

THE EXISTENCE OF BATAK *ULOS* IN THE AREA OF HEGEMONY

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ABSTRACT

Adat or custom is made by humans for the sake of human interest, it is hoped that the stability and order of the community are maintained through the customs that are imposed on these community groups. Culture will continue to move along with the movement of global economic activity, it also influences the development of every existing culture. The Toba Batak culture is also inseparable from these clashes. The label as an idol worshiper is synonymous with the Toba Batak culture. There are many issues and views that explain why this happened, including the result of local religious practices practiced by the Toba Batak community today such as the *Ulus* ritual labeled by Charismatic Christian Missionaries as Atheist teachings. According to them, *Ulos* must be destroyed because it is considered a magic object in which magical powers are attached and “save” the power of evil spirits. The hegemony of modernization and globalization, reinforced by the influence of religion, has made *Ulos* an object that has high values of civilization, starting to erode, especially in terms of the nature and meaning of it. In this regard, the aim of this paper is to explain the existence of *Ulos* in relation to the hegemony of modernity and the pressure of Charismatic Christian missionaries on the indigenous Batak culture. The data analysis and approach method used in this study is qualitative with the perspective of cultural studies. The results showed that the shift in meaning was getting out of control because the perpetrators were the Batak people themselves who had been exposed to a new ideology that was centered on spiritual issues. The reason that seems so biblical is used as a tool to legalize the extermination in the form of burning *Ulos* against his followers because *Ulos* is labeled loaded with demonic powers. The process of eliminating the meaning of the ancestral heritage becomes faster because the *adat* institutions no longer have the legal power to oppose the hegemony and dominance that continues.

Key words: *Ulos* Batak, hegemony, charismatic Christianity

INTRODUCTION

In the local community there are always values that are sacred or sanctified in the form of symbols, from the values and beliefs that are held. Sanctity as the ultimate value of a community is not only maintained by punishment but by rite. Meanwhile, the rites are held collectively and regularly so that society is refreshed and returned to collective knowledge and meanings. Likewise, rites become a medium for community members to remain rooted in their cultural values. One of the traditional rites practiced by the Batak tribe is Ulos, which has deep philosophical meanings and values for their cultural activities. However, this culture is now increasingly pressed for existence due to the practice of domination and religious hegemony from outside, namely Charismatic Christianity. In this connection, the purpose of this paper is to explain the existence of Ulos in relation to the hegemony of modernity and the pressure of Charismatic Christian missionaries on the indigenous Batak culture. The data analysis and approach method used in this study is qualitative with the perspective of cultural studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Development of Religion and Batak culture

The Batak region has been influenced by several different religions. Islam and Protestant Christianity entered the Batak area since the beginning of the 19th century. Islam was broadcast by the Minangkabau people since around 1810 which at this time is mostly adopted by the Batak people who live in the south, namely Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola. Those who live in the northern area are the Toba Batak (Koentjaraningrat, 1979: 112).

In the XIX century, especially in post-World War II in 1945, the Charismatic Movement experienced a triumph. After American victories in many places, including the Korean War (1950). America experienced development in industry and an abundance of materials. But spiritual emptiness also cannot be ignored, so the Charismatic Movement is easily liked by the public. One reason is that this school also teaches the Theology of Success.

The spread of Charismatic Christianity in Indonesia, especially in big cities such as Medan, Jakarta and surrounding areas, is also felt to be very intense. In teaching the charismatic movement adopts various elements and teachings that focus on things above (heaven) rather than worldly things such as customary rules. They focus on charismatic

experiences, religious fervor, and the tendency of asceticism. For them, in this age, Satan is the ruler of the world, but Allah has given humans the strength and power to defeat him and to escape all activities that originate from the world, including cultural issues.

The movement of charismatic groups to burn, and reject the existence of the Batak Ulos for reasons that seem theological is a very painful phenomenon against the harassment of the religious values of the Toba Batak tradition. The resistance of the Batak traditional haters group is getting out of control because there is no resistance from the lovers and owners of Batak culture through official institutions that have the legal power to provide resistance to the practice of arbitrariness against these ancestral objects. Indeed, that in the context of instilling values, religion has social values that can be shared with the community in order to properly regulate and optimize life together. Religious leaders are informal leaders who have a significant role in instilling good values in society (Simanjuntak, 2015: 28). This condition is even more ludicrous because the perpetrators of the rejection actually come from within the Batak community itself who have been exposed to a new ideology that campaigns for standard norms based on alkitab but is wrong from the true meaning of the Bible itself. This group considers Ulos to be an unclean object and part of an idol product, so it must be destroyed. They do this with the assumption that obeying, living, loving and truly loving Allah should no longer be attached to worldly things.

