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Etiology of Disease and Traditional Medicine in the Minangkabau Ethnic Cosmology System

Syahrizal¹, Robi Mitra²¹ Department of Anthropology, Andalas University, Indonesia. E-mail: syrizal81@gmail.com² Department of Anthropology, International University of Papua, Indonesia. E-mail: robimitra04@gmail.com

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CORRESPONDENCE

Phone: 0813 8979 5064

E-mail: syrizal81@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

Traditional medicine still has an important role in overcoming health problems in some Indonesian people, especially in people who live far from the reach of modern medical health services, such as Nagari Maek, Regency 50 Kota of West Sumatra Province. The relationship between the etiology of disease and the use of traditional medicinal herbs and plants by battra (people who heal) in the Minangkabau tribe needs to be explained. This research examines the etiology of disease related to disease symptoms, causes, concepts of health and disease, as well as physical treatment of sick people. This research was conducted in the Nagari Maek community, Regency 50 Kota with 5 informants, 10 of whom were patients or had been patients. The research uses ethnographic type qualitative methods, namely observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The results of the research show that the diseases that occur in the Nagari Maek community are caused by personalistic causes (diseases caused by the supernatural through shamans who aim to cause disease) and naturalistic causes (diseases caused by food, unclean environments, conditions in a person's body such as blood clogged, blood not flowing smoothly and so on). Diseases caused by personalism, in general, battra perform external treatment by soaking the concoction and sprinkling it on the patient's body, distributing the air concoction throughout the sick person's body and emitting smoke from the concoction into the patient's body. Meanwhile, diseases caused by naturalistic causes are treated by using concoctions that have been made to be drunk or eaten by the patient being treated.

A. INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine in several areas of the Minangkabau tribe still exists today. Even though times are becoming more complex and have advances in medical treatment technology and the development of medical science, some Minangkabau people still maintain treatment using traditional methods. Nagari Maek District 50 Kota, one of the areas that still uses traditional medicine. Treatment uses traditional plants and ingredients which are believed to be able to cure diseases caused by personal or naturalistic causes.

The Minangkabau people in Nagari Maek, District 50 Kota continue to do everything they can to keep their bodies healthy, because their bodies' health is the most important thing. Not only the Minangkabau people in Nagari Maek, everyone wants to live healthy, but not everyone's desire to be healthy can always be fulfilled. If you are sick, people will look for ways to deal with their illness in the hope that they will be healthy again. The diverse Indonesian society has various ways to deal with disease problems, there are differences between one ethnic group and another. This difference is due to cultural and ecological differences in their place of residence. Cultural diversity in disease management causes Indonesia to be

rich in traditional medicine. According to Katno & Pramono (2006), health is one of the basic human needs, in addition to the need for clothing, food, shelter and education, because only with good health conditions and a prime body can humans carry out life processes to grow and develop and carry out everything. life activities.

A body that is experiencing pain will interfere with all human activities in daily life. A healthy body without attacking diseases is the main asset for humans to carry out all their activities. For the sake of body health, humans do everything possible to heal it until it is healthy again. Almost all regions in Indonesia still believe in various traditional medicines. As in the writings of **Adiyasa & Meiyanti (2021)** in Indonesia, the use of traditional medicine has been one of the cultures and traditions of society that has been used since time immemorial.

Traditional medicine or alternative medicine is also considered as a substitute for modern medicine methods. When the community experiences boredom in carrying out medical treatment, the community returns to digging up their ancestral medicine known as traditional medicine (Rismadona, 2018). Traditional medicine for this disease uses ingredients based on plants and everything that exists in nature (Wahyuni et al., 2016). Almost all ethnic groups have a repertoire of knowledge about traditional ingredients derived from plants and animals. This knowledge has lived and developed throughout the life of the ethnic group. However, unfortunately this knowledge has not been well documented. Most of that knowledge is still stored in the memory of certain people in an ethnic group. These people are usually healers or recognized as healers in their community. Whereas knowledge is important because it has the potential to be developed to solve the nation's health problems.

