

Article History

Received: 24 Dec 2024/ Revised: 28 April 2025/ Accepted: 29 April 2025/Published: 30 April 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54170/harati.v5i1.832>

Integrating Tongkonan and Christianity: A Strategy to Build Cultural and Spiritual Identity of Toraja Youth in the Midst of Urban Globalization

Jodih^{1*}, Latupeirissa Risvan²

¹Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Toraja, Indonesia

²Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, Netherlands

*Corresponding Author: tinurunjodih@gmail.com¹

Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of globalization on the cultural and spiritual identity of Toraja youth, as well as the role of Tongkonan and the integration of Christian teachings in their lives amid urban life, particularly in Makassar. Globalization brings significant changes that affect the way people think, interact, and form their identities, including Toraja youth who are deeply connected to their cultural and traditional roots. The fast-paced urban life and the dominance of global culture have caused many Toraja youth to feel disconnected from their cultural heritage, leading to a crisis of identity. Meanwhile, the church, as a religious institution in Makassar, faces challenges in linking Christian teachings with Toraja cultural values, which are increasingly marginalized. Using the library research method, this study analyzes literature related to Toraja culture, Christian teachings, and the impact of globalization. The findings suggest the importance of integrating Toraja cultural values, such as the symbolism of Tongkonan, into Christian religious education so that Toraja youth can rediscover a more authentic and relevant sense of purpose amid the pressures of globalization. Religious education based on experience and reflection, and connecting local values with Christian teachings, can help form a strong and relevant spiritual identity for Toraja youth in the city.

Keywords: christian religious education; cultural identity; spirituality; tongkonan

Introduction

In the midst of the increasingly rapid flow of globalization, the world is undergoing significant changes that affect almost every aspect of life, especially for the younger generation. The development of information technology, easy access to social media, and the entry of various global cultures are increasingly dominating daily life, influencing the way of thinking, interaction patterns, and even individual identities. Youth as a group in the midst of this transition of change become very vulnerable to outside influences that sometimes conflict with the values of their local culture and ancestral traditions.

In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon is felt more complex among Toraja youth who live in big cities such as Makassar. Toraja youth, who come from communities rich in tradition and customs, as reflected in the symbolism of Tongkonan (a traditional house that also symbolizes a spiritual connection with ancestors, nature, and community), now face a major dilemma in maintaining and affirming their cultural identity. Tongkonan is not only a physical symbol, but also a profound value system that governs social, spiritual, and family life (Dinarti Tandira'pak, 2022). However, as more Toraja youth migrate to Makassar to pursue their education or work, they begin to feel disconnected from their traditions, and often face difficulties in rediscovering their cultural roots eroded by the demands of modern lifestyles.

In fast-paced city life, full of outside cultural influences, Toraja youth often feel alienated from their own culture. Losing a deep cultural meaning, which should be reflected in their daily lives, leaves them facing an identity crisis. They feel trapped between two worlds: a city world with a global culture that prioritizes materialism and individualism, and a homeland world full of ancestral values that seem increasingly distant and irrelevant. This situation creates uncertainty in finding a place and meaning in their lives.

Anthony Giddens explained that globalization brings rapid changes in various aspects of life. Global cultural influences that enter through technology and social media can change ways of thinking, behavior patterns, and even traditional value systems, such as those experienced by Toraja youth who are disconnected from their cultural roots when they are in big cities (Listiana, 2021). On the other hand, the church, as an institution that is supposed to guide youth in the spiritual and religious aspects of life, faces the same challenges. Christian religious education in the Toraja Church in Makassar is often more focused on theological teachings that do not always touch the real needs of young people, who are trapped in the difficulty of maintaining their cultural identity. Christian religious education is often detached from the realities of their lives filled with social, cultural, and globalization challenges. These youth experiencing an identity crisis feel that the Christian teachings they have accepted are not relevant enough to the challenges they face, and often feel detached from the culture of their ancestors.

The Multicultural Education Theory developed by James A. Banks can be used as a reference in a more relevant approach to religious education. Education must respect cultural diversity and integrate local values in the curriculum to fit the realities of students' lives. In this context, the church can adapt an educational approach that connects the teachings of Christianity with the Torah cultural values that exist in their daily lives (Mania, 2010).

