



The Utilization of the Gedung Arca Museum as a Learning Resource for Batak Literature

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang Pemanfaatan Museum Gedung Arca Sebagai Sumber Belajar Sastra Batak. Adapun tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah sebagai media untuk mengetahui kebermanfaatan museum sebagai sumber belajar, apa saja koleksi peninggalan Sastra Batak yang ada di Museum, dan bagaimana sejarah berdirinya Museum Negeri Sumatera Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Informan dalam penelitian ini adalah kepala museum, para akademis, mahasiswa/mahasiswi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sejarah berdirinya Museum Negeri Sumatera Utara yang terletak di Jl. H.M. Joni No.51 Daoed Joesoef, Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, pada 19 April 1982. Namun, Presiden Ir. Soekarno meletakkan batu pertama, sepasang macara, pada tahun 1954. Sejak saat itu, museum juga disebut Gedung Arca. Bangunan museum ini berbentuk seperti rumah tradisional Sumatera Utara. Atap depan dihiasi dengan ornamen dari suku Batak Toba, Simalungun, Karo, Mandailing, Pakpak, dan Nias. Pemanfaatan koleksi yang ada di Museum Negeri Sumatera Utara sebagai sumber belajar Sastra Batak bagi para peneliti terlihat dari penggunaan sumber sejarah tersebut sebagai sumber utama serta memiliki tujuan utama yaitu sebagai penyempurnaan penelitian sebelumnya. Koleksi yang ada didalam museum sangat memberikan kontribusi dalam penelitian, sehingga banyak makna yang terungkap mengenai kajian sastra Batak.

Kata Kunci: Pemanfaatan, Museum, Sastra Batak

Abstract

This study examines the Utilization of the Statue Building Museum as a Learning Resource for Batak Literature. The purpose of this study is as a medium to find out the usefulness of museums as a source of learning. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The informants in this study are museum heads, academics, students/students. Data collection is carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the history of the establishment of the North Sumatra State Museum located on Jl. H.M. Joni No.51 Daoed Joesoef, Minister of Education and Culture, on April 19, 1982. However, President Ir. Soekarno laid the first stone, a pair of ceremonies, in 1954. Since then, the museum has also been called the Sculpture Building. The building of this museum is shaped like a traditional house of North Sumatra. The front roof is decorated with ornaments from the Batak Toba, Simalungun, Karo, Mandailing, Pakpak, and Nias tribes. The use of the collection at the North Sumatra State Museum as a source of learning about Batak Literature for researchers can be seen from the use of these historical sources as the main source and has the main goal, namely to improve previous research. The collections in the museum contribute greatly to research, so that many meanings are revealed about the study of Batak literature.

Keywords: Utilization, Museum, Batak Literature

Introduction

Museums are institutions that play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage while serving as educational resources for society. According to the definition proposed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a museum is a permanent, non-profit institution that serves society by collecting, preserving, researching, interpreting, and exhibiting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage for the purposes of education, research, and enjoyment (ICOM, 2022). Therefore, museums should not merely be viewed as repositories of historical artifacts but also as valuable learning resources that provide experiential learning opportunities, enabling students to develop a more contextual understanding of history.

In the field of education, the utilization of museums as learning resources has become an effective instructional approach because it bridges theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom with authentic historical evidence. Museum-based learning enables students to develop critical thinking skills, observational abilities, appreciation of cultural values, and historical literacy through direct interaction with exhibited collections (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). Furthermore, Falk and Dierking (2018) argue that learning experiences in museums foster more meaningful education by simultaneously engaging cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

North Sumatra Province is one of Indonesia's regions with exceptionally rich cultural diversity. This diversity is reflected in the historical heritage of various ethnic groups, including the Batak Toba, Karo, Mandailing, Pakpak, Simalungun, Angkola, Malay, Nias, and many other communities that have flourished for centuries. One of the institutions playing a significant role in preserving this cultural wealth is the North Sumatra State Museum. The museum serves as a center for preserving collections of archaeology, ethnography, history, numismatics, philology, fine arts, and traditional technology, all of which illustrate the historical development of North Sumatran society from the prehistoric era to the modern period (Sinaga, 2021).

