Concerning Toba Batak's Local Wisdoms and Cultural Values for Regional Character Building

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This article is aimed at seeking Toba Batak's local wisdoms, for instance, its types and cultural values, which are potential for the development of character building in the regions. Methods: The study of local wisdoms and cultural values for the development of regional character building in the North Tapanuli, Central Tapanuli, Toba Samosir, Humbang Hasundutan and Samosir regencies was made on the basis of anthropolinguistic analysis. Components of performance, indexicality, and participation can be considered effective in the assessment to text, cotext and context of local wisdoms. Three auxiliary components were paid attention, namely, interconnection, valuability, and sustainability. Findings: Local wisdoms of Toba Batak try to reach some values, such as, trustworthy, polite and respectful, honest, promoting togetherness and convention, tolerant and harmonious, responsible and committed, caring, and grateful. These local people are hoped to have the following characteristics: hard working, dilligent, disciplinary, mutually assisting, and environmental caring. These are called working ethics. Therefore, Toba Batak has eight cultural values, for instance, paradaton 'being a custom', partuturon 'kinship', parsaoran dalihan natolu 'interaction of three customary parties", tanda habatahon 'marders of Bataknese identity', hagabeon 'posterity and long life', hamoraon 'welfare', hasangapon 'honor', and haporseaon 'faith, belief". These values produced eight auxiliary values: maradat 'customary, civilized', martutur 'being involved in kinship', parsaor 'friendly; interactive to the three customary parties', marhabatahon 'being identified as Batakness marker', marroha hagabeon 'being hopeful of long life and good posterity', marhamoraon 'hopeful of being welfare', marhasangapon 'hopeful of honor', and marhaporseaon 'having good faith'. Improvements/Application: Materials in this article shall determine some polite components of local wisdoms that can be used for the ongoing development of character building in the regencies so that local governments build infrasctructure from inner hearts.

Keywords: Anthropolinguistics, Character Building, Cultural Traditions, Cultural Values, Local Wisdoms, Oral Traditions

1. Introduction

Before holding the presidency, Joko Widodo (or Jokowi), who is now the President of Indonesia, ever said that Indonesia faced a complicated paradox which required answers from the national leaders. After sixteen years of reform, there arises a question: why are public still getting

restless (or *galau* in youth term)? The reform implemented in Indonesia since the fall of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998 merely revamps the institutional nature but it fails to touch the paradigm, mindset, or political culture in the nation building. To see a truly meaningful change in a constant continuity and in accordance with the ideals of the Proclamation of Indonesia to create

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free, fair, and prosperous conditions, Indonesia requires a mental revolution. Nation building might not proceed when it just relies on the institutional overhaul without reforming the Indonesian people as well as the characters of those who run the government system. No matter how great the reform is, but if institutions are handled by people with misguided character, prosperity will not emerge. Since Indonesian independence, mismanagement always becomes the living potrayal which brings disasters in the nationwide. By holding a certain convention, Indonesia needs to perform a mental revolution which starts from families, social environment as well as working atmosphere and must becomes a national movement1.

This paper tries to discuss how indigenous or cultural values contribute to character building and to mental revolution in the nation which should be free from poverty and strife but should bring peace, welfare or fairness, and prosperity to the next generation. Local wisdoms as part of cultural values avail in the community and they could inherit peace and welfare (two conditions which are really important in human life) in the local communities in the ancient times. Toba Batak (TB) occupying the land in around Lake Toba lived in such conditions in the past by just following their local wisdoms as the sources of mental attitude. However, today, they have difficulties to meet their basic needs and to send their children to school owing to poverty-stricken conditions; they even strive, fight, and kill each other. Such problems exist caused by degradation or loss of local wisdom. The ethics on goodness, such as trustworthiness, honesty, fairness and politeness that can create peace within the community and on work, such as, hard work, serious study, diligence, and discipline that can uplift their welfare have degraded in today's societies.

