Space and Cultural Behaviour:  
Deconstruction of Stage ideas in Batak Tribal Traditional Houses

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Abstract:  
In Batak tribal community the idea of dwelling permanently is influenced by labour, social,  
culture and religion. Territorial behaviour can be seen clearly patterned from the Batak  
community dwelling, each settlement unit, calls it Huta, attended by clan. Previous  
researchers believed that the presence of a stage in some traditional houses was more due  
to symbolic meanings or cosmological ideas. A traditional Batak Toba house represents  
cosmological ideas of their inhabitants. The space for animals in the substructure  
symbolizes the underworld. The living area that is raised on stilts is the people’s place that  
represents the middle world. (Hanan, et all 2015). The behaviour of the Batak culture seems  
to be the main reason for the presence of the stage in traditional Batak house. Research with  
an ethnographic approach shows that phenomena to meet socio-cultural needs must be  
adopted in the spatial arrangement of dwellings. In traditional Batak House, the stage in the  
house is a strategy to fulfil socio-cultural behaviour in community life. In the Batak culture,  
a clan is representative of a power, self-esteem is important. The presence of a stage where  
the buffalo is placed is provided in every house design. The idea of stage in the traditional  
Batak traditional house is a production space.
Keyword: Stage, Behavior, Batak, Traditional, House

1. Introduction  
The Batak tribal community lives in full by traditional rituals. Even today, both in rural and urban  
areas, traditional rituals are still carried out. Batak associations are often formed in several cities in  
Indonesia, across clans and often across religions, traditional rituals unite them, Dalihan Na Tolu  
concept is a system of kinship in indigenous Batak people based on blood relation (genealogist) [1]  
[2] [3] [4] . In Urban area, the shape of house of Batak people has characteristics, a living room  
that blends into the kitchen, a large space and the relativity of furniture arrangement are unwritten  
but real requirements. the space was formed to fulfil the traditional processions that were often  
carried out. In performing the traditional rituals, rice has an important role, most of the traditional  
rituals conducted involving elements of the rice in the procession, rice has a sacred value for the  
Batak people [5].
Beginning with the behaviour of nomadic, living in remote moved up to settle down, people in different ways and always striving for sustainable living through the exploration and adaptation potential habitat environment. Actually, The Human Condition has been explicitly divides Vita Activa by outlining three fundamental things of humans that is working (labour), work, and action (action). And finally, in the effort to maintain the sustainability of individual and species life, Labour is the main thing [6]. On the other hand, it turns out humans are also part of a political animal with the idea of living. The idea of living is part of the ability of labour, the ability to survive, the political ability, the ability to guarantee the growth process and physical and psychological development [7]. Typically, the process steps to settle, starting with subhuman pattern Architecture and ending with the Settlement patterns Architecture [8] Egenter, 2006 (WS Yoyo, 2017). He also said the embodiment of living space attention to territorial control and establishing a settlement entity (nuclear border / settlement core complex). So that no one if the pattern permanently reside often interpreted as the effect of change in mindset is influenced by external factors, namely social, cultural, and religious traditions and the architecture of traditional vernacular (rural) home [9].

Likewise in Batak society, the idea of living permanently is also influenced by labor and social, cultural, religious. The sustainability of family life based on territorial behaviour is very clear from the pattern of living, each settlement unit, the Batak people call it Huta, is formed based on clans (clans). It is true, if the researchers reveal that the emergence of Huta is more influenced by politics and territory. In an earlier time, a Huta is a political and territorial unit of Batak people, to get a territorial claim one has to set up a homeland out of nature land, and the settlement stands for a legitimate territoriality of the family clan [10].

Related to the house, Batak Traditional house is formed by 3 zones which refers to the third world, from this myth, we can understand how the Toba Batak recognizes the world around them. Basically, they divide the world into three parts: Upper World, Middle World, and Under World [11], representation of the underworld is manifested in the form of a stage. the results of other studies believe that the presence of the stage in some traditional houses is more due to symbolic meaning, symbolic meanings and purpose of the house [9] or because of the influence of religion
ancestors who dominate the traditional social order, *religious beliefs influence the layouts of micro spaces, including those of the house* [9] or also for security reasons.

