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WOMAN LEADERSHIP IN TOBA BATAK SOCIETY A CRITICAL STUDY ON PATRIARCHY

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Abstracts:

The main problem of this research is an attempt to highlight the important aspect that leads to the inequality and marginalization of women in Toba Batak society, including their exclusion from leadership roles. The research aims to discover the root roots of discrimination practiced by Toba Batak women. The researchers used a combination of qualitative and library research methods. The researchers tried to determine basic assumptions about the problem of discrimination that occurred in Toba Batak women through interviews. Afterward, the data was collected, and then the researchers interpreted and processed it through previous investigations through library research. The research result found that the discrimination against women is rationalized by the patriarchal system which is persistent and enduring even to this day. The role of the patriarchal system that resulted in the gender-inequality system is those acts that subordinate women in Toba Batak society. Cultural beliefs and rituals have created an attitude among the Toba Batak to view men as first class and women as second class. Therefore, the Toba Batak people have introduced a breach between men and women, consciously or unconsciously. The conclusion of the study is the need for evaluation and renewal of understanding of Toba Batak's cultural values. This renewal can be useful for creating equal

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opportunities for men and women including in leadership. Finally, the researchers offer pastoral invitation to the importance of equality between men and women as the image of God through family formation.

Keywords:

inequality; leadership; marginalization; patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

This research will examine the persisting experiences of *Toba Batak* women (TBW) in the society of North Sumatra, Indonesia. Gender inequality in social and political life remains a challenge for societies and institutions. Culturally, the regime strengthened the patriarchal structure in *Toba Batak* society (TBS)[1] by placing limits on the possibilities for the TBW, including as a leader in the community. The TBS revolves around the descendants of the village's founder, who assume the role of royalty, and a pair of lineages that only count men. The *Toba Batak* community has three goals in life namely *hamoraon* (wealth), *hagabeon* (many descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor).[2] In all the struggles of life, the *Toba Batak* people attempt to realize these three goals. The village head has the right to determine the members of the community who have accomplished the three goals of life. Customarily, the families who have prospered in realizing the three goals have a degree in society. The TBS villages are ruled by man as the council of elders, chiefs, and chiefs councils under positions in the founder's lineage. The TBP are one of the tribes in Indonesia that originate from the Lake Toba area.[3]

1 Doangsa Situmeang, *Dalihan Na Tolu Sistem Sosial Kemasyarakatan Batak-Toba (Dalihan Na Tolu Social System of Toba Batak Society)* (Jakarta: Kerabat, 2007), 32–33.

2 Prinsi Rigitta, "Analisis Kedudukan Sosial Perempuan Batak Toba Dalam Konteks Kesusastraan," *Normatif* 1, no. 1 (2021): 50.

3 Harisan Boni Firmando, "Aktualisasi Status Sosial Melalui Upacara Adat Masyarakat Batak Toba Di Kawasan Danau Toba," *Aceh Anthropological Journal* 6, no. 1 (2022): 28, https://doi.org/10.29103/aaj.v6i1.5721.

The right to control village affairs is given to the entire male lineage from the descendants of the founder to the next village head.[4] They preside over various ceremonies, over some judicial matters and are socially expected to set high moral standards for everyone to follow. The TBP are generally members of a village community and are obligated to follow all the cultural values and practices to live in a societal relationship among them. Over time, this conventional obligation became a greater principle and developed as the supreme aim of life for all the members of the *Toba Batak* community. This value is supported by the maxim of *Toba Batak*, "*togu urat ni bulu, toguan urat ni padang, togu pe na nidok ni uhum, toguan na nidok ni padan*" which means the roots of the bamboo are strong but the roots of the grass are stronger."[5]

Based on the history of *Toba Batak* culture, which is part of a patriarchal culture, women do not have the opportunity to be leaders. The TBP firmly adheres to the principle of gender-blind anthropocentrism. With this cultural background, women do not have the right to be leaders. The researchers affirm that *Toba Batak's* patriarchal system excludes women from leadership and public life at the same time relegates them to a different sphere or realm.

