



The *Dipopantunu Bai* Tradition in Tana Toraja and its Relevance to Calvin's Teachings about Atonement

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain the tradition of *dipopantunu bai* in Tana Toraja and its relevance to Calvin's teaching on atonement. This writing is motivated by the existence of traditions in Toraja society that encounter the church, and more especially Calvin's teachings. This is an essential matter because tradition or culture and the church are two things that cannot be separated. Therefore, in order to provide a correct understanding of the *dipopantunu bai* tradition, it is necessary to be relevant in terms of Calvin's teaching on atonement. The method used in this study is a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach that seeks to explore *dipopantunu bai* culture and atonement in the teaching of Calvinism. The results of this study show that Calvinists no longer view and prioritize the guilt of atonement in receiving forgiveness or salvation from God because the salvation received by humans is grace. However, the *dipopantunu bai* tradition in a Calvinist perspective can be used as a means to realize mistakes or sins in order to return to the grace given by God.

Keywords: Calvinism, *dipopantunu bai*, grace, wrongdoers.

Introduction

Society, culture and traditions cannot be separated, so it is not uncommon for these cultures and traditions to become inseparable for several regions in Indonesia and even the world in general. Culture or tradition is an effort made by the community to create peace and harmony between individuals and groups born from habits and agreed upon as a tradition that binds the community. The emphasis on tradition includes cultural values, norms, law and religion (Darwis, 2017). One of them is the Toraja area which is famous even in foreign countries because of the culture and traditions that exist in the area. Various forms of tradition and culture that develop in Toraja are divided into two major groups: the *rambu solo'* and the *rambu tuka'*. *Rambu solo'* talks about traditions related to death, while the *rambu tuka'* talk about



traditions related to life such as thanksgiving, weddings and all other forms of traditions that contain joyous values for the Toraja people.

These traditions and culture cannot be separated from all the rules that bind the community, called customary law. The customary law again aims to regulate life so that it is orderly and avoids all forms of conflict or crime that damage human life in relation to others and God. Customs and laws are related to an area and have been carried out for a long time (Manalu, 2020). Many forms of customary law regulate the life of the Toraja people, both about their relationship with others and God. The law applies in certain situations when people violate a rule or norm in society, both social and religious norms. Even though the rules of customary law are different in various regions, the main objective remains the same: to regulate good relations within society to create order and peace.

This paper examines explicitly one of the customary laws as a tradition and culture that applies in the Toraja area, which is called *dipopantunu bai* (in other areas may be different). Apart from Toraja, this tradition is also found in several places, such as Mamasa and its surroundings. This tradition is a form of customary law given to someone who has violated norms enforced explicitly in several cases of adultery, fights or disputes, defamation or other severe cases that affect human life, values and dignity (Tangke, 2023). However, this customary law or tradition is not only seen as a social sanction for someone. However, it contains other values, such as religious values, that can be viewed theologically by the church's life today.

Dipopantunu bai is a means to punish someone while providing relief for the offence he committed. *Dipopantunu bai* is a symbol of regret or a sense of repentance from perpetrators of violating societal norms, which at the same time symbolizes forgiveness from victims. Therefore, *dipopantunu bai* contains the value of forgiveness, which, according to the author's hypothesis, is closely related to the concept of atonement in sacrifice, which is known in the Holy Bible. Several previous writings also examined the connection between tradition and the Bible, as written by Frans P. Rumbi, who saw that *the Massuru'* tradition and repentance in the Bible have almost the same pattern to contextualize them in the Christian faith (Tangke, 2023). The same article was also written by Alferdi, who tried to juxtapose *the tradition of the Seko Mupupantunu* area with the guilt offering in the book of Leviticus (Alferdi, 2021). Similar to previous research, this paper will also try to find value and meaning in the *dipopantunu bai* tradition and see the value of the Bible in it. However, this paper will focus on the concept of atonement behind this tradition and the contextualization efforts that can be made.

Based on this explanation, this paper seeks to answer a problem, namely how is the tradition of *dipopantunu bai* in Tana Toraja and its relevance to Calvin's teaching on atonement where this paper will focus on the problem of one of the traditions that exist in Tana Toraja, namely the tradition of *dipopantunu bai* itself. In addition, this paper will specifically relate this tradition to a form of theology, namely Calvinist theology which focuses on teaching about atonement. This paper is intended to explain the *dipopantunu bai* tradition in Tana Toraja and its relevance to Calvin's teaching on atonement so that from this paper, one can find and relate the gospel values contained in the *dipopantunu bai* tradition, which hypothetically, the author can contextualize with present-day church traditions and life.

