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Local Wisdom of the *Mangain* Tradition in Batak Toba

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the local wisdom embodied in the *Mangain* tradition of the Batak Toba community and explores its role in preserving cultural identity, kinship, and social harmony amid the challenges of modernization. *Mangain* is a customary practice of granting a Batak clan (*ulos*) to an adopted child or an individual from outside the Batak ethnic group, thereby integrating the person into the Batak Toba patrilineal kinship system. The tradition is commonly performed in cases of child adoption and interethnic marriage, where it serves as a legitimate mechanism for establishing social status, inheritance rights, and obligations within the *daliha na tolu* kinship structure. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with an anthropolinguistic perspective, this study analyzes the linguistic expressions, ritual performances, symbolic objects, and cultural meanings embedded in each stage of the *Mangain* ceremony. The findings reveal that the tradition embodies fundamental values of local wisdom, including respect for elders and ancestors, kinship solidarity, mutual responsibility, social justice, cultural identity, and communal cooperation. These values are transmitted through ritual speeches, the presentation of *ulos*, ceremonial food, blessings, and symbolic exchanges that reinforce collective memory and cultural continuity across generations. Furthermore, the study highlights that *Mangain* functions not only as a legal-customary process but also as a cultural mechanism for integrating outsiders into the Batak social system while maintaining harmony among families. Nevertheless, globalization, migration, and changing lifestyles have contributed to the simplification of ritual practices and a gradual decline in understanding the philosophical significance of *Mangain*, particularly among younger generations. Therefore, preserving the *Mangain* tradition is essential for safeguarding Batak Toba local wisdom, strengthening cultural resilience, and ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge and identity in contemporary society.

Keywords: Batak Toba; Local wisdom; *Mangain* tradition; *Daliha na tolu*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji kearifan lokal yang terkandung dalam tradisi *Mangain* masyarakat Batak Toba serta mengeksplorasi perannya dalam melestarikan identitas budaya, kekerabatan, dan harmoni sosial di tengah tantangan modernisasi. *Mangain* merupakan praktik adat pemberian *ulos* Batak kepada anak angkat atau individu dari luar kelompok etnis Batak, sehingga mengintegrasikan orang tersebut ke dalam sistem kekerabatan patrilineal Batak Toba. Tradisi ini umumnya dilakukan dalam kasus adopsi anak dan pernikahan antar-etnis, yang berfungsi sebagai mekanisme sah untuk menetapkan status sosial, hak waris, dan kewajiban dalam struktur kekerabatan *daliha na tolu*. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan perspektif antropolinguistik, penelitian ini menganalisis ungkapan linguistik, pelaksanaan ritual, objek simbolis, dan makna budaya yang melekat pada setiap tahapan upacara *Mangain*. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi ini mencerminkan nilai-nilai dasar kearifan lokal, termasuk penghormatan terhadap orang tua dan leluhur, solidaritas kekerabatan, tanggung jawab bersama, keadilan sosial, identitas budaya, dan kerja sama komunal. Nilai-nilai tersebut diwariskan melalui pidato ritual, penyerahan *ulos*, hidangan upacara, pemberian berkat, dan pertukaran simbolis yang memperkuat ingatan kolektif serta keberlanjutan budaya lintas generasi. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menyoroti bahwa *Mangain* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai proses hukum adat, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme budaya untuk mengintegrasikan pihak luar ke dalam sistem sosial Batak sembari menjaga keharmonisan antar-keluarga. Namun



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demikian, globalisasi, migrasi, dan perubahan gaya hidup telah berkontribusi pada penyederhanaan praktik ritual serta penurunan pemahaman secara bertahap mengenai makna filosofis Mangain, khususnya di kalangan generasi muda. Oleh karena itu, pelestarian tradisi Mangain sangat penting untuk menjaga kearifan lokal Batak Toba, memperkuat ketahanan budaya, serta memastikan keberlanjutan pengetahuan dan identitas adat dalam masyarakat kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Batak Toba; Kearifan lokal; tradisi Mangain; Dalihan dan tolu

1. Introduction

Oral traditions constitute an essential component of cultural heritage because they preserve collective memory, social values, and community identity across generations. As an integral part of intangible cultural heritage, oral traditions embody the knowledge, beliefs, customs, and social practices that have been continuously transmitted through verbal expressions, rituals, and symbolic performances. These traditions not only reflect the worldview of a community but also function as mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity in the face of social transformation. In many indigenous societies, oral traditions remain closely connected to everyday life, regulating interpersonal relationships, customary law, and communal responsibilities. Consequently, the study of oral traditions provides valuable insights into how local communities construct, preserve, and negotiate their cultural identities [1].

