



## THE RITUAL MEANING OF “MA'NENE” FOR TORAJA SOCIETIES IN INDONESIA

*(Makna Ritual Ma'nene bagi Masyarakat Toraja Sebagai Budaya Indonesia)*

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### Abstract

*Toraja culture with its authenticity makes this culture unique and cannot even be found in other areas. This uniqueness and authenticity is what makes Toraja culture known to foreign countries. Culture includes a way of thinking and a way of acting. This is characteristic of certain societies. This study aims to (1) find out the development of the Ma'nene 'ritual for the Toraja people and (2) to know the symbolic meaning contained in the Ma'nene' ritual. Ma'nene 'is a tradition of the ancestors of the Toraja people, namely the procession of changing ancestral clothes. This research is qualitative descriptive research. Research informants are determined by non-probability sampling. Primary data is carried out through observation and interviews with parties related to the research and secondary data is carried out through library research by reviewing some literature which is closely related to the issues to be discussed. The data that has been collected is then presented in the form of realism narrative and analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that (1) the development of Ma'nene 'rituals that are still being carried out in the Toraja area until now has experienced many changes when compared to the Ma'nene' rituals that were carried out in the past. This is inseparable from the influence of the new religion adopted by the local community at this time which then replaced the previous religion, namely Aluk Todolo. (2) the meaning of Ma'nene 'for the Toraja people is through the ritual of caring for ancestral corpses carried out in this ritual, which is reflected in an attitude of continuing to love, respect and honor ancestral services.*

**Keywords:** makna, ritual, Ma'nene', Toraja

### Abstrak

*Budaya Toraja dengan keasliannya menjadikan budaya ini unik dan bahkan tidak dapat ditemukan di daerah lain. Keunikan dan keaslian inilah yang membuat budaya Toraja dikenal hingga ke mancanegara. Budaya mencakup cara berpikir dan cara bertindak. Ini adalah karakteristik masyarakat tertentu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) mengetahui perkembangan ritual Ma'nene 'bagi masyarakat Toraja dan (2) mengetahui makna simbolik yang terkandung dalam ritual Ma'nene' tersebut. Ma'nene 'merupakan tradisi nenek moyang masyarakat Toraja yaitu prosesi pergantian pakaian leluhur. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Informan penelitian ditentukan dengan non-probability sampling. Data primer dilakukan melalui observasi dan wawancara dengan pihak-pihak yang terkait dengan penelitian dan data sekunder dilakukan melalui studi pustaka dengan menelaah beberapa literatur yang berkaitan erat dengan masalah yang akan dibahas. Data yang telah terkumpul kemudian disajikan dalam bentuk narasi realisme dan dianalisis secara kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) perkembangan ritual Ma'nene 'yang masih dilaksanakan di wilayah Toraja hingga saat ini mengalami banyak perubahan jika dibandingkan dengan ritual Ma'nene' yang dilakukan di masa lalu. Hal tersebut tidak terlepas dari pengaruh agama baru yang dianut masyarakat setempat saat ini yang kemudian menggantikan agama sebelumnya yaitu Aluk Todolo. (2) Makna Ma'nene 'bagi masyarakat Toraja adalah melalui ritual merawat jenazah leluhur yang dilakukan dalam ritual ini, yang tercermin dari sikap senantiasa mencintai, menghormati dan menghormati jasa leluhur.*

**Kata kunci:** Makna, ritual, Ma'nene ', Toraja

## INTRODUCTION

Knowing and preserving traditions and culture is important so Indonesian people we have our own identity and are not easily swayed in the face of the challenges of globalization and literalization which are full of new and foreign values. Edy, 2002. It is not easy for us to be able to maintain or maintain the traditions and cultural heritage of our ancestors, perhaps because of the assumption that ancestral traditions are ancient. Another factor is the limitation of people who understand and know about what and how the tradition is. Thus, it is no wonder that there are traditions of an area that are starting to disappear and tend to be forgotten, but among the tribes in Indonesia, there are still those who maintain the authenticity of their customs and culture, namely the Toraja culture. (Roland.2012)