Christian religious education should be the answer to this problem, by linking religious teachings with local culture and providing space for youth to integrate their spiritual and cultural values. One way that can be done is to integrate Toraja cultural symbols, such as Tongkonan, in the process of Christian religious education. Tongkonan is not only a cultural symbol loaded with the values of togetherness, respect for ancestors, and harmony with nature, but can also be a starting point for building a more contextual and relevant spiritual understanding for Toraja youth.

In this regard, the church can play an important role in helping Toraja youth rediscover their more authentic meaning in life, by connecting the teachings of Christianity with the cultural values that exist in their lives. An experiential approach to Christian religious

education, reflection, and integration with local cultures, can provide a deeper understanding of their spiritual identity, which in turn helps them overcome the confusion and crisis of the meaning of life amid the pressures of globalization.

Although various studies have discussed Tongkonan as a symbol of the cultural identity of the Toraja people, both in terms of architecture, cosmological values, and social functions in maintaining the kinship structure and order of indigenous peoples (Ranteallo, 2019; Sarira, 2020) and studies on the role of youth in the preservation of local traditions such as Rambu Solo' have also been carried out (Limbong, 2022), but there is still a research gap in integrating Tongkonan cultural values with Christian teachings in the context of youth identity formation in the midst of urban globalization. Most previous research has separated the discussion between cultural and spiritual aspects, so it has not explained in depth how Christian theological values can interact harmoniously with local Toraja wisdom in building a holistic and contextual identity (Tammu, 2021). The novelty of this research lies in an integrative approach that places Tongkonan not only as a cultural symbol, but also as a spiritual space that can be contextualized with Christian teachings to strengthen the cultural identity and faith of Toraja youth in a plural and modern urban environment. Thus, this research makes a new contribution in the realm of contextual Christian religious education, inculturative theology, and cross-cultural youth development in Indonesia.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method to understand the influence of globalization on the cultural and spiritual identity of Toraja youth, as well as the role of Tongkonan and the integration of Christianity in their lives. This research relies on the collection of secondary data through a literature review, including books, articles, journals, research reports, and other documents relevant to the topic being studied. The library research method allows researchers to access various references that include theories about cultural identity, the influence of globalization, the role of Tongkonan, and Christian teachings in the life of the Toraja people. Using this method, researchers can identify various perspectives and analyze the impact of globalization on the identity and spirituality of Toraja youth in an urban context. This research was conducted by analyzing the literature that existed over a certain period, focusing on sources that discuss Toraja culture, Christian teachings, and the influence of globalization on local communities. Research ethics are maintained by ensuring that all sources are used appropriately and provide accurate references.

Findings and Discussion

The Concept of Globalization and its Impact on Social and Cultural Change

Globalization is a phenomenon that is increasingly dominating world life today. According to Giddens, globalization can be understood as a process that reduces the distance and time required to transfer information, goods, people, and ideas around the world. Giddens argues that globalization is not only about the flow of goods and capital, but also about the exchange of cultures, ideologies, and lifestyles between individuals and societies (Listiana, 2021). Globalization can be seen as a social transformation that has a major impact

on societies around the world, including people in urban areas, which are the center of concentration of global dynamics.

Giddens emphasized some of the key features of globalization, among others (Giddens, 2024): First, Global Interconnection: Globalization facilitates faster and wider interconnections between countries and regions, covering various sectors such as economy, communication, politics, and culture. Second, Shortening of Time and Space: Through modern communication and transportation technologies, globalization reduces the barriers of space and time in social interaction, allowing for a very rapid flow of information and goods. Third, Cultural Hybridity: Globalization has resulted in the phenomenon of cultural hybridity, in which cultural elements from different parts of the world interact and form a new culture that combines traditional and modern elements. Fourth, Accelerated Modernity: Globalization accelerates the process of modernization, leading to faster social and cultural changes, and affecting the social structure and behavior of individuals.

In urban areas, globalization has had a huge impact on social and cultural aspects. Some of the main impacts that can be observed include (Vitry & Syamsir, 2024): first, Changes in Social Identity Globalization is causing changes in the formation of social identities, especially with the presence of an increasingly widespread cultural mix. Giddens notes that individuals' identities are now shaped not only by local or national factors, but also by their global affiliations. Youth in cities, for example, often have identities influenced by global popular culture through social media and the internet, which are more dominant than local or traditional cultures. They may be more familiar with Western culture or a more materialistic and individualistic global culture, which is the opposite of the collective values taught in traditional societies such as in Toraja.

