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Functions and Types of Tau-Tau Statue as Torajan Identity in South Sulawesi Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research explores tau-tau statue as identity by looking at function, meaning, and rituals. Tau-tau is the statue that represents a Torajan noble family who has passed away. The findings of this study reveal that tau-tau is one of the main equipment in the funeral (rambu solo') only for high nobility (tana' bulaan). The ritual use of this tau-tau is that after the funeral ceremony is completed, only tau-tau *ngangka* (statue from jackfruit) stored on the cliffs in line with preceded tau-tau, while the tau-tau *lampa* (statue from mixed of wood) and *batelepong* (statue for everyone) thrown away after the funeral ceremony is completed. This is because the raw materials of tau-tau *lampa* and *batelepong* only made of packing cloth on a bamboo frame that is only temporarily as part of a series and at the funeral ceremony took place. In the beginning, tau-tau was prayed and lamented by families and communities of Torajan Aluk to Dolo, but in line with people left Aluk to Dolo by the Torajan community and switch to embrace Christianity and Islam. Because of this, ritual of tau-tau Aluk to Dolo in *rambu solo* (funeral ceremony) is not related to rituals and ancestors' beliefs. As a consequence, one of the nobility identities, "tau-tau" even now made by the noble family before they die, and souvenir of tau-tau emerges for sale to the tourists. Thus, the statue of tau-tau at this time is still one of the prides of Torajan noble, but all the sacred rituals of Aluk to Dolo associated with tau-tau has been reformed in accordance with the level of noble family in Torajan communities.

Keywords: Functions and Types, Identity, Indonesia, Tau-Tau, Torajan.

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1. Introduction

There is less attention of researchers on the issues art and social dimension particularly within the Indonesian context. Some of the previous studies on Torajan communities is conducted by a number of researcher including religion and social life of Torajan people (Nooy-Palm, 1979), values and characters of Torajan communities (Suherman, Triyanto, & Sunarto, 2017) and the entrepreneurship and capital dimensions of art and statue in Torajan (Jayadi, 2018). As a result of this, there is not much information on the literature related to the art of Torajan communities in Indonesia. For this reason, this article provides a unique description of Torajan art as part rituals and identities of communities.

Historically, the current Torajan art is originally from the ancestors of Torajan people. This kind of art is passed down from generation to generation to the current communities through rituals and tradition. For example, the tradition of funeral is taught to the young generation through rituals and celebration that is maintained by communities especially by the noble communities in Torajan society. This paper describes and recognizes the art in the form of *tau-tau* as part identity and rituals in Torajan communities.

2. Literature review

The research on arts and identity has been studied by a number of scholars. For the purposes of this study, the scholars include Suherman, Triyanto, & Sunarto (2017), Jayadi (2018), Gagliardi (2017), and Asante, Asmah, & Adjei (2013).

Suherman, Triyanto, & Sunarto (2017) investigate the philosophical values of Torajan people. The research has identified the important values of Torajan people that are respected and maintained by Torajan people. The values not only function as symbols but also function as philosophical bonds among Torajan community.

Jayadi (2018) explores the potential entrepreneurship and economic benefits of statue production in the Torajan communities. Jayadi identifies that the economic capital of Torajan statue includes as a source of living, as the arts of Torajan communities and as the symbolic capital of people there. As a form of entrepreneurship, *tau-tau* (statue) production enhances the economy of the local people in Tana Toraja.

Gagliardi (2017) argues that the art is a form of social identities that shows the levels of stratification among communities. The art as a form of social identities provides the lenses in which other people can grasp the meaning and the attributes of the arts. Finally, Asante, Asmah, & Adjei (2013) investigate the arts and cultural identities. They identify that arts has strong relation to the cultural and ethnic identities because particular arts represent particular ethnic and cultural entities.

From these studies, it indicates that there is a strong recommendation to conduct further study of arts as identities within different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This research fits this knowledge gap by exploring *tau-tau* as statue (art) as a form of identities in Torajan communities in Indonesia.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research question

The questions guided this research article are as follows:

- a. What are the functions of *tau-tau* in the art of Torajan communities?
- b. What are the types of *tau-tau* in the art of Torajan communities?