Toraja culture with its authenticity makes this culture unique and cannot even be found in other regions. This uniqueness and authenticity has made Torajan culture known to foreign countries. Culture includes ways of thinking and ways of acting. This is a characteristic of certain societies. The way of thinking and the way in which it applies consists of language, science, laws, beliefs, religion, music, habits, work, prohibitions, and so on. In general, Toraja culture includes aspects of ideas, concepts, thoughts, language, art, and the results of the culture itself. (Asa. 2010) Thus culture is the knowledge itself possessed by the community, in this case the Toraja people, which is an accumulation of various kinds of experiences. In their life, the Toraja people are very much bound by the prevailing traditional system, so that it has an impact on the existence of traditional ceremonies. In general, the ceremonies that are always held in Toraja are closely related to religious ceremonies or traditional methods of slaughtering pigs, chickens or buffalo.

The life of the Toraja people throughout the year is involved in religious ceremonies such as rice harvest festivals,

traditional house parties, and funeral ceremonies for the dead. In this research, the writer will conduct research on Toraja culture which is a ritual of Toraja society, namely the Ma 'nene' ritual. Not too many people know that the Toraja people have the Maenene ritual because so far what has been put forward more often in the media is the Rambu Solo ceremony. Kurniawan. 2001. Based on the basic classification of Toraja traditional ceremonies, the Ma 'nene' ritual is classified as aluk rampe matampu (solo rambu ceremony). Basically Ma 'nene' means the activity of visiting the graves of ancestors or relatives. In this activity, traditional ceremonies are carried out at the cemetery by offering sacrifices in the form of pigs, chickens and dogs. This ritual is carried out as a form of harmonization of the human relationship with the spirits of the dead after the funeral ceremony. This happens in accordance with the teachings of Aluk Todolo where the ancestral spirits are one of the three persons who should be adored, worshiped, trusted.

In this ceremony, the ritual of changing the tau-tau (statue of a deceased person) is carried out, wrapping the corpse of a relative, and making a new grave (carving the grave). In Torajan terms, there are those who call this Ma 'nene' ritual as ma 'kassai' and some use the term ma'ta'da '. However, not all areas in Toraja perform the Maenene ritual every year. There are even areas that perform this ritual only once in three to five years. This is because Toraja has never been ruled by a single ruler. Its territory consists of customary groups ruled by each of the customary stakeholders. This is where the beginning of Toraja's cultural diversity (H. Benyy. 2011). Although in general Toraja culture is the same, each region has its own cultural characteristics. A funeral ceremony in one place is not quite the same as a funeral ceremony in another place. Likewise, the system of division and naming of the social strata of the community varies from one customary area to another In

Toraja culture, there are many symbolic meanings that even for the younger generation of Toraja themselves as owners of cultural heritage, they do not necessarily know and understand the meaning and purpose of all activities contained in the rituals of the traditional ceremonies that are carried out (Riyadi, 2003).

The above situation occurs because of the lack of acts of cultural passing from the older generation to the younger generation. In addition, the young generation's lack of concern for their cultural heritage is a fact that culture is acquired through a learning process from society and its environment. (Iye, 2018) If the ignorance of this younger generation is not as straightforward to be answered, then it is not impossible that the Ma 'nene' ritual, which has received less attention, will be slowly abandoned and then lost because there is no inheritance of cultural knowledge and finally the cultural values that we have can only appear as a historical story. The writings or literature that specifically discuss this tradition are still very limited. Of course this is a deep concern for the Toraja people in particular.