Ethnomedicine is part of the study of ethnoscience, which concerns health and forms of maintenance and treatment in traditional communities, which have become a traditional belief of the local community (Widianti et al., 2021). Given the importance of this ethnomedicine knowledge, the Indonesian Ministry of Health in 2012 conducted research on the Exploration of Local Knowledge of Ethnomedicine and Community-Based Medicinal Plants in Indonesia to explore local ethnomedicine knowledge as part of the local wisdom of each ethnicity and the diversity of medicinal plants (TO) which forms the basis for development of sustainable research in the field of ethnomedicine and medicinal plants. This Community-Based Community-Based Research on Local Knowledge Exploration of Ethnomedicine and Medicinal Plants in Indonesia is also known as Research on Medicinal Plants and Herbs (RISTOJA).

Ethnomedicine research from the Ministry of Health in 2012 focused on exploring diseases, ingredients

and medicinal plants used. However, there are still many important things related to the ethnomedicine system that have not been revealed. Therefore, it is important to continue this research to explore the concepts of health, illness, disease etiology, and treatment methods. Helan et al., (2020) explained that health and illness are common conditions faced by every human being. There are various different views regarding a person's health condition, definition, causes and how to treat it. All of this is greatly influenced by how the person views the world

Next, in writing Closser et al., (2022) their research focuses on how people produce, engage, and use policies, programs, and systems to shape, enact, and resist global health agendas. High-quality ethnographic work is an excellent way to understand the complex systems that shape health outcomes, and provides a critical vantage point for thinking about what global health policy and systems do and mean.

Anthropological curiosity about knowledge systems and medical practice of members of the various traditional societies they study, is the oldest curiosity of medical anthropology. Foster & Anderson (1986) explained that ethnomedicine is theoretically a contemporary term for a broad group of knowledge originating from an anthropological curiosity to know the ins and outs of traditional medical knowledge and the implementation of healing practices in various societies of different cultural groups. In these successive events humans will make judgments. If the initial symptoms continue to cause his activities to be disrupted, then he will look for the cause (etiology) of the events he is experiencing. Based on these causes, he will seek the type of treatment and care according to the symptoms he is experiencing. This is an interesting thing to research because it can find out the Minangkabau people's habit of seeking treatment via *battr* in Nagari Maek when they feel sick. The times have advanced and people think realistically, but the Minangkabau people in Nagari Maek still really believe in seeking medical treatment via *battr* when they want to get better.

To understand this issue, it is necessary to understand the community medical system. The medical systems of all societies, however simplistic they may be, can be broken down into two categories: (1) theoretical systems of disease and (2) health care systems. Systems theory of disease includes beliefs about the characteristics of health, the causes of illness, and the medications and other healing techniques used by doctors and other healers. The health care system, on the other hand, is concerned with the ways in which various societies treat the sick and use knowledge about the disease to help the patient (Foster & Anderson, 1986). The data processing technique in this research uses analytical descriptive analysis. The author selects data according to the research objectives, so that it can provide a clearer picture. Data

analysis starts from writing down the results of observations and interviews, then classifying them and finally presenting them in the form of analysis. This method is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of aspects related to research.

B. METHOD

Creswell (2015) provides five types of approaches that can be used in research in qualitative research, including: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Among these 5 types of approaches, this research is more suitable to use an ethnographic method approach because it is considered capable of exploring information in depth in accordance with the research objectives. This ethnographic approach is holistic, namely paying attention to comprehensive aspects of the phenomena that occur. This research also follows the 12 steps in ethnographic research by Spradley (1997), including: determining informants; interviewing informants; taking ethnographic notes; ask descriptive questions; analyzing interview results; submit domain analysis; asking structural questions; create taxonomic analysis; asking contrasting questions; make component analysis; find cultural themes; and writing ethnographic reports.

As a consequence of these reasons, the method used is a qualitative ethnographic type method. Nasution (1996) said that qualitative research always prioritizes the emic perspective, because it prioritizes data from research subjects. The behavior or actions of the community are directly related to the traditional medicine that exists in the Minangkabau community in Nagari Maek, 50 Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province.

Data collection was carried out using observation techniques, free and in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation is observing what the informant does when treating patients and the informant's daily life. Interviews were conducted at the informants' homes and in public places using field notes and recording equipment. Apart from conducting in-depth interviews, observation techniques were also carried out regarding *battras*' activities in treating patients. Apart from getting an overview of activities in treatment, this technique is also used to cross-check the results of previous interviews.

This research was conducted in Nagari Maek, 50 Kota Regency. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling (deliberate selection), consisting of key informants and informants, as many as 20 informants consisting of 5 people, 5 people as patients or 15 people who had been patients.

