

Social Change of Death Ritual Ceremony in Indonesia

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Abstract—*Sayurmatuah* is one of ritual ceremony of the death of Indonesian tribes who had reached many years of living and bore offspring of men and women, who had grandsons and granddaughters and whose all children had got married. There are two in one of art performances, which is dance and music. The purpose of this article describes efforts of how to preserve the art in this rite and to discuss the changes and adaptions of gual Indonesia before Indonesia independence. Participants in this study are Simalungun art workers and Simalungun community who support the ritual ceremony of death that took place in several villages, North Sumatera, Indonesia. This study uses qualitative research with descriptive methods. Descriptive method through analysis, interview and observation. The results of this study stated that arts performance Indonesia on Simalungun's death ritual ceremony are changes in instruments and dance, musical and dance structures as an adaptation to the dynamic of social life.

Keywords—social change; Simalungun; death ritual ceremony

I. INTRODUCTION

Simalungun is one of ethnic Batak groups in North Sumatera, Indonesia [1]. In addition, they also have traditional ceremonies, both joys and sorrows that discuss stages, such as birth ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and death ceremonies.

All of traditional ceremonies, the authors are interested in performance the ceremony of the death their ethnic in Indonesia (*sayurmatuah*). According to the people, it is a traditional ceremony for people who have received enough blessings [2], the day ceremony is performed on others according to the criteria that must be done with traditional wedding rituals.

Death ceremonies, in which the past until now have experienced a shift and change, due to the lack of awareness and behavior of the people towards the art found in the death ceremony. In addition, the conditions of social life have also developed and experienced changes that are driven by internal factors and external factors. We also see that the art found in the rituals of death in the community today is generally very familiar with the use of modern devices, such as keyboard.

Art found in the rituals of death are musical ensembles (*gual*) and mask dance (*toping-toping* dance). The music group consists of *gonrang sipayu-pitu* as tempo organizers, *sarune* as

the melody bearer, and the accompanist is *mongongan* and *ogung*. This music is unique when presented in this ritual death ceremony. Dance performed by *toping-toping* dance (mask dance) [3].

The phenomenon that occurs in the arts in the rituals of death is very alarming, and in quantity, seeing the reality of customary leaders, musicians (calling) from year to year diminishes. The disinterest of the young generation in this ritual, so they are not given the opportunity to get to know this culture. This made the researchers interested in describing the structure of the presentation of these rituals of death and looking deeply at the changes that occurred in the rituals of death in this community to avoid extinction and be eroded by modernization.

II. DEATH RITUAL CEREMONY

A great variety of social occasions are identified as “rituals” in the anthropological literature. They range from private ceremonies with few participants, or indeed just one person, to large gatherings, and from single acts to long sequences spread over months or years. The general themes range from worship to protection to aggression. The occasions for ritualized behaviors also vary, either contingencies such as illness or misfortune, life-stages like birth, initiation, and death, or recurrent occasions such as seasonal changes. Shortly, the connections between rituals and religious concepts are crucial in some cases [3].

In previous research, it was studied about the beginning of the ritual of death performed by the royal family, who died of children, adults and elderly. At this ritual ceremony, there were two in one of art performances, namely mask dance (*toping-toping* dance) and *gonrang sipayu-pitu* music ensemble (*gual*) [4].

Since 1945, after Indonesian independence, the types of death are limited by age, so that there are three types of elderly death. Typically, they can be divided into three names: (1) *namatei sayurmatuah*, namely someone who dies for a long time, has sons and daughters. Having grandchildren of sons and daughters, and no one who had got married (2) *namatei sayurmatua*, a person who dies, has sons and daughters, there are still those who had unmarried, (3) *namatei matua* someone

who died in time old, have grandchildren, but there are one who had unmarried. In the rituals of death after Indonesian independence since 1945, there are seldom use mask dance (*toping-toping* dance) and *gonrang sипitu-pitu* music ensemble (*gual*) [4]

After Indonesian independence and the inclusion of religion, this community's death ritual experienced many changes that occurred and have not been studied.

Death played a central part in the conversations between missionaries and their converts. The death of Christ represented the once-and-for-all sacrifice. Death itself had been conquered, for those who had the courage to believe [5]. In Simalungun, the missionary insistence on talking about death triggers attraction and flight among their potential converts, and helps convey feelings of God's authority. For some people of Simalungun, the description of Christians about the resurrection of the dead and the second - the coming of Christ has a certain attraction, because this offers eternal life so that the ceremony of death is not an event of sadness but joy. Previous research has not yet examined the changes that occurred in the ethnic rituals of death in ancient times with now. This is what attracts researchers to examine this.