The discrimination experienced by TBW is also experienced in various cultures that adhere to a patriarchal system that believes that "control is an essential element of patriarchy".[6] Discrimination is defined as making unfair and morally unjustified differentiation in one's treatment of people based on gender, age, race, religion, and other factors.[7] In this study, the Toba Batak still practiced discrimination

4 Vergouwen, *The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northhern Sumatra* (The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 111.

5 Vergouwen J.C., *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northern Sumatra* (Netherlands: Publication Commissioned and Financed, 1964), 142.

6 Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 13.

7 D R Kiran, *Professional Ethics and Human Values* (India: McGraw Hill Education, 2014), 229.

specifically an equal position of women in the culture. [8]This has led to the mainstream that "patriarchy is a system of domination" which created the problem of gender blindness.[9] Analysis of the domination of women due to gender differences shows that there is an existential influence of the patriarchal system in the structure of society.[10] As a result, consciously or unconsciously a patriarchal system is practiced based on control by men over women. The process of domination and control is an attempt by men to show authority over women and patriarchy provides this opportunity.[11] In other words, the oppressive behavior carried out by men against women has perpetuated women's oppression in history.[12]

Discrimination against women is rationalized by the patriarchal system. The patriarchal kinship system is a kinship system that upholds the principle that men have higher dignity or value than women. Therefore, men have special rights in the family, especially to ensure the continuity of the lineage.[13] This system is persistent and enduring, for example, to determine "the names of the Patriarchs and the patriarchal period"[14] is only intended for men. The patriarchal system has given the opportunity completely to place women as objects who must be ready to serve men as servants.[15] Thus, the presence of women in families that adhere to patriarchal understanding is only a matter of fulfilling men's

8 Andreas Fredriko, "Konstruksi Sosial Realitas Perempuan Batak Toba Sebagai Parhobas Pada Komunitas Adat Batak Toba Di Kota Salatiga," *Neo Societal* 9, no. 3 (2024): 52.

9 Filiz Akgul, *Patriarchal Theory Reconsidered: Torture and Gender-Based Violence in Turkey* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 39.

10 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism Globalization and World Religious* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, inc, 2005), 25.

11 Johnson, *The Gender Knot*, 51.

12 Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Know Press, 2005), 46.

13 Raymond F. Gregory, *Women and Workplace Discrimination Overcoming Barriers to Gender Equality* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 116.

14 Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* (New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1974), 17.

15 Cornelius F. Murphy, *Beyond Feminism: Toward a Dialogue on Difference* (United States of America: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 7.

needs, likewise in the TBS. This is the root of the problems and problems resulting from the patriarchal system.[16]

The women can only submit to the laws, the gods, the customs, and the truths created by the males. Pui-lan an Asian Feminist who wrote from the first Asian Women's Consultation on Inter-faith Dialogue, explains similarity with the previous feminist thinkers regarding how the world of religions in the Asian context had been practicing discriminatory laws and religious practices against women, the limitation of women's leadership and ritualistic roles. She affirms, "Women of all religions continue to be marginalized and discriminated against at the societal level".[17] The main purpose of the research is the examination and critical analysis of TBS and its patriarchal culture concerning its position in leadership. Hence, this research intends to look for possible ways forward and methods to liberate and empower to create equal space to be a leader in the Toba Batak society.

METHOD

The researchers used a combination of qualitative and library research methods. The researchers tried to determine basic assumptions about the problem of discrimination that occurred in Toba Batak women through interviews. Afterward, the data was collected, and then the researchers interpreted and processed it through previous investigations through library research. To deeply understand the reality of discrimination in culture, the author uses the theoretical thinking of Pierre Bourdieu. From the socio-cultural analysis, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural dispositions and practices will be used to understand

16 Elisabeth Schὺssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: Critical Feminist Ecclesiology of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 19.