Among the museum's most historically valuable collections is its Batak literary heritage. Batak literature represents one of the most important intellectual legacies of the Batak people, preserved through various media such as *pustaha laklak* (traditional bark manuscripts), Batak-script manuscripts, inscriptions, and

numerous artifacts associated with the indigenous knowledge system of the Batak community. According to Kozok (2009), Batak manuscripts functioned not only as writing media but also as repositories of knowledge concerning traditional medicine, customary law, religious beliefs, astronomy, and the social organization of Batak society. The existence of these collections demonstrates that the Batak people had developed a sophisticated literacy tradition long before the introduction of the modern educational system in Indonesia.

In addition to their historical significance, Batak literary collections possess substantial educational value. By utilizing these collections as learning resources, students can gain a deeper understanding of the development of the Batak script, the history of local culture, indigenous wisdom, and the cultural identity of the people of North Sumatra. This perspective aligns with Hein (1998), who argues that museums represent constructivist learning environments where learners actively construct knowledge through direct engagement with authentic objects.

Despite their considerable educational potential, the North Sumatra State Museum has not yet been optimally utilized as a learning resource. History instruction in schools continues to rely predominantly on textbooks and lecture-based teaching methods, resulting in students acquiring historical knowledge primarily at a theoretical level without directly observing authentic historical evidence (Sinaga, 2021). Consequently, students often demonstrate limited understanding of local history and a relatively low level of appreciation for the preservation of regional cultural heritage. In contrast, museum-based learning has been shown to enhance students' learning motivation, historical thinking skills, and cultural awareness (Falk & Dierking, 2018).

Based on these considerations, this study adopts a case study approach to examine the North Sumatra State Museum as a historical learning resource. The research focuses on investigating how the museum is utilized as an educational medium, exploring the role of Batak literary heritage collections as resources for learning local history, and examining the historical establishment of the North Sumatra State Museum as an institution dedicated to cultural preservation. The case study approach was selected because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon within its real-

life context, thereby generating deeper and more meaningful insights (Yin, 2018).

The objectives of this study are to examine the educational benefits of the North Sumatra State Museum as a learning resource, identify the museum's collections of Batak literary heritage, and describe the historical background of the museum as one of the principal institutions responsible for preserving cultural heritage in North Sumatra Province. It is expected that the findings of this research will contribute to the development of museum-based history education while supporting efforts to preserve local cultural heritage through the effective utilization of museums as contextual and meaningful learning resources.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to explore visitors' responses to the utilization of the North Sumatra State Museum as a learning resource for Batak literature. A descriptive qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in their natural settings by interpreting participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions without manipulating the research environment (Creswell, 2024). Qualitative research aims to describe and interpret contemporary phenomena holistically based on naturally occurring conditions and multiple sources of evidence (Arikunto, Suhardjono, & Supardi, 2019).

In qualitative research, participants are regarded not merely as respondents but as key informants who actively contribute to constructing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement with the research topic. The study involved three categories of informants. The key informant was Dra. Sri Hartini, M.Si., the Director of the North Sumatra State Museum. The expert informant was Dra. Mehamat Br. Karo, a scholar specializing in Batak history and literature. Supporting informants consisted of museum researchers, museum staff, and visitors to the North Sumatra State Museum. The diversity of informants was intended to provide comprehensive and credible data through multiple perspectives.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted through direct participation in the museum environment to examine visitors' activities, interactions with museum collections, and their engagement with exhibitions related to Batak literary heritage. This method enabled the researcher to capture authentic behaviors and contextual information regarding the museum's educational function (Moleong, 2024).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the museum director, Batak literature experts, museum staff, and visitors to obtain rich and detailed information regarding perceptions of the museum's role as a learning resource for Batak literature. This interview technique allowed participants to express their views openly while enabling the researcher to explore emerging issues relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2024).

