

ECOLOGICAL RELIGION OF TOBA BATAK: RECIPROCAL, ETHIC AND RESPONSIBLE INTERSUBJECTIVE RELATIONSHIP

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A B S T R A C T

Recently, scholars of religious studies have called for new appreciation of indigenous peoples' understandings of the ecosystems of which they are a part as a necessary alternative way of thinking about environmental sustainability in the face of ecological crises (Harvey, 2000; Tucker and Grim, 2003; Wei-Ming, 2007). This paper aims to analyze the concept of the ecological religion of the Toba Batak in order to revitalize the local religious wisdoms that shape their relationship with their natural environment. The questions: *first*, what is the ecological religion concept of the Batak Toba in perceiving and relating to their environment and how do they apply that concept? *Second*, how do their ecological religion practices shape how they maintain their environment?

This analysis is based on field research, including interviews and living in the Toba Batak community in Sianjur Mula-mula Village, Samosir District near Lake Toba in North Sumatera Province. For many years, scholars and religious leaders perceived the Toba Batak as animistic and uncivilized, but, turning this around, I argue that Toba Batak's religion should be seen as an indigenous religion. By using this perspective, I show that they have an inter-subjective relationship with the environment around them. This kind of relationship is built on *tondi*, the power of life (Warneck: 1909, Nainggolan:2012) given by *Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon* (Batak God's name) to all subjects in the world. Then, the existence of *tondi* gives rise to an inter-subjective relationship based on responsibility, ethics and reciprocity between subjects, which include aspects of nature like water, forests, trees and animals. For example, they frequently clean up the water spring as their responsibility to the water's *tondi*, who called *Naboru* (Aunt) *Saniang Naga*. I show how the concept of Toba Batak religion in relationship with their environment is

being transformed in the midst of changing times today. This transformation has led to many problems. They face pressures when they implemented their ecological wisdom in making rice planting rituals in rice fields.

Unlike previous studies which have mostly discussed Toba Batak Religion as objects of research, this study contributes to ecological studies in religious studies because it focuses on environmental sustainability in order to comprehend how this society is trying to revitalize their local wisdom to sustain their natural environment.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous Religion, ecology, local wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Environmental crisis are global and universal problems. Globality and universality of environmental issues refer to a certain location, time, and also the future of the environment itself. These kinds of phenomena are happened locally and divers, but the impacts are experienced globally: environmental change, reducing of ozone sphere, air pollution, more difficult to fine clean water, and the other impacts. One of the main factors is a certain paradigm that implemented to understand and to relate with nature. In fact, that paradigm does not support the sustainability of the nature. White (1967) submitted one argument that the approximation by using western and world religion paradigm is one of the boosters to nature's exploitation. "Human is master of the nature" is the important evaluation from White on the defacement of nature.

Base on that evidence, new approximation is need to understand the nature more properly. On of the new aproximation that many scholars discussed for early decade is by using indigenous religion uderstanding. Tucker, Grim and Tu We-Ming (2007) have efforted to open space for reappearance of local wisdom. Tu We-ming (2007) asserted "The typical shape of the original traditions is an in-depth understanding and experience of rootedness. Each genuine religious tradition is embedded in a concrete place that symbolizes a way of understanding, thinking of styles, ways of life and attitudes, as well as the view of the world." There is an integrity of people with their own place rooted in their worlview. This is very different from what modern paradigm offered for people as a worldview. But in fact, the local wisdom in most of place of indigenous people are eraditated by modern worldview. It was caused by the wrong way of modern people to understand them. That is way, the first step to find the local wisdom is to destruct the modern perspective on local religion.

Locus of this study is Sianjur Mula-mula village, Samosir District, North Sumatra. Historicity and the importance of this village for all Batak people in general and to the Toba Batak society in particular have become the

main reasons for selecting this location. The author used research methods participant observation and indepth interview. By staying with them and participate and perform their daily activities for approximately 8 weeks is helpfull to see clearly the subject of this study. Life story interviews became the other options to further deepen the methods of participant observation.

