

## THE MANGNGARO CEREMONY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EVOLUTION THEORY

Marthen<sup>1</sup>, M.Yamin Sani<sup>2</sup>, Pawennari Hijjang<sup>3</sup> & Muhammad Basir<sup>4</sup>.

Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Hasanuddin

Corresponding Author: lekkongnosu@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Nosu is a sub-district in the Mamasa Regency and an expansion of Pana sub-district located on a plateau approximately 1,750 to 2,300 above sea level. The people generally adhere to Christianity, although before the introduction of this religion around 1916, the population adhered to *Aluk Tomatua* or *Aluk Todolo*. One of the *Aluk Tomatua* rituals is the *Mangngaro* ceremony where the corpse is removed from the grave and rewrapped. This ritual is performed at *pealloan* or after the rice harvest and before the next planting season. In the initial days of Christianity until the early 1990s, the ceremony was rarely performed because the church citizens were forbidden from attending the ritual. However, in the mid-1990s, there was disagreement among the members and they began to perform the ceremony often. In the end, the people were no longer questioned by the church concerning the ceremony. There are several reasons why it is increasingly being performed, which include softened attitudes of the church leaders and members due to contextualization and respect for older figures. Others are the departure of migrants after the death of parents or family, as well as governmental support, which has converted the practice into a leading tourist attraction. Therefore, this paper intends to understand the *Mangngaro* ceremony with an analysis based on the evolution theory.

**Keywords:** Ceremony, *Mangngaro*, *Aluk Tomatua*, Christianity, Evolution.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Each tribe has a unique culture and the attraction is through outward appearance, as well as the contained meaning, which is very rich but difficult to understand. This is because objects are not understood completely or thoroughly by relying on sight and hearing but require special skills and expertise. The meaning and message contents of culture are comprehended from various perspectives. Subsequently, conveyed messages can be understood through theories that have been formulated and developed by experts to help in dissecting cultures.

Anthropologists have laid down theoretical foundations for understanding culture anywhere on earth, and each theory entails both advantages and disadvantages. In revealing the meanings and messages of the *Mangngaro* ceremony performed by the Nosu District community in the Mamasa Regency, various anthropological theories can be used. Therefore, the discussion mechanism will begin with a description of the ceremony, which will be further analyzed from the perspective of the Evolution theory. It is rooted in the local beliefs of *Aluk Tomatua* and has experienced numerous changes and shifts concerning the meaning and function. The attitude of the public towards this ceremony is different from before and the function as a tribal religious ritual is no longer dominant as the current performers are generally Christians.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Toraja people have several old belief systems with various names including *Aluk Todolo* of North and Tana Toraja, as well as *Aluk Tomatua* and *Ada Mappurondo* of Toraja Mamasa and *Pitu Ulanna Salu* (George, 1989: 31). In *Aluk Todolo*, there are the *Rambu Tuka* or joyous, and *Rambu Solo* or sorrowful ceremonies (Frans B. Palebangan, 2007: 42), of which *Mangaro* is part. When a person dies, the funeral is performed following the social stratum and the economic strength of the family (Shinji Yamashita, 1996: 59). There are several levels of funeral ceremonies which are determined or measured by the number of buffaloes sacrificed.

In Nosu, these include *Disolongan* where the bodies are immediately buried and only one pig is sacrificed, *Dituru Tau* and *Disundun* which involve the sacrifice of three and seven pigs respectively with no buffalo, and the *Untetang Pesambak* which involves one buffalo and seven pigs. Others are *Dipatomali Limanna* with two buffaloes and seven pigs, *Dipatoi Aluk* with three buffaloes and twenty pigs, and the *Dipa lembangan* with four buffaloes, twenty-one pigs, and only one drum sound. Additionally, in the *Dituttun Pitu*, seven buffaloes, 25 pigs, three dogs, and one chicken are sacrificed, along with a single drum sounded with a distinctive punch. The *Dipelima* entails 9 to 15 buffaloes, 25 pigs, two dogs, one chicken, and two drums sounded during the funeral ceremony, especially at the reception of guests. Finally, in the *Dipandan* also called *diallun* or *dirapai*, at least 16 buffaloes and pigs are used for sacrifice.

