



## The Death Ritual in Bataknese Culture

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**Abstract:** In Batak society there are various kinds of rituals that have long been passed down from their ancestors and these rituals are still very much adhered to today. Starting from birth, marriage, death, to the stages of entering a new house, everyone uses ritual. However, this research focuses on Death Ritual in the Bataknese Culture especially in Batak Toba. The Death Ceremonies are also different. Starting from newborn children, toddlers, teenagers, for those who are married, already have children and even for those who are already having grandchildren also has different rituals. This research aims to introduce Batak culture, especially the tradition of death, which has a variety of differences, and at the same time invite young Batak people to preserve Batak customs so that they do not become extinct over time. Death ritual often involve various complex rites and traditions, such as traditional ceremonies, funeral processions, traditional ceremonies, and a series of activities aimed at sending the spirit of the deceased to another world peacefully. Apart from that, there is also a belief that the relationship between living people and the spirits of the deceased remains, and this ceremony is also a way to maintain this relationship..

**Keywords:** Batak, Masyarakat Batak Toba, Tradisi, Upacara Adat Kematian Suku Batak

### INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the kinds of literature. Literature is any collection of written work, but it is also used more narrowly for writings specifically considered to be an art form, especially prose fiction, drama, and poetry. Culture is a term that refers to a large and diverse set of mostly intangible aspects of social life Nicki Lisa Cole.Ph.D.2019. According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to

define them as a collective. Culture also includes the material objects that are common to that group or society. Kebudayaan adalah seluruh cara kehidupan dari masyarakat yang mana pun dan tidak hanya mengenai sebagian dari cara hidup itu yaitu bagian yang oleh masyarakat dianggap lebih tinggi atau lebih diinginkan. Linton dalam Ihromi (2006: 18).

Culture is distinct from social structure and economic aspects of society, but it is connected to them both continuously informing them and being informed by them. Tradisi adalah penilaian atau anggapan bahwa cara-cara yang telah ada

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merupakan yang paling benar. Selain itu, diartikan pula sebagai adat kebiasaan turun temurun dari nenek moyang yang masih dijalankan di masyarakat. Related to the topic, researcher focus on analyzing what types of death ritual are practiced in Bataknese culture and how the Batak people performed the death ritual based on the expert by using qualitative and quantitative method.

Many researchers had made the Death Ritual in Bataknese as their research. This research has similarities with the previous study in the ritual, the steps and the symbols. The first previous study is *Pandangan Pengadati Terhadap Kematian Kristen Masyarakat Batak Toba Desa Ujung Serdang Kecamatan Tanjung Morawa Kabupaten Deli Serdang*, Herman Planu Manik, this research study about the death ritual in Batak Toba Christianity, how the ritual Batak Toba Christianity do especially in Saur Matua Ritual. The difference about the researcher paper that study about the death ritual in Batakness commonly not just in Christianity.

The second previous study is *Tradisi Sijagaron Pada Upacara Kematian Saur Matua Di Kabupaten Toba* Christina Rayani Panggabean (Universitas Sumatera Utara, 2022). In this study the researcher discusses "the Sijagaron Tradition at the Death Ceremony of Saur Matua in Toba Regency". What Elements are in Sijagaron and how Sijagaron's Dance and Hata-Hata Performance is. This study aims to describe what elements are contained in Sijagaron, how is the performance dances of Sijagaron, how are cultural values and norms in Sijagaron. The difference about the researcher paper is that the researcher summarized the process of the each death ritual in Bataknese .

The third previous study is *Parjambaran Dalam Upacara Saur Matua Etnik Batak Toba: Kajian Folklore* Endang Hutasoit, (Universitas Sumatera Utara, 2022). In this study researcher describe about the kinds of the Parjambaran and the meaning in Saur Matua Ritual (one of the kinds rituals of the death ritual in Bataknese tradition). The difference of the researcher paper

is that the researcher will describe the Parjambaran in each ritual tradition not only in Saur Matua ritual.

The fourth previous study is *Tradisi Mangalahat Horbo Dalam Upacara Saur Matua Etnik Batak Toba Kajian Kearifan Lokal*. Edi Winarto Sihombing (Universitas Sumatera Utara 2022) .In this research the researcher study about Mangalahat Horbo Tradition, that one of the food symbol in the death ritual in Bataknese tradition. The difference of the researcher paper is the researcher will agglomerate what ritual can use Mangalahat horbo tradition because not all of the death tradition can use it.