III. PROPOSED METHOD

The research uses a qualitative method, namely all the data obtained are described in the form of words that are not expected as usual in quantitative research. How to work and think to get the right data through work processes and inductive thinking is not deductive as is the case in quantitative research. Location determination, study objectives, data collection techniques, and data analysis steps are generally explained [6].

The research on the ritual death ceremony was conducted in several villages, North Sumatera, Indonesia. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach and a type of case study research. Qualitative descriptive is where the researcher describes what is obtained in the field and describes it in a writing in the form of narrative. In this study, the data sources used were obtained through direct recording of what the informant put forward, namely words and actions were also supported through photos used as interview evidence, and looking at the facts directly in the field. The informants chosen in this study are two elders (people who lead the ritual), six players/roles of figures, one religious leaders, and community. Data collection techniques in this study use in-depth interview and observation techniques. In-depth interviews are conducted with informants. Direct observation is used to find out the conditions and processes that exist in the field as the object of research. The technique used to test the validity of the data in this study is source triangulation and informant review.

To help this study researcher used social change theory from various sources. In this research, social changes of the death rituals on Simalungun tradition involved two dimensions of time: before 1945 and after 1945 (1945 until 2018).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Change of Instruments and Dance on Simalungun's Ritual Death Ceremony

Before 1945, the *gonrang sипitu-pitu* music ensemble (*gual*) and mask dance (*toping-toping* dance) relation each other on this ritual. *Gonrang sипitu-pitu* music ensemble or *gual* has a very important role in the ritual ceremony of the death on this community because without music (*gual*), the ritual of death will not happen.

The *Gonrang Sipitu-pitu* music ensemble (*gual*) is a set of traditional music consist of *sarunei bolon*, seven *gonrang*, two *mongongan*, and two *ogung*. If the music (*gual*) performed, mask dance (*toping-toping* dance) will be show off. It had used on Simalungun's death ritual ceremony performed by royal family. Figs.1 until 4 show images instruments and dance property had used on this ritual.



Fig. 1. *Sarunei Bolon*.



Fig. 2. Two *Mongongan* and Two *Ogung*.



Fig. 3. Seven *gonrang* (*Gonrang Sipitu-pitu*).

The use of the name *gonrang sипitu-pitu* is based on the existence of seven *gonrang* in a set of musical instruments. The first *gonrang*, starting from the biggest is as a protector who presents a basic rhythm pattern that is repeated continuously. The second, third, fourth and fifth *gonrang* are called *panirang* (separators), which are some *gonrang* which are sounded alternately and present different rhythms with basic rhythms. The sixth and seventh *gonrang* is *Panintingi* (Fig.3).



Fig. 4. Dance property of mask dance (*Toping-toping* Dance).

After 1945, at the ritual death ceremony in several villages, we found that those have changed in rites. First, it has not used seven *gonrang* but used six *gonrang* (Fig.5). Second, the addition *seruling* instruments (flutes) and western musical instruments, namely keyboard instrument and drum set (cymbals, snare drums and tom-toms). The addition of musical instruments is one form of effort in providing innovation in traditional Simalungun music and giving a festive atmosphere in traditional ceremonies of death. (Fig.6). *Sarune Bolon*, two *mongongan* and two *ogung* have used on opening and closing ceremony.



Fig. 5. Change in seven *gonrang* become six *gonrang* instrument with addition of a drum set.



Fig. 6. The addition *seruling* instrument (flute), keyboard and drum set.

B. Function Changes the Gonrang Sipitu-pitu Music Ensemble (Gual)

In the presentation of the *gual* during the ritual ceremony of death in several village North Sumatra, Indonesia was carried out for two days before the funeral.

Rites are not simply either sacred or secular. Rather, some are closer to the scared, associated with supernatural or spiritual beings, while others are closer to the mundane world,

concerned with propriety and relations between people [7]. Based on interviews, rituals of death still used *gonrang sipitupitu* without the addition of western musical instruments. First, this music was used specifically by previous Simalungun kingdoms to entertain grieving families while displaying *toping-toping* dance. Second, it has changed to function as a ritual to summon the spirits of previous ancestors based on prior belief (before they tribe embraced religion) so that the death ceremony was carried out smoothly while performing *toping-toping* dance. Third, after they tribe embraced Christian, Islam and others, the *gonrang sipitupitu* music ensemble (*gual*) have changed function to function as entertainment for the grieving family and spectacle for the surrounding community and *toping-toping* dance was no longer divided into an obligation to be performed in rites of the death.

C. Change of Musical and Dance Structure

Before 1945, the arts performance of death ritual is *gonrang Sipitu-pitu* music ensemble (*gual*) and *toping-toping* dance (two in one) on ritual death. This ritual was happened just for royal family.

