

Ethnographic Study of Symbolic Meanings in the Ma'nene' Toraja Ritual Series

Ahmad Suthami Putra¹, Pawennari Hijjang², Mahmud Tang²

Email: voxnov@gmail.com

¹Anthropology Postgraduate Program, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

²Department of Anthropology, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

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Abstract

In an ethnographic study of the "Toraja Ma'nene' Ritual," the Toraja people follow the Aluk Todolo beliefs which involve symbols, religion, and cultural preservation. The Ma'nene' ritual is a funeral ceremony that honors ancestors and is related to symbols that have meaning in the life of the Torajan people. The Toraja people believe in the Aluk Todolo belief, which combines elements of local beliefs and elements of Christianity. The Ma'nene' ritual is understood as a way to respect ancestors, care for them, and preserve culture. The traditional meaning, rooted in the Aluk Todolo belief, has experienced a shift to a modern meaning that emphasizes love, gratitude, respect and care for ancestors. This study reveals the complexity of interactions between tradition, religion and cultural preservation in Toraja society. The Ma'nene' ritual is a symbol of changes in meaning and implementation that reflects the combination of Aluk Todolo beliefs and the influence of Christianity, with the aim of preserving cultural heritage.

Keywords: Ma'nene' Ritual, Toraja Society, Aluk Todolo, Symbolism, Cultural Preservation

Introduction

The Toraja people adhere to a belief which they call Aluk Todolo (Ancestral Religion). The Aluk Todolo belief is a sacrificial religion because in all its religious ritual activities the blood of sacrificial animals, namely chickens, pigs and buffalo, is generally shed. All behavior and social patterns are regulated by custom (Umair et al., 2021). Marriages are also regulated by custom and not by aluk (religious ritual). There are no religious officials involved in the marriage, but those involved are traditional holders (Patittingi et al., 2020). The general cultural characteristics of Torajan society are as follows: 1) agricultural society, 2) society with a high work ethic, 3) society that places great importance on integrity, 4) home society, 5) ceremonial society, 6) hierarchical society (Smith, 2008). They group themselves with symbols in the form of names (sanga), food (kande), tongkonan, carvings (passura'), traditional ceremonies and aluk rituals, regional genealogy (bate manurung), and so on.

In the hilly areas of the Toraja tribe, there are still many ancient graves where the dead are placed in stone burrows which logically do not rot quickly like burials in the ground. The Torajan people hold the Ma'nene' ritual, which is a funeral ceremony to commemorate ancestors with the process of renewing the clothes of the deceased for the deceased ancestors. The name of the Torajan people at this event to commemorate their ancestors is Ma'nene' or Ma'putu' in Indonesian meaning "wrapping back". This culture is one of the legacies of their ancestors that they must preserve (Foner, 1997; Daniell & Hamilton, 2010). The Ma'nene' culture is regularly held by the Toraja people with symbols that convey a deep message or meaning which of course was inherited by their ancestors. The Ma'nene'e ceremony is a ceremony to change the clothes of the bodies of ancestors. During Ma'nene', the coffins of the

ancestors, were removed from the graves and stone burrows, then placed in the ceremony site. At the same time, relatives and relatives were waiting and gathered. Then carefully, representatives of the family took the body out of the coffin and then they put on clothes which is in the form of a new cloth placed on the body of the corpse. The Ma'nene' ritual carried out by the Torajan people is considered a form of their love for ancestors, figures and relatives who have died. They still hope that the spirits of their ancestors will protect them from all evil disturbances, plant pests and also the misfortunes of life.

Torajan people who believe in spiritualism and who are steeped in the spirituality of their ancestral religion generally have a more general sounding name as the 'Aluk Todolo' people. As local beliefs are dressed in the name of Toraja customs and culture with a combination of Christianization. This combination is learning to understand and appreciate the ancestral religion of the Toraja people, so that differences in ritual expressions, procedures and speech are not something that the Toraja people find too interesting to debate, let alone use as a distinction and divider between them. This emphasis on the same things regarding internal and essential understanding, and the exclusion of external things, is a strong characteristic of Toraja society.

