

Struggles for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam

Agency and Structural Change

Le Ngoc Bich Ly

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Theology | Activism | Women's Rights | Power
Power | Gender Relations | Elitism | Manipulation
Feminism | Leadership | Privilege | Discrimination
Christianity | Southeast Asia | subordination | Gender
Gender equality | Religion | Oppression

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Yogyakarta, 20 December 2016

Le Ngoc Bich Ly

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BTI** : Biblical and Theological Institute
- CCA** : Christian Conference of Asia
- CCT** : Church of Christ in Thailand
- C&MA** : Christian and Missionary Alliance
- DGI** : Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (Council of Churches in Indonesia)
- EACC** : East Asia Christian Conference
- ECVN** : The Evangelical Church of Vietnam
- GKJ** : Gereja Kristen Jawa
- GMIM** : Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa
- GMIT** : Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor
- GZB** : Gereformeerde Zendingsbond
- HKBP** : Huria Kristen Batak Protestan
- MTI** : Missionary Training Institute
- PAK** : Pendidikan Guru Agama Kristen (Christian Religion Teacher Training Program)
- Pdt.** : Pendeta, an Indonesian title for ordained clergy
- PERUATI** : Persekutuan Perempuan Berpendidikan Teologi di Indonesia (Association of Theologically Educated Women in Indonesia)
- PGI** : Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (Communion of Churches in Indonesia)
- PWGT** : Persekutuan Wanita Gereja Toraja (Women Fellowship of Toraja Church)
- Rev.** : Reverend, an honorable title for ordained clergy
- STT** : Sekolah Teologi Tinggi (Higher Theological School)
- UCC:** : Union University of California
- WARC** : World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- WCC** : World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century marks the development of feminist scholarships on women's struggles for leadership in religions (Gross 1996, 29). Leadership here refers to the decision-making level which includes access to theological education, ordination, and hierarchical positions. Feminist scholarships have generally focused on separate aspects of the issue. Several feminist scholars approach this struggle through exposing patriarchal structures, namely doctrine, sacred texts, culture, institutional practices that limit leadership for women (Adams 2007; Antone 2013; Fiorenza 1994; Kang 2013; Wadud 1999). Others focus on the enabling aspects of the structure that create opportunities for women's leadership (Ecklund 2006; Tremper 2013). Recently feminist scholarships have taken interest in how women actively use resources and strategies to transform their religious communities or achieve extra-religious ends even within highly conservative religious systems (Adeney 2003; Mahmood 2005; Noriko 2003). As feminist scholars reflect on the overall process of women's movement for inclusive leadership in religious institutions around the world, they start to realize that women's advancement in leadership depends on both women's agency and the openness of the religious institution to reform. This realization is best articulated by Georgie Ann Weatherby (2010) in her

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article “Overview: Women as Leaders in Religion and Religious Organizations” as follows:

“[W]omen have nonetheless sensed oppression via restricted, even marginalized roles and have, to varying degrees, fought back for change. Those most successful have made in-roads, but that widely depended on their particular church’s overall openness to reform. Without the consistent push of women, however, the male-dominated, hierarchical status quo would have remained firmly entrenched much longer, in more domains.”

(Weatherby 2010, 475)

The openness of the church can also be understood as structural opportunities that facilitate women’s advancement in leadership. Though the roles of agency and structural opportunities or context are recognized as determinants of church transformation toward women-inclusive leadership, this new direction has not been sufficiently and empirically studied. There seems a lack of feminist scholarships that comparatively looks at this struggle as a whole process and from an outcome perspective. In other words, why have women’s struggles for leadership in religious institutions achieved different levels of advancement? While feminist scholarships in political field have well developed this approach to study women’s movements in politics (Banaszak 1996; Disney 2002; McCammon et al. 2001), there is generally a lack of this approach in women’s studies in the religious field. Hence this dissertation argues for a comparative approach of this issue.

The dissertation explores the relationship of agency, context including structural opportunities, and the different forms of gender structure change between Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) in Vietnam toward women-inclusive leadership through a comparative qualitative sociological approach. It explores this relationship by examining how the gender structure of each religious

institution has been shaped and reshaped in different forms now by its own contextual forces and the internal politics of the agency. The dissertation also expands feminist analysis of women's struggle for leadership in religion to include men's agency. Feminist studies in this field have primarily focused on women's agency while leaving men's agency untouched, perhaps because men have been part of the domination structure. There are voices from men scholars and feminists who try to engage men in feminist theories (hooks 1992; Ndlazi 2004; Pease 2000; Schacht and Ewing 2004); however, it has been under-studied in women's leadership studies in religious field. This study, among other purposes, explores the men's agency and their contribution in women's leadership struggle in both churches. My findings show that men play a significant role in the contestation process of the two religious institutions.

These two Christian institutions provide a good opportunity for comparison. Both churches were products of Western colonialism during the early twentieth century. The Dutch missionaries brought Protestant Christianity to Toraja in 1913 and Toraja Church was established in 1947; whereas the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) missionaries from North America successfully planted Protestant Christianity in Vietnam in 1911 and the ECVN was established in 1927. Both churches were influenced by Calvinism (Theodorus Kobong 2008, 130; Nguyễn 2002, 335) and very conservative about local tradition and women's roles. In the early period of the church life, women were excluded from the cleric order in both institutions. The Toraja church even had a lower starting point regarding women's rights. While the ECVN still allowed women to hold lay-leadership office such as deacon, Toraja church excluded them from this position. However, after several decades, Toraja Church dramatically changed to give women equal rights with men in church leadership in 1984; whereas the ECVN has been subordinating women to men in leadership though there have been few

changes. In other words, the Toraja church has been through transformation of its gender structure whereas the ECVN has reproduced its male-dominated gender structure with little change. These two churches are good examples to investigate how agency and gender structure are shaped and reshaped by different cultures or contexts that provide different structural opportunities. Sociological studies of Christian women in both places: Toraja and Vietnam have not existed. Hence, this is also another research gap to be filled by this dissertation project.