17 Megawati Naibaho, "The Investigating the Oppression of Toba Batak Women: Call for Empowerment and Woman Leadership," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 23, no. 1 (2023): 156–74, https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v23i1.518.

how the TBS express and reproduce their habits and behavior that are seen to dictate the culture and the force of patterns of practices that are translated into moral standards. With Bourdieu's analysis, this research hopes to bring into focus the root of women's subjugation in the culture's beliefs, rituals, social arrangements, and habitual practices. It is to be understood that the power of TBW subjugation lies in the power of cultural patterns and memory regarding the place, status, and role assignment of women. Cultural patterns and memory have produced solidified practices that further define women's place or subjugated space in the *Toba Batak* state of affairs. This way, a cultural analysis will bring about a more appropriate proposal in addressing women's subjection; that is, a culturalist approach (like promoting newer beliefs through habitual alternative practices) may be similarly called forth to foster women's emancipation, specifically in leadership.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Toba Batak Culture and Context of Leadership

The status of the TBW can be evaluated based on the ethnic identity and origins of the TBP in general, especially the socio-political structure of TBP and the cultural values and virtues. The TBP are generally rural and agricultural people. The TBS claimed to have a strong patriarchal and patrilineal *marga* (clan) system. The claimed patriarchy, or the subservient and unequal position of women, is a strong element of the cultural matrix of the *Toba Bataks*.[18]

The *Toba Batak* cultural values created an imbalance in the social structure that discriminated against women, especially the leadership rank. This is to show that the oppressive and inequitable character of the

[18] Megawati Manullang, "Inkulturasi Dalihan Natolu: Bentuk Misi Kristen Di Tanah Batak," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 2, no. 1 (2018): 4–5.

treatment of women lies deep in the culture of the TBP. The TBW are subordinated because of an attitude dictated by the cultural belief systems, especially the social system of *marga*, which places women under the authority of men. This is particularly true of women because they must be available to produce male children under the proscription of the *marga* system of values.[19] Under the *marga* system, women must struggle to secure their husband's heirs. Under this circumstance, the TBS breeds gender inequality and subjugation.

This research is the examination and critical analysis of TBS and its patriarchal culture. To liberate and empower the TBW, we should understand the place where they belong, and what is the root causes of the suppressive situations. Hence, this research intends to understand the root causes of the suppressive situation of women and their sufferings. On the other hand, this study intends to look for possible ways forward and methods to liberate and empower them from culturally rooted discriminations, especially on leadership rank.

The Toba Batak Culture

The cultural values and virtues of TBP can be summarized in their two philosophies, namely the Philosophy of *Dalihan Natolu* and the Philosophy of *Hamoraon* (property), *Hagabeon* (descent), and *Hasangapon* (respectability). In this research, the researchers more focuses of explaining the philosophy *Dalihan Natolu* which specifically became the place for the practice of discrimination leadership against women. The Philosophy of *Dalihan Natolu*[20] is one of the basic elements of *Toba Batak* culture and social structure. This is specific to the *Toba Batak* culture. *Dalihan Natolu* means the three poles used in the stove.

19 Vergouwen, *The Social Organization*, 192; Catholic Women's Group at St. Francis of Assisi Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra-Indonesia, interview by researchers, February 14, 2024.

20 Situmeang, *Dalihan Na Tolu*, 205.

The TBP has been cooking using a stove made up of a three-stone pole. The stove must consist of three poles and the three poles must be in harmonious positions and should have the same height to serve as a balanced support. These stove principles are adopted in the social structure of the life of TBP among the three clan groups known as 1) the *hula-hula* which means wife-giver group, 2) the *boru* which means wife–receiving group, and 3) the *dongan sabutuha* which means womb companions or blood relatives group. *Dalihan Natolu* as a philosophical term is connected to the understanding of family ties as very close to each other.[21]

Dalihan Natolu shows the uniqueness of *Toba Batak* culture among other Indonesian cultures. *Dalihan Natolu* is not found in the cultural values of other tribes in Indonesia.[22] *Dalihan Natolu* can be noted as a necessary value that exists within the TBS.[23] Here, the TBP understood that societies are not just collections of people, but it is connected by looking through the kinship order. It can be noted that there exists a configuration of the society reflecting the reality of *Dalihan Natolu*.