Documentation served as a complementary data collection technique to strengthen the findings obtained from observations and interviews. The documents analyzed included museum catalogs, archival records, institutional profiles, educational publications, collection inventories, and other official documents related to the North Sumatra State Museum and its Batak literary collections. These documents provided historical and contextual evidence supporting the interpretation of the research findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024), which emphasizes that qualitative data analysis is a continuous and iterative process conducted throughout the research. The analysis consisted of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, organizing, and coding information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the organized data were presented narratively to facilitate interpretation and identify patterns, relationships, and themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified through comparison among different data sources to ensure the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the findings.

Result and Discussion

Based on field observations, interviews with museum administrators, and document analysis, the findings indicate that the North Sumatra State Museum plays a significant role as a source of historical and cultural learning, particularly in introducing the richness of local cultural heritage to the public, school students, and university students. The museum functions not only as a repository of historical artifacts but also as an educational medium that enables visitors to acquire firsthand learning experiences through direct observation of its collections. The thematic presentation of collections, organized according to historical periods and cultural development, facilitates visitors' understanding of the evolution of North Sumatran civilization from the prehistoric era to the modern period. These findings are consistent with Sinaga (2021), who argued that the North Sumatra State Museum has been effectively utilized as a historical learning resource for students in Medan, enriching their historical knowledge while enhancing their historical awareness.

The findings further demonstrate that the utilization of the museum as a learning resource provides substantial benefits for history education. Teachers and lecturers can integrate museum collections into contextual learning activities that connect classroom instruction with authentic historical evidence. During the observation process, visitors obtained information not only through collection labels but also from museum guides, audiovisual presentations, and chronologically organized exhibitions. Such learning conditions create a more active, engaging, and meaningful educational experience, allowing students to develop observational skills, historical thinking, and appreciation for local cultural values. Consequently, the museum effectively supports the implementation of experiential learning, an educational approach that remains underutilized in history instruction within schools.

Another important finding reveals that the North Sumatra State Museum houses an extensive collection of Batak literary heritage with significant historical and educational value, serving as an important source of knowledge regarding the development of Batak civilization. Based on the collection inventory, the Batak literary artifacts examined in this study include *Pustaka Laklak*, traditional Batak manuscripts written on tree bark using the Batak script. These manuscripts contain extensive knowledge related to traditional medicine, astronomy, customary

rituals, belief systems, and various aspects of Batak social life in the past. In addition, the museum preserves numerous ancient manuscripts written in the Batak script, the ritual staff known as *Tunggal Panaluan*, *parhalaan* (traditional containers used for storing *pustaka* manuscripts), traditional seals, ritual equipment used by *datu* (traditional priests or healers), and several other artifacts associated with the Batak literary tradition. The existence of these collections demonstrates that the Batak people had developed a well-established writing tradition long before the introduction of the modern educational system in Indonesia. These collections constitute valuable primary sources for research in history, philology, anthropology, and cultural education.

Field observations also revealed that each Batak literary artifact is accompanied by detailed information regarding its origin, function, construction materials, and philosophical significance. This presentation enables visitors to understand that Batak literature encompasses not only written texts but also represents the Batak knowledge system, including religious beliefs, social organization, customary law, and traditional medicine. Consequently, the Batak literary collections preserved in the North Sumatra State Museum possess substantial educational value, as they introduce younger generations to their local cultural identity while supporting the preservation of cultural heritage that has increasingly faced challenges due to technological advancement and globalization.

This study also found that the establishment of the North Sumatra State Museum was closely associated with the Indonesian government's efforts to preserve regional cultural heritage. According to the museum's archival records, its development began in 1954 with the placement of its first collection, the *Makara*, inaugurated by Indonesia's first President, Ir. Soekarno. During its early years, the institution was popularly known as the *Gedung Arca* (Statue Building). Following several years of construction and institutional development, the North Sumatra State Museum was officially inaugurated on April 19, 1982, by the Minister of Education and Culture, Daoed Joesoef. Since then, the museum has evolved into a provincial museum housing extensive collections of archaeology, ethnography, history, numismatics, ceramics, fine arts, traditional technology, philology, and

numerous other cultural artifacts originating from across North Sumatra Province.