3.2 Research design

This research is based on longitudinal ethnographic study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) in Torajan community in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This longitudinal study employed series of interviews and observations. For the purposes of this article, the data is taken from direct observation in Torajan communities. The observations are conducted in different community events such as funeral, happy activity based events, and traditional cultural events.

Data are analyzed through systematic and thematic analysis approach (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The process of thematic analysis includes reading whole transcript of observations, coding, and identifying key categories or themes from the data.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1 Function of *tau-tau*

There are two important function of *tau-tau*:

- *Tau-tau* as individual personifications
- *Tau-tau* as representation of nobility

4.1.1 Tau-tau as individual personifications

Tau-tau is one component of the ritual of *Aluk to Dolo* to describe the human figures (personification), representing by jackfruit wood. The attributes of this noble tau-tau include clothes, pants, headband and glove and other traditional tools.

The acceptability of *tau-tau* as a depiction of the dead people, not only form the associated relationship of costumes and ritual ceremonies that strengthen the presence of *tau-tau* as a "re-incarnation" the deceased people, but also the positive response from the Torajan who can submit *tau-tau* a fate that is considered resemble to the dead people. This makes *tau-tau* so respected and adored as much as those who are still alive by his family and whole Torajan people.

4.1.2 Tau-tau as representation of nobility

Tau-tau as a representation of nobility is essentially determined by social stratification of *Aluk to Dolo*, who up to now still held by the Torajan people. *Tau-tau* as a representation of nobility also very visible on the use of attributes, costumes and costumes are embedded in the physical appearance of the tau-tau. For examples: the costumes worn in the *tau-tau nangka* 'in general is: headband (*passapu*) in men, hair bun (*Simbolon*) in women; clothing (*wind*); a knee shorts (*seppa tallu buku*); sarong (*dodo*); bag where betel of area nut (*sepu* '). In daily life, the type of costumes and how wear it only be done by the Torajan nobility, while the non-grandee wear it is not allowed.

4.2 Types of Tau-tau

4.2.1 Tau-tau Aluk to Dolo

Tau-tau is the key equipment in the funeral ceremony, showing prestige and economic development. The meaning of *tau-tau* in a funeral ceremony (*rambu solo'*) is not only merely as a burial ceremony equipment of nobility, which represents the highest social level *tana' bulaan* (highest level), but it is the symbols of equipment obsequies used, especially in treating *tau-tau* as a "substitute" a person, that is connected to the lives of the living human beings.

4.2.2 Tau-tau Christianity

The emergence of various forms and face of *tau-tau* now, is a form of syncretism which is the adjustment effort, a mix between the values of old traditions (*Aluk to Dolo*) tradition with the new (Christian). It is also the efforts of the establishment and reinforcement of social status shown by the high nobility of the current Torajan people. This is mainly done by the high nobility community in Tana that does not want to "lose" the identity of social stratification as the most respected symbols of the dignity in the Torajan community. Therefore, symbols that lead to the nobility such as property ownership, for example, *banua sura'*/ *tongkonan* engraved, *alang sura'* carved rice barn, which they maintain as a belonging to a group in plain view to distinguish them with other groups of ordinary people. Similarly, with the implementation of the funeral ceremony (*rambu solo'*) is still maintained as part of the identity of nobility, although this is incompatible with the confidence that the majority of nobility now, namely Christianity.

4.2.3 Modern tau-tau

Modern *Tau-tau* does not represent the noble family, but it is a representation of anyone in the community. Anyone in the family of Torajan people can placed themselves in family books and portrait statue that is crafted by both local artists and outside artists. The modern meaning of *tau-tau* statues is a portrait of someone that does not representing rituals and nobility anymore. There are various levels of understanding of *tau-tau* and a portrait statue held by Torajan nobility. The current tradition of *tau-tau* production is that *tau-tau* sculpture is no longer made by *tau-tau* experts with various ritual, which contradict to the Christian faith teaching and faith. This statue is located on the some-what of what is in the cemetery Londa and Ke'te Kesu'. *Tau-tau* is made the statue-like face and should be, and the proportion of people who were made as statue. In many cases, is the statue does not resemble to someone in the family, the family can reject the portrait statue of sculptor that has been produced. On the other hand, if the statue is made resembling the portrait of someone in the family, the member of

the family will strongly appreciate the tau-tau and it becomes the family pride. Some of the examples of modern tau-tau as follows:

One example is the very realistic statue (like the person) of FK Sarunggallo, is crafted with the proportional size of 1:1. This form of modern tau-tau is no longer made based on the stages to *Aluk to Dolo* rituals and social stratification. This is because the statue is still associated with their raw materials from jackfruit wood and displayed in the funeral, even though the style is no longer follow a-do style.

