

THE NATURE OF TRADITIONAL MINAHASAN MARRIAGE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature of Minahasa traditional marriage in the perspective of Protestant Christian beliefs, describing the acculturation process between local traditions and religious teachings. The study shows that Minahasa traditional marriage has undergone significant transformation with the inclusion of Protestant Christian influences, creating a unique synthesis between traditional and spiritual values. The role of family and community in marriage remains significant but has undergone reinterpretation, encompassing aspects of spiritual and material support. Traditional concepts such as 'mapalus' (gotong royong) took on a new dimension in the church context. The responsibilities of husband and wife have also shifted towards a more egalitarian direction, although some traditional aspects remain. In conclusion, Minahasa traditional marriage in a Protestant Christian perspective reflects the harmonization between cultural heritage and religious beliefs, showing how tradition and modernity can go hand in hand. This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of culture and religion in Indonesia, and highlights the importance of an ongoing dialogue between customary traditions and religious teachings in the context of social change.

KEYWORDS *Minahasa customary marriage, Protestant Christianity, cultural acculturation, tradition, spirituality*



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INTRODUCTION

Minahasa, a region located at the northern tip of Sulawesi Island, has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Minahasan people are known for their unique traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting the local wisdom and

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values upheld by the people. Minahasa culture is not only reflected in the language and daily customs, but also in various rituals and ceremonies that are an integral part of community life (Turang, 1997). In Minahasa socio-culture, marriage has a very important position. Marriage is not just the union of two individuals, but also the union of two extended families and even two communities. Minahasa traditional marriage rituals are full of meaning and symbolism that reflect the philosophy of life of the local community. Through marriage, cultural values and social norms are passed on, ensuring the continuity of Minahasa cultural identity in the midst of modernization (Lonto, L., & Pangalila, 2021).

Over time, the entry of Protestant Christianity into the Minahasa region has brought significant changes in the social and cultural dynamics of the community. The influence of Protestant Christianity is not only seen in spiritual aspects, but also in various customary practices, including marriage. The acculturation process between Christian values and Minahasa customs has produced a unique synthesis that enriches the meaning and implementation of marriage ceremonies (Pangemanan, S., & Lumolos, 2022). The encounter between Minahasa customs and Protestant Christian teachings in the context of marriage creates an interesting cultural phenomenon to study. On the one hand, Minahasan people try to maintain the essence of ancestral traditions, while on the other hand they also adopt Christian values in their marital life. The harmonization of these two elements does not always go smoothly, but it has produced a distinctive form of marriage, reflecting the dual identity of the Minahasa people as custodians of tradition as well as adherents of Protestant Christianity (Sumampouw, 2019).

The study of the nature of Minahasa traditional marriage in the perspective of Protestant Christian beliefs is important to understand how Minahasan people negotiate between their cultural heritage and religious beliefs. This understanding is not only beneficial for cultural preservation, but also to bridge the potential gap between tradition and modernity in the context of marriage in the contemporary era. Therefore, the focus of this research is how the nature of marriage and Protestant Christian beliefs in Minahasa society?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an analytical descriptive method. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the phenomenon of Minahasa traditional marriage from the perspective of Protestant Christian beliefs. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to explore the meaning, symbols, and acculturation processes that occur in the practice of customary marriage and Protestant Christian teachings in the Minahasa community.

Research Location This research was conducted in the Minahasa area, North Sulawesi. The selection of this location is based on the existence of the Minahasa people who have a strong tradition of traditional marriage and the majority embrace

Protestant Christianity. Villages that are customary centers, as well as active church communities, will be the main focus of this research.

