THE ROLE OF HKBP CHURCH IN PRESERVING BATAK CULTURAL IDENTITY AMONG THE YOUNG GENERATION OF BATAK CHRISTIANS (CASE STUDY OF HKBP CINTA DAMAI CHURCH)

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Abstract
In the relationship between religion and culture, there are institutions that have legitimacy to overshadow both, one of which is religious institutions. Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) as one of the religious institutions is seen as a place of spiritual fellowship and cultural fellowship (Batak) that has legitimacy to preserve. This preservation departs from the phenomenon of fading Batak cultural identity among the Young Generation of Batak Christians today in the midst of hybrid culture is an interesting thing to research. This research is a case study using qualitative methods with the aim of explaining the role of HKBP Church in efforts to preserve Batak Cultural Identity Among the Young Generation of Batak Christians with a Case Study of HKBP Cinta Damai Church. The results showed that HKBP became a place of spiritual and cultural communion based on the historical history of the cultural journey of the HKBP Church. However, the mixing of cultures (hybrid) due to the times makes the Batak Christian Young Generation have no interest in their identity besides the parental factor that does not inherit. Social Construction The role of HKBP Cinta Damai Church in preserving Batak Cultural Identity in building social practices received a positive response and interest from the Young Generation of Batak Christians

Keywords: HKBP Church, Batak Cultural Identity, Role, Young Generation of Batak Christians, Preservation.

INTRODUCTION
“Tudia pe halak Batak mangaranto, sai dihunti do Garejana” (Wherever the Batak travel, their Church will always be taken). Such is the philosophy of Batak Christianity echoed by Justin Sihombing. Batak fanaticism towards the Church is ingrained in Batak life (Hutauruk, 2011). From this we can see that Batak identity and Christianity are closely related to each other. This is inseparable from the historical journey of evangelism in the Land of Batak which then changed the paradigm of Batak people to live in Christianity. As an indigenous tribe of North Sumatra, the majority of Toba Batak people embrace Protestant Christianity. Silaen (2021) in his research saw the romanticism of Nommensen (Zending to the Land of Batak) which did not get rid of culture but transformed culture in the principle of hamajuon which is reflected in Pargodungan which became a place of spiritual development, health and education. Nommensen blends the daily traditions of the Batak people with spiritual and health activities so that the strength of Batak Christian solidarity is increasingly prominent. The romanticism of cultural transformation carried out by Nommensen through the Church is what HKBP then wants to pass on to the younger generation of Batak Christians.

Why the Young Generation of Batak Christians? In recent decades, there has been a phenomenon of waning Batak cultural identity in the Young Generation of Batak Christians. Research Zulkarnaen (2022) Seeing that the lifestyle of the younger generation is increasingly influenced by modernity and global culture. The penetration of information technology and modern lifestyles has influenced the perspective of the young generation of Christian Batak especially in urban areas towards their ancestral traditions (Sinaga, 2019). This is then called hybrid identities (cultural mixing), where cultural identities that were owned in the past (since birth), then mixed with today’s cultural identities so that they experience mixing. Batak identity that has been owned by the younger generation since birth, then mixed with other entities such as popular and modern culture, especially in technological advances which can then be different or contradictory, thus
disrupting the identity system that was originally owned. So it is not uncommon for identity crises to occur due to the encounter of mixed cultural identities (Piliang, 2009). This can be seen from the sense of ownership as if the younger generation does not have.

Seeing this phenomenon, the role of religious institutions (Churches) is needed to be able to form a movement to preserve cultural identities in the midst of the lives of the young generation of Batak Christians so that they have a special interest in the midst of global culture and today’s technological currents. Why the Church? Bernard Adeney as quoted Amaliyah (2018) It also asserts that religion has a role when modernization has taken social control over the culture of the ancestors who became the identity of individuals or groups. So that religion is expected to be able to become a social institution (Church institution) that seeks to maintain cultural preservation amid the development of modernization.