Indonesia is recognized as one of the world's most culturally diverse countries, possessing hundreds of ethnic groups, each with distinctive traditions, languages, and customary systems. Among these ethnic communities, the Batak Toba people of North Sumatra possess one of the most comprehensive and well-preserved systems of customary traditions. Batak Toba society is organized through a patrilineal kinship structure in which every individual belongs to a particular clan (*ulos*) inherited from the father's lineage. The clan system is far more than a family name; it determines social identity, kinship obligations, inheritance rights, marriage regulations, and participation in customary ceremonies. This kinship system is inseparable from the philosophical principle of *Dalihan na tolu*, the fundamental social framework that governs reciprocal relationships among *hula-hula* (wife-givers), *dongan tubu* (clan relatives), and *boru* (wife-takers). Through this philosophy, Batak Toba society promotes mutual respect, balance, justice, solidarity, and social harmony, making customary traditions an indispensable element of community life.

Culture itself develops through human thought, experience, and social interaction. It consists of inherited systems of meaning that are expressed through symbols, rituals, language, and customary practices. These symbolic systems enable communities to preserve historical knowledge, transmit moral values, and strengthen collective identity. Cultural traditions therefore function not merely as ceremonial activities but also as educational media through which younger generations learn appropriate behavior, ethical principles, and social responsibilities. Language plays a particularly significant role in this process because ritual speeches, ceremonial expressions, and customary dialogues communicate philosophical meanings that reinforce cultural values. Consequently, the preservation of traditional ceremonies simultaneously contributes to the preservation of indigenous languages and local wisdom [2].

Among the numerous customary traditions practiced by the Batak Toba community, the *Mangain* tradition occupies a distinctive position because it directly concerns the incorporation of an individual into the Batak kinship system. The term *Mangain* originates from the Batak Toba root word *ain*, meaning "to adopt" or "to take," while the prefix *mang-* transforms the word into a verb denoting the act of adopting or formally accepting someone into a family. In customary practice, *Mangain* refers to the ceremonial process through which an individual is officially incorporated into a Batak Toba family by receiving the adoptive family's clan (*ulos*). Through this process, the adopted person becomes a legitimate member of the new lineage with corresponding social rights, customary obligations, inheritance status, and participation in the *Dalihan na tolu* system.

The implementation of *Mangain* generally arises under two principal circumstances. The first occurs in intercultural marriages involving a Batak Toba individual and a spouse from another ethnic group. Since the Batak kinship system requires every participant in customary ceremonies to occupy a clearly defined genealogical position, individuals originating from outside the Batak ethnic group must first receive a Batak clan through the *Mangain* ceremony before participating fully in traditional marriage rituals. In this context, women usually receive a clan from the husband's maternal uncle (*tulang*) and are symbolically positioned as *boru ni tulang*, whereas men receive a clan from the bride's paternal aunt's husband (*amang boru*) and are recognized as *anak ni namboru*. The second circumstance involves the formal adoption of children, including

situations in which a Batak child already possessing a paternal clan is adopted by another Batak family because of socioeconomic considerations. Although the child already belongs to the Batak ethnic group, the *Mangain* ceremony remains necessary because adoption changes the child's genealogical position, clan affiliation, inheritance rights, customary obligations, and legal status within the adoptive family.