The illustration above opens a way to explore and describe the TB's local wisdoms that are inherited orally and found in cultural traditions, and that can be formulated in such a way as a model of character building both in the rural and urban societies in Batak land of five regencies in specific and in North Sumatera Province in general. This paper attempts to answer two basic questions: how do local wisdoms indicate cultural values and what types of local wisdoms can be utilized for local and regional character building? To seek answers a qualitative approach is applied with data collecting methods are addressed to open-ended and in-depth interviews, participatory and direct observation as well as focus group discussion. Information reconstruction is used as method of analysis; since this research is in the range of linguistic anthropology, the text, co-text and context in relation to local wisdoms which deal with ceremonies during life cycle and with verbal traditions as well as with performances, indexicality, and participation are paid attention. Moreover, the interconnection, valuability, and sustainability also become the targets.

2. Concept Headings

2.1 Character Building

Character is concerned with attitude and way of thinking, behaving, and interacting an individual does when he undergoes his life or when he works together within his family, neighborhood, community, and nation. Character covers the whole range of values, thoughts, words, behaviors and/or actions that a person has and can be part of a person's identity which appears in the form of mindset, attitudes, and behavior. Roosevelt has ever said: "I care not about what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do. That is character! "(Abourjilie, 2002a: 23)2. Lickona (1991: 8) argued3 "When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it's clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within. Lickona proposed eight elements of character, namely (1) honesty, (2) compassion, (3) good judgment, (4) courage, (5) kindness, (6) self-control) (7) cooperation, and (8) diligence or hard work. The elements of the character can vary, but the soul remains the same because the core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others, form the base of good characters that Abourjilie (2002b: 15) mentions that the elements of character consist of (1) courage, (2) good

judgment, (3) integrity, (4) kindness, (5) persistence, (6) respect, (7) responsibility, (8) self-discipline. As long as it is based on ethical values or good ethics, character elements can be increased, varied, and different4.

In the academic paper of Development of Nation Character and Culture Education, the Ministry of National Education has formulated 18 character values⁵ that will be developed for children and young people of Indonesia. The values of these characters are (1) religiousness, (2) honesty, (3) tolerance, (4) discipline, (5) hard work, (6) creativity, (7) independence, (8) democracy, (9) curiosity, (10) national spirit, (11) love for the homeland, (12) achievement-esteem, (13) friendship/communication, (14) love for peace, (15) fondness of reading, (16) care for environment, (17) social care, and (18) the responsibility.

The character building based on local wisdom can be divided into two major parts, namely the character building based on local wisdom in "good ethics" to establish peace or justice and based on local wisdom in "work ethics" to uplift the welfare or prosperity. The character of "good ethics" covers (1) trustworthiness, (2) honesty and fairness, (3) politeness and respect, (4) solidarity, (5) harmony and tolerance, (6) self-control, (7) commitment and responsibility, (8) care and compassion, (9) friendly and communicative manners, (10) positive thinking, and (11) thanksgiving. The character "work ethics" covers (1) hard work and study, (2) diligence, (3) discipline, (4) creativity and innovation, (5) self-reliance and thriftiness, (6) educating, (7) healthy life, (8) mutual cooperation, (9) caring for environment, (10) love for culture, and (11) pro-gender.

Abraham Lincoln says that character is like a tree and reputation like its shade. The shade is our minds; but the tree is in fact the real object. We need to build a strong tree with a broad shade; we need to build a strong personality in order to do good for many people. Thus, the elements of character need to be taught systematically by means of holistic education model using the methods of knowing the good, feeling or loving the good, and acting or doing the good. Knowing the good can be easily taught because knowledge is cognitive. After knowing the good, feeling and loving the good should be flourished, that is how to

feel and love virtue as an urge to make people always wish to do something good. By this, the awareness of people to do good will grow as they know and will surely love virtue. When being accustomed to do virtue, a person will have the habit of doing good⁷. Character education is a plus moral education, covering aspects of knowledge (cognition), feeling (feeling), and action (action). According to Lickona, without these three aspects, character education will not be effective. When character education is applied systematically and sustainably, a child will be emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence is an important provision in preparing children to meet the future, because someone will be more easily and successfully face all kinds of life challenges, including challenges to succeed academically.