The fifth previous study is *Deiksis Dalam Teks Upacara Adat Mangongkal Holi Pada Masyarakat Batak Toba: Kajian Pragmatik Gulo*, Rebeka Ratna (Universitas Sumatera Utara, 2020). Mangokkal holi is the ritual for dig graves and move corpses from the one grave to others grave. This ritual can be done after several years after the corpse buried. The difference of this research to these papers is that this previous study discusses the rare ritual in Bataknese and it will be happened if the Death Ritual is already held.

The difference of this research with the previous study is this research put any types of Death Ritual in Bataknese based people at less people know. The researcher arranges the kinds of Death Ritual based on the age and status level. Not only study about the Ritual but also the steps, what is prohibited and also what is allowed and also the symbols. Based on the problem of research, the researchers provide the objective of research, as the follow to explain about the types of death rituals are practiced in Bataknese culture and to explain about the process of Batak people perform the death ritual.

In Bataknese culture there is a kindship system known as "Dalihan Na Tolu" which is a basic principle in the social organization of Batak society. This concept divides Batak society into 3 groups of closely related kindship elements:

Hula- hula. Refers to wife's clan family. In this context hula-hula consists of clan groups

originating from the wife's side or the women's family in marriage. This group has an important role in strengthening kinship relations between the wife's family and the husband's family.

Dongan Tubu, is a group of friends or relatives from the same clan. They are the individuals who have strong kinship ties because they have same clan relationship. The concept "dongan tubu" emphasizes the importance of solidarity and cooperation among members of the same clan.

Boru, refers to the woman's family from the father or husband. Boru is a group of women who have an important role in Bataknese kinship structure. They have a respected position in the family and community as custodians of customs, culture and inheritors of traditional values.

Dalihan natolu system reflects the complexity of kinship relationship that regulate the social structure and interaction between various groups of Batak society. In the context of preparing or a funeral ceremony or carrying out traditional rituals, the presence and role of these kinship groups can be very important in organizing and carrying out the procession in accordance with applicable customs. When discussing the technical requirements in the context of Batak funeral ceremonies or any similar cultural rituals, it often involves the provision and preparation of specific ceremonial equipment and items essential for the proceedings. These technical requirements generally include:

**Coffins:** The procurement or preparation of coffins or caskets suitable for the funeral ceremony, often decorated elaborately and in accordance with cultural traditions.

**Instruments and the Players:** Traditional musical instruments such as gongs, drums, flutes, and other instruments that hold cultural significance in Batak ceremonies. Skilled players or musicians are also arranged to perform during the funeral rites

**Tableware and Dishes:** Special tableware and dishes used for serving food and refreshments to the mourners attending the ceremony. These

items are often chosen or prepared in line with cultural practices and customs.

These technical aspects are crucial in ensuring that the funeral ceremony adheres to the cultural norms, respects the traditions, and provides an environment suitable for paying respects to the deceased in accordance with Batak customs. The provision of these ceremonial items plays a significant role in the ceremonial process, creating an atmosphere that honors the departed and upholds the cultural values associated with the funeral rites.

## METHOD

Research approach is one way on produce and technique that collect the data. The researcher uses Qualitative and Quantitative approach to this research. A research site is a place where people conduct research. Common research sites include universities, hospitals, research institutes, and field research location.

According to Hamid Darmadi (2011:52) lokasi penelitian adalah tempat dimana proses studi yang digunakan untuk memperoleh pemecahan masalah penelitian berlangsung (research location is a place where the study process used to obtain research problem solving takes place).

The research location is the place that researcher can get and collect the data based on the researcher topic, as the researcher topic "The Death Ritual In Bataknese Culture" that take place in North Sumatera for in more detail Sitompul village, Tarutung district that still preserves all kind of the death tradition.

## Primary Data

According Sugiyono (2018:456) Data primer yaitu sumber data yang langsung memberikan data kepada pengumpul data. Data dikumpulkan sendiri oleh peneliti langsung dari sumber pertama atau tempat objek penelitian dilakukan. (Primary data is a data source that directly provides data to data collectors. Data is collected by the researchers themselves directly from the first source or where the object of research is carried out). The researcher collects the primary

data from the expert of the researcher topic, the researcher collecting the data by conducting interviews, observations and documentation of research subjects as a basis for discussion directly from Penatua Adat.

