

## The Role of Performing Arts Performers of the Batak Toba Tortor Dance as Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Perspective Protection of Traditional Cultural Expressions

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand efforts to preserve the Toba Batak Tortor Dance by performing arts actors in Samosir Regency, especially in maintaining cultural identity and traditional values in facing the challenges of modernization. The Tortor dance, which is one of the intangible cultural heritages of the Toba Batak people, has a deep meaning not only as entertainment, but also as an expression of custom, spirituality, and a medium of social communication in various traditional ceremonies. However, as time goes by, there is a threat of change that could reduce the original meaning of tortor, thereby increasing the risk of losing traditional values of tortor as a Toba Batak cultural identity. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. Data was collected through direct observation of tortor performances, in-depth interviews with artists at Sanggar Angel Elkanean, as well as literature studies. The data obtained was analyzed through reduction, presentation and verification methods to maintain the validity of the information. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the role of artists in maintaining tortor cultural traditions and provide practical recommendations for the government and society to increase the protection of traditional cultural heritage. Apart from that, this research is also expected to increase awareness of the young Toba Batak generation regarding the importance of preserving tortor culture as part of their identity.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Toba Batak tortor dance is a form of traditional performing art which has important meaning and value in the lives of the Batak people, especially in the Samosir region. As a cultural expression rich with symbolism and ethnic identity, tortor is not just a dance, but also a communication medium that conveys traditional messages, spiritual values and togetherness between members of the Toba Batak community. Tortor is a typical Batak dance which is usually performed at various traditional events, such as weddings, funerals and traditional Batak parties. Apart from being an important part of traditional rituals, the Tortor dance is also an artistic expression full of beauty, where every movement contains its own meaning. (Teresia, 2022:300)

During its development, Tortor underwent a transformation in terms of form, function and meaning due to the influence of globalization and modernization. This change raises concerns about the loss of the original value and identity contained in tortor as intangible cultural heritage. Along with this, the need to protect tortor as part of traditional cultural expression becomes increasingly urgent. This protection is needed to prevent blurring of meaning and excessive commercialization without paying attention to the cultural and traditional values inherent in it. In addition, many younger generations do not understand the value and meaning of tortor as their own cultural heritage, so there is a risk of a disconnect in knowledge between generations. Changes and development of cultural values in society occur along with the influence of globalization and the entry of foreign cultures. The emergence of cyberspace, the internet, and advances in electronic and digital information often develop regardless of local value systems and culture. This development is taking place very quickly, especially felt by the younger generation who are easily influenced by interesting new elements. This happens because culture emerges from the existence of society, so there is no culture without a society that supports it, and every society must have its own culture. (Ruth, 2023:107).

On the other hand, the development of tourism in Samosir has had both positive and negative impacts on the sustainability of tortor performing arts, which are increasingly being presented in the context of entertainment for tourists. Tortor has the principle of a spirit of togetherness, a sense of brotherhood, or solidarity for the common good. At the international level, the Tortor Dance has been recognized by UNESCO as part of the cultural heritage that needs to be preserved.

Article 12 paragraph (1) of Law Number 19 of 2002 concerning Copyright regulates that protected works include creations: Law Number 19 of 2002 concerning Copyright has not been able to provide maximum protection for traditional cultural expressions. Weaknesses of Law Number 19 of 2002 concerning Copyright and the problem of the absence of national data that can show the total number of traditional cultures that exist in Indonesia. Efforts to protect traditional cultural expressions can be realized through regional regulations. This is important to explain the meaning of protecting traditional cultural expressions, emphasize the position of regional regulations in protecting traditional cultural expressions, and outline the main contents of these regulations. Protection of intellectual property rights for traditional cultural expressions is very necessary. Regional governments can play a role in protecting these cultural expressions by formulating appropriate protection policies in their areas. The establishment of regional regulations to protect traditional cultural expressions functions as a regional policy that guarantees intellectual property rights in the cultural sector. The position of this regional regulation, as a traditional cultural protection policy, must remain in accordance with the generally applicable legal framework for intellectual property rights. (Bayangsari, 2013:32).

In the perspective of protecting traditional cultural expressions, the role of totor art practitioners in Samosir is very important because they function as guardians of cultural values as well as transmitting cultural heritage to the next generation. However, their role often does not receive adequate support in terms of law, policy or wider public attention. Therefore, this research aims to understand more deeply the role of Toba Batak tortor artists in Samosir in maintaining and preserving tortor as intangible cultural heritage, as well as the protection efforts needed to maintain the sustainability of this traditional cultural expression.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand phenomena experienced by subjects, such as behavior and motivation, holistically. This approach allows researchers to explore the cultural expression of the Tortor Dance and the role of artists in maintaining traditional values that are at risk of being lost. The location of the research was at Sanggar Angel Elkanan, Jl. Diponegoro No.54, Pangururan, Samosir, North Sumatra, which was chosen because of its role in preserving the Tortor Dance, a traditional dance that has important cultural value for the Samosir Batak community.

