

Indigenous images of women in Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat**

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I. Introduction

Minahasa is geographically located on the North-eastern tip of the long northern peninsula of the island of Sulawesi, Eastern Indonesia. The people of Minahasa are perceived as a unified social category and the term is used as an umbrella nomenclature for the geographical area (Henley 1996; Jacobsen 2002; Schouten 1998). Unlike most other Indonesian regions in which Islam is dominant, the major cultural marker of Minahasa is Christianity.¹⁾

After the Portuguese first visited Minahasa in the 1520s, the Minahasans had intermittent contacts with Europeans [the Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch] and periodic Jesuit missionary activities (Godée Molsbergen 1928: 53-59). However, it was not until the NZG

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1) In fact, there has long been an attempt to reflect indigenous elements in Minahasan Christianity. Nevertheless, socio-cultural expressions of Minahasan traditions have almost always taken place within a framework of Christianity (Henley et al. 2007: 307-26; Maleke 2013; Kim 2014: 188-189; Schouten 2004: 227).

[*Nederlandsche Zendeling Genootschap*; Dutch Missionary Society] began to work actively in Minahasa in the 1830s that Minahasan people increasingly turned to Christianity. From then on, Christian conversion spread rapidly, and Minahasa underwent fundamental changes (see Wallace 1890: 194).

Meanwhile, the indigenous images of Minahasan women encountered newly-emerged Christian ideas of womanhood and their dissemination through the teachings of Christian missions and also by the formal regulations of the colonial government such as the State Gazette [*Staatsblad*]²⁾ of 1861. One significant change in Minahasan society was a greater stress on the patriarchal image of society. It is thus evident that a patriarchal notion of womanhood was encouraged among the Minahasans through the teachings of Christian missions and also by the formal regulations of the colonial government in a colonial context. (Andaya 2006; Gouda 1998: 236; Kroeskamp 1974: 265-274; Kruijt 1907: 43; Tendeloo 1873; van Bemmelen 1992: 191; Zinoman 2014: 47).

Given the description below of Minahasa, however, we see a yawning gap between the preoccupations of Christian missions and the colonial government and the indigenous images of ordinary Minahasan women. In 1859, the Dutch Christian missionary Nicolaas Graafland came to Minahasa, and observed the indigenous landscapes of Minahasan women in community life. He described, for example,

2) It included a marriage law which was applied to 'Native Christians' in the Moluccas as well as Minahasa. The 1861 regulation attempted to remove pagan elements from the customary marriage. Another significant change was the re-definition of the marital position of women. According to the *Staatsblad* of 1861, the husband was entitled to represent his wife in the management of her property. The wife was not allowed to remarry until 300 days had passed.

the custom by which Minahasan women told riddles during *pinatean* [funeral], wedding ceremonies, and *fosso* [pre-colonial Minahasan feasts]:

If someone wants to demonstrate his or her knowledge of riddles, people soon fall silent to listen. A group of women who sit upstairs [in the house] silently pay attention to the riddles, and several women, who are tempted either by the desire of knowing or to participate, go to sit downstairs [on the ground] to listen to the riddles or present some riddles [of their own]. Some of the riddles are not respectful, some of them amoral; and in presenting such risqué riddles, women are never outwitted by men (Graafland [1898]1987: 144).

The description shows an interesting paradox in the sense that the public contribution of Minahasan women is rather contrary to the patriarchal notion of womanhood idealized by the Christian missions and colonial government.

Bearing in mind the description of Minahasa in 1859 by Nicolaas Graafland, this paper aims to examine the indigenous images of women as they are symbolized and idealized in indigenous traditions with the aim of re-imagining them as 'active socio-cultural agents' in the context of Minahasan cultural values, ideas and expectations. In this regard, this paper primarily deals with the idealized and symbolized socio-cultural values and expectations of womanhood in Minahasa, rather than the lived experiences of Minahasan women, the ways in which socio-cultural patterns of their lives are generated in a certain context, or their socio-cultural images in the context of cultural hybridization. The investigation of the latter may be a topic

for other studies (see Kim 2003, 2004, 2006; King and Kim 2004, 2005).

In doing so, the primary local sources used in the attempt to construct the indigenous image of womanhood are Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat* [customary laws] regarding the kinship system, marriage, divorce and property rights, given that they are still deeply rooted in the minds of the Minahasans as ‘memory traces’ which enshrine local value systems (see Giddens 1984: 25-26; Tauchmann 1968). They still provide symbolic meanings of traditional precedents that may inform day-to-day events and actions in the Minahasan lifeworld. In this regard, this paper takes Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat* as idealized and symbolized cultural forms that express a repository of local knowledge and a set of indigenous values, ideas and expectations, thereby sensitizing us to the indigenous images of men and women.

At the same time, however, it will also keep in mind a potential methodological dilemma in the construction of the indigenous image of womanhood: it is hard to construct ‘purely authentic’ indigenous images of women in pre-colonial times by considering the traditions and culture observed in contemporary Minahasa, since they have been transmitted through recursive historical processes of invention, alteration, and re-localization (see Kahn 1993). Moreover, we face the practical limitations of the interdependence of indigenous sources and the selectivity of the contents of tradition: the validity of a source may depend on other internal or external sources and certain contents of tradition may be discarded in favor of what is immediately relevant to the present (Vansina 1985: 187-192). Nevertheless, we can isolate

certain non-Western or non-Christian images which are regarded as ‘traditional’, although we may not be able to determine when they first appeared or the extent to which they were reshaped or even transformed under external influences. We may also catch glimpses of indigenous images in a range of cultural forms [narrative traditions and *adat*] which anchor various contemporary norms and values (see King 1985: 50).

