

Tungku Api: Traditional Malaria Treatment For The Firiwage Community Papua

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Abstract: The Firiwage community when suffering from malaria tried to treat it by doing Tungku Api tradition, namely the tradition of smoking or heating the patient's body. This study aims to explore the meaning of the practice of Tungku Api tradition as a treatment for malaria using a phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews with 10 informants who have practiced Tungku Api tradition and 2 informants who are currently carrying out the tradition. This research was conducted in Firiwage District, Boven Digoel Regency, Papua for two months. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that the people of Firiwage still maintain Tungku Api tradition by heating because it is recommended by village elders and parents. Even though Tungku Api tradition is carried out with the intention of seeking treatment for malaria, this tradition has the potential to cause other health problems such as respiratory problems, coughing and shortness of breath, burns, skin irritation and even death. This study confirms that people's behavior in maintaining health is influenced by social determinants, namely tradition. The community is required to treat malaria in a healthier way, and health workers should develop health promotion and education efforts about malaria treatment.

Keywords: traditional, phenomenology, malaria, treatment, local wisdom, cultural, health beliefs

I. INTRODUCTION

Malaria is one of the infectious diseases that is a public health problem in Indonesia¹. The World Malaria Report 2015 reported 214 million positive cases of malaria of which 88% came from Africa with 438,000 deaths². The 2015 SDGs make malaria a target for epidemic elimination by 2030 with a 90% reduction in case incidence and mortality in at least 35

countries^{3,4}. Malaria is an endemic disease with high transmission in eastern Indonesia, namely: Papua, West Papua, and East Nusa Tenggara⁵. Technical barriers in health service efforts such as distance, time, cost, and availability of medical personnel, as well as socio-cultural factors hinder the implementation of health programs.⁶

Malaria cases in 2020 in Papua reached 155,670⁷ with 17.58% coming from Firiwage District⁸. Firiwage has a

Tungku Api tradition in treating malaria sufferers. This tradition smokes or heats the bodies of people with malaria. This tradition has been carried out by the Firiwage community from generation to generation and is still maintained today. Some people already know that Tungku Api tradition can pose health risks to their families and surroundings. People continue to carry out this tradition at the suggestion of their families and at their own will.

The cultural conditions of the Firiwage community consist of the Wanggom, Kombay, Korowaim and Sokanggo tribes. Firiwage people's perception of health is largely influenced by customs, culture and beliefs. Socio-cultural factors such as customs, values and cultural norms contribute to efforts to solve health problems, for example the se'i tradition. The se'i tradition is carried out to smoke the mother who has just given birth with her baby for 40 days, this treatment is expected to warm the body of the mother and baby. This tradition causes respiratory problems in both mother and baby.⁹

The tradition of warming or heating the body is believed by the Firiwage Community to help restore health when exposed to malaria, but the side effects resulting from the Tungku Api tradition can cause carbon monoxide gas poisoning and respiratory problems.¹⁰ People's beliefs about this tradition are difficult to change, and it is a serious challenge for health workers to change this thinking. Access in Firiwage to the capital city of Boven Digoel Regency can only be reached by river with a travel time of 8-12 hours. Health services are strongly influenced by extreme geographical conditions as potential alternative medicine in accordance with local wisdom. Based on this background, this study aims to explore the meaning of the Tungku Api tradition as a malaria treatment.

II. SUBJECT AND RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative with a phenomenological approach.¹¹ This research was carried out in Firiwage District, Boven Digoel Regency by conducting in-depth interviews and observations of 10 informants who had experience in treating Tungku Api and 2 informants who were undergoing the Tungku Api treatment method. Informants were selected using the snowball sampling. This research was conducted for two months, September – October 2021. The validity of the data was carried out by triangulation of sources and methods and data analysis with content analysis. This research has been approved by The Research Ethics Commission of The Faculty of Public Health, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia Number; 7973/UN4.14.1/TP.01.02/2021.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Firiwage is one of the districts in Boven Digoel Regency which is located between a river and forest which can only be reached by river with a travel time of 8-12 hours from the district capital. Firiwage consists of 4 villages, namely: Firiwage which is the district capital, Karuwage Village, Waliburu and Kabuwage. Firiwage is inhabited by 4 tribes,

namely: Wanggon, Kombay, Korowai, and Sokanggo. The geographical conditions of Firiwage affect the customs, culture, and beliefs of the community which are not in line with the science of Health.¹² The community prioritizes traditional traditions even though it contradicts the principles of patient health and safety. Humans cannot live without traditions, although they often feel dissatisfied with their traditions.¹³ Tungku Api tradition is carried out by using several materials such as firewood, dry leaves, earth, matches, and iron sheeting which are used to heat the sick with these materials burned and placed near the sick. Generally, in every resident's house there is already a special place for burning a firebox.