Borrowing from Sewell's definition of structure (Sewell 1992, 13), I define gender structure as composed of both virtual schemas and actual resources that regulate gender practices in both churches. Schemas can be rules, patterns, or norms that can be transferred across time and space; whereas resources, which include actual human and non-human resources, become part of the structure under the effect of schemas. The gender structure is chosen for assessing the process of transformation because it directly relates to women's leadership practices in both churches. It can be seen as an inseparable part of the church structure that regulates gender relations in the church life. As Geertz argues that symbols function as both "model of" and "model for" reality (Geertz 1973, 93), the gender structure, which is constructed by each church, functions as both "model for" building gender relations in each church and "model of" gender relations to make sense or judge existing gender relations and practices in each church. The process of accommodating women in leadership is supposed to go with the transformation of the gender structure/system/culture or else it is incomprehensible to have old norms and new contradictory practices. The transformation of each church must lead to the transformation of the gender structure.

In social studies, the relationship of agency, context, and structuration has been theorized and debated. Starting from Anthony Giddens (1979), the concept of agency is restored to the reproduction of structure. However, structural transformation is not well-theorized until the

works of Marshall Sahlins (1985) and Williams H. Sewell Jr. (1992; 2005). While Giddens primarily focused on the reproduction of structure as a single entity and in a synchronic manner; Sahlins and Sewell take into account the historical process of structural transformation in convergence with other structures which make it possible to explain structural change because the conjunction of structures helps social actors distance themselves from their own cultural structure and creatively apply new schemas or use resources in a new way. Sewell also theoretically explains why structural reproduction happens in the midst of significant historical transformation by identifying particular mechanisms from institutional structures and built- environment that shield the structure from being destabilized and transformed by external forces.

Additionally, when locating a particular group's interest in the social structure, structures in contestation are also viewed through the lens of opportunities for this particular group. In political science, "opportunities" or "political opportunity structures" often refer to both formal political structures and the environment that affects the dynamics of social movements (Kriesi 2005; Suh 2001). If their theories are appropriated for women's religious leadership struggles, the formal religious structures and the environment of each religious institution create different opportunities for women's leadership advancement. Thus, this dissertation investigates the interconnection between context and different forms of structural contestation of the two churches through the light of these theories.

Structural transformation will not be adequately explained without the analysis of the contestation between structure and agency. While Giddens restores the concept of agency, his theory of agency is oversimplified since it focuses on agency as power in general but ignores other dimensions such as gender, asymmetrical power relations, class, status, and ethnicity and it does not clarify how agency is formulated and leads to transformation of the structure. Sewell (2005) and Sherry B.

Orner (2006) have utilized basic theories of agency and structure from major social practice theorists of namely Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault, Geerts, and Sahlins and theorized a theory of agency that takes into account the complexity of agency subjectivity and politics and locates agency in the nexus of dynamic social relations and power asymmetry in the historical process. Both scholars stress on a cultural interpretative method of agency subjectivity. However, the focus on cultural interpretation of agency shows inadequate in case of structural change or the emergence of structural opportunities. In political theories of opportunity structures, agency seems pragmatic rather than having a vigorous intention in their actions since they cannot anticipate changes in structures when they participate in collective action (Kriesi 2005, 83). Social agents' actions also depend on how they perceive opportunities since this helps them calculate how effectively they can achieve their desired goals. Thus, structural opportunities can affect the subjectivity of the acting subject and alter its project and strategies. Therefore, these theories help to explain better the emergence and dynamic of agency in the Toraja Church and the ECVN in the process of transformation of the gender structure since this study involves various actors, different cultures and context dynamics in the historical process of each church development.

Finally this dissertation also benefited from feminist theories of agency. Feminist studies have explored various types of women's agency ranging from the liberal model of resistance and subversion of patriarchal norms and values (Adeney 2003; Leming 2007) to the conservative model of embodiment and performance of patriarchal values and norms (Avishai 2008; Mahmood 2005). This dissertation calls the first model of agency as feminist agency and the second type as non-feminist agency. Feminist agency pushes for structural change whereas non-feminist agency supports the status quo. This dissertation argues that level of structural change toward gender equality in religious institutions

depends on the dominance of feminist agency and the success of women and men in turning their feminist projects or plans into collective effort.

1.2 Research Questions

The main question question of this dissertation is: Why have the two churches had different levels of accommodating women in leadership? This dissertation answers this question through the lens of the aforementioned theories that focus on the interconnection of contextual structures, agency, and the contestation of the gender structure. Specifically it addresses the following questions:

1. What has the gender structure of each church been like? How has it been established, reinforced, and transformed throughout the church life journey?
2. How has this gender structure of each church been destabilized and reformulated by the cultural, political, and religious forces, structural opportunities and institutional dynamics? How do these contextual factors explain the varying degrees of gender structural change between the two churches?
3. How has the women's and men's agency pushed for gender structural change in each church? What enables their agency and what are their strategies? How have the context and structural opportunities informed their agency? How is the agency different between the two churches that helps to explain the varying degrees of gender structural change between the two churches?

By answering these questions, this research project addresses the research gap of why and how religious institutions have different levels of accommodating women in leadership by focusing on context, agency and the contestation of the gender structure. It determines the interconnections between cultural, political and religious contexts, structural opportunities, institutional dynamics, and strategic choices of both

women and men agents and the contestation of the gender structure during the process.

