




## Animal Medicine in Medical Practice in Batak Toba Tribe

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### ABSTRACT

This article explains how traditional medicine, especially those that use animals in traditional medicine facilities of the Batak tribe, Animal medicine is a medical practice carried out by means of animals as mediators or as herbs for consumption in curing infectious diseases. Diseases that can be cured by the use of this animal also vary from naturalistic diseases such as typhus, toothache, and ulcers to diseases such as gadam. This paper focuses on the Toba Batak tribe with data collection techniques in the form of primary data in the form of interviews and also through direct experience of the author and secondary data in the form of literature reviews by reviewing written writings from online databases. Research was conducted on Batak people and the slap animals that are often used for treatment. From the results of research, it is known that, until now, these treatment activities still exist despite modern medicine.

**Keyword:** Animal Medicine, Traditional Medicine, Batak Tribes

### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menjelaskan bagaimana pengobatan tradisional khususnya yang menggunakan hewan dalam sarana pengobatan tradisional suku bangsa batak. Animal medicine adalah sebuah praktik pengobatan yang dilakukan dengan sarana hewan sebagai mediator ataupun sebagai ramuan untuk dikonsumsi dalam menyembuhkan penyakit yang menjangkit. Penyakit yang dapat disembuhkan oleh penggunaan hewan inipun beragam mulai dari penyakit naturalistik seperti tifus, sakit gigi dan bisul, sampai penyakit seperti gadam. Tulisan ini berfokus pada suku bangsa batak toba dengan teknik pengambilan data berupa data primer berupa wawancara dan juga melalui pengalaman langsung penulis dan data sekunder berupa review literatur yang dengan cara mengulas tulisan tulisan dari database online. Penelitian yang dilakukan terhadap orang Batak, tersebut memamparkan hewan yang sering digunakan untuk pengobatan. Dari hasil penelitian diketahui sampai saat ini kegiatan pengobatan tersebut masih tetap eksis meskipun ada pengobatan modern.

**Keyword:** Animal Medicine, Pengobatan Tradisional, Suku Bangsa Batak



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## 1. Introduction

Various cultures all over the world have been using traditional medicine for thousands of years. This method involves the use of natural ingredients and techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation. This traditional medicine is often used as an alternative or complement to conventional medicine. The WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019 reports that as many as 40–59% of Indonesians still use traditional practices and medicines. Traditional medicine utilizes natural ingredients to cure diseases. For hundreds or even thousands of years, various ethnic groups around the world have used natural materials to treat illnesses. Some of the materials used are categorized into five groups, namely: Medicinal Plants: Medicinal herbs have been used for centuries as ingredients in traditional medicine. Examples are the leaves, roots, seeds, and bark of trees used to make potions or extracts to treat various ailments. Herbs: Herbs are plants that have healing properties. Some herbs commonly used in traditional

medicine include ginger, turmeric, aloe vera, and ginseng. This herb can be consumed in the form of tea, supplements, or extracts. Fruits and Vegetables: Fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients and bioactive compounds that can help treat and prevent diseases. For example, pomegranates are rich in antioxidants that can fight free radicals, while garlic has antimicrobial properties. Minerals and Salts: Some traditional medicine involves the use of minerals and salts. For example, Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate salt) can be used to reduce inflammation and muscle pain. Animals: Some traditional medicine uses ingredients derived from animals, such as fish oil, bee honey, or animal bile.

Of the five ingredients used, this study focuses on healing diseases by utilizing animals as medicine or media in traditional medicine, known as animal medicine. The use of animals is a tradition and structured knowledge that is used throughout human civilization (Karim et al., 2022). However, studies and inventories on the use of animals in traditional medicine are very minimal, especially in Indonesia. Before arriving at modern medicine practices like now, with tools, materials, and techniques that have been proven to be cutting-edge in curing diseases, humans used to do medicine with practices, materials, and tools derived from nature in the environment around them. Plants and animals have been used for a long time as a fulfillment of human needs (Rambey et al., 2021). In fact, the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Promotion of Culture in Article 1, Paragraph 3, reads, "Cultural Promotion is an effort to increase the cultural resilience and contribution of Indonesian culture in the midst of world civilization through protection, development, utilization, and cultural development." Therefore, this review is important to do.