The *Mangain* ceremony consists of a sequence of interconnected ritual stages, including *martonggo raja* (customary deliberation), preparation of ceremonial materials, the formal adoption ceremony, *pasahat sipanganon* (presentation of ceremonial food), *pasahat ulos* (presentation of the traditional woven cloth), *pasahat parbue gabe* (presentation of symbolic blessings), *marsipanganon* (communal meal), *upa panggabei* (blessing ceremony), and *martangiang* (collective prayer). Each stage embodies symbolic meanings associated with kinship, gratitude, mutual respect, responsibility, prosperity, and social harmony. Furthermore, each ceremonial act is accompanied by ritual speeches delivered in the Batak Toba language, reinforcing the philosophical significance of the ceremony through carefully selected linguistic expressions. These ritual utterances not only legitimize the adoption process but also serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural values and reinforcing communal identity [3].

From the perspective of local wisdom, the *Mangain* tradition represents an integrated system of cultural knowledge that combines language, customary law, ritual performance, and symbolic communication. Local wisdom refers to the application of positive cultural values and social norms that contribute to solving community problems while promoting peace, social harmony, and collective well-being. Within the *Mangain* ceremony, these values are manifested through mutual cooperation, respect for elders, recognition of kinship obligations, collective decision-making, social responsibility, and the preservation of ancestral heritage. Every ceremonial offering, ritual dialogue, and symbolic exchange reflects ethical principles that have guided Batak Toba society for generations [4]. Therefore, *Mangain* functions not only as a customary requirement but also as a medium for transmitting cultural identity and strengthening the continuity of indigenous knowledge.

Despite its cultural significance, the *Mangain* tradition currently faces considerable challenges resulting from modernization, globalization, urbanization, and increasing intercultural interaction. Many Batak Toba families living outside their ancestral homeland have begun simplifying customary ceremonies by reducing ritual stages or replacing traditional symbolic exchanges with more practical alternatives. Younger generations often perceive *Mangain* primarily as an administrative prerequisite for customary marriage rather than as a profound cultural institution embodying philosophical meanings and social responsibilities. Furthermore, the increasing frequency of interethnic marriages has created variations in the implementation of the ceremony, with some participants possessing limited understanding of its historical background and symbolic significance. These developments raise concerns regarding the gradual erosion of the cultural meanings embedded in *Mangain* and the weakening of its function as a mechanism for preserving Batak Toba identity and maintaining the integrity of the *Dalihan na tolu* kinship system.

Although numerous studies have examined Batak Toba customs, kinship systems, and oral traditions, relatively limited scholarly attention has been devoted to *Mangain* as a manifestation of local wisdom integrating linguistic expression, ritual performance, symbolic communication, and social values within a single customary practice. Most previous studies have emphasized legal, anthropological, or sociological aspects of Batak adoption without comprehensively exploring how ritual language and ceremonial symbolism contribute to preserving cultural identity and transmitting indigenous knowledge. This gap highlights the need for interdisciplinary research that examines *Mangain* from the perspective of local wisdom.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the local wisdom embodied in the Batak Toba *Mangain* tradition by examining its linguistic expressions, ritual performances, symbolic practices, and cultural values. Specifically, the research seeks to understand how *Mangain* functions as a cultural mechanism for integrating individuals into the Batak kinship system while simultaneously preserving indigenous identity, reinforcing social solidarity, and transmitting local wisdom across generations. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and demonstrate the continuing relevance of indigenous traditions in strengthening cultural resilience amid the pressures of contemporary social change [5].

2. Literature Review

Local Wisdom and Cultural Tradition

Local wisdom has become an essential concept in cultural studies, anthropology, and linguistics because it reflects the collective knowledge, ethical values, and practical experiences that communities develop through long historical interaction with their environment. Local wisdom consists of cultural values and social norms that positively contribute to solving communal problems while promoting peace, harmony, and social welfare [6]. Rather than functioning merely as inherited customs, local traditions embody systems of knowledge that guide social behavior, regulate interpersonal relationships, and strengthen cultural identity. Consequently, local wisdom is continuously reproduced through cultural practices, oral traditions, rituals, and symbolic expressions that connect present generations with their ancestors [7].