According to Shinji Yamashita (1996: 61), the funeral ceremony in Toraja is an exotic primitive custom and, therefore, holds as a special attraction for outsiders. This ceremony is related to the old belief system known as *Aluk Todolo*. In this practice, a dead person will move to the world of the dead, either called *Puya* (Ihromi, 1981: 65) or *Pullondong* (Buijs, 2009). The transfer from this world to *Puya* or *Pollondong* is determined by a ceremony performed by the family at the death of the individual. If the animal is sacrificed in keeping with the social strata concerned, the spirit can go from *Puya* or *Pollondong* into *membali Puang* i.e. back to being a god (Kobong, 1983: 31-34). According to Kees Buijs (2009: 91-92) however, not everyone will become a god even though the death rites are executed properly as only the recipients of buffaloes during these ceremonies were to become *membali Puang*. Also, the imperfect performance of the rites was said to cause the return and disturbance of the spirits to the respective families.

Aguswati Hildebrandt Rambe (2011) stated three main factors regarding the current Nosu and Pana people that are willing to sacrifice a buffalo worth ten million rupiahs when a family member dies. First, psychologically, the family members are satisfied with the sacrifice because animals have become a medium for involvement in feeling the newly deceased situation. Second, prestige and status, as individuals tending to sacrifice numerous buffaloes when a family dies are of stronger social statuses. Lastly, *peramba damok* meaning paving the way, because an animal slaughtered at the demise of a person is said to open a path for the individual while passing on to the world of the dead according to the tribal religious beliefs. To achieve this, the body can be stored for a long time before being buried. However, they are not considered dead but as sick persons or *to macula* and are fed when the people in the house eat (Abdul Azis, 2004). In Toraja, Mamasa bodies are kept for a maximum of two years, while some may be stored for decades in Tana before being buried. (Yamashita, 1996:63).

The implementation of funeral ceremonies differs in the various ethnic groups in Toraja. It is generally understood to be the culmination of a death ritual and during the ceremonies, spirits are escorted to the world of the gods with animal sacrifices and the prayers of families and

mourners through *bating* or lamentations and *badong* dances. However, in Nosu, the funerals do not end with death rituals but are continued by the closest family members as they remain in a state of mourning for a year following the funeral. Husbands or wives left by spouses are not to marry as long as the last ritual called *meollong* or carrying of flowers and/or *mangngaro* has not been performed. This ritual is done at those funerals where less than four buffaloes had been sacrificed. Here, the family of the dead brings clothes and food, particularly betel and areca nuts to the grave, and pigs are sacrificed by one head. After Christianity was introduced, the practice of *meollong* was replaced by bringing flowers and worshipping at home. Additionally, *Mangaro* is specially performed for aristocrats where a minimum of nine buffalos had been carried and corpses with at least four buffalos were also included. This ritual is busier than the *meollong* because the corpse is removed from the grave and brought to the *rante* or plain for the ceremonies, while a buffalo aged between 2 to 3 years and several pigs are usually sacrificed.

The *Mangngaro* ceremony as a continuation of the death rite is executed during the *pealloan* period or when the harvest has ended. According to the beliefs of the locals, performing the ceremony without the harvest completing will damage it. This ceremony also means gratitude to the ancestral spirits for the finished rice harvest and an avenue to request for blessings in the upcoming planting season. During the 1970s to the early 1990s, the *Mangngaro* ceremony was rarely performed mainly as the tribal religion adherents were decreasing. This was because the church had prohibited members from performing the ritual which, according to them, was against Christian teachings. Although the church strictly forbids it, pro and contra attitudes still exist among the members, and the activities have become more frequent in recent years. The performers are generally Christians, including those previously opposed to the ritual.

Moreover, the performance of this ceremony is on the rise due to several factors. First, the Regional governments of Mamasa and the West Sulawesi Province have established the *Mangngaro* ceremony as an important part of the cultural tourism calendars. Second, some Nosu citizens overseas do not have time to attend the actual funerals in the village but may find time to return to perform the *Mangngaro* or *meollong* ceremony. Third, the sub-district government has designated August as the *Liang* month to carry out the ceremony.

### **C. *Mangngaro* in the Perspective of Evolution Theory**

There are different views of religion as a part of human culture. On the one hand, it is an absolute truth that comes from God, while on the other, historical facts show that it cannot be separated from the power of human creation. When religion was in the realm of human creation, it already existed in the culture. This reality allows religion to be discussed from various perspectives including that of the evolution theory, which is more popular in biology, especially through the works of Charles Darwin. Darwin saw an organism undergoing a change from the simplest to an increasingly complex form. In subsequent developments, the evolution theory has been used in biological studies, as well as cultural researches. According to Adam Kuiper (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, 2000: 326), the theory of evolution in sociology and anthropology was inspired by that of Lamarck which was the opposite of Darwin. A well-known anthropologist as a pioneer and adherent of the theory was Herbert Spencer with the argument that all nature evolved due to the impulse of an absolute force called universal evolution (Koentjaraningrat, 2010: 34). Apart from H. Spencer, there was E.B. Tylor and this pioneer specifically studied religious evolution, as well as L.H. Morgan. This adherent of the cultural evolution theory stated that humans had undergone a long evolutionary process and this had progressed from the wild, barbaric, and ancient civilization into the present era.

