

## **Batak Opera Business Revitalization in Strengthening the Creative Industry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Batak Opera time to dominate the world of entertainment in North Sumatra finally torpor after the decade of the 1980s. Many attempts were made to revive the art that was born around the 1920s. One was by HS Thompson theater workers. This artist Opera Batak start revitalization movement by holding a variety of performances Opera Batak in North Sumatra and several cities in the country in 2002, which initiated the Training Center Opera Batak (PLOT) in Siantar. For the Batak, Batak Opera is a traditional willingness entertainment is very popular in his time. Opera created Tilhang Oberlin Gultom Batak artist is inspired by the Malay theater group. But in its development, Opera Batak began to sink after the maestro Tilhang Oberlin Gultom died in 1970. Entertainment folk art ever to enter the palace at the time of President Sukarno increasingly marginalized from public attention. Dozens of opera group formed by students Tilhang, slowly falling, and the players can no longer survive then choose to return to its original habitat. This article will try to explain how the Batak Opera revitalization effort can serve as a creative industry in the middle of the swift currents sweeping modernization of the country. As the creative industries, Batak Opera course, must be maintained and packed more professional as the richness of Indonesian culture. Culture-based creative industries such as these have the power to be developed. Culture industry serves to give comfort associated with emotion, expression, and have a tendency appeal to the masses, while the creative industries can develop a basic human need that crave entertainment.

**Keywords:** *batak opera, strengthening communities, the creative industries*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia has a rich oral tradition that is scattered in each area. Oral tradition as the nation's cultural wealth is a form of cultural expression of the region is very valuable, not only to save the cultural values of a traditional society, but could also be the cultural roots of a new society. In a sense, the oral tradition can be a source for a new cultural creation (Esten, 1999: 105),

Meanwhile, according Pudentia (1998: 32-35) The oral tradition was conceived like orality. Mentioned oral tradition (oral tradition) covers all things related to literature, language, history, biography, and a wide range of knowledge and other art forms are passed from mouth to mouth. So not only includes the oral tradition of folklore, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, mythology, and legends as many people understand. The oral tradition is also associated with cognitive system of culture, such as history, law and medicine. So not only includes the oral tradition of folklore, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, mythology, and legends as many people understand. The oral tradition is also related to the cognitive system of culture, such as history, law and medicine.

One form of the richness of Indonesian culture is the traditional theater. But like most traditions inherent in our daily life in the past tended to be eroded by modernization. Like any other

type of art, traditional theater was consequently only be window-dressing in special places as a sign that we still love the traditions of the ancestors. Traditional theater performances as well as other types of traditional arts are not so strong to compete with other forms of modern art in the realm of public life. Slow development of traditional theater reflects the culture of injustice experienced by the artists (read: theater) in Indonesia.

Observing the development of theater tradition, it is clear that the theater departed from the oral tradition. Theater of this type rely on the power of memory or collective memory instead of memorization script text to be displayed. No wonder the theatrical tradition in Indonesia, many of which play spontaneously with a strong and able to interact with the audience is qualified. The verbal theater tradition in several cities in Indonesia began to be considered as capital or potential repertoire of national culture in which there is a combination of art performances by folklore story of a region. The audience did not just watch, but also a unique story full of messages from local stories sung players this verbal theater.

## **METHOD**

One of the areas in Sumatra, which has a strong tradition of oral theater is the area of North Sumatra. In this area known art and Batak Toba ethnic Malays. In Batak Toba, known theatrical tradition of the Opera Batak. In the Dutch colonial era, the early twentieth century, the condition of art which is only involved in the ceremony, as well as the condition of the people repressed by the invaders, an artist named Tilhang Oberlin Gultom sparked the idea to establish the art displayed outside the ceremony. This art was inaugurated by dean-dean indigenous name that means Tilhang Parhasapi musician. Tilhang Parhasapi which is the forerunner of the Opera Batak Tilhang Sirindo (Purba, 2002: 28). Opera in Batak, is one of the artistic tradition evolved accidentally gets influenced by foreign cultures.

