

EXPLORATION OF THE DEATH CEREMONY OF THE TOBA BATAK TRIBE

Tiarnita Maria Sarjani Siregar¹, Ami Girsang², Halimahtu Saddiah³, Ribka Hawkins
Manurung⁴

Universitas Negeri Medan¹, Universitas Negeri Medan², Universitas Negeri Medan³,
Universitas Negeri Medan⁴

Pos-el: lian.nita2010@gmail.com¹, amigirsang14@gmail.com², saddiah5@gmail.com³,
ribkamanurung2405@gmail.com⁴

ABSTRAK

Kematian adalah bagian yang tidak bisa dihindari dalam kehidupan manusia. Bagi suku Batak Toba, kematian bukanlah akhir, melainkan peralihan menuju akhirat. Artikel ini mengkaji secara mendalam tradisi dan kepercayaan Batak Toba mengenai upacara kematian serta jenis-jenis kematian yang dikenal dalam budaya Batak Toba. Suku Batak Toba yang tinggal di wilayah Tapanuli Utara, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, memiliki sistem kematian yang kaya dan kompleks yang mencerminkan kekayaan warisan budaya dan nilai-nilai yang mendalam. Menggali jenis-jenis kematian yang dikenal dan dihormati dalam kehidupan sehari-hari masyarakat Batak Toba, artikel ini menceritakan bagaimana mereka memandang alam kematian dan menyikapinya melalui berbagai upacara. Setiap jenis kematian mempunyai tempatnya masing-masing, mulai dari kematian karena usia tua hingga kematian karena kecelakaan atau kekerasan. Artikel ini memberikan gambaran mendalam tentang bagaimana masyarakat Batak Toba merayakan, menghormati dan menyikapi kematian dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

Kata Kunci: *Eksplorasi, Upacara Kematian, Batak Toba.*

ABSTRACT

Death is an inevitable part of human life. For the Toba Batak tribe, death is not the end, but a transition to the afterlife. This article examines the depth of Toba Batak traditions and beliefs regarding death ceremonies and the types of death known in Toba Batak culture. The Toba Batak tribe living in the North Tapanuli region, North Sumatra, Indonesia, has a rich and complex death system that reflects a rich cultural heritage and deep values. Exploring the types of death that are recognized and respected in the daily lives of the Toba Batak people, this article tells how they see the realm of death and respond to it through various ceremonies. Each type of death has a place, from death due to old age to death due to accidents or violence. This article provides an in-depth overview of how the Toba Batak people celebrate, respect and respond to death in everyday life.

Keywords: *Exploration, Death Ceremony, Batak Toba.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The death rituals of the Batak Toba people offer profound insights into their culture, traditions, and strong beliefs. For the Batak Toba, death is not just the loss of physical life but also the transition of

the soul to another realm, imbued with deep meaning. The customs and traditions surrounding death have been passed down through generations and are an integral part of their cultural identity.

However, in the context of modernization and globalization, these death rituals face significant challenges. Common issues include:

1. **Changes in Values and Norms:** Traditional values often compete with modern values, leading to the degradation or neglect of certain aspects of the death rituals.
2. **Limited Resources:** The death rituals in Batak Toba culture often require significant financial and logistical resources, which can be a burden for less affluent families.
3. **Identity Conflicts:** In a society increasingly exposed to external cultures, there is a conflict between preserving cultural identity and adopting more modern cultures.

Theoretical studies in this context can encompass anthropology, sociology, and religious studies. These theories help in understanding the significance of death rituals in Batak Toba culture, as well as the social and psychological dynamics involved in the death process.

Relevant research topics related to this subject might include:

1. **Studies on Death Rituals:** Research can uncover various aspects of the death rituals in Batak Toba culture, including symbolism, customs, and the role of the community in these rituals.
2. **Analysis of Social Change:** Research focuses on the impact of social and economic changes on death traditions in Batak Toba society, as well as efforts to preserve or revitalize these traditions.
3. **Cultural and Psychological Studies:** Research explores individual perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of death in the context of Batak Toba culture, as well as how these affect mourning and healing processes.

Researchers may be interested in conducting this study for various reasons. Some possible reasons include a desire to

gain a deeper understanding of the cultural wealth and traditions of the Batak Toba people, as well as a drive to preserve and maintain valuable cultural heritage amidst the ongoing globalizing trends. Additionally, researchers may be interested in exploring innovative ways to harmonize death rituals with modern demands, ensuring that Batak Toba traditions remain relevant and meaningful for future generations.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. This allows researchers to probe context, explore multiple perspectives, and gain comprehensive insights.

According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena such as behavior, perceptions, motivations and individual experiences through rich and in-depth descriptions. This research was conducted in natural settings and used a variety of flexible data collection methods. As explained by Hendryadi et al. (2019), qualitative research is a naturalistic research process that aims to understand in depth social and natural phenomena.