The results further indicate that the museum's collection management has been systematically organized using thematic and chronological approaches, enabling visitors to follow the historical narrative in a logical and coherent manner. The exhibition galleries are divided into several sections, including prehistoric civilization, classical culture, ethnography, the Indonesian independence struggle, and the cultural heritage of North Sumatra. Such an arrangement provides visitors with a structured learning experience by illustrating the historical relationships among various collections within the broader context of regional historical development. Furthermore, the museum regularly conducts conservation, inventory, and documentation activities to preserve the authenticity of its cultural artifacts while maintaining their educational value for the wider community.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the North Sumatra State Museum has successfully fulfilled its primary functions as both a cultural preservation institution and an effective historical learning resource. The Batak literary heritage collections make a substantial contribution to preserving the cultural identity of the Batak people while serving as authentic learning resources for students, researchers, and the general public. Through the integration of museum-based learning into educational practices, history education extends beyond the acquisition of historical knowledge to foster historical awareness, cultural appreciation, and a sense of responsibility among younger generations for safeguarding the nation's cultural heritage. Therefore, the North Sumatra State Museum has considerable potential to be further developed as a cultural-based history learning laboratory that supports the implementation of contextual learning and promotes the sustainable preservation of local wisdom.

Certainly. Below is a polished academic English translation suitable for publication in an international journal, with natural scholarly language and terminology.

The findings of this study indicate that the North Sumatra State Museum plays a highly strategic role as a resource for history and cultural education. These findings reinforce the view that, in the modern era, museums are no longer regarded merely as repositories of historical

artifacts but have evolved into educational institutions capable of transferring knowledge to society through authentic learning experiences. Based on the results of field observations and interviews, the museum provides a learning environment that enables students to acquire firsthand experiences through direct interaction with historical collections, making the learning process more contextual than relying solely on textbooks. This finding is consistent with Kolb's (2015) theory of experiential learning, which argues that knowledge becomes more meaningful when it is acquired through concrete experience, observation, reflection, and direct interaction with learning objects. In the context of this study, the historical collections preserved in the North Sumatra State Museum serve as a bridge between historical concepts and empirical evidence, allowing students to construct their own understanding of the past.

These findings also support the constructivist learning theory, which posits that learning occurs when individuals actively construct knowledge through direct engagement with their learning environment (Hein, 1998). During the observation process, visitors obtained information not only from collection labels but also through explanations provided by museum guides, audiovisual media, and chronologically organized exhibition displays. These conditions demonstrate that the museum has successfully implemented constructivist learning principles by providing visitors with opportunities to connect new experiences with their existing knowledge. Falk and Dierking (2018) further explain that museum learning experiences enhance not only cognitive knowledge but also emotional and social engagement, thereby strengthening visitors' understanding of history and culture. Consequently, the findings of this study demonstrate that the North Sumatra State Museum fulfills the educational functions of a modern museum as described in contemporary learning theories.

The results also reveal that the North Sumatra State Museum makes a significant contribution to supporting history education based on local cultural heritage. Teachers and lecturers have the opportunity to utilize the museum as an outdoor learning laboratory that enhances students' historical thinking, observational skills, analytical abilities, and interpretation of primary historical sources. These findings are consistent with Sinaga (2021), who reported that the utilization of the North

Sumatra State Museum as a historical learning resource increases students' interest in learning while strengthening their awareness of local history. Likewise, Annisa et al. (2024) argue that museums serve a dual function as educational centers and institutions for cultural preservation, making them highly relevant to the implementation of contextual learning from primary education to higher education.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the existence of Batak literary heritage collections that possess exceptional historical, cultural, and academic value. Collections such as *Pustaka Laklak*, ancient manuscripts written in the Batak script, *Tunggal Panaluan*, *parhalaan*, and various ritual objects used by *datu* (traditional priests or healers) demonstrate that the Batak people had developed a sophisticated literacy tradition long before the introduction of formal education by the colonial administration and the modern Indonesian state. These findings support the work of Kozok (2009), who explains that Batak manuscripts constitute one of the most important manuscript traditions in the Indonesian archipelago, containing extensive knowledge related to traditional medicine, astronomy, customary law, religious beliefs, and the social practices of the Batak community. Therefore, Batak literature possesses not only philological significance but also serves as a primary source for understanding the intellectual development of Batak society in the past.