Redefenition of Local Religion

Various discussions regarding to religiosity of local religious has often done in the search for a better approach to provide space for productivity of local religion. Some scholars such as Ronald Geaves (2005), Catherine Bell (2006), James Cox (2007) and Tucker (2007) asserts that the study of religion has been greatly influenced by the “paradigm of world religions”. This approach formulates a definition of religion according to their way of thinking on the world’s religions. In other words, the so-called religion is in accordance to word religion definition on religion. The true religion is the religion which recognizes one God, patron, and Scriptures. In addition, relationship system in world religions is hierarchical relationships: God-man-nature. The most accurately approach described as essentialist approach asserts that outside this definition is not religion. Based on that reason, it needs a new approach to understanding the local religion that is not same as the world’s religions.

In his efforts to understand the Ojibwa in North America, Hallowell (1975) proposed a srategi in approaching the local religions. The first strategy is to understand worldview of the local religion. Worldview is the way of the society or communities in perceiving the other in relation to the world. Man who perceives the other has correlation with nature and character that owned by the others themselves. This worldview is also the basis on their religiosity. For the Ojibwa, religion is understood as ways of relating that is how people build relationships with other beings, including the living and non-living with beings such as animals, plants, forests, mountains, rivers and the other non-human-beings that are not visible by eyes like the Most High and spirits. They experienced religiosity also in economics, politics, agriculture, and so forth.

Hallowel see how Ojibwa people have different understandings about person. Person is composed by human and the-other-human kind. The mention of grandfather on natural entities becomes important evidence in the community. According to Hallowell, for the Ojibwa, the “Other-than-human persons include the sun, entities seen in dreams, “masters” or “owners” of plant or animal species, Thunder Birds,myths (sacred stories) and characters in them who have existed from time immorial” (Hallowel, 1956: 13). Thus, the person is not only attributed to humans who perceive the world but also to other certain beings. How they recognize other beings are born from their daily experience with the other-human-beings. They embodied the experience in oral stories which they refer to as hereditary stories and myths.

Next, Hallowell explains the relation between man and the-other-than-human. According to Hallowell, there is a certain relationship between both of entities. Morrison confirms the view Hallowell that man with the-other-than-human share magnitude capabilities such as intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and also the ability to speak, and ability to influence others (ibid). For the Ojibwa, the-other-than-human is always active in their life. They live without lived on in their daily lives. Both have social interaction by sharing actions and reactions “Objibwa’s world is a system of behaves, social in which the person-power in mind, and giving itself in myth and lore” (Morrison, 2000: 25). In response to the human, Ojibwa people have a responsibility to do what conveyed by non-humans to maintain their relationships.

This explanation lead a discussion about the local religious of Ojibwa that the relationship they built with the-other-than-human is intersubjective relationship. Every being in the relationship is understood as a subject that comes with the intention of sharing. In other words, all subjects present as an active responsible subject. However, not all non-humans are subject. A subject is non-human that provides specific actions to humans as a partner. Inter-subject relationship is called by Hallowell (1975), de Castro (1998), Bird-David (1999), Morrison (2000) as a religion. Religion is no longer limited to the teaching, building, or a certain person. Religion understood as a way to relate to various forms of human and non-human. In relation that all subjects actively present together to generate and maintain the balance of the cosmos.

The concept of Ecological Religion

Religion and ecology are two terms that have been frequently discussed from various viewpoints. However, it must be recognized that discussion of ecological religion is a new theme. In general, the study of these two themes is always separated by conjunctions, “religion and ecology”. In this paper, the author will unravel how ecological religion is understandable, especially in religiosity of Toba Batak. The theory proposed by Hallowell, Morrison, Bird David over the basis for the analysis carried out. The definition of religion is very useful to understand the practices of religiosity in Toba Batak society.

