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Theological Study of The Meaning of *Ma'katia* in *Aluk Rambu Solo'* and Its Implications for The *Buntao* Classist Chain Congregation'

Yonathan Mangolo

¹ Department of Theology, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja

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*Corresponding author: Yonathan Mangolo

Abstract

This study examines the theological meaning of Ma'katia within the Aluk Rambu Solo' ritual and its implications for the Rantekata Klasis Buntao Congregation. Ma'katia is a traditional mourning dance performed by women during the Rambu Solo' funeral ceremony. It is characterized by the chanting of lamentative verses (singgi') accompanied by expressive movements. The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which members of the Rantekata congregation understand the meaning of Ma'katia. This study employs a qualitative research method, including literature review, field observation of Ma'katia performances during Rambu Solo' ceremonies, and interviews with selected informants who have knowledge of the tradition, as well as members of the congregation. The findings reveal that many members of the Rantekata congregation do not fully understand the theological and cultural meaning of Ma'katia. For some, it is merely appreciated as a form of art without deeper comprehension. However, a portion of the congregation demonstrates an understanding influenced by the belief system of Aluk Todolo.

Keywords: Theological Studies; Makna Ma'katia; Rambu Solo'; Implications; The Rantekata Congregation

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia possesses a rich diversity of cultures, one of which is the culture of the Toraja people. The Toraja are an ethnic group in South Sulawesi who inhabit a mountainous region known as Tana Toraja, which is also an administrative reGENCY within the province. (Rahman et al. 2025) Approximately 99% of the population in Tana Toraja consists of the Toraja people, while the remainder are migrants who predominantly reside in the urban areas of Makale and Rantepao.

Torajan society preserves a wide range of cultural practices that are rich in meaning and have been passed down through generations.

(Lamban Gasong 2024),(Salurante 2020). One of the most prominent traditions is the funeral ceremony known as *Aluk Rambu Solo'*. Etymologically, *Aluk Rambu Solo'* consists of three elements: *aluk* meaning belief or rule, *rambu* meaning smoke or ray, and *solo'* meaning to descend. Thus, *Aluk Rambu Solo'* refers to a ceremonial practice conducted when the sun begins to set or descends toward the west (Mangolo dan Sampeasang 2023). In another interpretation, it also refers to rituals performed on the western side of the traditional house (*Tongkonan*). Lexically, *Aluk Rambu Solo'* is understood as a ritual of worship involving animal

sacrifice, carried out based on the indigenous belief system known as *Aluk Todolo*, which centers on reverence and worship of ancestral spirits.

Within the *Aluk Rambu Solo'* ceremony, there is a specific ritual known as *Ma'katya*. *Ma'katya* is a traditional dance performed by women while chanting alimantative verses (Wulandari et al. 2024). This dance is one of the artistic expressions presented during funeral ceremonies, and not everyone is permitted to perform it, as there are specific requirements that must be fulfilled. The dance also functions as a form of welcoming guests who attend the funeral ceremony (Maćkowiak 2024). The performers typically wear uniform attire along with traditional headpieces (*sa'pi'*). *Ma'katya* is comparable to *Pa'randing*, although *Pa'randing* is performed in the context of male funerals. In its performance, *Ma'katya* is usually accompanied by one or two men who recite poetic verses (*ma'bating*), which are then echoed or followed by the female dancers.

In Torajan culture, dances are more commonly observed in Rambu Tuka' ceremonies. However, this study focuses specifically on the *Ma'katya* dance as performed within the *Aluk Rambu Solo'* ceremony, particularly on the alimantative verses and their underlying meanings. Therefore, it is important to examine the theological significance of *Ma'katya* and to assess the extent to which the community understands its meaning.

