



## An Anthropological Perspective of Childbirth in the Batak Toba Tribe

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 22 January 2023  
Revised : 25 February 2023  
Accepted: 30 March 2023  
Available online: 3 April 2022

E-ISSN: 2745-536X  
P-ISSN: -

**How to cite:** Agustrisno., Simanjuntak, E.A.D., Lumbanraja F.D.N., Putra, G.A., Butar-Butar, I., Zaria, M. (2023). An Anthropological Perspective of Childbirth in the Batak Toba Tribe. Indonesian Journal of Medical Anthropology, 4(1), 32–37.

### ABSTRACT

This paper results from a study of the phenomenon born in the Batak Toba ethnic group. Birth in the Batak Toba society is a joy together. Not only family but even the surrounding community also rejoice. Batak Toba's cultural values are a source of everyday behavior in the kinship system. Kinship is related to birth, which determines the position of the Batak Toba community. This study aimed to assess the process of giving birth and some of the rites performed and rarely performed in the Batak Toba tribe today. The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research and literature review studies. Studies are written from various secondary sources, scientific journals, and anthropology based on the latest. The writing is carried out in a structured manner by classifying and developing various scientific sources based on the topics discussed. The analysis is carried out comprehensively to form a conclusion. The results show that the cultural practices carried out by the Batak Toba after giving birth are still carried out today. There are several themes: Postnatal care, childbirth care, efforts to maintain postnatal health, care for baby's organs, and the postnatal stages of children in the Batak Toba ethnicity, which are used for generations and traditional medicine is still running.

**Keyword:** Batak Toba, Culture, Childbirth Care

### ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini merupakan hasil kajian terhadap fenomena melahirkan yang terjadi pada suku bangsa batak Toba. Kelahiran dalam masyarakat batak Toba adalah suka cita bersama, bukan hanya keluarga bahkan masyarakat sekitar juga ikut bergembira. Nilai budaya batak Toba menjadi sumber perilaku sehari-hari yang terikat pada sistem kekerabatan. Kekerabatan berkaitan dengan kelahiran yang menentukan kedudukan pada masyarakat batak Toba. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengetahui proses pasca melahirkan dan beberapa ritus yang dilakukan dan jarang dilakukan pada suku batak Toba saat ini. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dan studi kajian literatur. Kajian ditulis dari berbagai sumber sekunder, jurnal-jurnal ilmiah, terbaru berlandaskan antropologi. Penulisan dilakukan secara struktur dengan mengklasifikasikan dan mendiskusikan berbagai sumber ilmiah berdasarkan tema dan topik yang dibahas. Analisa dilakukan secara komprehensif hingga membentuk kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktek kebudayaan dilakukan batak Toba pasca melahirkan masih dilakukan hingga kini. Ada mencakup beberapa tema : Perawatan pasca melahirkan, perawatan persalinan, upaya menjaga kesehatan tubuh pasca melahirkan, perawatan organ tubuh pada bayi dan tahapan-tahapan pasca kelahiran anak pada etnis Batak Toba yang masih digunakan secara turun temurun dan pengobatan tradisional pun masih dijalankan.

**Keyword:** Batak Toba, Kebudayaan, Perawatan Kelahiran



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<http://doi.org/10.32734/ijma.v4i1.11595>

## 1. Introduction

Javanese are among Indonesia's most populous ethnic groupings. In daily lifelines, culture influences people's conduct, particularly the custom of maternal care. In everyday life, the Javanese are inseparable from the laws and traditions they continue to observe and believe in (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). Many Javanese

continue to believe in the supernatural or taboos by engaging in various traditional ceremonial rituals, such as conventional ceremonial care during pregnancy, based on the subject matter (Rholand Muary, 2021). Including the tradition of maternal care, Javanese culture influences the behavior of individuals in daily life. Numerous Javanese continue to believe in the supernatural or taboos by engaging in various traditional ceremonial activities, such as conventional formal care during pregnancy, based on the nature of the subject matter (Cukarso & Herbawani, 2020a).

