ANCESTORS WORSHIP BASED ON TIMORESE PERSPECTIVES IN OELBUBUK VILLAGE, CENTRAL MOLLO SUB-DISTRICT, TIMOR TENGAH SELATAN DISTRICT

Yenry Pellondou¹, John A. Titaley²

¹Lecturer in IAKN Kupang
²Lecturer in UKIM Ambon.

Email: yenryanastasiapellondou@gmail.com¹, yenrypellondou@staknkupang.ac.id²

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In 1928, Timorese in Oelbubuk had abandoned their original beliefs and converted to Christianity. Now, belief in Uis Neno (sky god) is interpreted as God, Uis Pah (earth god) is lost in meaning, while the meaning of Pah Nitu (ancestor) is still maintained. Even though they have become Christians, the worship of Pah Nitu persisted in their lives. Why is that? What is so special about Pah Nitu for Timorese?

Design/methodology/approach: This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques in the form of Participant Observation, and Indepth Interview and Literature Study to answer that question.

Findings: Through interviews with Tua Adat, Village Heads and Timorese in Oelbubuk, it was found that even though they had become Christians, worship of Pah Nitu was maintained, because the lives of Timorese in Oelbubuk depended entirely on the role of Pah Nitu.

Research limitations/implications: Result shows existence of original belief of the Timorese in Oelbubuk centered on the belief in the existence of a celestial deity called Uis Neno. There are also other objects of worship that are considered as a manifestation of the manifestation of Uis Neno, namely Uis Pah (earth god) and Pah Nitu (ancestral spirits)

Practical implications: This research shows that Pah Nitu is understood as an important figure that will not be replaced by the role of any religious teachings (including Christianity).

Originality/value: This research is conducted in Oelbubuk Village, Central Mollo Sub-District, Timor Tengah Selatan District.

Paper type: Research paper.

Keyword: Ancestor Worship, Role of Pah Nitu, Timorese.

Received: December 24th, 2020
Revised: January 1st, 2021
Published: January 21st, 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the entry of Christianity, Timorese embraced and practiced the teachings of tribal religion which was the basis of their native religion. Timorese know a number of gods. (Departemen P&K, 1984) For them, Uis Neno, Uis Pah and Pah Nitu are the source of their life and protector. Uis Neno is considered the creator of nature and the preserver of life in the world. According to them, this Uis Neno incarnated in various forms : (Dinas P & K, 1984)

a. The form of crocodiles, water, moon and sun
b. The form of truth "Tetus" and cold givers ("Manikin Oetene").
In this original belief system, ancestor worship occupies an important place. Belief in life after death has a great influence. Where life after death is not so different from world life, it’s just that in other realms.

After Christianity entered the Mollo region in ± 1928, Oelbubuk became one of the goals of Christian missionaries. From here the changes occur. Now, Uis Neno means God of God in the Bible, Uis Pah lacks a role in their lives, on the contrary Pah Nitu which means ancestral spirits are retained and have an important role in their lives, such as during farming, birth, sickness, accident, and others. Pah Nitu is believed to be able to give blessings to humans who carry out his orders and will be disastrous if humans do not obey the requests or neglect to pay their respects and worship according to their wishes. Pah Nitu is the closest to Timorese life. Although Christianity brought by the Portuguese was finally formally accepted and embraced by the Timorese population especially in Oelbubuk as an official religion, their traditional beliefs persisted, especially the worship of Pah Nitu. (Manafe and Neolaka, 2020).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It should Based on the literature review conducted by the author, there are several works that discuss traditional beliefs, namely first, a thesis from Aldy Beny Karniku, a student of the Sociology of Religion Postgraduate Program at the Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga Class of 2008, entitled 'Matruma and Upatware'. This paper portrays the Tomra community as an indigenous community that practices ancestral cultural practices as a person who connects man and God (Karniku, 2009). Second, a book from Mubyarto entitled 'Work Ethic and Social Cohesion'. This book talks about Uis Neno, Uis Pah and Pah Nitu in Timorese life. In this book Uis Neno and Uis Pah are replaced by the word God in the Gospels (Mubaryato, 1993), but further discussion of Pah Nitu after Christianity is absent. Furthermore, the author also looked at several journals related to writing about Pah Nitu, but was not found. Therefore, this article will pay more attention to the worship of Pah Nitu based on the Timorese perspective in Oelbubuk.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses descriptive methods (Lawrence Neuman, 2014), namely research that seeks to describe or describe the condition of the subject under study, using a qualitative approach (Anderson, 1963), to obtain descriptive data on spoken and written words and the behavior of the subjects studied. Atoin Pah Meto or Timorese in Oelbubuk is the subject of this study. The village of Oelbubuk is located in Central Mollo district, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.

