

## ZENDING AND CULTURE OF TOLAKI TRIBE IN SOUTHEAST SULAWESI, 1916-1942

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### Abstract

*This study analyses the cultural problems as the entity of Tolaki Tribe about Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi in the period 1916-1942. The historical method is used to find and identify the cultural problems that detained the Christianity process by occupying the four stages begins with heuristic, critic, interpretation, until historiography. During the period also, found a pattern of negotiations between traditions or customs and the teachings of Christianity that were played by the evangelists. So, there was a harmonious dialogue between Christians and the indigenous people. In this case, the agent or pastor succeeded in carrying out interactions and playing on the strategies and rules of religion with the provisions of the indigenous people. It was concluded that culture became an obstacle and challenge in the process of Christianity. However, at the same time, it became an opportunity used by the evangelists in the process of spreading religion among the Tolaki society. The culture and religion of Protestant Christian are always united and together in the reality of the living in indigenous people.*

**Keywords:** Culture; Christianity; Southeast Sulawesi.

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of theology, the pastors used a model of contextual theology by prioritizing their concerns over the principles of interpretation, namely the understanding of the Christian faith in cross-cultural situations; by remaining faithful to both the biblical text and its relevance to the local cultural context. They also brought the culture closer as a reference to its theology. It consists of the disclosure of relations between the world view and the world of Al kitabiyah. Since the beginning of the arrival of Protestant Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi, the Pastors formed a local Christian theology for the indigenous society.

In relation to the culture approach, the zending party was guided by the fact that local culture as something foreign and contains the revelation of God, which was assisted by priestly reflection based on the Gospel and the Church Magisterium, trying to capture it as a way of

entering the gospel and Christian faith (Kira, 2014: 72).

From the explanation above, it related to the zending culture and strategy as well as a form of effort or method which was built as the habits and behavior of Tolaki tribe. It became an opportunity for zending in establishing relationships with zending target objects.

Long before the entry of Protestant Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi, the Catholic Mission was present. Karel Steenbrink explained that Catholic teaching was current in Southeast Sulawesi since 1885 by Jesuit missionaries. Furthermore, the Jesuit Pastor started the establishment of the Catholic Mission in Kendari Bay by settling in Kendari Bay in 1885. In 1887, it seemed that the attempt failed (Steenbrink, 2003: 182; Melamba *et al.*, 2012: 127). Learning from the failure of the Catholic religion, the Christians chose a strategy that could make the indigenous people accepting their presence.

In the period of the difficulties and obstacles mentioned above, Protestant priests succeeded in carrying out the spread of the gospel in the interior of the indigenous people. To overcome this, the evangelists implemented a strategy by approaching the community, through cultural approaches and approaches to local elites. Besides, a procedure was carried out through the health service, education services, skills training, and other services.

Although the spread of Islam has entered and developed earlier in the Tolaki and Moronene people, the religion was not evenly spread to the interior and many of which had a traditional tribal or religious belief. According to Treffers, that some of the people in the interior still adhered to the conventional religion or religions which was worshipping to the Sangia or the gods (Treffers, 1914: 17; Jongeling, 1976: 5, Jong, 2010).

The early development of Islam has developed in the coastal region. This condition did not make the work of zending done smoothly. The efforts of Protestant zending to introduce this religion experienced many obstacles. According to Jongeling, there were several obstacles encountered in the distribution of Protestant Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi, including: Language and culture problems, Influence of Islam, Dutch Indies policy, the Residents themselves equated the zending with the Dutch government which required them to pay taxes and eliminate slavery (Jongeling, 1976: 4). The obstacles and challenges above actually became opportunities for the zending workers to approach the indigenous people. The way they did was a cultural and elite approach among the local people. The reality above illustrated that firstly the spread of Christianity experienced challenges and obstacles, but with symbolic strategies applied by agents and actors, it could be overcome then Christian teachings could be accepted and developed among the natives. For this reason, this study will explain the position of elites and culture in the strategy of the spread of Protestant Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi, especially in the Tolaki and Moronene tribes.