Here, the evolution theory developed by E. B. Tylor is used as a reference. In the book *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (Koentjaraningrat, 2010: 48), it is stated that religion begins when human awareness of the soul arises. Also, two factors were revealed to cause this awareness and these were, first, the reality of life and death. In humans, moving was said to mean the individual was alive, while the cessation of movement signified death. Second, people sometimes dream of being in places far from where they are while sleeping. According to Tylor, this was the soul going to a different place in the dream (Koentjaraningrat, UI Press, 2010: 48) and it maintained a relationship with the body even though it left often. The soul gives strength to humans and will cause weakness on leaving, such as during faints or sleep.

The permanent departure of the soul is at death and when independent of the human body, it is called a spirit. Spirits are around humans all the time and although they cannot be grasped by the senses, activities can be felt, and they can affect life, frighten, and also help humans. Therefore, spirits are respected, offerings may be made to them, and these rites are generally directed towards them. This stage was called animism by E. B. Tylor, and it is the oldest stage of religious evolution. (Koentjaraningrat, UI Press, 2010: 49).

The animist system continues to evolve and the belief that the motion of nature occurs because it is moved by a soul has emerged. The flowing water, earthquakes, movement of the sun, and others are the results of natural spiritual movements, and nature in motion is considered to have personality, will, and thoughts. This is the second stage where the gods are known to control the universe and they are autonomous in their territories (A.G.Honig, 1987: 64). In subsequent developments, the belief in the gods of nature was thought to be in an order where all the locally ruling gods were controlled by a supreme. In the practice of everyday life, local gods are worshipped, while the supreme god controls the universe but is not directly involved in the daily lives of humans.

Based on the understanding of the supreme god, a monotheistic belief system developed. This is based on the realization that the presence of the gods in various forms is an incarnation of the supreme god. Therefore, the existence of one god alone in various forms of His universal presence is the monotheism religion embraced by humans today (Koentjaraningrat, 2010: 50).

The *Mangngaro* ceremony is one of the rituals in the tribal religion of *Aluk Tomatua*. According to a story conveyed through generations, it began when a migrant lost the parents while overseas and desired to see the bodies. This person had intended to deal with the people's belief at that time, which prohibited anyone from visiting graves, let alone removing the body while the rice was growing. Two violations were to occur if this intention was implemented, which were, damage to the yet to be harvested rice, and the absence of traditions being performed to remove bodies from graves for ceremonies. The intentions of the young nomad were carried out after negotiations with customary leaders and guaranteed that all the curses that were to occur would be borne by the individual and descendants. However, if blessings were to follow, then the whole society was to experience it for generations to come. After the *Mangngaro* ceremony was carried out, the harvest yields doubled and people believed that the good results were blessings from ancestors transformed into gods.

Several aspects have evolved in the *Mangngaro* ceremony with time. First, it is performed solely by families that were unaware and absent at the parents' funerals. In the traditions and beliefs of this tribe, if a member of a family dies and relatives are unable to attend, a mourning activity called *lelean bara* which means holding a ritual of slaughtering animals for the dead

in distant places can be performed. Therefore, there is actually no need for the *Mangngaro* ceremony if there is previous knowledge and the *lelean bara* had been held. This activity is rarely performed by both migrants and people in Nosu when a family member dies in another area. Second, there is a belief in receiving blessings from ancestral spirits as a later development after the first ceremony is performed. A successful harvest after the *Mangngaro* ceremony is viewed as a blessing from the ancestors now transformed into gods. This belief disappeared after Christianity became the religion of the Nosu people. Third, this ceremony is increasingly becoming less sacred because of the involvement of the tourism business initiated by the government in collaboration with entrepreneurs. State interference with these businesses continue to promote this ritual to tourists from various countries and regions, and according to Shinji Yamashita (1996), funeral ceremonies in Toraja have been engineered to gain prestige and business. In a traditional burial, the body is displayed to tourists for "sale" at the same time, hence, this sacred ceremony has become a spectacle.