The fundamental characteristic of *Dalihan Natolu* as the social structure in *Toba Batak* culture is the existence of different functions with different consolidations within each group that influence the degree of the relation among groups. To maintain the harmonious relationship among the three groups of *Dalihan Natolu*; each group must imbibe the social and moral responsibility to be in solidarity with the other groups. The rule for their connection is, "S*omba marhula-hula, elek marboru and manat mardongan tubu,"* which means show honor and reverence toward

[21] Vergouwen, *The Social Organisation*, 42.
[22] Catholic Women's Group at St. Francis of Assisi of Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra-Indonesia, interview by researchers, February 17, 2024.
[23] Muchtar Pakpahan, *Budaya Politik Pemerintahan Desa Di Batak Toba (Government Political Culture in Toba Batak Village)* (Jakarta: Bumi Intitama Sejahtera, 1999), 23.

your wife-givers, or make thoughtful, earnest requests of your wife-receivers and be watchful about protecting your womb companions."[24]

In the TBS, every member belongs to one of the three functional groups. The TBP adopted the patrilineal system in which a descent group from an assured ancestor used the name of their ancestor to distinguish them from the other members of the other unilineal descent group.[25] The philosophy of *Dalihan Natolu* has a very significant function for the *Toba Batak* culture. It represents the micro-cosmic community and has connected signs with three cosmic worlds according to the *Toba Batak* belief.[26] In every group of *Dalihan Natolu* the leader is a man. Thus, women have no rights as leaders. Even though the group is called *boru*, which means women, the leader is the man, namely the woman's husband. This shows that in *Toba Batak* culture women do not have the right to be leaders.

The Context of Leadership through Adat

The leadership that will be discussed through this research is active involvement in determining important decisions in the field of life in society for all members within it, without discrimination. Every community should provide equal opportunities for all members to be involved in the realm of leadership according to their capacity, not based on gender. Being a leader is understood as an ability that is useful for "empowering" others by paying attention to the rights and obligations of each member of a particular community or organization. Frances Hesselbein expounds that, "Leadership is a responsibility shared by all

[24] Situmeang, *Dalihan Na Tolu*, 221.
[25] Vergouwen, *The Social Organization*, 42.
[26] Anicetus B. Sinaga, *The Toba Batak High God: Transcendence and Immanence* (West Germany: Studia instituti Anthropos, 1981), 65.

members of the organization."[27] The opportunity to become a leader in Toba Batak society is generally held by men and this is considered an ancestral heritage that must be adhered to from one generation to the next. The TBP used their *adat* as the basis for moral judgment in their lives. This happens since the TBP believe that *adat* is the custom of their ancestors who were born into the world, hence they called, "*adat ni ompunta si jolo-jolo tubu*"[28] Which means this is a culture inherited from our ancestors. They believe that they have a link with their ancestors and they devotedly follow their *adat*. They dare not change their *adat* and it was expressed through their proverb: "*martagan sipilitton, maransimun so bolaon, adat ni ama dohot ompu tongka pauba-ubaon*" which means a thing that is small like a gherkin must be dispersed, a thing that is like a cucumber cannot be split.[29] Hence, for the TBP to uphold the customary law of their fathers and forefathers should never be altered.

The impression of "*adat*" for the TBP is well defined as a value system to organize in terms of inheritance, property, marriage law, the procedure of each life-crisis ceremony, the entire kinship system, and the proper behavior between members of various patrilineal kin groups.[30] *Adat* describes the mutual rights and responsibilities between relatives, both living and dead.

The major social function of *Adat* is to instruct and propose guidelines for the TBP on how to behave towards others. Yet, it is not precisely equivalent to either of the laws, the customs, or the culture. However, it includes the family, lineage, kinship system, and relations between wife-giving and wife-receiving groups, as well as all the rituals, life crises, and ceremonial activities that embody and express these

27 Frances Hesselbein, "Transformational Leadership," in *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask about Your Organization/*, ed. Peter F. Drucker et al. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 80.
28 Sinaga, *The Toba Batak High God: Transcendence and Immanence*, 140.
29 Sinaga, 141.
30 Sinaga, 89.

relations among kinsmen.[31] In essence, the *adat* instructs a man on how to relate to people at the highlands, especially those who are equivalent to kinsmen. For the researchers, among the Indonesian tribes, *Toba Batak* had performed their identity through their culture with all its uniqueness and distinctness.

The TBS has the basic structure of the patriarchal stretched group and *marga* is the kinship system in *Toba Batak* culture. This *marga* is a basic rule to distinguish people in the society.[32] They belong to an exogamous system (fashionable) in which a *Toba Batak* man must marry a woman from another separate *marga* from him. Hereafter, the marriage performances will unite the two family members and build up a bond between the two kinship groups. Among the TBP, it is functional and essential to distinguish one's kinship towards others, so she or he knows her or his place in society.

