

## *Itak Gurgur* and its Meaning in the Batak Cultural Community

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### ABSTRACT

*The emphasis of this research is ethics awareness that places humans in balance with their natural environment. Batak culture which is inseparable from nature (the cosmos) has also cultivated the tradition of eating "Itak Gurgur" as a value of human togetherness and balance, universe and God. There is a message of the value of simplicity, honesty and balance in this tradition. Three things to eat "Itak Gurgur" as a prayer for caring for togetherness, a sacred intention for blessings and prosperity, ideals ("sada tahi"). "Itak" is rice flour that is pounded or ground into a soft, white color ("puti") as a meaning of purity and prayer to Mula Jadi (the Greatest). "Itak" diadone of coconut, palm sugar and salt, clenched into a fist, a symbol of the tenacity of burning unity. To remain in harmony with the values of unity, in natural balance. unite the agreement ("sada tahi") then comes the spirit, the burning enthusiasm to achieve success. the spirit of eating "Itak Gurgur" together brings "Omo pariaman" abundant harvest and gratitude. Constructing cultural theology, eating, "Itak Gurgur" as a Batak "local sacrament", reminding the balance of life between: Humans, God and the Universe.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The archipelago has long been known to the world as a land of thousands of islands. Batak Land in North Sumatra, the island of Sumatra, has long been visited by the international community, precisely in Barus as one of the world's important ports. This is also the case with the Batak community, which is well known. They live in the land of Tanah Batak, which is formed from various villages ("hutas"). Live in harmony with nature (the cosmos). For them, land is also identity and self-esteem. (Simanjuntak. BA. 2015)

Has a tough and firm nature and character. They are also known as "Bangso Batak", who have high culture. The Batak civilization is well known to the world as an ethnic group that has traditions ranging from the social kinship system (Dalihan Natolu), the Batak script, natural beauty (Lake Toba) to its diverse culinary

riches. Batak cultural civilization with various values. This culture is also the result of human learning. (Koentjaraningrat, 2009)

Even though the people at first glance appear to be tough or rude, their hearts are soft. The people are quite friendly. One of the typical foods from this area "Itak Gurgur" is quite popular because it is soft and delicious. Itak Gurgur is a traditional Batak food which is generally used at certain Batak traditional events. (Wikipedia.org)

This Toba Batak food is made very simply but is rich in philosophy. This traditional food is served when praying at certain moments in traditional events. Simple food that is always associated with basic awareness and gratitude. Culture is a symbol of something whose meaning needs to be interpreted by members of society to be preserved.

In carrying out their traditional rituals, the Batak people always relate to spiritual things. This typical food is served as a snack at traditional events and prayers. Eat food together, offering prayers to God Almighty. Even when farming, this culinary dish is also included in prayers to ask for smooth and blessed rice planting. Almost the same traditions are carried out by other ethnic communities in the archipelago. However, many of the cultures of the people of the archipelago which had previously been traditions passed down from generation to generation have faded. As time goes by, it has eroded. Like the meaning of "Itak Gurgur" which has changed and what is popular is modern food or foreign products. Local snacks from a community's cultural traditions are starting to be forgotten. In the current era, it is not wrong to explore reconstructing thoughts from forgotten Indonesian teachings. Many ancient teachings in the archipelago are almost extinct. (Sandika, 2019)

## 2. METHOD

This study examines Toba Batak culture, using and combining Library Research research with qualitative practice. Carrying out historical research requires historical research data sources which can be in the form of relics, documents and people. In the event that the data source is a document, historical research is closely related to literature exploration research (library research). Ensure data accuracy and validation, after conducting library research. Finding with an ethnographic approach. Exploring understanding, natural theological behavior of individuals or communities. By means of researchers involved and participating in the life of the research object, looking for meaning, patterns or models behind understanding and behavior or they report data descriptively.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Families in the Toba Batak community usually always gather at the New Year. This moment is filled with self-introspection or evaluation of family achievements and various shared hopes for a healthy and prosperous life. The original meaning of that moment is the achievement of the basic ideals of health and prosperity ("horas") which should be the main benchmark. Gratitude from healthy and prosperous "Horas" through the passage of the new year, a symbol of an important expression ("hipas jala horas"). Batak is taken from the Batak word itself, namely "Batahi", which is the basic word for the word Batak which is described as the personification of someone to convey a collective agreement for one "tahi" or ideal. (Manalu, 2021a : 68-85).

