

Educational values in the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to investigate the ritual process in terms of meanings and values of the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual ceremony and the presentation in the context of the Batak Karo ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanan*. This was a qualitative descriptive study using an ethnographic method. The research setting was Semangat Gunung village, Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The informants were Batak Karo artists and lecturers of traditional Batak Karo music at the State University of Medan. The results of the study show that *Erpangir Ku Lau* contains meanings and values of social, cultural, and multicultural education, reflected in the lyrics of oral literature from the spells of the ritual ceremony chanted in ritual songs such as 'Simalungun rayat', 'odak-odak', and 'Patam-patam'.

1 INTRODUCTION

All aspects of art, including art exhibition groups that developed in certain ethnics can be examined in two aspects, namely the aesthetic aspect and the functional aspect. The aesthetic aspect focuses on several things about the beauty of a work, including form (proportion), subtlety, colour, harmony, etc. related to the aesthetic concept. On the other hand, the function of art is related to how far the art can serve people. Art has also a role as a media for various rituals that are usually in line with a religious system or a prevailing custom system.

The Batak Karo community living to the north of Toba Lake, which is called *Tanah Karo* in the Batak language, has land of 5000 km². Tanah Karo, geographically, covers most of Dairi, Deli Serdang, and Langkat Regencies. In the north, Tanah Karo borders Aceh Province.

In Batak Karo culture, one of the most important aspects as the guiding point for social integration and ethnic identity for the Batak Karo people is *merga* (clan). The Batak Karo people use a patriarchal system, meaning that the lineage and inheritance rights of each clan is handled by the males. Batak Karo people from the same *merga* (clan) like to live in groups, based on the same *merga* (clan). Since they have one ancestor, even if it is not by blood, they are considered as family since they come from the same clan.

Additionally, the Batak Karo people also have an art tradition supported by music, dance, performance, fine art, etc. There are two types of ensemble in Batak Karo musical culture, that is, *Gendang Lima Sendalanan* and *Gendang Telu Sendalanan*. *Gendang Lima Sendalanan* is an ensemble consisting of five types of musical instruments, namely: a *sarune* (double reed aerophone), which is a double-tongue wind instrument; a *gendang singindungi* (single head conical drum), which has a membrane at one end shaped like a cone; a *gendang singanaki* (single head conical drum), which has one-base membrane shaped like a cone; a *gung* (gongs), which is a gong with a *pencu*; *penganak* (gongs), which is also a gong with a *pencu*. Meanwhile, *Gendang Telu Sendalanan* consists of three types of musical instrument, namely: a *kulcapi* (long neck lute, two-stringed), which is a two-stringed musical instrument with a neck; a *keteng-keteng* (two-stringed idiochord tube zither), which is a tube-shaped musical instrument with two strings on the body of the instrument; a *mangkuk mbentar/mangkuk putih* (Tarigan, 2004).

The Batak Karo ethnic people have a distinctive religious system which believes in the creator and ruler of the universe having infinite power. Traditionally, in the Karo ethnic origin, there is a religion combining its belief system of 'all-spirit' and gods which is harmonious and complementary. In the concept of dynamism and animism, Karo ethnic people believe that their lives are surrounded by a cosmic power, applying myths to understand life and their environment.

Such a religion is called *Pemena* or *Perbegu*. Related to the people's belief of the concept of 'all-spirit', their activities are automatically characterised by rituals to worship the spirits considered as the ruler of the universe and to bring luck as well as anything related to human life. One of the rituals performed by the Batak Karo people that will be discussed in this study is *Erpangir Ku Lau*, although there are other rituals based on Batak belief.

Considering the complex cultural diversity in the ritual ceremonies of the Batak Karo people, and related to the traditional art in the form of music, the author would like to analyse educational values in the social structure of Batak Karo people, that is, *rakut sitelu*, through *Gendang Lima Sendalanan* in the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Etymologically, the word 'culture' comes from the Latin 'colera' which means maintaining, prioritising, and upholding. As time passed, the word 'colera' changed into 'cultura', which means human mind (Dewantara, 1967, p. 72). Generally, culture is the root of the human mind containing the nature of nobility, tenderness, ethic, and aesthetic, either physical or spiritual aspects of human life (Dewantara, 1967, p. 77). According to Koentjaraningrat (1990: 180), it is stated that culture is a system in which its entirety contains ideas, actions, and results that are useful for the society, which has to preserve it in the future.