The problem of tradition and customs were the obstacle in spreading Protestant Christianity among the Tolaki tribe in the period of the Dutch East Indies (1916-1942). But on the other hand, it

was utilized by the zending to introduce a new religion. Even it also used as a modal or capital in applying cultural strategies (symbolic) as an effort and the policy of zending. They adopted a strategy of cultural symbols by linking the teachings of Christianity to their culture. For example, the problem of Christianity and cultural approaches that connected Christianity and other traditions. Various traditions or habits of the Tolaki people also became habits that were used by the zending workers to approach the indigenous people. This strategy was quite successful in Christianizing the indigenous people.

The customs became an obstacle as well as a challenge for the Pastors in spreading Christianity among Tolaki people in the Dutch East Indies period. But with the symbolic strategies by utilizing the cultural capital of the Tolaki people. The evangelists were able to overcome these difficulties and became the opportunities for the zending workers to approach the people.

## **ENCOUNTERING CUSTOMS AND CHRISTIANITY**

The process of entering and developing Protestant Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi began in the early 20th century (Klift, 1925; Muller, 1955; Jongeling, 1976; Jong, 2010). The spread of Christianity in the Tolaki area among the zending workers with European cultural backgrounds experienced some competitions as well as obstacles and challenges. It was known that the presence of Europeans (Priests) in an area or region that has never been visited was something new to learn so that the person could become part of the Christian community.

The problem of indigenous customs of Tolaki people became an obstacle as well as a challenge for Serani or Christian people. One of the barriers or challenges faced by the pastors of zending in this region both to the indigenous people was that they were still concerned with their customs actively or were still deeply rooted. The entering of Islam also faced it in the Emperor of Konawe at the first time of Islamic entrance to this region. The same obstacle met when the entry of Islam towards Konawe was due to the strong local trust so that Islam was not so developing rapidly in

the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi, especially in Konawe Emperor. During the reign of Mokole La Rebi with the title of Sangia Inato in the Emperor of Konawe there was the arrival of some envoys from the Sultan of Buton to convert the King or Mokole La Rebi with the title of Sangia Inato to be a Muslim but were rejected, this was due to their strong traditional beliefs and customs of the Tolaki people (Bhurhanuddin *et al.*, 1978/1979; A, 1982, Tamburaka, *et al.*, 2004; Aswati, 2013; Melamba, *et al.*, 2016). Until the entry of Christianity in this area, the customary practices such as rites and traditional ceremonies which were so strong were still carried out by the indigenous people.

The problem of tradition and customs was an obstacle, but on the other hand, it was utilized by the zending to introduce a new religion. They adopted a strategy of cultural symbols by linking the teachings of Christianity to their culture. For example, the problem of Christianity and the cultural approach that connected to Christian teaching. So, the tradition was also a habit used by the zending workers to approach the indigenous people.

Facing this fact, the priest of Klift asked for help and cooperated with some culturalist and anthropologists working in Central Sulawesi. They were Kruyt and Dr. Adriani to give some advice in doing his mission to the people. This was revealed by Dr. Adriani that Klift should carry out his mission, which was the mission of the evangelist to be addressed to the regions that have not yet been Islamized, in this case, the area where the people were still infidel or still at the level of retardation (Tonga, 1999: 8). After Klift returned from Central Sulawesi, he began to surround almost all of the land in Southeast Sulawesi, where the people were still in a life of retardation and always adhering to the tribal religions, to learn how was their character, attitude, and mentality (habits). As the target in preaching the message of salvation (the gospel).

Looking at those two obstacles encountered by Klift when he first arrived on the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi, especially in Kolaka, it could be seen that both (language and culture) obstacles significantly affected the process of the missionary journey to be carried out. It was understandable because language and culture were one of the

challenges that were very struggled by Klift. Communication was a severe problem because in general people have not been passive in Malay (mombé malau), so was Klift.

