

Mythology Creation in Aluk Todolo as Reference to Perceive Women's Role in the Toraja Church

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Abstrak

The role of women in life ancestor of Toraja, culturaly is very important. There are many position and role that ocupay women in society. There are also many methapore that can be identify in Toraja culture. That mean women in Toraja is very important. Meanwhile in reality in society even in church the role of women is going to decrease.

This article will explore this situation, will looking for what is caused this situation changes. One of methapore is mythology of ancestor creation. In this mythology women taken a importan role, so that this metaphore can propose the indispensable of women in Toraja Churc. The aim of this article is to open of all chance for women leadership in society and in the church.

Key Words: Mythology, role, Church, culture, women

Church and Aluk Todolo

Toraja Church is one of the largest churches in South Sulawesi even in Eastern Indonesia. Missionaries who came preaching the Gospel named Antonie A van de Loosdrecht in 1913 until it established on March 25, 1947, which was very close to the tone of Dutch Gereformeerd church. The Zending name is Gerevormeerde Zendingsbond (GZB).¹ In some ways, it was also influenced by Pietism-revival that renounced culture as a system of values that govern life in Christianity,² that some elements of Toraja culture shall not be discarded or being locus or source of Christianity life value. Whereas in the Toraja culture, there are so much spiritual values to enrich the church lives in the community.

Aluk Todolo literally means the Toraja ancestral beliefs. In contrast to Durkheim that divides religion into profane and sacred one,³ it is indeed not the case

¹ Bas Plaisier, *Menjembatani Jurang, Menembus Batas: Komunikasi Injil di Wilayah Toraja*, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2016, h. 51. Lihat Juga Terance W. Bigalke, *Sejarah Sosial Tana Toraja*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2016, h.112.

² Plaisier., 52-55.

³ Emile Durkheim, *Sejarah Agama*, (terj.) Inyiaq Ridhwan Muzir, Ircisod. Yogyakarta: 2003, h. 34-35)

for Aluk Todlo. The Toraja ancestral belief reflected on the whole process and interaction of the life as sacred one. It starts from birth to death, ranging from bathing to building a house. The Toraja ancestral religion also did not recognize temple or place of worship. The whole rites were held in the open place, forest, open field, fields and courtyard. For all places were sacred and all were directed to the sacred acts, that it was known what was called *Pemali*⁴ in this belief. This position was in line with the concept of religious life according to Isaiah the Prophet and Paul in Romans 12 that does not distinguish between spiritual and non-spiritual life. Isaiah the Prophet and Paul considered life as inseparable between profane/secular and sacred one, keeping in viewing the whole life as worship.

Women in Toraja Church

In the area of Toraja Church these days, position and role of women has been decreasing. This might be unanticipated among euphoria of the revival of women's emancipation that was “intoxicating” and nearly “lull it to sleep”, in seminars of women's organizations.

Within the range of the Toraja Church, female pastor has currently equaled the number of male pastor, but almost certainly, they play no key role in the structure. One indicator is composition of the board in several Klasis areas, especially in the Synod, that it has not yet indicated women as one of the heads, let alone the chairperson. Even if they do exist in the structure, they serve as treasurer or deputy secretary (without misjudging these positions). Likewise, it is the same as women's leadership in the society.

From the list of Klasis chairman in 2016 I have received from data center of the Toraja Church, it indicated that the existing 89 Klasis in Toraja Church, it was only 12 women positioned as chairman, while the majority were male for 77 people.⁵ Therefore, the ratio for women who occupied the structure in Klasis level was 14% and men was 86%. This data indicated that women were still extremely lacking in structural positions in Klasis level throughout the Toraja Church. Range from 16 districts in Tana Toraja (Toraja has been splitted into two: Tana Toraja and North Toraja), there was

⁴ *Pemali* means some taboos or restriction and if broken, there will be sanctions.

⁵ Laporan Badan Pekerja Sinode Gereja Toraja pada Sidang Sinode AM Gereja Toraja ke-24 di Makale.

only one woman who became head of the district, while there were 15 men.⁶ It means 6.2% versus 93.75%, an awfully poor number, amid euphoria of the revival of women's emancipation.

The major question certainly was, why were women not taken into account for structural positions in both the church and society? What factors that leads to the case. This situation is called *glass ceilings*, which is a situation that put a woman on the ceiling of achievement, career and intellectual ability, yet at the same time, there is a glass barrier that make matters worse for women to reach the top position.⁷ One of the factors we want to highlight is cultural factors and unfinished process of encounter with Christianity by missionaries, including the Toraja church afterward. Culture, in this case, the stories, tales, legends, symbols and others, especially those related to position and role of women nearly ceased to be a reference in developing the social and church life.

Why is Women Indispensable in the Toraja Church?

There are at least four reasons why Toraja women shall be able to occupy the top position in every level or structure of social, politics organization especially in the church First, Torajanese system structurally belongs to the bilateral system (cognatic) with their matrifocal elements. This system puts women and men to be constantly parallel and even complementary; second, Mythology of Creation in Toraja culture puts women as initiator of creation, given the role of mythology in the Toraja ancestral belief system, as well as other tribes, which is valuable. At least this condition can represent appreciation to women and inspire that women in the Toraja culture have an important position. Third, the Toraja social history and culture noted that women can occupy the priest position as called *To Burake* that contribute to officiate the highest and important ceremony in the Toraja culture namely *Aluk Ma'buag*. Fourth, the number of female pastors in the Toraja Church is highly significant in the present.⁸

⁶ Data dari PEMDA Toraja dan Toraja Utara.