Oral tradition serves as one of the primary media through which local wisdom is transmitted. Oral traditions encompass both verbal and non-verbal forms of cultural expression that preserve collective memory and maintain cultural continuity across generations [8]. Stories, ceremonial speeches, ritual performances, and customary practices function not only as communication media but also as educational instruments that teach moral values, social obligations, and cultural identity. From an anthropolinguistic perspective, language used in traditional ceremonies represents more than linguistic communication because it conveys cultural meanings embedded within ritual contexts [9].

Culture itself is understood as a symbolic system through which people interpret reality and organize social life. Culture consists of inherited patterns of meaning transmitted through symbols that enable communities to preserve, communicate, and expand their knowledge [10]. Cultural values shape how individuals think, speak, and behave because cultural practices become internalized throughout the process of socialization [11]. Therefore, local traditions should be understood as dynamic cultural institutions that continuously negotiate between inherited values and contemporary social changes.

Batak Toba Kinship System and *Dalihan na tolu*

The Batak Toba community possesses one of Indonesia's most structured customary systems, characterized by a patrilineal kinship organization known as *ulos*. Every Batak Toba individual inherits the father's clan name, which determines genealogical identity, inheritance rights, marriage regulations, and social responsibilities [12]. The clan system extends beyond biological relationships because it establishes a comprehensive social network that governs interactions among community members.

The philosophical foundation of Batak Toba society is the concept of *Dalihan na tolu*, literally meaning "the three-legged stove." This philosophy represents the balanced relationship among three kinship groups: *hula-hula* (wife-givers), *dongan tubu* (clan relatives), and *boru* (wife-takers). *Dalihan na tolu* is not merely a kinship classification but a moral and legal framework regulating rights, obligations, mutual respect, and conflict resolution within Batak society. Every traditional ceremony, including birth, marriage, adoption, and funeral rituals, is conducted according to the principles of *Dalihan na tolu*, ensuring harmony and social equilibrium.

Scholars have further argued that the Batak kinship system demonstrates how indigenous legal traditions function alongside formal legal institutions. Customary law (*adat*) possesses binding authority because it is collectively recognized and socially enforced by community members. Consequently, ritual participation is not simply ceremonial but constitutes legal recognition of an individual's status within the social structure.

Mangain Tradition as Cultural Integration

Among various Batak Toba customary traditions, *Mangain* occupies a particularly significant position because it functions as a mechanism of cultural integration and kinship reconstruction. Linguistically, the term *Mangain* originates from the Batak word *ain*, meaning "to adopt" or "to take," while the prefix *mang-* transforms it into an active verb indicating the process of adoption or incorporation [13]. Within Batak customary law, *Mangain* refers to the formal process of granting clan identity to individuals, thereby integrating them into a recognized Batak kinship structure.

Previous studies generally identify two principal contexts for the implementation of *Mangain*. The first concerns interethnic marriages involving non-Batak spouses who must receive a Batak clan before the customary marriage ceremony can proceed. The second involves child adoption, whereby an adopted child legally becomes part of the adoptive family's genealogical line. Emphasizes that adoption in Batak society

involves much more than caregiving arrangements because it transfers clan identity, inheritance rights, customary obligations, and genealogical affiliation from the biological family to the adoptive family.

An important variation of *Mangain* occurs when a Batak child who already possesses a paternal clan is adopted by another Batak family. Although the child already has a clan identity, the *Mangain* ceremony remains essential because customary law requires official recognition of the child's new genealogical position. Through ritual performance, the adopted child receives the adoptive family's clan, assumes new responsibilities within the *Dalihan na tolu* system, and gains legal recognition as a biological child within the adoptive household. This demonstrates that Batak kinship is socially constructed through customary legitimacy rather than biological descent alone.

Ritual Performance and Symbolic Communication

Rituals constitute important communicative events in which language, symbols, material objects, and social interaction collectively construct cultural meaning. Anthropological studies emphasize that ritual discourse functions performatively by producing social realities through speech acts, symbolic exchanges, and ceremonial actions. Within the *Mangain* tradition, ritual language serves not only to announce adoption but also to legitimize new kinship relationships before the entire customary community.