The tendency to maintain osara or customs in Tolaki people who were very appreciative, submissive, loyal or obedient to the traditional tribes inherited from their ombue or ancestors, the appreciation of their customs could be seen in the customary practices. As implied in the philosophy of the Tolaki "konasara inae iee pinesara, inae lia sara kee pinekasara" which means who knows the customs, they are valued, whoever violates them, they will be abused (Chalik *et al.* 1977/1978: 9). Besides the meaning of the sentence, according to the researcher, it can be interpreted that anyone who upholds or respects the custom, they will be respected, on the contrary, whoever violates the custom, they will be violated or punished ". Between the customs and Islamic culture was difficult to be separated into religious practices. It shows that the dualism of belief become very strong among the Tolaki people which continues until recent times. It was reinforced by the existence of several Tolaki people members who adhered to the certain teachings based on the teachings of their ancestral heritage of ine sangia. The habits of the Tolaki people carried out by the pre-Islamic period remain today.

The role of agents, namely the Priesthood group and the Ponggawa established friendships and cooperation with the elite local nobles (*anakia* and *ndau*), ruling elites and intensively involved their social structures. As a pioneer that there has been an acceptance of Protestantism by the indigenous people. The success in carrying out religious conversion was inseparable from the role of the Dutch priests as the agencies in appreciating local values (habits) and the approachment to the traditional elites both Tolaki and Moronene in the arena of regional and religious competition both in Islam, Catholicism, and ethnic religion. The tendency to maintain osara or customs in Tolaki people who were very appreciative, submissive, loyal or obedient to the traditional tribes inherited from their ombue or ancestors. Appreciation for their traditions could be seen in the customary practices. As implied in the philosophy of the Tolaki "konasara inae iee pinesara, inae lia sara kee

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Besides the meaning of the sentence, according to the researcher, it can be interpreted that anyone who upholds or respects the custom, they will be appreciated, on the contrary, whoever violates the tradition, they will be broken or punished ". It shows that the dualism of belief that is very strong among the Tolaki people continues to this day. It was reinforced by the existence of several Tolaki people members who adhered to the certain teachings based on the teachings of their ancestral heritage of *ine sangia*. The habits of the Tolaki people carried out by the pre-Islamic period remain today.

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE ORIGINAL BELIEF

Tolaki people readily accept Christianity because of the similarity of the basic teachings or fundamental beliefs of Tolaki, which is *Sangia* religion as the ancestral religion, with the Christian teachings, especially in the problem of the faith of Trinity. The concept of teaching can be seen in the following Table 1.

Table 1. List of God's Name According the Belief of Tolaki and Its Relation to Christianity

No	Sangia Religion	Christian Faith	Meaning
1	God ( <i>Sangia</i> )	Trinity	
2	<i>Sangia Mbuu</i> (The Main God/Creator)	Allah The Father	The Creator
3	<i>Sangia Wonua</i> (The Land God/Maintain The Nature)	Allah The Son	The Love Giver
4	<i>Sangia Mokora</i> (The Destructive God/ Destroy the Nature)	Allah The Holy Spirit	The Administrator

Source: Bhurhanuddin, *et al.*, 1977/1978; Chalik, *et al.*, 1983/1984; Tarimana, 1985; Tarimana, 1993; Jong, 2010a; Melamba, *et al.*, 2016: 128.

Christian came with a new face which is spreading the compassion and toleration to the

other people. The basic concepts in the traditional beliefs of various Tolaki ethnic groups turned out to have many similarities to Christian beliefs. Among other things, the faith in one God which is called as *Ombu sameena*. By coincidence, it also has the same concept of faith which contains similarities with some ideas in the Protestant religion as mentioned above.

