

Christianity and Ritual: A Study of Church Members in the Practice Ritual of “Buang Soe”

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to describe the culture of the Treman community, specifically the rejection of disasters with the ritual of throwing away soe using a socio-theological perspective. This paper aims to describe the meaning of the Treman community who have embraced Christianity, in relation to the practice of the throwing away soe ritual. This paper uses a qualitative method with a case study design. Interviews are a data collection technique to deeply observe the community's understanding in implementing the throwing away soe ritual. The results obtained in this study are that the ritual is indeed carried out by the community when avoiding various accidents and disasters. It is done by worshipping their god. The interesting thing about the implementation of this ritual lies in the community who already believe in Christ, namely Christianity. Such is the social reality that occurs in the village of Treman so that social and theological analysis can be something new to explore the throwing away soe ritual as a cultural practice of the community. Through deep meaning to this ritual, the Treman community not only maintains tradition, but also opens itself to various other spiritual perspectives.

Keywords: Buang soe Ritual, Treman Society, Socio Theology, Church, Christianity.



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INTRODUCTION

Treman Village is located in North Minahasa Regency, specifically in Kauditan Sub-district, with a population of 2,409 people, consisting of 1,211 men and 1,198 women. The majority of the village's population adheres to Christianity, with a total of 2,066 people, followed by 178 people who are Catholic and 165 people who are Muslim (Kevin Oei, *Wawancara*). Although Treman Village is rich in cultural elements, many traditions have been abandoned by the community as significant social changes affect their lives. However, some traditions, such as Pengucapan, kaweng adat, and the “buang soe” ritual, are still preserved today.

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The tradition of throwing bad luck, also known as “buang soe”, is one of the cultural practices that is still preserved by the people of Treman Village and its surroundings. The word “soe” itself means “bad luck,” which in the context of the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) is defined as misfortune, where all efforts in life do not bear fruit. This ritual is carried out with the aim that the Treman community is protected from all forms of bad luck that they might experience. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation since the time of the ancestors and is still carried out by the people of North Minahasa, especially in Treman Village (Tuwaidan, *wawancara*). The villagers believe that failure to perform the “buang soe” ritual can bring bad luck and bad events in their lives.

The Treman community has a number of ritual elements that include birth, life and death rites. One significant rite is the “buang soe”, which falls under the death category. This rite aims to protect families in Treman Village from bad luck in the future. According to local beliefs, the “buang soe” ritual cannot be ignored, as it is closely related to the survival of the family after a loss. Grieving families are required to carry out a series of activities, including a consolation service, a funeral ceremony, a thanksgiving service known as Dumingguan, and the “buang soe” ritual.

The “buang soe” ritual is rooted in the Minahasan understanding of death and the forces that are believed to influence the journey of the living. The performance of this ritual is considered essential, as it is directly related to the spirit of the deceased and the safety of those left behind (Suh, 2021). The community believes that ignoring this ritual can invite disaster, bad luck, or other bad events that can disrupt their lives in the future.

The “buang soe” ritual begins with a trip with the family to a predetermined location. Upon arrival at the destination, the family performs a short ritual of collective praise and prayer. Next, the most crucial phase of the ritual is the “buang soe” itself, where the family heads to the beach to clean themselves. When they wash themselves at the beach, this activity is not just a physical ritual, but is interpreted as a symbolic removal of the sadness felt due to the loss. People believe that the water of the beach can absorb the sadness, with the hope that the future will be free of sorrow, misfortune and disaster. Although the beach is generally considered a place for recreation, in the context of the “buang soe” ritual, this location is elevated to a sacred space. The final stage of the ritual ends with a communal meal, where the family celebrates this moment with joy, as well as the relief of having released all the bad luck that weighed them down.

In general, rituals are seen as actions that distinguish them in the context of religion, symbols and myths. Each ritual that exists in various regions reflects the cultural richness of the community, while strengthening social ties between individuals and social structures. The rite or ceremony system can be understood as a series of human efforts to establish a relationship with the Almighty. These efforts include various forms of ceremonies, such as sacrifices, prayers, songs, dances, alms, meditation, pilgrimages, and communal meals (Syaharuddin et al., 2021). All of these are manifestations of the rite system that connects humans with God or the entity being worshipped.