Lickona further said that character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. He then mentions that the character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue - that is Objectively good human qualities that are good for the individual person and good for the whole society. Thus, the process of character education or moral education and character of the nation is certainly to be seen as a conscious and deliberate effort, not a coincident thing. With regard to the importance of this education, we are reminded by the Napoleon Hill saying that education comes from within; you get it by struggle and effort and thought.

The term character is essentially not a new term for Indonesian people because Mr. Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, often expressed about the importance of "nation and character building" for our newly independent state proclaimed on August 17, 1945. The concept was revived by Education Minister, Mohammad Nuh. when launching an important theme "Character Education for Building Nation Civility" on the occasion of National Education Day, dated May 2nd, 2010.

A person's success in society is 80 percent influenced by emotional intelligence and only 20 percent is determined by the intelligence (IQ)8. Children who have problems in their emotional intelligence will have difficulty in learning, hanging out without having ability to control their emotions. Children with problems can already be seen from the pre-school age and if left untreated will continue to adulthood. On the other hand teenagers with character will be able to avoid the common problems faced by teenagers such as delinquency, fights, drugs, alcohol, free sex, and so forth. In addition, based on his study in the United States, he states that people who have high emotional intelligence with ordinary intellectual intelligence are more successful than those who have high intelligence quotient (IQ), with ordinary emotional intelligence.

Some countries that have implemented character education since primary education are the United States, Japan, China, and Korea. The results of the research in these countries state that the implementation of character education systematically arranged has a positive impact on the academic achievement. The character building is an attempt to teach and apply the values of culture, kindness, ethical values or virtues to individuals in the community. That is why Samuel Adams says that the truest friend to the liberty of this country is he who tries to promote its virtue. Virtue is a good character-based cultural value as wisdom in the local community. Good character covers the understanding, awareness, and action of core ethical values. Thus, the cultural value as the local wisdom containing goodness or virtue is crucial to be applied in the process of character building.

2.2 Local Wisdom

As outlined above, it appears that the core characters formulated by the experts of character building are relevant to local wisdoms, deriving from the values of our cultural or oral traditions. Thus, an understanding of local wisdoms as the noblely cultural values of our traditions could be utilized as a source of character building. The impact of human with character-based local wisdom to the success of an individual, even the success of a nation, is of wide scale.

Local wisdom can be understood as ideas and local knowledge which are full of wisdoms, values, and virtues owned by members of the community. Local wisdom is gained from cultural traditions or oral traditions because it is the content of the oral traditions or cultural traditions inherited for the next generation and used to organize social life in all areas of their lives. Local wisdom is a local cultural value that can be used to set the order of a society in a wise or prudent way².

Cultural values and norms used to overcome the problems of life are the local wisdom of the local communities. Such local wisdom is very important to empower the community. Based on his research, published in the Journal Forum Agro Economic Research Volume 27 1 July 2009, 61-72, Pranadji¹¹ concludes that "the fate of the nation of Indonesia" in the future will highly depend on the extent of our ability to revitalize the customary value to advance the customary community. The progress of indigenous people will reinforce and accelerate the progress of the Indonesian nation independently, honorably and sustainably. Our ability to revitalize the values of customs and socio-cultures should be directed to aspects of independence, justice, dignity and solidarity between customary communities with the Indonesian nation as the pillar.

In cultural traditions or oral traditions in this archipelago there are a lot of cultural values and norms as the heritage the functions of which are to structure the social life of the community and they can be classified into two kinds of core local wisdoms, to uplift the welfare and to create peace. Those included in the local wisdoms of welfare are (1) hard rork and study, (2) diligence, (3) discipline, (4) creativity and innovation, (5) self-reliance and thriftiness, (6) educating, (7) healthy life, (8) mutual cooperation, (9) caring for environment, (10) loving for culture, and (11) pro-gender, while in the local wisdoms of peace are (1) trustworthiness, (2) honesty and fairness, (3) politeness and respect, (4) solidarity, (5) harmony and tolerance, (6) self-control, (7) commitment and responsibility, (8) care and compassion, (9) friendly and communicative manners, (10) positive thinking, and (11) hanksgiving.