From the results of observations made by researchers that the meaning of the Aluk Todolo belief (ancestral religion) in the Ma'nene Ritual is the idea of supernatural existence which is part of Toraja culture, understanding this belief is important for researchers because it has the challenge of defining the topic itself. The word "religion", which is commonly used in Indonesia to refer to participation in different forms of belief such as Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, is not a universally recognized idea. Many cultures have no word for "religion" at all and many societies do not make a clear distinction between beliefs or practices that are "religious" or "spiritual" and other customs that are an ordinary part of everyday life.

Methods

The research "Ethnographic Study of Ma'nene' Ritual Practices in Toraja" uses qualitative methods. In accordance with the initial objective, this research is focused on describing an ethnographic study of Ma'nene' ritual practices which can be seen from the life of the Torajan people regarding symbols. In focusing on this study, one symbol was chosen, namely the symbolization of Aluk Todolo as a religious heritage, which for them is a symbol that is very sacred and has deep meaning. As well as describing how these ancestral religious values were then put into practice as their efforts to "preserve Toraja culture" to Toraja society today. Thus, this research is not only intended to simply search for the meaning behind a symbol, but also emically describes the actual practice of this meaning as a complete unit of understanding.

The research was carried out around August 2022 to August 2023. The research focus locations were Tana Toraja and Rantepao, Baruppu Selatan District, Rindingallo, Ponglamba. Meanwhile, other locations are not limited, considering that the Toraja people are scattered in several places to migrate. So for researchers, wherever and wherever they are becomes a research location for researchers.

The informants selected in this research were Traditional Officials, Religious Officials, Toraja People who live in Toraja and outside Toraja and various groups including adults and seniors. In this research, in order to obtain the native's point of view, the main data collection techniques in ethnography are: (1) participatory observation, (2) open and in-depth interviews, and documentation carried out over a relatively long period of time. From these sources the researcher will start to make ethnographic notes that will help in writing the final ethnographic description. Ethnographic notes consist of written field notes, whether from participant

observation, interviews or documentation. In this research, the analysis technique used is Durkheim's approach by looking at facts about sacred and profane.

Results and Discussion

Forms of Sanctification of Ma'nene' Ritual Practices

In developing Toraja society, it is necessary to pay attention to cultural aspects. Because the noble values that appear in the symbol order contain meanings that can support social integration, such as religious values, social values and values related to the Toraja people as creators of works. Various cultures and local wisdom that should be maintained and preserved are of course rich in values and moral teachings and provide great strength in cultural empowerment.

The Ma'nene' ritual procession begins with deliberation with all family members who will carry out the Ma'nene' ritual for their ancestors. In this deliberation the implementation time, costs and consumption will be determined. When the time has come to carry out the Ma'nene' ritual, the nuclear family must arrive early at the cemetery to open the burrow/grave and then remove the bodies. Then, the bodies were dried outside and previously covered with mats or boards. Next, the bodies were re-wrapped in cloth provided by the family. The goal is that the corpse still looks intact and is not damaged. After being bandaged, the corpse was returned to the burrow/patane. In the framework of understanding and implementing the Ma'nene' ritual based on the Aluk Todolo tradition, after entering the month of August, in general the Baruppu' people can no longer eat rice, what they can eat are sweet potatoes, bananas and various kinds of fruit. Apart from that, the food that will be eaten during the Ma'nene' ritual must not be cooked at home but must be cooked around the grave. Furthermore, in carrying out the Ma'nene' ritual, Ma'badong activities are carried out. However, Ma'badong is only carried out for ancestors who have a high social strata. Apart from Ma'badong, village people also stay several nights at the cemetery and usually hold cockfights or Bulangan londong.

Community Understanding of the Ma'nene Ritual.