The Batak tribe is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia that is famous for its traditional medicine practices. Existing medical practices are inseparable from the use of basic materials derived from their surrounding environment, such as plants and animals. Angraeni et al. (2010) explained that there are 92 species of plants used by the Batak ethnic community as a means of treatment. There are 7 different types of animals that the Batak ethnic community uses to treat disease, according to Rambey et al.'s (2021) article "Ethnozoology by Batak Toba Tribe in Bahal Gajah Village, Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia." The paper does not explain in detail how the Batak tribe understands and uses animals in their traditional medicine practices. So in this paper, we will discuss "Animal Medicine in Medical Practice in the Batak Toba Tribe."

## 2. Methods

The data collected in this study is in the form of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is information gathered through interviews with community elders who have practiced traditional medicine involving animals or who, at the very least, are aware of its use, as well as through the experiences of authors who have used traditional medicine to treat illnesses they have personally experienced. Primary data for this study were obtained from several informants. The first informant, named Mangihut Manullang, who was 81 years old, came from Doloksanggul, Humbahas regency; he was the family of one of the writers, namely Rutmika Simanullang. He has knowledge about traditional medicine because, in his youth, he learned about traditional medicine. Currently, he lives in Ujung Serdang, so we were able to conduct interviews directly with him. The second informant, named Oloan Pasaribu, is 54 years old and resides in Pulo Pakkat, Central Tapanuli. He is a community elder who has knowledge about making jobar oil used to treat toothache. The third informant, Uli Hutabarat, was 36 years old and resided in Tarutung, North Tapanuli. And the third informant, Desi Melince Purba, regarding the use of Jobar oil and earthworms

From a literature review of online databases in the form of Google Scholar By entering the keywords "animal medicine," "medicine," "treatment using animals," "ethnozoology," and "batak tribe" combined in your search, you can get results that are quite thorough and minimize keyword errors. We found as many as 14 journals related to our discussion, with 12 journals in Indonesian and 2 other journals in English. Data processing and analysis are carried out by triangulating the data. Bachri (2010) explained that triangulation is a way of analyzing data by synthesizing data that has been obtained from various sources. This method is done in order to strengthen understanding and minimize data obtained from errors.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Animal medicine in Batak communities

Animal medicine is a medical practice using animals as basic ingredients for making medicines, as well as practices in traditional medicine that function to overcome and cure various diseases. The use of animals as a source of treatment is a practice that has long been rooted in humans and has a very crucial role in healing diseases experienced by humans. Until now, treatment using animals has been a trend that never dies in society (Zayadi et al., 2016). Animal medicine generally utilizes certain parts of the animal's body, such as the cobra

bile, rhino horn, antelope fetus, buffalo horn, and so on. Then there are also treatments that utilize production from animals, in the form of honey, eggs, milk, leeches to suck blood, and bee stings (Sudardi, 2011).

In the Batak Toba ethnic community, animal medicine relies on special knowledge that is learned and passed on to the next generation. In general, this practice is oriented towards healing using supernatural science. The Toba Batak tribe has a medical book written using the Toba Batak script known as *pustaha laklak*. Reporting from the page of the Ministry of Education and Culture Directorate General of Culture (2017), *pustaha laklak* is a cultural relic from the Batak tribe in the form of written works with bark media. *Pustaha laklak* contains something secret and is generally a ritual, symbol, myth, medicine (*Haubatan*), mantra (*tabas*), potion (*pulungan*), date of good or bad days (*parhalaan*), or *porsili*, made by a shaman. Not just anyone can master this *pustaha laklak*. People who master the contents of this book of medicine are called *Datu* or shamans, and they will also become practitioners of traditional medicine. But now, traditional medicine is better known as *parubat huta* because *datu* has a negative connotation in Toba Batak society (Panggabean & Tampubolon, 2022). With the expertise possessed by *Parubat Huta* in curing many diseases using animal medicine practices, the use of animals is not a single recipe in the practice of healing diseases using traditional medicine. Combinations with plants are the most widely used recipes as a complement to herbs.