Religion is a human relationships with non-humans in which all persons actively present in building and maintaining the cosmic balance. From this understanding, ecological religion can also be understood as the ways of humans interact with all the subjects that exist outside of them. This relationship is not solely based on their own but by allowing the non-human creation comes to teaching, guiding and strengthening them. In this case, Hallowell theory said, those non-human creatures share the knowledge, wisdom and ways to distinguish the good and wrong can be more understandable.

The relationships have some form that based on responsibility, ethical and reciprocal. Intersubjective relations that based on the responsibility are about the responsibility of all subjects to maintain the balance of the world and keep the other living. Morrison explains Hallowell's theory by comparing this relation with a spiritual view of religion. "In centerstaging such a conversation between humans and cosmic beings, Hallowell rejects a spiritual view of religion. He favors, instead, locating religious life in the world as a matter of responsibility between human and other kinds of being (Morrison in Harvey, 37)." In other words, man is the self who responsible for maintaining the balance of the world by maintaining "the other-humans".

The second is basing relationships on ethics. This relationships emphasis on the well being of the other to who subject related. This baseline is associated with the first and often intermingled. However, they can clearly differentiate between the two, especially in the field of practical through the emerging phenomenon. Both ethics and responsibility arise because all subjects are indeed aware that every creature, human and non-human, has their own rights. Ritual activity to the ancestral is an example in this relation. Ancestors are regarded as non-human subjects that have the right to receive a ritual because they have done their responsibilities to their descendants: participation, attendance in daily activities and help people to live well.

Hallowell bases his explanation about ethic relationship on interdependency principle. According to him, everything has a connectedness with others. What do humans surely affect the other. This theory described by Harvey, "these traditions recognize similarities of ontologisme and interdependence relationship of all being" (Harvey, 36). Similarity ontological and interdependency relationship is confirmed that human being is not higher or lower than the others. Directly, this understanding resists hierarchical relationship that has been propagated by world religion.

Grounding the reciprocal has implications for the awareness that humans and non-humans are equal in luck with that action. If they do not do it so they would be equally collapsed (mutual relationship). This relationship emerges clearly in rituals are held together. A ritual leader is not possible to celebrate this alone without the presence of other subjects. These relationships are based reciprocity. Relation between "beings" is confirmed by Hallowell, "The help of human being, however, was also vital, especially the services of those who had acquired the kind of power which permitted them to exercise effective curative functions in case of illness" (Hallowell, 43). Cox (In Harvey, 2000: 232) also confirms this opinion, "Reciprocity between the community and the spirits marks the central core of indigenous religious activity ... In return, the spirit provides protection and material beneficence for the community."

The third grounding of these relationships exposed more clearly what is meant by ecological religion. It occurs only if humans and non-humans alike understood as an entity that has equality and interdependence of rights

affirmed by each other. The goal is to maintain the order of the universe. In this case, the volcanic eruption was never regarded as a disaster but because the mountain is present as an active subject sustain the lives of all “beings”. In other words, in the ecological religion, all the inhabitants of the universe is always understood in relation to the self as the center of this world. Therein clearly expressed their religiosity is always based on the perspective and how they relate to other beings in the universe.

Toba Batak as an Indigenous Religion

As well as the Ojibwa, Toba Batak society also has their own myths passed down from generation to generation. One of the most famous myth is world creation myth. From this myth, we can understand how the Toba Batak recognizes the world around them. Basically, they divide the world into three parts: Upper World, Middle World, and Under World. Upper world is recognized as *Debata Mula na Bolon* (MJN) place. Besides *Debata MJN* the other persons living in upper world are *Tumbur Jati* tree, *Layang-Layang Mandi*, *Debata na tolu* (*Mangala Bulan, Soripada and Batara Guru*), and other persons. Middle World create through disobedient story of *Si Boru Deak Parujar* (ended up staying on the moon). Because she was arranged marriage, *Deak Parujar* go down and formed the earth from a lump of land given by *Debata MJN*.