There is no single book on Minahasan women or even on women in the province of North Sulawesi. What is noticeable is the tendency of Western scholars concerned with studies of women, especially those who have studied Indonesian women, to select certain kinds of communities. They have largely been attracted to non-Christian subjects, for example, either on the Islamized island of Java or the Islamic matrilineal society of Minangkabau in Sumatra (Berninghausen and Kerstan 1992; Geertz 1961; Hadler 2008; Sanday 2002; Smith-Hefner 2007; Wolf 1992). Local scholars have also paid little attention to women’s lives among Christian minorities. In fact, there have been few studies on Minahasan women. In 1913, a Minahasan scholar, Ratu Langie, published a short Dutch article titled ‘*De vrouw in de Minahassa* [Women in Minahasa]’. In 1992, van Bemmelen wrote an English book chapter titled ‘*The marriage of Minahasa women in the period 1861-1933*’. In 1995, a Minahasan writer, Manoppo-Watupongoh, published a short Indonesian article titled ‘*Wanita Minahasa* [Minahasan Women]’. However, van Bemmelen focused specifically on the changing marriage systems in Minahasa, and Ratu Langie and Manoppo-Watupongoh just touched only briefly on the general images of Minahasan women and did not

develop a detailed discussion. Therefore, this paper is expected to be a significant contribution to comprehending the indigenous images of women in such marginalized Indonesian regions as Minahasa. In this regard, it is also expected to add a significant ethnographic case to Southeast Asian Studies on the indigenous images of women.

II. In Indigenous narrative traditions

Until the early twentieth century, ordinary Minahasan people could narrate numerous indigenous stories (see Tauchmann 1968). Today, indigenous narrative traditions are still deeply rooted in the minds of the Minahasan. They still provide symbolic events and reflexive role models, which inform day-to-day events and actions in the Minahasan community. The Minahasan often relate the contents of the indigenous narrative traditions in everyday conversation, and attempt to draw from them lessons or a reflexive imprint of everyday incidents. Therefore I will first attempt to examine indigenous narrative traditions and link them with indigenous images of Minahasan women.

Wewene, *tetenden* and *kasende* are local generic terms for ‘women’, which all used to be employed widely in Minahasa. The terms ‘*tetenden*’ and ‘*kasende*’ are rarely if ever encountered today, but the Minahasans still use ‘*wewene*’ in everyday discussion. Considering the implications of these terms, we may be able to draw certain indigenous images of women as facilitators and as complementary elements in relationship with the world of men. For instance, the

meanings of *tetenden* and *kasende* provide an indication of the complementary images of women in the indigenous community, since *tetenden* means 'the ones who are willing to support', and *kasende* refers to 'soul mates who eat and live together'. Thus the terms *tetenden* and *kasende* suggest that women were viewed as symbolically complementary individuals who both support and keep company with men.

On the other hand, although the term *wewene* as used today is more or less equivalent to the modern Indonesian *perempuan* or in the English 'woman', it invokes ideas of women as facilitators in an agricultural society. *Wewene* originates from the word *wene* or *kan wene* [rice] which is believed to be *kaopo'an* [gods' food]. According to one legend, *wene* was the sacred food of the heavenly gods and goddesses. One day a hero [*Tumileng*] stole *wene* and brought it down to earth. After this, people who had lived largely on *keliat* [rattan or cane] began planting *wene*. Bearing this cultural meaning in mind, the term *wewene* is said to imply 'prosperity', 'fertility' and 'abundance', which are believed to be *kamang waki karondoran* [blessings from heaven] for an agricultural society. The cultural implications of the term are also found in the names of Minahasan female ancestors and legendary heroines such as *Lumimu'ut* and *Lingkambene*. *Lumimu'ut* is believed to be the first human being, also referred as *Opo si nimema in tana* which means 'ancestral goddess of farmers on earth who provides for prosperity'. *Lingkambene* is one of *Lumimu'ut*'s daughters. The name *Lingkambene* is derived from *'lili eng kam bene* [creator of rice] (Adam [1925]1976: 42; Senduk 1994: 4-5). As a result, the local references to women are associated

symbolically with providers of the basic foodstuff, and with fertility, abundance and prosperity, as well as with the complementary elements [support and companionship] of women to men. In the rest of this section below, I will attempt to demonstrate these images in more detail by examining other indigenous narrative traditions.

In the first case, based on the origin myth, *To'ar dan Lumimu'ut*, the Minahasans proudly see themselves as descendants of *To'ar* and *Lumimu'ut* who are believed to be the common ancestors of the Minahasans. The content of the myths varies from narrator to narrator, since it has been passed on by word of mouth (Siwu 1997: 15; Supit 1986: 18). In Minahasa, there exist various versions of the origin of the first human beings, *To'ar*, *Lumimu'ut*, and *Karema*. For instance, one version narrates that *Lumimu'ut* was miraculously born from a sacred stone and *Karema* later appeared to become her spiritual guardian after she prayed for a companion (Supit 1986: 19). Other versions describe *Lumimu'ut* as a human being in a foreign land. One day she travelled and asked the Almighty for help on the journey. After *Lumimu'ut*'s prayer, *Kareima* [*Karema*] appeared from a sacred stone (Graafland [1898]1987: 89).

