

# Batak Toba Concept of A Leader in Umpasa and Umpama

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**Abstract** *Umpasa* and *umpama* are two kinds of literary works that belong to the people of Batak Toba that reflect brilliant thoughts, collective consciousness and life philosophy of the traditional of Toba Batak that lead the way of thinking and the way of life of the people. They are parts of the identity of the people. As the identity of the people it is important to learn it to enable people to establish reconciliation with the digital revolutionary world. The objective of the research is to answer the question whether the traditional concept of a leader should be obsolete or not by analysing and finding the hidden meaning of *umpasa* and *umpama* which deal with the concept of Batak Toba of a leader. The research had to pay attention to the social cultural aspects of the people of Batak Toba by using qualitative descriptive method. The finding shows that the meaning within *umpasa* and *umpama* deal with the concept of a leader still relevant with the modern theories in digital era.

Key words : *umpama, umpasa, leader, society* .

## 1. Introduction

The flow of globalization destroys the cultural values and social characters especially the character of the young generation in cities and at rural areas in Indonesia. Cultural values which cover the entire meaning of that social values such as knowledge, social structure which actually were the result of human struggle. In this open source of the 21st century, the traditional management and business models have been transformed into digital technology. According to Nasir [1]. The expert claim that we are in the middle of digital revolution as it is chasing this world as such profound the speed. This problem creates the shift of social structure and increase the process of interconnection among the people. It is a multi dimension problem as can be found in political, social cultural, economy and defence aspect. On the other side many nations have proved that loving and consciousness of cultural values from the past are a huge shield in achieving the progress. Just take a look on what have been done by Japan, Cina, India and Korea. They are able to overcome the problems they encounter by using their traditional values.

It is true that the development of technology brings with it many positive results. Still we have to agree with the contrast idea that says that many precious traditional value such as the concept of a good leader have disappeared from the social life. The result of previous research on *umpasa* and *umpama* shows that many of them contain local genius deal with politic such

as the characters that should be owned by a leader. Therefore, the research is highlighting some traditional concept of a leader which are suitable and need to be considered for reshaping today's leader in the open source era of technology.

The difficulties of drawing attention to the value found in traditional heritage happen all over the ethnic groups in Indonesia. This research tries to give answers to the effort of revitalising local genius. Local genius according to Hilman [2] "Local wisdom is one of the product of cultural community that formed because the necessary of value norm and rules a model to do something action". Haryati Soebadoi [3] gives a definition of local wisdom "... as an identity or cultural personality of a nation that make the nation able to absorb and cultivate culture which come from outside suitable to the character and personal need. On another aspect, this ability even named as tenacity, mainly on cultural field or what tenacity of nation we call to day as nation tenacity of each nation"

After modernization then came the era of post modernism, the now time where we live. The era is not about logic and substance any more. It is about style and perception. In its extreme form, there is no absolute truth anymore. Human live in cultural market, the place for idea, perspective or point of view like box office movie, politic and advertisement that destroy the concept of the truth and present confusion in authority that claim the truth. All of them are the impacts of the failure of knowledge in giving solution for the problem. Still, we do not need to worry as long as we are ready to hold the traditional value as a system of knowledge.

Tobing and Hutabarat [4] say "That Batakese Toba tribe located in North Sumatera Province is one that still retain the tradition passed down from generation to generation by their ancestor."