1.3 Significance of the Research

Men's privilege sanctioned by culture and religion has often led to the abuse of power by a group of elite men to subordinate and dehumanize the others including women by manipulating their power to define religion, doctrine, theology and women's value and roles in such a way that benefits their group. For instance, to keep men in privileged position, patriarchal cultures and religions justify women's low status, economic and spiritual dependency on men, and violence against women (Carr and Schuurman 1996, 12–13; Ellison 2001, 41–67; Rambachan 2001, 17–39; Stearns 2000). Women in religious institutions started to be aware of the problem and have fought back for change. After half a century, though women in some parts of the world have achieved some success, many more in other parts of the world have still been fighting the same struggle (Weatherby 2010). This study contributes to the body of sociological knowledge about contemporary Asian women's struggle for full participation in religion particularly Christian women's leadership struggles in Toraja, South Sulawesi, Indonesia and Vietnam. Though the topic might be old, context is always changing and unique in each part of the world, which makes this study new and significant. In fact, this is still an under-studied subject in Southeast Asia in general and in Vietnam and Indonesia in particular. A comparative approach to the subject is even rare. In Indonesia, most studies on Christian women have focused on theological aspect. There has been one vigorous sociological work on Indonesian Christian women's agency by Frances S. Adeney (2003) known to the public. Since her work mostly focuses on graduate female students in university settings in Java and North Sulawesi over a five-year period 1992-1998 and her analysis seems to con-

centrate on patriarchal culture, her study might not sufficiently reflect the diversity of women's struggles which take place between different generations of female agents in different church settings and cultures such as the bilateral kinship and strong position of women in Toraja culture, South Sulawesi as one focus of this study. There have been no vigorous sociological studies on Toraja Christian women's leadership. Neither have there been any sociological studies on Vietnamese Christian women conducted. Therefore, this study first of all contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the topic in terms of locality, contemporariness, and a comparative approach.

Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to the feminist studies of agency in non-Western world by comparatively examining agency in both relatively gender equality culture and patriarchal culture. It investigates if Asian resources such as bilateral kinship culture can become transforming forces to patriarchal religions and how agency is shaped by these different cultural contexts. Non-Western feminist scholars have become aware of a few problems in women's struggles for gender equality in religious institutions. On the one hand, Asian feminists have started to criticize the colonial-imperialist model of Western feminist scholarships that view that the future of Asian women's liberation and transformation of Asian patriarchal religions rely on Western feminism. They show that Asian women also have their agency and have been fighting patriarchy in their context (Kwok 2002; Noriko 2003). On the other hand, the Asian women's movement for gender equality has also faced stereotypes and hostility from many Asian men that the cause for this struggle is an imported Westernized value. These men use it as a reason to suppress women's genuine struggle and ignore the real problems persisting in their society (Narayan 1997). However, it seems that these scholars have based Asian women's agency on their experiences of oppression within their own context as their argument against both prejudices. Gender equality seems to be either a taken for granted value or

an outcome of a process of experiencing oppressions. What seems lack here is the confidence in Asian heritage or living resources that are transforming imported patriarchal religions, which might go beyond women's politics. In other words, there are positive Asian resources that might enable men and women's agency to struggle for gender equality beyond women's interest or influence by Western feminism. This study reveals that the ethics of gender justice and empathy from Toraja culture did become the source for both male leaders' and women' agency to transform the patriarchal gender structure. The Torajan men struggled for women's rights even before Torajan women initiated the struggle and before the birth of Western feminist theology. Empathy value from Vietnamese culture also shows to be a strong motivation for men to support women in the highly male- dominated ECVN. This can be a sign of hope that positive Asian resources can transform gender relations beyond any gendered group's interest.

As a whole, this dissertation project contributes to the body of knowledge a comparative and empirical explanation of process and different forms of church accommodation of women in leadership by examining the relationship of agency, context, and gender structure contestation. By including men's agency in the analysis, it helps to look at women's struggle in religious institutions in a more comprehensive way rather than focusing on either structural constraints or women's agency.

1.4 Demographics of Toraja Church and the ECVN

1.4.1 Toraja Church

Toraja Church was a product of the Dutch missionaries who brought Protestant Christianity to Toraja in 1913 and established this church in 1947 with 45,000 baptized members (Taruk 2013, 61). It is an ethnic-

based Protestant church which is centrally located upstream the Sa'dan River in south Sulawesi, Indonesia. This includes Toraja Utara to the north with Rantepao as its city and Tana Toraja to the south with Makale as its city. However, the church population is extended beyond this geography. Basically the church population is divided into four administrative units (wilayah): Luwu, Rantepao, Makale, and Makassar, but its headquarters or Toraja Church Synod is located in Rantepao in Toraja Utara. In 2015, Toraja Church claimed a membership of 327,246 or 63.14% of the total population (Sinode Gereja Toraja, 2015). Below is the Toraja Church statistics of its membership in 2015.

Table 1.1 Statistics of Toraja Church Membership and Number of Pastors in Four Administrative Units

| Church branches | Year | Membership | Congregations | Male clergies | Female preachers |
|--|------|------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| ECVN-North | 1975 | 1,500 | 14 | - | - |
| | 2011 | 126,000 | - | - | - |
| | 2013 | - | 151 | 18 | - |
| ECVN-South | 1975 | 146,000 | 530 | 357 | |
| | 2011 | 600,000 | - | 820 | - |
| | 2016 | - | 1,550 | 1085 | 39 |
| Central Highlands church under ECVN- South | 1975 | 57,768 | 216 | 133 | - |
| | 2010 | 300,000 | 1000 | - | - |

Source: This table is built on data from Nguyen Thanh Xuan's work (2013), the official websites of the ECVN-North (2013) and ECVN-South (2016), and Nguyen Cao Thanh's work in the official website of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (2016).

According to an essay published in an internal journal *Người Chấn Bầy* within the ECVN-South in 2000, women accounted for two thirds

of the total membership of this church. (*“Phát Triển Hội Thánh Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại [Developing the Church at the Present]”* 2000, 47). This dissertation mainly focuses on the historical development of the ECVN-South among Kinh ethnic majority especially after 1954 when the ECVN was divided into two churches: the ECVN-North and ECVN-South.

1.5 Methodological Reasons for Comparison

The Toraja Church in Indonesia and the ECVN in Vietnam provide good comparative case studies for examining the process of differential structural change to accommodate women in church leadership by exploring the interconnections between cultural, political and religious contexts, institutional dynamics and strategic choices of the social agents and the contestation of the gender structure during the process. I chose these two case studies because I want to have an inter-regional and cross-cultural comparison of the interconnection of context, agency, and differential structural change of religious institutions.