In addition, technological advances and the entry of foreign cultures into our country, whether consciously or not, have slowly made their own culture which should have been preserved into oblivion. The demands of the times that put pressure on the community to always be cultured according to the times, made the original culture of our nation slowly eliminated from modern life where there had been a big mistake in society in interpreting modernization (Mattulada, 2007). This is clearly seen in the younger generation who do not care about traditional customs and culture because of the assumption that traditional customs and culture are ancient. This results in their ignorance of the customs and culture of their own area. Yet with a lack of knowledge on culture itself will have a bad impact on the future development of the nation, one of which is losing one's

identity as the Indonesian nation. Therefore, this research is expected to give respect to the indigenous cultures of our nation as a form of national culture and to avoid misperceptions for people who are outside the Toraja tribe. Based on the description above which then becomes the basic assumption of research to conduct a research on Ma 'nene' ritual. Departing from a concept of the meaning of symbols in the Maenene ritual, it is hoped that later it can become a reference in providing solutions to existing problems, with the hope that the Toraja people can know or understand further the Maenene ritual. The meaning in the Ma'nene 'ritual is considered important because it can give a special meaning to this tradition, thus allowing a general picture in perceiving the meaning of the Ma'nene' ritual later.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this research is the semiotic approach. The semiotic approach is an approach that has its own system, in the form of a sign system. (Sofie, at.al.) Signs that are meaningful can be icons, indexes, or symbols. Based on the type, this research is a qualitative descriptive study, where the researcher will try to provide an overview of the procession and the meaning of the symbolic messages contained in the Ma 'nene' ritual process and provide understanding to the younger generation, especially the Toraja tribe and people outside the Toraja tribe.

Sources of research data were obtained from informants, the authors used a nonprobability sampling technique, that is, every informant who is considered to have mastered Toraja customs, does not have the same possibility of being selected as an informant. The selected informants were members of the Toraja community who really understood the Maenene ritual. The informants in this study were traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community leaders. (Soerjono, 2021)

The research data consists of two, namely, primary data and secondary data. Data collection was carried out by means of observation and interviews. The data analysis technique used is qualitative by presenting data in the form of narrative realism based on information obtained through observations, in-depth interviews and other sources relevant to the research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the teachings of Aluk Todolo, Tana Toraja has a number of ritual properties. Despite having embraced a new religion, the rituals passed down from generation to generation to the Toraja people were not abandoned. The Toraja people remain faithful in carrying out the unique traditions that become Toraja identity. One of the rituals that are still carried out today besides the death ceremony of Rambu Solo 'is the Ma'nene' ritual. Ma'nene 'is a tradition of the ancestors of the Toraja people which used to aim for the spirits of the ancestors and parents to protect and care for their descendants who are still living in the world.

### ***The development of Ma'nene 'rituals in Toraja society***

In the past the Ma'nene 'ritual was always carried out in all areas in Tana Toraja every year after the rice harvest. However, in its development the areas in Tana Toraja have differences in the time of implementation. There are regions that perform this ritual only occasionally, that is, depending on the result of the derivative agreement, so that this tradition can occur at long intervals, so that this tradition can occur at long intervals, on the grounds of time and funds owned. by the family because there is no obligation to be carried out every year. If, the implementation is usually carried out after the big harvest in the local area and adjusts it to a holiday for children and grandchildren so that those who live outside the area can also attend. However, in certain areas the Ma'nene 'ritual is a must which is

carried out every year after the rice harvest. Although in practice today, this tradition has undergone many changes in terms of the rituals performed and their meaning. This happened as a result of the entry of a new religion which was eventually adopted by the local community. After the entry of Christianity, the meaning of Ma'nene 'ritual was also Christianized so that some rituals that were previously performed are no longer practiced today because they are considered not in accordance with religious teachings.

Before looking deeper into the development of Ma'nene 'rituals in Toraja people, first we will see how the Ma'nene rituals according to the informants. According to Mr. Semuel Sanda said:

*"Ma'nene" is a tradition of going to the graves of parents or other relatives while performing rituals to remember and love relatives who have died. But in the past, when the religion of the people here was Aluk Todolo, pa'neneran was carried out so that the spirits of our parents and ancestors always protected and gave us blessings. As rice grows fertile, no one in our family is sick, the animals we raise are also not sick and fat. So, when it comes to the pa'neneran period, the Toraja area must be busy because the families living far outside the area all come to take part in the Ma'nene 'event because of the importance of this Ma'nene event. There are also rules if you want to make a new burrow, you can only do it in the eighth month. Apart from the month of Pa'neneran, you cannot. If it is a burrow that is not finished yet then it is over the eighth month or period of Ma'nene ", the carving activities must stop and wait until the next eight months, if the Ma'nene people" can only continue.*