In the context of ceremony, there is a significant difference between rites and rituals. A rite can be understood as a sacred event that includes various activities in a religious ceremony, such as worship performed by adherents of a belief system. Rituals, on the other hand, refer to specific actions carried out during religious ceremonies, including the manner of worship followed by adherents. The system of rites and rituals practiced by humans has a clear purpose: to establish communication with the worshipped entity (Loparawi et al., 2023). Therefore, rites and rituals are performed repetitively, following a schedule that has been agreed upon by the community. These ceremonies are structured in the life of the community, creating laws and customs relating to various events in daily life. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that rites and rituals play an important role in ceremonies or celebrations related to the worship of entities that are considered to have supernatural powers.

On the other hand, there is “magi”, as a form of ritual science, reflecting beliefs and practices in which individuals believe that they can influence the forces of nature through their own efforts, by managing higher powers (Amin, 2021). “Magi” as a ceremony reflects human desire for the outside world with a specific purpose. “Magi” has a very important position in the society that supports it. “Magi” aims to establish a relationship with the forces of nature, with the hope of controlling these forces for the benefit of the individual (Made yuliari, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that magi is a ritual action involving ceremonies aimed at influencing the forces of nature, in which humans play a controlling role. The practice of “magi” certainly applies in the process of the “buang soe” ritual. This meaning and practice has become a social reality in the people of Treman Village, even though they have embraced Christianity. When viewed from a simple perspective, this practice appears to contradict the teachings of their religion. However, this tradition is still carried out not because of ignorance of the incompatibility with the Christian faith, but because of a deep belief in the function and importance of the “buang soe” ritual in their lives (Sihombing, 2022). This reflects what sociologists say about the function of religion, namely how religion responds to rituals that are clearly not in line with the teachings of the Christian faith. The author makes a study from a socio-theological perspective to understand the social reality that occurs in the community during the implementation of the “buang soe” ritual, and explores how the people of Treman Village reflect their religious identity as Christians who also live the ritual. This theological reflection is an attempt to deeply understand the experiences that have been analyzed in the context of living faith.

As far as researchers have encountered, there are several studies on religion and the tradition of rejecting disasters. First, Ritonga and Ismail's research, which focuses on disaster rejection in the Javanese community, which only focuses on the rejection of bala in one area (Adelita et al., 2024). Second, the Chinese tradition of rejecting disasters, which sees the other side of community rituals, which focuses on obtaining a blessing, through the Ciswak ritual (Febriyani, 2022). Third, as a request for blessings and rejection of disasters in the midst of the Toraja community. This is important in seeing the social relations of the community in the midst of social reality (Kenden et al., 2023). So far, there has been no research that specifically discusses the “buang soe” ritual and its relation to social and theological aspects in the North Minahasa community. Therefore, the author is interested in further exploring this ritual by

raising the topic. Based on this background, this study aims to describe how the Treman community who have embraced Christianity interpret the practice of the “buang soe” ritual.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the author applies a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to deepen understanding of the phenomenon at the center of the study, namely the practice of the “buang soe” ritual. Qualitative methods allow researchers to understand the context and meaning of a phenomenon more deeply, so that the data obtained is not only descriptive, but also has a strong interpretation according to the existing reality. In order for this research to obtain accurate and relevant data, researchers must involve various sources who have an understanding and involvement in the implementation of this ritual (Sugiyono, 2017). By conducting focused and in-depth interviews, the author can explore the perspectives of people who understand this ritual directly and deeply, so that the conclusions produced can be academically accounted for.

In collecting data, researchers used several techniques, namely interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews are the main technique used as a primary data source, because this interactive dialog allows researchers and interviewees to build meaning in the research context (Moleong, 2013). Interviews helped the author to gain direct understanding from various points of view, especially from village leaders (Hukum Tua), traditional leaders, religious leaders, and villagers who still perform this ritual. With their involvement, the researcher not only listened to the stories of the ritual performers, but also understood the deep meaning implied in each stage of the “buang soe” ritual.

The next data collection technique is in-depth observation, which has an important role in connecting theory with reality in the field. Through this observation, the researcher has the opportunity to witness the ritual directly, providing a more authentic experience of what actually happens during the ceremony (Hartono, 2018). On several occasions, the researcher acted as an active participant, allowing the researcher to experience first-hand and understand the feelings and interpretations that the community had towards the ritual. This enriched the researcher's insights and ensured that the data obtained was not merely objective information, but also included the emotional and social experiences of the community.

In addition to interviews and observations, documentation is also an important technique in obtaining secondary data. Documents were collected in the form of pictures, videos and written notes recording the implementation and stages of the “buang soe” ritual, as well as various historical references that strengthen the research background. This documentation serves as a source that helps researchers understand the development and continuity of the “buang soe” ritual over time (Hartono, 2018). In the context of this research, secondary data is not only complementary, but also plays a role in providing a more detailed visual and historical picture of the values that the community maintains through this practice.