Opera Batak is a kind of theater performances oral tradition that began in 1925 when Tilhang Oberlin Gultom founded an art group called Tilhang Parhasapi. Batak Opera has long been known in the realm of the arts of Indonesia. Opera Batak never experienced the glory of the golden age. This art is experiencing a period reflux, even rarely heard since the 1980s. Batak Traditional Arts appeared in 1925 that when kejayaannya often staged by traveling from village to village and even from city to city. Batak society at that time always expect the presence of Opera is to be staged in the village. Opera Batak is one kind of folk art contained in Batak society.

In its heyday, opera group amounted to 30s. Among them: Serindo, Serada, Rompemas, Seribudi, Roos, Ropeda, Serbungas, Roserda, Sermino and others. Opera presents the stage play interspersed with songs, dances and comedy. Uning-uningan accompanying music or traditional Batak set of musical instruments consisting of flute, harp, flute, garantung, odap and hesek. The stage was simple but unique. The shape resembles a traditional house and decorated gorga Batak (Batak typical engraving) as well as the name of the opera. Stage deliberately given a painting or property as the story demands. A curtain into the interface cover scene changes or when the event switched to the interlude song, dance or comedy.

Siregar (2006: 45) says is a kind of drama Opera Batak Toba society by enacting various stories such as legends, myths, epics, and the problems of everyday life. Drama Opera Batak usually performed at night as folk performances by quoting the ticket / payment. Opera Batak is a traditional art that uses the media as a vehicle for the expression of the theater stage. Opera Batak combine theatrical elements to convey meaning and purpose to the audience. Thus the Batak Opera can not be separated from the elements of folk theater they had practiced in everyday life.

In the early 90s, Opera Batak again raised in the spirit of revitalization with the development era. Opera Batak no longer worked with the traditional approach but has been modified to conform with technological developments. But as the traditional arts, the Opera Batak had not left the

hallmark of the model cultivation stage. As most of the traditional theater that does not rely on the manuscript text, Opera Batak remain more reliant on the strength of the players in the dialogue. Players are only given the theme of the story and they are welcome to develop with improvisation. Some characteristics that stand out are typical in traditional theater. Based on the latest development of this form of folk theater performances,

1. The story is presented without a script and worked on by the events of history, fairy tales, mythology, or daily life
2. Presentation of the story is done through dialogue, singing and dancing
3. The elements of clowning through a comedian character (bodor) always appears throughout the story
4. Values and dramatic spontaneous behavior, in every scene there are two elements at the same emotion, the laughing and crying
5. Performances using drumming or traditional musical instruments
6. Viewers to follow the show in a relaxed and intimate. Often the emergence of a direct dialogue between the actors and the audience
7. The venue is open in the form of theater arena (surrounded by the audience)

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Structure of Batak Opera Performance**

Theater tradition in the archipelago largely born of religious traditions who have lived in the past. The original religious system, Hindu-Buddhism, and Islam is not uncommon mixed together in the staging of art. Therefore, the structure of the theatrical tradition in general have in common in various places in this archipelago. It is also found in the Opera Batak. As a traditional theater performances, Opera Batak have a general structure as found in the theater tradition. The general structure of the traditional theater performances are as described below:

1. The show begins with drumming (tatalu) as a marker that the show was about to begin. This tetabuhan long been dependent on the gathering of spectators around the venue
2. Leader of the group or mastermind then perform rituals invoking the protection to the four winds. The process is done by chanting a ritual incantation or tattoo, and burn incense (incense). This process sometimes use a dance performed by the puppeteer or the group leader
3. Once the ritual is complete, appears a group of dancers who bring the dances entertainer. The emergence of the dancers is a sign that the show has been detached from the feel of ritual and nothing to do with certain religious ceremonies
4. The story begins by presenting the story in a linear structure. The elements of melodrama often be hold in this traditional theatrical performances. The story is divided into several sections so it feels round or long
5. At the turn round time lag is always filled with entertainment, such as singing and dancing. In many theatrical performances folk tradition, this part is favored because at this time the audience can dance together dancers give a certain amount of money. Frequent pauses between innings lasted long enough to show the whole story can end before the morning
6. End of the show closed with dances and prayers of thanks. All the players usually perform in front of an audience to thank. The entire show was closed with drumming back as the beginning of the show.