We shall never know exactly when and how the origin myths were originally created or modified. Moreover, there is no doubt that they have come through recursive processes of alteration across time. Nonetheless, there is a broad common plot (Graafland [1898]1987: 89-91; Lundström-Burghoorn 1981: 35; Makaliwe 1981: 246; Siwu 1997: 15-16; Supit 1986: 18-25):

Once upon a time, in a land near Pegunungan Wulur Mahatus,

there lived a mysterious woman, Lumimu'ut, and a female walian [religious leader] called Karema. One day Karema prayed for Lumimu'ut so she could have a son. After a good while, Lumimu'ut became pregnant by the western wind. A few months later, a son was born to her. She named her son To'ar. He grew into a handsome young man. One day, Karema thought that the time had come for Lumimu'ut and To'ar to choose their partners. So she made them leave their homeland and roam the world until they found a partner. At their departure, she presented both of them with a staff of equal length and she entreated them not to marry anyone who had a staff of the same length. They both set out in different directions. After many years and long journeys, To'ar met a beautiful woman, who was in fact Lumimu'ut. He desired to marry her. In her he did not recognize his mother who had indeed remained eternally young. Lumimu'ut also did not assume that this full-grown man was her son. Before entering into marriage, mindful of the wish of Karema when they had left her, To'ar laid his staff alongside that of his bride-to-be for comparison. Because of intensive use during his travels, however, his staff had been greatly worn down and was no longer of the same length. So there was nothing to prevent their marriage. After they were married, they lived happily together. Lumimu'ut bore him several children. These children lived peacefully with each other and later became the ancestors of the Minahasan people.

In the various versions of this story, several common images of women emerge. First of all, they are seen as independent of men; the first human beings are the two women, *Lumimu'ut* and *Karema*, who were mysteriously born not from a union of male and female but by supernatural means. Moreover, the first man, *To'ar*, was born of *Lumimu'ut* and the earlier ancestors of the Minahasans were likewise born of *Lumimu'ut*. This point is particularly evident in the

versions of Northern Minahasa (Hickson 1889: 217). Moreover, the origin myth has *Karema* as a mediatory *walian* [religious leader of ancient Minahasa]. In a more detailed version, *Karema* mediates between the Almighty and *Lumimu'ut* so that she can become pregnant and bear a son. Her intercession is as follows:

The source of every living creature, God of everything great and powerful! Hear your servant and give a blessing upon her [Lumimu'ut]! The source of the southern wind, make her pregnant! Give her offspring! (Supit 1986: 20)

This also depicts the complementary nature of women. At the beginning of the myth, the female element is expressed as the centre and origin of the universe. However, it is ultimately combined with the male element to render creation complete; the complementarity of female and male is necessary in that a single individual is not enough to populate the land. In this manner, the first human being *Lumimu'ut* and *To'ar* are ultimately depicted as complementary beings both in relations to each other and consequently in the world, thereby functioning as the centre and origin of all existing life in Minahasa.

The Minahasans accept that they may have originated from the marriage of *Lumimu'ut* and her son *To'ar*, and that *Karema* was the first great religious leader. It is thus taken for granted that women are independent of men and mediatory in every aspect of Minahasan society. As a local historian, Professor Jan Turang, said in an interview:

The greatest legend is about the first human beings. Lumimu'ut, Karema and To'ar. Yet the first human beings are women, Lumimu'ut and Karema. For this reason, Minahasan women are highly respected. They are respected by men and their families. Because of the legend, the first human beings in Minahasa are women. Karema is usually called 'Opo' or 'walian'. To my mind, she is a goddess, not a human.

As with 'To'ar dan Lumimu'ut', some other local stories also provide us with a means of accessing the indigenous images of women. The first is a story of the first human being on earth, which was recorded by a Dutch missionary, Nicolaus Adriani (Adriani 1932: 344-345). It seems to be a simplified version of the *To'ar dan Lumimu'ut*.

In the beginning, there was a large coral rock in the middle of the ocean. One day, the sun shone on the rock so it perspired and became full of foam. The foam swayed here and there, blown by the wind. In the end, it hardened into the shape of an egg. Due to the scorching heat of the sun, the egg soon hatched. Out of the egg came a beautiful girl. She lived on the rock until she was grown up. One day, holding a tree branch in its beak, a crow continuously circled around her. She asked the crow, 'Where did you find the branch?' The crow replied, 'I brought this from the land on the opposite side.' She anxiously asked the crow to take her to the land. The crow agreed to do so, and they flew away to reach the land. On arriving there, she found a small area of land. She scattered it so that it increased in extent. Again, she gathered the soil from the land and scattered it. Shortly afterwards, trees, plants and animals emerged.

The second story is 'Keke Pandagian'. It is so popular throughout

Minahasa that two earlier European observers also referred to it (Hickson 1889: 244-245; Wilken 1863: 331-332). However, I will introduce another version that I heard from a primary school teacher, *Bapak Hengky Wilar*, in Tomohon.

A long time ago, there lived a beautiful girl called Pandagian. She was very famous in her village for her beauty. She loved to go to feasts and dance with her friends. Whenever there was a feast in the village, she was there. One day, there was a wedding in her village. That night, there was a feast with dancing. Therefore, Pandagian as usual prepared to go. Then she told her parents that she was going to the feast. Yet her parents unexpectedly replied that she couldn't go. She again asked for permission. Again, her parents said that she couldn't go out. Nevertheless, she didn't abandon her plan to go out. She eventually slipped out of the house while her parents were sleeping. She went to the feast and enjoyed dancing with her friends until the early dawn. After the feast, she came back home. Yet all the doors were locked. She pleaded several times for her family to open the door, but they refused to let her in. Devastated and crying, Pandagian finally began climbing up a tree near her house. As her voice became more and more distant, her family came out of the house and saw Pandagian climbing up to the sky. They felt sorry for her and asked her to come down. Disappointed, Pandagian refused. In the end, she reached the heavens [kayangan]. Later, her body was divided by the gods and goddesses into heavenly bodies: her head became the sun, her neck the moon, and the rest of her body the stars.