As such, these three data collection techniques complement each other, creating a comprehensive picture of the “buang soe” ritual. Interviews provide depth of meaning,

observation enriches the data with direct presence, and documentation adds a visual and historical perspective. The result of this comprehensive qualitative approach is expected to present findings that not only describe the “buang soe” ritual, but also illustrate its meaning and relevance in the lives of the people who perform it.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Research Site

In 1525, a group of indigenous Minahasa people known as the Dotu started a journey to find a new settlement location. This journey was led by several leaders, namely Dotu Lengkong, Wulur, and Rensina, along with two Tonaas namely Paruntu and Makalew (Djamaluddin, 2016). In their quest, the Dotu and Tonaas did not just settle in one place. Every time they stop, they perform a traditional ritual, which is a request to Opo Empung through the intermediary of the Doyot Bird or known by the Minahasa people as the Manguni Bird. Because they had not received Opo Empung's blessing and there were disturbances such as disease, they decided to continue their search. Finally, in 1546, they found a place that was named Tareuman. This name was proposed by Dotu Lengkong as “Minawanua Tareuman,” which means former village. After settling in Tareuman for about 160 years, they then moved to the Tareuman Unet area, where they stayed for 40 years. In 1801, the Dotu and Tonaas moved again to a place called Tareuman Wangko, which is now known as Treman village (Djamaluddin, 2016). This description certainly serves as a foundation, that the Treman community already had an existence before the evangelists entered the Minahasa area in general.

Currently, Treman Village is one of the villages located in the Kauditan District, North Minahasa Regency. This village has a population of 2,409 people, consisting of 1,211 men and 1,198 women. Most of its residents are Christians, numbering 2,066 people, followed by 178 Catholics, and 165 Muslims (Kevin Oei, *wawancara*). Treman Village has various cultural elements, but many traditions have been abandoned due to social changes that have affected the community's way of life. Some traditions that are still preserved to this day include “Pengucapan”, “kaweng adat”, and the “buang soe” ritual, which are the focus of this research.

Ritual as Tradition: "Buang Soe" in the Understanding of the Treman Community

The ritual of dispelling bad luck, known as “buang soe”, is still a highly esteemed tradition among the people of Treman Village and its surrounding areas to this day. In the local language, “soe” means “bad luck,” which in the KBBI is defined as misfortune or failure in various endeavors. The tradition of throwing away “soe” is carried out with the aim of preventing villagers from misfortune that might hinder their lives. According to one of the leaders of the indigenous community in Treman, Bernhard W. J. Tuwaidan, this ritual is considered a protector for the community, shielding them from difficulties and misfortunes that could befall families in the future (Tuwaidan, *wawancara*). Here are some meanings attached to the “buang soe” ritual in Treman Village:

- ***Ancestral Heritage Ritual***

“Buang soe” is interpreted as a sacred tradition passed down through generations from ancestors, and it has become a cultural heritage that is preserved with great honor. This tradition has existed since the generation of the ancestors of the Minahasa Utara people, particularly the community of Treman Village, and continues to be preserved to this day. The villagers believe that if they abandon the “buang soe” ritual, misfortune, disaster, and various bad things will constantly disrupt their lives. This belief reflects a deep respect for ancestors and a commitment to maintaining life's balance through the legacy they left behind. This tradition is believed to provide peace and protection, making it an inseparable part of the identity and spiritual beliefs of the local community.

- ***Ritual to Avoid Bad Luck After Mourning***

Specifically, the “buang soe” ritual is considered a misfortune countermeasure performed after a family experiences grief or calamity. In the view of the Minahasa community, mourning brings a certain energy that can affect the safety and fortune of the surviving family members. Therefore, the “buang soe” ritual is believed to be a means to ward off negative influences that may come from the spirits of the deceased, while also maintaining harmony between the spirit world and the real world. Through the implementation of this ritual, the community hopes that disasters, misfortunes, or other bad things will no longer disturb their lives. This tradition represents the belief in spiritual protection obtained from harmony with ancestral spirits, making it important to be performed for the safety of all family members.

- ***As a Manifestation of Gratitude and a Repellent of Sorrow***

More than just a protective ritual, “buang soe” also serves as an expression of gratitude for the community after experiencing mourning. After losing a loved one, this ritual is believed to alleviate prolonged sorrow and help the family continue their lives with a sense of gratitude. For the Treman community, every event, including grief, must be accepted with an open heart and appreciated as part of life's journey. The implementation of “buang soe” becomes a symbol for letting go of sorrow and moving towards a better future. Through this ritual, the villagers hope to live their coming days more peacefully, free from deep feelings of loss, and blessed with inner tranquility and happiness.