2. **Research Problem and Methodology**

Previous researchers believed that the idea of the stage in the traditional Batak house was more due to symbolic meaning, the influence of ancestral religions that dominated the traditional community life order or for security reasons, is that so? This research wants to deconstruct the idea of the stage in the traditional Batak house and understand its initial forming factors. This research was conducted using qualitative method with ethnography approach. Starting from a literature study related to the traditional Batak house, conducting field studies and conducting interviews with communities and traditional leaders. The analysis was carried out by comparing the facts in the field with the results of the interviews which led to an understanding of the idea of the stage at the traditional Batak house.

3. **Literatures Review**

3.1. **Stage in Batak Traditional House**:

Majority of traditional houses in Indonesia are equipped with stage, with varying heights. Although the presence of the stage tends to be based on symbolic meaning, protect inhabitants from termites, animals and enemies, effects of flooding, poor drainage and splashing rainwater hitting the floor in the rainy season [12], proven to be an earthquake [13]. In reality the space formed from the solid wooden columns does not exist as an empty space, but is full of functions, even today when modernization occurs, the space formed even changes its function as an economic space.

Structurally, the traditional houses of the Batak tribe are made of wood which has good strength, structural system arranged in such a way in the rules of order, either horizontally (beam) and horizontally (column). The diameter of each column really depends on the size and size of the building to be supported. The traditional Batak Toba house structure consists of several parts, such as columns, roof truss, and wooden blocks. The structural system has a rod configuration, where the joints or joint points are jointly model as semi-rigid, [13]. The stage is present as a sub-structure that is made firmly to withstand the middle and upper structures, with the foundation resting on stones placed above the ground. Unlike some other traditional houses, in the Batak traditional house, the height of the substructure is between 1.5 m-2 m, with a cross position. The substructure consists of 1.5 meter high wooden structure that rests on flat stones, and it is used as stall and storage space [12].

![Photo 3: Distance Ground and Beam](source: Researcher, 2019)

![Photo 4: Column and Stone Base](source: Researcher, 2019)

![Photo 5: Beam and Column](source: Researcher, 2019)

3.2. **Rice In Batak Tribe**
In the Batak tribe, at the end, the decision to stay permanently is a strategy of social, cultural and economic change. Changes settled a strategy to dominate a particular region, this is evidenced by the presence of the naming of the area based on clans (clan), land is identity [14], as a central mythic point of reference for the clan [15]. Pemersatu (A traditional house has an important position as it stands for the concept of a unifying principle (Levi-Strauss in Schefold, 2003, p.4). According to the older literature sources above, there were formerly two types of buildings in Toba Batak hamlet; Ruma and Sopo (rice barn or gathering place). Ruma and Sopo are placed into two rows, which are facing each other with a small square between them [15].

Living permanently, a strategy for survival is needed, as in general, the main activities of traditional communities to meet their basic needs are agricultural and livestock activities, as well as the Batak tribe, the phenomenon of the Batak traditional house (Ruma) which is always present along with Sopo (rice warehouse) proves that agriculture is a mainstay of the Batak community. The availability of rice for one family symbolizes the social status of one family, the more rice one has, the higher the family's social status, this will eventually form the pattern of Ruma and Sopo. The results found that rice has a sacred value for the Batak people. Rice is generally owned by the rich and poor so that there is social equality so that using rice as a symbol of spirit strengthening [16]. However, the facts show that not all residential areas are equipped with Ruma and Sopo, mostly among people keep rice on the stage area of the home that they have. Apart from Sopo, evidence of the importance of rice for the Batak tribe can be seen from the formation of rice fields that are commonly found around the neighbourhoods of Batak tribal communities, especially around Lake Toba. For the Batak tribe, rice has its own meaning, not only as the main food but has a symbolic meaning. From the start of traditional rituals at the time of birth until the time of death of traditional rituals, rice plays an important role. The terminology "Boras Si Pir Ni Tondi", which means' soul-strengthening rice, symbolically means linking soul and spirit, proves the importance of the existence of rice in traditional rituals. They use rice as a symbol in certain rites from generation to generation from their ancestors. Rice for the Batak has a very high historical value from the process of planting rice to rice [16]. In addition to the calendar, the ritual became a form of religious practice ecological Toba Batak society. Here is presented an example of ecological ritual called Tonggo ni harbue (prayer on rice). This prayer emerged from their closed relation with rice fields. Agriculture and paddy are the main source of life Batak Toba, The way they refer to rice as Inong (mother) is a clear example on that relationship [11]. Accepting rice as a person revealed the word, inang. Inang is a given name to mother. As same as mother’s role, the rice’s role is very big in human life.