From an educational perspective, the Batak literary collections preserved in the North Sumatra State Museum can be classified as primary historical sources due to their high level of authenticity. Through the utilization of these collections, students are able to study local history directly from empirical evidence rather than relying solely on textbook narratives. According to Wineburg (2001), history instruction based on primary sources enhances students' historical thinking because it requires them to interpret, analyze, and evaluate historical evidence critically. Accordingly, the findings of this study suggest that Batak literary collections possess substantial potential to be integrated into the teaching of local history, philology, anthropology, and cultural education.

The field observations further revealed that each Batak literary artifact is accompanied by detailed information regarding its function, origin, construction materials, and philosophical significance. Such presentation provides visitors

with a more comprehensive learning experience because they not only observe the physical characteristics of the artifacts but also gain an understanding of the cultural meanings embedded within them. This finding is consistent with the definition of museums established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2022), which defines museums as permanent institutions responsible for collecting, preserving, researching, interpreting, and exhibiting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage for the purposes of education, research, and community development. Based on the findings of this study, the North Sumatra State Museum has effectively fulfilled this interpretive function by presenting systematic and informative exhibitions that enhance the educational value of its collections.

The findings concerning the historical establishment of the North Sumatra State Museum also illustrate the government's long-term commitment to preserving regional cultural heritage. The museum's development, which began in 1954 and culminated in its official inauguration in 1982, reflects a lengthy process of establishing a cultural preservation institution in North Sumatra. The museum functions not only as a repository of collections but also as a center for documentation, research, conservation, and education. According to Ambrose and Paine (2018), modern museums perform four principal functions: conservation, research, communication, and education. These four functions have been effectively implemented by the North Sumatra State Museum through professional collection management, conservation activities, documentation programs, and a variety of educational initiatives designed for the public.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the thematic and chronological arrangement of museum collections provides visitors with a more systematic learning experience. The organization of exhibition spaces according to historical periods enables visitors to understand the cultural development of North Sumatran society sequentially, from the prehistoric era through the classical and colonial periods to Indonesian independence. This finding supports the argument of Hooper-Greenhill (2007), who asserts that museum exhibition design constitutes an important educational communication strategy because it shapes the ways visitors interpret information and construct new knowledge. Therefore, the exhibition layout of the North Sumatra State Museum serves not only an

aesthetic function but also acts as an instructional medium specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the North Sumatra State Museum has successfully integrated its educational, conservation, and cultural functions. As a learning resource, the museum makes a substantial contribution to enhancing historical literacy, preserving Batak cultural identity, and strengthening education based on local wisdom. The Batak literary heritage collections preserved by the museum function not merely as historical artifacts but also as educational resources that connect younger generations with the intellectual legacy of their ancestors. Therefore, the museum should continue to be developed through innovative educational programs, the digitalization of collections, strengthened partnerships with schools and higher education institutions, and the development of technology-enhanced learning media. These initiatives are expected to further optimize the role of the North Sumatra State Museum as a dynamic center for history education while preserving the authenticity and integrity of the cultural heritage entrusted to its care.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the North Sumatra State Museum plays a significant role as a source of historical and cultural learning through its authentic collections, particularly Batak literary heritage, including *Pustaka Laklak*, Batak manuscripts, *Tunggal Panaluan*, and other cultural artifacts. In addition to serving as a cultural heritage preservation institution, the museum functions as a contextual learning medium that enhances historical understanding, cultural awareness, and appreciation of local wisdom. The implications of this study suggest that museums should be further optimized as strategic partners for schools, universities, and communities in developing local culture-based learning and strengthening character education through experiential learning. However, this study has several limitations, as it employed a case study approach focusing solely on the North Sumatra State Museum, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other museum contexts. Furthermore, the study did not quantitatively assess the effectiveness of museum-based learning on students' learning outcomes. Therefore, future

research is recommended to involve multiple museums as research sites, employ mixed-methods or experimental approaches to evaluate the impact of museum-based learning on educational outcomes, and explore the development of digital learning media based on museum collections to broaden public access to cultural heritage and enhance its relevance in the digital era.

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