Method

The research method used by the author in this paper is a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach is a research approach related to culture (Sidiq & Salama, 2019). In addition, this paper also combines qualitative research methods, namely methods that explain something behind an event or topic that needs to be slightly known to provide complex details about a topic or event (Starauss & Corbin, 2009). This paper describes the *dipopantunu bai* tradition itself, which was obtained through an



ethnographic approach and relates it to the atonement of guilt in a Calvinist view. This article is also sourced from literature in dialogue with the author's experiences and observations of the traditions referred to in this paper. The results of these data are then analyzed to draw conclusions.

Research Urgency

The urgency of this research is to provide an explanation of the *dipopantunu bai* tradition and its relevance to the teaching of atonement in Calvinism, where this research is approached with theological and cultural disciplines.

The Main Problem and Research Purpose

Based on this explanation, this paper seeks to answer a problem, namely how is the tradition of *dipopantunu bai* in Tana Toraja relevant to Calvin's teaching on atonement and the paper focuses on the problem of one of the traditions that exist in Tana Toraja, namely the tradition of *dipopantunu bai* itself. In addition, this paper will specifically relate this tradition to a form of theology, namely Calvinist theology which focuses on teaching about atonement. This paper thus intends to explain the *dipopantunu bai* tradition in Tana Toraja and its relevance to Calvin's teaching on atonement so that from this paper, one can find and relate the gospel values contained in the *dipopantunu bai* tradition, which hypothetically, the author can contextualize with present-day church traditions and life.

Result and discussion

Conceptual Foundation

Definition of Dipopantunu Bai

Conflicts or problems cannot be separated from social life, so laws or rules are needed to solve conflicts in society. Laws or rules are owned and inherent in people's lives that are accepted as part of social life. Therefore, in response to the problems in several places, including Toraja and Mamasa, they recognize a tradition of customary law called *dipopantunu bai*.

Dipopantunu bai is one of the customary sanctions given to someone who violates the rules or norms in society, both related to living together and life and relationship with God. This tradition may be found in various places in Indonesia, a country rich in tradition and culture. The tradition of *dipopantunu bai* is included in the customary law, which is oral in nature and is passed down from generation to generation. This law continues to be maintained in society, so this law is still often found being enforced in Toraja people's lives. This customary law is believed to be able to be used as a solution in the life of the Toraja people who commit an offence. However, even though the *dipopantunu bai* tradition is seen as a law that applies in the life of the Toraja people, it does not mean that all violations committed by the community are given sanctions in the form of *dipopantunu bai*. The community has regulated the law and the provisions for violations that can be sanctioned by customary law.

Therefore, the *dipopantunu bai* tradition is a customary law carried out by the Toraja people against certain violations that occur in society. This customary law is in the form of imposing sanctions in the form of burning pigs by an alleged violator.

Terms and Implementation of the Dipopantunu Bai Tradition

As previously explained, the *dipopantunu bai* tradition is a form of unwritten customary law tradition passed down from generation to generation in society. Someone will be subject to the sanction when there is a violation. However, several provisions or conditions exist



regarding the types of violations sanctioned by *dipopantunu bai*. Some types of violations referred to are, first, cases of adultery. Second, cases of fights or disputes. Third the case of defamation. Fourth, other severe cases relating to human life, values and dignity (Tangke, 2023). Each region in Toraja has different standards regarding these types of violations. However, one thing is sure when certain types of violations occur in the community; the problem will be resolved between the two parties, both the perpetrator and the victim.

Settlement of these cases is usually through a customary council where settlement efforts usually result in both parties' decisions.

The guilty party or perpetrator will be sanctioned in the form of animal slaughter according to the type and severity of the violation committed (in the context of Toraja and Mamasa, animals can be pigs/*bai*). However, it is also possible that other types of sanctions will be given, either in the form of money or otherwise, in accordance with the results of a joint decision and the level of loss experienced by the victim (Tangke, 2023).

It has been revealed that when there is a violation or case above, the victim does not directly give sanctions or carry out the *dipopantunu bai* tradition but must go through the customary council. The meeting with the customary council is intended to bring together the two parties to mediate to seek further and provide solutions to the cases at hand, and the guilty party would be given sanctions. The customary council will ask for recognition or information from both parties before finally giving appropriate sanctions. The sanction is a sense of regret and sincerity to apologize to the victim. In addition, the victims will also provide forgiveness to the perpetrators who have regretted their mistakes, which were manifested through the sanctions they received (Tolanda, 2023).