Household married couples anticipate pregnancy with great anticipation. No husband and wife do not desire the birth of a child as the next generation to emerge from their wombs. Therefore, pregnancy till labor requires attention and direction (Siregar et al., 2021).

Humans are social beings with inherent qualities that protect and uphold moral standards. The principles of goodness, regarded as the basis of moral education, can be instilled in children as early as the womb. In the Javanese community, there are a variety of traditional ceremonies associated with human life, beginning when the child is in the womb, continuing through birth, adolescence, and adulthood, and concluding with death.

The traditional rites of the Javanese people are inextricably linked to the local wisdom of the local community, which derives from the teachings and cultural values of the people that have existed since ancient times or since the days of the Javanese people's forebears. This traditional ceremony performed during pregnancy is intended to pray for the unborn child's safety and the absence of complications during childbirth (Cukarso & Herbawani, 2020b).

This paper describes the customary ceremonies performed during pregnancy in Javanese society, passed down from generation to generation since the Javanese people's ancestors. The *Mapati* traditional ceremony, a ceremony that marks the period of pregnancy entering the age of 1 to 5 months (Hall, 1996); the *Tingkepan* traditional ceremony, namely the traditional ceremony, which denotes that the gestational age has entered seven months; then, the *Mrocoti* traditional ceremony accompanied by the *Ndadung* tradition, a traditional ceremony that marks the period of pregnancy entering the age of seven months; and finally, the *Mrocoti* traditional ceremony attended by the *Ndadung* ritual, a traditional ceremony that marks If the infant has not been born at a gestational age of ten months or more, however, the *Ndaweti* traditional rite is performed.

## 2. Research Method

The research method used a literature review (Oxman & Guyatt, 1993) and a qualitative descriptive study (Cresswell, 2013). Studies are written from various documentary sources, secondary and the latest scientific journals based on anthropology and health. To report this paper structurally by classifying and discussing sources of scientific data based on the topics and themes discussed through the organizational stages of the literature review and then using a comprehensive analysis to form a conclusion that is used as a reference material that is applied in the realm of postnatal Batak Toba ethnicity through anthropological studies.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Health workers know about the culture to make it easier to approach and provide health services because not all treatments based on ancestral heritage can be accepted as necessary. Fully the treatments carried out have an unfavorable health impact on the mother and her baby. This requires special attention to overcome (Pitriani et al., 2021)

The culture of the Batak Toba tribe has its own culture in living life. Culture influences all behaviors passed down from generation to generation. In dealing with health problems, the Batak Toba tribe uses many cultural practices and newborn care. The culture of the Batak Toba tribe has certain traditions that have been applied from generation to generation until now. That is why healthcare workers are suggested to assist in line with cultural background (Situmorang et al., 2019).

### 3.1 Postpartum Care

The cultural value system is the conceptions of value that live in the minds of most members of society and serve as the ultimate guide for their mental attitudes, ways of thinking, and behavior. The cultural value system is the result of life experience that lasts for an extended period so that it becomes a patterned habit. The patterned cultural value system includes all aspects of the values of people's lives. Community life is a pattern of group life in certain forms. Cultural factors are essential in understanding attitudes and behavior regarding pregnancy, birth, and care of mothers and their babies. The cultural views regarding this matter have been passed down from generation to generation in the culture of the people concerned (Caturingsih et al., 2021).

### 3.2 Maternity Treatment of Batak Toba Tribe

- a. Doing routine motherly tasks like cooking, laundry, and housecleaning.
- b. Place charcoal below or next to the mother to provide warmth for the mother and the child.
- c. The husband gave the mother water and black beer, assuming she would get healthy quickly and be strong enough to return to work in the fields when she is entirely healthy because most of their main item is farming.
- d. Feed him, namely wake-awake and *napinadar* chickens, so that the remaining blood in the mother's uterus comes out quickly and the mother gets healthy quickly, making breastfeeding easier.  
Help the mother to urinate, bathe and change clothes if the mother wants it.