The third story is '*Ceritera tentang si menguma*' [a story of a farmer]. A similar story can be heard in the Tondano area where it is called '*Mamanua dan Lumalundung*' and in the Bantik area where

it is known as ‘*Utahagi dan Kasimbaha*’ (Graafland [1898]1987: 533-535). There is no clear evidence as to which version came to Minahasa first. Even the Minahasans cannot identify which is the original. Nevertheless, they believe that this story appeared in Minahasa in pre-colonial times and became popular at all levels of Minahasan society. It goes as follows:

Once upon a time, there lived a young farmer. One day, while he was working in a farm [ladang], he was surprised by a female voice coming from a sugar palm tree [pohon enau] nearby. He approached the tree and found a pretty girl in the tree. He immediately fell in love with her and asked her whether or not she would marry him. She accepted his proposal. At the same time, she solemnly asked him for an oath that he would never swear or use abusive words towards her. He took her home and they were married. She soon gave birth to a son and they lived happily. The young farmer worked in his farm as usual. He went to the farm in the morning, came back home for lunch, and then went to work until sunset. One day he came home for lunch. However, his lunch was not yet ready because his wife had been very busy taking care of their son. He was so hungry that he became very angry. Forgetting his oath, he swore at her, calling her bad names. Having heard the abusive words, she went silent and then ran away to the palm tree whence she came, leaving her husband and son behind. After this, he became aware that he had broken the oath. Embracing his son and crying, he chased after her. On reaching the palm tree, he begged her forgiveness for his carelessness and attempted to persuade her to come back home. Yet there was no response from the tree. He once again asked her to show herself. After a considerable time, suddenly, her tangled hair appeared out of the tree and became palm blossoms. Then his wife’s voice was heard from the tree:

'Although thou already begged my pardon for your carelessness, I cannot live with you any longer. Knowing that our child still needs breast milk, bring him here each morning and afternoon. I have already prepared the palm tree milk [rano patotoan = sagueer (palm wine)]. Hearing this, the husband sadly went back home.

The fourth story is 'Matindas dan Mogogunoi'. The motif of this story apparently stems from the conflict in former times between Minahasa and a neighboring region 'Bolaang Mongondow'. Various versions of this story are found throughout Minahasa (Hickson 1889: 309-310; Wilken 1863: 321-323). An example is 'Puteri Uweran' in the Tontemboan area (Bodde 1884). The story, 'Matindas dan Mogogunoi' is as follows:

Long long ago, there lived a man named Matindas and his wife Mogogunoi. Mogogunoi was an extremely beautiful woman, and Matindas loved her dearly. Each time he went to work, Matindas always carried with him a sculpture of his wife that he had carved himself. One day, when he was fishing on the beach, a strong wind overtook him and the sculpture was blown away and went missing. Shortly afterwards, it was discovered by the king of [Bolaang] Mongondow. On seeing the sculpture, the king fell in love with the image and immediately sent his subjects to the village to find the woman it depicted. When the subjects arrived at the village, they set two cocks to fight in the main street. Eventually, Mogogunoi was discovered among the on-lookers. The subjects informed Mogogunoi, 'In nine days, the king of Mongondow will come to take you as his wife.' After that, as they loved each other so dearly, Matindas and Mogogunoi tried to find how to evade the king of Mongondow. In the end, Mogogunoi came up with a good idea. When the king arrived, Mogogunoi said to her husband, 'Take your clothes off now and hang

them on the wall. Then, go and hide yourself in a large case. Then wait and see how I shall save you!' Shortly, the king entered the house alone and asked where Matindas was. Mogogunoi replied, 'He went fishing. He doesn't care about himself. He is lazy. I'd rather be your wife.' However, she added, 'There are numerous relatives of Matindas in this village. If they see me following you, they will kill both of us.' So Mogogunoi asked the king to put on the clothes of Matindas and dance a warrior-dance the way Matindas did. When they came out of the house, the king in Matindas's clothes began dancing just like Matindas. Meanwhile, Mogogunoi urged the subjects of the king to attack him, saying 'See, there is Matindas. Kill him!' After all, the king was killed and Mogogunoi lived happily with her husband, Matindas.

Together with the creation myth '*To'ar dan Lumimu'ut*', these local stories are popular in Minahasa, although many others have disappeared over time. Similar to the '*To'ar dan Lumimu'ut*', these local stories also enshrine various indigenous images of women, which emphasize their mediatory and complementary character, as well as idealized images of community and indigenous role models. Above all, the stories depict women as mediatory beings, especially in the 'story of the first human being', '*Keke Pandagian*', '*Ceritera tentang si menguma*', and '*Matindas dan Mogogunoi*'. Women's mediatory role depicted in the stories overlaps with the image of facilitator or coordinator. For instance, the 'story of the first human being' sees women as the providers of trees, plants and animals. In '*Keke Pandagian*', Pandagian is described as a female, whose body turns into the sun, the moon, and the stars. In '*Ceritera tentang si menguma*', the woman from the palm tree is the provider of *saguer* which is the major beverage of the Minahasans. Moreover, in the

story '*Matindas dan Mogogunoi*', *Mogogunoi* is depicted as a smart and ingenious coordinator for her husband *Matindas*, thereby taking her symbolic place as a heroine in the historic conflict between Minahasa and Bolaang Mongondow.