According to Aluk Todolo's belief, death is just a change in the nature of life, from the human realm to the spirit called Puya. Puya is a world of spirits, a gathering place for all spirits located in the southern part of human habitation. As stated by Mr. J. Tumonglo regarding Ma'nene 'is:

*"If Toraja people die, it doesn't mean they are really dead, but they live in Puya, which is the world of the dead. That is why when Toraja people die, buffalo and pigs are always slaughtered because that is what they will provide for them later Puya. If someone has been buried, there is another tradition that must be carried out for the dead person, that's what is called Ma'nene '. So, Ma'nene 'is a tradition of the Toraja people to take care of the bodies of their parents and other families. It is done as a form of compassion for the spirits of those who have died so that they will keep and care for us who are still alive in the world."*

Aluk Todolo's teachings firmly believe that the spirits of people who have died will still pay attention and give blessings to the descent on the real earth if the living humans still make offerings to spirits and do not violate the taboos that have been regulated in Aluk Todolo's teachings. Therefore, the Toraja people believe that there is a relationship between humans and the spirits of the dead after being buried in fact continuously and there is reciprocity. The explanation above is an explanation from the point of view of traditional leaders and the community. There is also an opinion from the theological point of view expressed by Pdt. Uzak, S.Th.

*"In general, the Ma'nene ritual" is a visit to the grave which is carried out by a family group, in order to visit the family's children who have left. If, seen from the theological point of view, Ma'nene 'is a form of love for the family who has died, because in the theological view, we have to share love with everyone, even the corpse. So, Ma'nene 'becomes a container to manifest love from the living Si to the dead, but that happens it is no longer a reciprocal relationship. Even so, there are still many people who carry out this Ma'nene ritual with the motive that they will still receive*

*protection and blessings from the spirits of their ancestors. "*

After discussing what the Ma'nene ritual is based on the opinion of the informants, it can be concluded that basically the core meaning of the Ma'nene ritual in the present has changed. If, in the past, the Ma'nene ritual was carried out so that the life of the family who was still alive in the world would still receive protection and blessings from the spirits of the ancestors and parents who had died, then in the present time the meaning is a form of love from the living family for the already dead. From this change in meaning, it becomes clear that the change in meaning that is happening now is inseparable from the regulatory system adopted by society today which ultimately greatly influences the development of Ma'nene 'rituals today.

The entry of Christianity in Toraja had a very big influence on the development of Ma'nene 'rituals today. Rev. Uzak revealed that:

*"Ma'nene rituals" today are influenced by several factors, one of which is the belief system that is currently adhered to by the community. Based on this belief, several rituals that are considered not in accordance with Christian teachings are no longer carried out. However, I think the Ma'nene 'ritual must be maintained, even though not all priests agree with me. The meaning of ritual alone is necessary and must be Christianized. If in the past, when people still embraced the Aluk Todolo belief, the meaning was to get protection and blessings from the spirits of people who had died, now it means more as an obligation for Christians to continue to love one another even if it is for corpses. This is where the role of religious figures is needed so that people do not continue to drift into belief in spirits. The spirits of the dead do not have the power and capacity to protect, let alone bless us who*

*are alive. After the conversion of Christianity in Toraja, there were no more offerings given to the spirits of the dead. Slavery is also completely abolished because in Christian teachings, no one can be a servant of another, other than being a servant of God. These things have a very big influence on the Ma'nene ritual now and in my opinion, the Ma'nene ritual that exists today has evolved from before where there were no longer any people who became servants or aristocrats. Everything is the same now. "*

The system of community regulation that is adopted today requires that several rituals that were once obligatory to be carried out, are now obliged to be abandoned. Yunus said that:

