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# Tambar Ni Hulit: An Ancient Medical Manuscript in North Sumatera: Local Wisdom-Based Medicines with Potential to be Developed as Indonesian Medicine

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Abstract --- Tambar ni hulit, which means skin medicine in the Simalungun language, is the title of an old manuscript belonging to the Simalungun tribe. This manuscript is written on laklak material containing medicine information for various diseases. Moreover, this manuscript is relatively rare and written in characters and language that are no longer commonly used. The purpose of this study is to inventory, describe, transliterate, and translate the interpretation of the Tambar Ni Hulit contents. Tambar Ni Hulit is one of the results in searching for old manuscripts in various places in North Sumatra, like museums, libraries, and private collections. The inventory, description, transliteration, and translation were carried out by applying the philological method and content analysis was done to review the content. The result of the inventory described the information of the storage location of Tambar Ni Hulit, namely the North Sumatra Museum. The description analysis described the physical state of the manuscript. From the transliteration and translation results, it is concluded that the Tambar Ni Hulit contains various disease information accompanied by the ingredients of their respective medicine and treatment methods with incantations during the treatment.

**Keywords--**-classical medicinal, Indonesia, local wisdom, medicine information, Tambar Ni Hulit.

#### Introduction

Indonesia has diverse old manuscripts in a variety of languages per the diversity of Indonesian ethnic cultures. Old manuscripts are writings written centuries ago by Indonesian ancestors as a result of their thoughts. Therefore, by studying the old manuscripts as the products of the past or so-called local wisdom, which consists of the view of life and knowledge of the ancestors, we can know the various life strategies of local people to respond to various life problems (Njatrijani, 2018; Kristiyanto, 2017). These strategies are adapted to the environment they live in. For instance, to establish a harmonious living side by side with the community, the rules of behavior, which are related to the rules of conduct between person to person in a community, are drawn up. Dahliani et al. stated that old manuscript as local wisdom product is following the local's environment and forms the knowledge to deeply understand the culture, situation, and natural conditions that prevail in a certain place, as quoted:

"manuscript as local wisdom product is the positive behavior of man connecting with nature and the surrounding environment and was achieved through researches from several fields of study" (Dahliani, 2010; Pesurnay, 2018).

Yasip stated that old manuscripts contained various information about the past with various aspects of life (Yasip, 2017). Old manuscripts were written in various media, like tree barks, animal skins, palm leaves, bamboo, etc, which were thought to be long lasting and could be processed into mobile or portable writing materials (Baried, 1985; Rodiyah et al., 2017). Old manuscripts' content is diverse. One of them is a medicinal manuscript containing various disease information and how to treat it. The medicines were discovered from the local environment where the manuscript was written and used to overcome the health problems of the local society.

The manuscripts containing medicines from various tribes in Indonesia are often found (Sumarlina, 2017), and several tribes in Indonesia still take care of their medical knowledge, including the *Usada* manuscript in Bali and the Science of Physicians, which is marked by the building of a healer site on Penyengat Island, Riau (Mujizah, 2016). The traditional medicine of the Sasak tribe in the *Usada* script is also found in Lombok (Yamin & Burhanudin, 2018). The existence of medicinal texts in various tribes indicates that medicine is a primary need for humans to support the health of the community. Thus, it can be said, from ancient times and universally, medicine is a primary need community.

However, in some tribes like the Malay, the traditional healing practice has experienced ups and downs and is starting to be eroded by modern medicine and

pharmacy. The preservation of old manuscripts of medical knowledge has been supported by the President of Indonesia, who stated that the use of traditional medicines that have been used by the community for centuries is a part of the nation's culture (Liem & Rahmawati, 2017; Woerdenbag & Kayser, 2014). One of the medicinal manuscripts found in the North Sumatra is *Tambar ni Hulit*, which belongs to the Simalungun tribe in Simalungun Regency Region, North Sumatra (Figure 1). The manuscripts are the local wisdom of the Simalungun people in terms of medicine.



Figure 1. Map of Simalungun (purple)

Tambar ni Hulit means 'skin medicine' in the Simalungun language. The manuscript is one of the old manuscripts found in the old Simalungun manuscript collection. This means that this manuscript was produced by the Simalungun people. As this is a product of local wisdom, the content used local ingredients found in the Simalungun environment, processed with the knowledge of the Simalunguns, and used to meet the medicinal needs of the Simalungun. It contains treatment methods for various human diseases, including leprosy, exposure to poison, liver or spleen disease, and eye disease. The manuscript is written in Simalungun script with Simalungun language mixed with Toba Batak language.