Second, the Influence of Popular Culture and Consumerism Globalization also brings in popular culture that is commercial and materialistic. In the urban, consumerist culture increasingly dominates social life, where values such as overconsumption, individualism, and the search for social status through material goods often replace more collective and spiritual traditional values. This is especially evident in the behaviour of urban youth who are more focused on material achievements and self-image on social media, rather than prioritising social solidarity and togetherness that are part of their local culture.

Third, Loss of Local Traditions Globalization has the potential to cause cultural "dislocation", which is the loss or erosion of local traditions by more dominant global cultural influences. In big cities, traditional values that prioritize mutual cooperation, simplicity, and community life are beginning to be marginalized by a culture that prioritizes technological advances and modern lifestyles. In Toraja society, for example, the traditional traditions that are part of their identity are often forgotten or considered archaic in the midst of the rapid modernization current. Toraja youth who are exposed to globalization often experience a dilemma in maintaining traditional traditions in the midst of urban life that is increasingly focused on consumerism and individualism.

Fourth, Giddens Cultural Homogenization also mentions the phenomenon of cultural homogenization, in which global cultures, especially those originating from developed countries, begin to dominate and influence local cultures. In cities, this can be seen in the way people dress, communicate, or consume goods and entertainment. While there are positive

aspects such as cultural exchange and access to new ideas, this cultural homogenization can also threaten the diversity of local cultures. In this case, Toraja people who have distinctive cultural traditions and symbols, such as Tongkonan, can feel the impact of losing their cultural elements because they are influenced by global culture that prioritizes technological and economic advances.

Fifth, Access to Knowledge and Technology Globalization allows greater access to knowledge, technology, and innovation from around the world. In urban areas, people have greater opportunities to access higher education and jobs in various sectors. However, globalization has also exacerbated social inequality, as only a handful of individuals are able to access technology and information, while others are left behind. On the other hand, although there is an improvement in the quality of life through education and technological innovation, the existence of this gap can accelerate the process of individualization and reduce the social solidarity that was previously an important part of the lives of local communities.

Cultural Identity Theory and the Challenges of Toraja Youth in Maintaining Cultural Identity in the Midst of Urban Culture

Cultural identity is a concept that deals with how individuals or groups perceive and define themselves in relation to the values, symbols, traditions, and cultural practices that exist around them (Febrianty, Pitoyo, Masri, Anggreni, & Abidin, 2023). In the context of increasingly widespread globalization, the challenge of maintaining cultural identity is even greater, especially for Toraja youth living in big cities. Globalization, with all its influence on social and cultural change, has created a shift in values that affect the way Toraja youth view and revive their cultural traditions. In this discussion, we will look at how cultural identity theory can help understand the challenges faced by Toraja youth in the midst of urban culture.

Cultural identity theory describes how individuals or groups shape and construct their identities based on the cultural influences that exist around them. Young defines cultural identity as the way an individual or group sees themselves based on their cultural references, which are constantly evolving along with social, political, and economic changes. Cultural identity is not static; It is formed through social interactions, inherited values, and lifelong experiences (Febrianty et al., 2023).

For the Toraja people, cultural identity is closely tied to traditions and rituals that are passed down from generation to generation, such as death ceremonies and cultural symbols such as *Tongkonan* (traditional house). This tradition not only shapes identity, but also strengthens social bonds within the community. However, challenges arise when Toraja youth, especially those living in big cities, face a process of globalization that brings values and lifestyles that are different from the traditional values they inherited.

According to Bhabha, cultural identity is "in-between," that is, between two or more cultures that interact with each other. This identity is always in the process of negotiation and reconstruction, especially in the context of globalization that introduces new cultural elements. Bhabha calls this process "hybridity," which is the incorporation of different cultural elements that produce a new form of cultural identity (Premiere, 2019). Toraja youth living in large cities are often in these intermediate spaces, where they combine elements of Toraji culture with

global cultural influences. However, in this process, they must balance their cultural traditions with the demands of a more individualistic and materialistic modernity.