The initial aim of Ma'nene' in the Aluk Todolo tradition is an effort to honor deceased ancestors with the hope that the families left behind when carrying out the Ma'nene' ritual will come to give blessings. In the context of Aluk Todolo's understanding, they believe that when a person dies their spirit will become an angel. This spirit or bombo deatanna is what they believe is a bridge to the Creator so that what they want or hope for can be conveyed and their request will be granted. In Toraja language literature it is said that bombo deatanna grandmother *palnten panicuan la saatg goosebumps pala' situru' passakkena puang matua*. So in Aluk Todolo's understanding, angels are the spirits of deceased ancestors and that is what is believed to convey hopes and ideals and even ancestral spirits who will protect the lives of the Baruppu people. After the Baruppu people received the Gospel, their understanding of the Ma'nene' ritual experienced a shift. Previously, Ma'nene' was understood as a ritual carried out by families in the hope of receiving blessings from their ancestors.

Ma'nene' is no longer understood as a ritual carried out by the family to obtain blessings from the ancestors, but the Baruppu people interpret Ma'nene' as a ritual that represents a form of love, affection, care, respect, expression of gratitude and appreciation from the family. family to ancestors who during their lifetime have loved and cared for their family. This meaning departs from society's understanding that the only person who can bring blessings to human life is God, not from deceased ancestors.

Ma'nene' is also understood as a way to care for ancestors who are already in the form of corpses. The Ma'nene' ritual is still carried out today because the Torajan people feel sorry and cannot bear to see the corpses of their ancestors scattered around. This sense of concern then

encourages the family to look after and care for the corpse by adding layers of cloth every year to make it look neater.

The Toraja people also interpret that the implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual is a form of responsibility as a human being who believes in God where every believer is invited to interpret love not only limited to others living in the world but also that love is expressed also to those who have precede.

The community also understands that the implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual is the community's effort to preserve the culture that has been lived by their ancestors. They think that the Ma'nene' ritual is an original culture originating from Baruppu' and they have a responsibility to preserve it so that it is not eroded by time. Based on this understanding, they then decided that every year they would use the month of August to carry out the Ma'nene' ritual.

In general, in the context of Baruppu' society, Ma'nene' is not only understood as a ritual for caring for the corpses of ancestors by adding cloth wraps, but Ma'nene' is also understood as a process of self-cleaning. A person whose partner has died cannot be called a widow or widower before carrying out the Ma'nene' ritual. The nickname widow or widower will stick when he has carried out the Ma'nene' ritual or the process of cleansing himself from the marriage ties of his previous partner. Interestingly, for young people who have not carried out the Ma'nene' ritual every day they must wear black clothes, must not carry out activities such as going to the market, to the rice fields or taking part in the Rambu Solo' or Rambu Tuka' events and cannot remarry someone else. This understanding is interpreted as a way to describe that young people are still in a period of mourning because they were abandoned by their partner and at the same time as proof that basically when a partner dies the relationship between husband and wife does not necessarily end but the emotional bond is still there.

The implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual contains an emotional dimension which then makes the ritual performers connected to their ancestors. When carrying out the Ma'nene' ritual, people feel grateful because even though their ancestors died hundreds or decades ago, they can still see their ancestors even though they are in the form of corpses. Not only is there a feeling of gratitude, but it is also as if when they see the corpses of their ancestors there is a feeling that makes them connected and there is a process of inner transaction between the ancestors and the community. The connection between ancestors and family in the Ma'nene' ritual procession is filled with sadness. Sadness arises because the family recalls past memories that existed between them. The community remembers every affection, advice, reflection of life attitudes and ancestral services that have been felt by the family.

A Sacred Review of the Meaning of Aluk Todolo

In this world, from a religious perspective, it is divided into two, the first is the sacred area and the second is the profane area. The Profane is usually ignored, becomes ordinary, its territory is not something sacred, it is not consecrated. The Sacred is a supernatural area, something extraordinary, not easily forgotten and very important. Eliade describes two fundamentally different kinds of religious experience: traditional and modern. Traditional or homo religious humans are always open to viewing the world as a sacred experience (Shiner, 1972). Meanwhile, modern humans are closed to these kinds of experiences. According to him, modern humans can only develop themselves as a whole when they rationalize themselves and the world. For him, the world is only experienced as profane.