The sources of information in this research consist of tortor artists as the main informants, who understand the values in tortor movements and rhythms, as well as art studio managers who are responsible for transferring knowledge and skills about tortor to the younger generation. The data collection techniques used include observation to see directly the activities at Sanggar Angel Elkanan, in-depth interviews to explore the views and experiences of artists and studio managers regarding the preservation of the Tortor Dance, and literature study to collect information regarding cultural preservation and literature related to the Tortor Dance.

Data analysis was carried out through several steps: data reduction to simplify information from interviews and observations, data display to compile information regarding the role of tortoises in cultural identity and preservation challenges, and data verification to ensure consistency and accuracy by comparing information from various sources.

## RESULTS

### 3.1. The Role of Toba Batak Tortor Performing Arts Performers in Samosir in Maintaining and Preserving Tortors as Intangible Cultural Heritage

The results of research have shown that Tortor Batak Toba performing arts performers in Samosir have a strategic and multidimensional role in maintaining and preserving Tortor as an intangible cultural heritage. This role includes responsibility as a custodian of tradition as well as an innovator who is able to present this culture in a modern context. The main efforts are made by maintaining traditions without abandoning current developments, through various approaches that align traditional values with the needs of contemporary society. One important step is teaching the basics of Tortor Dance, such as Tortor Somba, to the younger generation. This training not only covers the technical aspects, but also instills a deep understanding of indigenous philosophy, movement symbolism, and spiritual meaning in Tortor. This systematic teaching provides a solid foundation for the younger generation to continue the tradition with full respect. As stated by Siahaan (2014), the preservation of communal culture must start with the structured transfer of traditional knowledge to ensure the continuity of cultural values.

However, amidst technological advances and social change, artists also face the challenge of keeping Tortor relevant to modern audiences. For this reason, modern technology is used as a promotional and documentation tool. Social media, digital platforms and video technology are used to introduce Tortor to a wider audience, both at home and abroad. Educational content that displays the history, philosophy and beauty of Tortor becomes a bridge for the younger generation who tend to be more familiar with technology. This approach is in line with the views of Irawan (2020), who emphasizes that preserving traditional culture in the era of globalization requires innovation that maintains the essence of that culture.

Apart from technology, collaboration with indigenous communities and community leaders is also a key element in preserving Tortor. Involvement of traditional stakeholders ensures that any innovation or modification does not violate applicable customary norms. This collaboration creates harmony between tradition and modernity, so that the preservation of Tortor remains rooted in Toba Batak cultural values. Artists can also act as facilitators in local cultural activities, such as festivals and traditional rituals, to strengthen community identity and expand the influence of traditional arts.

It is also important to create sustainable training programs that involve formal and informal educational institutions. Integrating Tortor arts into local curricula could be one way to strengthen a sense of belonging among the younger generation. Thus, education is not only a means of transferring skills, but also a tool for building collective awareness of the importance of preserving culture as part of national identity. Through a combination of traditional and modern approaches, Tortor artists in Samosir not only preserve this cultural heritage, but also give it space to develop. Tortor is no longer only seen as a traditional dance, but also as a symbol of Toba Batak cultural pride that can adapt to the challenges of the times. This effort makes Tortor an integral part of Indonesian national culture as well as a valuable asset in the eyes of the world.

### 3.2. What are the challenges faced by Toba Batak tortor artists in their efforts to preserve traditional culture amidst the influence of globalization and commercialization?

Challenges faced by artists in preserving Toba Batak tortor in the midst of globalization. This tradition faces various pressures, ranging from foreign cultural influences to social changes that affect its existence and practice. This research identifies these challenges, explores the impact of globalization on the sustainability of tortor, and analyzes the adaptation efforts of the Toba Batak community to maintain their cultural identity.

In addition, this article highlights the changes occurring in tortor practices, including how the younger generation is taking an important role in maintaining cultural values through creative approaches. Despite threats to the preservation of traditions, conservation initiatives based on education, technology and social media have helped strengthen the relevance of tortor in the modern era. By utilizing digital innovation, the Toba Batak tortor can develop dynamically while becoming a symbol of local cultural enrichment that is able to compete in a global context. (Dian, 2024 :758).