### 3.3 Efforts to maintain a healthy body

- a. Take a warm shower  
Taking a warm bath creates a feeling of relaxation. A warm bath between 36.5°C and 40°C benefits muscle relaxation. Soaking in warm water is beneficial not only for surface nerves but also for the autonomic nervous system (Pamangsah, 2008). A mother who performs postpartum care by carrying out habits that are by the traditional beliefs of the Batak Toba tribe, which are believed to be able to maintain a healthy body, namely bathing with warm water.
- b. *Merarang*  
Batak women in postpartum nurses often carry out the Habits using *Merarang*. This *Merarang* habit is one of the efforts to maintain the health of the mother's body. So that it can strengthen the body and the waist does not feel sore after giving birth.
- c. Using *betel* water  
A Batak Toba mother who performs postpartum care with habits to maintain a healthy body, namely wiping with *betel* water.
- d. Take out dirty *karah*  
In postnatal care, Batak Toba mothers have a habit or tradition of removing dirty blood, namely drinking black beer with a mixture of free-range chicken egg yolks.
- e. Increase breast milk  
To secrete and increase breast milk in postnatal care, Batak Toba women have the habit of consuming *Bangun-Bangun* leaves.

### 3.4 Organ Care

Caring for the body's organs involves treating the head, nose, ears, mouth, hands, nails, and feet.

- a. Head care  
Head care is performed, starting with shaping the head using a pillow called a sigundal bolon or a cloth filled with rice. The pillow aims to make a good woman's headwear a bun and shape the head, so it does not tilt. The baby's head is also sprayed with betel, betel and pepper to protect the crown and fontanel. According to Batak Toba culture, the crown must be covered with candlenut and areca nut and rearranged, which have been chewed beforehand and sprayed on the baby's head to completely cover the crown so it does not catch a cold and keep awake from injuring the baby's head. Candlenuts betel nuts are rarely believed to have properties that can protect the head.
- b. Nose and Ear Care  
The nose and ears can be shaped with *dipohol* (massage with warm palms). This works so the baby's nose becomes sharp and is good at wearing earrings.
- c. Oral Care  
In a baby's mouth usually, found whitish spots which are traces of Mother's Milk (ASI). To prevent this, according to the Batak Toba tribe, the baby's mouth is cleaned with the mother's hair or chicken feathers by wiping it in the baby's mouth until it is clean. Before acting, the leading hair or chicken feathers must be ensured to be cleaned.
- d. Umbilical Cord Care  
The baby's umbilical cord is cut using cassava/turmeric-based bamboo and tied with twine, both regular and *manalu* threads. In China and Japan, a bamboo knife is also used to cut the umbilical cord at birth. Bamboo has parts: base, segment, middle, and end. The base and the book have a higher starch content than the middle or tip. In addition to starch, bamboo is a cellulose-based material that is susceptible to fungal attack. Bamboo is also in contact with the ground even though the soil is a medium for growing mushrooms and mold-coloring fungi (staining fungi) (Duryatmo, 2000). The moist baby's umbilical cord

will be treated with ashes from burning black cloth. The umbilical cord should not be closed tightly with anything because it will make it moist. In addition to slowing down the rupture of the umbilical cord, it also raises the risk of infection (Ayurai, 2009). The goal of umbilical cord care is to prevent infection and promote the separation of the umbilical cord from the abdomen.

e. Hygiene Care and Skin Care

The Batak Toba tribe believes that newborns should be cleaned immediately since they are regarded as filthy. Warm water is used for bathing the infant while adding a mixture of betel, Sona, or Leung leaves. As previously mentioned, betel has a natural substance that is very beneficial, particularly for the skin. Protein and unsaturated fat can be found in betel. If water gets in the baby's ear, the mother needs to suck it out right away. If water gets inside the ear, it will plug the ear canal; if untreated, it will infect the inner ear.