As the result of language development, the Simalungun script and language are almost no longer used because it has been replaced by the Latin script. Very few are interested in learning regional scripts, including the Simalungun. The condition of the language itself is increasingly neglected and much of its vocabulary is not used anymore today (Bensing, 2000; Pengpid & Peltzer, 2018). Therefore, very few people can read and understand its contents. Below are the Simalungun alphabets in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Simalungun alphabets (Tambak, 2019).

Old Sumatran manuscripts, including the Simalungun medicinal texts, are relatively rare. The reasons for this are the lack of popularity, inaccessibility, and the inability to read the characters and language. If the contents of Tambar ni Hulit are revealed, it has the potential to be developed as pharmacological or medical studies and could reduce the dependence on imported drugs that drains Indonesia's current state budget. Especially in the COVID-19 era, the Indonesian people require numerous medicines for antibodies and immunity. Therefore, it is necessary to disclose the old North Sumatran manuscripts with medicine information by carrying out an inventory, description, and media transformation of old North Sumatran texts. The study of old manuscripts is increasingly prevalent because the results can be used to meet human needs. Saraswati (2011), mentioned it as a necessity for the nation's life as a whole (Saraswati, 2011). For this reason, the content assessment of the Tambar ni Hulit manuscript needs to be studied to see the used medicinal ingredients and how to treat diseases in the past. The purpose of this study is to describe the results of the description, transliteration, and translation along with interpretation of the Tambar ni Hulit contents as one of the old North Sumatran manuscripts that contain medical information. The study is intended to find an alternative material for medicine development for the fulfillment of health-related needs in Indonesia.

## **Material and Methods**

#### **Materials**

The manuscript description part described the manuscript storage, the physical appearance of the manuscript, and the outline of the manuscript's contents. The transliteration and translation part described the transliteration result of *Tambar ni Hulit* from *Simalungun Batak* script to Latin and the translation from the Batak language to Indonesian. The description should clearly illustrate the script, both physical and content (Harahap, 2021). If it is related to local wisdom, it should be written as well as possible so that by reading the description of the manuscript, the reader will able to describe the state of the manuscript even though the reader does not see the actual script.

#### Method

The data was collected using a survey (Rachman, 2017), to search for the source of the manuscript storage and the Tambar ni Hulit manuscript was found in the North Sumatra Museum. Furthermore, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted with community leaders in Simalungun to obtain information on the Tambar ni Hulit manuscript. The data analysis was carried out according to Miles and Huberman's theory, which was data reduction through the data selection process, focus, and simplification, of the raw data from Tambar ni Hulit. The data were presented descriptively in the form of narrative texts and tables relating to the manuscript. The data was also analyzed based on the interpretation theory (hermeneutics) (Endraswara, 2008), and carried out in five steps. The first step was identifying the form of the script and transliterating it into the Simalungun language. The second step was the translation of the transliteration result of the Simalungun language into Indonesian. The third step was the identification of the treatments found in the Simalungun community based on the collected data. The fourth step was the classification of the medicine ingredients for each type of treatment (Harapan et al., 2018; Castaldo & Capasso, 2002). Finally, the fifth step was the identification of traditional Simalungun healing techniques, which include how to make the medicines and how to treat the diseases.

#### Results

# Tambar Ni Hulit manuscript description

It is better to clearly describe the manuscript both on the physical script and its contents (Harahap, 2021). There are 18 points of description in describing the *Tambar Ni Hulit* manuscript and each point is related. Figures are presented to support the explanation of the manuscript description. The description of the *Tambar Ni Hulit* manuscript is as Table 1.

Table 1
Tambar Ni Hulit manuscript descroption

No	Criteria	Description
1	Title of the	Tambar ni Hulit (Figure 3, Figure 4)
	Manuscript	
2	Repository number	487 dan 07.29
3	Code	C.22/76-77/21-7
4	Number of pages	159 pages
5	Legibility	Clear and legible
6	Location of the	Vitrin Pustaha Laklak Museum Sumatera
	collection	Utara, Indonesia (Figure 5a, Figure 5b).
7	Source of the	Society
	manuscript	·
8	Age of manuscript	The time of writing is not stated in the manuscript, but it is estimated to have been written around 200 years ago. This estimate

		is based on several writings from Van den Tuuk, who came to the Batak region and
		learned the Batak script in 1862.
9	Status of the manuscript	North Sumatra government (state-owned)
10	Identity of copyist	Rahalam T
11	Content	Contains the medicine information for various diseases, including leprosy, eye pain, stab wounds, and others, along with the medicinal ingredients and ways to treat it. There are incantations for some treatments.
12	Completeness	Complete without missing page
13	Language	Batak Simalungun
14	Letter	Batak Simalungun
15	Manuscript size	length 626 cm, width 9.5 cm, and thickness
16	The state of the series	7.5 cm.
	The state of the script	well-preserved and can be read clearly
17	Script form	An accordion; The manuscript is 626 cm long when completely open (Figure 6a, Figure 6b).