Middle world is inhabited by human and natural creation. The myth says that humans and all that exists on earth is derived from upper world such as plants, animals and other being. That is, none of that is in the middle world exist without the upper world. All beings are connected in a interpersonal relation system. All beings are subject. Certain being have what is called a *tondi* and it depend on their activity.

Tondi according to Toba Batak religion is not spirit, nor soul. *Tondi* is a life force in all beings in the middle world. Deriving from upper world as a determinant of the fate of all beings makes *tondi* as very important entity in Toba Batak religion. *Tondi* is in certain subject such as rocks, trees, springs, mountains, and amulets. Because of the belief in the existence *tondi*, Toba Batak people are able to build a special relationship with the rice, amulet, mountains, forests, streams, lakes, land, houses and other objects. *Tondi* can be interpreted as the power of life, essence, or make things as “the other-than-human persons” and human. The essence *tondi* thus should be developed from the essence of vitality into the essence of relationship.

The essence of the relationship refers to the main core of the relationship between man-God-nature. Humans build a relationship with God because form God, human people gets *tondi*; humans build relationships with nature because nature also has *tondi*. *Tondi* make them should not exploit nature even humiliate as how modern paradigm envisaged the nature. Because tree has *tondi* then

humans have the responsibility to take care of. If people want to use this tree, firstly, humans must hold a certain ritual. From this idea, we can understand why the banyan tree is very important to the Batak Toba. *Beringin* respected not because there is *begu* (demons or spirits) or anything scary, but because of the banyan tree has *tondi*, so she also is a subject in the relationship. Ritual is the main way to communicate with the other-than-human-beings.

The knowledge of *tondi* leads the Toba Batak to build relationships to other entities by naming several persons. Because of their relationship with the land, then named land *Boras pati ni tano*. This person is identified as fertility giver to the land or the ruler of the land itself. Water authorities and water itself known *Boru Saniang Naga*. Forest authorities named as *Ompu sin (dar) Dolok*. These entire people are very close and their knowledge emerge responsibility in community members to honor them. Their presence made people does not want to exploit the land, water and forests. For the Toba Batak, all these persons have a stronger power than them because of their outhority and fungsion.

Underworld inhabited by *Naga padoha*. In myth, when *Siboru Deak Parujar* forging land, this person destroy the land. Because of that destruction, there was the second creation of the land while looking for a way to conquer the *Naga Padoha*. Finally, when the second creation is done, *Siboru Deak Parujar* asked sticks from *Debata MJN*. When *Naga Padoha* tried to destroy the land, *Siboru Deak Parujar* plugged the stick so that the *Naga padoha* bound. At the time, there is an agreement between them that when the *Naga Padoha* moves in the form of an earthquake, people should shout “*suhul..!*”. When people shout it, the bond will closed more tightly.

This mythology is not only present as a theory in the Toba Batak. The third world is manifested in various forms in their lives. Toba Batak traditional house is one of the cosmos’ manifestations. The house is divided into three parts: *Tarup* (roof), *Ruma* (house) and *tombara* (under the house). Roof of the house is a manifestation of the upper world. When the house’s members pray, they would put offerings on the roof parat as a form of respect for *tondi* of their ancestors and to the rest of the upper world. *Ruma* is a manifestation of middle world where humans live. *Taumbara* is a manifestation of the underworld which used as a corral.

Ecological Religion of Toba Batak in Practice

Batak Toba has one of its own ecological system that is ecological religion. This opinion will be more apparent when looking at ecological practices that take place in their daily life: agriculture, fisheries, construction of houses and other activities. Everything was always done in the realm of religiosity. They never forget *Debata MJN*, human beings and nature. Thus, the third entities are always included. The question is, how they practice their ecological concepts?

Toba Batak worldview overall inspired by and based on their religious system. They establish these relationships without differences. For them, the relationship with *Debata MJN* has similar characteristics with their relationship with nature. In other words, the relationship they built with nature always included their relationship with the upperworld and human. This relational unity can be seen clearly in everytime they do ritual.