The main purpose of research is to get data, then the data collection technique is the most strategic step in this research (Sugiyono, 2009). This study uses Participant Observation and Indepth Interview techniques, as well as Literature Studies. In this Participant Observation technique, researchers as observers who try to establish relationships with informants and observe them, and record data obtained. The technique used next is the Indepth Interview or direct and in-depth interviews with a number of key informants who understand Pah Nitu, namely the village head, Traditional Figure (Tobe), Timorese in Oelbubuk. The type of interview used is an unstructured interview (Open ended Interview), but still based on interview guidelines that have been prepared previously. Literature study was conducted to obtain secondary data that supports primary data. For this reason, researchers will collect written data in the form of books, journals, papers, articles, documents and reports, to support research data collection. The analysis is done by first making a classification of data in accordance with the focus of research (Moleong, 2000), describing the collection of information compiled in narrative form and making conclusions. (Salim, 2006)

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Result

Humans have special features in their minds. Reason is a tool to determine his attitude. The view and evaluation of the universe and the world in which it lives is the first starting point that forms the basis of
thinking and incarnation in the form of their outlook on life. Life attitudes and subsequent behavior patterns become a way of life that must be followed. This view and evaluation of the cosmos forms the basis for thinking, how it should behave. This basic pattern of thinking is based on the order of the cosmos which gives rise to cosmic thinking patterns, where humans are only a part of the completeness of the cosmos which has its place and position. Man's place and position must remain as the circulation of this universe, which has been ordered in an orderly manner. If the circulation and place of each part of the cosmos changes, it will change and the chaos, because one another will clash with each other, this means destruction. The basis of the cosmic view is the basic view that believes in how to be able to keep each of these parts of the cosmos functioning in their respective positions and places. This order will occur if the overall totality carries out their respective functions. Each part is a unity that is inseparable from the other parts. One changed part will shake and endanger the whole.

Humans are an inseparable part of the universe. Human life must be adapted to the overall order of the universe. If humans in processing and working on the natural surroundings should not be careless, but must try so that the order of the relationship between humans and nature does not change. Humans must seek balance and relationship with the magical forces hidden in each part of the universe. This relationship and cooperation, especially with supernatural forces in the heavens and those on the earth are bipedite that can maintain balance and maintain order in totality between humans and the universe, especially with the natural surroundings, where humans live. The basis of cooperation between above and below (heaven and earth) also applies to cooperation between the living and the dead, two different worlds but the two are inseparable, closely related and mutually complementary so that the universe remains in balance. The unity of the two is fostered in traditional patterns of behavior in the form of human effort in the context of establishing contact with the spirit of his ancestors (Pah Nitu). Just like living people, they can have emotions, feelings, and tastes. They must be treated well to guarantee their continued good will and assistance for life. (E.B.Tylor, 2007) In the book The World’s Religion, Anderson said: (Anderson, 1963)

“..It is natural that death should assume great terrors, and that much time and thought should be given to the security of the living in relation to the souls of the departed”.

An obligation for those who are still alive to still be able to make contact with the spirits of their ancestors (Pah Nitu). Pah Nitu is what fills the supernatural powers that exist on earth. Therefore, according to him, if the relationship with Pah Nitu is broken, it means that no one gives supernatural powers to them in maintaining a balance between humans and the natural environment. Pah Nitu will always supervise and punish human descendants, who dare to violate the balance between humans and the natural environment. These spirits can be found in places of worship such as stones, springs which are considered pemali because it is the place of these spirits. This is also similar to the opinion of Paul Radine: (Radine, 1957) ‘Ghosts were found everywhere and could become transformed into anything. They should live in a tree or rock or ant-hill…’ Even though the place of Pah Nitu is in the ground, but it can also be present in the midst of humans, in the natural world around human life, so that faster the power of influence for humans. The spirits of ancestors and humans are two separate categories, but they are complementary. Although separate but they are interconnected (Hicks, 1976). Ancestors have a clear position and are associated with someone or something. Even though his true place of residence is in the ground, he is still looking for a place in trees or rocks or springs, because trees and stones are considered to represent a person's body, the spirit will continue to be there permanently (Durkeim, 1992) Rather than the power of God which according to him requires a process in helping humans, because its existence is far from humans, namely in the sky and not near humans who are on earth. Pah Nitu is a fundamental value of the Timorese. Pah Nitu has several important roles in life.