The Challenges of Toraja Youth in the Midst of Urban Culture

The phenomenon of rapid urbanization and the influence of globalization bring great challenges for Toraja youth in maintaining their cultural identity. Youth living in big cities have to face the shift in social and cultural values that occur due to the dominance of urban culture that is more materialistic and individualistic (Vitry & Syamsir, 2024). The following are some of the main challenges faced by Toraja youth in maintaining their cultural identity in the midst of urban culture: first, Changing Social and Cultural Values: The Influence of Materialism and Individualism In large cities, Toraja youth are exposed to more individualistic and materialistic values, which often focus on material attainment, social status, and consumerism. Traditional values such as mutual cooperation, kinship, and respect for ancestors have become marginalized by a lifestyle that prioritizes individual freedom. This process led to the emergence of a dual identity, in which Toraja youth had to balance traditional values with the demands of fast-paced city life.

Second, Social Media and Technology: Catalyst of Identity Shift Social media and modern communication technologies have a great influence on the formation of Toraja youth cultural identity. In cyberspace, they are exposed to a more affluent global lifestyle, a culture of consumerism, and an individualistic lifestyle that differs from the values they learned in their communities. The pressure to emulate this global lifestyle can lead to an identity vacuum, as Toraja youth feel alienated between two conflicting cultures – the local cultures they learn from families and communities, and the global cultures they encounter online.

Third, Loss of Connection with Local Traditions: The Impact of Urbanization and Social Mobility High urbanization and social mobility causes Toraja youth to move further away from their cultural roots. Many of them work or continue their education in big cities, so they rarely engage in the traditional ceremonies and other traditions that are an important part of their cultural identity. Losing direct connection with hometowns and indigenous communities creates a gap between the younger generation and their traditions, which can lead to a loss of understanding and attachment to cultural values that have been formed over centuries.

Fourth, Identity Crisis: The Struggle to Maintain Cultural Integrity Toraja youth living in big cities often face identity crises because they feel trapped between two conflicting worlds. On the one hand, they want to respect their cultural traditions that prioritize collective values and togetherness, but on the other hand, they have to adapt to the demands of the modern world that prioritizes material progress and individual freedom. This unclear direction leads to identity confusion, as they feel alienated in a society that prioritizes technological and economic advancement.

Fifth, Cultural Hybridity: Unification of Tradition and Modernity. Despite these challenges, Toraja youth are also creating new identities that reflect cultural hybridity. They combine elements of Toraja culture with global influences, creating a more flexible identity that accommodates both sides – local traditions and modernity. While this hybridity provides room for youth to adapt to global dynamics, there is a risk that this new cultural identity could lose the depth and authenticity that the original Toraja culture possesses.

The Importance of Tongkonan as a Cultural and Spiritual Symbol of Toraja in the Formation of a Strong Cultural Identity

Tongkonan in the Toraja language is derived from the word *squirrel* which means to sit, with the suffix *-an* which indicates the place or place of shelter. Literally *Tongkonan* means a seat or shelter. Tongkonan is a traditional stilt house of the Toraja people in the shape of a rectangle. The design of this stilt house aims to protect the occupants from the interference of wild animals. Apart from being a place to live, Tongkonan also has a role as a symbol of customary power and the development of the socio-cultural life of the Toraja people (Dinarti Tandira'pak, 2022).

Tongkonan is owned by a family or clan, not by an individual individually, and is passed down from generation to generation. This house is maintained by someone who is trusted to manage it, known as *to ma'kampai tongkonan*. Her duties include maintaining the house, paying taxes, and organizing the traditional ceremonies performed by the families living in it. Tongkonan is divided into three main rooms (Wong, Hussin, & Saat, 2022), namely: first, the Front Room (Tangdo'): Known as *Kale Continent*, facing north, is used for ceremonial performances and worship of Puang Matua. Second, the Middle Room (Sali): A room that is more spacious and somewhat lower than the other rooms. It is divided into two parts: the left (west) side is used for animal offerings in the Aluk Rambu Solo' ceremony, while the right (east) side is used for offerings in the Aluk Rambu Tuka' ceremony. Third, Back Space (Sumbung): Known as *Chicken Banua*, located in the southern part, the place considered the entrance to the disease.