After 1945 until 2018, the arts performance has performed in the ritual ceremony of death in several villages is *gual* and dance *toping-toping*. Especially, the dance is seldom found. Typically, music performance of death ritual is divided into three types:

- Keyboard music to accompany Christian worship. In general, it is first held as an opening and closing event both on the first and second days.
- *Gual rambing-rambing*, *gual sayurmatua* and *gual olob-olob*. It has used as an opening and closing on this ritual. It uses musical instruments such as *gonrang sipitupitu*, *sarunei bolon*, *mongongan*, and *ogung*. Before 1945, the presentation *Gual* is pure without using western musical instruments, but now there are addition in presentation *gual* such as cymbals.
- *Gual* for songs (*doding-doding*) uses keyboard instrument, *seruling* (flute), and *gonrang* that is added a drum set.

The ritual of death ceremony for this community was carried out for two days. On the first day it was held inside the house and the second day was held on the terrace of the house. The changes that occur in the structure of the presentation of the ceremony are

1) The first day: The presentation structure carried out on the first day is

a) Worship ceremony: The opening ceremony on the first day is worship ceremony. They tribe had embraced religion, this death ritual ceremony began with the implementation of religious worship embraced by the grieving family. At the time of research, the ritual of death ceremony held was a religious religion with a keyboard instrument alone. This service aims to make the ritual of the death ceremony run well.

b) Giving betel leaf, rice and money (batu napuran) for grieving family: After the service, the body was inserted into the coffin and the family sat around the box, then the provision of it which was betel leaf containing money and rice from the family grieved for every family who had come far from assistance. Betel leaf is carried out as a sign of respect for the family. According to people, rice is a sign of fertility which means that humans have a long life and are blessed by creators.

c) Giving and using white cloth (porsa) for grieving family: After that giving white cloth to each family. A white cloth as a sign of a grieving family, it is used on every male of the family or son. It is tied to the head of a man while a woman wears a head as a head covering. According by Simalungun community, white cloth is a sign of purity and peace. This means that the deceased person returned sacred to God and so did the families left behind and the people around them were calm and peaceful after being left behind.



Fig. 7. Giving white cloth (*Porsa*).

d) Giving betel leaf, rice and money (batu napuran) and white cloth (porsa) for musicians (panggual): Before placing the gonrang by the grandson of the corpse, the grieving family gave betel leaf and rice to be given to musicians represented by *Sarune* players. This is done as a sign of respect or appreciation for playing musical instruments during the rituals of death.



Fig. 8. Giving *Batu Napuran* and *Porsa* to *panggual*

e) Gonrang of beating by grandchild: Gonrang beating was carry out by the oldest grandson.

f) Greeting word from musicians to grieving family: After the Gonrang beating by the grandchild, the musician will say an expression of gratitude to the grieving family, then hit ogung instrument. In the past time, it used to call the spirits of ancestors, and now it has undergone changes adapted to Christian beliefs. *Ogung* was sounded three times by church leader and saying "in the name of the Father, Son and Amen Holy Spirit". After that, it is continued by hitting/beating *gonrang* by the grandson and granddaughter of the deceased person.

g) Gual performance: *Gual* Performances presented by *gual sayur matua*, *gual rambing-rambing*, and *gual olob-lob*. It is held as a sign about one person had died. This *Gual* ussually always held on death ritual ceremony in Simalungun community. They cannot dance and be quiet.

2) Second day: On the second day, rituals of death at these community were carried out at home. The procedures for the program held on the second day are as follows:

a) Worship ceremony: Worship is always held as an opening event in the rituals of death after they tribe began to embrace religion. Worship performed at the ritual of death in several village is a Christian worship accompanied by a keyboard musical instrument.

b) Gual performance: *Gual* Performance is *gual sayur matua*, *gual rambing-rambing*, and *gual olob-lob*.

c) Giving white cloth (porsa) to corpse: Giving white cloth is done by the grieving family and the close families are accompanied by Simalungun's songs.

d) Gala lunch: It is a gathering ceremony in a form of gala lunch from the grieving family dedicated to the guests.

e) Dance (manortor) with music (gual) and Simalungun's songs (doding-doding): It is a tradition of this ritual what functions is as an entertainment.



Fig. 9. *Tor-tor* dance in mortality ritual.

f) Grieving Family have give betel leaf, rice, and little money (batu napuran) for musicians (panggual) as a closing ceremony of this ritual.

g) Finally, burial of the body.

V. CONCLUSION

The arts performance of the death ceremony Simalungun ethnic are changes in instruments and dance, musical and dance structures as an adaptation to the dynamic of social life.

The customary ceremony of death will be carried out in the future aimed at achieving the perfection of life according to the corners of the Simalungun community. Social changes in rituals of death are due to new discoveries such as the addition of western musical instruments, place of implementation, and the conversion of religions so that the implementation of traditional ceremonies is harmonized with it.

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