The types of local wisdom should be explored through the study of the various ethnic groups in Indonesia. This study is focused on the utilization of local wisdoms as the source of character building in Toba Batak society. Local wisdoms of Toba Batak ethnic group have embodi-

ment characteristics according to the cultural traditions that have gone through differences. The embodiment of Toba Batak cultural traditions is different from those of other ethnic group but the basic concept might be the same, that is a character of virtue to uplift the welfare and peace.

The fundamental virtue that can be applied in the character building is the practical wisdom prevailing in the local community. He states that wisdom (prudence) or practical wisdom could become the master virtue that can be used to direct others. Wisdom tells us to practice virtues. Wisdom tells us when to act, how act, and how to integrate other virtues that are useful and well-worthy for the feelings of others. Wisdom also enables us to make distinctions that are important in life: which is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false, what is fact and what is opinion, what is eternal and what is ephemeral.

On that basis, the character building based on local wisdoms or practical wisdoms that is used in the local community is very important to free or liberate people from strife to create their peace and to release people from poverty to improve their welfare. Local wisdom is the wisdom of a community or indigenous knowledge derived from the noble values of cultural tradition to set the order of a society. If the local wisdom is focused on cultural values, it can also be defined in other ways. Local wisdom is local cultural values that can be used to set the order of a society in a wise or prudent way (Sibarani, 2012: 114-115). As a practical wisdom, local wisdom is found in the cultural tradition or oral traditions that need to be explored to be used as a source of character building.

3. Results

One of the differences between humans and other creatures is tied to sanctity, particularly those associated with life cycle ceremonies. Life cycle is culturally concerned with rituals of birth, marriage and death (the rites of passage), as the journey of human life. Each cycle of life has a cultural tradition which is celebrated, sanctified or ritualized to welcome and celebrate the life cycle. A welcoming ceremony and a thanksgiving ceremony at each cycle of life is a traditional activity that has been habituated from the ancient times and remains sustainable until now under transformation and modification. Toba Batak ethnic group is always involved in such life cycle traditions.

Every customary tradition of life cycle is entrusted to be conducted by a parsinabung 'a customary spokesman' of each ceremony. The trust is given to the person owing to his capability, commitment, and honesty. He always carries out the ceremony in honest and fair manners. Then owing to his fluency in speaking, parsinabung generally implements the custom to maintain harmony and tolerance towards the Dalihan Natolu. Such cultural values become local wisdom that can be utilized as a source of character building.

In the implementation of the customary tradition of the life cycle, the customary performers including parsinabung use idioms, proverbs and parables in customary discourse. The idioms, proverbs, parables, and even the customary discourse have cultural values that can be also utilized as local wisdom for the character building. In addition to the customary tradition of the life cycle, the cycle of livelihood in respect of agriculture is also a tradition that has cultural values, which can be used as local wisdom for the character building. Toba Batak ethnic group also has folktales (turi-turian), either regarding to the tradition of the life cycle or the tradition of livelihood cycle. Folktales have cultural values that can be used as local wisdoms for the character building. So, the Toba Batak cultural values are gained from ther performances (cultural practices) of life cycle ceremony and livelihood cycle activities through their texts, cotexts, and contexts.

4. Discussion

Based on the analysis of the Toba Batak life cycle stages of customary traditions (the rites of passage), the cultural values can be formulated as follows. Cultural values in Toba Batak customary tradition of birth cover (1) caring, (2) togetherness, (3) mutual cooperation, (4) mutual help, (5) thanksgiving, (6) caring, (7) affirmation of identity, (8) tolerance and harmony, (9) responsibility and commitment, (10) honesty, and (11) trustworthiness.