According to Samosir [5] "The Toba Batak Language, the language spoken by Toba Batak people is included in the Malay language family which has a typical grammar system and its own meaning. The Toba Batak language is unique, poor in words which can explain the general, very rich in those, that differentiate the particular. For example, it has no word for monkey in general. But it has name for each particular kind of monkey" According to Sidabutar [6] "Batak culture which was the root of the Batak society had essential part in character build of the leader in Indonesia." And according to Reed [7] "Batak of North Sumatera are one of the Indonesian most important intricate group in Indonesia" The benefit of conducting this research is to draw the attention of the people to the cultural element like *umpasa* and *umpama* and to motivate other researcher to conduct the same research on the cultural element of hundreds ethnic group in Indonesia which in the same time empowered the social identity of Indonesia as a nation. The formulation of the problem is to find out the concept which are categorized political that is the concept of Batak Toba of a leader by finding the deep meaning of *umpasa* and *umpama*. According to Pasaribu A.N [8] "Umpasa in the context of Toba Batak community is not only beautify the string of words, but also to convey a very broad meaning, that contains the philosophy of life, ethics of decency, laws, and society". *Umpasa* and *umpama* are kind of poetry. *Umpasa* is a kind of *pantun* that is four lines verse with alternate rhyming lines. The first two lines are usually allusive. The last two lines have a more direct meaning. *Umpama* is a kind of witty saying consist of one line which is an illustration which reflect an idea. To find the deep meaning, theory of Taylor Richard H was used. According to Taylor [9] "Structure and style are the principal devices of poetry and its language is far more condensed and intensified than even that of drama.". Siahaan. Bisuk in his book *Kehidupan Di Balik Tembok Bambu* [10] gives the definition or concept of a leader of Batak Toba. According to Siahaan, a leader is called *raja*. That is why, we find many kind of *raja* among the people such as *Raja ni Huta*, *raja Bondar* or *Raja Ihutan*. Although they are called *raja*, they are not like the kings in Java or European kingdom. They are leaders or

heads but they do not have any power like Javanese or European aristocracies. It is more suitable to call them leaders or heads. According to Nasir [11] “The path goal theory of leadership describes clearly that leaders can achieve desired goals and identify the new policies by adopting new leadership style according to the situation. To understand organizational effectiveness many researchers and practitioners have developed various studies to determine theories regarding leadership organizational commitment and job satisfaction”. According to Nasir (2019 :545 CEO Rajeev Peshawarira of ICLIF (Leadership & Governance Centre Malaysia) has developed a formula for a leadership. According to him, “Leadership consists of Charisma, Personality, Power, Authority Skills Competences, Best Practices cognitive Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence” Decades of research suggest that leaders are both born and made. This suggests that environmental factors play a large part in the early development of leader potential and the attainment of leadership positions, but the heredity should also be considered. It has been proposed that a leader development is a process that can occur across the entire life span and is a journey with various development

## 2. Research Method

The research has been conducted based on the phenomenologist perspective, which is a philosophical perspective based on some step of process of thinking through many critical and scientific. Two kinds of research have been conducted, they are library research for collecting *umpasa* and *umpama* whereas field research was conducted to find the function of *umpasa* and *umpama* and the attitude of the people toward them. After formulating the problem, the main method of research is decided, that is qualitative descriptive. According to Bondan and Taylor [12] The procedure of qualitative research produces a research that reveals qualitative data that through an approach directed to the background and people holistically or wholly but view it as a unity. The decision to use qualitative descriptive was based on the consideration that this approach enables the research to use strong data analysis in arranging a deep description. Connected with this, some method that applied to collect the data are (1) Method of Documentation to collect *umpasa* and *umpama* out of written source such as document, books, journal, notes or news paper. Documentation technique are recording, noting and taking photos. (2) Interview to find the reason for the decrease of appreciation of people towards *umpasa* and *umpama* and to find solution for the problem by establishing the revitalization. Interview is a meeting of two or more people to change information or ideas through questions and answer so the meaning of a topic can be organized. Observation to see how *umpasa* are used. Observation was conducted to see how *umpasa* and *umpama* are used. The method of questionnaire was used to get self report of the informant. Focused Group Discussion or FGD was applied to straighten the function of *umpasa* and *umpama*. Analysing the collected data was conducted by using the theory of Taylor Richard H to find the meaning within the *umpasa* and *umpama* deals with the concept of a leader. According to Richard there are three devices in finding the meaning. They are structural device, sense device which deals with the figurative language and sound device. According to Tampubolon et al [13] “figurative language is a type of language that uses language or phrases different from literal meaning. 7 of 10 kinds of figures of speech were found in the *umpasa* and *umpama* Batak”

### 3. Results And Discussion

There are 29 *umpasa* and *umpama* had been selected to be the object of the research in finding the concept of Batak Toba of a leader. These data consist of 10 *umpasa* and 19 *umpama*. Here below are some of them.