Tongkonan has a distinctive structure, divided into three parts: lower, middle, and top. Its boat-shaped roof is the main feature, which reminds the Toraja people of their ancestral journey by boat to the land of Sulawesi. At the top of the house, it is often found that a statue of a buffalo in three colors: white, black, and striped, as well as pig teeth affixed to the top of the house, which is a symbol of the social status of the homeowner. Some houses also have statues of chicken or dragon heads as a sign of respect for their elderly owners.

Tongkonan not only functions as a place to live, but also as the center of social and cultural life of the Toraja people. Apart from being a traditional house, Tongkonan functions as a place to hold traditional ceremonies that have religious value. This traditional house has symbolism that reflects the social status, kinship system, and beliefs of the Toraja people. Tongkonan is also a place to discuss and decide on the rules that govern social interaction in Toraja society.

Philosophically, Tongkonan combines the concepts of microcosmic and macrocosmic. This house reflects life and the larger relationship between humans and the universe. Therefore, Tongkonan is considered a cultural center, a place for family development, as well as the organization of social activities and mutual cooperation (Mulyadi, 2013). The Toraja people consider Tongkonan to be a very sacred symbol, symbolizing the dignity of their families and ancestors.

Tongkonan is also dyed in four basic colors: red, yellow, black, and white. Each color has a symbolic meaning: red symbolizes life, yellow is a gift from God, black symbolizes death, and white symbolizes purity and cleanliness. These four colors reflect the values of life that

are upheld in Toraja society, and Tongkonan as a whole conveys the teachings of life based on the philosophy of *Aluk Todolo*, the traditional Toraja beliefs (Wong et al., 2022).

Tongkonan is not only a place to live, but also a symbol of family and the dignity of the Toraja people. The sale or pawning of Tongkonan is considered an act that degrades the dignity of the family and ancestors, which can cause shame in the community. On the contrary, Tongkonan treasures must be preserved and preserved, as they are part of a very valuable heritage and social identity for the Toraja family.

Tongkonan plays a very important role as a cultural and spiritual symbol for the Toraja people. The reason why Tongkonan is very important in forming a strong cultural identity for the Toraja people is (Hakpantria, Shilfani, & Tulaktondok, 2021): first, a symbol of family and social dignity: Tongkonan not only serves as a residential house, but also as a symbol of family honor and dignity. As a hereditary inheritance, this house binds each individual to their family origin and social status. Thus, Tongkonan becomes the foundation that connects the individual with the ancestor and creates a strong sense of collective identity.

Second, the Center for Social and Religious Life: As a place where various traditional and spiritual ceremonies are performed, Tongkonan serves as a center of social and religious activities for the Toraja people. This creates an environment where cultural and spiritual values are passed down from generation to generation. The ceremonies and rituals performed in it remind people of the importance of maintaining traditions and relationships with the universe, as well as their ancestors.

Third, the Symbol of Connection with Nature and Ancestors: The structure and orientation of the Tongkonan house has a deep philosophical meaning. By facing north, Tongkonan reflects the relationship between heaven and earth, a symbol that human life is not separate from the universe. The roof that resembles a boat also reminds the Toraja people of their ancestral journey. This strengthens the Toraja people's spiritual bond with their ancestors, thus creating a deep sense of connection to their traditions and history.

Fourth, Binding Cultural Values and Life Philosophy: Tongkonan contains symbols that reflect the life values of the Toraja people, such as red (life), yellow (God's grace), black (death), and white (purity). These colors are not only aesthetic ornaments, but have a deep meaning related to the teachings of *Aluk Todolo*, the belief system of the Toraja people. Thus, Tongkonan is not only a physical house, but also a representation of the philosophy of life that is the foundation in shaping cultural identity.

Fifth, The Function of Forming a Strong Cultural Identity: In the midst of the influence of globalization and modernization that is getting stronger, Tongkonan remains a symbol that binds the Toraja people to their cultural roots. As a cultural representation that is passed down from generation to generation, Tongkonan helps the Toraja people, especially the younger generation, to maintain their traditional values. Understanding and caring for the Tongkonan means strengthening their cultural and spiritual identity in the midst of changing times.

Overall, Tongkonan is not only a traditional house, but also an important symbol that depicts the social, spiritual, and cultural values of the Toraja people. By maintaining and reviving the meaning contained in Tongkonan, the Toraja people can form a strong cultural identity, which allows them to maintain and celebrate their cultural heritage in the face of the challenges of modernity.

