

The Position of Toba Batak Ethnic Women on Land Obtained from Families in North Sumatra Province

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Abstract: Development activities often ignore the position of women concerning land. The condition of the social structure and unbalanced relations in society makes women have a disadvantaged position in every policy issued. Therefore, this study aims to look at the position of women on land in the Toba Batak community. This research was conducted in 6 regencies in North Sumatra Province, including Toba Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Samosir Regency, Humbang Hansuduntan Regency, Barus Regency, and Dairi Regency. A qualitative approach was used through interviews, observations, and Focus Group Discussions with 50 ordinary and key informants. This research is based on gender equality in society and equality of women's rights in development. The conclusion of this study shows that Toba Batak women have an essential role in the existence of land owned by the family.

1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout human life, land becomes a very important position in supporting life. Land has various meanings and functions for the community, including economic interests, including fulfilling the needs of life. In the interest of social status as community members by owning a lot of land, they will have power and respect from the community compared to those who do not own land. In terms of the existence of a land tribe, this becomes important as the identity of the existence of a tribe, and in the application of customary activities the land becomes important in ceremonial activities. Especially for agrarian communities, land becomes a very important asset for them, where land ownership determines productivity, economic welfare, social status, and political power.

There is an increase in population growth that is getting higher, while the land area is limited; of course, this raises public interest in land. This increasing interest in land has given rise to various community and land relations. Sometimes the relationship between the community occurs in

conflict because of the struggle over land for their needs. Women are found to be one of the actors who are often involved in land conflicts. The narrative of women in land conflicts can be seen in the women's movements, the Pandumaan and Sipituhuta women's movements against plantations (Siagian and Harahap 2016)

From a traditional perspective, the land is considered very important for women due to its essential role in producing food for their family consumption. According to research on women farmers, even though they are in a subordinate position, women farmers are the key to reducing hunger in the world (Wahyuni, 2018) (World Bank, 2003) (Sasongko, 2005). The available data also shows that about 40 percent of small farming families in the Indonesian agricultural sector are women, or 7.4 million, contributing to 14 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). At the 2017 World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting, Monique Villa, CEO of the Thomson Reuters Foundation, said that women own less than 20 percent of the world's land, but more than 400 million of them farm produce most of the world's food. The data above shows there

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is an impression that appears that women dominate the land more than men (Suradisastira, 1998).

In many communities, it is found that landless women imply lower social status. The lack of women's rights to land reduces women's autonomy and voice, affecting their self-esteem and well-being. Women who are not guaranteed land rights have less bargaining power in the household and are less able to participate in decision-making and access other resources. FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2011) emphasizes that increasing women's access to economic resources will positively affect a series of development goals, including poverty reduction and economic growth.

In the life of the Toba Batak people, Toba Batak women have a close relationship with the land. The local context of the Batak Toba community is women as a source of food providers and food security guards by placing women as *Parsonduk Bolon* in the household to maintain family welfare. In supporting this role at the time of marriage, this Toba Batak woman got land in the form of a rice field given by her family called "pauseang." Pauseang land is owned by individuals and can also be owned by a community that is descended from a woman who owns pauseang land, which shows the existence of female descendants. This fact can be seen, among others, in the existence of pauseang land owned by the Tambun clan in the Sibisa area, which is a land belonging to the Manurung clan. This ownership is not only limited to regional geography but includes the descendants of the Tambun clan worldwide.

Although the Toba Batak community is known as a patriarchal society, Toba Batak women and their husbands are allowed to live on family land. They can manage their family's land, called "sonduk hela." There is a custom that Toba Batak women like to buy land rather than sell land. An interesting fact found in the Toba Batak community is that Toba Batak women always try to protect their family's land. Among them, Toba Batak women are often found as guardians of land owned by the family because all of their brothers are not in the area where the family lives. There were several cases where this woman was very persistent in protecting her family's land when her extended family wanted the land to be managed so that she would fight against them. There are many records of women's resistance to protecting the land.

In addition, if a brother sells the family land, he will try to buy the land on his own or provide loan money where the land is used as collateral and can be redeemed. The existence of this condition makes women also have the opportunity to get a lot of land in the place of their families.