Among the people of Batak Toba the word *raja* is a term used for a leader. That is why the people have many kinds of *raja* such as *Raja huta* means the head of a kampung or *raja bondar*, a term given to a person who handle irrigation whose obligation is to manage the distribution of water. Still, being a *raja* is honorable position. It can be seen in the below *umpasa*:

*Disi sirunggu kdisi sitata*

Sitarunguk is there, Sitata is also there

*Ia disi hita hundul, disi omputta Debata*

Where ever we sit, God is there, too

This *Umpasa* means that whatever they (the *raja*) do, where ever they are ( the *raja*) God is with them. In another words they have to be serious in doing their duty for the Creator witnesses them and they are blessed by God. The qualification that should be possessed by a *raja* or a leader can be seen in the below *umpasa*

*Hariara na bolon, pangunsandean sihor-sihor*

Big banyan is a place for the net to lean on

*Sai tubu ma raja, na godang pangidoan uhum na tigor*

Wishing a king to be borned, to ask for knowledge and justice

The above *Umpasa* consist of two lines. The first is called *sampiran* (alternating rhyming line) which has no connection- based on meaning- to the second lines which is called *isi* or content. The qualification of a leader or a *raja* which is formulated in second line should be a person who has a broad knowledge on law for providing justice. Based on this meaning it can be concluded that a leader or a king is a person who is able to give justice. It can be seen that a leader or *raja* has a close relationship with the possession of knowledge. In this case, knowledge deals with law. It means a *raja* or a leader is a person whose obligation is to judge. The word *tigor* means straight. It also means just, straight forward or honest. Then, a leader or *raja* should be a straight forward or a honest person. The decision that he has to give should be a straight forward decision. The word *tigor* means correct, or right.

*Baris-baris ni gaja, di rura Pangaloan*

March of elephants are at the valley of Pangaloan

*Molo marsuru raja, dae ma so oloan*

If the king give the instruction, no reason not to obey

The content reveals a concept that a leader is a person whose instruction is difficult to reject. It can be connected with charisma or power or authority. A leader is a person to look up to. His people or follower will be reluctant to reject him. The above data is *umpasa* where the first line is *sampiran* which has no any connection with the meaning or content in the second line that reveal the concept of a leader as a person that people can lean on. The word place to lean on can be connected with the meaning of power. In this case power or authority is not only physical, but it also deals with mental, knowledge and economic potential. A place to lean on means a place which is strong, powerful to support and to give comfort. We look for something to lean on because there is a need of support that can decrease the weariness and to provide comfort. It can be concluded that a leader should be a person who

has power or outhority to support.He is ready to be a place to lean on and he gives it sincerely so the person who lean on him feels comfortable.

*Hauma ni Sitohong pambuatan ni Langki*  
Fields in Sitohong are places to collect nails  
*Martua angka raja na so marhilong*  
Blessed is the king who does not cheat

The second line gives an idea about being a leader. A leader is a person who would not cheat. He is honest and can be trusted. *Trust* or reliable is a very important qualification of a leader. A honest king or leader is blessed. The word *martua* deals with supernatural power. It means blessed by the Creator. The word *martua* has to be connected to the super natural power. It is nothing to do with human. This *Umpasa* shows the believe of the people that a honest person will be blessed by the Creator. And for the people honesty is a very important qualification demanded not only by the people but also by the Creator. Honesty is a very important attitude or qualification and there will be reward for it, that is a blessing.

*Umpama* as a witty saying. It is a sentence that reflects an effort of comparing. Old Indonesian witty saying are *pepatah, perumpamaan, ibarat and tamsil*. *Perumpamaan* is a sentence that express a process of comparing (simili), a figure of speech, *ibarat* is an illustration followed by explanation, *tamsilis* a figure of speech where the *sampiran* and content are on the same line adalah kalimat. Based on the theory I.E Richart, *umpama* is reflective poem. The readers or the listeners are given a picture, an illustration which is the result of a process of comparing.

*Di jolo pangihutan di pudi panggomgom*  
In front to follow, at the back to protect

The *umpama* above says that a king or a leader is a person who walk in front to follow. It means that a leader is a person that can be imitated. This person is also an individu who is ready to walk at the back or stay at the back, behind the people in order to protect them.

*Topot raja ni uhum, sudung raja ni patik*  
See a king for justice, see a king for regulation

It reflects the idea of a good leader that is a person who masters law and regulations. To understand law we should see a king or a leader. And to understand regulation we have to see the king or the leader, too. Then we can conclude that a king or a leader is a person who has the knowledge of law and regulation. It is impossible to be a good leader without knowing law and regulation. It means a leader should be a person with a broad knowledge of law and regulation.