Giving the meaning of family unity with one goal ("sada tahi"), always getting along in harmony, enthusiasm, strength and mutual support, is the dream of families in the Batak community. "Itak Gurgur", this simple food, if explored from its identity and meaning, has the opportunity to be presented in the realm of blessings and gratitude, proof of life in one fist of determination ("tahi") together. This meal is unforgettable, if you understand its philosophical meaning as proof of its importance. Because when the family gathers, the essence of gratitude and prayer is the same. However, what mostly happens is the hustle and bustle of fireworks, modern dining displacing the traditional one which is rich in philosophy and essence. Progressive development that does not destroy culture. (Agus Widjojo. 2021).

### Getting to know "Itak Gurgur"

"Itak Gurgur" is served when offering prayers at traditional ceremonies and other togetherness events. Made in a simple way, it reminds us of the meaning of simplicity in life. Learn to understand and become aware of values or prayers that may have begun to be forgotten. That in starting a new time. A new leaf, a new place to live, opening a new year or planting new rice. The prayers and intentions that must be filled in on the special day of opening the year or a new chapter are as simple as having to excuse yourself first with a simple logic, namely prayer.

"Itak Gurgur", as an introductory prayer which is also served when starting farming activities. It could be called Mutual Cooperation food. Gotong royong is the original attitude of life of the Indonesian people. Traces of it exist in various traditions and local wisdom of the archipelago. (Arif Susanto, 2020)

Agricultural or farming culture has had Itak Gurgur tradition as a habit since their ancestors. Because Batak land has long been known as a producer of Frankincense ("Haminjon"), "Itak Gurgur", has been a tradition, including when hunting in the forest ("martombak") to raise prayers of hope for blessings in the work for one's life.

"Itak Gurgur" is historically in the land of Sagala, Batak Land, hit by a long dry season. People pray in the rice fields and make, "Itak Gurgur". It started to rain and water started to pool. "Itak Autumn" has its meaning strengthened in prayer. The sound of the prayer is 'On ma itak gurgur da ompung, gurgur ma gogo ni haumanami on.' which means 'This is itak gurgur (pounded rice flour) ya ompung (somba on Martua Pusuk Buhit and Mulajadi Nabolon), multiply the yield of our rice fields'. These are the prayers of farmers said to the Almighty. Itak Gurgur, cooked simply, tastes the typical Batak culinary itak gurgur, a symbol of blessing. "Itak" or flour is also interpreted in the Malay tribe. Rice flour is the meaning and symbol of prayer, the process and procedures for plain flour in Malay weddings. It has the function of praying and also repelling reinforcements. (Doni Febri Hendra. 2020)

Served as a snack that is made very simply without cooking. The main ingredient of this food is rice flour. Before there were mills, rice was simply ground as finely as possible. Until now, there are still people who maintain this kind of processing because they think the taste of "Itak Gurgur" actually tastes better. How to make it: Soak the rice first, then grind it finely and mix it with water, palm sugar, salt and grated coconut. Everything is stirred until evenly mixed. Once the mixture is evenly distributed, then knead it until it is solid. Done, "Itak Gurgur" can be enjoyed.