The phenomenon of the Church as a conservationist of Batak culture in addition to its main role as a spiritual institution is very interesting to study. This phenomenon is shown by the sincerity and seriousness of the HKBP Cinta Damai Church. HKBP Cinta Damai Church is located in an urban area in Medan City. Based on researchers’ observations, HKBP Cinta Damai has demonstrated the existence of attention to Batak culture and the Young Generation. Not only rituals but also followed by significant supporting activities in teaching, spirituality and social praxis as an effort to preserve Batak cultural identity among the younger generation of Batak Christians. The approach and role of HKBP globally or HKBP Cinta Damai locally is needed to be able to preserve the Batak cultural identity of the young Batak Christian generation amid cultural mixing conditions as part of realizing the principle of hamajuon that has been pioneered socio-culturally.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The method carried out in this study is qualitative. The study in this study is descriptive where this study seeks to display phenomena based on case studies and descriptions in the form of writing and narratives in a structured manner which are then analyzed in terms of experiences and observations based on observations, interviews and documentation (Moleong 2012). The observation took place at HKBP Cinta Damai Church, interviewing twenty people from the younger generation of Batak Christians, then asking for opinions from pastors, congregations and experts who knew HKBP and Batak Culture and documentation in the form of writings or documents as supporting parts.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Religion, Social Construction and Social Practice**

One of those who built his theory of religion was Emile Durkheim in the structural functionalism he developed. Durkheim (2017) see religion as sacred and profane. Sacred in that which is superpowered, powerful, unquestionably superior. Meanwhile, profane is a practical thing that regulates daily life. It is affirmed that religion is social and closely related to culture, which is then implemented through pre-ingrained clan social ideas (Totemism / primitive culture) and various existing symbols. (Sitorus, 2022)

In connection with the above, the supporting theory is the social construction built by Peter Berger. In seeing the course of religion as a phenomenology, Berger saw that society is a human product that then opens up interconnected social realities. In an effort to construct social reality, Berger developed three steps of social construction: externalization, objectification and internalization. Externalization is the attempt of man to get out of his territory to find his world either physically or mentally, especially in human activities in his environment. Berger then developed objectification whereby humans would create value which then became a reminder part of their social life. Objectification is the result of collective action and collective recognition by people and society. Internalization is an effort to absorb the world (culture) that has been objectified.
so as to form consciousness in individuals. This attempt to form consciousness then becomes a phenomenon related to external reality. (Berger, 1991)

The social construction of religion as a continuous part of social life, culture and society aims at a social practice. Social practice was established by Pierre Bourdieu, a sociologist of postmodernism who saw a significant relationship between religion and culture. There are three concepts offered by Bourdieu, namely arena (field), capital (capital) and habit (habitus). Regarding the arena, Bourdieu sees that a person's objective position is also determined by the objective views of those around him and all of it lies in one continuous arena. Then there is capital which contains three understandings, namely economic, social and cultural capital. For Bourdieu, capital is a system of social relations in an attempt to present the individual self under certain social conditions. The focus of this research is more on the cultural capital developed by Bourdieu. In his research, Bourdieu saw that cultural investment efforts in individuals form a knowledge system in an effort to show the social environment of their owners. Individuals will receive education in an effort to participate in religious or community activities. Bourdieu's third concept is Habitus. Bourdieu saw that habitus is the practical experience of what will be done under certain conditions based on the socialization process that the individual undergoes so as to internalize the objective structure in his habits in which tastes and tendencies are developed and embedded in that individual. From these three concepts, Bourdieu wants to develop a social practice in an illustration (Habitus x Capital) + Arena which is interpreted where habitus combined with certain capital (culture) and placed in the region (domain) will give rise to social practices that lead to social actors (agents) in the midst of society. (Rey, 2007; Grusendorf, 2016).

The connectivity of the three concepts (Durkheim, Berger and Bourdieu) will be a scheme to analyze the role of the Church and the response of the Batak Christian Young Generation. Durkheim with sacred and profane religion will be supported by the role of internalization of Berger and Habitus as well as bourdieu capital and all that lies in the institution of the Church is expected to produce the Social construction of the Church and Social practice in the Young Generation of Batak Christians.