In terms of ceremonies, there are similarities in the concept of local culture with Christian beliefs such as *mosehe*. Regarding the *mosehe* ceremony (Bergink, 1991). Furthermore, explained by Jongeling (1976: 42) that;

"The term "redemption" and "peace" can easily be understood because to reconcile humans with their ancestors, a white turban is used; white chicken, white buffalo, white egg. With the blood of these white things, humans were redeemed to be white in their souls. Here lies a starting point to preach the redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, even if it means that it is not synonymous at all (*mosehe*= reconcile, need something to cut)".

If there is a common violation by the Christian relating to the religion or relating to the disputes or the social problems, then one of the models of conflict resolution that will be taken is by implementing *mosehe*.

### The Oral Tradition and Christianity

The Pastors do the evangelism contextually, instill the Protestant teachings by using the concept of local culture and express it in the idioms of Tolaki which are derived from stories *Taenango*, and the local folklore (see Melamba, 2016; Limba *et al.*, 2014). Under its influence and with the encouragement by decreasing the quality of church members during and after the depression. For this reason, zending in the 1930s sought church and liturgy forms, which were appropriate or in ways which were taken from traditional customs and religions.

The implementation of the form of Christianization by Ponggawa and through means also called as *O'anggo*. *Anggo* is a traditional song of the Tolaki tribe that contains praise and flattery. *Anggo* serves as a lesson in the formation of character or mentality and a spirit of heroism. The

person who created *anggo* is called Pande Anggo. Generally, *anggo* contains the custom and culture elements so that it can be more found in ceremonies or traditional parties (Mekuo, 1977/1978; Rahmawati *et al.*, 2007: 129). The oral tradition which is in the form of *o'anggo* in the Tolaki tribe become the model of the cultural approachment. Klift and his assistants in the 1930s created the form of *o'anggo* from the several stories about Jesus Christ in the Tolaki point of view (see Klift. Hb NZV, Mowewe 9 Mei 209 1936; ARvdZ 101/4/4). There are some concepts of God for Tolaki people, which are 1) *Nopinebawo nggo Niono Omboe Iesoe*; 2) *Nioano Omboe Iesoe*; 3) *To'ono pondo'oriakoari losoano oleo*; 4) *Poroepono Omboe Iesoe i laika*; 5) *Lanopo Omboe Iesoe mongoeroe sabatoeno oemoeroeno 12 taoe*; 6) *Omboe Iesoe, pombakani me'ambo*; 7. *Kara-kara mongoni-mongoni*; 8. *Omboe Iesoe nopesabeangge rongga anadalo* (see ARvdZ 101/4/4). The Christians sing the story of the birth of Jesus whose poems they are arranged in the form of rhymes (band, with the Psalms literary), and is sung according to the original song of Tolaki people which is called as *o'anggo*. It was conceivable that church worship was carried out straightforwardly (Boonde, 2016: 19).

In delivering the gospel, the Pastors usually used local poetry. For example, The Pastor Mollema during the service, he recited certain parts of the gospel such as the story of the missing child from Lucas 15, in the form of semi-chanting and semi-traditional sayings (Jong, 2010a: 79). In this connection, since the end of 1930 among the school students, religious study texts were distributed in regional languages, to replace the Penaboer evangelistic magazine, the Malay language version of Zaaier, which had been distributed in many schools since the 1920s. Many texts were written in the form of *anggo*. The vocal art of the Tolaki can be known through the songs of people, which are; huhu (the lullaby songs for the children), *o'anggo* (the songs that describe a sense of admiration for a leader, or contain advices), *taenango* (the songs that depict heroic stories), *sua-sua* (the songs that describe the feeling of introduction to anyone else, and *kabia* (the love songs) (Tarimana, 1993).

The transition from the old religion to the new one was facilitated, and the current Pagan customs disappeared automatically from the original Christian group, so this hope was emphasized by Klift (Interview with Rev. Simon Karel, Kepas Boonde, Bachruddin L, 24 November 2017).