*Na manghaol bunga, situndali matani ari binsar*  
Who holds flowers, who turns his back to the sun rise

This *umpama* gives an illustration of a leader, flowers and the sun rise. Flower can be found in any kind of literary works as the symbol of beauty. A king or a leader is portrayed as a person who hold flowers, who loves beauty. He must be gentle. It is impossible for a rough person to hold flowers. Then, a raja or a leader should be a gentle person and a person who loves beauty. He is a person who turns his back to the sun rise. Turn his back to the sun rise gives a sense of ignorance. To turn his back to the sun rise means that he takes no notice of the sun rise. The question is why. To turn his back to the sun rise because he want to keep his eyes. And the sun here is something that can hurt his eyes if he stare or focus on it. So what

the sun rise stand for ?. It shines and also beautiful. A leader holds the flower, still he turns his back to another kind of beauty, the sun rise. Two kinds of beauty. A beauty that give a sense of softness and mild, colorful and it doesn't hurt him. The sun also beautiful still it is painful for it has a power to hurt. Then it is understandable that the sun rise here stand for dangerous beauty. A kind of destructive beauty. To turns his back to the sun rise means that he ignore destructive beauty. A chance to give another interpretation for the sun rise is open. Sun rise could be something that blind eyes such as power or gold or money. Turn his back to the sun rise means ignoring things that could blind his eyes. He prefer the beautiful flower to the destructive beauty.

*Manolon do raja i naingkon tigor uhum sidabuonna*

The king declares an oath, the punishment that he'll execute has to be straight

There are two words that attract our attention in the above *umpama* which are needed to analyse. The two words are declaring oath (*manolon*) and straight punishment (*uhum na tigor*). *Manolon* means declaring oath. Declaring oath means if the person ignore, his oath, it is believed that he will be punished by supernatural power. The second is the straight forward punishment(law). It is not a crooked or curved punishment. On a broader sense it means that all the people are on the same position in front of the law. This *umpama* gives a clue that a leader should be a straightforward person and rightfull or fair.

*Na maila sumurut na maila so dapoton*

Who feel ashamed to turn back ward and who feels ashamed if he is not available (can't be seen).

The above *umpama* gives a sense of comparing, that is a leader or a king is a persistent person who does not intend to turn back ward. It will be a stain if a *raja* or a leader if he turn back from what he has attend to do. It means a *raja* or a leader should be a person who is not easy to give up. The second is, he would feel ashamed if he is not available when people want to see him. It means a leader is a person that can be seen any time.

*Parmahan mantat batahi, pamuro so mantat sior*

A sheperd without stick, a person who keep an eye on the *padi* (rice) on the field with an arrow

The illustration in this *umpama* is a sheperd. Usually a sheperd has a stick. Still this sheperd is without stick to direct his cattle. This leader which is potrayed as a sheperd doesn't need a stick to direct his people. Another illustration is a person who use arrows when he work on the field keeps *padi* or rice before the harvest time. It shows that a leader should be a smart person in choosing his weapon.

*Si tiop gantang pamonaran na so ra teleng*

Who holds the the measure of truth which is not slanting

A *raja* or a leader is a straightforward person. His measure of truth is the correct measure.

Just like those ideas given by expert which have been mentio before just like "The knwoeledge oriented leadership aligns the objective around those strategies, initiatives, investments which support the organization to cupe up with upcoming digital age challenges" The the analysis reveals the concept of Batak Toba about a leader is that he has to posses nowledge. This qualification found in six *umpasa* and *umpama*. The second is the possession of power found in six *umpasa* and *umpama*. The third qualification for Batak Toba is that a leader is a person to follow and to imitate. The rest are the emotional intelligence like the

qualification of fairness (3), wise (2), gentle (2), provide the feeling of secure (2), attentive (1), trustworthiness (1), cooperative (1), generous (1), loving (1), unambitious (1), faithful (1), acceptable (1), effective and consistent (1).

#### 4. Conclusion

Mostly, the *umpasa* and *umpama* emphasize the concept of leader on having **knowledge** and **power** and someone to follow and to obey. Whereas the modern concept stress on having capability and skill to influence and someone to obey. Then it is clear that the concept of traditional Batak Toba still relevant to nowadays modern theory of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

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