3.3. **Buffalo in Batak Tribe**

Buffalo also has an important meaning, Toba Elephant is another term representing buffalo for Batak tribe. Buffalo presence has an important role, as part of traditional rituals [17]. Similarly, for traditional communities in Indonesia, buffaloes become one animal that has an important meaning, used as transport, as a tool to process the rice fields, before the people familiar with the currency buffalo is also used as a medium of exchange and investment. Some areas make the buffalo as an animal that has its own meaning, even specifically has a symbolic meaning, is considered a symbol of fertility [18], believed to bring the spirits of the dead who are feasted to the afterlife where the spirits ride the buffalo [19]. Especially for the Batak tribe, some traditional ceremonies require the buffalo to be an important part of the procession, by slaughtering a buffalo during a traditional ceremony related to the death of the ‘Saur Matua’, giving the meaning that the deceased has a high customary position. Likewise, when a wedding is held, the buffalo is used as one of the dowries.
that must be paid by the groom to the bride. Even though it has a relatively high price, all family members will try to fulfil this obligation, buffaloes are also used as a means of paying, when money has not become one of the instruments in the process of buying and selling, as the richest of all domestic animals; has two horns and is very powerful. A pair of buffalo horns is a symbol of the descendants of two ancestors of the Batak people, namely Lontung and Sumba. [18]. it could be that the causes for some traditional communities to make it as a life investment, that is the importance of the meaning of the buffalo.

As an investment, buffalo ownership becomes a symbol of community social status, the more buffalo owned, it is interpreted as a rich person who has a high social status, in megalithic community life, buffalo has a sacred value and buffalo ownership determines one's social status [20]. So important is the meaning of the buffalo for the Batak tribe, then the place of these domestic animals is also very important. As an investment, efforts are made to make buffaloes very close to the owner's residence. In contrast to rice, which provided a special place, the buffalo tend to put in place staging their homes. Option to put on the area must have a certain consideration.

The spatial usage vertically represented by the universe of the Toba Batak, Yoshida, 1973: p.211

4. Research Results

4.1. Batak Tribe Philosophy
Society is a social system, each group having a different identity, a vital part of an ethnic group to ensure the continuity of the group, “It can provide an important thread of continuity with past and is often kept alive through the practice of cultural traditions” [22]. Identity may be present in various forms, both seen, as well as traditional houses and traditional clothes, and unseen, it seems like language and philosophy of life, as well as respect for the people of Batak who have language and philosophy of life which aims to ensure the sustainability of tribal life Batak wherever they are. Every life, both nationally and regionally (tribe) has a philosophy of life as a guideline that governs the system of life and kinship. For Batak, philosophy of life based on the philosophy of religious cosmology, it is believed that cosmology is divided into three Banua, namely Banua Ginjang or the world over, Banua Tonga or middle and Banua Toru world or the underworld. In daily activities, especially in the activities, the Batak have Dalihan Na Tolu philosophy that aims to regulate the position, rights and obligations of a person or group of people or to regulate and control the behaviour of a person or group in the lives of indigenous communities [1] [2] [3] [4]. It also serves as a basis for deliberation and consensus Batak [23] [24] [25]. In addition to a philosophy of life, Batak has nine major cultural value [26]. Other values that serve as guidelines for the life of the Batak tribe are presented in the form of oral stories or folklore, folklore more regulates daily social life, the relationship between the king and his people or fellow people [27].

4.2. Batak Tribe Ritual
Traditional rituals in Batak is a heritage, it comes with a unique ritual, sacred, and magical and full of meaning. Dalihan Na Tolu govern traditional rituals in Batak, everyone will be bound by the
customary position, this position will be unique in turns, depending on the traditional rituals performed by the male or the female. Each traditional rituals has its own meaning, starting from the traditional ritual birth to death, in principle, every phase of life has its own traditional rituals, both joy and sorrow. Undeniably, the Batak tribal rituals always use rice as a traditional instrument, usually placed on a plate or incorporated into a special place, called Tandok. Rice has an important meaning, the term inong in rice shows that rice has a role as a mother who is always present in prayers and hopes for the lives of her children. By laying rice on someone's head, it means blessing and prayers of parents / elders accompany it.