### **Oral Aspect of Batak Opera**

Opera Batak as a cultural heritage for generations and have strength in oral communication at the show. Oral communication, writing BH Hoed (2005: 184) have special properties, namely (1)

production using speech synthesizers, sedangkan acceptance of using the sense of hearing; (2) except in telephone communication or oral communication in the darkness, sender and receiver to see the face and the body respectively; (3) except for receiving communication through the tape, basically there is no time gap between production and reception.

Opera Batak inherited as part of folklore as well. Folklore can be interpreted as an expression of the culture of a society through speech language directly related to various aspects of culture, such as religion and belief, legislation, economic activity, kinship, and the composition of the social values of the community. In the past, the folklore passed down through the generations from one generation to the next within a given population. According Danandjaja, among the characteristics of folklore, among others:

1. Deployment and inheritance done verbally
2. Traditional nature, ie live in a culture in less than two generations
3. Is spoken, so manifest in various versions
4. Is anonymous, the name of its creator is no longer known. So he belong together in society
5. Has a specific function in society, such as education media, moral teaching, entertainment, social processes and so on
6. Pralogis nature, which has its logic, which is not by following the logic of science, such a figure is a descendant of the gods or unnatural birth process as Karna in Mahabharata epics were born through her ear.
7. In general, both simple and sober, too spontaneous and sometimes seem harsh, as seen on anecdotes and some funnies. But in its development, some folklore have been compiled in the form of language that is more orderly and smooth.

### **Strengthening Community and Creative Industry of Opera Batak**

As an art performances, Opera Batak seen not only within the boundaries of convention drama alone. Although this art belongs to the ethnic Batak Toba, but in a string of performances always take the idioms of everyday society in general. Therefore, the Opera Batak belong to the general public. Even the language used in the show also began to think about the audience with different ethnic backgrounds in North Sumatra.

At the show in various places, for example, Opera Batak not only watched by ethnic Batak Toba, but has been able to go into other areas. For example in North Sumatra Cultural Park (TBSU), Opera Batak watched by many. Enthusiastic reception from the audience indicate that Opera Batak has belonged to the general public.

In the history of Batak Opera performances, especially before the end of the golden era Opera Batak Tilham Gultom, supporters always have a place in society. Even Opera Batak players can survive by relying on these traditional arts. 30 The emergence of Batak Opera group at that time an important note that the arts have a place in society and always look forward to the show. The process of interaction of players and spectators Opera Batak take place in various places, especially frequently exhibited at harvest time. This interaction makes the Opera Batak as the only traditional theater rooted in Toba Batak society.

Therefore, it allows a revitalization movement does not stop at the Opera Batak-conceptual aesthetic reinforcement only. Revitalization concept that carries the aesthetic-conceptual reinforcement will only stop at the limits of abstraction. Opera Batak art movement may again be only understood as a cultural heritage alone, without being able to be a force against the hegemony of mass culture.

Opera Batak such as arts like having traditional values are still original, timeless, enduring and a-historical. But in the process of a dynamic culture so it will need the spirit of deconstruction in an attempt to plug back in this art in society. Of course, in practice, the power that is built is

'ownership' of the community of supporters, not just ethnic Batak Toba as an important part of Opera Batak. Mutualism symbiotic processes built with a large wake that still makes the Opera Batak.