Pierre Bourdieu and the Feminists Perceptions of the Notion of Discrimination

Pierre Bourdieu's Formulation of His Theory of Practice

In this part, the researcher chose Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) who was a French sociologist, philosopher, and anthropologist whose research "left an indelible mark on the field of educational and cultural sociology."[33] He was perhaps the most well-known sociologist of the last quarter of the twentieth century. He was also one of the most provocative. He investigates through Bourdieu's formulation of his theory of practice that goes with the treatment of *habitus*, *doxa, field, class, capital,* and *hysteresis*. The other researchers only explain the doxa that specifically

[31] Vergouwen, *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northern Sumatra*, 147.
[32] Vergouwen, 33.
[33] Michael Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu Agent Provocateur* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 4.

supports explaining the context of discrimination against the TBW. It should be noted, that by using such alternative *key concepts,* Bourdieu can pierce through culture's everyday character and take away much of its solidly ossified and occulted character as natural and eternal. The research will explore the notion of symbolic domination as Bourdieu presents this in his book *Masculine Domination*.

Domination as a consequence of *Toba Batak* patriarchal status, roles, and privileges will be discussed in the light of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus. This is to establish the basis of the notion of domination and suppression of women in the TBS in Indonesia. It is through this section that the subjugation of women through symbolic domination will be analyzed. It is hoped that through this analysis an opening may be made towards alternative lifestyles and practices that counteract women's subjugation as well as construct lifestyles away from masculine domination's taken-for-granted natural and eternal status.

For Bourdieu, "practice" refers 1) to conventional or habitual ways of doing something (for example: marriage customs or ways of talking) and 2) to disciplined training (like the athlete's practice of her skills). Action, thus, is "practical" in two senses. Here, action means that it is composed of and done through practice; and, further, action is directed towards some pursuit or outcome - all with the passion and skills involved in winning that pursuit in a game. Bourdieu even quotes from Karl Marx: "All social life is essentially practical. Bourdieu uses the concept of doxa at the very start of his research on cultures especially through his ethnographic knowledge he tried to analyze the natural order of the traditional societies. In his explanation about doxa, Bourdieu underlined that doxa is grounded upon the ultimate implication, "what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying," and where "the

tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition."[34] This human understanding of doxa had strong implementation at the cultural view that is "what is taken for granted" at the human practicing domination in the cultural environment. Hence, doxa is something strongly linked with the original cultural ceremonial practice which has been used as a tool to control the powerless.[35]

These principles are supported by Toba Batak philosophy, "Anakkonkin do hamoraon di ahu," which means, "the male child is the precious treasure of the family." The cultural values of the *marga* clan system are typically male-oriented in character. The clan gives priority to the male in the family who will continue as the heir. The dynamics of Toba Batak social relations, activity, rights, and obligations conform to the patrilineal *marga* clan's systemic code of behavior. As such, the *marga* system constitutes a type of quasi-political system characterized by highly regulated conduct. A Marga constitutes a group of blood relatives of the same lineage who have a common location in their ancestral domain. Every Batak has a *marga* that specifies their status, identity, and ancestral origin. Because this kinship system is patrilineal, males dominate positions in all family activity, exercise control over wealth, and ensure the daily life of the Marga. In this structure, a father must have a son or sons. This is continued by the Toba Batak people with the belief that ancestral heritage must be continued. This is seen in the following proverb: "martagan sipilitton, maransimun so bolaon, adat ni ama dohot ompu tongka pauba-ubaon"

In this circumstance, "doxa is more precisely used to account for actions and practices in the traditional social organizations where the correspondence between the social structures and mental structures

[34] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 165–167.

[35] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 173–74.

make the natural and social world unquestionable".[36] The consequence of doxa can be shown concretely as the influence of the people who own the power such as categorizations, classes, values, and so on, which have formed the doxa itself. It continues to endure to be misrecognized and reproduced in a self-reinforcing manner. Concerning the practical culture of *Toba Batak,* the concept of doxa can be acknowledged through the attitude of the TBP who accept the cultural values as something required by all the TBP and even consider that cultural principles have supernatural power. It is because they strongly consider that cultural values as inheritance from ancestors.