However, it is undeniable that some noble families still provide statues that are crafted through rituals and the social classification in Torajan communities. For example, this is done by, among other family Ramba DS, crafted the portrait statue of cement ordered and produced outside Torajan communities. The presence of a statue of a DS Ramba, a little more 'extreme' in reducing the use of symbols-is compared with a statue of a *tau-tau* FK Sarunggallo. The other statue is JS Pasaka. The raw material of JS Pasaka's statue that is made of sandalwood is produced by Balinese sculptor. The characteristics, style and presence of this statue, which has no connection to the tradition of *tau-tau*, except that high-status of nobility by JS Pasaka family that is attributed to the existence of this statue. The tradition of making sculpture objects' someone 'in the Torajan people, is currently a common practice.

4.2.4 Tau-tau souvenir

The emergence of *tau-tau* souvenir cannot be separated from the tourism development of the Tana Toraja regency. Currently, the tau-tau displayed in a variety of burial, just an attempt to attract foreign tourists to visit the area. As part of tourism industry product, tau-tau price ranges from cheap one to the most expensive ones. *Tau-tau* souvenir is made by the Torajan craftsman. As part of souvenirs, tau-tau is seen widely in many Torajan kiosks and tourism destination places in Toraja.

Tau-tau souvenir is made with various sizes, ranging from the size of 10 cm to 150 cm, with a costume that resembles a costume of original *tau-tau* and also with the traditional costume of Torajan fashions. *Tau-tau* souvenir is not related to the burial ceremony. *Tau-tau* souvenir appears as part of souvenirs for visitors who came to Toraja. Thus, *tau-tau* used as a source of imagination and creativity of the craftsman to create a replica of tau-tau that has economic benefit for people living in Toraja.

The production of *tau-tau* souvenir is quicker because the materials of tau is provided and supported by the Local Government of Tana Toraja Regency. The government believes that the diversifications of several Torajan arts tradition as part of souvenir memories can enhance economic aspect of Tana Toraja regency. This condition strengthens the value of the Torajan art in the context of style, form and rituals. Therefore, a replica with the various styles and sizes that appears to be made by the local craftsman should be maintained so that the essence of Torajan art can be sustainable in the coming future.

These findings show that, on one hand, the evolution of social stratification into modern and equality among Torajan communities (Shaver, 2015), and as form of cultural identities in community (Asante, Asmah, & Adjei, 2013). On the other hand, it stills maintain social stratification (Reygadas, 2015) among Torajan communities. The social stratification reflects inequality among society (Kusow & Eno, 2015), unequal social participation in society events (Bulbulia et al., 2017) and unequal position in educational contexts (Posselt & Grodsky, 2017). These two dimensions of Torajan arts is recognized as the uniqueness of tau-tau.

5. Conclusion

Tau-tau as an art in Torajan communities reflects a form of social life (Gagliardi, 2017) that is each individual involved that occupies a space and a specific area that has been outlined by *Aluk to Dolo*. All the equipment and tools that are used in tau-tau production reflects the unity of the whole community in Toraja regency. Individual equipment and supplies have obsequies function of depth and meaning in the effort to respect the dignity of the dead people.

Tau-tau production is also a form of submission to the *Aluk to Dolo*, and homage to the dead/ancestors. Therefore, every organization in the burial ceremony, nearly all relatives and families, people from compatriot even the neighboring villages attend the funeral rituals and ceremony. This is because the funeral ceremony bridges between the religious emotions of families and residents

involved so that it bonds a strong relationship between them and it helps to maintain the sustainability of traditional ceremonies.

It is recommended that further research on arts as identity can be conducted within multiple sites and multiple arts with longitudinal perspectives. Therefore, the result of the research can enhance this finding and provide holistic understanding of the art.

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