⁷ Linda Wirth, *Breaking to The Glass Ceiling: Women in Managemen*. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2001, h.1.

⁸ Pakan Priyanti Suryadarma, "Pendeta WanitaToraja: Suatu Kajian Etnografi Berwawasan Perspektif Wanita," Tesis-Universitas Indonesia, 1998, h.8.

Mythology of Creation in AlukTodolo

Women and *Aluk* are two entities in the culture of Toraja tribal ancestors confronted with an exceptionally important position and role of women in church and society in the present day. Why is it important? For *Aluk* is a spiritual and philosophical foundation of the Toraja ancestors. *Aluk* encompasses beliefs, rules and sanctions governing the life in both this world and the other world (*puya*). Meanwhile, women occupy an important place in *aluk*. One of the mythological tale as believed to be the beginning of all that exists on this earth is a creation myth. In the myth of creation, women act as initiators of creation.

Poem of *Passomba Tedong* stanzas 417-433 told the story of a woman named *Arrang Dibatu* who sent supreme god *Puang Matua*, who also as her husband, searching for gold as the base material of creation.⁹ In one poem stanza, it said: *lando lalanni komi Bulawan tasak rokko kalambunan allo, PuangMatua*. Then *Puang Matua* took a chunk of gold, while *Arrang Dibatu* created the Toraja ancestors from the gold chunk. From the gold chunks, it was born 8 brothers and sisters. First, a female human named *Datu Laukku* (*ukku* is a voice or cry when the man was born in this world); the second named *Allo Tiranda*, poison ancestor; third, *Laungku'*, cotton ancestors; fourth, *Pong pirik-pirik*, rain ancestors; fifth, *Menturini*, birds ancestors; sixth, *Manturini*, buffalo ancestors; seventh, *Riako'*, iron ancestors; eighth, *Takkebuku*, rice ancestors.

The remarkable thing from creation process of human ancestors and the entire universe is an initiative coming from the woman that commanded *PuangMatua* who happened to be god as well as her own husband to search for gold. All creation came from the same raw material that is gold that could be interpreted as something pure. Moreover, from the eight creations, *Laukku Datu* was the only one human who was a female, thus it means that the first human of Toraja people was woman. However, in relation to the human siblings consisting of toxins, cotton, poultry, buffalo, iron and rice ancestors were well-established as fellows, never be higher or lower.

Simple analysis of mythology and women position was, Toraja culture is neutral, not based on patriarchal or matriarchal system. For if the Toraja culture is

⁹ H. Van der Veen, *The Merok Fest of Sa'dan Toradja* (Leiden: Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Ta Al-, Land-En Volkenkunde, 1965), 86-89. Lihat juga, Hetty Noy Palam, *Sa'danToraja: Study of Social Life and Religion*. Leiden-Netherland: The Haque – Martinus Nijhoft, 1979, h. 134.

based on patriarchal system, the stories that emphasized central role of women will not be existed, and vice versa. There were nearly no stories that place women in a subordinate position than men. The place of women in the stories and tales or fables is neutral.

Based on the above analysis, it shall have no significant challenge on the path of leadership in the community and church. However, the above data from both government and church pointed out an awfully small index numbers of women in the leadership. Four basic points of the above-mentioned ones shall actually be a reference for the community to provide the widest possible opportunity rather than merely be rhetoric to women. Letty Russel, one of Feminist theology was one of the first women to be ordained in the Presbyterian church for special services said that this situation must be reconstruction that start from the bible. Because bible also make the situation by patriarchal system by reinterpretation.¹⁰

Old Testament inevitably was the patriarch product.¹¹ Highly androcentric interpretation to some texts in the Bible, for example, Genesis 2:18-25, became one of any reasons why the structural role of women in the church was unreal. Structural role in the church becomes complicated as the church helped perpetuate the patriarch hierarchical structure (Mary Mc Kenna, 1992:93). For 100 years of the Gospel creeping into Toraja that it must represent highly enough time to run over the text in liberating shades. Likewise, it has been 70 years of its independence to be an institution that shall have independence in theology by its context and culture. One important thing that must be put back is God's mission through creation story, which created man (male and female) of the same material, as well as creation story in the Toraja mythology created from the same material for the same goal of natural harmony despite the different tasks. Liberating element in both texts shall be a reference to the Toraja church and community to relocate the role and position of women to the fullest.

The core of Feminis Theology is liberating that aslo about justice. The important thing as a base of feminis theology is not only a matter of clarification about women and its position, but a perspective. It is turns out the presence of feminist

¹⁰ Lihat uraiannya lebih jauh dalam Letty M. Russell, *Church in The Round: Feminist Interpretation of The Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

¹¹ Lihat misalnya kisah Hagar dalam Eben Nuban Timo, *Hagar dan Putri-putrinya*, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006. Lihat juga, Asnath Niwa Natar (edt) *Ketika Perempuan berteologi, Berteologi Feminis Perempuan*, Yogyakarta: Taman Pustaka Nasional, 2012.

theology as a perspective, as a way of life, is more prominent than as a movement that is identical with a rebellion that once stigmatized feminist theology.¹²

¹² Septemmy Lakawa, “Sketsa dan Arah Misi di Indonesia” dalam Martin Sinaga, Johana R. Tangirerung, Steve Gasperz, (eds), *“Misiologi Kontekstual di Indonesia: Th Kobong dan Pergulatan Kekristenan Lokal di Indonesia”* (Jakarta: Unit Publikasi STT Jakarta dan BPS Gereja Toraja), 113.

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