### ***Secondary Data***

Secondary data is data obtained from other parties, not directly obtained by researchers from research subjects. Secondary data is data obtained by researchers from existing sources. In this study, data is collected from documentation, reports, articles and other information related to the research on the Death Tradition in Bataknese Culture.

### ***Data Analysis***

After process of the data collection was completed, the next step taken was the analysis process. The steps that have been applied to analyze the data were sorting, compiling, and making meaningful data sets collected. Data analysis is a procedure performed to interpret data whose validity has been tested based on research on traditional Batak death rituals. The process of this analysis is to find out the death ritual process, social and cultural meanings, as well as symbolic meanings in death ritual customs in the Batak people. This analysis will be revealed to meet and answer the problem formulation in this study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Every aspect of life in Batak society inseparable from the implementation of the traditional ceremony. Before birth, still in the womb until death and becoming bones, a series of traditional ceremonies are carried out. Death is the final stage of the journey of life. The natural events of all living creatures, including humans, cannot avoid death.

In Toba Batak society, people who die will experience special treatment in the traditional death ceremony ritual which is the last respect given to family members who have died. However, there are various types of customary implementation in Batak tradition, both of weddings also death. The implementation of customs that occur in the Toba community,

especially in Tarutung, the area of North Tapanuli, is still well preserved with the cultural heritage of their ancestors. The death tradition in Bataknese people adjusted to the status of the person who died.

However, the death status that can be carried out according to the full tradition "adat na gok" is not determined by old age at death, or good enough economic conditions but is influenced by several other factors, for example whether or not there are the descendants of the person who died. For Batak people, dying in the status of "Saur Matua" and "Mauli Bulung" is considered an ideal death, so usually their descendants will be margondang, because the higher the status of someone's death, the greater the customs they will receive. For Christian the meaning of death is the end of life in this earth and a path to God. That's why as Christians we must have great respect and love for those who die young.

The death ritual types that practiced in Bataknese culture are:

### ***Tilahaon***

Tilahaon is the person who died was unmarried, whether he was a baby, child, teenager, adult or old man, but his father and mother were still alive. Tilaha = child who dies, Tilahaon parents. Tilahaon is the name for parents whose children are abandoned. Tilahaon is the name for parents whose children have died.

### ***Haponggolan Ulu***

Haponggolan Ulu is when the husband dies leaving behind his wife and very young children. This type is the pitiful types of death for his family, because he leaves their family who still need him.

### ***Toppas Tataring or Matompas Tataring***

Toppas Tataring or Matompas Tataring is when the wife dies leaving behind her husband and very young children, Toppas Tataring is the opposite of Haponggolan Ulu.

### ***Sari Matua***

Sari Matua is the kind of the death ritual to give the last respect the deceased wife or husband who has left behind their children or grandchildren, even though they still have

unmarried children. Different with Tilahaon, Haponggolan Ulu, and Toppas Tataring that the corpse has to be buried in that moment, in Sari Matua ritual the corpse can stay several nights at his residence waiting for children or family who haven't gathered yet. The family can Mangondasi. *Saur Matua*

Saur Matua is the kind of the death ritual to give the last respect to the deceased wife or husband who has left behind their children and grandchildren and all of their children have married (Sippan). In the Bataknese culture, this explanation illustrates the complexity of various situations of someone's death and how this affects the course of traditional ceremonies. In Batak custom there is an emphasis placed on various situations of a person's death that influences the complexity and the level of importance of the traditional ceremonies carried out. The condition where someone dies when they already have grandchildren but there are still unmarried grandchildren (mate saur matua) is because it is considered an ideal or perfect death. This is because of the people who die in this condition no longer have dependent children to take care in world life.

#### *Mauli Bulung*

Mauli Bulung is the situation that they have the children from their grandchildren. In Batak culture, the term "Marnini Marnono" refers to a death status that is considered very high or ideal for a father or mother who has died and has great-grandchildren (grandchildren of sons and daughters). This status has conditions that must be met. Children Are Married and Have Children. All children of the deceased father or mother are married, have their own children (sons and daughters), and even have grandchildren (great-grandchildren of sons and daughters). No One Dies Before Their Father and Mother:

All the children are still alive and no one dies before their Father or Mother, ensuring that the generation is still complete and intact when both their parents die. The status "Marnini Marnono" is considered the highest death status in Batak procedures or customs. This condition describes a situation that is considered ideal in which both parents have provided a complete family

inheritance, including through their offspring, and ensure the completeness of the next generation. In practice, "Marnini Marnono" status is very rarely found nowadays because it must fulfill quite complex requirements. However, in the context of Batak people's customs and beliefs, achieving this status is considered an achievement and is something that is highly respected because it shows the completeness of a parent's role in continuing the lineage and giving birth to the next generation with an intact whole.