From the description above, it is interesting to analyze the position of women in maintaining the state of their land and belonging to their extended family. This is important given that land is the primary source of income and food security for most rural households in many countries. This is not an easy challenge as tenure arrangements are dynamic and can vary widely within and between countries.

2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

What is the Position of Toba Batak Ethnic Women on Land obtained from the family

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The Function and Use of Land for the Toba Batak People

The Toba Batak people have long known the division of land locations based on the function and use of the land as follows (Firmando, 2021):

- a. Forest area: the so-called tano jungle and harangan. Young forests are called spears or rabbis.
- b. Agricultural Area: Rice fields are called saoa or hauma. The fields for growing rice are called hauma tours.
- c. Grazing Area: Streets are pastures for grazing livestock without supervision
- d. Backup Areas: Backup areas are named according to different purposes. Offer at a push or bonus level.
- e. Sacred Area: This channel is believed to be around the spirits and souls of dead ancestors called parsombaonan, solobean, parbeguan and saba parhombanan, or other equivalents of this designation

3.2 The Struggle of the Batak Toba Women to Defend the Land

Ulfa Nadra's (Nadra, Santoso, & Sasana, 2016) research results found that women in the Batak ethnic group are not only involved in domestic activities but are also central figures in rice farming activities. This phenomenon has occurred for centuries and is a habit that has been passed down from generation to generation in the households of ethnic Batak farmers.

Agrarian conflicts in the Batak Lands related to social development occurred several decades ago in

the Batak lands. The exciting thing about land conflicts in the Toba Batak community is that Batak women are always involved in conflicts to defend the land. This picture can be seen in several cases of land conflicts that occurred. In 1972 in the village of Syriac, North Tapanuli, a dispute started with the Forestry Service, who planted pine trees on vacant people's land without prior permission. Counted 200 Batak women came down to protest. Batak women to fight for their land rights walk 65km from their village to Tarutung. The case ended when the Regent of North Tapanuli decided to stop the activities of the Forestry Service.

In 1989, a rural conflict also occurred in Sugapa Village, North Tapanuli. 10 Batak women protested against the 52 ha land taken over by Indorayon, which was used as the People's Inti Plantation (PIR) area and planted with eucalyptus. These ten women represent 42 Heads of Families who feel that they have never agreed to hand over their land to become a PIR area. The story of the ten women who fought for their customary land is one that the Batak people remember as an example of fighting for customary land rights (Silaen, 2005)

In a land dispute related to social development that occurred on September 12, 2019, a group of Batak women, residents of Sigapiton Village, Ajibata District, Toba Samosir Regency, blocked a vital tool that entered their village and took action to take off their clothes. This important tool is part of a tourism development project belonging to the Lake Toba Tourism Authority (BOPDT), namely The Nomadic Caldera Toba Escape.

3.3 The Concept of Poverty and Inequality

The land is an essential asset in an agrarian society where land ownership determines productivity, economic welfare, social status, and political power. Therefore, land rights can be an essential tool for promoting the health and well-being of the poor. The case for improving land rights is solid for women in developing societies as women tend to own smaller lands and plots than men (World Bank, 2003). Women are consistently less likely to own or operate land; they are less likely to have access to leased land, and the land they do have access to is often of lower quality and in smaller plots" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2011). Women also face widespread discrimination on inheritance rights, and when they access to land through markets and redistributive reforms are less likely than men to acquire land due to discrimination in the land market, differences in

income and access to credit, and social discrimination (World Bank, 2003). According to the Marxist view, the leading cause of poverty is the unequal or unequal distribution of wealth and income, which is the main consequence of capitalism.

3.4 The Concept of Land for Women, According to Frminism

To create gender equality, whether based on human rights or economic efficiency. The main challenges for land administration are: to understand and recognize the complexities of property rights regimes as they relate to the dynamic roles of men and women. In today's society, and to provide effective institutional structures that can protect and strengthen equitable access to land within the framework of community-specific land policy objectives. This statement is essential given that land is the primary source of income and food security for most rural households in many countries.

3.5 Development Concept

A prosperous society is not only synonymous with the growth of national income, industrialization or social modernization, or per capita income. However, the development aims to increase freedom in many aspects, such as a capability approach which characterizes a person's condition to do something and the assets owned. Individual freedom needs to be reflected as a development value. Lack of freedom to achieve economic opportunities, political freedom, and social power is a form of development poverty (Ar, 2018).