Figure 3. Tambar ni Hulit manuscript



Figure 4. Pages 4-5 of Tambar ni Hulit



(a) (b)
Figure 5. Location of the collection: (a) Museum Negeri Sumatera Utara (North Sumatra State Museum), Jl. HM. Joni No.51, Medan, Sumatera Utara 20217; (b)
Vitrin Pustaha Laklak



(a) (b) Figure 6. Script Form: (a) *Tambar Ni Hulit* text (in accordion form); (b) *Tambar Ni Hulit* when opened

# The medicine prescriptions in Tambar ni Hulit

The *Tambar ni Hulit* manuscript contains various medicinal ingredients and treatment methods for various diseases. A description of the treatment instructions was written together with the description of the disease along with the medicinal ingredients. Sometimes there was an incantation to treat the disease. In this paper, various diseases with their medicine ingredients and the methods of treatment are described (Scartezzini & Speroni, 2000; Jiang, 2005). There were several medicinal herbs and treatment plans that are unknown to English readers, so the original terms contained in the text will be used for words that have no known equivalent in English and written in italics.

All medicinal ingredients contained in the *Tambar ni Hulit* manuscript are presented in a table, which consists of the disease name, its medicine's ingredients, and the methods of treatment, as well as incantation information; whether the incantation was included in the text or not (Table 2). Several mentioned objects in the ingredients or in the methods of treatment that the author considers needing to be introduced in pictures will be presented with pictures.

Table 2
The content of Tambar ni Hulit

No.	Disease	Ingredients	Method of	Incantation*
	name		Treatment	
1.	Skin medicine/ leprosy	3 hajor oranges, 2 hambeng oranges, 1 puraga fruit, 3 kicung tong marhabang malun fruit, 3 sticks of mangalumi, 2 stalks of lemongrass, 4 grains of salt (coarse), lempuyang, kencur, 3 peppers, 2 balu turmeric seeds, 3 oranges, 2 galangal segment, 2 gingers segment, 2 hosaya dili, 2 hosaya bolon	All ingredients are boiled. One-third of the concoction is removed and the rest is boiled with a chicken in a pot. Then put the broth in a medicine container (which is called <i>guri-guri</i> ) (Figure 7). Next, an incantation with a betel media is directed to the <i>guri-guri</i> .	+
2.	The medicine for people who have had a lot of sexual intercourses,	2 large sihaporas fish, a large plate for stirring the ingredients, galangal, turmeric, spices, kencur,	All ingredients, apart from sesame, are finely ground and dried in the sun, moistened with lemon juice, and	+

	which in the manuscript is called the king's disease (Syphilis)	pepper, real salt, and seasonings, one measure plus two-part charcoal and camphor and sesame.	read the dimensions. This concoction is mixed with sesame and then eaten. As an applicator, a grilled chicken without the insides and feathers. Mixed charcoal roasting chicken.
3.	Eye Disease	Haligina, 1 pandorahan, 1 pepper, mixed with orange flower essence.	The potion is placed in the yard and covered with seven sheets of <i>dapdap</i> leaves, boiled, and covered with a white cloth. A warm white cloth was sprinkled over the sore eyes.
4.	Infectious Disease	Roots of lanting, rimbang, sibaguri, sampilulut, dapdap, turmeric, and whiting, and coconut oil	All the roots are cleaned, skinned, and finely ground. Next, add lime (betel) and oil, then rub it on the sick
5.	Sedatives (witchcraft) exposure	The inside of a tree trunk (hubei) (Figure 8), turmeric, galangal, onion, 7 grains of coarse salt, egg yolk, lime juice, and cucumber juice	person. All ingredients are finely ground and add the egg yolk, lemon juice, and cucumber juice, then drink the concoction.
6.	Venomous animal bite: snake, centipede	Same ingredients as number 5 plus rice water, cockroach feces, and nasugi- sugihon	Same application as medicine number 5
7.	Headache	Same ingredients as number 5 and add lemon juice	Smeared on the sore head
8.	When one feels that an animal is crawling on the body	Same as potion number 5 and add crude oil	Smeared on all of the sick bodies, stay in the yard with the whole body covered to avoid catching a cold.

9.	Spear wound	Mothballs, <i>jerango</i> (ground then squeezed), oil, chicken egg yolk, a handful of boiled galangals, chili, turmeric, 7 slices of <i>kencur</i> , sugarcane juice	All ingredients are ground and attached to the wound.
10.	Poisoned	Rice, the root of: kepok banana, saloh sugar cane, and sitolu begu, plus various flowers and sibaguri salimputput, and buffalo milk	All ingredients are kneaded together with rice water, covered, and put in a medicine container for the sick to drink.