#### **The way Batak perform each death ritual**

The implementation of death rituals in Batak society is not the same, the implementation of customs must be adjusted to the type of death that one receives.

Tilahaon is usually done with ordinary prayers without any special rituals carried out by the family and without any invitation from the bereaved family. And the funeral must take place on the same day. Tilahaon itself is the saddest ritual in the Batak people's traditional rituals, because the parents of the deceased must accompany the body to the funeral. However, traditional elders must also accompany the funeral procession which is led by a priest for religious processions. Tilahaon is the saddest kind of death in Batak, so there is no ceremony at it.

#### *Haponggolan Ulu*

For doing this ritual the family of the woman (wife) will give *tujung* (hood) to the wife as a sign that she was legally be a widow at this time and the *tujung* will be worn on the wife's head. The wife who left behind by her husband will be difficult to accept the *tujung* (hood), because at the time she has to accept the fact she is legally a widow, but no matter how hard she refuses to wear the *tujung*(hood), it will not hinder the reality she will accept. Ready or not she has to accept the *tujung* so that the process of the funeral can be continued. And the uncle of the husband will give *ulos Saput* to the deceased person. This is the last *Ulos* that will be given. Usually, the color of the *Ulos* must be black or Brown.

#### *Toppas Tataring / Matoppas Tataring*

The ritual of Toppas Tataring is almost the same

with the Haponggolan Ulu ritual. The difference is in giving the *tujung* (hood) and the *ulos saput*. *Tujung* will be given by husband's uncle. And it will be worn on the husband's head as a sign that he was legally be a widower. For the *Ulos Saput* will be given by the wife's family as the last *Ulos*, the color is usually black or brown.

#### *Sari Matua*

Tor tor Mangondas is a ritual or mourning expression in Bataknese Culture design to fulfill the tradition needs in honoring the deceased. This ritual is also considered a communication between the real world and other world, which refers to spirit world (*tondi*) of the deceased person. Through this ritual, the requests from the real world are conveyed to the ancestors by hoping the blessings or good fortune from the ancestors can be given to living people, especially to their heirs.

#### *Saur Matua*

When a Batak person dies in Saur Matua situation, the relatives immediately have a deliberation (*Martonggo Raja*) to discuss the ceremony preparations, including the time of ceremony, location of the burial, post-burial customary events and technical requirements for the ceremony. *Martonggo Raja* is a deliberation forum involving close relatives and traditional figures who have power or influence in Batak community. This meeting discussed various preparation for funeral ceremonies which included:

***The Ceremony Time:*** to determine to appropriate time for the funeral ceremony based on considerations of custom and the availability of family and relatives.

***Post-Burial Events:*** to determine a series of ritual events that will be carried out after the funeral procession as part of respect and offerings to the spirit of the deceased.

In the context of the Batak culture and the saur matua ceremony, the timing of the ceremony's implementation is often influenced by the arrival of all children and the *hula-hula* party (relatives from the wife's side). The tradition dictates that the saur matua ceremony commences only when all immediate family members and significant relatives have gathered. It's not uncommon for the

saur matua ceremony to be postponed for more than a week or even longer to accommodate the arrival of all family members who are often dispersed in various locations. During this waiting period, non-traditional events may take place. One common practice is the daily welcoming of arriving mourners until the saur matua ceremony can be conducted.

These activities during the waiting period serve not only as a means to accommodate the arriving family members but also to maintain a sense of togetherness, support, and communal bonding within the family and community during this mourning period. They provide an opportunity for people to come together, share condolences, and prepare for the solemn saur matua ceremony honoring the departed soul.

In the Batak culture, saur matua ceremony considered as an ideal passing for an individual as it occurs after all the children are married, often takes place during the daytime in an open space, frequently in the yard of a funeral home or a designated area. This ceremony marks a significant moment to honor the deceased. During the saur matua ceremony:

***Location:*** The ceremony typically occurs in an open space, commonly in the yard of a funeral home or another open area where the family can gather.