The effort of the zendeling to establish a relationship and introduce this monotheistic religion is by changing the literary variant of *anggo* into the concept of Christianity. It could be done by the Pastor Klift and his assistants in 1930s. They created the form of *anggo* from the several stories about Jesus, the several stories about Jesus Christ in the Tolaki point of view. Meanwhile G. J. Mollema during the worship, he recited certain parts of the gospel such as the story of the missing child from Lucas 15, in the form of semi-traditional and semi-traditional sayings (see Klift. Hb NZV, Mowewe 9 Mei 209 1936, ARvdZ 101/4/4; Jong, 2010: 79; Anonymous, 2013). There was a kind of song which is called as *anggo* in the form of *sala anggo*. *Anggo* is a traditional Tolaki song that contains praise and also flattery. *Anggo* serves as a lesson in the formation of character or mentality and the spirit of heroism. Generally, *anggo* contains the custom and culture elements so that it can be more found in ceremonies or traditional parties (Rahmawati, *et al.*, 2006; Melamba *et al.*, 2016: 159). There are some sounds of the *anggo* relating to Christianity, then one of them is: "ie ito pinehu, puu leuno Sarani omawei pombisimena ine Sangia lako ine Ombu Allah Taala". It means: "this is the first story about the coming of Christianity which brings the belief of God to The Almighty God (interview with F.N Boonde, 14 February 2017, Ajemain S, 27 January 2017). The verse above is an example of *anggo* which is full of the Christian shades is sung by using the lyrics of *anggo*.

To introduce Christian teachings among the indigenous people, the church then printed some books. In 1940s, the book entitled *sa'salama* was printed again, and the Zending Pastors distributed them (the book entitled "Sala-Salama'a") to the church community, the translation of the book entitled "Jalan Keselamatan (the road of salvation)", which is printed or reprinted in London England, 1947 (Pingak, 1963; Lawole and Sonaru, 1982;

Boonde, 2016: 29). The creation of the book entitled *Sala-salama'a* in the language of Tolaki people meant the road of salvation. This book was written by using the local language which is called as *mombetolaki* or the language of Tolaki. One of the chapters inside this book explained about *Te'embe mbera tine'eniakono Omboe Ala nggitoe'o lelekaa rongga mendona, monggaso'ipo ano'amba piso pemata mbonimbi* (Anonymous, 1947: 2). It means "what Lord Ala said, it must be properly preserved, sharper than a knife that had an eye next to it." "*Pebatuangi'ano pokonda'oemioe loemangawio toono*" the translation is a lesson for us as the light of the human illumination. In the Tolaki land, it seems that the Pastors make religious books or literature as a reference in services. In conducting the religious ritual activities, the Pastor is certainly based on the teachings that exist which can be found in some books that are recognized its validity. The types of Christian religious literature in Tolaki include theology, the church history, the thought of songs, and the school lessons. Christian religious literature played an important role as a media for scientific transformation.

On the other hand, the religious literature became the basis and was used to preach and to provide information to the indigenous people, because that is the method that could be used to present arguments to the indigenous people about the explanation of something, indeed based on literature. So, the people did not just accept the 'doctrine' of religious teachings emotionally but could be done through conscious awareness.

### **The Cultural Model and The Strategy of Zending**

The fact above is connected to the opinion of Christine (2000: 32) stated that "religious factors in the identity of local people in Southeast Asian countries tend to blend with the cultural factors. Religion is complicated to separate from social identity in everyday life in the people of these countries". It has happened in Southeast Sulawesi, which can be seen from the experience of reality found by a Pastor. According to Klift, he stated that,

"From all of the pastors, they are the least caring or most bossy. The remnants of old ceremonies, rituals, customs, and perspectives are maintained in the church, not just in Mowewe. It became clearer when his colleagues in the 1930s were more serious than before in emphasizing the systematic assessment of the local language and understanding more about its custom. One of the first things that are interesting is that indigenous Christian beliefs far exceed what they describe are inherent in "threatening awareness of magical power" (see Storm. Hb NZV, 3/7/1936, ARvdZ 101/4/4).