In connection with their relationship with the wider universe, Toba Batak people's relationships with the universe are contained in *parhalaan* (*Batak calendar*). This calendar is based on their experiences and observations on the universe. The days of the Toba Batak never passed without considering the situation of the universe. Parhalaan checking activity is usually called *manjujur ari* (check out day). The term is derived from venomous animals' name: *hala* (scorpion). Understanding this activity is very important to understand their ecological practices.

The Toba Batak's ancestors appear to have tried to identify the universe is based on their cosmological view. The cosmology said that *Debata Sorisohaliapan* has a twin: *Tuan Dihurmijati* also called *Panenabolon*. In modern thinking, *Panenabolon* is called as a Natural Law which is characterized by light horizon starts to look at dusk and at night. Constantly, *Panenabolon* stayed for three months in a village, and will move on to another village. The introduction to *Panenabolon* is the basis for the Toba Batak to prepare *parhalaan*. Tobing affirmed, "... the porhalaan is not a calendar in the modern sense of the word. It is an oracle-instrument. Before any enterprise, such as sowing, harvesting, marrying, the building of a new village, etc. a Tobanese will always consult this important instrument and it is fact that almost all Toba-Batak Christians follow this custom" (ibid, 124-127).

All days are understood according to function, so there are certain days where humans should not be doing activities that can disturb the harmony of nature. Based on the introduction to nature, they can determine when the right day for sowing, planting and harvesting. Wisdom about days studied by the *datu* (*shaman*) and they will be asked when people want to do their activities. Bonar Siahaan *datu* confirms this role, "*Ianggo namargoar datu, ingkon diboto do jujur ni ari, bulan, taon, desa (mandesai) dohot manjaha bintang*" (Siahaan, 1990:10). A *datu* should know concerning the determination of the day, month, year, winds and read the stars.

Not all regions have the same calendar as a whole. Calendar is depend on their respective areas. The difference depends on the season of each region. And also elements of nature: wind, water, clouds, and land, memili each character. However, the way they adapted, stay the same. Everyday they are investigating and analyzing so often happens in the debate between the *datu*s. In the common areas such as the division of the day, the month, all have the same shape.

All timing are done based on the analysis of the *datu* of the rotation of stars, moon, sun and the universe. Analysis was only possible because of their

understanding on nature after so much time they had a variety of experiences from which they build knowledge. Based on this calendar they determine when they will grow plants. Sahala Simanjuntak explained, “The season can be mapped on a rainy and dry, it is very easily observed. But there are two more who observed such a period of time the wind blows and fertile soil.” They record every season for years. Thus, Toba Batak *porhalaan* is a form of ancestor introduction Toba Batak on natural conditions without intending to manipulate, but to keep their unity with the universe.

This Porhalaan determine when the universe shows his “will”, such as giving the right for people to do some appropriate things. With the blessings of nature, Toba Batak people do not have to kill rats because rats have been expelled by a snake. And they will not hunt paddy birds because the birds will not interfere with paddy. That’s one reason why they keep letting *sanggar* (pimping grass) grows in around their fields. Even, they are also often held a reforestation of those fields by burning it. This is the attitude of ecological Toba Batak.

In addition to the calendar, the ritual became a form of religious practice ecological Toba Batak society. Here is presented an example of ecological ritual called *Tonggo ni harbue* (prayer on rice). This prayer emerged from their closed relation with rice fields. Agriculture and paddy are the main source of life Batak Toba. Loeb (1972: 23-24) and Sherman (1990: 34-35) concludes that the Batak Toba has long lived on the farm fields. Op. Mancen Limbong asserted that in the soil and the soil itself is *Boras pati ni tano* who have a very real role in human life. They keep this relationship very well. The way they refer to rice as *Inong* (mother) is a clear example on that relationship.