The meaning and function of the *Mangngaro* ceremony have changed and it is being used as a means of holding family reunions in various regions in Indonesia. The Nosu people scattered in various places rarely meet and their descendants are unfamiliar with each other. Therefore, these people use the ceremony as an opportunity to gather together in the village. Another function that appears later is the social status statement which entails two indications. First, it is rare for parents to slaughter less than 4 buffaloes which is the minimum requirement for *diaro*, and more are usually accepted. These include *dipelima* where 9 to 15 buffaloes are slaughtered and *dipandan* where at least 16 buffaloes are sacrificed to, therefore, fulfill all the requirements for *mangngaro*. Second, there is a sense of shame if parents do not bring *diaro* when *alang-alang*, meaning the family's mass burial ground, is opened during the ceremony.

#### D. Research methods

1. This is a qualitative research using an ethnographic approach as both the work procedure and for the *mangngaro* ritual description.

2. Research location.

It was conducted in the Nosu sub-District of the Mamasa Regency. The selection of locations was based on the fact that the ceremony was held annually in August at Nosu only, and it was, therefore, designated as the *Mangngaro* Tourism area by the district government.

3. Sources and Types of Data.

The data was obtained from informants and presented in a narrative form. Also, primary data was acquired from observations while attending the *Mangngaro* ceremony, as well as from interviews with the informants.

4. Data collection technique.

The data were obtained in two ways, particularly through interviews and direct observations, by being involved in the ceremony.

5. Informants.

They were determined based on knowledge and involvement in the ceremony. The informants consisted of local religious adherents of the *Aluk Tomatua* and Christian religious leaders involved in the *Mangngaro* ceremony.



## 6. Data analysis.

This was performed using one of the anthropological theories, specifically the evolution theory developed by E.B. Taylor. This analysis shows the process of change that has occurred throughout the ceremony.

## E. CONCLUSION

Although the *Mangngaro* ceremony has undergone a long evolutionary process, and many changes have occurred, survival elements remain. The meaning and function change according to the interests of the various parties involved, either as actors or supporters of the ceremony. This activity which was originally sacred has entered a profane realm and has even become a commodity for the government to generate revenue for the state or regional treasury. Additionally, dead humans continue to "contribute" to the next generation and Van Gennep's view that the death ceremony was the closing of a series of human life rites does not seem to apply in this context.

The ritual can be continually performed every year so long the family wishes, and also have the material capacity. Also, the church which once forbade the followers from performing the *Mangngaro* ceremony is no longer showing resistance and through the leaders, it is always present at what were originally tribal religious ceremonies. The performers of the ceremony are generally Christians and the number of tribal adherents is increasingly powerless to maintain the ritualistic authenticity. These people are practically spectators or have evolved and most of these adherents have changed identity cards showing that there has been a mutual influence either by contextualization or syncretic and it is the result of an ongoing evolutionary process.

## F. REFERENCES

- George, Kenneth Martin, *The Singing from the Headwaters: Song and Tradition in the Headhunting Rituals of an Upland Sulaesi Community*, Michigan : U.M.I., 1989
- Mandadung, Arianus, *Keunikan Budaya Pitu Ulunna Salu Kondosapata Mamasa* (Pemda Mamasa, 2005.
- Ihromi, T.O., *Adat Perkawinan Toraja Sa'dan dan Tempatnya Dalam Hukum Positif Masa Kini*, Gadjh Mada University Press, 1981.
- Buijs, Kees, *Kuasa Berkat Dari Belantara dan Langit*, Makassar: Innawa, 2009.
- Kobong, Th., *Manusia Toraja. Dari Mana-Bagaimana-Kemana*, TangmentoE: Institut Theologia, 1983.
- Kobong, Th., *Injil dan Tongkonan*, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008
- Honig, A.G., *Ilmu Agama*, Jakarta : BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987
- Koentjaraningrat, *Sejarah Teori Antropologi I*, Jakarta: UI Press, 2010
- Palebangan, Frans, *Aluk, Adat, dan Adat Istiadat Toraja*, Rantepao : Sulo, 2007
- Said, Abdul Aziz, *Toraja. Simbolisme Unsur Visual Rumah Tradisional*, Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2004
- Yamashita, Shinji, *Manipulasi Tradisi Etnik : Upacara Pemakaman, Pariwisata dan Televisi : Kisah dari Tana Toraja dalam Th. Sumartana, Kisah Dari Kampung Halaman. Masyarakat Suku, Agama Resmi dan Pembangunan*, Yogyakarta : Interfidei, 1996.
- <http://www.masbied.com/2010/11/21/fungsionalis-strukturalisme/>