Christian Education Based on Local Cultural Values to Strengthen the Spiritual Identity of Toraja Youth

Christian religious education that integrates local cultural values is an important approach in strengthening the spiritual identity of Toraja youth, especially in the face of urban cultural challenges and globalization. In this context, the linking of Christian teachings with Toraja cultural symbols, such as Tongkonan, has the potential to create a relevant spiritual understanding for Toraja youth, which combines local values and Christian teachings without neglecting both. There are things that can be integrated in Christianity with Toraja cultural symbols in order to strengthen spiritual understanding for Toraja youth as follows:

First, the Meaning of Life Related to Nature and the Divine. Tongkonan, as a symbol of Toraja culture, has a deep meaning related to the relationship between heaven, earth, and humans. In Tongkonan, the northern part (ulunna langi) is considered a noble place, while the southern part (pollo'na langi) is considered ungood (Wong et al., 2022). In Christian teaching, this concept is in line with the hope of a glorious life in heaven, and the importance of maintaining a relationship with God. The northern direction in Tongkonan can be likened to the concept of a blessed life expectancy, while the southern part depicts the avoidance of sin. Toraja youth can find similarities between the Christian teachings of living in peace with God and avoiding sin with the symbolism present in Tongkonan. This strengthens their belief in living a life of love, hope, and honor in accordance with the spiritual principles in Toraja culture and Christian teachings.

Second, Tongkonan as a Family and Church Gathering Place. Tongkonan functions as a family gathering center and a place to carry out traditional ceremonies, strengthen social ties, and maintain ancestral traditions. This function has similarities with the church in Christianity, which also serves as a gathering place for people to worship, fellowship, and strengthen the bonds of love between fellow human beings (Wong et al., 2022). Although they differ in cultural and religious contexts, they have similar functions as spiritual and social centers. Toraja youth can see Tongkonan as a symbol of family and community unity, which is in line with Christian teachings on the importance of togetherness and fellowship in faith. By connecting Tongkonan as a spiritual symbol of Toraja with the church as a place of Christian fellowship, Toraja youth can better understand how the values of love, unity, and obedience to God are reflected in their own culture.

Third, the Symbol of Death and Eternal Life. In Toraja culture, Tongkonan also has meanings related to life and death, with black symbolizing death and white symbolizing purity and eternal life (Wong et al., 2022). In Christian teaching, death is seen not as the end, but as the beginning of the eternal life that God promises to His people who believe in Jesus Christ. The Toraja youth can see that although Tongkonan contains a symbol of death, it reminds them that this earthly life is temporary and that eternal life can only be found through a true relationship with God. By understanding this symbol, they can integrate the meaning of death in Toraja culture with the hope of eternal life in Christian teachings, creating a deep and relevant spiritual understanding for them.

Fourth, Tongkonan as an Ancestral Heritage and Honor. Tongkonan is a symbol of respect for ancestors and families, which are passed down from generation to generation. In

Christian teaching, there is a commandment to honor parents and ancestors as part of God's commandment, as recorded in Ephesians 6:2-3, which emphasizes the importance of honoring parents to bring blessings. Toraja youth can see that honoring the Tongkonan and their ancestors is in line with Christian teachings about honoring parents and caring for spiritual heritage. This reinforces their respect for Toraja cultural traditions, while helping them build a deeper understanding of how to maintain their ancestral values while living according to Christian teachings.

Fifth, Cultural Hybridity: Integration of Tradition and Modernity. Toraja youth living in big cities face great challenges in maintaining their cultural identity. The processes of globalization, urbanization, and technological advances have created space for Toraja youth to integrate traditional values with the demands of a more individualistic modern world. In this case, Christian teachings can serve as a moral foundation that helps them find a balance between traditional Toraja values and the demands of urban life that prioritize material progress.

Toraja youth can create a hybrid form of spiritual identity, combining Christian teachings with their local cultural values. For example, they can apply the values of love, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors in their daily lives, even if they live in a big city with a more modern lifestyle. However, they must also be careful that this cultural hybridity does not lead to a deeper dilution of identity.