Both churches started relatively at the same time and they both adopted a patriarchal gender structure from the Western missionaries. The Dutch missionaries brought Protestant Christianity to Toraja in 1913 and at the same time established a highly patriarchal church in 1947; whereas the CMA missionaries from North America successfully introduced Protestant faith to Vietnam in 1911 and founded a male-dominated church in 1927. Since the beginning, women were excluded from cleric offices in both churches. The Toraja Church even had a lower starting point regarding women’s role than the ECVN. While women in the ECVN were allowed to hold lay-leadership office or deaconess, the Toraja Church completely excluded women from this lay position. However, after several decades, the Toraja Church dramatically changed to give women equal rights with men in the church life in

1984 and has been improving women's participation in leadership since then; whereas, the ECVN has been subordinating women to men in leadership though it has made some minor changes to accommodate women. The two case studies provide excellent opportunity for examining the differential contestation of church gender structure after the same length of history and with relatively the same starting point regarding women's roles.

Additionally the different contexts of two churches are good resources to examine changes and differences in agency and its politics. The contexts of both Toraja church and the ECVN have their own uniqueness. Indonesia is a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and more than 700 distinct languages. The modern Indonesia, which was born in 1945, is a combination of several nations and kingdoms with their distinctive cultures, customs and languages. Consequently, Protestantism in Indonesia also has its own unique characteristics. While long-established protestant churches in other countries such as the ECVN in Vietnam, and the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) in Thailand have national organizations that cut across ethnicities and cultures since these countries are single nations, those in Indonesia or the so-called mainstreamed churches are divided by ethnic and geographical lines such as Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ) in Jawa island, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) in Sumatera island, Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa (GMIM) in Minahasa, North Sulawesi island, Gereja Toraja in Toraja, South Sulawesi island, to name a few. A national church that cuts across ethnicity like the ECVN in Vietnam seems inconceivable for these long-established churches since their faith is also their cultural identity. Before the birth of modern Indonesia, these churches were national churches within their own territories. Because of the unique context of Indonesia, the perception that ethnic church is not compatible with national church can be misleading. This study perceives this unique feature of Protestantism in Indonesia as

an advantage rather than a hindrance for this study because it helps to easily identify distinctive cultural features of Toraja church.

Regarding the ECVN which is composed of the Kinh ethnic majority (2/3 of the membership) and several ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands (1/3 of the membership), how is it compatible with Toraja church in terms of culture for this study? Though the ECVN has a diverse ethnic background, its dominant and official culture is Confucian patriarchal culture. This is because the ECVN was established first among Kinh ethnic majority in 1927 and a small Chinese ethnic group in Saigon during this late 1920s. The ethnic church in the Central Highlands, where the rest 52 ethnic groups reside, joined the ECVN-South in much later period in 1959 (Nguyễn 2013, 294). By this year, the ECVN-South had been well-established regarding its leadership and institutional culture. In fact, the Kinh ethnic majority has been dominating the leadership of the ECVN-South.

By focusing on the ECVN-South and the Kinh majority group which comprises the majority membership and leadership of this church and whose patriarchal culture has been the official culture of the church, this study makes it possible to compare the two religious institutions in terms of dominant culture. Moreover, the two churches have been through different political changes and types of government. This can be an important factor to examine changes in agency and its politics because different political contexts might offer different structural opportunities.

Why is Toraja church instead of another one in Indonesia? According to the record of the Communion of Christian Churches in Indonesia (PGI) in 2015, there were 89 Protestant churches in Indonesia as members of this national organization. (*Ibadah Syukur Dan Perayaan HUT 65 PGI 2015*, 9–11). The majority of these churches are compatible in terms of organization, culture, and history. Despite the diverse cultures, mainstreamed Protestant churches started to ordain women as early as

1950s. For example, the Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) ordained women in 1953 (Sipora E. Niap 2015, 4). The Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ) recognized women's full rights to church offices in 1964 and ordained its first woman 27 years later (Markus Rani 2011, 37). For the HKBP, this regulation was institutionalized in 1982 (J.R. Hutaaruk 2001, 20). Despite a number of good choices for this study, the Toraja church is chosen because it recognized women's rights to church offices much later than other mainstreamed churches even though it has a dominant gender equality culture. While women's ordination in GMIT went smoothly and GKJ with a patriarchal culture started to recognize women's equal rights in church leadership even before there were any women applied for the position, it is a surprise that the process of recognizing women's rights in Toraja church is not automatic but a long struggle process. This makes the Toraja case interesting for exploring the interconnection of its agency and context.

1.6 Research Design and Data Collection

In order to examine the different forms of women's leadership accommodation between the Toraja Church and the ECVN with a focus on the relationship of agency, context and gender structure contestation, this study used qualitative narrative sociological approach to collect data. Narrative inquiry method was useful to collect rich data since participants told their own life stories which revealed sources of their strength, choices, and support for their new path, and which also revealed their strategies, fear, and concerns. Their life stories also illuminated the constraints that they faced from their own religious structure and context. Data collection included both documentary research and ethnographic fieldwork. The main researched population included men and women who have passed theological education and have served in the church as pastors or leaders in church ministries. However,

church lay leaders were also interviewed to have a more objective view of the researched issue.

Regarding the Toraja Church, I started to collect data in February 2014 by in-depth interviews with Torajan pastors and lay leaders and participant observations at Toraja congregations in Central Jawa. Later I conducted several interviews with Torajan female pastors and female leaders from other churches in Indonesia during the 14th Christian Conference of Asia General Assembly in Jakarta in May 2015 and the National Conference of Indonesian Theologically Educated Women Association (PERUATI) in Manado in August 2015. I also traveled to Jakarta and Makassar to conduct interviews with a few Torajan female pastors and had library research at Jakarta Theological School, In-Tim Makassar Theological School, and Jaffray Theological School in early October 2015. I intensively had my ethnographic field research in Toraja from the last week of October 2015 to early January 2016. I attended the Pastor Convention of Toraja Church from 20 to 23 October 2015 at which 626 pastors of Toraja Church were present. I could meet and interview several of them. For more than two months doing fieldwork in Toraja, I was welcomed to stay with a female pastor's family in the center of Rantepao. Beside conducting interviews with other male and female pastors in nearby churches, most of the time, I participated in church services, family visits, and festival celebrations conducted by this female pastor. I stayed, went to market, cooked, ate, and conversed with her and her family members daily. I visited Toraja Church Synod Building to get statistical data and participated in a few workshops at Tangmentoe. I also traveled to Makale and Palopo to visit Torajan churches and interviewed pastors there. I experienced warmth and enthusiasm from Torajan pastors and lay leaders to share with me about the struggle for women's leadership in the church. They were willing to share their stories, opinions and resources with me.