Literature Research to Support Analysis

This research uses library research methods to complement data obtained from the field. This method allows researchers to examine various theoretical sources and other references relevant to the research topic.

According to Sugiyono (2017), library research refers to research that uses written materials to collect data and information about values, culture and norms that develop in a social context.

Narrative Data Analysis Techniques to Reveal Meaning

Researchers used narrative study data analysis techniques to process and

analyze the data obtained. This technique, as described by James Schreiber and Kimberly Asner - Self (2011), focuses on the study of individuals' lives told through stories of their experiences.

Narrative research allows researchers to understand the deep meaning of individuals' experiences and how those experiences shape their identity and worldview.

According to Webster and Metrova, narrative is a research method in the social sciences that allows researchers to understand a person's identity and worldview through stories heard and told in everyday life.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The death rituals of the Batak Toba people emphasize the significance of cultural heritage in shaping their community's identity. Despite facing challenges from modernization, these death traditions remain a symbol of cultural continuity and strength. However, this study has limitations in its scope and depth of analysis, particularly in understanding local variations and the more complex social changes.

Pembahasan

The type of death and ceremonial system of the Toba Batak people are closely related to the religious belief system (ancient or Christian), social structure and cultural values. From these three elements, a system of death ceremonies was born, the original form of which existed in pre-Christian times. However, traces of this system can still be observed today, although some elements have changed. The ceremonial system performed at each death describes the type of death that occurred. This type of death gives the heirs the right and responsibility to carry out the ceremony system on behalf of the deceased. However,

social status and economic ability determine whether this ritual system can be carried out at the time of death or not. As said, the main life goal of the Toba Batak people is to gain wealth, many descendants and honor. Achieving the goal of life is seen as the glory and perfection of life. These three elements of life goals support each other and are equally important. However, the first two elements are the determining factors in achieving honor and glory. Honor and glory (hagabeon) are the highest goals of life that can be achieved during life and also after death. There are two types of death in the Toba Batak tribe:

First, the type of death of unmarried Toba Batak, which includes:

1. *Mate Poso-Poso*

In traditional Toba Batak beliefs, *Mate Poso-Poso* is a death that occurs when you are still a baby and is considered a sign of spiritual disturbance or an evil spirit that has an influence, such as an unknown illness, or other sudden event. The tradition and traditional death procession used is covering the body with Ulos (Batak woven cloth) given by the parents of the body.

2. *Mate Dakdanak*

According to Toba Batak beliefs, *Mate Dakdanak* is a death that occurred when he was still small (child). The tradition or traditional death procession used in this type of death is that the body is covered with Ulos (a typical Batak woven cloth) which is carried by the bones (uncle/relative). mother's male) corpse.

3. *Mate Ponggol*

In the Toba Batak tribe, *Mate Ponggol* dies when he is an adult but is not married. The tradition or traditional death procession used is the same as *mate dakdanak* and *mate*

bulung, namely the corpse is covered with Ulos by bones.

4. *Mate Bulung*

Mate bulung is a death that occurs during adolescence or before adulthood. The tradition or traditional death procession used is the same as mate dakdanak, namely covering the corpse with Ulos made of bones.

5. *Mate Di Bortian*

In the Toba Batak tribe, Mate Di Bortian is someone who dies while or is still in the womb. Traditions and traditional death processions used for this type of death are not yet valid because they are buried directly without using a coffin.

Second, the type of death of Married Toba Batak, which includes:

1. *Mate Mangkar*

In the Batak tribe, Mate Mangkar dies when he is married and married and leaves behind young children.

2. *Mate Di Paralang-Alangan (Mate Punu)*

Mate Di Paralang-Alangan (Mate Punu) is a term used in the Toba Batak tradition to describe the death of someone who is married but has no children. The deceased was called "nunu" which means "without descendants". In the funeral procession, two types of Ulos (Batak traditional cloth) are used. The Ulos Saput is used to cover the corpse, while the Ulos Tujung is placed on the head of the surviving spouse. After the burial, a ceremony called the opening of the tujung is held, followed by a gathering to comfort and amuse the family abandoned.

3. *Mate Hatunganeon*

In the Toba Batak tribe, Mate Hatunganeon died when he already had children and some of his children were already married, but did not have grandchildren.

4. *Mate Sari Matua*

Mate Sari Matua is a term used in the Toba Batak tradition to describe

the death of someone who leaves behind their children and already has grandchildren, but among their children there are also those who are not married.

5. *Mate Saur Matua*

Used to describe the death of someone whose condition is that all of their children are married and also have children, in the sense that they died when they already had grandchildren.

6. *Mate Saur Matua Maulibulung*

Mate Saur Matua Maulibulung died when all his children were married and had children and grandchildren. Then, none of his children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren died. This death usually occurs at the age of 90 and over 90 years. This death is very rare because it is rare for people to survive until the age of 90 years and above.