Research Subject The subjects of this study are traditional leaders, church leaders, married couples who have held Minahasa traditional marriages from a Protestant Christian perspective, as well as the general public involved in marriage ceremonies. The selection of subjects was carried out purposively, namely based on their involvement and knowledge of customary and religious marriage practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Marriage and Protestant Christianity in Minahasa

Minahasa traditional marriage is a profound social institution, reflecting the values and philosophy of life of the local community. More than just the union of two individuals, marriage in the Minahasan context is seen as a sacred bond that unites two extended families and even two communities. The ultimate goal is not only to build a new family, but also to preserve cultural heritage, strengthen social ties and ensure the continuity of Minahasa society (Renwarin, 2019). The Minahasa traditional marriage process consists of several meaningful stages. It starts with the engagement stage or 'maso minta' where the man's family formally asks for the blessing to marry the daughter of the woman's family. This is followed by the 'kaweng' or wedding ceremony itself, which involves a series of complex rituals. After the wedding, the couple undergoes the 'maleaya' ritual or a visit to the extended family home, which serves to cement the relationship between the families (Tangkudung, P. M., & Senduk, 2020).

In a traditional Minahasa wedding ceremony, various symbols and rituals play an important role. One of the most significant is the 'maengket', a traditional dance that symbolizes unity and joy. The ritual of 'handing over the dowry' or 'wedding treasure' also has a deep meaning, not just as a material transaction, but as a symbol of respect and responsibility. The use of traditional clothing, the exchange of rings, and the blessing by the elders are also important elements that are loaded with cultural meaning (Supit, B., & Masinambow, 2021).

Meanwhile, the Protestant Christian perspective on marriage brings a spiritual dimension that enriches the understanding of the marriage bond in Minahasa. In Protestant Christianity, marriage is seen as an institution ordained by God, not just a social contract. This makes marriage a sacred covenant between husband, wife, and God (Titaley, 2022). According to the Bible, the purpose of marriage includes aspects such as spiritual and physical intimacy, procreation, and complementarity between husband and wife. Marriage is also seen as a reflection of the relationship between Christ and His church, emphasizing aspects of love, sacrifice, and faithfulness (Lumintang, 2020).

The principles of Christian marriage include monogamy, faithfulness, mutual respect, and unconditional love. Christian teachings also emphasize the importance of the husband's role as a servant leader and the wife as an equal helper. Lifelong

commitment and mutual spiritual growth are also key elements in the Christian understanding of marriage (Manoppo, 2023).

The integration of the Minahasan concept of traditional marriage and the Protestant Christian perspective has created a unique synthesis. Christian Minahasan people now undergo marriage ceremonies that combine traditional elements with ecclesiastical rituals, reflecting their dual identity as Minahasan people and as Christians.

The Nature of Marriage and Protestant Christian Beliefs in Minahasa Society

The encounter between Minahasa customs and Protestant Christian beliefs in the context of marriage has produced a unique and interesting phenomenon of acculturation. This process did not happen suddenly, but was the result of a long and dynamic interaction between local cultural heritage and the religious teachings brought by European missionaries. The Minahasan people, who had embraced Protestant Christianity since the 19th century, creatively integrated elements of their new faith into long-entrenched customary practices. In marriage ceremonies, this acculturation is evident through the fusion of traditional rituals and ecclesiastical processions. For example, before the church blessing ceremony, couples often undergo traditional rituals such as 'maso minta' (engagement) and 'kaweng' (traditional marriage). However, Christian elements such as blessing prayers and Bible readings are also incorporated into the event. The use of Minahasan traditional attire combined with Christian wedding attributes such as white dresses and black suits also reflects a harmonious blend of local traditions and Western influences (Pantouw, V. R. B., & Palar, 2021).

Interestingly, many values in Minahasa customs are in line with Christian teachings, thus facilitating this acculturation process. For example, the concept of 'mapalus' in Minahasa culture, which emphasizes mutual cooperation and togetherness, aligns with Christian teachings on love and service. Similarly, respect for parents and ancestors in Minahasan customs is in harmony with the biblical command to honor father and mother. Values such as loyalty, sacrifice and responsibility in marriage are also points of convergence between Minahasan customs and Christian teachings.

However, this acculturation process also involves adjustments and negotiations, especially when there are aspects of adat that are considered to be in conflict with Christian principles. For example, the practice of giving 'wedding treasures' which in Minahasan tradition can be very expensive, has undergone modification to emphasize its symbolic rather than material value. This is in line with Christian teachings that emphasize simplicity and the spiritual value of marriage.