Ma'katya is a cultural art form that deserves preservation and further development within Torajan society. The author is interested in examining how the Toraja people, particularly members of the *Rantekata Klasis Buntao'* Congregation, interpret the *Ma'katya* dance presented during *Rambu Solo'* ceremonies, and how this interpretation influences their Christian faith, especially in responding to grief. This topic will be further explored in a scientific work entitled a Theological Study on the Meaning of *Ma'katya* in *Aluk Rambu Solo'* and Its Implications for the *Rantekata Klasis Buntao'* Congregation.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach to collect and analyze data. The qualitative method is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The research utilizes a combination of library research, field observation, and interviews as primary strategies for data collection (Gill 2020).

2. Data Collection Techniques

To obtain both theoretical and empirical data, the researcher applies several data collection techniques, including literature study, observation, and interviews.

a. Library Research

Library research is conducted to gather theoretical foundations relevant to the research topic. This involves searching, reviewing, and analyzing scholarly books, journals, and other academic sources. The collected literature serves to support the conceptual framework and provides a basis for analyzing the research problem.

b. Observation

Observation is carried out through direct engagement in the field. The researcher observes the phenomena related to the research topic in their natural setting. This method enables the researcher to capture the actual conditions and realities of the research objects,

particularly those related to cultural practices within the community being studied.

c. Interview

Interviews are conducted to obtain primary data through direct interaction with respondents. This study employs a structured open-ended interview model, allowing flexibility while maintaining a clear set of guiding questions. The respondents include traditional leaders, religious figures (such as pastors), grieving families, and community members who are considered knowledgeable about the meanings of symbols within the *Rambu Solo'* ritual. These interviews aim to collect reliable and accountable data.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

All data obtained from field observations and interviews are systematically analyzed. The analysis process begins with data classification based on relevance and validity. The data are then organized and interpreted to facilitate understanding.

The analysis procedures include:

a. Data Reduction and Presentation

Given the large volume of data collected, the researcher performs data reduction by selecting and focusing on relevant information aligned with the research problem. The data are then organized, categorized, and presented based on interview questions and respondents' answers, allowing for clearer interpretation.

b. Further Analysis

After the data have been organized, the researcher conducts a deeper analysis by comparing empirical findings from the field with existing theoretical frameworks. This step aims to identify patterns, draw conclusions, and ensure that the findings are supported by both data and theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Ma'katia'*

In the Toraja-Indonesian dictionary, *Ma'katia* comes from the word *katia*, which is a song where every time a verse is sung, it is always locked with the word *katia* (meaning it is locked with a word of hope, a word of prayer); *Ma'katia* is singing songs; *Pa'katia* is the singer. According to one of the respondents, *Ma'katia* is a song and dance of grief that is sung to express family grief. This *ma'katia* is displayed at the *Rambu Solo'* ceremony. *Ma'katia* is a dance performed by women by chanting songs or poems of sadness commonly called *Bating* (Palimbong et al. 2023). According to Kanan, *Bating* is an expression of sadness over the death of someone conveyed in the form of words or sentences.

Ma'katya is a symbol that the ceremony is from the nobility (*Tana' Bassi* or *Tana' Foolishness*) (Palimbong et al. 2023). Dance Squirrel This will be displayed when the family in question is able to carry out the ceremony rape. Dance Squirrel Not to appear carelessly at a ceremony *Rambu Solo'*, there are conditions for this dance to be performed. When the deceased are from the "Come on, Bassi, then minimal The Tuning (There were 12 buffaloes sacrificed), but when the deceased were from the *Tana' Lie* minimal The Tuning (the sacrificed buffalo) is 24 buffaloes. This dance is performed when the deceased is a woman from the aristocratic and aristocratic class. Squirrel' (High-level ceremony in Toraja).

Why are the people who chant *katia* women? According to Silas, *Ma'katia* is the same as *Ma'randing* which symbolizes a brave man.

In addition, the dance is synonymous with women, so this is also the reason why Ma'katia is only performed when the deceased is a woman. Ma'katia is a dance to welcome family or relatives who come to the funeral ceremony of nobles with movements and accompanied by a song of mourning as a statement of sharing grief. But this dance became comforting to the grieving family. The poems that were chanted were also in the form of *Pa'tendeng* (flattery) for guests who came to the ceremony. This *ma'katia* is usually performed by 13 dancers, including leaders, dancers and leaders who stand in front of *tongkonan* or loud karampoan (a place where guests are welcomed) and dance while singing, and there are also one or two men who mention verses to the dancers and then chanted by the dancers. In performing this dance, the dancers wear uniforms and wear head hats (*sa'pi*).