For Bourdieu, doxa is manifested in the form of belief, which is perceived by society.[37] Like what the TBP strongly believed and valued only men assist in the authorization of the name of lineage and belongings of the family to the male child. Then, the male child has the right to carry on the process of heritage of lineage and be a leader to the next male generation. This shows that the human understanding between men and women has different degrees. Thus male domination is based on the social contracture that principally male is active and female is passive.[38] For Bourdieu, doxa embodied in the human practicing and understanding the doxa as an inherited cultural value and had practiced it without an evaluation, therefore, the doxa creates the possibility of biased practices against certain classes.

The influence of doxa not only takes place in traditional society but also in the modern culture of the present times. As for the traditional practices and values of a particular society, it is evident that many people just follow them blindly without any critical evaluation. Therefore, as a result, doxa is being accepted simply as human beliefs and insights

[36] Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992*, ed. Patrick Champagne et al., trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 182.
[37] Bourdieu, 182.
[38] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2001), 21.

determined by the society. Bourdieu took a very concrete example how the influence of doxa at the "independent social fields which determine natural practice and attitudes through the internalized sense of limits and habitus of the social agents in the fields." Doxa is "a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma."[39]

The Feminist's Perceptions of the Notion of Discrimination

The cultural bias that creates the discrimination, particularly in TBS, demands concern for evaluation about culture as the root of such discrimination "nexus of power relations".[40] From the opposite end of domination, the researcher has a strong expectation that using Bourdieu's notion of criticism of the practice of all the ancestor beliefs in culture will open the opportunity to evaluate culture, especially discrimination due to the patriarchal system and creating spaces for women–creating other lifestyles that may generate alternative beliefs, rituals, organizations, and practices.[41]

Among feminists, sexual and gender essentialisms are primary targets of emasculation. Bourdieu's analysis of sexuality and gender relations is anti-essentialist and, thus, a potent tool to undermine the perpetuation of gender power inequalities.[42] In Toba Batak matrimony is generally done by negotiation of bride price. The Toba Batak people have a special term to describe the procedures for giving the bride price from the groom's family to the bride's family. They used the term *marhata sinamot* which means negotiation on bride price.[43] This occasion is very significant because they will discuss the bride price. The negotiation will

39 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 16.
40 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 166.
41 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 89.
42 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 69.
43 Vergouwen, *The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northhern Sumatra*, 174.

take place only after fulfilling the preliminary proceedings such as the customary rites of permission, the special blessing of an uncle, and the conveying of intention and purpose implemented. The leader who accommodates this ritual is only a man, while the woman who is the wife of the man who leads the ritual does not have any role. The women are present only as *parhobas*, namely servants.[44] Hence, to construct equal space for all, the form of organization in TBS should be evaluated. *Toba Batak* with a patriarchal system is attacked as a result of such questionable social construction and must criticize their perpetuation of privilege and advantage.

Indeed, the struggle for women's voice works against "the power to be heard, believed and obeyed, along with the ability to silence others or allow them to speak".[45] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminism does not directly engage with Bourdieu's understanding of masculine domination, but she strongly believes that humanity and society are mostly categorized under the term male favor, including the religious field.[46] When Fiorenza speaks of the goal as "women's (religious) self-affirmation, power, and liberation," she directs this against "all patriarchal alienation, marginalization, and exploitation."[47] Her voice is an advocacy more situated within the churches. She analyzes women's status in the church by examining women's role in the Church's history and its implications for theological reflection today.

[44] Mrs. Daulat Samosir at Pangururan of Onan Runggu City, North Sumatra-Indonesia, interview by researcher, 30 July 2024. The ritual of marhata sinamot is very important in the Toba Batak people. At this ritual, both families will not face any tension or problems. It is because all arrangements and procedures for the wedding event have been planned during the marhusip ritual. Thus, it may also be concluded that the marhata sinamot ritual is an occasion to build familiarity and interrelationship between the two families. At the end of the custom marhata sinamot implementation, the groom's family will give na parsituak tonggi which means money to buy wine to all the members of the family of the bride who is present during marhata sinamot ritual.

[45] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 69.

[46] Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: Critical Feminist Ecclesiology of Liberation*, 71.