### Simple and Full of Meaning

In the Batak language, "Itak" means traditionally ground rice, while "Gurgur" means boiling or burning. Even though the manufacturing process is not cooked using fire at all, "Gurgur" is simply molded by simply clenching it with your hands. The meaning is different from the way it is made. Anyone who eats it will become "Gurgur", or full of spirit. It is said that what is meant by boiling or burning is the meaning of keeping the spirits up for those who enjoy "Itak Gurgur". It is hoped that anyone who eats this food will regain their full and burning enthusiasm, that is part of the meaning of this typical food.

The content of palm sugar and salt in this food is what makes this rice cake sweet and savory, meaning that sugar can give energy to those who taste it to be more enthusiastic. As explained above and it is known that the way to make it is different from the way to make "lampet", while the method for "Itak gurgur" is quite practical. Mix rice flour or "itak", grated young coconut, sugar, salt and a little hot water. After the dough is flat, it is then molded manually with your own hands. So practical, so simple, Itak Gurgur is ready to be served.

Even though this dish is simple, the purpose of this food is to give the effect of a burning and burning spirit "Gurgur" (burning). Giving meaning and hope to a fistful of "itak" dough that has been clenched tightly with the determination of 'a handful of prayers'. The author sees the understanding and opportunity to dialogue about this culture as the intervention of God Almighty in every life's struggle and prayer of thanksgiving. Obtaining a shared spirit that is full, blazing or burning. This dish is eaten raw (without cooking), but there are some that can be steamed after being molded, becoming "pohul-pohul".

There is a meaning of commitment. An atmosphere of close unity 'one strong, tight fist. If the "itak" dough is not clenched or held firmly, it will not mold well. A symbol of togetherness and burning determination as when shouting the word "Merdeka". A mood free from shackles. "Itak Gurgur" carries a spirit that is blazing with determination to realize one ideal goal, as mentioned above, ideals extracted from shared ideas ("sada tahi", "satahi"). The meaning of togetherness is to start a real work ("ulaon") or village community collaboration, which is activated in mutual cooperation (marsurupan). Community activities are "sada tahi" or "satahi saoloan".

So there is a division of cooperation and everyone works together to take part or serve each other ("hobas"). All of this is related to the symbol of commitment, "Itak Gurgur" which is present to deliver prayers for blessings during Batak traditional ceremonies including during rice planting activities ("marsuan eme"). Planting "marsuan eme" rice in wet rice fields after completing "samei" sowing seeds ("boni"), or the "mangordang" activity for planting land rice ("land eme").

When the rice is tall and starts to turn green, people believe that rice should be treated specially and with gratitude.

The meaning and meaning for the Batak people is that rice has been blessed, there is the intervention of Sang Mulajadi (God Almighty) to be grateful for and protected. Understanding is appreciated in the hope of the Giver of blessings and the owner of life until the rice turns yellow. "Itak Autumn" is an expression of prayer of the religious Batak people. It is said, 'On ma itak gurgur da ompung, gurgur ma gogo ni haumanami on.' Thus the prayers of Batak farmers are said to the Almighty, the Owner of Life, meaning, "This is "Itak Gurgur" (pounded rice flour) ya ompung (somba on Martua Pusuk Buhit and Mulajadi Nabolon), multiply the yield of our rice fields."

### **The Meaning of Strength and Hope**

To make "Itak Gurgur, rice is first soaked. So there is also an element of water, reminding of creation and building awareness of life in nature, meaning in cultural anthropology, water provides conditions for life in this nature. (Sitompul, 1991:7). Rice flour is then mixed with salt, sugar and grated coconut. Mix all the ingredients evenly. After that, just knead it until it is solid. Itak gurgur can be enjoyed, without cooking. Where the ingredients for grated coconut use younger coconut. The dough must be clenched with confidence so that the shape is visible good and natural. "Itak Gurgur" has a soft texture with a taste that combines sweet and savory, the manufacturing process is full of stability and strength, this also has a deep meaning. Gives strength to work. Gives spirit and moral messages in work. (Yolanda Arum Rizki.( 2014).