The priests participated in helping or participating in ceremonial activities which were carried out by the residents by taking part in it. For example; if someone was sick, then it happened because he did not have free time to go to the church. Many church members, especially those who have been Christian for longer than others and for anyone who is no longer surprised by the new belief, easily visited the meeting when they wanted to discuss with the pastor, while the pastors baptized them without disturbing their work. Especially when it came to the time of the gardeners (*mondau*), life and death and health, old habits and old beliefs remained throughout the pre-war period in the church and also after World War II. For example, the region around Mowewe, the Christians, Moslems and the other people with the old harvest ceremony model together led by a head *mbusehe* (handler) a headman near *Waworaha* region. Where *tino'ori* and *posule bisa*, as the spells are pronounced and the offerings are held. It was only after the death of the handler in the 1950s that the ceremony was no longer being held because there was no successor. The pastors mingled with the locals as Klift always attended the services carried out by the people.

Pastor G. J. Storm paid attention to the customs that arise when magical powers are used to harm others. The pastors have traditional knowledge such as *bungga manis*, and *polulu iune* such as D.N Boonde, Pither Lawole, and Latunduno (Interview with Head of Boonde, April 24, 2017). A custom that was Christianized as far

as possible in the church congregation was also under its responsibility. It was considered necessary to maintain social ties in the village community. In a more general sense, they did not mind when the Christians were involved in their customary party environment, with the conditions that they had to stay away from the Pagan elements.

The cultural approach was constructive for the zending work, as done by Ds or Pastor D.N. Boonde who translated the Gospel into Dutch-Moronene, and Dutch-Tolaki in 1939. The priest who was also a teacher and even a Protestant priest in Kolaka, Kendari, and Poleang Rumbia, completed the first translation of the Bible (in a whole) into the local language in 1939.

The book *sala salama'a* in the language of Tolaki which was written back in 1937 and reprinted in 1947 was published in London England. This book became a source of learning in both the zending schools and the government schools. The first page in the book of *sala salama'a* was written, "*Mbera-mbera o'kita ari-ari ine Omboe Ala ihino owose otoeno pepokonda'oeha, mokomendoda'i hanu tesala, mokome'ambo'I mbera-mbera hano tesosa'a ronga toemiso'I sala mondoelu*". It meant that all Bibles are originally from God with its outline contains lessons, giving an explanation of something wrong, which corrects something that is broken in a straight direction. According to Erens Elvianus Koodoh, a Christian intellectual and Anthropologist UHO, stated that the sentence above meant: "All the books that come from God are beneficial, they are giving lessons, showing wrong things, correcting everything that is broken, and showing a straight path". The text contained lessons on Christian religion in the Tolaki area. Furthermore, this book was also used in schools both the zending and the government during the Dutch East Indies era.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of the Tolaki arena that there has been a negotiation between tradition or customs and the teachings of Christianity. This thing has an impact on the conversion of religion from the animism tribal religion to Christianity (Monotheism). This stage was the beginning of

the formation of indigenous Christian communities in Mowewe as the center of zending. This stage was also called indigenization, where the zending worker did not directly introduce the teachings. But agencies and the actors of zending identified their habits and model or capital owned by the indigenous people. The zending made approaches to the natives by utilizing habits and religious capital, social and cultural symbols.

One of the cultures that we can find in the life of the Tolaki tribe is *kalo*, including the tradition that always has relations with the values and teachings of Protestant Christianity. The cultural approach which was carried out by the evangelists in introducing Christianity was very influential among the Tolaki tribe. The argument that one of the cultures which is called as Kalo shows that the Tolaki people have a relationship in religious life. Kalo is not only seen as a philosophy, as a sacred object in the dynamics of Tolaki's life, but Kalo is seen as the object which has a connection with the theology of the religious life of Christians in Southeast Sulawesi.

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