The *Mangain* ceremony consists of several sequential stages, including *martonggo raja*, preparation of ceremonial materials, the main customary event, *pasahat sipanganon*, *pasahat ulos*, *pasahat parbue gabe*, *marsipanganon*, *upa panggabei*, and *martangiang*. Each stage contains verbal formulas, ritual objects, and symbolic gestures representing respect, gratitude, solidarity, blessing, and collective responsibility. The ceremonial presentation of *ulos*, traditional food, and other customary gifts symbolizes not merely material exchange but reciprocal obligations among kinship groups.

The use of Batak language throughout the ceremony further reinforces cultural identity. Formal speeches delivered during *paulak une*, clan assignment, and blessing rituals preserve indigenous expressions that embody philosophical concepts difficult to translate into other languages. Consequently, ritual discourse becomes an effective medium for transmitting local wisdom while simultaneously strengthening ethnic identity across generations [14].

Cultural Identity, Modernization, and Cultural Sustainability

Globalization and modernization have significantly influenced indigenous cultural traditions throughout Indonesia, including Batak Toba customary practices. Increasing educational mobility, urban migration, technological advancement, and interethnic marriages have transformed how younger generations understand and practice traditional rituals. While modernization encourages cultural adaptation, it also presents challenges to preserving the philosophical meanings embedded within customary ceremonies [15].

Several studies indicate that younger Batak generations increasingly simplify ritual procedures by reducing ceremonial stages, shortening customary speeches, or replacing symbolic gifts with more practical alternatives. Although such adaptations improve efficiency, they may gradually weaken the educational and philosophical dimensions of the tradition. In many cases, *Mangain* is viewed primarily as an administrative requirement for marriage rather than a comprehensive cultural institution that reinforces kinship solidarity and collective identity [16].

Interethnic marriages further introduce new dynamics into the implementation of *Mangain*. Couples originating from different ethnic backgrounds often possess varying levels of understanding regarding Batak customary values, leading to modifications in ritual practice. While cultural adaptation is inevitable, preserving the essential principles of *Dalihan na tolu*, mutual respect, and kinship responsibility remains fundamental to maintaining Batak cultural identity.

Despite these contemporary challenges, *Mangain* continues to demonstrate remarkable cultural resilience. Its survival reflects the adaptability of Batak customary institutions in responding to changing social conditions while maintaining their core philosophical foundations. From the perspective of local wisdom, *Mangain* illustrates how ritual performance, linguistic expression, symbolic communication, and kinship organization collectively sustain cultural continuity. Therefore, investigating the *Mangain* tradition through an anthropological framework contributes to understanding how language, ritual, and social practice interact to preserve local wisdom and reinforce Batak Toba cultural identity amid the pressures of globalization and social transformation.

4. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Mangain* tradition embodies a comprehensive system of local wisdom that strengthens the cultural identity, kinship structure, and social cohesion of the Batak Toba community. The analysis reveals that *Mangain* is not merely an adoption ceremony or a customary requirement for interethnic marriage, but rather a cultural institution that integrates linguistic expressions, ritual performances, symbolic objects, and customary law into a unified mechanism for maintaining social order. The results are discussed according to four major themes: (1) *Mangain* as the preservation of kinship identity, (2) ritual stages as representations of local wisdom, (3) linguistic and symbolic meanings in the ceremony, and (4) challenges to the sustainability of the tradition in the modern era.

***Mangain* as the Preservation of Kinship Identity**

The primary finding indicates that the *Mangain* tradition functions as a mechanism for preserving the Batak Toba patrilineal kinship system. In Batak Toba society, a family name (*ulos*) represents more than a surname; it establishes an individual's genealogical identity (*tarombo*), customary rights, social obligations, and position within the *Dalihan na tolu* philosophy. Consequently, every individual who becomes part of a Batak Toba family through adoption or interethnic marriage must be formally incorporated into the kinship structure through the *Mangain* ceremony.

The findings reveal that assigning a clan name is simultaneously a legal, cultural, and moral process. Through this ceremony, the adopted individual is officially recognized as a legitimate member of the adoptive family and assumes all customary rights and responsibilities. These include inheritance rights, participation in family ceremonies, obligations toward relatives, and recognition by the wider Batak community.