**Batak Cultural Identity**

The theory of Cultural Identity was developed by Stuart Hall (1994) in his book *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (Jayadi, 2022), Explains that cultural identity seeks to hide personal identity in the midst of collective identity in the community. Hall also emphasized that an aspect of cultural identity is the inherent sense of belonging, living linguistic, religious, ethnic, racial that is owned and continues in a process. According to Chen (2014), Because individuals are usually affiliated with more than one cultural group in their daily lives, the inherent cultural identity must be more complex to know and understand. In a world that competes with modernization and globalization of the times, cultural identity must continue to be negotiated, maintained and even challenged to exist with communicative practices owned by groups or between individuals.

Speaking of Batak cultural identity, Batak culture has material (material) and intangible (non-material) culture. Cultural objects (physical) in Batak can look like ulos, musical instruments (gondang batak music – Ende book (Batak Christian hymns), Batak house architecture. Then in the culture of objects there are also immovable heritage such as cultural heritage, historical sites. In intangible culture (non-physical, non-material) there will be Batak language, kinship values (clans), legend stories, martonun skills, margondang, manortor, adaptability and so on. This is what later developed into an identity in the midst of Batak culture. Related to this, Damanik (2017) Seeing that socio-cultural changes greatly affect the cultural identity possessed by society. This opens up
the view that cultural identity is not just to distinguish one group from another, but how identity is a strategy of adaptation and cultural sustainability in a multicultural society. In terms of Batak cultural identity, the Batak language and Batak ethnic songs (music) (godang batak) are the main focus specifically in their use in the Church which will be discussed in the next section.

Role of Religious Institutions: HKBP preserves the Cultural Identity of Batak

The Role of Religious Institutions according to Irawan (2022) It is enough to have the power to become social stability, be it relations, cultural solidarity or between ethnicities as part of the believer's life. Religion with its ceremonies, rites, and symbols is able to be a representation that shapes values in individuals. In this case, the religious institution to be analyzed is the Church. According to Tari (2020), The Church as a religious institution does not just carry out worship, but plays a role in providing education and various social actions. The Church must be re-awakened to the task of preaching the gospel and social movements in the midst of the realities faced. One of them is how the Church is able to assess socio-cultural phenomena that are developing and give more assessment to customs.

In the socio-historical history of HKBP as a religious institution, the evangelistic movement was particularly influential in spirit which began at a meeting in Sipirok 7 October 1861 by Heine, Klammer, Betz and Van Asselt (which later became the forerunner of the name HKBP). Research Schreiner (2011) Seeing attitudes towards custom/culture in a religious-ethnographic sense led to the emergence of important elements in church design in the first decade. This started from the movement of zending priests who combed remote villages who then took action to illuminate Batak culture. One of the keys to the successful encounter of Christianity and Batak was when the mission of the RMG was the concept of people's identity in Germany which later developed into the People's Church (Volkskirche). This concept builds a theology that is directly perpendicular to aspects of people's lives both economically, socially and culturally. (Hutauruk, 2011)

HKBP, which was originally born as a result of RMG evangelism, is a People's Church. The word Huria is used to refer to a social community rather than a church as a spiritual communion. Through HKBP, Christianity becomes the leaven that permeates all aspects of Batak life. Although it seems exclusive, HKBP strives to be inclusive where Batak Christians can still socialize with their fellow non-Batak or non-Christians without having to leave Christianity and its bricks so that this is called hamajuon. Two Batak cultural identities that to this day become the heritage of HKBP are Batak Language and Batak Song (Musical Instrument). HKBP uses Batak language in the delivery of the Word or in the songs contained in the HKBP Ende Book as part of an effort not to eliminate the cultural identity that has become a hereditary heritage. (Lumbantobing, 2018)