f. Digestive tract Care

Digestive care in infants is carried out by providing sufficient urinary tract (BAB), so the feces that resemble blood can finally come out smoothly. If the dirt does not come out, it will cause disease. It has been chewed beforehand so that the baby can defecate

g. Warming the baby's body

Warming the baby's body in Batak Toba culture can be done by *martatarang* (furnace) the baby with *dimandarbagashon* (put in the mother's sarong) and continued with *mamoholi* (massaging the baby with warm hands). Fire is the principal capital for newborns and is used to *mamoholi* babies so that the baby's body is healthier, more robust, and protected from disease and wind. *Mamoholi* can also shape the baby's body parts to be ideal, for example, the nose, ears, feet, hands, and others. Fire keeps the baby warm so that the baby will feel comfortable and not cold and can sleep soundly.

h. Fulfillment of baby nutrition

The Batak Toba people consider that mother's milk (ASI) the leading food and the most important thing for babies, but they consider that breast milk is not enough to make babies complete. Signs that a baby is not full are crying and fussiness, so you must provide additional food, *rica*, a porridge mixed with spinach, tomatoes, carrots, or starch water used for cooking rice. The baby is not immediately given breast milk because the baby is given hazelnut, which has been chewed by the mother first. This shows that the baby is not given exclusive breastfeeding. The baby's growth and development depend on the food consumed by the mother because a baby is still breastfeeding, so the mother must consume food or drink that affects breast milk, for example consuming lots of *torbangun* (*bangun-bangun*) vegetables. According to Mardiswojo and Rajakmangunsudarso (1985 in Marlina, 2007), in *torbangun* leaves, there is much potassium (6.46% of dry weight at K20). And essential oil (0.043% in fresh leaves or 0.2% in dry leaves). Weehuizen in Heyne (1987 in Marlina, 2007) stated that from 120 kg of Fresh dry leaves, approx. 25 ml essential oil containing phenol (isopropyl-O-cresol).

i. Hand and Foot Care

The baby is wrapped in a blanket or shawl for a few weeks. The continual touch of a napkin gives a baby comfort. Napkin help baby feel calm for sleep and is an excellent way to soothe colic babies, especially when combined with *mengayun* (a swing) (Kelly, 2010).

### 3.5 Postnatal Traditional Stages

#### 3.5.1. Children of ethnic groups:

a. *Mararang* traditions for mother and baby's health

*Mararang* or *mendadang* Tradition is burning wood or charcoal until it becomes coals and then placing it beside or under the bed of the mother and baby. This tradition is carried out to give a warm feeling to mothers and babies and help clean the dirty blood of postpartum mothers and mothers (Muay & Sembiring, 2022). It also accelerates the recovery of the mother's health. *Mararang* is done after the mother and baby are cleaned of blood after giving birth. This tradition is usually carried out for 40 days. *Mararang* tradition is burning wood or charcoal until it becomes coals and then placing it beside or under the bed of the mother and baby. *Mararang* tradition is believed to be postnatal care that provides health benefits. Postpartum mothers quickly recover from postpartum pain, have solid backbones and warm and sweaty bodies, and expedite postpartum bleeding. Mothers do not often feel cold after the postpartum period, which can give a warm feeling to mothers and babies. Some mothers said that they did *mararang* because it had been done for a long time, and they wanted to follow the habits of their parents. *Mararang* tradition can pose a risk to the health of both the mother and the baby. The smoke produced from burning charcoal and firewood when carrying out the *mararang* tradition can cause health problems for both the mother and

her baby because, during the *mararang* tradition, the mother and baby will breathe polluted air due to the burning of charcoal and firewood. A too-hot fire can cause a rash on the baby's skin.