The terminology of Horas, as safe, it’s also has an important meaning, Horas is believed to have originated from the word Boras (rice), an interview conducted with one of the Batak Community Leader, explained that:

Q : Philosophy of Rice for the Batak tribe?
A : “… For the Batak tribe, there is a popular word that is often called Horas which means safe… Horas is synonymous with rice… if there is rice… then life is comfortable and safe… rice is a guarantee of survival, like savings or deposits. …”

(W. Nadeak, Batak Community Leader, lives in Tangerang)

In addition, buffalo has many functions among them as animals that help to cultivate rice fields, milk producers, meat producers, fertilizer producers, and as textile materials (industry), an interview conducted with one of the Batak Community Leader, explained that:

Q : For Batak tribe, how important is the buffalo?
A : “… The buffalo is called the Toba Elephant, why is it so important…? Buffaloes are perceived as disturbing and strong animals, Most of the traditional events use the buffalo as a condition, especially for weddings or funeral ceremonies for elders, buffaloes are a very good investment ... have a high and fast selling value ...

(W. Nadeak, Batak Community Leader, lives in Tangerang)

4.3. Space in the Batak Traditional House
Life meaningful and magical cosmology bring a different perspective space, a traditional Batak house represents the cosmological ideas of reviews their inhabitants, zoning division of space into three vertical zonation, basically, they divide the world into three parts: upper World, middle world and under world [11], the living area that is raised on stilts is the people’s place that represents the middle world, the space for animals in the substructure symbolizes the underworld [15]. That understanding became the dominant paradigm in looking at zoning space on traditional Batak house. Is that so? Batak tribe makes rice and buffalo as part of the cultural life of the community, even very dominating traditional rituals, Buffalo presence has an important role, as part of traditional rituals [17]. Not only in traditional, rice and buffalo are also a symbol of social status of a family or clan. Generally Rice is owned by the rich and poor so that there is social equality so that using rice as a symbol of the spirit of strengthening [16]. Rice and Buffalo is an important investment, not only as part of traditional rituals, but also part of an effort to meet the daily needs for financing family life, especially education of children who are in families. an interview conducted with one of the Batak Community Leader, explained that:

Q : The function of stage in a traditional Batak house?
A : "... interesting is the downstairs room of traditional Batak house, the stage is usually used as a storage place to a place of rice and buffalo, as the two commodities are assets owned by the family ..."

(W. Nadeak, Batak Community Leader, lives in Tangerang)
For Batak tribe, the presence of children as a successor to the clan is something important, the child is considered as a symbol of 'wealth', a song by Nahum Situmorang quite popular in Batak, Anakhon Hi Do Hasangapon Di Au (my son is an honour for me”. Gives a deep meaning and even influences the behavior of the Batak community in their daily lives. The philosophy of life for the community that is passed down from generation to generation is wealth (hamoraon), many descendants (hagabeon) and honor (hasangapon) pervading life and being the strength of the Batak tribe. Hasangapon can be interpreted as an attempt to have the honor or glory and sometimes interpreted also as an attempt to have a high social status.

As a tribe that embraced patrilineal, boys have an important role, the boy attempted to could get as high as higher education, both formal and spiritual, while now it seems a dichotomy between boys and girls has been slightly changed. In order to fulfil this responsibility, parents struggle to be able to meet the needs of their children, even parents are willing to work hard to provide opportunities for their children to be equal with their surrounding friends, especially in education in the refrain of the song, *hu gogo pe mansari siang nang botari; lao pasikkolahon gelleng hi; ai ingkon do singkola do satimbo-timbo na; Sintap ni na tolap gogo hi* [I working day and night, to give my child the opportunity to go to school; they have to go to school as high as possible, as strong as i can]. Historically, for the Batak tribe, efforts to pay for daily necessities were not only done with agriculture, some of them supported their families as fishermen on Lake Toba. In addition, in several areas, weaving activities carried out by Batak women, not infrequently, have become one of the main livelihoods for a family, weaving traditional cloth called Ulos. ulos is a weaving work of Batak women. Ulos is present as a symbol of the various meanings of life, every phase of life is interpreted by giving ulos, ulos has a fairly high market at that time even today. Weaving activities as part of production activities are generally carried out by Batak women in the stilt room below the house.