The Dynamics of Batak Tribe Identity

Batak people often refer to themselves as *Bangso* Batak. This is in accordance with the inherent history of the Batak tribe which has its own kingdom, it is marked by its existence as a tribe that already has God with the name "Mulajadi Nabolon" (creator of everything that exists), has handicrafts, Batak script, has had separate money with the name Ringgit Batak (Ringgit *Sitio Suara*), a diverse musical instrument (*uning-uningan na marragam*) has its own culture and customs, and has a law (*tuho*) which functions as a standard of norms / rules inherent from generation to generation .

Ulos (woven cloth) Batak is known as an identity for the Batak ethnic group according to their cultural and customary treasures. The Batak tribe has a handicraft called "Ulos Batak" which is interpreted as having its own values according to its type and function. *Ulos* means cloth woven specifically for custom. The woven cloth resembles *Ulos* but not for customary purposes, not *Ulos* (Sianipar, 1991: 222). The diversity of *Ulos* has been determined

according to the meaning and purpose of the gift. The work of ancestral heritage is full of aesthetic values and at the same time as part of the identity of the Batak people themselves. As part of identity, in every activity of Batak community life, both in joy and sorrow, *Ulos* will become objects that stick and always color the life of the Batak community itself.

For the Toba Batak community, *Ulos* is also interpreted as a symbol of warmth considering the weather conditions in the Batak region with cold and humid natural temperatures. Apart from *Ulos*, other symbols of warmth for the Batak people are: sun and fire. Apart from being a very important tool in supporting the continuity of their daily life, *Ulos* is also used as a medium to convey beautiful advices (blessings or messages) from the giver to the recipient of *Ulos* which is practiced through the rules and norms inherent in every process of implementing customs.

The Batak ancestors creatively coined the term `` *Ulos* " which cannot be rotten (*Ulos naso ra bad*), which is a plot of land or rice fields. In certain circumstances the hula-hula (party giver of the daughter) can also give the daughter (*boru*) a plot of land called *Ulos*, which cannot be rotten. In addition, the term *Ulos* is woven in a day (*Ulos na tinonun sadari*), which is in the form of money whose function is considered the same as *Ulos*.

As a work that is full of high religiosity, *Ulos* has become part of an identity that has high cultural and civilizational values and has economic and social meanings. Therefore the distribution / distribution of *Ulos* will never proceed arbitrarily without adhering to the meanings and values that have been determined based on agreed customary rules and norms. This means that *Ulos* will be given and received by people who have been right based on the existing norms and rules by referring to the Batak Dalihan Natolu customary philosophy (*Tungku nantiga*) according to the type and meaning inherent in each of these *Ulos* sheets. As a symbol, the function and position of a person in the implementation of the Toba Batak traditional event will be known through the type of *Ulos* that is used, accepted, as well as a symbol of the existence of the recipient and giver in the traditional Batak order.

Specifically in the pre-Christian days, *Ulos* or everyday textiles were used as a medium (intermediary) for giving blessings (*pasu-pasu*) from parents-in-law to daughters / daughters, grandparents to grandchildren, uncles (*bones*) to nieces (*bere*), and from the king to the people or to someone who is hired. Along with the process of embedding *Ulos*, the giver (who is respected) will give a string of beautiful and poetic words in the form of blessings (*umpasa*) and messages (*tona*) to warm the soul of the recipient.

Batak *ulos* according to the type and variety, length and width varies greatly depending on the type and meaning inherent in it. There are times when it reaches approximately 2 meters with a width of 70 cm (usually joined so that it can be used to wrap the body) which is woven by hand without the touch of modern technology. The time spent weaving one sheet of *Ulos* also depends on the type or variety, sometimes it takes weeks or months depending on the complexity of the motifs attached to the type of *Ulos* being worked on. Basically, *Ulos* workers (weavers) are women whose work is carried out under the house.

***Ulos* shifting meaning**

Along with the development of modernization and globalization, various phenomena of human life have sprung up with very varied varieties and styles. For certain groups of people, there are times when they break away from the bondage of this culture because they are considered contrary to the values of the new culture that are adopted. The social movement he builds is by instilling a set of beliefs and actions to promote and hinder change in society (Atang, 2018: 63)

The entry of Christianity brought by German and Dutch missionaries greatly influenced the shift in the meaning and function of *Ulos* in Batak society. At first, the Batak ancestors began to hegemony by imitating European costumes, namely men in shirts and trousers and Batak women in dresses and skirts imitating Western dress patterns. With this condition, *Ulos* slowly began to be abandoned as a costume or daily clothes, except for certain events. As Western influence increasingly entered the lives of the Batak people, the use of *Ulos* as daily clothing became increasingly rare. As a result, the existence, meaning and function of *Ulos* as everyday costumes (clothing) are increasingly reduced even considered as "sacred" items because the process of making, interpreting and placing them in accordance with the custom order is polarized in orientation as "magical" or "sacred" objects.

The mindset of the Batak community towards the shift in the meaning of *Ulos* is in line with the hegemony of church teachings, the current of globalization and modernization which tends to be very effective in influencing everyone to shift more towards various modern-based products. With this phenomenon, some Batak people began to be suspicious (stereotyped) of the true nature of *Ulos* even though some of them still considered it to be a truly lucky and beneficial object for social life and community religiosity.