Tonggo is a very prevalent form of prayer in Toba Batak religion. “*Tonggo* means “call” so *martonggo* means “to call” (Nainggolan, 147). *Tonggo* word is often used in the rite. When I participated in their prayers, they spoke these words “*Hutonggo, hupio, hupangalu-aluhon*” (I called, I beg, I proclaim You). One selected *tonggo is tonggo ni Harbue. Tonggo ni harbue* means prayer for rice (ibid., 139). This prayer is intended to invoke in order tondi of rice growing firm and strong.

“... *Hugolom ma Dainang di pogu ni tanganhu, huambur di punsu ni jari-jaringhu. Huambur di jaeen, jumpa ahu di juluan, huambur di juluan, jumpa ahu di jaeen. Dainang na uja marboru, na pakpak marhela on. Dainang siapul na tangis, sipamokmok na marniang on. Dainang Si Boru Agea, sipatuk nidok ni roha on. ... Jadi hutatap, hutonggo ma dainang on: Si Deang Marlundu Pepe goar ni Dainang on, di toding partandangan i. Sahat ma Dainang tu toding partandangan i, satiga, dua tiga, tolu tiga, opat tiga, lima tiga, onom tiga, pitu tiga...*”

... I hold you, oh mother, in my hand. I sow through the tips of my finger. I sow downstream, I found upstream. I sow in the upstream, I found downstream. Mother who the smooth-tongued her 'doughther'. Mother is clever to take heart of her daughter in law. Mother, entertainers those who weep, make fat thin people. Mother, Princess Agea that meet the desires of the heart. ... I watched and I watched mother, your name now is: Queen Marlundu Pege (Queen of young ginger buds) at the meeting place. Mother arrived at the meeting place, A week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks, six weeks, seven weeks....

In *tonggo ni harbue* can be seen that the relationships built by the Toba Batak with this rice is interpersonal relationships. Rice is understood and accepted as a form of personal because she has *tondi*. The idea of the personhood of rice is awareness of the relationship between people and rice as a form the other personnel. Both these persons are equally involved: giving-receiving, keeping-welfare. As explained by Viveiros de Castro (1998) in the theory of "perspectivism" that the world is inhabited by human beings and non-human. That relationships make them perceives the other as a person or a subject with a capacity of intentionality and agency. Intentionality means that all beings are present along with the purpose and will of their own to relate. All beings are present as an agency to take part in shaping their social environment. Thus, the person in this case has the character of intentionality, agency and subjectivity.

Accepting rice as a person revealed the word, *inang*. *Inang* is a given name to mother. As same as mother's role, the rice's role is very big in human life. For Toba Batak people, a mother called "*Inanta soripada, na so ada bada, di ruma marhuraja, manggonggom ma ibana*" (*brilliant king Madam, without any dispute, in home to reign, elderly is hers*) (Sinaga in Panggabean, 2007: 40). This expression confirms that a mother has a high status in the household who brings peace and sustain life. Apparently, mentioning *inang* to the rice is proportional due to the overwhelming role of rice in human life. The rice could not realize its responsibilities. However, because that ritual, both (human and non-human) willing to mutual benefit, take part in the relationship and remain subject to autonomous.

The existence of rice's *tondi* make the rice has capability to perform its responsibilities: grow well, giving a fruitful and manifest the life of human. The way Toba Batak people related also heartily filled with values of their religiosity because presenting supernatural person, nature and human. Thus, their relationship never separated one of the main entity: God, human and Nature. How does this religiosity manifest?

Toba Batak people show their responsibility by ensuring the fulfillment of the rights of the rice. They held ritual devoted to growing rice paddy

before and at the harvest time. This responsible relationships build by giving great respect to rice. Respect here does not mean worshipping rice. Paddy has provided welfare to them. Moreover, rice is not only viewed as food, but also a means of blessing to mankind. Expression, *Boras sipir ni Tondi* (fortitude *tondi* rice) delivered when parents want to blesse their children. They do by sprinkling down the rice on the heads of their children. This proof that the role of rice will never be separated from Toba Batak's life. The relationships are always confirmed even in everyday life beyond the period of sowing seeds.