As in '*To'ar dan Lumimu'ut*', in terms of the plot-structure the local stories also reveal an overt complementary dualism in Minahasan symbolic classification systems. For example, in '*Ceritera tentang si menguma*', the female element is symbolized as complementary to the male element. In the plot-structure, the young farmer lived happily with his son and wife, but when his wife mysteriously disappeared, his life became so difficult that he decided to take her back. Moreover, once he realized that his wife could no longer be with him, he was saddened. Similarly, in '*Matindas dan Mogogunoi*', *Matindas* felt happy in the presence of *Mogogunoi* and vice versa. What threatened their complementary happiness was their possible separation by the king of *Mongondow*. They thus strove to get rid of anything which endangered their complementary 'togetherness'. In the end, their happiness was secured, and they lived happily together.

III. In Minahasan customary law 'adat'

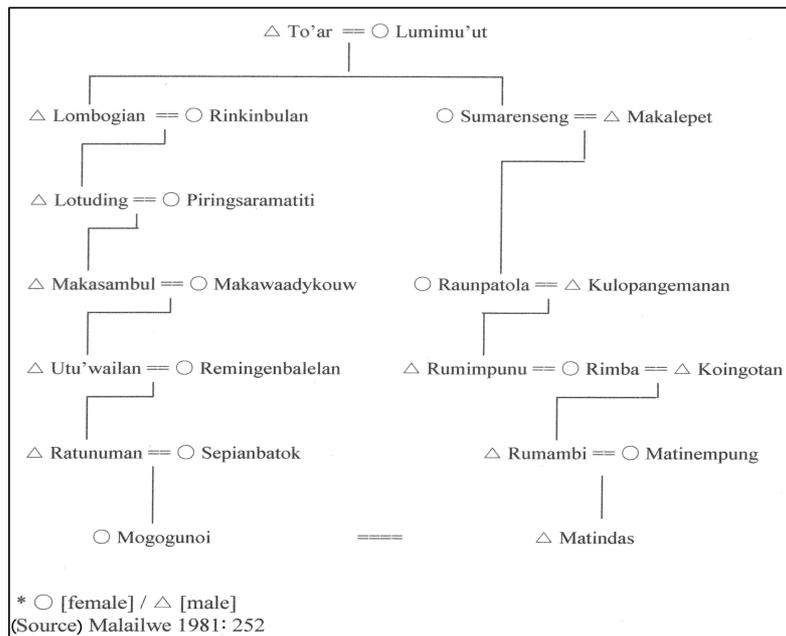
Scanning the indigenous narrative traditions, we become aware of the respectful indigenous images of women as embedded in their indigenous narratives. Taking a closer look at the local stories, '*Keke Pandagian*' and '*Ceritera tentang si menguma*', on the other hand,

we also find a slightly different image of women. For example, in ‘*Keke Pandagian*’, while the image of the young protagonist at the end of the story accords to a certain extent with that of coordinator, in the main body of the story she is depicted as a vulnerable woman subject to social restrictions because of the authority of her parents. In ‘*Ceritera tentang si menguma*’, the female element is ultimately described as a provider of palm tree milk in what may be termed ‘recovered complementarity’. Nevertheless, she is also described as a woman who deserts her husband and son, and is subject to a mysterious supernatural rule. In fact, it is true that many local stories present women in terms of complementary, independent, and mediatory images, especially in the origin myth ‘*To’ar dan Lumimu’ut*’ and ‘*Matindas dan Mogogunoi*’. Nevertheless, given the ‘*Keke Pandagian*’ and ‘*Ceritera tentang si menguma*’, it can also be argued that women are perceived not as entirely independent, but rather as restricted in other dimensions of socio-cultural life. We thus need to re-examine the indigenous images of women in the light of Minahasan *adat*, which provides other sources relevant to this topic. For the Minahasans, *adat* presents an indigenous model of the socio-cultural system that relates in various ways to everyday experiences and events in the Minahasan lifeworld. As mentioned earlier, however, it is not entirely true that the Minahasan *adat* is an authentic property of the pre-colonial Minahasan lifeworld in the sense that it has been formed through complex socio-historical processes of invention, alteration, and re-localization across time (Kahn 1993). Nevertheless, Minahasan *adat* does provide us with indigenous images of women and furnishes evidence of core values

that cover most aspects of the relationship between men and women: kinship system, marriage and divorce, and property rights (see Boomgaard 1926).

In locating the indigenous images of women reflected in the kinship system in pre-colonial times, I shall focus on Minahasan genealogies. Minahasan genealogies of descent provide a socio-cultural framework of relations among ‘consanguineal’ or ‘affinal’ relatives. Moreover, they also embody ideas about gender relations and origins. Some Minahasans still keep genealogical records, which are connected to the origin myth, ‘*To’ar dan Lumimu’ut*’. The genealogies are usually traced back to the mythological ancestors of the Minahasan people

<Figure 1> An example of the beginning of a genealogical record in Minahasa



- *Karema* as a supernatural initiator or *To'ar* and *Lumimu'ut* as the first ancestors. They also contain various names of Minahasan heroes and heroines such as *Matindas* and *Mogogunoi* (see 'Figure 1'). This type of genealogical record is commonly found throughout Minahasa (Makaliwe 1981: 252).