<sup>\*+:</sup> means accompanied by incantation.

Some of the ingredients are presented in the figures below.



Figure 7. Guri-guri



Figure 8. Hubei

#### Discussion

An old manuscript could contain many teachings that are still relevant today. Menachem Ali, a lecturer of Philology at the Faculty of Humanities, Airlangga University, revealed that there is nothing more fun than spending his spare time studying old manuscripts. Almost every corner of the living room in his house is lined with old books and manuscripts. Because of his love for old manuscripts, he has visited several countries as a delegation of Linguists from Indonesia.

The experience above shows many benefits of studying the old manuscripts. The same thing was expressed by Mehamet br Karo Sekali who was dubbed a heroine preserving Batak's *pustaha*. She said "the more often I read, the more soulful the contents of the texts were". Her heart was touched to see the existence of the *pustaha laklak* and the Malay manuscripts that were left untouched (Zarosylo et al., 2021; Yasa et al., 2021). However, Mehamat Br. Karo Sekali became the savior of the manuscript and Marsiria Sebayang felt that dedication was like an oasis for those who supported the preservation of the Batak tribe's cultural heritage.

Other than those, there are several communities of reviewers, lovers, and observers of manuscripts in various cities. There is a group called NGARIKSA at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, which was piloted and spearheaded by Oman Faturrahman, one of the professors at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah. Starting in early 2019, NGARIKSA, called "Noran Manuscript Nusantara". It is scheduled on a talk show or manuscript discussion once every month and took place around Jabodetabek (Harahap, 2021). In line with this, The National Library of Malaysia has preserved the old Manuscripts in Malaysia (Yahya et al., 2009).

The treatment of this old manuscript was carried out by utilizing available materials in Indonesia. The disclosure of the old manuscripts' contents containing medicinal knowledge needs to be done as an alternative to the development of medicine in Indonesia to reduce the dependence on imported medicine. Old manuscripts, including the old North Sumatran manuscripts, are not easy to obtain and even their existence is generally unknown to the public. *Tambar ni Hulit* medicinal manuscripts are one of the results of searching for old

manuscripts in North Sumatra in various manuscript storages, like museums and libraries, as well as in private collections. The inventory results and descriptions describe the existence of the manuscript storage area and the physical conditions as well as the outline of the manuscript's contents. Transliteration and translation resulted in the translation of the *Tambar ni Hulit* script from the Batak Simalungun script to Latin and the translation results in Indonesian (Husariev et al., 2021; Malaiya et al., 2017).

Likewise, the *Tambar ni Hulit* Manuscript contains information on past remedies, utilizing available ingredients in Indonesia. The easiness to obtain these medicinal ingredients encourage its users to take advantage of them. It's just that the information contained in this manuscript has not yet public. Therefore, it is time for medicinal ingredients and methods in the manuscript to be renewed using more sophisticated technology (Widana et al., 2021; Filladsen & Jordenzen, 2020). The manuscript *Tambar ni Hulit* can be used as a stepping stone in processing medicines as an alternative treatment in Indonesia. Reading the contents of the *Tambar ni Hulit* manuscript after being transliterated into Latin script and translated into Indonesian will make it easier to understand its content and apply it appropriately.

In line with that, Elis, a lecturer at the Department of Philology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Padjadjaran University, has studied the ancient Sundanese manuscripts containing medicines and revealed the intricacy of medicinal plants and traditional treatment. She further exemplifies: "temulawak contains essential oils, which can increase endurance. Turmeric, besides its immunity-boosting effect, can treat fever, diarrhea, cancer, scabies, overcome inflammation, prevent Alzheimer's, ulcers, inhibit chromosomal damage, maintain brain power, reduce and prevent depression, and maintain diabetics (Corson & Crews, 2007; Silalahi et al., 2015).

### Conclusion

The treatment in the Tambar ni Hulit manuscript is mainly done by concocting various ingredients in various ways, such as boiling, pounding, drying, moistening, mixing, cleaning, peeling, pounding, and kneading. Medicines and/or medicinal ingredients in traditional Simalungun medicine used ingredients from 26 plant species (citrus, puraga, kicung, mangalumi, lemongrass, clay, kencur, pepper, turmeric, galangal, ginger, spices, camphor, lanting, rimbang, sibaguri, dapdap, whiting, coconut oil, cucumber water, jerango, roots of kapok banana, saloh sugar cane, sitolu begu, sibaguri flower, and salimputput) and 3 animal species (large haporas fish, cockroaches, and buffalo milk). The recorded diseases were leprosy/skin, syphilis, eyes, infection, witchcraft, snake bites, centipedes, headaches, animals spreading on the body, spear wounds, and poison.

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