Solving problems through the customary council is also intended to resolve problems by deliberation. Deliberation is considered a way to prevent injustice from occurring in conflict resolution. This is because the Toraja people highly uphold the values of justice and mutual respect. Quoted from the opinion of John Liku Ada', deliberation is an essential matter for the Toraja people because the Toraja people cannot be hasty in judging other people where their rights need to get attention as the expression *tallungbongipiki lan tambukna tau ta manedadi* (it takes three nights in a new womb for a person to be born). In addition, several vital philosophies or expressions are lived by the Toraja people; for example, people who make mistakes should not be criticized openly, so several expressions are known, *tae'na ma'din untossok bale* (you cannot pierce the eye of the fish), *tae'na dibatangdallei tu tau* (a person cannot be naked like corn), or *tae'na dipopa 'kambelang tu kada* (every word cannot be expressed openly) (Ada', 1986). It is these considerations that the conflicts that occur must be resolved through the customary council so that the norms in society are maintained and well-lived.

Therefore, it can be said that the *dipopantunu bai* tradition is a tradition that aims to sanction the perpetrators of adultery or fights that end in injuring/killing others to provide a deterrent effect to the perpetrators and show a sense of regret and forgiveness from the victim.

The Value and Meaning Behind the *Dipopantunu Bai* Tradition

The culture and traditions that exist in society are full of meaning. This also applies to the *dipopantunu bai* tradition, which lives on in people's lives. There are several values contained in the *dipopantunu bai* tradition, namely:

The Value of Love (Tangke, 2023). *Dipopantunu Bai* is said to have a value of love because this tradition mediates between the two parties to find a solution to a problem. Without tradition as a medium for mediation led by the customary council, injustice, continuing acts of violence, and other forms of action without love may occur. This is also almost the same as God's plan



for humans. God took the initiative to replace the loincloth that Adam and Eve had made for themselves (Genesis 15:7), even though he had just been 'wounded' by Adam's sin of transgression! Isn't that a great demonstration of God's love? This love of God is expressed in one of the most critical passages in the Bible, namely, God's Promise for Salvation; this is what underlies the work of redemption, bloody death on the cross by the Messiah (God's incarnation) (Wulandari et al., 2023).

The Value of Forgiveness (Rumambo, 2023). This value is a manifestation of the value of love. The results of mediation as a way out will lead both parties to accept, forgive and forgive each other. This value is the primary value of this tradition. According to Lontoh and Chia, one of the seven dimensions of religiosity, according to Kindler et al., the value of forgiveness describes caring and forgiving each other (Lontoh & Chia, 2022).

The Value of Justice and Law (Tangke, 2023). The *dipopantunu bai* tradition is also considered to have the value of love and justice towards others even though they commit violations or injure fellow human beings. However, this tradition is a form of problem-solving that not only reconciles but also gives punishment to the guilty party as a consequence of their transgression. These consequences are not intended to judge but to show justice to others who are aggrieved (victims). Wauran mentioned that the values of justice and law can also be found in the Holy Bible. The Bible records in Exodus 32 how God was angry when the Israelites made a golden calf as a god was an obvious example of God's angry attitude when there were other gods the Israelites tried to worship. Referring to what the Bible describes in how God, through His love, builds relationships with the people of Israel, it is not surprising that God is very hateful and angry when the chosen people start talking about, let alone start worshipping other gods, of course, this hurts God and makes Him angry (Wauran, 2015).

Based on the explanation above, *dipopantunu bai* is a customary law carried out or given to someone who commits a specific societal violation. This can be accepted as a sanction for violations by which it can provide forgiveness to those who make mistakes.

The Guilt Sacrifice in the Old and New Testaments

Sacrifice is one of the essential themes in the Bible, specifically in the Old Testament, which is widely recorded in the book of Leviticus. The guilt offering is often also referred to as the sin offering. This sacrifice is found in Leviticus 4 and 7. Dyrness notes that the atonement is the same as the sin offering because the sacrifice is needed when someone is guilty and considered unclean (Dyrness, 2013). Herbert Wolf also argues that the sin offering is closely related to the guilt offering, even though there is overlap between the two (Wolf, 2021).