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C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nagari Maek, District 50 Kota is one of the nagari in the Minangkabau region which still has traditional healing practices. In the Minangkabau community in Nagari Maek, people who treat traditionally are called "battras". In most areas of Minangkabau in general, people who heal are called "dukun", namely people who can treat patients. The concepts of dukun and battras have the same goal, the difference is only in the names. Battras is considered as a healer for people who get diseases. The existence of battras has meant a lot to the people of Nagari Maek since ancient times. Before health services or community health centers were built in the nagari, sick people would be cared for by Battras. Currently, the health service center has been present in Nagari Maek, District 50, City since dozens of years ago. The existence of the health service center is still welcomed by the local community. Many people also seek treatment at the medical health service center. The large number of people who seek treatment at the medical health center shows that the people trust seeking treatment from medical doctors.

However, the existence of shamans and traditional medicine still exists amidst modern medicine. Their existence is still recognized by the community as users (Ardani, 2013).

Many of the people of Nagari Maek are still receiving treatment from the *battras* of the six *battras* who were used as informants, on average they are still visited by their patients for treatment. There is a difference between one *battras* and another regarding the number of patients, it is related to which *battras* the community prefers to seek treatment for. Because some people think that there are *battras* that are more capable and that they can treat many types of diseases. Even though there are differences between one *battras* and another, it means that *battras* plays an important role in the treatment of the Nagari Maek community.

The term *battras* is used in the local language in Nagari Maek or Indonesians generally call it dukun. *Battras* is a term for someone who can treat patients traditionally. *Battras* uses plants as ingredients. Traditional materials do have the advantage of being easier to obtain so that they have an impact on competitive prices (Nugroho, 2022).

According to Syuhudi et al., (2013) said that shaman treatment in traditional ways seems to be liked by some people in Makassar City. Likewise with some *Nagari* Maek people, traditional *battra* medicine is also liked by the people, because the cost is not so expensive when compared to medical treatment in a hospital.

Treatment by *battra* can be regarded as the second stage of treatment by the community. This is because people usually treat their illnesses themselves first, for example with over-the-counter medicines in stalls and traditional medicines that they know. After the effort did not cure them, they went to *battra*. If going to *battra* doesn't cure it, then the community uses modern medical system treatment, going to the health center and then going to the hospital.

Battra in *Nagari* Maek are generally old, with an average of over 60 years. This is possibly due to the belief in the traditional medical system that a person can pass on his skills to become a *battra* to his offspring, but even though it has been taught to the next generation, the offspring are not yet able to practice this medical science. Even though practicing the knowledge will not be effective or the person being treated will not recover, the offspring of the knowledge will be effective after the person who teaches it treats the person dies.

Regarding *battra's* knowledge about health and illness for *battra* it is almost the same, how does *battra* know someone is sick or not is what is conveyed by the patient. The *battra* way of knowing what disease someone is suffering from, first is by listening to complaints from patients. From there, it will be known what disease the patient is suffering from. After the patient explains what he feels, then if necessary, the *battra* touches the sick part of the patient's body. As stated by *battra* Darisman

As previously explained, *battra's* knowledge of types of disease is not the same between *battra* who have more knowledge of types of disease. There are people who have less knowledge about the types of diseases. Among the *battras* with the most knowledge about types of disease are Asam Dukun 33, Sariman 22, Darisman 21, Wak Minap 16 types of disease, Angku Nan Elok 11, and Binar 5 types of disease. *Battra* can treat patients with various diseases, for example stomach aches, high fevers, internal body aches, tumors, demonic or demonic disorders, and so on. The patient's family came to *Battra's* house with the aim of treating the patient. *Battra* uses a variety of plants, such as various types taken from the forest. The leaves are made into a potion and spells are read to treat patients.

In general, *battra* knowledge about the causes of disease can be grouped into two, namely knowledge about diseases caused by personalistic causes and by naturalistic causes. Because naturalism is a disease caused by nature, the environment, and humans themselves.

While personalistic causes are diseases caused by the supernatural or by the medium of the supernatural. Generally each *battra* has knowledge about diseases caused by personalistic causes and diseases caused by naturalistic. For example disease. For example, what was disclosed by *battra* Asam Dukun about bomp disease which in modern media terms is called a tumor which can be caused by naturalistic or personalistic causes.