### **Dialogue about cultural roots**

#### ***Dialogue back values***

In its meaning, Itak Gurgur is a typical Batak food, often served at weddings, condolences, graduations and when going abroad. In fact, some people also have the tradition of "Itak Gurgur" when building houses, offices, churches and schools and other important events. This tradition is usually included as a reinforcement of meaning so that the spirit is full and remains burning. It is often done to send children abroad. A symbol of prayer of hope to achieve your goals, so that when you are abroad you remain strong in spirit and protected from all bad things. The church, as a unit of living believers, is part of the dynamic history of mankind and cannot be separated from culture. (Martasudjita, EPD 2021)

There is an unearthed meaning in this ritual, humility, a meaning that refreshes and strengthens the body, spirit and soul. For the Batak people, rice which is the basic ingredient of "Itak Gurgur" is a symbol of a basic need that strengthens a person's body and spirit. Rice is also always used during "mangupa" (salvation) or "boras warden ni tiondi" or to avoid disaster. Rice is a ritual medium. There is coconut, salt and also sweet sugar content. All of this has meaning as symbols of contemplation of life. There is an effort to interpret the gospel as a Christian message preached to a cultural group. (Martasudjita, EPD 2021: 22). Reconstructing a sense of togetherness from local wisdom values. Something from simple things to achieve goals and ideals, the simplicity of "Itak Gurgur", an awareness that may have begun to be forgotten.

## Philosophical Meaning

### *Symbol of strength and hope*

To make it, in Batak villages ("huta") rice is first soaked. Then it is ground until finely ground into clean, white flour without any stains. The meaning of the main ingredients of this food must be processed. Processed manually. Start processing, pounding the rice so that it becomes smooth. Pounding rice is done painstakingly and patiently. Usually done by two or more people. There is an educational message that everyone must also carry out the process. He must be willing to learn to process and forge, to become something that he learns or learns and then grows in order to be successful. Learning and being tempered by nature, the meaning is closely related to cosmology which contains the symbolic meaning of belief in the power of the universe or expressing gratitude to God, the creator of nature. (Selvia Frety Yunia Enjelina. 2022)

The views of Batak ancestors have long instilled a value and meaning in the process. If you understand the meaning of "Itak Gurgur" you will find a direction for learning. Don't grind rice using a machine. However, pounding rice to make "Itak Gurgur" manually will reveal the value and identity of this typical food. Many are just looking for the taste of this food with instant processing. There is a value that needs to be maintained that the process determines quality. This paradigm already exists, the orientation is not only limited to results, but the process must be prioritized, not the results. Pursuing achievements and dreams is a process full of struggle, not laziness. Have a genuine understanding of their culture again. Bataks are spiritual people (Sihombing, 2022).

A local awareness that needs to be discussed among generations. The meaning of water, water in Batak terms is "Aek" which is a symbol of life. An important element of the universe (cosmos). In the Batak view there is a traditional ritual called "Martutu Aek", which is one of the rules of worship in the Malim religion. However, you need to know that before the Malim religion officially existed, namely during the time of Sisingamangaraja I, even since the time of Si Raja Batak, Martutuaek had become part of Batak customs. (Gultom, 2010).

Water or "aek" is a Batak natural element (cosmos) which is always remembered during traditional rituals, especially the "Martutu Aek" ritual.

Manalu, HB (2021b). Water is believed to be a medium for cleansing the body and soul. In the Malim belief, every human being is obliged to maintain and live in purity ("Martondi Hamalimon).

The element of salt ("sira"), throughout the history of humanities of various cultures has been an important part. Thus, the existence of Batak has long been known to the world since the historical glory of Barus. Barus as part of "Batak Land" has been supplying salt needs for thousands of years. Salt or "Sira" is often used for treatment and healing. "Sira" gives flavor to food. The element "sira" signifies a recovery process for physical and mental health.

Interpreted to cure all kinds of illnesses (physical and spiritual). Likewise, the sweet sugar content is a symbol of living in peace and prosperity. Meanwhile, coconut is also considered a multi-purpose tree, from the roots to the fruit stem to the leaves, it has many benefits, so those who eat it will benefit everyone before God and the nation.