***Arrangement of the Coffin:*** The body placed within a coffin, the position is at the center surrounded by the children and grandchildren. The coffin is often situated in such a way that the foot of the coffin leads toward the exit of the house, symbolizing the departure of the deceased from their earthly home.

***Arrangement of Family Members:*** To the right side of the coffin are the sons with their wives and children. To the left side are the daughters with their husbands and children. This arrangement reflects the family structure and serves as a way to pay respects and honor to the deceased surrounded by immediate family members.

The spatial arrangement of family members during the saur matua ceremony holds symbolic significance, representing the unity and connection among family members, also signifying the completion of the deceased's



journey in this earthly life. The ceremony itself often involves rituals, prayers, and ceremonial actions carried out by a designated individual, such as a religious leader or elder, to honor and bid farewell to the departed soul. It's a solemn occasion where family and community members come together to pay their respects and offer prayers for the soul's peaceful transition to the afterlife.

The saur matua ceremony within the Batak culture often incorporates various rituals and traditions that hold significant meaning in honoring the departed and maintaining the cultural heritage of the community. The ceremony usually begins with the serving of a meal, typically consisting of rice accompanied by a side dish made from sacrificial animal meat (either buffalo or pork) that has been prepared by the parhobas or party cook. After get the meal, the ceremony proceeds with the ritual of distributing jambar among all the dalihan natolu, the three familial relations consisting of hula-hula (relatives from the wife's side), dongan tubu (same-marga relatives), and boru (relatives from the husband's side). Jambar comprises four main types, each carrying symbolic significance:

*Juhut (meat)*: Symbolizes sustenance and nourishment. It typically refers to the meat distributed during the ceremony, representing a form of sharing and communal unity among family members and attendees.

*Hepeng (money)*: Represents wealth or financial assistance. In some instances, jambar hepeng might not be obligatory and has been replaced by jambar juhut. It's usually only distributed by respected individuals or as deemed necessary by customary provisions.

*Tor-tor (dance)*: Symbolizes cultural expression and vitality. It might involve traditional dance performances during the ceremony, showcasing the cultural heritage and vitality of the community.

*Hata (talking)*: Represents dialogue or communication. This might involve speeches, prayers, or discussions conducted during the ceremony, allowing for communication of sentiments, prayers, or important messages.

The distribution of jambar serves as a way to

uphold traditions, maintain social cohesion, and reinforce bonds among family members and the community. It carries both symbolic and practical significance by ensuring that everyone is provided for and contributing to the gathering in their respective capacities. In the Batak tradition, specifically during the saur matua ceremony, the distribution of jambar juhut, which typically includes buffalo or pork meat, is carried out in a structured manner, allocating different parts of the meat to individuals based on their position or relation within the familial hierarchy:

*Ulu (head)*: Reserved for traditional kings or respected figures, if present at the ceremony, to honor their status and significance.

*Rungkung (neck)*: Allocated for the boru, representing female relatives within the family.

*Soit (thighs and legs)*: Designated for the dongan sabutuha, signifying other same-marga relatives.

*Ihur-ihur (back and ribs)*: Distributed to the hula-hula, the relatives from the wife's side of the family.

*Upa suhut (host's child)*: Received the back portion of the meat.

After the distribution of the jambar juhut, the event progresses to jambar hata, a ritual where attendees offer words of comfort and encouragement to the children left behind by the deceased. This sequence usually begins with the hula-hula, followed by the dongan sahuta, boru, and finally, the dongan sabutuha. Each change of offering words of support is marked by a tor-tor jambar, a ceremonial dance. At the jambar hata, participants engage the tor-tor accompanied by the traditional Gondang Sabangunan music, played by a Batak orchestra. This dance and musical accompaniment serve as a form of cultural expression and reverence for the deceased, creating a poignant atmosphere while offering words of comfort to the bereaved children. The combination of dance, music, and spoken encouragement signifies a communal effort to support and uplift the family members affected by the loss. In the Batak tradition, the tor-tor or manortor dance has significant cultural and ceremonial importance, especially during rituals such as the saur matua ceremony. This dance

involves specific practices related to the use of ulos, which is a traditional Batak cloth considered sacred and symbolic. During the tor-tor or manortor dance:

*Bona Tulang and Bona Ni Ari:* These individuals envelope ulos *ragi idup* directly over the body of the deceased. Additionally, they give ulos *sibolang*, another type of ulos, which holds symbolic value in the ritual.