At first *Ma'katya* This is interpreted in beliefs *Aluk Todolo* (Tandi dan Ary 2025). According to the first respondent *Ma'katya* It is interpreted to connect the deceased with their ancestors and also connect the living with the living who came *Tongkon*. In general, it does lead to the worship of spirits or the deceased as well as hopes or prayers for salvation for the deceased later in Puya (the afterlife) to accompany the process Returning Home (incarnation) then gives blessings (Liana, Riyanto, dan Afdholi 2025). Therefore, it can also be said that *Ma'katya* This is too much of a boast of the dead. A lament is conveyed as a request if it can be accepted by the ancestor, and the deceased can arrive well in the afterlife and give blessings to his surviving descendants. *Ma'katya* It is also interpreted as entertainment for the family and people who come and can be said to be a medicine for all those who are grieving or strengthening, especially for the family concerned, as well as an expression of gratitude and gratitude to God for the implementation of the ceremony.

According to the second respondent, the meaning of *Ma'katia* is to respect the person who comes to the *tongkon* and to appreciate the deceased and strengthen the bereaved family where he agrees with the first respondent that it is also a provision for the deceased to *Puya*. The third respondent agreed with the first respondent and the second respondent that the meaning of *Ma'katia* is the hope of the family and strengthening for bereaved families. According to the third respondent, *Ma'katia* does not function or have meaning when there is no hope for God in it.

2. Solo Signage Ceremony

In Toraja society, if a person dies and is buried without undergoing the proper ceremonial rites, the family may be perceived as lacking respect and affection for the deceased. Such a situation can also prompt responses from the surrounding community. As an expression of love, respect, and social responsibility toward the deceased, the family traditionally conducts the *Rambu Solo'* ceremony.

Ceremony *Rambu Solo'* is a death and funeral ceremony for the Toraja tribe (Alobaidi 2020). Ceremony *Rambu Solo'* It is also commonly called *Aluk Rampe Matampu*. *Rambu Solo'* It also means offering a sacrifice that is believed that the victim can deliver the spirits to the south of where the spirits live. *Aluk Rambu Solo'*; It is believed to be a way and a guarantee to return to the original world. The animals sacrificed in this ceremony are Pigs and Smells where for the Toraja people the two animals play an important role in cultivating rice fields and for religious ceremonies *Aluk Todolo*. Therefore, the dead need to bring provisions as a means to continue their activities in the hereafter (*Puya*). The animals that were sacrificed were limited according to

what was needed by the deceased to cultivate his rice fields in *Puya* And the boundaries of slaughtered animals are not uniform in several areas.

Before the deceased at the ceremony, it is usually kept Some days, weeks, months and even years above the house and as long as it is still considered not dead in other words still sick (*To Makula'*) and still be given food. For the Toraj people, a person is really considered dead when it has been ceremonial. Even when he is dead but still considered sick then he is sat down and the family puts him in his oversized clothes and usually this lasts for three days. Why aren't most of the dead Toraja buried quickly? Because if someone dies, all family members are shocked and grieved, and this is still common. More specifically, if the family of the deceased is buried immediately, it will leave a very painful feeling as if he or she disappeared suddenly. Another thing is also to remind and make the family aware that all humans will die and during this period of storage of the body all families must hear this news and deliberate Determine the time and level of the funeral ceremony to be chosen and in this case also the family raises money for Honoring the family of the deceased and the opportunity to make a cottage.