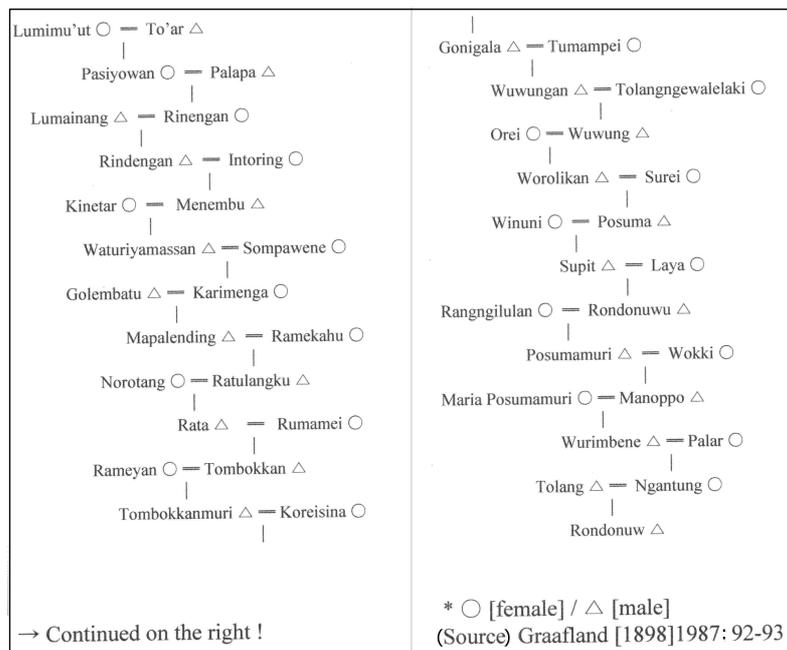
The genealogies are usually handwritten and were apparently compiled by certain educated Minahasans during the Dutch Colonial Period. This suggests that some parts of the genealogies might have been reconstructed in an attempt to express claims to an illustrious ancestry or to noble status (Makaliwe 1981: 252). Nevertheless, the genealogies reveal the principle of complementary dualism in Minahasan symbolic classification. The names of ancestors usually appear in dualistic pairs in the genealogies. In fact, in the early parts of the genealogies, the ancestors are normally recognized by the Minahasans as '*opo-opo*' [Minahasan ancestral gods and goddesses] who sustain the supernatural and social orders. In Minahasan society, the idea of *opo-opo* is always understood in terms of symbolic dualism. Accordingly, neither the male nor female element alone constitutes the balanced order and law of the universe. Paternal and maternal ancestors as '*opo-opo*' are normally shown in linked pairs.

The genealogies are also traced through lines of either men or women. A number of Western and local ethnographers argue that Minahasan kinship systems are clearly characterized by bilateral descent (DPK 1977/8; Lundström-Burghoorn 1981). However, what we should be aware of is that some anthropologists challenge the classical conceptual framework of 'cognatic' or 'bilateral' kinship. For instance, based on Borneo ethnography, Victor T. King (1991)

questions the conventional formulation and utility of the concepts of ‘cognatic’ or ‘bilateral kinship’ and ‘personal kindred’ in broad cross-cultural comparison, since there are significant variations in the form and function of kinship between egalitarian and hierarchical societies. What is more, ‘cognation’ does not define a type of society distinct from unilineal systems because all societies recognize bilateral kinship links through males and females. Similarly, taking as an example the Kerinci of Central Sumatra, C. W. Watson (1991) asserts that in attempting to define social systems, the classical anthropological labels of kinship are unsatisfactory on the grounds that kinship systems are complex and this complexity is never fully captured in typologies. Similarly, the Minahasan descent system embedded in local genealogies cannot be defined exclusively as unilineal or cognatic. Take the example of ‘Figure 1’. On the one hand, Minahasan descent can be defined as patrilineal in the sense that the descent of *Mogogunoi* is traced solely through the male line. On the other hand, it can be read as quasi-cognatic or quasi-bilateral, because the descent of *Matindas* is traced through both males and females. ‘Figure 2’ shows the more detailed genealogy of *Rondonuwu* [*Roland Ngantung*] who was the *majoor* [head] of Tomohon *distrik* [a colonial administrative unit] in the late 1870s. In the genealogy, the descent of *Rondonuw* may be defined as patrilineal if we focus on the majority of the male ancestors and treat the minority of the female ancestors [*Pasiyowan*, *Rinengan*, *Karimenga*, and *Ngantung*] as possible variations of the patrilineal system. On the other hand, the descent of *Rondonuw* may also be categorized as a quasi-cognatic or quasi-bilateral system if we emphasize the significance of the

female ancestors who provide links between genealogical levels and we recognize the female line as a meaningful praxis. As a result, the classical anthropological categories of kinship do not suffice to characterize sufficiently the Minahasan descent system. However, what can be derived from Minahasan genealogies is that in pre-colonial times, the Minahasans appear to have operated a flexible descent system, which included lines of both men and women, although the male link was dominant. This trend was also common in Indonesia, or in many parts of Southeast Asia generally (see Andaya 2006).

<Figure 2> Genealogy of *Rondonuwu* (Roland Ngantung)



Now I will move on to discuss the indigenous images of women

reflected in Minahasan *adat* regarding marriage, divorce and property rights. In pre-colonial times, the dominant marriage system of the Minahasans was monogamy. It was, however, also true that some noblemen took other women as *selir* [concubines] (Adam [1925]1976: 35). Moreover, customary marriage did not recognize all women's rights. For instance, in the morning following the wedding night, the newly-married couple customarily underwent a public ritual to test the virginity of the bride. One of the elderly women from the groom's family entered their room and examined the *kain putih* [literally, white cloth] to establish whether the bride was an innocent virgin or not. Once the bride was proven innocent [*leos*], another *fosso* was held as planned. If the bride was proven guilty, there would be no further *fosso* celebrating the marriage. Sometimes, this led to immediate divorce. Similar cultural practices may also be found elsewhere in Indonesia (see Andaya 2006). As I will describe later on, however, in the indigenous marriage system the relatively high status of Minahasan women is expressed in their right to be equal to men in matters of marriage, divorce, and property rights.