Rituals related to pre-Christian animist beliefs have also undergone adjustments. For example, the ritual of asking for blessings to ancestral spirits has been transformed into prayers of gratitude to God for the blessings of the ancestors. Similarly, the use of amulets in marriage ceremonies has been replaced with Christian symbols such as the cross or the Bible. This acculturation process does not always go smoothly. There were times when there was tension between those who wanted to maintain the purity of adat

and those who wanted a stricter application of Christian teachings. However, over time, the Minahasan people have managed to create a unique synthesis, where their cultural identity as Minahasan people and religious identity as Christians can go hand in hand.

This phenomenon shows that acculturation between custom and religion is not a rigid or one-way process, but rather an ongoing dialog. Minahasan people continue to negotiate between their cultural heritage and their religious beliefs, creating a dynamic and contextualized form of cultural expression. This not only enriches Minahasan marriage practices, but also provides an example of how local tradition and universal religion can integrate harmoniously.

From a Protestant Christian perspective, Minahasa traditional marriage undergoes a significant transformation of meaning, resulting in a unique synthesis of traditional and spiritual values. The spiritual meaning of marriage in this context becomes deeper and more complex, reflecting the fusion of Minahasan local wisdom and Christian teachings. Marriage, in this view, is understood not just as a social bond or contract between two individuals, but rather as a sacred covenant involving three parties: husband, wife and God. This concept is rooted in biblical teachings that depict marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. In the Minahasan context, this understanding enriches the traditional meaning of marriage as the union of two extended families, adding a vertical dimension to the previously more horizontal bond.

The spiritual meaning of marriage is also reflected in the understanding that the marriage bond is a means of spiritual growth for the couple. Through marital life, husband and wife are called to support each other in their faith journey, reflecting the love of Christ in their daily lives. This concept extends the traditional Minahasan understanding of marriage as a means to build a family and preserve the bloodline. In this spiritual context, traditional Minahasa rituals related to marriage have been reinterpreted. For example, the 'maso minta' (engagement) ritual, traditionally understood as a negotiation between two families, is now also seen as a process of seeking God's will. Similarly, the 'kaweng' (traditional marriage) ceremony is no longer just a social celebration, but also a sacred moment where the couple makes a commitment before God and the community (Lontoh, J. E., & Tulung, 2020).

The spiritual meaning of marriage also emphasizes a deeper aspect of unity. The Christian teaching of "two becoming one flesh" is integrated with the Minahasan concept of family unity. The result is a more holistic understanding of marriage, where unity is not only physical and social, but also spiritual. The couple is seen as a spiritual unit called to serve God and society together. Furthermore, the spiritual meaning of marriage in this context also includes aspects of mission and service. The Minahasa Christian family is seen as the basic unit of the church and society, with the responsibility to be witnesses of faith and agents of social change. Marriage, then, is not only about personal happiness, but also about the call to participate in God's plan for the world.

It is important to note that the integration of these spiritual meanings into traditional Minahasan marriage is not a uniform or unchallenging process. There are

variations in interpretation and application, depending on denominational background, level of education, and involvement in the church. Some groups emphasize the traditional elements, while others focus more on the Christian spiritual aspects. Despite these variations, the spiritual meaning of marriage in the Minahasa Protestant Christian context has generally enriched the understanding of marriage. It creates a more holistic view, where social, cultural and spiritual aspects are harmoniously integrated. The result is a concept of marriage that is not only culturally relevant, but also spiritually rich, reflecting the unique identity of the Minahasa Christian community.

Minahasa traditional marriages influenced by Protestant Christian beliefs show a unique blend of tradition and religion. In this context, the role of family and community remains very important, but undergoes a transformation in meaning and practice. Family is no longer only understood as blood ties, but also as part of the "family of God", extending the support network in marriage. Pre-marriage processes such as engagement or "maso minta" now involve seeking God's guidance, combining traditional wisdom with spiritual aspects. Society, especially the church community, plays an important role in providing spiritual and practical support.