According to custom *Aluk Rambu Solo'*, the only way to the home world, if a person goes out to wander and dies but his body is not known where then it must be nets in the wind (his breath caught). As a result, that is what is treated as his corpse. Some have their hair or nails or sarongs that are sent to *Tongkonan* to replace them. In *Aluk Rambu Solo'* The ceremony is carried out based on the caste of the deceased. If the *ARS* is not carried out, it is believed that the spirit will go with the evil spirits.

There are several types of castes in Toraja society, namely:

- a. *Tana' Bulaan (Tokapua)* is a noble caste
- b. *Tana' Bassi (Tomakaka)* is a middle-class aristocratic caste
- c. *Tana' Karurung* is an independent caste of the people or most of them
- d. *Tana' Kua-kua* is a servant caste. This caste is people who serve the *tana' bulaan* and *tana' bassi*.

Death is only a transition and in this transition, the prescribed rites are very complex. The rites for the dead are determined by their social status. This is sometimes a problem for families whether they have the assets to carry out the prescribed rites. Because there are levels in *Aluk Rambu Solo'*

3. Ma'katia' According to Christian Teachings

Over time, some of this meaning has begun to shift since the presence of the Gospel in Toraja. There are already many adherents *Aluk Todolo* who have believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and The Savior until the dance Squirrel this has been interpreted by Christian beliefs, namely worship or praise and the hope conveyed that leads to God. As also conveyed by Rev. Kristian that *Ma'katya* This was indeed initially interpreted as the *Aluk Todolo* but now the meaning has been brought to the Christian version as a form of hope in God. According to him, the meaning of *Ma'katya* This is to provide strength and entertainment for the family so that they do not dissolve in grief. So, it is not only about lamenting but also about hope, strengthening, comforting and gratitude to God. From the description above, it can be concluded that the meaning of *Ma'katya* this is hope to God, as comfort and strengthening for grieving families and also as gratitude to God. Although not everyone understands according to Christian beliefs and there are

still those who understand *Aluk Todolo*, but according to all the respondents above, it is already dominant which interprets it from the Christian version.

a. Ma'katia Poem

The poems used at the beginning have not changed until now only the meaning has been changed even though there are still versions *Aluk Todolo* in it. According to Mr. Bartholomew's poem *Ma'katia* This is difficult to translate word by word or sentence by sentence, therefore he interprets after a group of verses is finished.

1. (Passailo')

Tabé' Indo' tabé' Ambe'

Siman kalandó kaodi'

Lamessimanakan dolo

Lako tingayo boko'ki

Sola kanan kairingki

Laumpokadapakan bating

Laussa'bu'kan mario

Indete' tondok Torammang

Pessulunan maladundun

Tang marendengkan manindi'

Tanggungkan massaelako

Napokinalloi lalan

Sau' rumombena langi'

The Meaning is respect to all those present and request permission to convey lament or Batting as a provision for the deceased.

2. pa'marakka

Tabé' bulan tabé' allo

Siman kabarreang kulla'

Lamessimanakan dolo

Lako olo mala'bi'ta

Tingayo makaraengta

Laumpokadakan Bating

Laussa'bu'kan Mario

Indete' rantekalua'

Lan te tandung sea-sea

Tiromi tu tau tongan

Tu natampa Puangna

Nakombong tu to mampana

To laen-laen dadinna

Senga' kombong garaganna

Di dadian lanmai bulan

Ditibussanan lanmai bintoen

The meaning is Respect for the person present and request permission to convey lament or Batting and hope to God to

continue to be blessed and flattered to the deceased that it is indeed the custom of the nobles and their descendants. This verse is used in the Tana' Lie and can also be used in the Tana' Bassi.

3. Pa' Tipo'

Male mati' to tang mandu

To tang buda kadanna

Ke inayanta tongan

Kenna ba'tengta lan liu

Tangla ditangga'pa

Lamale untapeki'.

The Meaning is It is an entertainment for those who come and a strengthening for those who are left behind and in this verse it is implied that this deceased is still needed by many people.

