in order to persuade the readers or internet users preserving Tortor dance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To observe how Instagram could be used as a medium to persuade Tortor dance as one of Indonesian cultures, we can observe the feed from @festbudayabatak in Figure 1.

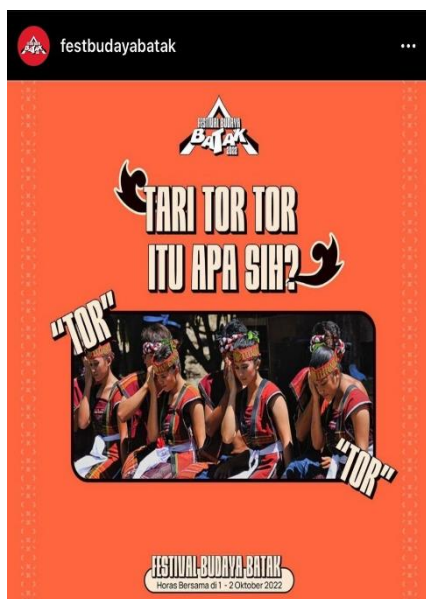


Figure 1. The history of Tortor dance

In Figure 1, we can see that @festbudayabatak posted one of Indonesian dances namely Tortor. In their post, they asked what Tortor is. From their post, the authors view that they intend to make the internet users interested in knowing this

dance. Thus, they attempted to attract people attention by asking that question to the internet users.

In a closer observation, Tortor is a dance that energizes the entire body with the required rhythm *gondang* as the center of the movement of the hands, fingers, feet, legs, back, and shoulders. Panortor is the name given to the dancers' Tortor (dance). The importance of motion in Tortor (dance) The notion of kinship *Dalihan Na Tolu* adapted the motion of the tortor (dance) to the position of the Panortor (dancer). Tortor dance is integral to any Batak celebration, such as the wedding ceremony. In marriage rituals, Tortor demonstrates that each hand movement has a meaning and value. *Maneanea* means to ask for blessings, *mamasu-masu* means to express gratitude, old *mangido* means to ask for and receive blessings, and *manomba* means to show respect for his wife's parents (Diana, 2017). Those statements are in line with Ginting (2021). He stated that the four standard hand movements (positions) in the Toba Batak Tortor, according to the dancer's position (*panortor*) in the kinship system in the life of the Toba Batak people, have meanings *Maneanea*. *Maneanea* means asking for blessings. *Mamasu-masu* means giving blessings. *Mangido tua* means asking and receiving blessing. *Manomba* means honoring the parents of (who lowers the clan). Thus, the authors view that @festbudayabatak does not only attempt to introduce Batak culture, Tortor dance to internet users but also persuade them to preserve as the cultural

identity of Batak people.

The following analysis can be seen in Figure 2.

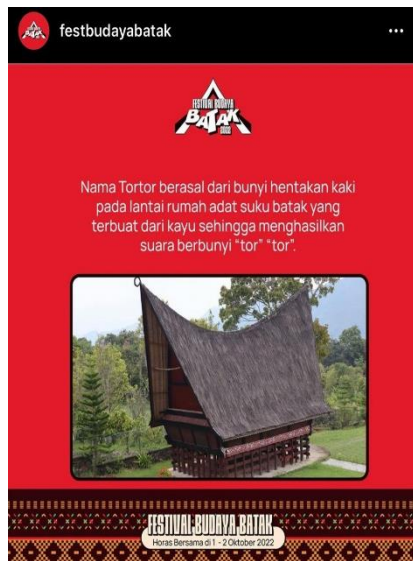


Figure 2. Traditional house of Batak tribes

In Figure 2, we can see a traditional house of Batak tribes. Based on the post, @festbudayabatak stated that that house as a symbol of Batak people has a relation with Tortor. From their post, they stated that the name of Tortor comes from the sound of the footsteps on Batak house. As the floors are made of wood, they sound “tor tor tor”.

In a closer observation, along with the growth of a tribe, traditional dwellings grow and evolve. Consequently, traditional homes are one of the defining characteristics of a tribe or group that sustains it. They embody the combined ideological, social, and material form of culture and reflect the individuality of traditional communities (Napitupulu, 1997). According to Germain & van der Goes (2002), a typical Batak home is distinguished by its remarkable roof section and elegantly and thoroughly adorned surface. Residences, meeting halls, barns, rice-milling huts, and

funeral homes are among the different forms of Batak structures. Each structure was rectangular, with a tiered floor supported by massive pillars and a pitched roof on top. The roof comprises coconut palm fiber and has a protruding triangle wall. Wood and other natural materials were used to construct building materials (Germain & van der Goes, 2002). Separate parts were joined without nails using tanggam and lumpang or knotted with palm fibers.

