



NEW HOUSE CEREMONY

Tiarnita Maria Sarjani Br. Siregar¹, Ribka Manurung², Rina Trie Syahputri³, Sandra Hutapea⁴, Yoga Karosekali⁵

Universitas Negeri Medan

lian.nita2010@gmail.com¹, ribkamanurung2405@gmail.com², rinatrie2023@gmail.com³,

sandrasridevi0711@gmail.com⁴, yogakarosekali5@gmail.com⁵

Abstract:

This research aims to find out about the new house ceremony, specifically in the Batak toba custom, by exploring and documenting what is known as "*Mambongoti Bagas*" practiced by the Batak tribe, especially the Toba subgroup. *Mamongoti Bagas* is an important ceremony since the house is a sacred place for Batak people, especially when it is new. This ceremony takes place in the owner's new house, and the goods used can vary. The method used is to observe the *Mambongoti Bagas* tradition of the Batak Toba tribe. The results of the research show the celebration of the new house of the *tobayang* Batak tribe is also called "*Mambongoti Bagas*". The ceremony begins with respect in the form of local cuisine, "*Namalum*" (pork neck) to *Tulang* and *Tondong*, and they will give ulos to the owner of the house (*Suhut*), blessings (*pasu-pasu*) to *Suhu*, *Boru*, and *Sanina* give food namely *manuk* (*dayok*), *batur manggoluh* and rice to *Suhut*, then prayers and advice.

Keywords: *mambongoti bagas*, new house ceremony, Batak Toba

Corresponding: Rina Trie Syahputri

E-mail: rinatrie2023@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Almost every region has a tradition of entering a new house. However, there are unique things that happen in the tradition of entering a new house in the Batak tribe, especially Toba. This tradition is called *mambongoti bagas*. The unique thing is that the builder is involved in this ritual. Usually, the ceremony will be held after the house has been built, the builders have been fed, and their salaries have been paid by the owner of the house. In this ritual, the day of implementation is determined by traditional elders because not all days are good (Sinabutar, 2019).

Oral traditions can be defined as customs that develop in a society, are recorded through spoken language, and are passed down from generation to generation. Oral traditions are part of the national cultural heritage as stipulated in the UNESCO Convention of 17 September 2003 (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2020; Jagielska-Burduk et al., 2021).

Currently, not all Toba Batak people, especially those living in urban areas, want to move to new houses (*mamongoti bagas*). Many Batak people no longer carry out traditional rituals when entering a new house and do not carry out traditional Batak rituals according to the procedures for entering a new house in the Toba Batak community. However, there is a small group of people who pray. Together, now we only hold Thanksgiving Day (*Partangiangan*).

However, in general, the Toba Batak people do *Mamongoti Bagas* (entering the house) as a thanksgiving to God for being able to build an aesthetically beautiful house and as a prayer request so that the house remains in good condition. A house built for health. Therefore, as a tradition and culture, the *Mamongoti Bagasu* (entering the house) event is maintained wherever the Toba Batak people live,

because this tradition reflects and represents the identity of the Toba Batak people. Maintained and preserved.

The traditional elder looks for good dates to find out good and bad days. The implementation is carried out in the morning when the sun appears on the eastern horizon. The ceremony is carried out before the sun reaches its culmination point or, in other words, no later than 12 noon because, before 12 o'clock, the sun was rising, so the hopes of the occupants of the new house for their fortune rose like the sun. Oral tradition is a custom of a certain group of people that is inherited from time to time by the next generations (Hartanto & Ramadhan, 2023).

Their special nature derives from the fact that they are "unwritten" sources couched in a form suitable for oral transmission and that their preservation depends on the powers of memory of successive generations of human beings (Allen, 2017; Ojedoja & Abubakar, 2018; Luhar & Nimavat, 2020). This particular definition of oral tradition is strengthened by (Sibarani, 2012), who stated that oral tradition can be one of the cultural powers and one of the main sources of creating identity and building up a civilization.