Totally I conducted 37 interviews with male and female pastors and lay-leaders of the first generation who witnessed the process of transformation and later generations. Most interviews were conducted by the researcher herself in Indonesian language and a few in English with permitted sound recordings. Despite being an outsider, my research went smoothly and had almost no difficulty accessing data in Toraja Church. I even felt that my position as an outsider researcher who was from a patriarchal church yearning to learn from the Torajan people's experiences somehow gained much openness and hearty help from them. The research in Toraja Church changed completely my pre- assumptions about the women's leadership struggle. I had planned to focus on only women's agency because I had assumed that women's rights struggle was the sole task of women. However, I was surprised to learn that men played a dominant role in the early process of the struggle. Therefore, I had to change my research direction to include men's agency.

Regarding the ECVN in Vietnam, ironically I faced much difficulty and obstacles during my field research in my own church where I was an active member for more than twenty years. I started to conceive this research when I was exposed to feminist theology at the seminary for my Master of Divinity at Payap University in Thailand from 2008 to 2011. However, my actual research was carried out in 2013. Along the way, I was discouraged to give up the research by a few friends from the church. They told me something like "if they know you are studying this, they will hate you"; "They will look at you as heretic and as someone who does not know how to behave;" "They will never tell you the truth."

However, my conviction and passion for the research and also the kindness and help of several wonderful people from inside and outside the country gave me strength to move forward. I am conscious that this passion can serve both as a motivation and strength for my research and

as bias for my data collection and interpretation. Since then I have conducted several interviews with old and young female theological graduates and pastors and pastors' wives from the ECVN whenever I had an opportunity to meet them in person or via email, yahoo messenger and facebook during the time I am abroad for my doctoral studies in Indonesia or during my short visits back home in Vietnam. Some did not respond, but most of them did.

I started my intensive ethnographic fieldwork at the ECVN in South of Vietnam mostly among the majority Kinh people and Chinese ethnic from February to May 2016. I interviewed several pastors, pastors' wives, young female leaders and visited their churches in Vinh Long, Can Tho, Soc Trang, Tien Giang, My Tho, and Ho Chi Minh City. I call it "interview", but in reality these interviews were hidden in very informal conversations with them with indirect approach to the topic. I started with those of long acquaintance to new ones. Most of the time, I resided in Ho Chi Minh City where the headquarters of the ECVN is located with its library, seminary and bookstore. Most prominent female leaders including pastors' wives and female pastors are living and working there. Through recommendations from those who knew me and my research, I contacted and made appointments to meet for interviews with these female leaders. A few of them refused to meet when they learned about my research, but many others were willing to meet me after their friends had introduced me to them. I was not allowed to use sound recordings, but I was allowed to take notes with my pen and notebook. Most of the interviews took place as natural conversations in which the informants told their own life stories. I had to be very careful not to pose direct sensitive questions about women's status in the church or else the conversation might end. I always quickly wrote down my conversations with them in my research diary after coming back to my room. One female pastor was kind to assist me during my research in Ho Chi Minh City. She had me come to

stay with her a few times at her house where I had chance to learn in depth about her and other female pastors at the ECVN. Through her recommendations and advice, I could meet and interview a few other prominent female pastors. She allowed me to observe her activities at her church. I also participated in church services and women fellowship gatherings at several churches during my fieldwork.

In order to have a better view of the researched issue, I also travelled to Dak Lak in Central Highlands to interview a couple of female church leaders who serve and joined a Sunday service there to learn about the situation of women in the ECVN among the ethnic minorities. Beside that, I visited and interviewed a couple of ordained female pastors from other Protestant denominations in Ho Chi Minh City. I also extended my interviews to Vietnamese female pastors and leaders in Europe and the United States.

Totally I have conducted 38 interviews with male and female pastors, pastors' wives and lay-leaders of old and young generations. Among them, two male pastors are synod leaders. Since the topic was sensitive to the ECVN, I could not get access to synod documents as I did in Toraja Church. However, I could collect a few important church documents and church publications from local pastors and my relatives who have served as pastors and lay-leaders in this church for several decades.

Table 1.3. Main Characteristics of the Informants in Toraja Church and the ECVN.

| Informants | Toraja Church | | | Total | ECVN | | | Total |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Below 35 | 36-60 | Above 60 | | Below 35 | 36-60 | Above 60 | |
| Age groups | 35 | 60 | 60 | | 35 | 60 | 60 | |
| Male ordained pastors | | 2 | 3 | 5 | | 2 | 5 | 7 |

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| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|----|---|-----------|---|---|-----------|
| Female ordained pastors | | 11 | 5 | 16 | | | |
| Female non-ordained pasors/preachers | | 1 | | 1 | | 4 | 3 |
| Pastor wives | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 | 8 |
| Female theological graduates | 1 | | | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Male layleaders | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | 1 |
| Female layleaders | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 1 |
| Scholars and female pastors and leaders outside the church | | 4 | 4 | 8 | | 1 | 5 |
| Total | | | | 37 | | | 38 |

Source: Field research data

Basically my data collection includes the following: (1) changes in status and conditions of women in both churches from the church establishment to the present, including their participation in theological education, their access to church offices, and their roles in church ministries and in culture, politics, and local religions; (2) the struggle for women’s rights to serve and lead in both churches including the men’s and women’s voices and strategies illuminated from church synod assembly records and documents, autobiographies of missionaries and church leaders’ lives and works published by both churches, and interviewed life stories and writings from first person witnesses; and (3) the convergence of each church with local and trans-local cultural, political and religious forces with a focus on how these forces empower agency and destabilize the patriarchal gender structure.

1.7 Chapter Organization

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation project. This includes identification of research gap, a brief introduction of theories, research questions, research significance, methodology, and chapter summaries.