In this regard, Denis Green explains the differences between the two, even though the two victims are considered the same, and it is not easy to tell them apart. Green argues that the sin offering is related to sins against God, while the wrong atoning sacrifice is related to relationships with humans, demanding compensation (Green, 2019). The book of Leviticus clearly states the procedure for carrying out this sacrifice. In essence, every human being or people of Israel who made mistakes or good sins against God would make these sacrifices. The sacrifices given were in the form of animal sacrifices. The animal in question can be a goat, sheep or even a bird. The sacrifice binds both parties, but a series of sacrifice ceremonies are performed only by one party taking part in it. Unlike the New Testament, the description of the sacrifice is less clear than in the Old Testament. The New Testament explains Christ's atoning work on the cross as the perfect sacrifice and saving people from sin.

Compared with the sacrifices in the Old Testament, where sins were forgiven only by animals, then in the New Testament, Jesus Christ himself is described as a glorious sacrifice. The death of Jesus on the cross, which stated the truth and justice of God, very clearly stated that



the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was eternal or forever and that it was all done because God did not want humans to fall into destruction. The sacrifice discussed in the OT refers to one sacrifice, namely Jesus Christ, who forever takes away the sins of the whole world. These sacrifices made Jesus' death very important in God's plan of salvation. Jesus was willing to die on the cross; becoming a sacrifice for human sin is a picture of Jesus as a glorious sacrifice that there is no more tremendous sacrifice than the crucifixion of Jesus on Golgotha. This was done by Jesus Christ so that humans would live together with Him. Human duty is to be on guard, live with Him, advise one another, and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that the sacrifice of guilt or sin is still found in the context of the life of the Old Testament people to restore the people's relationship with God. However, sacrifice no longer applies to people in the New Testament era because Christ has become the once-for-all sacrifice to save humanity from their sins and mistakes. Jesus' sacrifice has restored God's relationship with humans.

Did John Calvin know the 'False Sacrifice'?

John Calvin (10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564) was a French theologian who was an important pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation. He was one of the key figures in the development of the system of Christian theology which was termed Calvinism. These incorporated doctrines of predestination and of God's total supremacy in the salvation of the human soul from death and eternal damnation (Parker, 2006). Calvinism is a Christian school or group that adheres to the teachings of John Calvin as the initiator of this school. This flow is often called the Reformed church. For Calvinists, salvation depends not on human works but on faith in God. Even though Calvinists say that good works are not a determinant of human salvation, that does not mean that these good works are of no benefit or are not necessary because these good deeds are the fruit of faith. If so, one crucial question for Calvin's theology is how did Calvin see the guilt or sin offering as found in the Old Testament teachings?

When discussing a sin offering or atonement, the first thing that needs to be understood in Calvinist theology is the Calvinist understanding of sin. Sin has made humans fall and receive punishment from God. Humans must bear and bear all the consequences for the sins they have committed, but humans cannot find their way to salvation. John 14:6 says that no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. This means that the only way to obtain salvation is to come to Him and confess all sins because only He can save people from misery (Hadiwijono, 2012). Therefore, humans need to admit mistakes or sins in the form of confession. Calvin considers that confession of sin is not a matter of formality. However, in confession, there is conscious regret for mistakes that have been made and expresses a willingness not to repeat them, or confession of sin must give birth to true repentance. Through confession of sin, humans should be aware of God's love that always accepts humans in all forms of life, good or bad, and the proof of this love is that Christ was willing to die to atone for human sins (Strom, 2004). Agreeing with Calvin's theology, Bons Strom stated that confession is not something that is just mentioned or just a (superficial) formality. However, confession is a form of regret for humans aware that they always want to stay away from God (Strom, 2004).

Guided by this, it can be said that Calvinist theologians adopted New Testament theology which did not pay much attention to sin offerings or guilt redemption as was often found in the lives of God's people in the Old Testament. However, this does not mean that sacrifice in the Calvinist school is not necessary because, in reality, there are still many tribal churches that adhere to Calvinism where their church members live in a society that recognizes the sacrificial system.



To understand more about the Calvinist understanding of this matter, it is necessary to explain one of the churches that adhere to this Calvinist understanding, namely the Toraja Church which is a Protestant Calvinistic Christian denomination in Tana Toraja, Indonesia. Most of the Torajan people are members of the Toraja Church and it is influenced by the context in which it operates and thus the customs and habits of the society in which it functions. The Confession of the Toraja Church, Chapter IV, concerning redemption says that Christ had left His glory and emptied himself by becoming an actual human being except for sin to bear the curse of sin so that humans would be justified in Him. Furthermore, the next verse says that salvation does not depend on charity, animal sacrifices and our virtues and piety as humans but is justified before God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Church Confession). Thus, it can be understood that the Sacrifice of Guilt or Sin in the Toraja Church as a Calvinist church is not accepted.