*b. The tradition of Raso and Yellow Bamboo*

*Raso* is a thorn *bayon* (a plant type) usually used to make mats. This *raso* is believed to be able to ward off magical things, usually placed outside the walls of the mother and baby's room by hanging with its roots above. Meanwhile, more or less, two yellow bamboo sticks are placed above the entrance to the house. Many families in the villages carry out this tradition after their wife or family gives birth because newborn babies are said to have fresh and fragrant blood. It can provoke the lust of some people who have black magic. The advice in my village says that these two traditions cannot be eliminated because they are very effective in being an award against spirits, so they are believed to be able to protect the mother and her baby.

*c. Maranggap Tradition*

The tradition of "*maranggap*" in the Batak Toba community contains values and medical knowledge. *Maranggap* is a tradition in which neighbors spend the night at a family's home who has just had a child (Nababan & Bahri, 2019). In the past, this activity could be carried out for up to one week. During *maranggap*, they hold events to relieve boredom. *Maranggap* is done to help a family that has just been blessed with a child. Especially families who have just had their first child. It is understandable that apart from not having experience in taking care of children, the presence of the neighbors is also to help the wife recover after giving birth. The women will take care of the work in the kitchen. Meanwhile, at night, a group of men will be on guard. They take care of the mother and baby. In the beliefs of the Batak Toba people in the past, newborn babies were vulnerable to being disturbed by spirits. In addition, it is also often the target of someone who is studying. Because of that, the baby's placenta must be implanted in secret. Nobody knows. Because it is not uncommon for people to find out where the placenta was planted. Usually, the placenta is inserted into a small *tandok*. Usually, the placenta is put in a small chicken tank made from screw pine, complete with one betel seed, kaffir lime fruit, and seven betel leaves. Generally planted in muddy soil or paddy fields with the hope that the child will be abundantly blessed later.

*d. Paebathon Tradition*

*Paebathon* or *mebet* tradition is a postnatal tradition in the Batak Toba tribe. This tradition is carried out for the new-born baby when the baby is strong enough, or it could be at the age of 3 to 6 months to be taken for a walk or to visit (*menebati*) Opung's house (grandparents from mother) and other relatives such as *tulang* (mother's brothers). At the time of the visit, the family brought a souvenir, namely by cutting a pig, to the baby's mother's family. During the event, the *ompung* from the baby will give ulos *parompa* (small ulos to carry or support the baby). After that, *tulang* (uncle) will also give ulos and pray for his nephew. The Batak Toba tribe is still maintaining this tradition. Apart from that, there is a meaning contained in this mebet tradition, namely to bring the child closer emotionally to his relatives, especially the *ompung* and his *tulang* (uncle). This is the meaning of spirituality contained in the *Mebet* ceremony.

*e. Tardidi tradition and giving of the name of Martutu Aek*

*Tardidi* is a baptism ceremony in the church (Clarita & Salam, 2022). A priest or pastor performs this baptism in a church for those who embrace the Christian religion. In general, this baptism is done for a newborn baby so that the baby can legally become a member of the Lord Jesus as well as to legalize the name that has been prepared by his parents beforehand. When the baptism is completed in church, Thanksgiving is celebrated at home. All members of Dalihan na tolu and the people of the village were invited. Thus, the event was made big enough for families who could afford it. Food was being brought to the occasion's location, hosted at the daughter's house, by the mother's relatives who had just given birth. Rice and arsik carp or dengke sitiotio (a golden fish) are provided as food

#### 4. Conclusion

From the description above, several conclusions can be drawn; Cultural practices carried out by the Batak Toba tribe after giving birth are still being carried out, namely by carrying out various traditions such as the Mararang Tradition for mother and baby health, Raso and Yellow Bamboo Tradition, the Maranggap Tradition, Paebathon Tradition, Tardidi Tradition and the naming of Martutu Aek. Postpartum care for the Batak Toba tribe is carried out from generation to generation with traditional treatment. In Batak Toba society,

which has its own culture, birth in the Toba community determines one's position. Because of the high value attached to kinship, the Batak Toba have an identity in the clan and pedigree called Tarombo or pedigree.

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