Chapter 2 examines the main theoretical bodies of literature relevant to this analysis of the struggle for women-inclusive leadership in the Toraja Church and the ECVN. First, I examine theories of structural transformation and structural duration by William H. Sewell, Jr., and opportunity structure theories and how they can help to analyze the different forms of gender structure change between the two churches with a focus on the relationship between context and structural contestation. Second I examine theories of agency proposed by Sewell, Sherry B. Ortner, structural opportunity theories, and feminist theories and how they help to analyze the relationship of agency-context and agency-structuration in each case study. Third, I synthesize and construct a comparative theoretical framework for the analysis of the two case studies.

Chapter 3 describes the formation and differential contestation of the gender structure between the two churches by examining the changes of women's roles and status in church regulations, theological education practices, and theologies. I argue that the patriarchal gender structure in each church was adopted and reinforced through gender-biased theologies, regulations, and educational practices by Western missionaries and conservative local male leaders. These gender structures have been through different levels of change or transformation seen in the continuities and new development of women's roles in each church.

Chapter 4 examines the interconnection between context and contestation of each church's gender structure in its own cultural, political, and religious contexts. It analyzes how these contexts have contested and shaped this gender structure of each church as it is now and how these structures offer different opportunities for women's leadership ad-

vancement. It also examines how the institutional dynamics including leadership style have contributed to the contestation. I argue that the varying degrees of gender structure change between two churches are to a certain extent due to both context and institutional dynamics. Particularly the cultural, political, and religious contexts of Toraja Church offer a higher degree of gender equality opportunities, the empowerment of the agents, and pressure to change than those of the ECVN. Institutionally while the Toraja Church has been flexible and open to reform, the ECVN seems to become more conservative and resistant to change regarding women's roles.

Chapter 5 examines the relationship between agency and the contestation of the gender structure in each church in its context. I examine in details the emergence, diversity, and shifting of the agency's projects and subjectivities and its strategies in various historical periods. I examine how their agency is informed by the symbolic meanings of the wider contexts and how their agency is diverse within the struggle and how it is shifted depending on challenges perceived in each period of time. I argue that the different forms of gender structure change between the two churches is to a certain extent due to: (1) the degree of support and identification with the struggle by male leaders; and (2) the dominant existence of women's feminist projects and the degree of their success in turning their feminist projects into a collective effort.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by summarizing research findings and arguments. It also discusses the limitations of the study and draws implications for future research. The conclusion restates the argument that the differential change of the Toraja Church and the ECVN is due to both contextual forces and agency. The unique wider context and institutional dynamics of each institution significantly contributed to the shape of agency and the contestation of the gender structure in each church. The study also argues that struggle for gender equality is a joint effort of both men and women. It also reflects on

Sewell's and Ortner's theories as well as the role of positive Asian resources such as the gender equality elements of Toraja culture. Finally this study presents some limitations and suggests possibilities for future research.

AGENCY, STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION, STRUCTURAL DURATION, AND STRUCTURAL OPPOR- TUNITIES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN-INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation aims to explore theoretical and methodological gap in feminist studies of women's struggle for leadership in religious institutions and argue for a comparative approach of agency and structural change in this area of study. I will approach the issue in question by examining gaps in feminist theories on this topic and formulating a theoretical framework that best serves the purpose of this study based on existing social, cultural and political theories of agency and structure. I will explore theories of structural transformation and structural duration by William H. Sewell, Jr. (1992; 2005), and structural opportunity theories to formulate a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of the interconnection between the gender structure contestation and context. I will then explore theories of agency by Sewell (1992; 2005), Sherry B. Ortner (2006) and others to formulate a theoretical framework of a comparative analysis of agency. Finally I will explore feminist theories of agency in the struggle for women's religious leadership before I construct a theoretical frame-

work of a comparative approach of agency and structuration as a historical process in women's religious leadership studies.

Feminist studies of the struggle for gender equality at leadership level in religious institutions emerged during 1960s (Gross 1996) and have explored various aspects of the issue ranging from structural aspects to agency. Several feminist scholars focus on analyzing how patriarchal structures such as culture, doctrines, sacred texts, theologies, and institutional practices limit leadership for women (Fiorenza 1994; Hodge 2010; Kang 2013; Satoko and 山口里子 2003; Wadud 1999). Recent studies explore structural opportunities by focusing on how institutional cultures and context dynamics create opportunities as well as constraints for women's leadership (Ecklund 2006; Tremper 2013). However, these approaches tend to view women through the lens of passive receivers of external formations and most studies have left out historical process and intersection of structures that make structural change possible in their analysis.

Other feminists focus on women's agency. They examine how women use their resources and resistance strategies to transform their religious communities, which is called the liberal Western model of feminist progressive politics (Adeney 2003; Leming 2007; Noriko 2003). Other feminist scholars (Hoodfar 2001; Mahmood 2005; Avishai 2008) criticize the liberal Western model of agency as inadequate for studying agency in conservative and fundamentalist religious communities. They show how women actively embrace conservative patriarchal values to achieve extra-religious ends or to just perform their religiosity within these communities that exclude women from leadership. Despite the facts that women's agency is manifested in a variety of ways and agents might not have an underlying gender politics, this dissertation argues that certain choices or performances whether intentional or pragmatic lead to gender structural change while others do not, which I will clarify in the later part of this chapter.

Generally these models of agency, however, are oversimplified since they focus on one type of women's politics and tend to treat the researched group as a unified category of women while they ignore the complexity of agency subjectivities and politics as shaped by internal differences in women's social status, education, class, power relations with the structure, and self-interest. They also ignore the complexity and shifting of agency subjectivities and politics as shaped by multiplicity of structures and structural opportunities in a historical process of transformation. Feminist studies of agency in women's religious leadership have also restricted their analysis to women while leaving out men's agency. This is understandable because religion has been closely linked with male-dominated power elite (Wallace 2000, 497).

In general, feminist studies of structure and agency in this field have mainly focused on either structural constraints or opportunities that determine spaces for women's leadership or on women's agency through an oversimplified model; while, within my limited awareness, it seems there is a lack of feminist scholarships that look at women's struggle for leadership in religious institutions as a whole historical process of contestation between agency and structures across contexts that explain different forms of women's leadership accommodation in religious institutions.