However, from a comparison of the causes of disease due to naturalistic causes there are more than personalistic causes of disease. For each *battra*, only two or three types of disease are caused by personalistic causes, the rest are naturalistic disease causes. Personalistic causes are related to several things, for example being in the wrong place because that area is a place for magical creatures to play so that these supernatural beings don't like and get angry causing someone to get sick. The wrong place is for example passing through a certain area on the edge of a forest, or a certain river bank, playing in the yard at sunset which can cause a devil's child or a demon to be stepped on. There is a special disease for children whose name is palasik, the symptoms of palasik are caused by supernatural beings, as said by *battra* Sariaman.

Other personalistic causes are caused by other people because the other person doesn't like us. Usually if someone doesn't like him he asks someone who has "smart" to send a disease to someone. According to *battra*, the person who has this intelligence is also a shaman or *battra* who uses his intelligence for the wrong purpose. The causes of naturalistic diseases, as mentioned earlier, are more likely to be the causes of the types of diseases known to *battra*.

Angku nan beautiful as *battra* in *Nagari* Maek, said that:

"Pinyakik ko ado lo nan diagiah urang. Kadang ado urang nan indak suko samo awak, yo agiah wak pinyakik. Ado juo urang nan nio mauji kapadaian ilmuno".

Translation: This disease is also given by people. Sometimes when someone doesn't like us, he gives us disease. There are also people who want to test their scientific abilities."

The causes of naturalistic diseases range from food causes, unclean environment, conditions in a person's body such as clogged blood, non-fluent blood and so on. Illness, is the patient's perspective of his ill health, of which this perspective is very different from the medical practitioner's perspective that is based on the Western biomedical disease model (Yew & Noor, 2014). The next cause is related to blood, *battra* explains that disease is also related to blood circulation and blood conditions. Blood circulation that is not smooth causes a person to get sick, a disease caused by blood that is not smooth. Furthermore, there are several causes that cause only one or two diseases, such as straining too much causing hemorrhoid pain, not paying attention to dental

hygiene causes toothache, itching is the result of not maintaining good hygiene.

Food related to the type of food eaten that causes illness. Toothache caused by drinking ice water, drinking sweet water and sweet food. Stomach pain associated with acidic foods or eating too much. From the causes of the disease above, it can also be known what to avoid if someone does not want to get sick. The first is related to attitudes or behavior towards the environment, you must always take care not to disturb the spirits that exist around human habitation. If you do something wrong or do something that is not good, the spirits will make that person sick.

Local people in several regions in Indonesia know of shamans or people who are considered experts in traditional medicine by exploiting the potential of plants (Yansip et al., 2017). Furthermore, maintaining attitudes and speech towards other people, if someone is not happy with us, that person will make medicine (potions) with the help of a shaman so that we become sick. Even the *battra* who treats can also get sick when he treats the disease of someone who is sick because of that other person. That's why every time treating a *battra* patient always asks for a condition as a tool for an antidote to the disease that the patient brought to the *battra*. *Battra* usually asks for a condition in the form of a knife as a condition for treating *battra*.

Then *battra* saw the importance of paying attention to the food eaten to maintain health. Eating too much food can also cause certain diseases. Then eating certain foods such as sticky rice, jackfruit, meat, and jengkol can cause a person to become sick. To not get sick one has to eat these types of food naturally not too much. Furthermore, related to cleanliness, *battra* seems to realize that cleanliness is important for maintaining health. Furthermore, certain weather conditions must be avoided if one wants to stay healthy. These conditions are rain and heat, if someone is caught in the rain they can get sick, then if they are exposed to the scorching heat of the sun they can also get sick.

Sariaman as *battra* in Nagari Maek said that:

"Urang tu bisa sakik dek makanan nan indak taratur. Indak mamikian higienis makanan. Kadang inyo sakik mag, dimakannyo juo katan atau jarianng. Itu nan mambuek pinyakik tu tunggok di badan".

Translation: *"The person can get sick because of irregular food. Don't think about food hygiene. Sometimes he has stomach ulcers, but he still eats sticky rice or jengkol. That's what makes disease settle in the body."*

One of the characteristics of traditional medicine is the use of prayers or readings, water, and traditional herbs. Treatment and diagnosis by *dukuns* are always synonymous with the intervention of supernatural powers or those that combine rational and mental powers (Agoes,

1996). *Dukuns* in Java use magical techniques, chanting incantations, and administering traditional herbal medicine, to treat their patients (Koentjaraningkat, 1984). Likewise with *battra*, the way of treating diseases caused by personalistic reasons is carried out by traditional healers usually by using herbs which the *battras* are told to drink or simply soak and the water is sprinkled on the patient.