According to Rostiyati (1995, p. 74), the educational value of culture is something considered to be good and valuable by the ethnic group or tribe, yet it is not always considered to be good by other ethnic groups or tribes since a cultural value limits and gives characteristics to a certain community and its culture. Cultural value is the most-abstract level of custom and life, rooted in people's minds, so that it is hard to be replaced by another culture in a short time. Cultural values in human life exist because humans interpret space and time. The interpretation will be inter-subjective because it is grown individually, but it is shared, accepted, and approved by the community, being an integrated background for the phenomenon described. The system of cultural values is the core of the culture that will influence and manage elements existing in the surface structure of human life, including behaviour as the unity of symptoms and objects as material unity. Based on the opinion above, it can be said that the cultural-educational value system has a central and important position in the cultural framework which is abstract and can only be expressed or explained through observation of the more real symptoms and material objects as the result of expressing value concepts through patterned-behaviour.

According to Evans-Pritchard (2013, p. 154), every community, in spite of its very simple form, will have a form of family life, recognition of family ties, economic and political systems, social status, religion, and conflict solutions as well as punishment for criminals, and others in addition to material culture, which is a collection of knowledge of the universe, techniques, and tradition.

The term *Gendang Lima Sendalanan* in the Karo language is basically defined as music. Additionally, *gendang* also has some definitions based on the word following it, such as *gendang* as a music instrument (*Gendang Anakna/Singanaki*, *Gendang Indungna/Singindungi*), *gendang* as an ensemble (*Gendang Sarune/Gendang Lima Sendalanan*), *gendang* as a repertoire (*Gendang Guru*), *gendang* as a composition (*Gendang Simalungen Rayat*), and *gendang* as a ceremony (*Gendang Serayaan*).

Gendang Lima Sendalanan in this research refers to *gendang* as composition, that is, *Gendang Simalungen Rayat*, *Gendang Odak-Odak*, and so on, and *gendang* as ensemble, that is, *Gendang Sarune/Gendang Lima Sendalanan*. *Dalan gendang* is a term from the Karo language consisting of two words, that is, *dalan* and *gendang*.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is the qualitative method. Qualitative research is research aiming to describe and analyse phenomena, events, social activities, belief behaviour, perception, and notions of people as individuals or a group (Nana, 2007, p. 60).

Koentjaraningrat (2011, p. 329) regards qualitative research as ethnography, describing culture of a nation through an anthropological approach. This is confirmed by Fathoni (2006, p. 98); because the material of the cultural unity of an ethnic group in a certain place becomes the main description of an ethnographic work, it is divided into chapters concerning cultural elements based on the standard order.

In this research, data analysis will be conducted by dividing the whole *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual through the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*, and then it is analysed using Saussure's semiotic theory. Saussure's theory focuses more on the way signs (in this case, words) relate to the research objects.

This research uses Saussure's semiotic theory (Gaines, 2007), in which there are three elements, namely: signifier, signified, and signification. Those three elements will be separated and facilitated by the researcher to interpret the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*. Separation of the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual will guide the researcher in interpreting the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*. To analyse a text based on Saussure's theory, there are some steps that can be used to interpret the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*. These steps are as follows:

a. Signifier

This includes the material aspect of language: what is said, what is heard, and what is read. The signifier can also be defined as sound or writing with meaning. In this research, the signifier is the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*.

b. Signified

This is the description of a signifier; an interpretation phase of the text of the research object. In this research, it is the result of interpretation of the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*, which is related to educational values.

c. Signification

This is a process of signification after the interpretation step of the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen*. The researcher will relate the context of the music to educational values. In this research, the signification is performed by connecting the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in the context of the Batak ethnic music of *Gendang Lima Sendalanen* with educational values.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Cultural area of the Karo people

The Karo tribe is one of the Batak sub-tribes in North Sumatera, Indonesia, so it is often called Batak Karo. Karo, besides being the name of a Batak sub-tribe, is also the name of the administrative city, that is, the Karo regency area that covers the entire Karo highlands. The description of the Karo people's domicile can be seen and understood through Neuman's book about the Karo people's cultural life (Tarigan, 2009, p. 36), where it is stated that the area inhabited by the Karo tribe is bounded, in the east, by the road separating the highlands from Serdang. In the south, it is bounded by the Biang river (which is named as the Wampu river if it enters Langkat); in the west it is bounded by Sinabung mountain, and in the north, it extends to the lowlands of Deli and Serdang.