Young Generation of Batak Christians

In the development of generations of human life, there are several generations that give rise to individual characteristics that exist in that part of the period. The era of Baby Boomers is people born in the era of 1946 - 1964, then followed by Gen X born in the era of 1965 - 1980, then Gen Millenials in the era of 1981 - 1996 and finally Gen Z in the era of 1997 - 2012 to give rise to Gen Alpha who was born in the era of 2012 until now. The younger generation (Gen Z) that is the focus is people aged 12 years to 25 years. Soleh & Kuncoro (2023) Seeing the contemporary era experienced by today's Young Generation (Gen-Z) also participates in changing the paradigm and views of the younger generation, especially when popular culture and technological advances are growing. Especially when Gen-Z grew up in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, so it is not uncommon to seek spiritual and cultural feelings that are more tied to personal satisfaction than
sticking to the conventional. This can be seen in the Young Generation of Batak Christians or better known in HKBP as Naposobulung (na poso: young, bulung: leaf). Regarding the relationship with Naposobulung with Batak cultural identity, an urgency was born about the continuity of the two. Research Afriliani et al (2022) found that the Toba Batak Young Generation who did not know their customs were driven by rational thinking in the modern era. Of course, the impact that occurs is the existence of exclusion and social laws as said Vergouwen (2004). Therefore, HKBP is faced with a situation known as hybrid cultural identity. Cultural hybridity is a mixture between two indigenous and immigrant cultures, which then mixes and allows for a conflict. HKBP as a church with a Batak identity has historically had the task of maintaining the existence of the young generation of Batak Christians in their Batak cultural identity even though they must blend in with other cultural situations. The power of a living dialogue with culture must be that which is developed where cultural identity as a property becomes something that the church uses without having to undergo deep absorption into the culture itself. In addition, the Church is in the form of preserving cultural identity in naposobulung so that it exists to face a global culture that is quite borderless and even not identity but comfortable, so as not to forget the Batak identity they have so that the Church creates the principle of Culture friendly Church.

Role HKBP Cinta Damai Church in Preserving Batak Cultural Identity

From various informant findings, field observations and calls for the preservation of Batak cultural identity as an effort to build identity construction in the midst of social reality by developing internalization models, HKBP Cinta Damai shows its role as a spiritual and cultural fellowship with three things, namely:

a. Spiritual Development

1. Conducting Revival Services for the entire congregations, especially Naposobulung (young generations) with Batak nuanced worship with Batak musical instruments and songs
2. Revitalizing Worship at 08.00 by combining Indonesian Song and Batak Language. Seven songs in The HKBP Liturgical Worship, divided into 4 Buku Ende Songs, 3 Spiritual Pop with Batak Style in the use of musical instruments.

b. Teaching:

1. Empowerment in the form of Seminars and Panel Discussions to Naposobulung related to Batak Culture, Economy and the Future. This teaching centers on how the teenagers of Naposobulung can understand about their Batak culture in addition, knowledge about finding work in economic terms in Medan City in addition to experience and motivation about their future.
2. Retreat (Special Construction) to Naposobulung and Manghatahatai (Discussed) on Batak Culture
3. The Ecclesiastical Music Seminar which was attended by the HKBP Cinta Damai congregations specifically the naposobulung who became Song Leaders and Music Players at the 8:00 a.m. Service as well as taught the relevance of Batak Ethnic Music
4. Adding Catechization Curriculum on HKBP Church History, Batak Language and Batak Culture. Every time they start and end the lesson, each student must bring a prayer in Batak and a song from the Buku Ende.

c. Social Relations

1. Cultural Approach in anticipating conflict and strengthening solidarity in the midst of HKBP Cinta Damai community.

   In addition to the 3 breakthrough parts made in an effort to internalize HKBP Cinta Damai as an arena in preserving its Batak cultural identity, the thing that was then most
accommodated by HKBP Cinta Damai was the use of Batak singing (Buku Ende) and Batak musical instruments. HKBP Cinta Damai tried to actualize some of Buku Ende’s songs with Batak musical instruments such as uning-unigan and Sulim. The songs in Buku Ende have been translated into HKBP Songbook in Indonesian (Buku Nyanyian HKBP) so that they can be understood by young people.