*Ulos Spread Over the Coffin:* The ulos, the traditional Batak cloth is spread over the coffin. This act signifies a final tribute and expression of gratitude towards the deceased.

*Hula-hula Party Using Ulos:* The hula-hula party, consisting of relatives from the wife's side, uses ulos for the *boru* (female relatives) and *hela* (daughters-in-law). This act symbolizes *pasu-pasu*, a form of blessing or bestowing of good fortune

The use of ulos in these ceremonial practices carries deep cultural and spiritual significance. Ulos, often intricately woven and symbolically meaningful, is considered a representation of honor, respect, and blessings. The act of wrapping ulos over the body, spreading it over the coffin, and using it to bless specific individuals signifies the cultural importance of the cloth in conveying reverence, blessings, and bestowing positive energy upon both the departed and the living relatives. The tor-tor dance, accompanied by these ceremonial actions involving ulos, serves as a cultural expression, paying homage to the deceased, conveying blessings, and fostering a sense of cultural continuity and community among the participants. In the Bataknese tradition, particularly during ceremonies like the *saur matua*, various rituals are performed involving the use of ulos (traditional Batak cloth) and symbolic acts to honor the deceased and bless the family members left behind. Here's an overview of the mentioned practices:

*Ulos Sibolang as Ulos Simpetua:* The hula-hula places the ulos *sibolang*, a specific type of ulos on the shoulders of the abandoned wife or husband. This act known as *ulos simpetua*, symbolizes respect and support for the spouse who has lost their partner.

*Ulos Panggabei for Descendants:* the next are the hula-hula and *tulang/uncle* (close relatives) give ulos *pangabei* to all the descendants of the deceased, starting from the oldest to the youngest. Ulos *panggabei* is offered as a form of blessing and signifies the continuity of cultural heritage and family lineage.

*Tor-Tor Dance by Women Holding Boras Sipiritondi:* The women from the *tulang* (uncle) troupe then perform the tor-tor dance while holding *boras sipiritondi*, unsalted flour rice. This ritual is carried out to give blessings and strengthen the *tondi* or spirit of the deceased. It's a symbolic act aimed at ensuring the well-being and spiritual strength of the departed soul.

Each of these rituals involving ulos and ceremonial actions holds specific cultural and symbolic significance within the Bataknese tradition. The use of ulos, along with the dance and offerings, aims to honor the deceased, provide support to the grieving family members, and reinforce the spiritual connection between the living and the departed. These rituals reflect the community's shared values, beliefs, and efforts to maintain cultural traditions during mourning ceremonies. In the Batak tradition, particularly during the *saur matua* ceremony, the exchange of expressions of gratitude and thanks holds significant importance as a part of the ceremonial proceedings.

After the completion of the *jambar tor-tor*, it is customary for the *upa suhut* parties (host's children) to take turns delivering responses or replies to the parties who provided the *jambar hata*. During this part of the ceremony, the *hasuhuton* parties express their gratitude and appreciation to all those who contributed, assisted, or participated in carrying out the *saur matua* ceremony. They acknowledge the efforts and support received from the attendees, family members, and everyone involved in organizing and conducting the ceremony. This act is to giving thanks serves multiple purposes within the cultural context:

**Acknowledgment of Support:** Expressing gratitude is a way to acknowledge and appreciate the help, support, and contributions of everyone involved in making the ceremony possible.



**Maintaining Relationships:** It reinforces the sense of community and reinforces the bonds among family members and attendees by recognizing their efforts and presence.

**Cultural Etiquette:** It reflects cultural norms and values of showing appreciation and respect towards others, emphasizing the importance of gratitude within the community.

The exchange of thanks and expressions of gratitude during this part of the *saur matua* ceremony is a way to conclude the event while fostering a sense of unity, respect, and communal appreciation among all those who participated in the ceremonial proceedings. In some Batak cultural practices, especially when individuals have embraced Christianity, the closing of traditional ceremonies such as the *saur matua*, might include a brief Christian service conducted by the church before the actual burial. This incorporation of a church service within the traditional rituals signifies the synthesis of cultural and religious beliefs. The Christian service typically consists of elements commonly found in a church ceremony:

**Opening Hymn:** A hymn is sung at the beginning of the service, setting the tone and invoking a sense of reverence.

**Sermon:** A sermon or message is delivered by the church leader, often reflecting on spiritual themes, offering comfort, and providing words of encouragement and hope.