Based on the description of the area of the Karo people's domicile, there are undoubtedly some groups of people living in the beach area who are neighbours of Malays, and the two tribes gradually blended and acculturated with each other. Thus, the Karo people spread and

acculturated with other tribes, resulting in different names for their community areas, namely, Karo Kenjulu, Karo Teluh Dereng, Karo Singalor Lau, Karo Baluren, Karo Langkat, Karo Timur, and Karo Dusun.

4.2 *The process of the erpangir Ku Lau ritual in the tourist attraction of Lau Sidebuk-debuk bathing in Semangat Gunung Village, Karo regency*

Batak Karo people in the tourist attraction of Lau Sidebuk-debuk bathing in Semangat Gunung village, Karo regency, still preserve traditional culture, which is the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual, and they still uphold the tribe's belief, called 'Pemena' in Batak Karo language. This belief still holds that supernatural power and ancestors' spirits exist in the world, guarding their descendants from distress. In the concepts of dynamism and animism, the Batak Karo people still believe that their lives are surrounded by cosmic power. They also use myths to understand the rite of the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual of the Batak Karo people living in Semangat Gunung village, Lau Sidebuk-debuk, Karo regency.

The *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual is carried out by Culture Department of Karo regency to maintain Batak Karo ethnic culture. The reasons for the Batak Karo people in Semangat Gunung village, Lau Sidebuk-debuk bathing still performing the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual are as follows:

- a. The *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual shows gratitude for ancestors' spirits blessing their descendants who now get good luck, are kept away from danger, get an abundant harvest, and recover from any diseases.
- b. Batak Karo people perform the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual to keep their descendants away from misfortune, and their ancestors will save them by giving warnings through dreams.

4.3 *The Sendalanan ensemble interpreting the steps of the Erpangir Ku Lau ritual*

Considering the function of each musical instrument integrated in *Gendang Lima Sendalanan*, *sarune* is the carrier of the main melody and *gendang singanaki* is the accompaniment that produces the rhythm or a certain rhythmic pattern playing repeatedly in one or more compositions. At the beginning of each composition, *gendang singindungi* introduces various rhythmic patterns, which are different from those brought by *gendang singanakin*, but they will follow the rhythmic pattern of *gendang singanaki* repeatedly, so they seem mono-rhythmic. *Penganak* and *gung* function as accompaniments that generate a repetitive beat pattern and as tempo/speed regulators to make each composition stable or constant.

4.4 *Creative multicultural educational values (culture and community)*

Based on the *Mangmang* and *Enjungken Mayang* music described above, the *Erpangir Ku Lau* tradition has existed in the Karo community giving a sense of past times reflected in the form of culture, and it has been inherited through generations. In this case, symbols and behaviour rules selected through acculturation become heritage in the form of sociocultural continuity from the past preserved until now.

As time goes by, the tradition changes through the acculturation process in terms of living place, from an individual to another as well as from one generation to another generation. It makes the living culture become the vital element as the basic principles in forming a cultural landscape. Thus, culture becomes something that has been created by the Karo people as a place to live in for people running their activities. These cultural spaces fill the spatial parts of rural areas, and possibly urban areas, as a place to organise their collective activities, along with cultural values and the architectural design that have been put in their type of building as a place to live in with their family and community. In totality, the values contained in an environment where people live creates a special place for them. In their daily activities, symbols of social status can be realised in the architectural form or style appearing in the *Erpangir Ku Lau* tradition of the Karo people, along with its social strata.

5 CONCLUSION

Erpangir Ku Lau is a ritual ceremony of Batak Karo ethnic music contains meanings and values of social, cultural, and multicultural education. It can be used as a reference to internalise the educational values of the community's life. It is a way to stimulate people to understand and to identify the meaning as well as the values in the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual, which is possible to be implemented in other communities.

Considering the benefits of examining and understanding the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual in re-developing internal values, there are some suggestions to be addressed:

1. Teachers teach about cultural values contained in the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual as a way to instil educational values in the next generation of the Karo community.
2. Karo people are expected to not merely follow the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual but also understand its educational values as well as know the values of the ritual as a basic educational value.
3. The regional government should pay more attention more to the local culture and preserve the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual by creating other types of music supporting the ritual in order to preserve the values of the *Erpangir Ku Lau* ritual.

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