Implications: Cultural and Spiritual Identity of Toraja Youth in Urban Areas

In order to create a strong identity among Toraja youth by incorporating Christian teachings and aspects of local culture, it is important to integrate Christian values into their daily lives without eliminating the long-standing characteristics of Toraja culture. Based on the discussion above, here are some ways to do it:

First, respect cultural heritage through Toraja cultural symbols. Integration in Religious Ceremonies: Traditional ceremonies in Toraja culture, such as those performed in *Tongkonan*, can be adapted to be in harmony with Christian teachings. For example, family ceremonies that are usually held in *Tongkonan* may include a group prayer or Bible reading as a form of respect for God, while still maintaining cultural values. Symbolism in Culture: Toraja youth can be invited to see *Tongkonan* as a symbol of family unity, which in Christian teachings, is similar to the church which is the united body of Christ. This will reinforce the understanding that both, although they have different meanings, speak of the importance of togetherness, harmony, and respect for ancestors and God.

Second, Religious and Cultural Education Based on Local Wisdom. Teaching Christian Values through Stories and Cultural Symbols: Toraja youth can be given lessons that combine Bible stories with traditional Toraja stories. For example, in interpreting *the Tongkonan* symbols that symbolize life, death, and honor, they can be taught that these concepts also exist in Christian teaching, such as the hope of eternal life after death. Culture and Faith-Based Leadership Training: Toraja youth can be provided with leadership training that combines Christian teachings with local culture. They can learn to be leaders in their families and communities by emulating biblical figures, such as family and church leaders, and relate them to their role in *the Tongkonan* and the social system of Toraja society.

Third, Strengthening Family Values in the Context of Christianity and Toraja. The Importance of Family in Christian Teachings: In Toraja culture, *Tongkonan* is the center of family life and a place of respect for ancestors. Christianity also places great emphasis on the importance of the family as a place of faith learning, especially in the context of the role of parents and children. Toraja youth can be given the understanding that *Tongkonan* as a symbol of a strong family is in line with Christian teachings on the obligation to honor parents and build a strong family in faith. Gotong Royong Life: One of the values that is highly valued in Toraja culture is mutual cooperation. In Christian teaching, this is in line with the teaching to help and love one another. Toraja youth can be given the understanding that togetherness in their culture is a tangible manifestation of the teachings of love in Christianity, and this can be applied in their daily lives, both in the church and in society.

Fourth, Youth Empowerment to Maintain and Develop Culture. Cultural Activities That Align with the Christian Faith: Toraja youth can be empowered to hold cultural activities rooted in Christian values, such as church choirs in traditional Toraj clothing or art performances that combine traditional Toraja dances with biblical themes. In this way, the local culture is preserved, but enriched with the values of faith that are in accordance with Christian teachings. Formation of Youth Groups That Combine Faith and Culture: Toraja youth can be encouraged to form youth groups that are active in the church and also nurture their cultural traditions. The group can hold discussions or activities that combine Bible study with exploration of Toraja culture, such as the history and meaning of *Tongkonan*, to strengthen their sense of identity as believing Toraja youth.

Fifth, Using Technology to Introduce Culture and Faith. Social Media as a Means of Learning: In this era of globalization, social media is an effective platform to spread Christian teachings and Toraja cultural values to the youth. Toraja youth can be invited to create content that combines biblical messages with local cultural values, such as the importance of maintaining family, honor, and kinship reflected in *Tongkonan*. This not only strengthens their identity as Toraja youth, but also introduces their culture to the outside world. Digital Apps for Learning Culture and Faith: Developing a digital app or platform that blends learning materials about the Bible with Toraja culture can also be an effective step. For example, an app that teaches about symbolism in *Tongkonan* and how those concepts are connected to Christian teachings, such as eternal life, love, and respect for ancestors.

Sixth, Connecting Christian Teachings with Traditional Values. The Importance of a Sacred and Honorable Life: Toraja youth can be taught to understand that the concept of holy living in Christianity is in line with the principle of honorable living in Toraja culture, which is reflected in the way they respect *the Tongkonan* and their ancestors. Thus, Toraja youth can see that maintaining the honor of family and community is part of the Christian call to live in holiness. Responsible Work Ethic and Social Life: Values such as strong work ethic and social responsibility taught in Toraja culture can be emphasized in Christian teachings, especially in the context of serving others. Toraja youth can understand that working honestly and serving others is a way to glorify God, in line with the values taught in the Bible.