In social development, income is not only a measure that can stand alone. According to Amartya Sen, individual freedom in owning assets and managing them is a factor that must be integrated into the process. This factor highlights the importance of development focusing on equal roles, values, and customs that can affect individual freedom to own and manage property (Sen, 2006).

4 RESEARCH METHODS

This study focuses on 6 areas in North Sumatra Province where most of the Batak Toba people are located, consisting of Toba Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Samosir Regency, Dairi Regency, and Central Tapanuli Regency. A qualitative approach was used with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and Focus Group

Discussions with 50 ordinary and key informants to answer this research problem.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Reasons for Giving Land That Women Can Obtain after Marriage

For the Batak Toba community, after the son and daughter at the time of marriage, they are given land. For boys, it is called Panjean land, while for girls, Pauseang Batak Toba land is given; there is still more land that is inherited by women, including:

- a. "Indahan Arian" is given a piece of land by a father to his daughter when the daughter already has children. So, this gift is meant to be "indahan arian" for his grandson.
- b. Batu ni assimun, a gift from a father to his daughter who already has children. In the form of pets and gold. The point is a gift that seems like a gift for his grandson.
- c. Dondon Tua, a gift from a father to his daughter who has given birth to a child in the form of a plot of land to his eldest grandson.
- d. Punsu tali, a gift from a father to his daughter. This gift is the last gift and can only be received by the daughter when the father dies.
- e. Ulos naso ra buruk, a gift from a father to his daughter. This gift is the first capital when starting to build a household.

Generally, all women had the right to a share of the land from their parents. However, it was found that there were differences in the rules of the geographical distribution of land. Women in the Barus, Tarutung, Samosir and Humbang areas do not know Pauseang land. Still, they are more familiar with land given as upah loja boru which are only given after their parents die. This land is known as the land of giving as a bond of love between parents and their daughters, namely the puncu tali. Pauseang land is only known in the Toba Regency area. This land is usually given when the daughter is asked to marry and at the same time as the sinamot (meaning: dowry) from the male side.

5.2 Accepted Land Form

The land in this research area is generally land and watery land (rice fields). In general, the informants received land in rice fields, and they had the right to manage the land they received from their families. They generally manage the land to be used as rice fields to help them meet their food needs. However,

also found that several informants received land that had been used as a place of residence and business. They have made this decision as a place to live and business based on the support of their parents.

5.3 Women's Access to Land Received

Women are a link in the development chain, but in general, they are not valued as members of society as a resource in the development process. Batak women were found to have direct access to land as managers and decision-makers to determine the function of the land they managed. This condition is possible because, in general, women who manage this land are women where women are wives and are supported by their daughters, who are already able to work in the fields. In addition, it was also found that Batak women could directly access their agricultural products for sale to the market.

5.4 Their Strategy Is to Defend the Land That Has Been given

Women in the study area were found to have different strategies for defending the land given to them. The strategy taken is

- a. Informants strengthen ownership by certifying the land owned to show the power of state legal ownership
- b. For land handed over but not yet certified, the informant strengthens his land ownership through a statement letter on paper stamped and signed by a relative. If the parents are still alive, it is also signed by the parents.
- c. The informant makes the land he receives into his residence and already has a letter from the subdistrict certificate.
- d. For land in the form of rice fields, the informant always manages it, and his son already manages it there.
- e. If they have financial difficulties, the land will be sold to their relatives with an agreement that if they have the money, they will be redeemed

5.5 Strategies Used by Women to Defend Their Family's Land

The exciting thing is that apart from protecting the land that was given to her, it turns out that the Toba Batak woman will also defend the land owned by her brother. Toba Batak women will defend their family's land when their relatives sell them by providing loans or buying the land directly so that it does not fall into the hands of others.

6 CONCLUSIONS

1. Batak women have direct access to the land they own from their families
2. Toba Batak women are the decision-makers in managing the land they own from the family
3. Batak women begin to have a strong position on land given to them by their families, both by custom and by law
4. Toba Batak women always try to protect the land given to them by their families.

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