The “buang soe” ritual is not just a customary tradition, but also a sacred means for the Treman people to maintain a balance between worldly life and the spiritual values they hold dear. It is a bridge that connects them to their ancestral heritage, passed down from generation to generation, and a reminder of the importance of living in harmony with nature and faith (Suh, 2021). By performing “buang soe”, people not only try to avoid bad luck, but also affirm gratitude for everything given, both joy and sorrow, in daily life.

Furthermore, “buang soe” is a reflection of their deep belief in the spiritual power of their ancestors, who are believed to provide protection and blessings for their families and communities. This ritual shows how the people of Treman Village honor every aspect of life

that they have lived, are living and will live (Sofyan, 2018). Through “buang soe”, they maintain a harmonious relationship with ancestors who are believed to always accompany and guide from the spirit realm, giving meaning to every step in their lives.

In a broader context, this ritual is not only a symbol of respect for ancestors, but also a way to appreciate the life cycle that each individual in the village recognizes and lives. “Buang soe” unites them in a stronger bond with their cultural roots and values, creating a sense of community that strengthens social cohesion (Ewilensia Magdalen Mbura et al., 2022). This shows that for the Treman people, the “buang soe” is an important foundation that shapes their identity, unites them in spiritual togetherness, and reflects a deep respect for the life journey they share.

Christian Congregation in the Implementation of the “Buang Soe” Ritual: A Reality of Social Theology

The phenomenon of congregations in ritual practice underscores a unique phenomenon in the life of the people of Treman Village. In particular, almost the entire community has embraced Protestant Christianity. Despite having made the Word of God a guide to life, the villagers still maintain local traditions, including the “buang soe” ritual, which has been passed down from their ancestors. The Treman community seems to live a balance between Christian beliefs and traditional customs that are believed to provide protection and keep them away from various forms of bad luck (Tumbol & Wainarisi, 2023). This shows that although they are committed to the Christian faith, ancestral traditions are maintained as part of their identity and irreplaceable cultural values.

The “buang soe” ritual, which continues to be practiced even though the people of Treman Village have embraced Christianity, is evidence that cultural heritage is not easily forgotten. Since long ago, this ritual was believed to be a way to ward off bad luck and disasters that might threaten their lives. The community not only sees “buang soe” as a traditional ceremony, but also as a guardian of the balance between the real and spiritual worlds, as a complement to the religious practices they follow. For them, this tradition is more than a legacy; it serves as a bridge between the present and the past, between the Christian faith and the ancestral beliefs that give them inner peace. In addition, people are aware that in the Christian faith, they have God as the source of love, blessings and grace. Belief in God gives them confidence that their lives are in His care. However, in their daily lives, they also feel the need to perform the “buang soe” ritual as an additional protection. This tradition is believed to be able to reject disasters or potentially harmful negative energy (Farida, 2022). For Treman villagers, the existence of this ritual does not diminish their faith, but rather complements them in living a life filled with gratitude and harmony.

The church itself shows a fairly flexible attitude towards the “buang soe” ritual, respecting families who choose to continue performing it. When a family is in mourning, a thanksgiving service for the departed family member is held, which usually includes praise as an expression of gratitude (Punuh, 2024). Pastors are even present at the funeral home to commemorate the one week anniversary of the deceased, as a form of spiritual support from the church. The church seems to understand the importance of this ritual for some families, and

so does not consider it a hindrance or a deviation from the Christian faith. Despite having performed religious ceremonies to commemorate and give thanks for deceased family members, Treman villagers still feel the need to perform the “buang soe” ritual. For them, this ritual is not just an attempt to ward off disaster, but also a way to alleviate grief. There is a strong belief that bathing in ritual water can “take away” the sadness that envelops their hearts (Andriyani, 2022). As such, the ritual serves as a means of emotional release, providing inner calm, and helping them to move on from their deep sorrow.

Ultimately, the implementation of “buang soe” in Treman Village shows how the local Christian community is able to maintain harmony between religion and tradition. In the midst of the strong influence of Christianity, the community still respects ancestral traditions, which for them are not an obstacle, but a complement to spiritual life. In this way, the church and customary traditions are able to go hand in hand, providing space for each individual to live out their faith and culture in a balanced way.