By combining Christian teachings with local cultural symbols such as *Tongkonan*, Toraja youth can form a solid identity that honors their ancestral heritage while remaining true to

Christian teachings. Through this approach, Toraja youth can not only preserve their culture, but also build a spiritual life that is deep and relevant to the challenges of modern times.

Conclusion

Urban globalization has had a significant impact on the cultural and spiritual identity of Toraja youth, who are increasingly influenced by foreign cultures and modern lifestyles. This can lead to a decrease in interest in local traditions and values, as well as obscure their understanding of their cultural identity. However, globalization also provides an opportunity to develop a more open and inclusive identity, as long as there are efforts to preserve Toraja cultural heritage. Tongkonan, as a symbol of Toraja culture and spirituality, plays an important role in maintaining this identity. As a place rich in historical, social, and spiritual values, Tongkonan helps Toraja youth to stay connected to their traditions despite living in an urban environment. In addition, the integration of Christianity with Toraja cultural values is important in maintaining a balance between religion and culture. With a respectful approach and adapting the values of both, Toraja youth can build a strong and relevant identity in the face of the dynamics of globalization without losing their cultural and spiritual roots. Overall, maintaining the sustainability of Toraja's cultural identity requires a concerted effort from various parties to foster a sense of pride and love for their cultural heritage in the midst of an increasingly global world.

Bibliography

- Dinarti Tandira'pak. (2022). Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Melalui Tongkonan Simbol Pemersatu Masyarakat Toraja. *PIJAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 1(1), 60-68. <https://doi.org/10.58540/pijar.v1i1.105>
- Febrianty, Y., Pitoyo, D., Masri, F. A., Anggreni, M. A., & Abidin, Z. (2023). Peran Kearifan Lokal dalam Membangun Identitas Budaya dan Kebangsaan. *El-Hekam: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 7(1), 168-181.
- Giddens, A. (2024). *Gudang Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Dampak Modernisasi Pendidikan Di Indonesia Menurut Perspektif*. 2, 54-57.
- Hakpantria, H., Shilfani, S., & Tulaktodok, L. (2021). Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai Filosofi Tongkonan Pada Era New Normal di SD Kristen Makale 1. *Didaktis: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 21(3), 278-291. <https://doi.org/10.30651/didaktis.v21i3.9830>
- Limbong, A. (2022). *Peran pemuda dalam pelestarian budaya Rambu Solo' di Tana Toraja*. *Jurnal Edukasi Sosial*, 8(2), 115-128.
- Listiana, Y. R. (2021). Dampak Globalisasi Terhadap Karakter Peserta Didik dan Kualitas Pendidikan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 5(1), 1544-1550.
- Mania, S. (2010). Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Pembelajaran. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, 13(1), 78-91. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2010v13n1a6>
- Mulyadi, Y. (2013). Menata Hutan Menjaga Tongkonan: Alternatif Upaya Pelestarian Budaya Toraja. *Jurnal Konservasi Cagar Budaya*, 7(2), 25-35.
- Perdana, A. (2019). Naskah La Galigo: Identitas Budaya Sulawesi Selatan Di Museum La Galigo La Galigo Manuscript: the Cultural Identity of South Sulawesi in the La Galigo Museum. *Pangadereng*, 5(1), 116-132.

- Ranteallo, Y. (2019). *Makna filosofis Tongkonan dalam kehidupan masyarakat Toraja*. Jurnal Budaya Nusantara, 5(1), 45–58.
- Sarira, M. (2020). *Tongkonan sebagai simbol identitas sosial masyarakat Toraja*. Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia, 41(2), 89–102.
- Tammu, L. (2021). *Inkulturasi ajaran Kristen dalam konteks budaya lokal Toraja*. Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual, 3(1), 33–47.
- Vitry, H. S., & Syamsir. (2024). Analisis Peranan Pemuda Dalam Melestarikan Budaya Lokal Di Era Globalisasi. *Triwikrama: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Sosial*, 3(88), 1–12.
- Wong, A. A., Hussin, R., & Saat, G. (2022). Fungsi Sosiobudaya Rumah Adat Tongkonan Suku Toraja Di Lalikan Pangala', Toraja Utara, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia. *Journal of Borneo Social Transformation Studies*, 8(1), 88–103.
<https://doi.org/10.51200/jobsts.v8i1.4165>