First, Pah Nitu acts as a way of life and behavior for Timorese. Pah Nitu itself has rules or laws. These rules can be defined as guidelines for behaving according to the procedures of Pah Nitu. This is evident in the traditional life of Timorese people daily and especially in ceremonies in agriculture. As a belief system that has rules, until now it is still acceptable because the whole set of values is directed towards the good of life for the Timorese themselves.

Second, Pah Nitu acts as a ‘helper and protector.’ When a human being (Timorese) is able to carry out the rules in Pah Nitu he will be saved. Congratulations on what is meant by (1). Success in agriculture (2). Will be protected by the Creator through the spirits of the ancestors (Pah Nitu) in all plagues. For example, when going to work on the land first worship ceremony is held so that later when farming, they can get good results. But if they fail, then a ceremony to hinder or ask for the power of Pah Nitu is made. Pah Nitu's relationship with her offspring is also evident in other lives. Apart from ceremonies carried out in agriculture, the names of their newborn babies are also taken from the names of their ancestors. For them, this was done so that the Pah Nitu became happy because their names were given to their descendants, and for living Timorese this was done so that their newborn children were always protected by the ancestors whose names were given to the children. They. The names of the ancestors are now better known as clans.
Third, Pah Nitu can also give blessings and doom or sanctions to his generation who are negligent or forget to carry out traditional demands together. Infants who are often sick are considered because their names do not match and must be immediately replaced by another name from their ancestors. In subsequent beliefs, the taking of the names of the ancestors was based on the belief that the ancestors’ spirits could be re-manifested in newborn babies. If it matches the name, it means the baby is reincarnation of his ancestors. In addition, in daily life, the relationship between Pah Nitu and Timorese is still strong. If any of them experience misfortune or mistake, and an accident with an unknown cause, then often they bring offerings to the graves of their ancestors. It aims to avoid the next bad luck. In fact, when celebrating Christmas, Timorese also pilgrimage to the graves of the ancestors to clean the graves, rearranging rocks or dirt that is messy around the grave with a rampe to be sown in the cemetery and to raise private prayers, which are usually in the form thank you because they still get protection and inclusion of Pah Nitu up to now, because if not done they usually get nightmares.

Fourth, Pah Nitu is a place for humans to admit mistakes and beg for forgiveness or Naketi. (Paulino, 2016) to avoid obstacles later on. For Timorese, Pah Nitu is Uis Neno Pal-Pala or is God's representative in the world. So even though at Christmas and New Year they celebrate the birthday of Jesus, but at the same time they also remember parents who have died, so that God and Pah Nitu take care of them and that their relationship with God the Creator and Pah Nitu as the person who gave birth to them stay awake. In fact, when they make mistakes, then they will do a Naketi which contains a confession of mistakes and requests for forgiveness addressed to God and Pah Nitu.

Timorese understand that the spirit of the ancestors (Pah Nitu) has a continuous influence on their lives. Certain misfortunes (such as illness, accidents, difficulties in social life) are often regarded as the actions of the spirits of the ancestors, if there is no other reason that can explain the cause of these misfortunes. Usually the actions of the spirits of the ancestors were seen as retaliation for the mistakes of the Timorese or for negligence in traditional ceremonies. Therefore, the worship of Pah Nitu needs to be done so as not to bring misfortune, bad luck or other illnesses. Various disasters that come are considered as an act or warning from the spirits of the ancestors towards those who have been negligent and do evil. Therefore, worship rituals aimed at the spirits of the ancestors (Pah Nitu), because Timorese believe that the spirits of the ancestors (Pah Nitu) are custodians of people who are still living in the world. In this area, the worship of ancestral spirits (Pah Nitu) is a core defense for the strongholds of pre-Christian customs. The urgent need for security guarantees came forward as a basic factor in the behavior of people of this tribal religion.