This finding illustrates that local wisdom operates not only as inherited knowledge but also as a practical solution for maintaining social harmony. Local wisdom provides positive cultural values that help communities resolve social issues and preserve collective welfare [17]. In this context, *Mangain* prevents ambiguity regarding kinship identity and reinforces social integration, particularly for individuals entering the Batak Toba community from different ethnic backgrounds.

Moreover, the study found that *Mangain* creates a sense of belonging. Individuals who undergo the ceremony are no longer perceived as outsiders but become equal members of the family. Such inclusion strengthens interpersonal relationships while preserving the continuity of Batak customary law across generations.

Ritual Stages as Representations of Local Wisdom

The second finding concerns the sequence of ritual stages in the *Mangain* ceremony. Observation of the customary process demonstrates that each stage contains specific philosophical meanings that collectively express Batak Toba local wisdom.

The ceremony begins with *martonggo raja*, during which family elders deliberate and reach consensus regarding the adoption or granting of a clan name. This stage reflects the values of democracy, collective responsibility, and respect for customary leadership. Decisions are never made individually but through communal agreement, emphasizing the importance of consultation in Batak social life.

The preparation of customary materials and ceremonial equipment symbolizes readiness to accept new social responsibilities. Every object prepared for the ceremony carries symbolic meaning, indicating that cultural rituals involve both tangible and intangible heritage [18].

During the main *Mangain* ceremony, the formal declaration of kinship transforms the individual's social status. This transformation is publicly witnessed by relatives and customary leaders, ensuring legitimacy within the community. Public recognition strengthens social trust and minimizes potential conflicts concerning family membership.

The subsequent stages, including *pasahat sipanganon*, *pasahat ulos*, *pasahat parbue gabe*, *marsipanganon*, *upa panggabe*, and *martangiang*, represent interconnected values of gratitude, blessing, mutual respect, prosperity, and spiritual devotion. The communal sharing of food emphasizes equality and solidarity, while the presentation of *ulos* symbolizes protection, affection, and family unity. Likewise, prayers at the conclusion of the ceremony demonstrate that customary practices remain closely connected with religious beliefs.

These findings indicate that the ritual sequence is not merely ceremonial but functions as a medium for transmitting ethical principles from older to younger generations. Every ritual act teaches participants about responsibility, mutual cooperation, respect for elders, and collective identity.

Linguistic Expressions and Cultural Symbols

The third finding highlights the importance of linguistic expressions and symbolic communication throughout the *Mangain* tradition. The ceremony is characterized by formal speeches, traditional greetings, blessings, and customary dialogues delivered in the Batak Toba language. These linguistic performances preserve not only the language itself but also the cultural values embedded within traditional expressions.

The findings demonstrate that ceremonial language performs multiple functions. First, it legitimizes the adoption process through formal declarations. Second, it communicates moral advice to both the adopted individual and the extended family. Third, it reinforces collective memory by recalling ancestral traditions and emphasizing the continuity of Batak cultural identity.

Particularly significant is the symbolic speech accompanying the presentation of *paulak une*, the official granting of a clan name, and the exchange of ceremonial gifts. These verbal performances emphasize gratitude, respect, reciprocity, and social responsibility. The language employed is highly metaphorical, reflecting the richness of Batak oral tradition.

The symbolic objects used during the ceremony also convey important cultural meanings. The *ulos*, for example, functions as a cultural symbol representing warmth, blessing, protection, and kinship. Food offerings symbolize generosity, togetherness, and communal prosperity, while traditional gifts signify reciprocal obligations among family members [19].

From an anthropolinguistic perspective, the findings suggest that language and ritual cannot be separated within *Mangain*. Verbal expressions acquire meaning through ritual performance, while ritual actions gain legitimacy through language. This interaction illustrates that linguistic performance serves as a vehicle for preserving cultural knowledge and transmitting local wisdom across generations.