The most famous figurehead of Christianity in Batak land is Dr. Ingwer Lodewijk Nomensen under the zending flag RMG (Rheinische Mission Gessellschaft) based in Barmen-Germany. The essence of *Nomensen's* teaching is to change the perspective of the Toba Batak people who are bound by atheist teachings to new teachings, namely knowing and acknowledging and practicing in their lives that the source of everything in human life is God who is in the person of Jesus Christ, not belief and belief in spirits and ancestral spirits with all the symbols attached to them. The source of salvation, warmth and success in human life comes from God, not human objects or products such as customs, traditions, *Ulos* and other objects of ancestral heritage.

The rejection of the *Nomensen* teachings against traditional practices that are wrapped in the Toba Batak culture has met with very strong resistance from the Toba Batak community even though there are also some people who follow them which are then converted into a new form of understanding as understood and practiced by the Toba Batak community at this time. As a result, the Toba Batak people now live in a dualistic understanding, (completely ambiguous) which means that the Batak people continue to practice cultural teachings while at the same time adhering to Christian teachings under the influence of modernization and globalization. Amir Piliang (2006) states that postmodern humans are deconstructive, constructive, or dual (Ardika, 2015: 41). On the other hand, the Batak people who recognize themselves as Batak people but reject all forms of Batak cultural teachings by distancing themselves from traditional practices and even trying to get rid of them.

Meaning of the value of cultural religiosity

Adat is made by humans for the sake of human interest, it is hoped that the stability and order of the community are maintained through and by custom (Daeng, 2008: 13). Culture will continue to move along with the movement of global economic activity, it also influences technological developments. So the logical consequence is that the uncontrolled exchange of information will have an impact on secularization and globalization, so that it will undoubtedly affect culture in every place on earth. As part of the impact of the strong de-regionalization in modern times, it inevitably forces humans to re-conceptualize the culture that is being embraced and carried out in the continuity of their daily lives.

Historical records show that culture too was a subject of frequent collision. He clashed with other cultures that came and came from outside and from within his own country. And

the thing that most often clashes is the clash between culture and religion. In its turmoil, very often culture is higher than religion, or culture can become equivalent to religion, or a higher religion so that culture is neglected. Some even consider culture to be like an "enemy" that must be destroyed and destroyed because it is considered an idol or a manifestation of belief in ancestral spirits, but there are also those who try to integrate culture with religion, which in its development will become syncretic.

The Toba Batak culture is also inseparable from these clashes. The label as an idol worshiper (*Sipelebegu*) is synonymous with the Toba Batak culture. There are many issues and views that explain why this happened, including the result of the practices practiced by the Toba Batak community today which are said to be still unchanged from the practices practiced by their ancestors who are full of cultural elements that are tied to Atheist teachings. Rituals such as digging up the bones of ancestors (*mangongkal holi*), monument parties, *mangalahat horbo* and others. One effect of the development of the paradigm is the practice of burning Ulos by charismatic Christian groups. According to them, *Ulos* must be destroyed because it is considered a magic object in which magical powers are attached and "save" the power of evil spirits. Its stream is a stream of exclusivity that does not recognize customs, only recognizes its teachings and groups of people (Napitupulu, 2012: 312)

Rejection of this cultural product has clearly eliminated the aesthetic value inherent in any existing cultural heritage, they do not appreciate and appreciate the various benefits and meanings of each element of cultural heritage which has been proven to be able to present very positive bonds of social relations between community adherents. The aesthetic value of a cultural heritage can be enjoyed in the present regardless of the context in the past. Thus it does not rule out that the aesthetic value of today's society will be different from the aesthetic value of society in the past. (Ardika, 2007: 24)

CONCLUSION

Culture is indeed something that is very slippery, difficult to define, and is in constant motion. That is what makes him unique and must be closely monitored. Culture is something inherent in humans, so he holds a very central role in regulating human life itself. There are also many controversies or clashes in it and one of the cultural products that is (still) being discussed is the controversy of burning *Ulos*. There are several reasons why *Ulos* are

considered unclean by certain groups of people and this is their main motive until finally they confidently burn and destroy *Ulos* from their position as religious creatures.

Attitudes towards culture must be selectively open, meaning that humans must remain open to existing customs and cultures, although not all types of culture must be completely accepted, they must still be selected which ones are good and which are not. In addition, culture must also undergo transformation or renewal, so that agents of change and innovators are needed to be able to make it happen properly. This is in accordance with the motto of the Batak ancestors who stated: *Ompu parjolo martungkot siala gundi, pinungka ni parjolo sipadengganon na di pudi* (what the ancestors have made, should be improved by the next generation.) The correct attitude towards culture is to make improvements to everything. Something that is proven to be contradictory to present values, not to eliminate or even harass it without any remedy.

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