As in many other parts of Southeast Asia, socializing among unmarried young men and women was relatively free and open in Minahasa. They could easily mingle with one another in public events such as feasts or *mapalus kerja* [rotating reciprocal cooperatives] in the farm. In these meetings they might find a *kaleos* [lover for the marriage]. If a boy was interested in a girl, he would send a *gagaren* [informal intermediary] to her to ask her whether or not she also had an interest in him. The *gagaren* was normally chosen from his close friends. If the girl responded 'yes', the boy would publicly show his

affection towards her by carrying her *cangkul* [hoe] on the way to the *ladang* [swidden farm] and back to the village. He would also help provide for the daily needs of his lover's household. As a token of his love, he would prepare firewood or hunt wild pigs for her family. Once the girl's parents recognized him as a potential *kaleos* of their daughter, the boy could visit the girl's family and even go out with her with her family's permission. However, it was not possible for girls to visit their lover's family in public (Turang and Tangkawarouw 1997: 49).

Prior to any wedding, a set of customary procedures was always entailed. A boy's family normally proposed the marriage to a girl's family by sending a *waluk* [formal marriage intermediary] to suggest an *um buka un suma* [formal meeting for the purpose of negotiation; literally 'to release the tongue']. In some cases, marriages were arranged without the girl ever having met the boy, though Minahasan girls also had a say in accepting or declining the marriage proposal (Turang and Tangkawarouw 1997: 48). Once the formal consent for the marriage was confirmed, a *musyawara perundingan* [meeting of negotiation] was held. The primary focus of the meeting was usually the *mehe roko* [bride-wealth]. Sometimes, due to excessive demands from the girl's family for *mehe roko*, the negotiation failed and the proposed marriage would not take place. Once the amount of the *mehe roko* was agreed upon, the meeting moved on to discuss the detailed preparations for the wedding ceremony: the appropriate time and date and the estimated number of guests. The boy's side was customarily responsible for the full costs of the wedding. Usually, about a week before the marriage, the parents of the boy's family

presented the *mehe roko* to the girl's family. The *mehe roko* usually consisted of clothes, *betel* and furniture, but sometimes might also include farm land or coconut trees if the groom's family was rich enough. The *mehe roko* was sometimes accompanied by *rurup* [gifts from the relatives of the groom]. Although the *mehe roko* was customarily given to the bride's family on the occasion of a marriage, it did not have the same significance as the 'bride-price' which changes hands in patrilineal societies. It customarily meant nothing more than presents for the wedding preparations [clothes] and for the support of the new couple [furniture and lands].

In the indigenous imagery of the household, the roles and status of the husband and wife are viewed as 'complementary' rather than 'hierarchical'. This can be seen from the customary well-wishing remark to a newly-wed couple at the wedding feasts: '*si wewene si mengoeling, si tuama si memolé!*' [the woman steers, the man rows!] (Ratu Langie 1913: 243). During marriage, the husband or wife had his or her exclusive rights to various types of property: *pasini* [individual property] and *kelakeran* [property obtained in common by a couple during marriage]. Property given as *mehe roko* or inherited from one's own family became *pasini*. Property jointly obtained during marriage was recognized as the *kelakeran* to which both the husband and wife had equal rights. As mentioned above, the *mehe roko* was given to the bride's family as a present for marriage. Ultimately it became the personal property of the bride in the form of *pasini*, i.e., *tana mei pemuyang* [land given to the bride] and *tana'nei pamaya* [land given as *mehe roko*]. If the husband wanted to sell any of it, he had to ask his wife for permission. If either wife or husband received *budel* [inheritance] from her/his family or relatives,

the *budel* was exclusively hers or his. As for property jointly obtained during marriage, rights over it were reserved equally for both of them.

In Minahasa, divorce occurred occasionally. The husband might simply repudiate his wife or leave the house. The wife could also take the initiative in securing a divorce. The common reasons for divorcing a husband were adultery, laziness, mistreatment, or his leaving home without good reason for a long time. The general reasons for divorcing a wife were adultery, laziness, and childlessness (Adam [1925]1976: 51-52). Upon divorce, the properties were divided according to *adat*. In an amicable divorce, the rights of the *mehe roko* and inherited *pasini* were reserved to the original owner. As for the *kelakeran*, it was normally divided equally between them in Minahasa, whereas in some individual cases in Minahasa, Adam ([1925]1976: 53) recorded that, the wife received a third of the property, while the husband was given two-thirds. However, if either husband or wife was proven to be 'adulterous', he or she was punished by loss of all rights to the property obtained jointly during marriage. After a divorce, the wife and husband both had the right to remarry immediately, if they wished.

When either husband or wife died, the rights to all the remaining properties of the deceased were granted to the widow or widower unless their children were of age. If their children were already grown-up, the inheritance was divided among all the children and the surviving parent. In general, the portion of inheritance for a widower was slightly greater than for a widow, and the eldest son or daughter gained slightly more than the others (Senduk 1997: 70). If a couple died childless, their *pasini* would be returned to the families whence

they originated. As for the property jointly obtained during the marriage, it was equally divided between the husband's and wife's families. When either husband or wife died and the surviving partner wanted to remarry, he or she had to return his or her deceased partner's property to the partner's closest relative (Senduk 1997: 69-70).