Regarding the building of houses, the Batak tribe has its own way of giving meaning to a room, this meaning is implied by the designation of the space, each room has a different designation (name). The space that is formed at the bottom (under) of the residence is known as Tombara or Taumbara, Tombara itself comes from the word Bara which means as a place to raise livestock. middle section known as Tonga used as a residence or dwelling place for the whole family. While the top, where there is a roof of a house, a room which is formed from a series called Urur wooden roof, and above Urur stretches Lais used to store sacred objects.

### 4.4 Deconstruction of Stage ideas in Batak Tribal Traditional Houses

Taken from an article entitled WANITA di TOMBARA (Woman at TOMBARA), it portrays real Tombara function:

Batak women use Tombara as a Weaving place when her great husband is too busy drinking at Kedai Tuak (Batak specialty drink shop). Tombara is a place for Batak women to socialize and gather even if it's just Marshutu (looking for lice). Tombara is a place for Batak women to store tools for fields and rice fields. there are hoes there, there are tripe, sickle, bamboo, gunny, pushcart, basket etc. This tool will be used by Batak women to cultivate rice fields when the husband is busy discussing people's wealth in the coffee shop. Tombara is a place for Batak women to make a living apart from the results of farming, in Tombara, Batak women will raise several animals in the hope that they will breed and can be sold for the needs of Ucok’s and Buet's schools, so that they don't miss their education, so that smart, could be a scholar, could be an employee, and could not hold hoes anymore.

http://marulaksinurat.blogspot.co.id/
Originally a stage that exist in traditional Batak house interpreted as representative of the World cosmology space in the form below. Could be the correct interpretation as a form of community life Megalithic. But when life continues, after customary activities are combined with religion, the meaning changes. The stage is no longer presented as the underworld but as Bara, for storage of goods or something that can be used for activities that are economic, Bara itself has a meaning as under the house, where live cattle during the night, the cage. In addition Bara is also used to store agricultural equipment even specifically used as a space for Batak women to weave. Initially, the Batak people were dominated by activities based on agriculture, livestock and fishermen. So along with the changing times, weaving activities become one of the economic activities carried out by some family members, especially women. With a more secure economic source, the next generation of the Batak tribe is generally endeavoured to be able to take the highest education possible, this effort is a manifestation of the Batak tribe philosophy, namely Hagabeon, Hasangapon, Hamoraon. One of the efforts to fulfil this philosophy is through education. Most of the Batak people, especially Batak women, will struggle so that their children can take higher education so that later their lives can change to be better than their parents.

The necessities of life and efforts to realize the expectations so that children can continue their studies can only be done through business activities, stage present to meet the space used as a function of economic or economic space, economic space they understood space formed: a. Natural or legal persons (entities), which for the realization of their economic needs and expressing the needs of the economic interests enter into economic relations. b. Physical and non-physical objects that are sources of economic interests and economic relations [28]. Finally, Bara as interpreted under the house (stage) as part of the production hall with economic function. Bara does not exist as a meaningless space, but Bara's presence shows that there has been a change in meaning from a mentalist space to a real space known as production space, Lefebvre explains better between mental space (the space of the philosophers) and real space (the physical and social spheres in which we all live), from metaphysical and ideological considerations of the meaning of space to its experience in the everyday life of home and city [29].

5. Conclusion :

Dominant paradigm: The idea of Stage in the traditional Batak traditional house is part of the underworld, refers to the cosmological understanding says.

When referring to the daily life of the Batak tribe, it turns out that Batak women hold an important role as a source of family economy. Responsibility to meet the needs of the family is also in the hands of women. If adult men have production space outside the home, through agriculture and fishermen, then Batak women have a production space at home, to be precise under the house. The stage is present not only as part of the cosmological aspect but also as a production space, a space that can be used to fulfil the family economy, through weaving, raising livestock and storing rice and agricultural equipment.

Rival paradigm: The idea of stage in the traditional Batak traditional house is a production space. If divided by zoning, the lower zoning is the production space, the middle zoning is the family space and the upper zoning is the space for storage area for valuables.

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