Cultural values in Toba Batak customary tradition of marriage cover (1) politeness, (2) agreement, (3) mutual help, (4) respect, (5) unity, (6) tolerance and harmony, (7) responsibility and commitment, (8) honesty, (9) posterity, (10) affirmation of identity, and (11) trustworthiness. Cultural values in Toba Batak customary tradition of death cover (1) agreement, (2) convention, (3) mutual help, (4) thanksgiving, (5) affirmation of identity, (6) tolerance and harmony, (7) responsibility and commitment, (8) honesty, (9) customary rite, and (10) trustworthiness.

The cultural values are supported by the concept of Dalihan Natolu namely the dongan tubu 'the same surnames', boru 'the wife recievers', and hula-hula 'the wife givers'. The three parties must be present in every rite of Toba Batak customary tradition. These parties are often augmented by dongan sahuta 'the same dwellers' and aleale 'colleagues'. It appears that the cultural values reflect goodness to succeed the implementation of customsy traditions for the sake of peace and welfare of the community as the owner of the customary traditions. Cultural values in the phases of the cultural traditions are often accompanied by expressions containing cultural values.

Based on the description of the stages of the tradition of the cycle of livelihood (planting, managing and harvesting) described above, cultural values can be formulated as (1) hard work, (2) diligence, (3) discipline, (4) togetherness, (5) mutual cooperation, (6) alternate cooperation, (7) politeness, (8) environmental safeguard, and (9) thanksgiving.

The analysis of the life cycle tradition of Toba Batak proves that the Toba Batak culture is oriented to some values. First, the cultural value of *paradaton* 'being a custom'. All the life cycle is done by means of customary rites, even other events that are not tied to life cycle are often oriented to custom. Rites of dwelling a new house, for example, are performed through customary ceremonies. The sustainability of the customary traditions of life cycle is based on the strength of the value of *partuturon* 'kinship' as the second cultural value, including *pardongantubuon* 'the same clans' and *parmargaon* 'the same surnames'. The imple-

mentation of the customary traditions of Toba Batak life cycle has always been based on *parsaoran* interaction of 'Dalihan Natolu as the third cultural value with the attitudes of *somba marhula-hula* 'being respectful for the wife givers', *elek marboru* ' being persuasive to the wife recievers', and *manat mardongan tubu* 'be careful to the same surnames'.

The fourth, the cultural value of habatahon "Batak identity marker". The implementation of the customary tradition always uses markers of Batak identity such as ulos 'traditional woven cloth', tundu-tudu ni sipanganon 'portions of meat', boras sipir ni tondi 'rice', and gondang 'traditional drum'. The implementation of the customary tradition of life cycle reflects the values of hagabeon 'having posterity and long life. Almost everyone who gives words of advice on life cycle rites prays and hopes that the person holding the rite will be blessed of *hagabeon*. The fifth cultural value is also revealed in parables of Toba Batak at the rites of life cycle. The same thing is also applied in the sixth cultural value, namely hamoraon 'wealth; welfare'. Literally, the meaning of hamoraon is wealth, but actually the word factually refers to welfare as "relative wealth". Either the implementation of life cycle rites or expectation in the rites reflects the welfare of the people performing the rites of life cycle and of livelihood cycle. The seventh cultural value is hasangapon 'honor'. All the three hagabeon-hamoraon-hasangapon are the unity of vision values stored in the collective memory of ethnic group of Toba Batak. The implementation of the customary tradition of life cycle, and even the tradition of livelihood cycle, is sacred based on their haporseaon 'faith; belief' in the tradition. By the haporseaon, as the eighth cultural value, people adhere to cultural norms of Toba Batak.

The relationship between the cultural value orientation of Toba Batak with the coverage of cultural values can be seen in the Table 1.

The cultural values that can be applied to solve social problems in order to create peace and to improve the welfare of a community are local wisdoms of the community. Most of Toba Batak cultural values can be utilized to create peace and partly can be used to improve the welfare.