4. Pa'biung-biung

Mase sia inayanmu

Tiliu Pasiruanmu

Male untampe tondokmu

Umbokoran banuammu

Makarorongmi te tondok

Makanturu-turumi

Pa'demo nenek

Nabasa pentiroki

Malemo ma'bua' misa

Ma'tondok tang sola tau

Ullambi' ba'ba titutu'

Ampang disalli' leko'

The meaning is This verse shows that many people feel lost, sad about the departure of the deceased and it is a hope for the deceased to go to Puya.

5. Pa'dondan

Dondandi.....dondandi..

Ndondalla dondan..

The meaning is In this verse it is a sign or lure for guests who are present to give Pa'toding For Dancers Scarred. This verse is usually repeated.

6. Pa'danduru' Dalle

Nduru' dalle

Giling-giling allo

Inang senga' ke to senga'

Inang laen ke to laen

Nduru' dalle

Giling-giling allo

To laen-laen dadinna

Senga' kombong garaganna

Nduru' dalle

Giling-giling allo

Kusanga bentoen ronno'

Dio sa'de banuanna
Nduru' dalle
Giling-giling allo
To dadi lanmai bulan
To kombong lanmai bentoen
Nduru' dalle
Giling-giling allo
Tang ta tiro raka lako
Tang ta'pai raka matanta

The meaning is this verse is a flattery for the deceased and for the officials present. This verse is usually repeated.

7. *Pa'massiman*

Tabé' allo tabé' bulan
Siman kabarreang kulla'
Lakisambungpa batingki
Lakiumpu'pa marioki
Indete' rante kalua'
Lan te tandung kalonaran
Inang senga' ke to senga'
Inang laen ke to laen
Tangditiro raka lako
Tang ta'paraka matanta
Ditiro pandala-dala
Disaiele paruninik

The meaning is Respect for the person present and request permission to convey lament or Batting and it is also a flattery to the deceased that the customs of the nobles and their descendants are indeed different and indeed it seems to us that the eyes are lit up and the body trembles at the sight of it. The poem also refers to the decorations at the ceremony. This verse also shows that the dancers Squirrel ready to be Toding. This verse is also a sign that the dance shattered will be completed soon.

8. *Passambo Padang*

Tabé' indo' tabé' ambe'
Tabé'ki' massola nasang
Lakipaupu'mo batingki
Lakitampa'imo marioki
Tuo'-tuo' male mati'
Passakkemi male mai

The meaning is This verse is the closing verse. Respect everyone present and apologize if any Squirrel and the hope that all those present will always be in the shade of God's blessing and this is a sign that the dance Squirrel will be finished.

From the above verses, it can be found that the meaning and theological values that mutual respect and appreciation between fellow people is very important, it can also be found that there is a sense of sympathy and empathy so that from that arises a sense of mutual reinforcement in the grief. Helplessness to lose, especially the loss of a loved one, makes us realize how important it is to depend on God in experiencing struggles, especially sorrow, even

though there are laments and tears because of loss, but it is inevitable.

1. *Ma'katia in the Christian View*

In the Old Testament, we can find some people who lament death or affliction. When feeling grief, wailing began to be heard. Related to Ma'katya, some biblical foundations related to Ma'katya.

In Psalm 31 it is revealed about the prayer of a sufferer which includes prayer, lamentation and supplication as well as thanksgiving. This psalm shows that the psalmist expresses distress and lamentation over enemies, illness and the loss of friends. This prayer expresses the cry of the hearts of all believers who suffer tribulation. In the last verse it says (Psalm 31:25)

"Strengthen and strengthen your hearts, all you who hope in the Lord!"

This part of the psalm is a warning, an exhortation and a collective prayer. David wanted the saints to hope in God. The psalmist closes with praise and cheers of victory and glorifies God and encourages himself and others to believe in Him.

"Strengthen and strengthen your hearts" Be encouraged because in danger and difficulty, the God in whom you trust will strengthen your heart. Those who hope in Allah have reason to be strengthened and strengthened. The person can also be spiritually encouraged by the testimony of the psalmist to maintain a patient and confident attitude in waiting on the Lord. Here it can be seen that verse 25 also gives words of comfort even though they are not directly expressed. It also wants to show that after suffering with God, there will be victory in joy GloryHim.