METHOD

This study aims to explore and document the housewarming tradition known as "*Mambongoti Bagas*" practiced by the Batak tribe, specifically the Toba subgroup. The tradition involves the active participation of the house builder in a ceremonial ritual held after the completion of the construction. The implementation of this ritual is guided by traditional elders who select auspicious dates for the ceremony. This study seeks to investigate the cultural, social, and spiritual significance of *Mambongoti Bagas*, as well as its impact on the community and individuals involved. The primary method employed in this study to explore the *Mambongoti Bagas* tradition of the Batak tribe is ethnographic fieldwork, involving participant observation, interviews with community members, and the use of relevant cultural artifacts and documents. Through in-depth interviews with practitioners and members of the Batak community, the research sought to uncover personal experiences and perspectives related to the *Mambongoti Bagas* tradition with some questions. One of the questions is "Can you share any personal experiences or anecdotes related to *Mambongoti Bagas* that have left a lasting impression on you?".

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mamongoti Bagas is a new house ceremony party that is usually held by the Batak Toba tribe. To Batak people, a house is precedence since a house is also a place to pile up all the fortune to be enjoyed (*halashon*) by family. This ceremony will be held after a house has been fully built and all the workers have already been getting paid (Hutagalung et al., 2023).

Nowadays, not every Batak people, especially those who have lived in urban cities, do this ritual anymore. They might probably just have a little ritual and prayers for their new house (*partangiangan*) without having to create a huge and luxurious ceremony, unlike *Mamongoti Bagas*, which requires a huge amount of goods and gifts and will cost a lot of money for the owner of the house (Ambarita, 2018).

Mamongoti Bagas is a ceremony that means to thank God, for God has shared its graciousness and generosity with the owner of the house as a place for families to be together and to sleep under the roof. Besides being a ceremony to thank God, this ceremony can also mean that there is a new family in the new area. That means this family, too, also needs to follow the rules that exist in their new place.

The owner of the house will find someone with spiritual power, something like a shaman. This shaman will tell the fortunate date and day for the ceremony, and if the date and day have been determined, the owner of the house will invite relatives and people in the village (Bakti et al., 2018).

Some days before the ceremony begins, the relatives will start discussing what cuisines will be served, how many people will be invited, who will cook and serve the food, and how much money the ceremony will cost. Then, a day before the ceremony, the owner of the house will fill the house with their goods.

Before the ceremony begins, there are some conditions needed to be done such as inviting important close relatives and some colleagues (same-surname friends, same-village friends) and the owner of the house's wife's big family. Keep in mind that Batak culture is very much patrilineal, and it is without a doubt that a man is demanded to have their family a roof over their head.

The '*Mammongoti Bagas*' event usually begins with a prayer service led by a priest. The opening of the front door is usually given to the priest, meaning that the house will be blessed by God. After the church service, the traditional event will take place at sunrise around 10 am. The rising sun also means that your family's wealth and health will improve in the coming days.

There are some different positions for different people in the ceremony according to their rank or their importance in the family. It is easily identified in this particular type of ceremony called "*marsipangon*" (eating ceremony). In *marsipangon*, there is this sub-ceremony called "*marbagi jambar*" (dividing parts of meat) where different part of animal's body (usually pig) is given to the guests according to their position in the ceremony. For example, a *hula-hula* (wife's same-surname family) will have the animal's chin part, etc.

Another example of noticing guests' position can also be seen in what they bring to the new house. For example, if they are a *Hula-Hula* or a *Tulang* they must bring fish and *ulos* as symbol. Fish and *ulos* are material representatives of having a healthy life when entering a new house. *Hula-Hula* and *Tulang* are very much respected guests to come to the ceremony. They are the closest relative, and the Batak people are known for their respect towards elders. In a metaphor, they would "give their head" to their close relatives, and if a member of a family cannot respect elders or other family members, they are a shame to the family (Fujita-Rony, 2020; Sinaga et al., 2022).