The social role Opera Batak as a function of the secondary is as a binding solidarity group Toba Batak society, as a medium of mass communication that convey certain ideas include problems habatahon (matters of which relate to the life of the Batak), as the media propaganda of government programs, and as a medium religious propaganda (Purba, 2002: 61). Opera Batak are in the public's understanding of culture mendominan, especially mass culture which puts the supreme art is much more acceptable than popular culture. As understood by many people, the national political culture, which is idealized as a literary and aesthetic domains occupy only 'official literary writing,' that literature is taught in formal schools and represent Indonesian literature and are endorsed by politics.

Additionally Opera Batak creative industries can be defined as a collection of economic activity associated with the creation or use of knowledge and information. Creative industries are also known by other names cultural industries (especially in Europe) or also the creative economy. Ministry of Trade of Indonesia stated that the creative industries are industry derived from the use of creativity, skill and talent of individuals to create wealth and jobs to generate and exploit the creativity and inventiveness of the individual.

One of the creative industries are now growing rapidly in Indonesia is an industry in the field of culture. Potential in the field of culture has always been a fertile ground for the emergence of social values and economics. Here the creative economy gives a very important role. Creative Economy is also called the creative industries, cultural industries, or the culture industry. Special skills and professional attitude required to manage and cultivate the creative industries or the cultural industries to produce something worthwhile in the end. The creative industry is a work that should be the work of the world, top quality, and the birth of creative ideas are brilliant. Therefore, there must be an effort to protect the intellectual property (Paeni, 2008: 3-4).

Measure an industry's prospects in the field of art, especially traditional theater, will refer to the mass absorption capability. Ojak Manalu, one of the instigators of the Opera Batak in an interview with the author says Opera Batak provide considerable opportunities in the development of creative industries in the field of culture. Extraordinary professor at the Faculty of Arts University of Medan (Unimed), admits that in some Batak Opera performances are held in Pematangsiantar, Samosir. This reality enables Opera Batak evolve as a creative industry in the field of culture, especially later become a mainstay of the tourism sector. In Kota Siantar, for example, the development of the tourism sector is strongly supported by cultural tourism projects.

When now through the Training Center Opera Batak (PLOT) in Pematangsiantar, Thompson HS began to perform a variety of efforts to revitalize the Opera Batak. PLOT itself already wrote long ago, namely began in the 1920s. Torpor in the 1980s and revived in 2005. The pioneering Gultom Tilham Opera Batak. The late perform it around with a simple apparatus. Dipentaskannya stories daily, about heroism and simple stories that are commonly encountered in everyday life. And in 1930 staged by Opera Batak official in the city of Siantar. Then there Zulkaidah Harahap menjayakannya back. But soon eroded by modernity and died in the 1980s. And after a few decades, reborn with the name of the plot (the Training Center Opera Batak) pioneered by Thompson Hs along Sitor Situmorang (Netherlands), and Lena Simanjuntak (Germany). At present around 100 young people joined PLOT. Such efforts are aimed in the business development of Opera Batak be able to become a creative cultural industry.

Efforts made Opera Batak supporter today is the concept of reconstruction and revitalization. In online media Silaban.net mentioned that kthe initial raft is constructed to revitalize the Opera Batak done in three segments, namely: regeneration, reconstruction, and innovation. Target regeneration

has been accomplished through the presence of GOS. While reconstruction, which rely on old players, in fact has begun to be considered since the GOS held twice stage. Target reconstruction takes place through collaboration with Dra. Ritaony Hutajulu, MA, alumnus and lecturer in the department of Ethnomusicology USU ever conducted research thesis about music / vocal Opera Batak.

## **CONCLUSION**

Revitalization must involve all aspects related directly to the Opera Batak public support, such as speakers and audience. besides of course the involvement of the state should be very important as well as parts for the preservation of traditional arts. Thus the revitalization movement Opera Batak as oral tradition has not lost its power to be able to compete with the various lacing mass culture that has been so easy to fall into the public sphere of society. This concept can make people have the mentality of loving supporters of the grandeur of traditional culture, such as the Opera Batak.

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