In Jeremiah 9:17-22 the women are called to lament by singing Singing and inviting others to mourn. Wise women are described as such because they have been trained in special methods of wailing.

In the New Testament there is also a lament over the death of the son of Jairus, found in Luke 8:49-56 where the waivers are paid or hired then Jesus comes into the house and says that the child is not dead but asleep. Here it is very clear that Jesus came to comfort the mourning and give hope.

In Mark 5:35-39 where the daughter of the head of the synagogue died. This incident made the people around him lament loudly as a habit so that the public knows that someone has died. Jesus' Response is Awakening the faith of the father even in a situation that seemed hopeless. Throughout the history of redemption, believers put their trust in God even when sometimes things no longer give us hope. At such a time, God gives us the faith to deliver His people according to God's will.

What has been displayed above, that is what it has to do with Ma'katya where people who are grieving or in difficulty are invited to be strong and always hope only in God.

2. *Contextual Theological Thought*

In his book, Bevans writes that there are six contextualized theological models, including: Translation Model, Anthropological Model, Praxis Model, Synthesis Model, Transcendental Model, and Counterculture Model. In this paper, the author will use one of the models, namely the translation model. The translation model is one that emphasizes the preaching of the gospel as an unchanging preaching.

The translation model emphasizes that there is "something" that is from the outside that will be matched with what is already inside and that there is always what is given and always received. In this model of translation, what is important is people's understanding of Christian preaching and being in a creative intersection with experience, culture. If there is a collision between Gospel values and cultural values in the process of contextualization, then it is clear that the content of the proclamation of the Gospel must be preserved and here it can be seen that the Gospel is the judge of all contexts. When this model of translation does not exist, it is almost impossible for cultured people to know what Christianity informs.

The author will also use the thoughts of Robert J. Schreier in his book *Design and Building Local Theology*. Robert explained the theological understanding according to the current context in which the gospel can be accepted in a culture if the gospel can adapt well, i.e. the gospel does not seek to eliminate the culture but the gospel corrects according to the truth of God's Word. The gospel and culture can have a good dialogue to bring about change in the gospel and culture. Once the gospel is accepted in a community, the concept of local theology or local theology that emerges must always be appropriate to its context. Where a believer explains the meaning of his faith in relation to the reality of life in a certain place or region. However, this does not mean that local theology is narrow and limited to its own scope without regard to other believers elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Ma'katya, as a traditional mourning dance within the Aluk Rambu Solo' ritual, holds significant theological and cultural meaning rooted in the Torajan belief system, particularly Aluk Todolo. Through its lamentative chants (singgi') and symbolic movements, Ma'katya functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a medium for conveying values related to grief, respect for the ᨗᨑᨕ (deceased), and the relationship between the living and ancestral spirits.

However, the findings of this research indicate that the understanding of these meanings among members of the Rantekata Klasis Buntao Congregation remains limited. Many congregants perceive Ma'katya primarily as a cultural performance or artistic tradition, without fully comprehending its deeper theological significance. Only a portion of the community demonstrates an awareness of its symbolic and belief-based dimensions, often influenced by the traditional framework of Aluk Todolo.

The implications of this gap in understanding are significant for the life of the congregation, particularly in how cultural practices are integrated with Christian faith. The limited theological interpretation of Ma'katya suggests a need for more contextual theological reflection and education within the church. Such efforts could help bridge the gap between tradition and faith, enabling congregants to engage more meaningfully with their cultural heritage while maintaining theological clarity.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of deepening the congregation's understanding of Ma'katya, not only as a cultural artifact but also as a meaningful expression that can be interpreted within a theological framework relevant to contemporary Christian life.

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Finally, the author acknowledges that this research is not without limitations. Therefore, constructive suggestions and criticism are highly appreciated for the improvement of future work. It is hoped that this study will contribute meaningfully to theological studies and the preservation of Torajan cultural heritage

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