Types of animals used in medicine Treatment using animals (animal medicine) in the Batak Toba tribe uses several types of animals that are believed to cure diseases. Some types of animals used in traditional medicine practices of the Toba Batak tribe are as follows:

1. Manuk, or chicken (*Gallus*) is a healer of *gadam* and breast cancer. Chicken is often used in traditional events of the Toba Batak tribe, both for dishes and as offerings. In traditional medicine, chicken is usually used as a medium for treating witchcraft. *Gadam* disease is a disease caused by "*guna-guna*" or poison, in the Batak Toba tribe. This poison is taken from a mixture of various types of poisonous animals and plants, consisting of two forms, namely powder and oil (Panggabean & Tampubolon, 2022). In the treatment of *gadam* disease, it is usually done by traditional medicine practitioners, or *parubat huta*, who are believed to have the ability to analyze symptoms and events experienced by patients. After *parubat huta* identifies these symptoms indicating *gadam* disease, the next step is to clean using chickens. The chickens used are live and are usually native chickens, not broilers that have certain criteria according to the demand for *huta parubat*. Then, the chicken is moved around the patient's body while performing certain movements. It aims to cleanse the negative energy in the patient's body that is believed to be associated with *Gadam*. Treatment of *gadam* also involves ceremonies and prayers led by *parubat huta*. This ceremony aims to cleanse the spirit and bring healing to patients affected by *gadam*. *Imbulu Ni Manuk*, or chicken feathers, can also be used as a tool in the treatment of breast cancer. Chicken feathers function as *pandais* (smearers), with one-way smearing and an odd number of chicken feathers used (Panggabean & Tampubolon, 2022).
2. Pananggai, or dog (*Canis lupus*), as a cure for dengue hemorrhagic fever In addition to its delicious taste, it turns out that dog meat is believed by the community to be efficacious to cure dengue hemorrhagic fever and relieve pain. Some Batak people affected by this disease will immediately find and cook dog meat to their taste and add various spices. The parts of the dog's body that are often used are meat, skin, and bones.
3. Limatok, or leech (*Hirudinea*), is a healer of boils. This animal is used in the treatment of ulcer diseases. Boils are inflammations of the skin in which there is pus. These bumps cause the surrounding skin to become reddish and painful. In Batak society, they view this disease as occurring because of dirty blood, so it must be removed. The way to treat leeches is to put leeches on top of boils, then let the leeches suck pus and dirty blood for about 15–30 minutes. After the leech sucks the blood, it is pulled from the top of the boil. Treatment of boils with leeches, at least once a day, until healed.
4. Antelope fetus or antelope fetus as a cure for all diseases. The use of antelope fetuses for traditional medicine is still little used, because the antelope itself lives in the forest and it is difficult to get it. But it is not a barrier for people to keep hunting antelope. Some Batak people process antelope meat as food and fetuses as immune boosters. An informant we interviewed, Pak Mangihut Manullang (56), said the antelope fetus was fermented first using alcohol drinks and left for 2-3 weeks. After that, it can be drunk as a drink that is believed to increase endurance and have various other health benefits.
5. Lizard oil (*jobar oil*) as a toothache medicine Problems with teeth are a problem that is a scourge for humans. The website of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2021) states that of the 57.6% of the Indonesian population who have dental and oral problems, it turns out that

only 10.2% report and access dental health services. This proves that there are other ways that are trusted by the community to overcome their problems when experiencing complaints in the teeth and mouth. Although rarely used, monitor lizards are sometimes considered a very powerful drug. Usually, monitor lizard oil and meat are used in traditional medicine. Hamdani et al. (2013) explained in their journal that monitor lizard oil is produced by cooking monitor lizard meat in hot oil until the fat contained in the fried monitor lizard meat melts and becomes oil. Batak people in the Pulo Pakat area of Central Tapanuli regency use jobar oil to treat toothaches. The author's experience with curing pain in his teeth using monitor lizard oil is to use monitor lizard noodles poured in cotton and then attached to the location of the affected tooth for about 15–30 minutes at night before going to bed. He explained that by using it 2-3 times, the pain he experienced would disappear (Desi Melince). As for how to process jobar oil, according to informant Mr. Oloan Pasaribu (54), it is very easy and simple: "monitor lizard oil is from monitor lizard fat, then the fat is roasted until the oil comes out and is accommodated by a container; it is used to treat toothache," he said.