IV. Conclusion

I have examined the indigenous images of women as they are symbolized and idealized in Minahasan traditions. It should be noted that the indigenous images of women were never entirely egalitarian in Minahasa. Nevertheless, Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat*, presented Minahasan women as independent agents, but also occupying a position that was complementary to that of men, and as mediating facilitators or coordinators in the context of Minahasan cultural values, ideas and expectations. Such images are in keeping with the argument that women are 'active socio-cultural agents' (see Geertz 1961; Jayarathne 2014; Kim 2003, 2004; King and Kim 2004, 2005; Kingston 2007; Sun 2012; van Esterik 1995). They are a countervailing evidence contesting the notion of women as 'passive receivers' in the shadow of cultural values and expectations (see Hunt 1990). The indigenous landscape of women, which Nicolaas Graafland observed in Minahasa in 1856, also confirms this.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the 'Introduction', the newly-emerged ideas of womanhood and their dissemination through

the teachings of Christian missions and also by the formal regulations of the colonial government attempted to construct patriarchal images of Minahasan women in a colonial context. Moreover, since Independence, especially under the post-1966 New Order regime, indigenous images of women have been under the influence of the state ideology of womanhood [*ibuism*] which emphasizes women's roles in the domestic domain. The dissemination of this ideology through the modern mass media has attempted to transmit the state-promoted images of women as secondary and subordinate to men (see Aripurnami 1996; Suryakusuma 2011, 2012).

Nevertheless, the contemporary socio-cultural landscape of Minahasan women suggests that the indigenous representations of Minahasan women have continued to remain as 'memory traces' deeply embedded in local culture. As a result, the indigenous landscape of women, which Nicolaas Graafland observed in Minahasa in 1859, can still be seen throughout Minahasa, at least within the boundaries of village life (see Kim 2003, 2004; King and Kim 2004, 2005). This clearly provides us with a glimpse into the indigenous accounts of women as 'active socio-cultural agents' in the context of Minahasan cultural values, ideas and expectations.

Keyword: Indonesia, Sulawesi, Minahasa, indigenous images of women

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<국문초록>

미나하사 구전 전통과 아닷에 나타난 여성의 토착적 이미지

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본고는 미나하사의 토착전통 하에서 이상화되고 상징화되어 있는 여성의 토착적 이미지를 고찰해보고, 미나하사의 문화적 가치, 이상 그리고 기대의 맥락에서 여성을 ‘능동적 사회문화 행위자’로서 재인식해보고자 시도한다. 이를 위해 본고는 미나하사 구전 전통 및 아닷(*adat*: 관습법)을 면밀히 살펴보며, 특히, 아닷은 친족체계, 결혼, 이혼 그리고 재산권등과 관련된 내용을 중점적으로 다루어 보고자 한다.

본고는 미나하사 여성의 토착적 이미지를 고찰함에 있어서 특정한 맥락 하에서의 미나하사 여성들의 일상적인 경험, 삶의 패턴이 양산되는 방식, 문화적 혼종화의 맥락에 주목하기 보다는 이상화되고 상징화되어 있는 여성의 이미지에 대한 이념적이고 관념적인 문화적 가치 및 기대와 관련된 내용을 중점적으로 다루어 보고자 한다.

결론적으로 본고는 미나하사 여성이 사회문화적으로 남성들과 결코 동등한 위치에 있었다고 할 수는 없으나, 미나하사의 문화적 가치와 기대를 담아내는 미나하사 구전 전통과 아닷은 여성의 상보적 그리고 중재적 이미지에 괄목할 만하게 주목하고 있으며, 여성을 ‘능동

적 사회문화 행위자'로 표방하고 있다고 피력한다. 이는 여성을 '수동적인 사회문화적 수용자'로 인식해온 담론과는 어긋나는 민족지학적 자료제시이며, 이를 통해서 그 동안 인도네시아 연구에서 도외시되어 왔던 미나하사 여성의 토착적 이미지를 이해하는데 이바지하고 더 나아가서는 본고가 동남아시아 여성의 토착적 이미지 연구를 위한 소중한 민족지학적 자료가 되어주기를 기대해본다.

주제어: 인도네시아, 술라웨시, 미나하사, 여성의 토착적 이미지

<Abstract>

Indigenous images of women in Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat*

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This paper examines the indigenous images of women as they are symbolized and idealized in Minahasan traditions with the aim of re-imagining them as 'active socio-cultural agents' in the context of Minahasan cultural values, ideas and expectations. The primary sources used in the discussion are Minahasan narrative traditions and *adat* (customary laws) regarding kinship system, marriage, divorce and property.

In so doing, it primarily deals with the symbolized and idealized values and expectations of womanhood, rather than lived experiences of Minahasan women, the ways in which socio-cultural patterns of their lives are generated in a certain context, or their socio-cultural images in the context of cultural hybridization.

This paper argues that although the position of Minahasa women was never equal to that of men, the indigenous sources (narrative traditions and *adat*) point to their complementary role, and show not only their independence but also their importance as mediators, facilitators and

coordinators. In other words, indigenous materials clearly provide us with a glimpse into the indigenous accounts of women as ‘active socio-cultural agents’ in the context of Minahasan cultural values, ideas and expectations. It is a countervailing evidence contesting the notion of women as ‘passive socio-cultural receivers’ in the shadow of cultural values and expectations.

This paper is expected to be a significant contributor to comprehension of, in detail, the indigenous images of women in such marginalized Indonesian regions as Minahasa. In this regard, it is also expected to add a significant ethnographic case to Southeast Asian Studies on the indigenous images of women.

Keyword: Indonesia, Sulawesi, Minahasa, indigenous images of women