The ceremony begins by giving the honor in the form of local cuisine called *Namalum* (the neck of a pig), which is the highest honorary cuisine in *Simalungun* to *Tulang* and *Tondong*. The next step after giving the first honor to *Tulang* and *Tondong*, they will give *ulos* to the owner of the house (*Suhut*). After giving the *ulos* to *Suhut*, *Tulang* and *Tondong* will give blessings (*pasu-pasu*) to *Suhut*. When *Tulang* and *Tondong's* event was finished, *Boru* and *Sanina* gives food, namely *manuk* (*dayok*), *batur manggoluh* and rice to *Suhut*. After the event has finished, they will eat together, and the eating ceremony begins with a prayer by the religious administrator and ends with a prayer by the religious administrator. Afterward, the invitees will give advice to the owner of the house.

After the *jambar* is given, a "*Mangatai*" (greeting/congratulations) event will be held. *Boru* is the first to intervene, then *Dongan Tubu*, *Dongan Suhut*, *Dongan Ale-Ale*, *Tulang*, and then only *Hula Hula*. Then "*pangampuon*" (reply to the greetings of all parties), first from *Boru Ni Suhut*, then the *Suhut* party. Before the *Suhut* gave thanks (*pangampuon*), *piso piso* and sweet palm wine (*tuak*) were distributed to the *Hula-Hula* and *Tulang* parties at the event.

Then the final event "*Pangjungi ni uraon*" (end of the event) began which included singing and prayer. Prayers will be led by church elders present at the event. If there is no one around, the person reciting the prayer will be confused. When moving to a new house, there are several things you need to pay attention to, including restrictions that must be obeyed. For example, it is forbidden to throw rubbish outside the fence for three days after the party, and it is forbidden to spend money for at least three days after the party.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of observations of things that become important to understand in the material: "*Mamongoti Bagas*" is a traditional feast for the ceremony of occupying a new house. Because Batak people believed that a house is also a place to accumulate all fortune to be enjoyed (*halashon*) by the family of the Batak Toba tribe. Local wisdom is formed in a broad sense as a result of the cultural superiority and geographical conditions of a local community. Local wisdom is a cultural product of the past that should be utilized continuously as a guide to life. Even though there are local values, the values contained in them are considered to be very universal. Local wisdom has its own values, and the values contained in local wisdom are reflected in everyday life. Local wisdom that reflects cultural values includes prosperity, hard work, discipline, education, health, mutual cooperation, gender management, cultural preservation and creativity, environmental protection, peace, politeness, integrity, social solidarity, harmony and conflict resolution, commitment, positive thinking, and gratitude. Mamongoti Bagas is an event that consists of a situational background and a social background. For context, the event starts around 10 am at sunrise. Therefore, the fortune and blessings of those holding this event are also expected to increase, and it usually ends in the afternoon. The location is the new house, namely the living room. In a social context, the actors involved are extended family (*furafura*, *bone*, *dongantub*, *pariban*), friends and village residents. The "*Mamongoti Bagas*" event combines three local wisdoms: Gratitude, Harmony and Peace, and Respect for the Environment. This belongs to one of the most well-known oral traditions among the Batak people. Batak is an ethnic group in North Sumatra that is known for its passion for parties, family, and friendship. That is what makes *Mamongoti Bagas* such a necessary ceremony to be held. The sequence of events is as follows: The "*Mamongoti Bagas*" ceremony will be held in the living room of the new house. It begins by paying homage by serving a local dish called *Namalum* (pork neck), which is the highest honour cuisine in *Simalungun* to the *Tulang* and *Tondong*. Secondly, after giving the first honor to *Tulang* and *Tondong*, they will give *ulos* to the owner of the house (*Suhut*). After giving *ulos* to *Suhut*, *Tulang* and *Tondong* will give blessings (*pasu-pasu*) to *Suhut* and *Boru* and *Sanina* give food, namely *manuk* (*dayok*), *batur manggoluh* and rice to *Suhut*, then eat together. The eating ceremony begins with prayers by religious leaders and ends with prayers by religious leaders, and finally, there will be advice from the invitees. Batak is a tribe where they would trade anything to build their family, and they very much respect their elders and other family members. This can be seen by how they treat different family members and how other family member should treat them. *Suhut*, the ceremony planner, should serve different places for different family members while still being respectful to them, especially for *Hula-Hula* and *Tulang*. Also known for its togetherness and family orientation, in this case, *Boru* is the one helping the *Suhut* to prepare for the ceremony and help with other needs.

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