Of the five symbols that appear in the Ma'nene' ritual, the author sees that all of them are Profane symbols, do not interpret "the Sacred" because these symbols do not show the existence of anything that is purified, respected, glorified, consecrated and sacred by members

of the community Baruppu Selatan, even these symbols are not fixed but can be changed according to the needs of the ritual. The symbols that appear in the Ma'nene' ritual are understood to have sociological value as manifestations of love, expressions of gratitude, respect, appreciation and concern from the family for ancestors or family members who have died. This is what Eliade said, that things that were originally important because of their connection with cosmic forces can degenerate into signs that operate automatically. The author sees that the "Sacred" in the Ma'nene' ritual is Aluk Todolo's version of the Ma'nene' ritual because in this ritual it is a sacred act that involves experiences with the supernatural. This is in line with Mircea Eliade's thoughts that symbols do not always have to be objects, but also myths, signs, stories and rituals.

Consciously, the presence of the symbol is interpreted and interpreted by the Baruppu people as a form of expression of thanks and thanks from the family to their ancestors who throughout their lifetime have loved their family. Looking at the meaning of this symbol, it seems that it does not have a sacred content. This is because ritual actors position themselves as owners of the symbols themselves so that they have their own interpretation and meaning of the presence of symbols in the ritual. Even though the presence of this symbol is no longer sacred, the people of Baruppu are trying to reveal their contemporary meaning to this symbol. This means that the meaning has been carried out from the way local people understand the symbols. Symbols are understood from the perspective of cultural actors or the owners of the symbols themselves.

It can be seen from the presence of symbols in the Ma'nene' ritual, all symbols are not understood merely as functional objects but the Baruppu people give them a deeper meaning, namely as a sign of gratitude and gratitude from the family to the ancestors. This is in line with what Mircea Eliade said that the true function of a symbol is to change an item or action into something other than what the item or action appears in the eyes of profane experience.

Conclusion

In fact, humans will never see, discover and know the world directly. Humans can only feel or experience this sacred encounter through means, namely symbols carried out in the form of rituals. In the context of Aluk Todolo's understanding, Ma'nene' is carried out on the basis of a mutually beneficial attitude in the sense that previously the Ma'nene' ritual was carried out to honor and care for the ancestors by adding cloth wrappings in the hope that what they aspired to, desires and hopes from the family will be conveyed by the ancestors to the Creator. This is in line with Eliade's thought that myths and symbols are the essence of spiritual life itself and their function as an expression of human dependence on reality and a metaempirical goal, can never be removed or eliminated.

In the implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual, there seems to be a shift in the meaning and procedures for implementation. If within the framework of Aluk Todolo's understanding, Ma'nene' is interpreted as an effort to honor deceased ancestors with the hope that the families left behind when carrying out the Ma'nene' ritual will come to give blessings. Then the procedures for implementation also experienced a shift, where in Aluk Todolo's understanding, the implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual was focused on being carried out in the cemetery, but now it is carried out at home. In the past, village people lived in cemeteries and Ma'badong or even held cockfights, but nowadays these activities are no longer carried out. The reason is because the Baruppu people carry out the Christian version of the Ma'nene' ritual or Aluk Kasaranian.

The sacredness of the implementation and symbols that appear in the Ma'nene' ritual seem to have been negotiated with existing developments. The author sees 2 influencing factors, namely First, the people of South Baruppu, Ponglamba have knowledge of religious values

which are then used as a guide to life so that what the community thinks is not in accordance with religious teachings will be interpreted into religious teachings and even eliminated. . Second, there is a responsibility or mandate from society to continue and preserve culture. However, this responsibility was not fulfilled obediently. Most Baruppu people do not carry out the Ma'nene' ritual regularly every year, but its implementation depends on the will and financial readiness of the community.

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