Pah Nitu has a blood bond with them and at the same time as the founder of the village, this is why the belief in Pah Nitu has not changed. Because, according to Nitanael Pai, if we forget our ancestors, we forget or deny parents who have died, and indirectly we also deny the existence of ourselves. Such actions by them are called nitum nasi which means don't forget your ancestors. So, this is where the traditional life arrangements of Timorese still exist.

B. Discussion

The author sees that in the environment of Timorese life in Oelbubuk, ancestors or Pah Nitu have an important role, such as health, birth of babies, when farming, and others. Using the thought of Mariassusai Dhavamony (Dhavamony, 1995) the authors see that the worship of Pah Nitu continues to be carried out by Timorese in Oelbubuk, because they continue to assume that the ancestors still lived in an effective form and intervened in their lives. In this case, the ancestors need to get prosperity to enter the next life, but on the other hand also for the good of their offspring. Then, quoting Frank Cooley's thought, it can be said that if Timorese in Oelbubuk respect custom and live according to its rules, the ancestors will be happy and bless people, but if humans do not heed the ancestors will be angry so they give a curse and havoc to humans (Cooley, 1976). Therefore, ancestral spirits must be pacified through traditional ceremonies carried on for generations. The ritual intended here according to O'Dea is not only to show the attitude of togetherness in a society, but also to strengthen attitudes into high self-awareness to reunite the relationship between individuals or groups with sacred objects that are considered to have power. (O'Dea, 1987).

Furthermore, the writer uses Suh Sung Min's thought that in general ancestor worship was a tribute to the founders of the area. (Min, 2001). This also happened to the Timorese in Oelbubuk, which was generally the worship of ancestors to commemorate the services of the village founders and the first adat owners, namely from the Pai, Tioneno and Nau families. After the death of the three founders of the village, their ancestral status was imposed on them. This is where respect comes for their services. So, using Suh Sung Min's thoughts, the writer can say that the worship of Pah Nitu which aims to pay homage to the ancestors is ancestor worship.

For them, Pah Nitu is understood as an important figure who will not be replaced by the role of any religious teachings (including Christianity). By them, the relationship with Pah Nitu was described as skin and
Ancestors Worship Based on Timorese Perspectives in Oelbubuk Village, Central Mollo Sub-District, Timor Tengah Selatan District

Yenry Pellondou, John A. Titalay

flesh, something which could not be separated from Timorese life, namely blood ties. Pah Nitu or ancestral spirits are still felt as part of the lives of clans of people who are still alive. Pah Nitu is considered as a living dead who continues to monitor the behavior of their offspring. The author sees that the Timorese understand Pah Nitu as Uis Neno Pal-Pala which means God’s representative in the world. This understanding helped support the survival of the Pah Nitu worship among the Timorese in Oelbubuk. In fact, they also assume that this belief is also accepted by Christianity. Christianity teaches them to be able to respect their father and mother or parents, which is evident through the belief in the power of Pah Nitu in their lives.

IV. CLOSING

A. Conclusion

The original belief of the Timorese in Oelbubuk centered on the belief in the existence of a celestial deity called Uis Neno. There are also other objects of worship that are considered as a manifestation of the manifestation of Uis Neno, namely Uis Pah (earth god) and Pah Nitu (ancestral spirits). In 1928 when Christianity entered this area, a change took place. Uis Neno is interpreted as the God of God in the Bible, Uis Pah is less understood, while Pah Nitu has retained its original meaning until now. Therein lies the privilege of Pah Nitu for Timorese in Oelbubuk. The meaning of Pah Nitu is still maintained, because for them, Pah Nitu has an influence on their lives. Worship to Pah Nitu is still maintained because it has several important roles. First, Pah Nitu acts as a guide for the life and behavior of Timorese. Second, Pah Nitu acts as a ‘helper and protector.’ Third, Pah Nitu can also provide havoc or sanctions for his generation who are negligent or forget to carry out traditional traditional demands. Fourth, Pah Nitu is a place for humans to admit their mistakes and ask for forgiveness or Naketi, to avoid obstacles in the future.

B. Thank-You Note

Thank you to the Indigenous People, Village Head and Timorese in Oelbubuk, who have deigned to help the writer collect the research data needed.

REFERENCES

Ancestors Worship Based on Timorese Perspectives in Oelbubuk Village, Central Mollo Sub-District, Timor Tengah Selatan District

Yenry Pellondou, John A. Titaley


Wikipedia (1928) As many as 1658 Protestant Christians and 25 Catholic Christians, Wikipedia.