[47] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation: With a New Afterword* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995), xv.

She states, “Feminist thinkers and artists disappear from historical records and consciousness because the continuation of patriarchy requires that feminist challenges to elite male power remain invisible and non-existent.”[48] Women's leadership was eliminated by the powerful authorities to shift from an intrusive society and culture. Fiorenza considers that the dignity and reputation of women, especially their ability as leaders in the community comes from the Holy Spirit. The decision-making power of the community has eroded.[49] Nonetheless, throughout the history of the Church, exceptional women emerged. The history of women's active involvement in early Christianity is a very important reflection to open up opportunities for today's women to become leaders in ecclesiastical communities.[50]

Winds of Change

Kinship is a key to the foundation of Toba Batak's social organization. These kinship groups have a habit of being molded for which the members act together in diverse circumstances and the implementation of customs. This leads to the consequence in which kinship group membership is the major determinant of personality's privileges, occasions, and responsibilities. The Toba Batak people are a communal kinship group with some general provisions in common, that is, "the whole of the Batak people derived their origin from Si Radja Batak. According to the legend he sprang from a descendant of a God."[51] In the very circumstance, the traditional local communities such as families, clans, tribes, villages, various groups of associations stemming from social

48 Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: Critical Feminist Ecclesiology of Liberation*, 4.
49 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Cristian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 286.
50 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence-Becoming Visible,” in *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feministy Liberation Theology* (Manila: St. Paul, 2004), 16.
51 Vergouwen, *The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northhern Sumatra*, 21.

contacts, experience more thorough changes every day."[52] As for the family, "discord results from population, economic, and social pressures, or from difficulties which arise between succeeding generations, or from new social relationships between men and women."[53]

The researchers believe that to gain a wind of change in the leadership status of the TBW, it is necessary to rethink *Toba Batak*'s philosophy regarding family practices' perception of kinship system. The *Toba Batak*'s kinship group was the traditional term *Dalihan Natolu*. The *Dalihan Natolu* is structured by tracing lines of descent through the male line. It comprised many families whose male heads were linked to one another by lineage since they have a common male ancestor. For each family of *Toba Batak* if they want to organize life crises the *Dalihan Natolu* should be present. Nevertheless, due to the high proportion of male-dominant practices, the limited women-affirmative practices may need external sources of inspiration or spirit for their further blossoming and the elevation of dispositions that also embody female recognition or even liberation.[54]

Matrimony is one of the states of life in the Church. The Church acknowledges the beauty and the sacredness of matrimonial life.[55] whose foundation is the love of Christ. Christian spouses' love for each other is modeled on the love between Christ and the Church. This form of relationship that is devoid of domination or subjugation is a perfect model for *Toba Batak* spouses, and liberating for both male and female. A Christian marriage that is modeled after Christ's union with the Church is a great transforming sign for the TBS. To be efficaciously represented, this union of Christ with the Church should be concretized in the

52 Kroeger, no. 6.
53 Kroeger, no. 8.
54 Mary John Mananzan, *Challenges to the Inner Room: Selected Essays and Speeches on Women* (Mandaluyong City: Raintree Publishing Co, 1998), 86.
55 Pope Pius XI, *Encyclical on Christian Marriage: Casti Connubii* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1930), no. 5.

matrimonial unions among ecclesial members.[56] In other words, matrimonial unions among *Toba Batak* spouses should not merely be signifying the supernatural life-union of Christ with the Church, but also be causing that union to be discernible in their lives.

The patriarchal concept that has gone on since time immemorial should evaluated in the light of the mystical union of Christ and the ecclesia. If patriarchy itself is a condition that threatens the meaning of such union, then this negative entity must abandoned and should give way to the saving sign of Christ's relationship with the ecclesia - a relationship that only promotes creative egalitarian union among Christians, especially among Christian spouses. What was considered true and useful in the patriarchal system in the past may no longer be considered appropriate for human life's flourishing. *Toba Batak* matrimonial culture should thus be rethought and analyzed in the light of the Christian understanding of marriage.