A very sad death for the Batak people is a mother who dies leaving behind a small child. These deaths are called "stove collapse" deaths (matompas tataring) because young mothers abandon their husbands and young children, leaving no one in the kitchen to raise the children. When the young man dies, it is called a "head-severed" death or maponggol ulu. In this case, a woman who becomes a young widow and is considered to have lost the head of the family is the same as losing her head (not being able to live and having no purpose in life).

People like this are considered it has no value and role in the world. Traditional ceremonies of these two types of death systems are using the partangiangan custom, the animal is slaughtered and the food eaten is called "bitter food" (sipanganon papet-paet) to prevent the bitter incident from happening again. The soul left behind by the deceased, both women and children, as well as men and children, became afraid and did not

want to accept such an incident again. This death was considered very bitter for the Toba Batak community.

The death that some people love and even long for is a happy, carefree death (mate saur matua) or at least a death that is still hard, but not difficult anymore (mate Sari matua). In both types of death, the direct descendants of the deceased, namely sons and daughters, are considered burdened. If there are still children (unmarried men or women, even just one), then the deceased still has obligations or debts towards his children. If all of the deceased's children are married, for example they are independent, the deceased no longer has the obligation to marry his children, he is considered happy.

His death was classified as the Saur matua type. This is the highest death rate that the Toba Batak people dream of. Even above that, there is still the highest death rate, namely Mate Saur Matua Bulung (death when all of his children have married and have given birth to not only grandchildren, but even great-grandchildren from his sons and daughters). Even though Mate Saur Matua Maulibulung is now very rare because it was made at the age of 90 years and over. However, both are considered as one concept of ideal death (death without dependent children). "The embodiment of these two types of death for a person is a system of ceremonies and their accessories which are carried out on the day the body departs. The Sari Matua type of death is the second highest level for the Toba Batak community. The celebration of the death of Saur Matua and Sari Matua lasted several days in pre-Christian times, namely three, five or seven days.

Every day, a large pig is slaughtered to serve as a side dish for the pandungoi, namely those who

come to visit and watch over the night and especially those who come to mourn and mourn the deceased, also called *mangandung*. *Ogung sabangunan* music is played and every community group has the right to dance, *manortori* or *mangondasi* and jambar to go around the corpse.

On the day of the funeral, a buffalo called a sigagat duhut (grass-eating animal) is slaughtered as an inheritance from the dead animal (boan). This traditional ceremony system still applies to the final death which the Toba Batak people always yearn for. The animal inherited from the deceased is called the elephant-toba, which is the largest buffalo the size of an elephant that is slaughtered on the day of burial. These two types of death celebrations are called horja pasidung ari-ari, or celebrations that end the worldly life of the person who died, because at this celebration the person who died ended their traditional relationship with the people they left behind.

His descendants also paid all the customs received by the deceased during the celebration, giving jambar to all those present, including hula-hula, dongan tubu, boru, jambar to friends and the king. The presentation of the jambar is carried out from the top of a podium-like structure called a pansa by throwing it to the ground. The sound of the jambar falling is a message to living people and the spirits of the dead that the deceased person has paid off all his customary debts during his lifetime.

When the handover of Jambar was completed, the pansa building was immediately dismantled (demolished), it could not be left as it was because it was considered taboo. Those who still believe that leaving the pansa standing means wanting the deceased to also call their living relatives so that they too die. However, sometimes there are

obstacles in holding large celebrations for these two types of death, so the implementation is postponed until an unspecified day.

Even though according to the conditions, the descendants of the deceased are all married or divorced and also have many children, but if the assets of the deceased and his descendants are not enough to hold a large pasidung placenta party, then the implementation will be postponed, it is useless if they already have children and are all married. but don't have enough money to carry out the Mate Saur Matua custom.

Therefore, his descendants must apologize to all existing social groups, namely to dalihan na tolu, and especially to huluhula or what is called dongan tubu, that the custom or funeral party for Pasidung ari-ari will be held on a day when they have enough money to hold it and on the day of burial or burial, a small ceremony is called the prayer request (ulaon – partangiangan) custom. On this occasion, only one or several pigs are slaughtered as food, as well as distribution of jambar.

4. CONCLUSION

The death rituals of the Batak Toba people emphasize the significance of cultural heritage in shaping their community's identity. Despite facing challenges from modernization, these death traditions remain a symbol of cultural continuity and strength. However, this study has limitations in its scope and depth of analysis, particularly in understanding local variations and the more complex social changes. For further development, it is recommended that the study involve collaboration with local communities, expand the geographical basis of data, and consider interdisciplinary approaches to delve deeper into the meaning and dynamics of

these death traditions within a broader social, cultural, and economic context.

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