The house's pillars stand on a stone foundation, and the space beneath the stepped levels served as a buffalo pen. In the past, a Batak house was occupied by multiple families whose social relationships with the primary owner were indicated by their physical arrangement within the home. The family units were arranged around the fireplace, and the family room was subdivided at night by hanging mats or fabric that allowed for individual privacy (Sitindjak, et.al., 2018). They also stated that the house represents the universe, in which Debata Mulajadi na Bolon (God Almighty) might manifest as three Debata or Debata na Tolu (three universe arrangements). The upper portion of the house represents the upper world (Banua Ginjang), which is ruled by Tuan Bubi na Bolon as the Creator's home and the ancestors' ghosts as the lords of the afterlife. The center section of the house represents the middle world (Banua Tonga), which is ruled by Tuan Silaon na Bolon, as a location where human existence or mortal nature exists. The underside of the house is a

metaphor of the underworld (Banua Toru), which is ruled by Tuan Pane na Bolon as the realm of bad spirits (the kingdom of darkness) (Sitindjak, et.al., 2018). Hence, I see that @festbudayabatak post attempts to persuade internet users to preserve Indonesian cultural heritage which is Tortor dance as a part of Batak identity.

The last analysis is taken from Official Instagram account of Cultures and Tourism Office of Samosir @disbudparsamosir, Figure 3.



Figure 3. Tortor dance movement

In Figure 3, we can see many Tortor dancers with their movements. Basically, Tortor is a performance that reflects the lifestyle of the Toba Batak people. It is always present in ceremonial activities, regardless of the ceremony, including the *tonggul panaluan tortor*, *saoan tortor performed at the treatment ceremony*, *tortor at the saur matua ceremony*, *mangido udan paramean* in the *mangido udan ceremony*, *martumba tortor*, and so on (Heniwaty, et.al., 2019).

The presentation of tortor is accompanied by the traditional music of Batak Toba *gondang sabangunan* or *gondang hasapi*. Tortor presentation with *gondang* must be

offered for the Toba Batak community, as tortor cannot be presented without *gondang*. Both become an intrinsic and inseparable component of the Toba Batak tribe's ongoing cycle of ceremonial ceremonies. In its implementation, manortor contains requirements consistent with *gondang*, which was played. All of these have become standards for the execution of every ceremony (Heniwaty, et.al., 2019).

Tortor has evolved into a traditional Toba Batak dance. Toba Batak Tortor is a dance that illustrates the life path of the Toba Batak tribe. It demonstrates bravery, loyalty, and authority, and they use tortor as a material in several activities. Toba Batak Tortor is a dance with a format in its presentation and a characteristic on *urdot* (leg motions executed with a count of two beats) that appears simple at first glance. However, the characteristic movement of the Toba Batak tortor is quite difficult, as the coordination between the leg motions and hand gestures, as well as the different beats and counts, make this dance fascinating. In addition to *urdot motions*, Toba Batak tortors frequently do *sombah* motions by bending their heads with the *sombah* facing upward, a gesture of prayer and appreciation for Debata Mula jadi nabolon. From the formation of the Toba Batak tortoise, a sequence of one-to-one motions, from the initial arrangement to the conclusion, have a narrative and a message. The musical accompaniment that serves as a standard in dance also serves as an accompaniment that provides the dancer a sense (*panortor*) (Heniwaty, et.al., 2019). They also argue that as a historical artifact, Batak Toba Tortor merits

consideration, as many of the performance's characteristics convey the significance of loyalty, fraternity, struggle, and authority, which are essential qualities in human life. From the observation, it can be interpreted that the post from @disbudparsamosir attempts to show Indonesian cultural heritage that must be preserved. It is Tortor dance. By reading the post, the authors view that they hope the readers can build strong awareness in preserving Tortor dance as a part of Batak identity.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, media is one of the platforms that can influence the internet users. One of the influences that media offer is cultural heritage issue. Tortor dance is one of them. By reading the posts or identifying the pictures, the internet users are expected to be more aware about their heritage. The posts shared by @disbudparsamosir and @festbudayabatak attempted to persuade us, Indonesian society to preserve Indonesian culture, which is Tortor dance. Preserving its culture is highly essential as it symbolizes cultural identity of every tribe.

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