### Christian perspective

Eating "Itak Gurgur", becomes a symbol of communion, not just enjoying food for the body, but the meaning of communion. When we gather to eat "Itak Gurgur" it is an opportunity to be together, greet each other and communicate. The Christian view of eating together is called a banquet of love. Opportunities to share stories, share experiences of struggle or testimonies of faith.

Eating "Itak Gurgur" is a means of prayer and thanksgiving. The opportunity for Cultural Theology is the realization that when we eat, we are reminded that God still preserves life and fulfills our needs. Emphasizing this inspiration, giving thanks is something we should get used to. Being grateful here means not just because you want to eat to cure your hunger. But to always be grateful, the Apostle Paul advises us to give thanks always. Remind our family or people around us to always be grateful for our food today. This tradition

can be bridged and can be constructed. In principle, the church can form alliances with various cultural patterns, church and culture enrich each other. (Martasudjita, EPD 2021)

Eating "Itak Gurgur" a local scramen of Toba Batak culture. Food that is prayed for and consecrated. The word sacramentum means consecrated, set apart. Every time we eat we remember the mercy of God whose special attention is always to provide food for us. The Lord Jesus taught us the Lord's prayer, Give us this day our daily bread. Teaching you to remember Me when you eat and drink. So when we eat we remember that it is a sacrament that we need to respect. The cultural niche is for the spirit of harvest ("Omo Pariama") that the results will be provided by God. Thus, when opening a new page, for example the New Year method ("Bona Taon"), the "Itak Gurgur" philosophy is the way to bring us back home. Don't serve it wrong, don't turn to other cultures or paths. Remember to eat "Itak Gurgur" and return home to God's path. No drunken parties, no fireworks, don't forget yourself like you don't know God. The Apostle Paul also advised the people in Rome about this (Rom. 13)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

"Itak Gurgur" is served when offering prayers at traditional ceremonies and other togetherness events. Cultivates a sense of love for culture with the aim of fostering solidarity and a spirit of unity. Reminds us of the local wisdom values of simplicity (because it is made in a very simple way), but rich in meaning, especially the determination to achieve goals and aspirations by a person or family. "Itak" or rice flour, pure white, gives the impression of pure and honest intentions. Providing meaning and meaning of hope from a fistful of "itak" dough that has been tightly clenched with the determination of a 'handful of prayer' from a sincere, pure heart. As a symbol of blessings, unity and shared ideals of hope through joint prayers to achieve prosperity through solidarity. The power of the full spirit is burning and burning "Gurgur". Constructing a cultural theology of food. Dialogue that the culture of eating "Itak Gurgur" is an awareness of returning to God. A tradition that acknowledges the intervention of God Almighty in every endeavor in life's struggle

From a Christian perspective, eating "Itak Gurgur" is the way to bring us back home. Meals and banquets are simple, so salt and light. Go home to God. Because behind the philosophical meaning of eating "Itak Gurgur" is to return to culture that calms and clears your memory of God. Cultural plurality is recognized by the church, where the church and culture enrich each other. Constructing Cultural Theology. Like a social phenomenon on New Year's Eve, which is noisy. It should be a quiet and calm contemplation. Don't turn to foreign cultures or other paths any more. Indonesian Cultural Theology builds culture from the region. Indonesian culture is the culture that exists among all the tribes in Indonesia.

Because we are often confused by "sophistication of words" which are packaged in the name of modernization or developments of the times. Realized progress turns out to be a decline in ethics. Encouraging people to only care about the "skin" is not the essence. Forgetting the content and reality because it is wrapped in subtle things. The culture of rioting, drunken parties, the hustle and bustle of firecrackers, fireworks, and so on, leads to forgetting oneself as if one doesn't know God. The Apostle Paul once advised the people in Rome about something like that.

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