Women's struggle for leadership in religious organizations around the world generally and in Southeast Asia particularly has been characterized with various levels of accomplishment across cultures, denominations, and even institutions within the same religious tradition. For example, this study takes two cases of women's struggle for leadership in two Protestant churches, the Torajan Church in Indonesia and the ECVN in Vietnam, which have similar starting points regarding women's roles in leadership and same length of church life both have different outcomes of accommodating women in leadership after the same historical length. The patriarchal gender system of one church is trans-

formed while that of the other is durable in the process of church development. It is impossible to generalize the mechanisms that have brought about these different outcomes; however, it can be illuminating by explicating particular mechanisms from different contexts that can bring better understanding of the phenomenon.

Thus, this study argues for a comparative approach of the topic because the comparative investigation of this struggle as a historical process of interaction between agency and structures in different contexts can illuminate both uniquely contextual mechanisms that help to variously reproduce or transform the religious gender structure toward women-inclusive leadership and the complexity of agency and its politics as shaped by the multiplicity of structures and structural opportunities rather than viewing the struggle as being restricted or enabled by powerful structures or worked out by a unified group of women's agency. This study has found social, cultural, and political theories of agency and structure useful for constructing such a theoretical framework.

2.2 Structural Transformation, Structural Duration, and Structural Opportunities

This part explores the interconnections between context and different historical processes: structural transformation and structural reproduction or duration. In Sewell's book *Logics of history: Social theory and social transformation* (2005), structural transformation refers to the conception of structures that emerge from an event and transform the pre-existing structures; whereas structural duration or reproduction refers to structures that tend to reproduce themselves with little change in the midst of considerable historical changes (Sewell 2005, 102, 271). In social practice theories which study the production of social subjects and the world through practice (Ortner 2006, 16), any social structure is a dialectic process between structure and agency. However, social

structure does not conform to either human will or conventional dictation (Sahlins 1981). This reality recognizes the contestation between structure and other forces beyond the social actors' control. This means any analysis of historical process of structuration needs to take into account the contestation between structure and external forces.

Additionally, when locating a particular group's interest in a social structure, structures in contestation are also viewed through the lens of opportunities for this particular group. In political science, "opportunities" or "political opportunity structures" often refer to both formal political structures and the environment that affects the dynamics of social movements (Kriesi 2005; Suh 2001). However, this concept can be extended to religious studies to refer to structural opportunities generated from both formal religious structures and the context. Different religious structures and contexts offer different structural opportunities that affect the transformation of the religious structure and dynamics of the group's struggle.

Hence, the analysis of historical processes of structuration both structural transformation and structural duration needs to include both the contestation of structure and external forces and the framing of this contestation in terms of opportunities for the interest of the researched group. In this part, I explore theories of structural transformation and structural duration by William Sewell Jr (1992; 2005) and structural opportunity theories to formulate a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of the contestation between the structure and context. I chose Sewell because his theories elaborately deal with structural transformation and structural duration in relation to historical process. His theories are built upon and overcome the weaknesses of major post-structural theories by Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, and Marshall Sahlins. I also chose structural opportunity theories because they are useful for this study by providing another lens of framing the issue as I have explained above.

2.2.1 Structural Transformation

Sewell builds his definition of structure on Giddens' definition, however, with correction and reformulation to overcome the structural totalization and reproduction in the theories of Giddens, Bourdieu, and Geerts. In *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Giddens defines structure as "Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists

only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgability, and as instantiated in action." (Giddens 1984, 377). Sewell criticizes that Giddens' definition of structure is inadequate and inaccurate by defining structure as a set of rules and resources which are both virtual. He argues the concept of rules is ambiguous because rules can be actual or resources rather than virtual and cannot encompass all range of schemas especially the informal and unstated ones. Sewell proposes to replace the word "rules" with "schemas". Schemas are "generalizable" and "transposable" procedures that can be applied across contexts (Sewell 1992, 7–8).

Giddens defines resources as "the media whereby transformative capacity is employed as power in the routine course of social interaction" and classifies resources into two types: authoritative which is the capacity to generate command over people and allocative which is the capacity to generate command over objects (Giddens 1979, 92, 100). Sewell argues that resources cannot be virtual because they are not resources by nature but only become resources under the effect of cultural schemas. He redefines structure as "composed simultaneously of schemas, which are virtual, and of resources, which are actual. If structures are dual in this sense, then it must be true that schemas are the effects of resources, just as resources are the effects of schemas" (Sewell 1992, 13). If resources are actual and contextually bound, it can be modified and changed and consequently affects the schemas or change the schemas. Hence, structural change is possibly explained.

Sewell also reformulates Bourdieu's theory of structure and agency by arguing that in Bourdieu's conceptualization of structure or "habitus", schemas and resources so powerfully reproduce each other that such gives no room for structural change. He sees that the problem with Bourdieu's theory is that Bourdieu's view of structure is "unrealistically unified and totalized" that it overlooks the existence of inconsistency and multiplicity of structures in social practice (Sewell 1992, 16). Therefore, Sewell proposes five lenses for analyzing structural change: (1) the multiplicity of structures, (2) the transposability of schemas, (3) the unpredictability of resource accumulation, (4) the polysemy of resources, and (5) the intersection of structures. He states:

"Structures, then, are sets of mutually sustaining schemas and resources that empower and constrain social action and that tend to be reproduced by that social action. But their reproduction is never automatic. Structures are at risk, at least to some extent, in all of the social encounters they shape because structures are multiple and intersecting, because schemas are transposable, and because resources are polysemic and accumulate unpredictably. Placing the relationship between resources and cultural schemas at the center of a concept of structure makes it possible to show how social change, no less than social stasis, can be generated by the enactment of structures in social life."

(Sewell 1992, 19).