**Closing Hymn:** Another hymn is sung at the end of the service, reinforcing the spiritual message and providing a conclusion to the religious portion of the ceremony.

**Closing Prayer:** The service concludes with a closing prayer, invoking blessings, offering gratitude and seeking comfort and strength for the family and attendees. The inclusion of a Christian service within the closure of traditional ceremonies reflects the adaptation and integration of religious beliefs into cultural practices. It acknowledges the significance of both traditional customs and religious convictions, providing a meaningful and comforting conclusion to the overall ceremony before the deceased is laid to rest.

This blending of traditional practices with a Christian service underscores the importance of

honoring cultural traditions while seeking spiritual solace and during guiding times of loss and mourning. After the conclusion of the traditional rituals and any accompanying church service, the final part of the ceremony typically involves the burial of the deceased with the coffin. The coffin, containing the deceased, is brought to the designated burial site or cemetery accompanied by family members, relatives, and attendees from the ceremony. The procession to the burial site is often solemn and respectful, reflecting the gravity of the moment. Once at the burial site, customary rites might continue, depending on specific cultural traditions or religious beliefs. Prayers, blessings, or additional ceremonies might be conducted before the coffin is lowered into the grave.

Family members and attendees may offer final words, prayers, or gestures of farewell. The act of burying the coffin signifies the culmination of the ceremony and the physical departure of the deceased from this world. It's a poignant moment for the family and community, marking the final step in honoring the departed and providing closure to the mourning process. After the burial, it's common for family and attendees to gather for a post-funeral gathering or meal, providing an opportunity for further support, sharing memories, and offering condolences to the bereaved family. The burial serves as the ultimate farewell, marking the end of the ceremonial process and initiating a period of mourning and remembrance for the deceased among their loved ones and community.

#### *Mauli Bulung*

In the death ceremony, the body is placed in a coffin with both hands placed parallel to the side of the body. This indicates that the person no longer has a burden or responsibility. In the coffin, a series of flowers called *ompu-ompu* are placed on the top of the head. *Ompu-ompu* is a symbol that the deceased already has children and grandchildren and what they have obtained well will be passed on to their descendants. Culture and traditions related to death often reflect a society's values and how they view life, death, and legacy. The death ceremony described shows an understanding that death is not the end of everything, but rather is part of the life journey

that every individual must go through. Hand positions and symbols such as the ompu-ompu show deep meaning regarding society's understanding of an individual's role and responsibilities throughout his life. The concept that happiness is not only measured by the amount of possessions, but also by positive contributions to family and society, reflects the values of family and togetherness espoused by Batak culture. Death as "Saur Matua Mauli Bulung" signifies the completion of life's tasks and brings happiness to the family because they are considered to have fulfilled their responsibilities, especially in ensuring the success and welfare of their descendants.

Each culture has its own unique view of death, and this provides deep insight into the values held by that society.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Death Ritual in Bataknese Culture are important part of Batak tradition and culture. It is an acknowledgment of the existence of life after death and is an attempt to honor and prepare the spirits of the deceased for their journey to the next life. The meaning and purpose behind this death ceremony is closely related to the spiritual beliefs of the Toba Batak people who believe that after someone dies, their spirit will continue their journey to another world. Therefore, death ceremonies are performed to ensure that the soul of the deceased will be given the respect it deserves and properly prepared for its spiritual journey.

The meaning and purpose behind this death ritual is closely related to the spiritual beliefs of the Batak people who believe that after someone dies, their spirit will continue their journey to another world. Therefore, death rituals are performed to ensure that the soul of the deceased will be given the respect it deserves and properly prepared for its spiritual journey. The concepts of "mate saur matua" and "mauli bulung" refer to the type of death that is desired, namely a death that

is considered lucky or "auspicious" because the person who died has reached old age happily and without significant burdens without major problems bothering their minds. This is considered a type of death that is respected and expected by the Batak people and Tilahaon's death is the least expected death because it is the saddest type of death.

Overall, death ceremonies in Toba Batak society have a deep meaning as respect for the deceased and the belief in wanting spiritual life after death.

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