Modernization and globalization bring complex challenges in preserving the Tortor Dance, one of the cultural heritages that is very important for the Toba Batak people. Changes in cultural values in society, especially among the younger generation, are one of the main causes of reduced interest in traditional arts. Lifestyles that are increasingly influenced by global culture tend to distance the younger generation from their cultural roots, making Tortor Dance considered less relevant in modern life. This condition is exacerbated by various limitations, such as a lack of funding for training and arts performances, a lack of facilities that support traditional arts activities, and the government's low attention to the preservation of local arts and culture. This challenge is not only technical but also ideological, where the conflict between the need to maintain tradition and the urge to innovate often gives rise to debate among artists and society. On the one hand, innovation is considered necessary to make the Tortor Dance more attractive to the younger generation, but on the other hand, excessive modification risks eliminating the philosophical values and original meaning of the tradition.

Apart from that, the influence of social media has an ambivalent impact on Tortor Dance. On the one hand, digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok can be effective promotional tools for introducing traditional art to a wider audience. However, on the other hand, social media often modifies or simplifies elements of art, turning them into mere visual entertainment without understanding the deep cultural context. This creates a new challenge for artists to maintain the authenticity of the Tortor Dance while utilizing social media as a means of preservation.

Facing this challenge requires collaboration from various parties, including the government, the arts community, educators and the general public. Steps such as providing funds for preservation, building traditional arts training centers, integrating arts and culture in the education curriculum, and involving the younger generation in cultural activities can be effective solutions. Thus, the Tortor Dance not only continues to exist as a cultural heritage but also becomes an integral part of the identity of the Toba Batak people amidst the rapid flow of modernization and globalization.

### 3.3 To what extent is the involvement of the local government and community in supporting the preservation of the Toba Batak tortor in Samosir?

Preserving the Tortor Dance requires synergy between the government, society and artists. The government can play a role by establishing cultural preservation centers, holding cultural festivals and providing subsidies to traditional artists. Apart from that, regulations related to the protection of communal intellectual property rights for traditional arts such as the Tortor Dance are important to prevent cultural exploitation without permission, as described in the book *Politics of Indonesian Intellectual Property Rights Law* (Irawan, 2020). The Community Also Plays a Strategic Role in Supporting Arts Activities, Building Awareness of the Importance of Local Culture, and Encouraging Active Participation in Preserving Traditions.

Apart from that, the local government also supports the preservation of Tortor by allocating funds for the development of local art studios. This subsidy is used to provide facilities, training and educational programs that enable the younger generation to study Tortor in depth. Not only that, the government is also trying to introduce traditional art into the school curriculum, creating opportunities for children to get to know Tortor from an early age. Cultural infrastructure, such as a cultural museum and art center, was also built to document and exhibit elements of Toba Batak culture, including Tortor, so that they can be accessed by the wider community.

On the other hand, the community plays an important role in maintaining the authenticity and sustainability of Tortor through direct involvement in various cultural activities. Art studios managed independently by local communities are Tortor's learning centers for the younger generation. The community not only plays a role as artists, but also as organizers of traditional arts events such as traditional ceremonies, folk parties and religious celebrations involving Tortor performances. This effort supports the preservation of Tortor in a traditional context, so that its spiritual and philosophical values are maintained. This approach is in line with the views of Irawan (2020), who emphasizes the importance of local community initiatives in supporting the preservation of traditional culture while maintaining its essence.

Promotion of Tortor is also an integral part of conservation efforts. Social media and digital technology are widely used to reach the younger generation who are more familiar with technology. Digital documentation through videos, photos and other creative content allows Tortor to be accessed by people outside the Toba Batak region, while increasing appreciation for this art. These efforts help Tortor remain relevant in the modern era, where cultural interactions are increasingly influenced by technology and digital media.

## CONCLUSION

Preserving the Tortor Dance in the midst of modernization and globalization faces various challenges, ranging from changes in cultural values in society, minimal attention to traditional arts, to the threat of cultural exploitation without permission. Nevertheless, Tortor Dance still has great potential to survive and develop through collaboration between the government, society and arts practitioners. The government's role in providing policy support, facilities and legal protection, coupled with public awareness of the importance of tradition, is a key factor in maintaining the existence and authenticity of the Tortor Dance. Apart from that, adapting to changing times through creative innovation and the use of technology, such as social media, can also be an effective tool to introduce and popularize the Tortor Dance without losing its philosophical values. This synergy is a strategic step to ensure that the Tortor Dance not only becomes a symbol of local culture, but is also able to contribute to strengthening cultural identity amidst global challenges.

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