This then confirms that everything related to religion and culture is interrelated with each other. This is where HKBP Cinta Damai tries to construct what Durkheim calls the function of religion to implement clan ideas and cultural symbols that have been embedded to this day or internalization efforts as developed by Berger. All of these things are done collectively. It is also emphasized by Bourdieu that the cultural capital (Batak) owned by the Church must be planted together in order to create habitus for the Young Generation of Batak Christians. Without group movements to legitimize individuals, the investment would be insignificant. What HKBP Cinta Damai is doing is a local action to achieve a global action. The process of objectification and internalization carried out by HKBP aims at the process of externalization of the Young Generation of Batak Christians (Naposobulung) in order to express their identity and then blend in with other socio-cultural worlds in a social structure of society.

Response Generation Young Batak Christians towards the Role HKBP Cinta Damai

It must be admitted that many of today's Young Generation of Batak Christians (Naposobulung) are only recipients of the cultural heritage that exists today without any strong explanation for it. The absence of an explanation about this could be due to the rigid nature of the Batak family that cannot accept the changing times. This is then confirmed by the condition that many Young Generation of Batak Christians are not inherited Batak identity properly. Though the first and main social institution that inherits it is the Family (Parents). Pantun Orang Batak also said this "Ramba Naposo dope hami, naso tubuan lata. Jolma na poso dope hami, naso umboto hata" (We are still grasses, young shrubs, which have not yet produced seeds. We are young people who don't know how to speak) This is the status and social role of the Naposobulung which is then in accordance with the philosophy of young leaves that must be cared for, that education is needed, understanding with current methods and methods. This is evident from the confession of Naposobulung informants that they know the Batak cultural identity but do not understand how Batak is because there is nothing in their family that teaches it and the influence of the times and the environment. Based on the results of field research analysis using NVivo 12 with Hierarchy Chart Features from 20 informants of the Batak Christian Young Generation, as many as 8 people said that due to factors of technology, popular culture and internetization, followed by 7 people because parents did not inherit and the rest were daily associations and perceptions were still young.

Figure 1. Data Factors influencing the Young Generation of Batak Christians

From this, HKBP Cinta Damai carried out a conservation movement and based on the results of informant interviews and field observations, a response was found from the Young Generation
of Batak Christians. Speaking of response, it will refer to an emotional attitude, words or actions that express a positive or negative side to what he sees, hears and feels. The response can then be influenced by various factors behind the birth of the response. Response is also a benchmark for an achievement made by other individuals or communities based on what the individual who assesses it feels. One of NVivo 12's features as part of qualitative data analysis is a hierarchy chart which shows that from the informant's explanation, they show interest and positive response to the role of the Church in preserving Batak Identity to the Young Generation of Batak Christians.

![Hierarchy Chart of Batak Christian Young Generation's Response](image)

This response was present for their various views regarding the role of HKBP Cinta Damai specifically in the preservation of Batak Language and Singing (Batak Musical Instruments). Although in an elusive category, the efforts of the Church generate interest. In response to the Naposobulung's, this was then an attempt to construct the Church towards social practice. The concept of bourdieu (Habitus x Capital) + Culture is real in this. HKBP Cinta Damai imparts cultural capital knowledge to them which then gives rise to habitus based on responses and all that they find in the Church as a realm of knowing more about Batak identity. Therefore, all efforts made by HKBP Cinta Damai in the process of building social practices in the community. The Young Generation of Batak Christians must be able to live as Batak people in the midst of modern life, because it is impossible for us to live in the way we used to live like our ancestors, but what value is contained in the previous heritage is constructed so well with the innovations provided by the Church so that it is not eroded by the times and can be passed on to the next generation.

**CONCLUSION**

HKBP is a church of spiritual fellowship and cultural fellowship that is a sacred force in the eyes of culture and can use culture as a profane part to regulate life. HKBP Cinta Damai as a Church in the middle of Medan has proven their locality's efforts to preserve their Batak Cultural Identity. The joint Social Movement built by the Church, in this case, the Head of the Congregations together with the congregations, shows that this task of preservation is the fruit of connectivity and collectivity to achieve a goal. What HKBP Cinta Damai has done has received a positive response from the naposobulung so that this positive response must be considered and become the main program in all elements in the Church to then not only discourse but action. The social construction of the Church ushered in the process of internalization to the Young Generation of Batak Christians in their lives of Social Practice.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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