The people of Firiwage maintain the tradition of the Tungku Api because they feel their bodies become warm and sweaty, so that their bodies are not cold, making them feel good or comfortable and speeding up the process of recovering or healing malaria. This is based on experience that malaria sufferers will show symptoms in the form of fever, chills, so to warm them up, the patient or person with an indication of malaria is brought close to the firebox to get heat radiation from the burning of the firebox. The Tungku Api tradition is carried out with the intention that the patient becomes strong and recovers quickly. The benefits that are felt by the community are various, such as a fresher body, less cold and shivering, a warm body, besides that people sweat and feel healthy. In addition, this tradition is felt to be able to help repel mosquitoes and insects because it is caused by the smoke and heat from the burning process.

Tungku Api tradition is carried out by the family of the sick person, such as parents, father or mother, grandfather or grandmother, relatives such as brother or sister, grandchildren or the sick person himself. This is a positive side of the Tungku Api tradition because it can be seen that the spirit of mutual cooperation from the family in seeking the healing of one of his family members who is sick. This tradition has been carried out since time immemorial by the ancestors of the past, passed down from generation to generation until now, there is no special or certain ritual before this tradition is carried out, so this tradition is very easy to do because its sole purpose is to warm the sufferer's body. The Firiwage community accepts the trust of their parents, grandparents based on belief and without any prior proof.¹⁴ People who are dominated by the orientation of social actions, habits and understandings will be supported by hereditary habits as a frame of reference that is taken for granted without problems.¹⁵

The tradition of Tungku Api by giving heat to the sufferer is believed to make his body fresh. Patients sweat which functions to cool the body and promote circulation. Sweat also functions to remove toxins in the body and is able to fight bacteria. When sweating, sweat glands will produce a lot of sweat that comes out of the skin pores. Dirt will be locked in the skin pores and pushed out by sweat, so the pores will be clean and fresh again.

The Firiwage community who suffers from malaria first performs the Tungku Api tradition, if the disease persists the Firiwage community prefers traditional treatment such as the use of leaf water or steam baths and the patient is not allowed to leave the house first before recovering or being healthy, if the patient has not recovered then the last resort taken is to

visit or visit the community health center. Tungku Api tradition is maintained for various reasons, including: this tradition is carried out from generation to generation from the ancestors, so it is still an inseparable part of people's lives. Diseases can be caused by the intervention of an active agent, which can be in the form of supernatural beings, non-human beings (such as ghosts, ancestral spirits, or evil spirits) and naturalistic medical systems, namely diseases caused by fixed elements in the body, such as heat, cold, body fluids according to age conditions and individual conditions in the natural environment and social environment.¹⁶

The people of Firiwage feel the positive effects of using traditional Tungku Api, such as the body becomes warm and sweaty, so that the sufferer feels better or comfortable, which in turn will experience a fast healing process. The community assumes that if they experience fever, dizziness, nausea and sluggishness, they are exposed to malaria and with a Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) the results are positive for malaria. This condition proves that social determinants still bind people's behavior in maintaining health. This shows that culture and knowledge and technology are very influential on health.¹⁷ Even though the Tungku Api tradition is carried out with the intention of seeking health, in reality the practice of this tradition poses a risk to health. The risks of health problems that can be experienced by the community include respiratory system disorders, such as coughing, shortness of breath, burns, skin irritation, and even fatal consequences, the most wary of which is death due to gas poisoning.¹⁸ This study confirms that people's behavior in maintaining health is influenced by social determinants, namely culture (tradition). It is recommended to the public to treat malaria in a healthier way, to health workers to develop health promotion and education efforts about malaria treatment.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Tungku Api tradition is a tradition that still survives and is used as a malaria treatment by the Firiwage community. This tradition is carried out with the aim of providing warmth to malaria sufferers so they do not get sick from the cold by smoking or heating the body. Even though the Tungku Api tradition is carried out with the intention of seeking health, in reality the practice of Tungku Api can be detrimental to health, including respiratory disorders, such as coughing, shortness of breath, burns, skin irritation, and can cause death due to gas poisoning. The community is required to treat malaria in a healthier way, and health workers should develop health promotion and education efforts about malaria treatment.

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