Table 1. Toba Batak values and implementation

No	Cultural values of Toba Batak	Implementation of Toba Batak cultural values
1	Paradaton 'being a custom'	TogethernessAgreementConventionCaring
2	Partuturon 'kinship'	ToleranceHarmonyTrustworthiness
3	Parsaoran dalihan natolu 'interaction of three customary parties"	 Politeness Responsibility Commitment Honesty Trustworthiness
4	Tanda habatahon 'marker of Batakness identity'	 Identity Awarding Identity Seeking
5	Hagabeon 'posterity and long life'	MarriagePosterityHealth
6	Hamoraon 'welfare; wealth'	 Togetherness Cooperation Mutual Assistance Diligenece Discipline Hard Work
7	Hasangapon 'honor'	RespectSelf-identity AwardingPoliteness
8	Haporseaon 'faith, belief'	ThanksgivingRite Performance

Thus, the cultural values of Toba Batak can be divided into two parts, namely the cultural values of local wisdom for peace and cultural values of local wisdom for welfare. The local wisdoms of Toba Batak to create peace are trustworthiness, respect, honesty, togetherness and convention, tolerance and harmony, responsibility and commitment, caring, and thanksgiving. Local wisdoms to improve the welfare are hard work, diligence, discipline, mutual cooperation, and environmental safeguard.

Local wisdoms derived from the cultural values of Toba Batak can be used as a source of character building of Toba Batak people. By applying the wisdoms as the source of the character building, then the purpose of character building in this case is to make human resources become trustworthy, polite and respectful, honest, promoting togetherness and convention, tolerant and harmonious, responsible and committed, caring, and grateful. Such people are said to have the character of good ethics. In addition, human resources are also formed to be hard working, diligent, disciplined, 'mutualally assisting ', and environmental caring. Such people are said to have the character of work ethics.

After the cultural values have been processed and analyzed in accordance with life cycle and livelihood traditions of Toba Batak, the mentioned cultural values may be classified into eight main cultural values of Toba Batak, namely paradaton 'being a custom', partuturon 'kinship', parsaoran dalihan natolu 'interaction of three customary parties", tanda habatahon marders of Batakness identity, hagabeon 'posterity and long life', hamoraon 'welfare', hasangapon 'honor', and haporseaon 'faith, belief". The cultural values may be classified into local wisdoms as they can be utilized to create peace and to increase welfare that can be the sources of character building to make people maradat 'customary, civilized', martutur 'being involved in kinship, parsaor 'friendly; interactive to the three customary parties'. marhabatahon 'being identified as Batakness marker', marroha hagabeon 'being hopeful of long life and good posterity', (marhamoraon 'hope of being welfare', marhasangapon 'hope of honor', and marhaporseaon 'having good faith.

5. Conclusions

 Based on the description of rites of life cycle and traditions of livelihood cycle containing cultural values and local wisdoms as the source sof character building, the conclusion is drawn as follows: The local wisdoms of Toba Batak that can be applied to create peace are trustworthiness, respect, honesty, togetherness and convention, tolerance and harmony, responsibility and commitment, caring, and thanksgiving, while those that can be applied to improve the welfare are hard work, diligence, discipline, mutual cooperation, and environmental safeguard.

- The basic cultural values of Toba Batak are basically oriented to social lives of Toba Batak ethnic group. In this study, there are eight basic cultural values of Toba Batak, namely paradaton 'being a custom', partuturon 'kinship', parsaoran dalihan natolu 'interaction of three customary parties', tanda habatahon 'markers of Batakness identity', hagabeon 'posterity and long life', hamoraon 'welfare', hasangapon 'honor', and haporseaon 'faith, belief'.
- The cultural values may be classified into local wisdoms as they can be utilized to create peace and to increase welfare that can be the sources of character building to make people *maradat* 'customary, civilized', *martutur* 'being involved in kinship', *parsaor* 'friendly; interactive to the three customary parties'. *marhabatahon* 'being identified as Batakness marker', *marroha hagabeon* 'being hopeful of long life and good posterity', *marhamoraon* 'hopeful of being welfare', *marhasangapon* 'hopeful of honor', and *marhaporseaon* 'having good faith.
- As the character building is based on the local wisdoms deriving from cultural values, the steps implemented are based on the character building by giving conceptual understanding and practical implementation of the ceremonial traditions of life cycle, of the livelihood, parables, and texts of folktales.

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