Furthermore, the use of the Batak language throughout the ceremony strengthens ethnic identity. Younger participants learn customary vocabulary, kinship terminology, and ritual expressions that are rarely encountered in everyday communication. Consequently, *Mangain* contributes to the preservation of both linguistic and cultural heritage.

***Mangain* as a Mechanism for Social Integration**

Another important finding is the role of *Mangain* in integrating individuals from outside the Batak ethnic group into the Batak kinship system. Interethnic marriage has become increasingly common in contemporary Indonesian society, creating new social circumstances that require cultural adaptation.

The findings reveal that *Mangain* provides an inclusive mechanism through which individuals from different cultural backgrounds may become legitimate members of Batak Toba society without diminishing the integrity of traditional customs. Rather than functioning as a barrier, customary law serves as an instrument for social inclusion while maintaining the principles of the patrilineal system.

This finding demonstrates the adaptive capacity of Batak local wisdom. Cultural traditions are not static but possess sufficient flexibility to accommodate changing social realities while preserving their essential values. Through *Mangain*, diversity is embraced within a structured customary framework that continues to uphold harmony and mutual respect.

Challenges in the Era of Modernization

Despite its enduring cultural significance, the findings reveal several challenges confronting the sustainability of the *Mangain* tradition. Globalization, urbanization, migration, and changing lifestyles have significantly influenced how younger generations perceive customary practices [20].

Many participants acknowledged that contemporary ceremonies are frequently simplified to reduce financial costs and accommodate limited time. While simplification may enhance practicality, excessive reduction risks eliminating important symbolic elements that embody the philosophical foundations of the tradition [21].

The study also found that some younger Batak people understand *Mangain* primarily as an administrative requirement for marriage rather than as a meaningful cultural institution. This limited understanding may

weaken appreciation for the values of kinship, solidarity, and collective responsibility that characterize Batak society.

Migration to urban centers and overseas communities presents additional challenges. Batak families living outside their ancestral homeland often encounter practical difficulties in organizing complete customary ceremonies because of geographical distance, economic considerations, or limited access to customary leaders. Consequently, several ritual components may be modified or omitted [22].

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate encouraging efforts toward cultural preservation. Many Batak cultural organizations, customary leaders, churches, and extended families continue to educate younger generations about the significance of *Mangain*. Digital media have also emerged as important platforms for documenting ceremonies, sharing cultural knowledge, and strengthening awareness among younger audiences [23].

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that *Mangain* remains highly relevant in contemporary Batak Toba society because it fulfills essential social, cultural, legal, and spiritual functions. Although modernization has transformed certain aspects of its implementation, the fundamental values of kinship, mutual respect, collective responsibility, cultural identity, and social harmony continue to define the tradition. Therefore, preserving *Mangain* requires not only maintaining its ceremonial procedures but also ensuring that its underlying philosophy of local wisdom is understood, appreciated, and transmitted to future generations through cultural education, family participation, and community-based preservation initiatives.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Mangain* tradition is a significant manifestation of Batak Toba local wisdom that functions beyond the formal act of adoption or clan assignment. It represents a cultural mechanism for preserving kinship, reinforcing the *daliha na tolu* philosophy, and integrating individuals into the Batak Toba patrilineal social structure. Every stage of the *Mangain* ceremony embodies symbolic meanings that reflect respect, responsibility, solidarity, and mutual cooperation, while the ritual language and cultural symbols serve as effective media for transmitting ancestral values across generations. The tradition also illustrates the adaptability of Batak Toba culture by accommodating interethnic marriages and adoption without compromising the integrity of its customary system.

However, the study also reveals that modernization, globalization, migration, and changing social perspectives have contributed to the simplification of ritual practices and the gradual decline in understanding of the philosophical values underlying *Mangain*, particularly among younger generations. These challenges highlight the urgent need for cultural preservation through documentation, education, and active community participation. Strengthening awareness of the cultural, linguistic, and social significance of *Mangain* is essential to ensuring its continuity as an important element of Batak Toba identity. Ultimately, preserving the *Mangain* tradition contributes not only to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage but also to maintaining social cohesion and promoting the sustainability of local wisdom in an increasingly globalized society.

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