*"The old Pa'neneran was complicated and the rituals were long. For example, during the Aluk Todolo era, there was a ritual for people to offer chicken wings, dog ears and pigs, or buffalo noses to spirits that were placed on fern leaves, then put into a grave. But now the ritual has been abandoned because it is not in accordance with Christian teachings that we now believe. In the past, there was also a taboo for people to eat rice when the Pa'neneran period arrived because rice was a divine food that was not eaten by spirits. So, people are also not allowed to eat rice when the Pa'neneran period comes. But now people have eaten rice even in the month of Pa'neneran as long as it's not eaten at the cemetery. "*

The explanation of the two informants above illustrates that the Ma'nene 'ritual at this time is clearly influenced by the community regulatory system adopted.

#### ***The symbolic meaning contained in the Ma'nene 'ritual***

Ma'nene 'is a tradition to remember ancestors, siblings and other friends who have died unia. For the Toraja people, the Ma'nene 'ritual is also interpreted as the glue of kinship between them. Even Ma'nene 'is an unwritten customary rule that is always obeyed by every citizen.

Tana Toraja is known for its unique traditions that carry specific meanings, such as the Ma'nene 'ritual. To find out the meaning of the message implied in the Ma'nene 'ritual, a question was asked to the informant, namely what is the meaning contained in the implementation of the Ma'nene' ritual? Mr. Paul stated that:

*"The core meaning of Ma'nene" is how we show love, compassion, and respect for our ancestors and parents who had already left us. So, we always remember them by holding Pa'neneran every eight months. "*

In the opinion of Mr. Yunus are:

*"The world of the dead or Puya is actually still around us. Humans living with the spirits of the dead are only limited by a kind of grass which is called poreanan. That's why we often hear that someone is still meeting their parents even though their parents have long since died. Between the living and the spirits of the dead, longing and compassion are still intertwined. So, through this Ma'nene 'ritual we show it to the spirits of our ancestors and our ancestors will give us prosperity, blessings, and generous fortune. So, the meaning that we can catch through Pa'neneran is sharing love with the ancestors.*

Furthermore, Pdt. Uzak, STh. provides an explanation that:

*The first "meaning of the message implied in the Ma'nene ritual" itself is a form of love and affection for parents, grandmothers, and other families who have died earlier. The second is as a way of preserving our culture, the Toraja people. The current situation is, not all*

*villages in Toraja do Ma'nene 'every year. Only in certain areas the Ma'nene 'do it once a year. The third meaning is as a place to build emotional bonds with other families who live far outside the region. If it is August (Pa'neneran month), relatives who live far away will return to their hometowns. It was at that time that we met each other again. So, Pa'neneran made our families who went overseas remember to return home. "*

The view of Mr. J. Tumonglo, the implied meaning of the Ma'nene 'ritual is:

*"The meaning contained in the Ma'nene ritual" is very good. Ma'nene 'ritual has a meaning as a tradition that shows love and respect for parents and ancestors and always remembers their services even though they are dead. By respecting them, we will still be cared for and blessed. "*

## CLOSING

In its development, the Ma'nene 'ritual which is still practiced in the Toraja area until now has undergone many changes, when compared to the Ma'nene' ritual in the past. This is inseparable from the influence of the new religion adopted by the local community at this time which later replaced the previous religion, namely Aluk Todolo. Through the ritual of caring for corpses which is carried out in this ritual, it is reflected in an attitude of continuing to love, respect, uphold, and remember melting services. This is the symbolic meaning contained in the Ma'nene 'ritual. By performing the Ma'nene 'ritual, the ancestors will always provide prosperity, protect, and provide adequate sustenance for their descendants, according to the beliefs of the local community. With the changes that have occurred in the implementation of the Ma'nene 'ritual, it is hoped that this tradition will be preserved and will not gradually be eroded by modernization. It is imperative that the symbolic meaning contained in the

Ma'nene 'ritual be maintained and socialized so that it can be understood by all parties so that this ritual can continue without losing its meaning.

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