In this regard, the reform group in the concept of Augustine (354-430 CE) said that justification from God is not based on certain conditions but only a gift from God. Together with this concept of justification, other concepts that fall into the category of soteriology or salvation, such as sanctification, rebirth and faith, all refer to the concept that a gift from God is considered a gift (Mawikere, 2016). God's gift of salvation to humans must be understood as something that God himself created in humans (McGrath, 1997).

As explained earlier, John Calvin understood salvation as God's grace (*sola Gratia*) received through faith (*sola Fide*) (Widiastuti, 2019). Calvinism understands salvation by the term TULIP namely (Widiastuti, 2019):

- 1) Total Depravity (Total Depravity of Man), where humans fall into sin, make them totally corrupt, and bring total inability to come to God.
- 2) Unconditional election, which in this case says that God's election to humans is not because of themselves and their actions but because of God's sovereignty and because of God's election without conditions.
- 3) Limited atonement (limited atonement) means that Jesus' death was for those who believe in Him.
- 4) Irresistible grace means that if God has chosen those He saved and gave him the Holy Spirit and regenerated them, then these humans cannot refuse them, and no one can hold Him because God has sovereignty.
- 5) Perseverance of the saints (Perseverance of the saints), which means that God is diligent in maintaining and maintaining the saints' safety, again declaring God's sovereignty.

Based on the above, it can be said that the guilt sacrifice in the Calvinist understanding is that the Calvinist group no longer emphasizes the importance of sacrifice to atone for mistakes or sins, specifically in relation to God. The reason Calvinists say this is that God, through Jesus Christ, has become the perfect sacrifice that provides salvation for sinful humanity. The salvation that frees humans from sin does not require human effort but as a gift from God.

Relevance of Calvinist Theology to the *Dipopantunu Bai* Tradition

Dipopantunu Bai is one of the traditions that developed in people's lives, especially for the Toraja people. Studying this tradition is essential because it lives and is lived by the Toraja Christian community, which is famous for its customs and culture. This tradition plays a vital role in people's lives, specifically in realizing social life according to the norms.



Dipopantunu bai is a means to punish someone while providing relief for the offence he or she has committed. *Dipopantunu bai* is a symbol of regret or a sense of repentance from perpetrators of violating societal norms, which at the same time symbolizes forgiveness from their victims.

Even though Calvinists no longer emphasize the guilt sacrifice for Christians, it does not mean that traditions in society, such as *dipopantunu bai* are immediately rejected. This is not a good attitude because such things can cause tension between the Bible and tradition. The presence of the Gospel in certain cultures causes a sense of threat to the culture itself when the Gospel, through its preachers, is too neglectful and even pushes to break through and eliminate a culture with the Gospel. This could lead to ineffectiveness in spreading and accepting the Gospel in society (Panjaitan & Siburian, 2020).

Therefore, in overcoming tensions in the encounter of the Bible and the culture of society, which includes tradition, a dialogical effort is needed to bring together an effort to contextualize the Bible in culture. This means that this culture is used in dialogue with the public about the Bible, including dialogue on theological understandings, including Calvinist theology.

In this regard, the *dipopantunu bai* tradition contains the values of the Bible, namely love and forgiveness, so a contextualization effort is needed so that the values of the Bible can be accepted and seen in the tradition without eliminating or rejecting the tradition. The *dipopantunu bai* tradition can be seen as an effort to resolve societal conflicts that encourage humans to build peace among themselves and even build obedience to God more. *Dipopantunu bai* can be the church's effort to invite people to return to God by being aware of mistakes, accepting the consequences, and accepting sanctions as a result of mistakes.

On the other hand, humans are awakened to accept other people's mistakes by forgiving and forgiving. This is the main emphasis of Matthew's book, which emphasizes forgiveness without limits and conditions (Derung, 2021). The emphasis on the value of forgiveness in the *dipopantunu bai* tradition can be used as a concrete manifestation of love in the Bible. In terms of the understanding of Calvinist theology, this can be seen as a response to the gift of forgiveness humans have received from Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Based on this, it can be said that the *dipopantunu bai* tradition is an important tradition for the life of Christian society. It can be used to convey the Gospel, including Calvinist teachings. This is because the Bible and culture are two things that cannot be separated. Because Calvinist theology no longer accepts human sacrifices because Christ has saved them from sin, this tradition can be seen as a medium for humans to realize sin and return to God, who has given the gift of salvation. Therefore, it is necessary to build a good correlation between Calvin's understanding and the understanding of society, especially the Toraja people who adhere to Christianity so that the traditions in society are understood in practices undertaken.

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