Family is a field for planting good seeds. But, the process of planting the good seeds is not easy as well. There are many challenges, and difficulties faced by the family navigating the journey of life. For the family to survive the family's purpose, all family members are needed for cooperative continuation of life. The family is the "first and fundamental contribution to society," being the first life experience of collaboration.[57] Hence, the family has a significant task to prepare children for education and positive attitudes. Likewise underlined by the Church through the document *Gaudium et Spes*, "the family is a kind of school of deeper humanity."[58]

[56] Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, *Passion for Jesus Passion for Humanity: Consecrated Life Born from the Spirit* (Quezon City: Claretian Publication, 2005), 98.

[57] Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (Rome: St. Peters', 1981), no. 43.

[58] Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes," in *Documents of Vatican Council II*, ed. M. M. James H. Kroeger (Pasay City: Paulines, 2011), no. 12.

The researchers believe that in the family the practices of equal leadership both male and female can flourish. Thus, it is very clear that the close connection of children's moral education in the family is also a contribution to the wider society. In other words, “the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs.”[59] If mutual respect and equality are felt at home, these may also be reflected in the wider society. Equal treatment of women among *Toba Batak* families will surely produce women's equality in the public realms of life.

Reflection for Action

This research claims that it is necessary to revisit the philosophy of the *Toba Batak* society as a way forward in addressing the suppressive situation of women in the society. Family is like a field where the seeds of positive values of life are cultivated. Children need their parents to set and enforce standards for the right behavior. This is how children learn to assume responsibility for their actions and come to realize that there are consequences for obedience as well as for disobedience. Hence the parents must teach their children in righteousness, but they must also have instilled discipline in their children.

The family setting is the first school of human behavior. The first lessons of life are learned in the family. It is in the family that the minds of the children are inducted into the positive values that eventually guide them in their lives when they grow up. In the family, the child will have learned about herself/himself and at the same time also about how she/she may relate to others. Children, who experience abuses and injustices in the family, will display it in life. Children who see their parents always quarreling in the family will imitate the violence. This is

[59] Vatican II, “Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum Educationis,” in *Documents of Vatican Council II*, ed. M.M. James H. Kroeger (Passay City, 2011), no. 3.

how important and instrumental the family is in cultivating the positive values of life.

The *Toba Batak* women are victimized by the patriarchal system. They are subjected to a marginalized situation of inequality and suffering. One of the main root causes of the oppressive culture of gender inequality is the patriarchal and patrilineal socio-political system of the *marga* clan system. This devalues the dignity and self-esteem of the women. It denies them equal opportunity, especially access to education. Therefore, it is necessary to begin transformation at the family level.

In this consciousness, *Toba Batak* women will have further prospects in sustaining sovereignty and respectability equal to the male child. This significant value also has been proved by the Christian credence to achieve a genuine emancipation of *Toba Batak* women. These would include some principles: the spirituality of marriage, living our way of the sanctified family, and the holistic appreciation of the human person.

The researcher is aware that facilitating social change in a society, especially in the family, proves to be a difficult challenge. The research articulates this effort to promote emancipation and empowerment among the *Toba Batak* women and contributes to a wider effort to add a value of equality to human life. It was connected with what the Fourth Conference of Women in Beijing proposed, “violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective equality, development, and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedom."[60] In the life of *Toba Batak* women whatever that are considered traditional, customary, or even modern practices that violate their rights should be contested and countered through appropriate practices.

[60] The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and the Plarform for Action* (New York: United Nation Department of Public Information, 1996), no. 112.

CONCLUSION

The suppression and discrimination of women in TBS in the light of feminist thinking together with the theory of Bourdieu. Selected feminist thinkers argue that suppression and discrimination are influenced by the patriarchal and hierarchal systems. The act of recognizing the pervasive nature of TBW has captured an enabling achievement for change. The TBW's attitude of acceptance the discrimination and oppression is the most essential obstacle to change. However, the researcher has self-confidence in the possibility way to assessing discriminative societal conditions. With the implementation described by Bourdieu in his theory of practice along with the feminist view of liberation, the study offers a step towards the asymmetry of the *Toba Batak* world to be able to unleash patriarchal shackles. Therefore, the present study might be able to offer a challenge against the asymmetries of the *Toba Batak* world. The family today is at the crossroads of making several paths for themselves. The family as a "domestic church" or a "little church" is invited and encouraged by God to gather together as a loving community based on God's love.

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