Ritual “Buang Soe”: Delving into Its Socio-Theological Dimension and Local Aspects

The “buang soe” ritual has become an inseparable part of daily life, so that the social activities of the community are integrated with the implementation of the ritual. On the one hand, the Treman Village community has largely embraced Protestant Christianity, making Christ the center of their faith through prayer and worship (Bustanuddin, 2006). However, on the other hand, they also still honor “Oppo Empung” (the god worshipped by the community) as part of traditional practices, where appeals for divine assistance are considered necessary for the balance of their lives. This phenomenon that shows the existence of another side of belief makes it complex, where the Christian side and local traditions still go hand in hand.

Basically, the “buang soe” ritual influences the perspective and values held by the people of Treman Village. The worship of a divine figure in ancestral traditions is considered a fundamental imperative for the performer. In this way, the community continues to preserve this religious act from generation to generation, passing on the teachings that their ancestors have lived by (Bustanuddin, 2006). From the perspective of Christian theology, this phenomenon can be viewed as a cultural practice that is honored within certain limits (Posumah et al., 2024). The church in Treman Village takes the approach of respecting local culture by ensuring that the main thing is Christ as the source of salvation in the faith they believe in.

The “buang soe” ritual and Christianity, sociologically, function to provide a sense of security for the community to face life in the future (Aritonang, 2023). In both traditional rituals and Christian worship, people feel a transcendental connection that is emotionally rooted and provides a basis for peace in their lives. In other words, the combination of ritual and religion provides a complementary force (Awang, 2024), where the functions of “buang soe” rituals and Christian religious practices each provide a sense of comfort and security for the community. The results of the author's research show that the people of Treman Village can maintain these two identities, namely as Christians as well as successors of the “buang soe” tradition. Furthermore, for the people of Treman Village, the buang soe ritual has a deep meaning as a cultural heritage that must be continued. One of the performers of the “buang soe” ritual, Bernhard Tuwaidan, stated that these ancestral values have a huge impact on the lives of future generations, not only shaping their living habits but also believed to keep them away from

danger (Tuwaidan, *wawancara*). The function of these rituals becomes an integral part of the social order that guides the daily lives of the Treman people, reflecting a practice that is not just a rite, but also part of their identity passed down through the generations.

The principles of this ritual appear to be in line with the practice of “*buang soe*” that is still maintained today. This practice, in various aspects, shows that traditional values and Christianity can coexist. In the “*buang soe*” ritual, the community not only appeals to the divine figure in tradition, but also upholds Christian values, including prayer and worship directed to Christ (Aritonang, 2023). Thus, this duality does not cause conflict, but rather strengthens the spiritual and cultural identity of the Treman Village community.

The author believes that the main reason why the community still performs this ritual is the desire to preserve the culture of their ancestors. Although most have become devout Christians, including some who are active as church assemblies, the Treman community still upholds the cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation. The existence of this local culture is considered very important, and maintaining it is a priority that must be maintained.

Ultimately, the “*buang soe*” ritual provides additional meaning for the community in facing the dangers and difficulties of life. The belief that this ritual can help them avoid bad luck and calamity shows that they are not only practicing tradition, but also shaping the way they respond to life's challenges. The rejection of disasters, which is one of the main purposes of “*buang soe*”, underscores the important role of ancestral traditions in the lives of the Treman people. Aside from being a form of protection, these traditions also allow them to live out their beliefs in two realms: as steadfast Christians and inheritors of a strong ancestral culture.

CONCLUSION

The “*buang soe*” ritual in Treman Village is a profound reflection of the social reality of the community, which is not only bound by Christian beliefs but also shows a strong attachment to ancestral traditions. The community that performs this ritual shows that although they have adopted Christianity, the cultural heritage that has existed for a long time is still preserved as an effort to avoid disasters that might befall them. This practice is not merely a form of worship, but also a way to affirm identity and maintain a harmonious relationship with the transcendent forces beyond the Treman community. The “*buang soe*” ritual serves as a bridge that connects spiritual values with practical needs in facing the challenges of everyday life. Thus, this ritual serves as a marker of social and spiritual order, providing a sense of security and hope for the community. Through a deep understanding of this ritual, the Treman community not only preserves tradition but also opens itself to various other spiritual perspectives. This research contributes to a broader understanding of the interaction between religion and culture, as well as the importance of appreciating and preserving ancestral heritage in a modern context. For future researchers, further exploration of the “*buang soe*” ritual as a means of interfaith dialogue can provide new insights into the social and religious dynamics in a pluralistic society.

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