The concept of "mapalus" or mutual cooperation takes on a new dimension in the Christian context, seen in wedding preparation and post-wedding support. Wedding rituals combine traditional elements such as "kaweng" with church blessings, creating a sacred atmosphere that combines tradition and religiosity. Post-wedding, the tradition of "maleaya" or visits to extended family is now accompanied by joint prayers and Bible readings. The community also plays a role in supervision and support, integrating the concept of "holy living" with traditional values of family honor.

In the education of children, the role of extended family and community reflects a blend of local wisdom and Christian values. Despite the challenges of modernity, the core of family and community involvement in Minahasa-Christian marriage remains strong, showing a harmonious synthesis between tradition and faith that continues to evolve with social change. Traditional Minahasa marriages influenced by Protestant Christian beliefs show a unique blend of tradition and religion. In Minahasa Protestant Christian society, the role of family and community remains very important, but undergoes a transformation in meaning and practice. Family is no longer only understood as blood ties, but also as part of the "family of God", extending the support network in marriage.

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The community also plays a role in supervision and support, integrating the concept of "holy living" with traditional values of family honor. In child education, the role of the extended family and community reflects a blend of local wisdom and Christian values. Despite the challenges of modernity, the core of family and community involvement in Minahasa-Christian marriage remains strong, demonstrating a harmonious synthesis between tradition and faith that continues to evolve with social change.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description that has been presented, it can be concluded that Minahasa traditional marriage from a Protestant Christian perspective is a unique phenomenon that reflects a harmonious blend of local cultural heritage and religious teachings. This acculturation process has resulted in a rich and deep understanding of the nature of marriage, where traditional Minahasa values and Christian principles complement and enrich each other. The spiritual meaning of marriage in this context becomes more complex, going beyond a mere social bond or contract between two individuals. Marriage is understood as a sacred covenant involving God, creating a vertical dimension that enriches the horizontal relationship between the couple and the extended family. This concept expands the traditional Minahasan understanding of marriage as the union of two families, adding aspects of spiritual growth and the call to participate in God's plan.

The role of family and community in marriage remains significant, but is reinterpreted in the light of Christian teachings. The involvement of extended family and community is not only in social and material aspects, but also in providing spiritual support and maintaining marital integrity. The concept of 'mapalus' or gotong royong takes on a new dimension in the church context, creating a wider network of support for couples. Spousal responsibilities have also undergone a transformation, shifting from the traditional patriarchal model to a more egalitarian one. While the husband is still seen as the head of the family, this concept is now better understood in the context of servant leadership.

Wives are no longer seen as mere housekeepers, but as equal partners in building the family and serving God. Family decision-making has become more collaborative, reflecting the values of deliberation and mutual respect. This phenomenon shows that tradition and modernity, custom and religion, can go hand in hand and enrich each other. Minahasa traditional marriage from a Protestant Christian perspective is an example of how cultural and religious identities can be harmoniously integrated, creating a dynamic and contextualized form of cultural expression.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions can be made. First, it is important to continue to maintain a balance between the preservation of customary values and the application of Christian teachings in marriage practices. This can be done through continuous dialogue between traditional leaders, church leaders and the general public to ensure that the synthesis that occurs remains relevant and meaningful.

Secondly, there needs to be a systematic effort to document and study this acculturation process.

Further research on how customary values and Christian teachings interact in the context of Minahasa marriage could provide valuable insights into the dynamics of culture and religion in Indonesia. Third, premarital education and coaching that integrates an understanding of Minahasan customs and Christian teachings needs to be developed and strengthened. This will help the younger generation of Minahasa to better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage while living a marital life that is in accordance with their Christian beliefs. Finally, this model of Minahasa traditional marriage from a Protestant Christian perspective can serve as an example for other communities in Indonesia on how local traditions and universal religion can integrate harmoniously. The exchange of experiences and cross-cultural learning can enrich our understanding of diversity and unity in the context of multicultural Indonesia.

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