6. Earthworm (*lumbricus rubellus*) as a typhus remedy In traditional Batak medicine, earthworms have several uses that are believed to help cure various diseases. Some of the uses of earthworms in traditional Batak medicine include treating digestive problems, such as stomach disorders and diarrhea, as well as treating typhus. Typhoid, or typhoid reported from the website of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2022), explained that typhus is a disease originating from *Salmonella typhi* bacterial infection that can infect food and drinks consumed by humans, enter through the mouth, spread to the stomach, and end up in the small intestine while multiplying there. The experience of one of the authors in curing typhus uses water boiled from worms taken three times a day, which can also be used as a substitute for drinks after meals. This worm cooking water is not a single medicine in the healing process that Typhus experienced, but I still routinely consult the puskesmas (Desi Melince). In the development of contemporary medicine, earthworm capsules or tablets are already available in various drug stores. Earthworms are dried and processed into capsules or tablets and are claimed to have various health benefits, including boosting the immune system, improving digestion, and overcoming skin problems (Prastikawati & Husain, 2020).
7. Snake as a remedy for asthma and itching The snake in traditional Batak medicine has a strong symbolic meaning and is often associated with mystical powers or connections to the spirit world. Some Batak people believe that snakes can cure hives and asthma. The parts of snakes that are used to treat itching are snake meat and soup. Mrs. Uli Hutabarat (36) had experienced itching for a week and never healed. Then he decided to go for treatment with Parubat Huta in Barus. Parubat Huta advised him to eat snake meat and drink soup. A few days after consuming the snake meat, the itching he experienced gradually healed.

### 3.2. The existence of traditional medicine

The widespread practice of traditional medicine tends to be the cause of the use of animals in medical practices in Indonesian society. Syuhudi (2022) explained that shamans are still the community's choice for curing diseases. In traditional Batak medicine, shamans, or parubat huta, have an important role in treating various types of diseases. They are believed by society to have the knowledge and power to cure diseases and overcome health problems. Because this belief makes their existence persist in treating diseases.

The use of traditional medicine in the Batak tribe was not only chosen by the ancient people but also by people who have modern thinking who still believe in traditional medicine practices. Many factors influence this phenomenon, including psychological factors, economic factors, and practical factors of traditional medicine.

#### *Psychological factors*

Batak people choose to go to parubat huta rather than see a doctor because usually parubat huta is someone who comes from the area and has been believed for generations to have the ability to cure diseases. A person has the ability to cure this disease; not just anyone can have it, but this ability is hereditary knowledge that has been owned by ancestors and maintained and given to their children and grandchildren.

#### *Economic Factors*

From operational costs to one treatment, traditional medicine has a more affordable price range than modern medicine. Syuhudi (2022) explained that Parubat Huta never set a price for the medical practices he did.

### Practical factors

Parubat Huta is believed to be able to treat all diseases experienced by a person. In the current era, most people entrust their treatment to doctors, but it is not uncommon for doctors to find cases where the patient's disease cannot be diagnosed or cannot be diagnosed because it is still in the incubation phase. Finally, patients who believe they are sick choose to go to a shaman to cure the disease they suffer. The above factors are the reasons why parubat huta and traditional medicine are still maintained to this day.

## 4. Conclusion

Knowledge of the Toba tribe regarding the treatment of traditionalism, especially the use of animals, including chickens, dogs, leeches, antelope fetuses, monitor lizard oil, and earthworms Treatment using this animal is useful for treating various diseases, including typhus, toothache, ulcers, and gadam. Until now, traditional medicine still exists among the Batak people, which is due to economic factors and encouragement from the family to seek treatment from shamans.

More in-depth research is urgently needed to multiply and enrich the inventory of traditional medicine. Therefore, further explanation is needed from multi-disciplinary science so that the understanding of traditional medicine using animals can be more comprehensive.

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