In addition to the responsibility, the Batak Toba establish reciprocal relationships with rice. They should give what they should give to rice, so they get the blessing of abundant results. They respect rice because has been instrumental in human life. Rice also has *tondi* which establishes human's *tondi*. This reciprocal relations will continue because this is the only way to realized the welfare of human and rice.

How *datu* treated rice is a ethical values held by the Toba Batak in their relationships with rice. They provide suitable land, flowing clean water into the fields by irrigation system, clean up all the grass that grows in the fields, harvesting, grinding and cooking rice. All of these activities they do with respect. In fact, parents have always taught children that do not mention an inappropriate words when they work in the fields. For example: when they are harvest, they cut the rice with very carefully, and put on the rice field. When there is a little group of rice grown in the fields, they are not allowed to mention the word *saotik* (a little). The correct word is, *sagodang*. So, the purpose is to say 'little', but in opposite way: *sa-otik+godang* (a lot) = *sagodang*. When asked why? The parents will answered, "rice will be angry".

CONCLUSION

Toba Batak society has wisdom in dealing with nature, then can be referred to as a ecological religion of Toba Batak. If the term is agreed as the main tese then we can take number of conclusions from this paper:

First, using the old paradigm to understand local religion do not give positive contribution to the local religion itself. Modern and world religion's paradigm have been hold in understanding the local religion in general and Toba Batak religion in particular. Thus, the new paradigm offered by Hallowell, Bird-David Morrisson can be implemented. Why? This approximation is more contributive for the local religious community as how they understood their religion themself and their world. Thus, the religiosity within local religious understanding is a ecological religiosity. They will be religious if they are also ecological. This is proved by their worldview on the other-than-human-being as subjects, not as objects. And it is based on their religion.

Second, Toba Batak Religion should not be equated to world religions that have hierarchical levels in their own relationship system. This society has

a intersubjective relationship in which they understand the other as personal beings who made a great contribution in maintaining the balance of the cosmos. They build an interdependence relationship with other beings. The way they understand themselves as part of nature bring them to the realization that they must participate to take part in maintaining the balance of the cosmos. This is proved by how they see themselves and other beings (home) as a manifestation of the cosmos.

Can be concluded, Toba Batak religion is a religion that based on the way of relating to other-than-human-beings who had also contributed in maintaining the balance of this cosmos. Thus, the concept *tondi* Toba Batak religion can be understood more clearly as a life force (not a spirit or animation). Everything, which has related to human, has *tondi*. Some of them have greater power than human, the other have less power than human, but all of them are equal. *Tondi* is the bond of these relationship.

Third, ecological religion of Toba Batak work clearly in their daily practices. From the example of *harbue ni eme* ritual, we can see clearly how they treat rice as respectfully as they treat their own mothers. This attitude is not only true in the ritual alone but in every process, from selecting the seeds, soak, sowing, planting, maintaining rice, harvest until consume the rice. There is no one missed from these activities. Respect comes because rice has a strong power of *tondi*. Toba Batak calendar (*parhalaan*), summarize the concept of ecological religion. The calendar was emerged from their experience in relationships with the universe. By using *parhalaan* they see how nature relates to them. When nature does not support them in taking action, they will not break it. It is clear from expression, “*Tu sanggar ma amporik tu lubang na ma satua*” (let the paddy birds go to the pimpim grass and the rats go to their hole).

Base on this explanation, ecological religion Batak Toba is an acceptable tese. For Toba Batak society, religiosity was no longer limited to strict religious teachings, but religiosity comes from everyday human experience with non-human being around them. As revealed by Togar Nainggolan (2012), Sibeth (1991), Sinaga (2014) that although most of the Toba Batak Toba people have converted to Christianity, their local religion never left from their appreciation. This is a major capital to revive local wisdom of Toba Batak. Hopefully.

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