Battra usually treats diseases by using potions. The concoction is drunk or simply soaked and the water is sprinkled on the patient. This method of treatment is associated with diseases caused by personalistic causes and diseases caused by naturalistic causes. If the disease is caused by personalism, most people only use external treatment by soaking a certain concoction and sprinkling the water on the sick person's body, distributing the concoction water all over the sick person's body or by exhaling the smoke from the concoction into the patient's body. Meanwhile, if the disease is caused by naturalistic *battra*, they make a concoction that must be drunk or eaten by the sick person.

This way of treatment is associated with diseases and ailments caused by naturalistic causes. For diseases caused by personalistic mostly *battra* only use external medicine by soaking certain ingredients and sprinkling the water on the sick person's body, then spreading the mixed water over the whole body of the sick person or by exhaling the smoke from the mixture onto the patient's body. Meanwhile, if the disease is caused by naturalistic *battra*, it makes potions that the sick person must drink or eat.

For all causes of illness, both caused by personalistic and naturalistic causes, the treatment is always using incantations. According to the *battra*, the mantras uttered by the *battra* are mostly in Minangkabau language. For some of these spells there are those who use Arabic. *Battra* wouldn't give away what spells he cast to treat ailments except to provide a few sample spells to the research team.

Treatment for personalistic causes of disease emphasizes treatment outside the patient's body. Some herbs or plants that are used only for treatment are sprinkled with the soaked water on the patient's body, or bathed on the patient's body, or placed on the affected part. If there is water for soaking the ingredients that must be drunk, only in small amounts. Besides that, the treatment for this disease by some *battras* also uses incense media to expel the influence of spirits from the patient's body.

Battra treats diseases caused by naturalistic causes by using herbal ingredients which are soaked, mixed, or mashed and then applied to the affected part of the body, the water is bathed in the patient, and the patient is drunk. Then almost the same as naturalistic

medicine there is also a herb that is burned and the smoke is exhaled into the patient's body. In the implementation of the treatment of all diseases caused by naturalistic also have to use spells.

Battra's treatment of the sick in the sense of how *battra* treats the sick like nurses in a hospital is practically non-existent. *Battra* only gave medicinal ingredients and how to use them, whether they had to be attached to the patient's body parts or potions that the patient had to drink. Then the *battra* explained how many times to drink and for how long. Usually the drug is taken for three days in a row. If it hasn't healed, it's a bit different between *battras*.

Regarding the taboos about what not to eat during illness, for every *battra* there are types of illnesses that are taboos and some don't need taboos. These restrictions relate to the types of food that should not be eaten during illness. The dietary restrictions described by all *battra* depend on the disease and they relate to various types of food which can be classified as fruits, meat, fish, vegetables, glutinous rice, sweets, and oily foods.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Treatment via *battra* is still trusted by the Minangkabau people in Nagari Maek, District 50, West Sumatra Province. Until now, people still rely on *battra* as healing. The role of *battra* cannot be ignored as partners for modern medical systems. The existence of *battra*, which has been around for a long time in the Nagari Maek community, is very helpful for medical personnel in treatment. However, the weakness of using traditional medicine is that there are no clear dosage measurements for the ingredients. The etiology of disease has types, namely personalistic and naturalistic knowledge.

Naturalistic causes of disease are caused by factors related to everyday life. Naturalistic diseases are also caused by food, an unclean environment, conditions in a person's body such as blocked blood, poor blood circulation and so on. For example, fever due to rain or overheating in the hot sun. High blood pressure is caused by consuming oily, greasy foods, or eating too much meat. *Battra's* way of treating diseases caused by naturalistic factors is by giving his patients a drink concoction.

Meanwhile, the cause of personalistic disease is caused by other people who don't like someone with the aim of giving them a disease. According to *battra*, a person who has intelligence is also a shaman or *battra* who uses his intelligence for the wrong purpose. The method of treatment used by *battra* for diseases caused by this is using potions and sprinkling the water of the concoction on the patient's body, spreading the concoction of air all

over the patient's body and giving the smoke of the concoction to the entire patient's body.

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