By viewing structures as multiple and intersecting, Sewell's theory makes it possible for explaining structural change from a symbolic level because the existence and convergence of multiple structures at one site at one time can enable the social actors to reflect on different schemas and creatively transpose and apply these schemas in a new way. Beside that, by viewing structure as simultaneously composed of virtual schemas and actual resources, it is possible to explain structural change from

changes in resources. Here the unpredictable accumulation of resources and the different implications of resource usage can result in the alteration of the schemas at the symbolic level.

Beside correcting errors in Giddens's and Bourdieu's theories of structure, Sewell adopts Clifford Geertz's interpretive cultural method and Marshall Sahlins's practice theory of historic turn and formulates a theory of structural transformation and structural duration. Sewell criticizes Geertz that his concept of culture as a coherent system of symbols and meanings that are consistently appropriated by the social actors to produce social practices is problematic for explaining cultural change. It is problematic because it assumes the coherence of culture and uniformity of social practices. He argues that culture should be viewed as a dialectic of system and practice and as one among independent dimensions of social life which is thinly coherent and subjected to change. He maintains that cultural practice analysis must admit social diversity in forms of life, social relations, and categories of people, which makes cultural systems as "sites of conflict, dialogue, and change." (Sewell 2005, 168ff).

Sewell proposes that the analysis of structural transformation needs to combine both synchronic description and diachronic description of cultural relations. The synchronic description can be seen as "history as temporal context" or "a block of time", while diachronic description can be seen as "history as transformation" or "process of change." He finds Geertz's interpretative method of culture useful for interpreting synchronic cultural relations. (Sewell 2005, 183–184).

In the theorization of diachronic description, Sewell builds his theory upon Sahlins's work. Sahlins was the pioneer in incorporating cultural practice into history to interpret historical change in his work *Historical metaphors and mythical realities: Structure in the early history of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (1981). Sewell welcomes Sahlins's ideas that historical events are events because of their interpretative effects

that break the existing routinized cultural formations. Historical events presuppose cultural structures. Events, though shaped by structures, transform structures that shape them because symbols and meanings, which compose the cultural structures, can be creatively used to serve the social actors' variously situated interests. (Sewell 2005, 199, 204). In structural change analysis, diachrony is built on the background of synchrony. However, Sewell criticizes that Sahlins still uses the term "culture" as singular rather than plural and structure as restricted to symbolic level. Though Sahlins is aware of the impact of resources on the acting subjects, he has little clarification of it. Sewell clarifies that structural change does not only operate at the cultural level but also involves dynamic of resources. While Sahlins explains historical event through "structure of conjuncture" which conceptualizes structure not as "enduring and routinely reproduced relationships" but as "a pragmatics" and "dynamics" which are driven by acting subjects' different interests but do not conform to "intention" and "convention," Sewell argues that cultural structures should also be conceptualized as "conjuncture of structures" which views cultural structures as "multiple, overlapping, and transposable" so that it is easier to explain the social actors' multiple subjectivities and creative cultural practices (Sewell 2005, 221–223).

To sum up, in social analysis of structural change, Sewell proposes that both synchronic and diachronic descriptions of cultural relations are combined. He argues for the use of Geertz's interpretative method to interpret structures and practice in synchronic description and Sahlins's historical practice method in diachronic descriptions. However, in both methods, he adds that structures should be conceptualized as multiple, intersecting, and transposable. Structures should also be viewed as pragmatic, dynamic, and driven by the acting subjects' different interests and the dynamic of resources but structures are not obliged to conform to either actors' intention or convention. Acting subjects should be

conceptualized as internally diverse, and differently situated in the power structures.

2.2.2 Structural Duration

Besides theorizing structural transformation, Sewell also theorizes structural reproduction or duration. Sewell finds that Giddens's concept of routinization cannot explain why some structures endure drastic historical transformation or why structural change fails to occur in the midst of changes. He argues that the interpretation of structural duration must "identify both the institutional structures that reinforce reproductive actions and the peculiar ecological situations that shield these institutions from the forces that potentially threaten them with erosion, decay, or disassembly." (Sewell 2005, 273). In this analysis, he insists that it is important to distinguish the multiple temporalities which he classified into three types: trends, routines, and events. Trends are "directional changes in social relations"; routines are "more or less taken for granted activities" to be "repeated indefinitely in unchanged ways"; and events are "temporally concentrated sequences of actions that transform structures." He said it is the job of the historically social scientists to discern how these various temporal processes of trends, routines, and events are combined within a real historical sequence to reproduce or transform the structures (Sewell 2005, 273). Sewell's theoretical framework of identifying institutional structures that reinforce the social practice and ecological situations that prevent this practice from being threatened by external forces can be a starting point for the analysis of structural duration for this dissertation project.

Overall, Sewell's theories of structural change and structural duration are useful for this project in ways that they give directions for the interpretation of how religious institutions have different levels of accommodating women's leadership by identifying characters of "structures of conjuncture" and "conjuncture of structures" that

result in different degrees of transposability of schemas and unpredictable accumulation of resources that enable the agents to creatively modify and transform the existing structures. When this analysis is incorporated into synchronic and diachronic descriptions, it can help to interpret the transformation processes of each religious institution. His theory of structural duration is useful to explain why and how some social structures are resistant to change regardless of changing context by identifying both contextual and institutional factors that shield these structures from being destabilized.

2.2.3 Structural Opportunities

As I have argued above, when locating a particular group's interest struggle in the social structure, structures in contestation should also be framed through the lens of opportunities for this particular group because structural opportunities affect the dynamic of the group's struggle and the transformation of the structure. In this part, I explore feminist theories of structural opportunities as proposed and applied in the works of Holly J. McCammon et al (2001) and Karen Ann Tremper (2013) to find meeting points between their works and Sewell's theories and generalize into a theoretical framework for this dissertation. I chose these works because they pursue a similar topic with this dissertation and offer something different and concrete about structural opportunities which is lacked in Sewell's theories.

In their study of how U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements during the period of 1866 to 1919 won their voting rights, McCammon et al (2001) proposed an expansion of the use of "opportunity structure" beyond formal political structures. They argued that the success of movements like the U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements emerged not only because of changing dynamics in formal political structures that made political decision-makers interested in granting women's voting rights but also because of the emergence of gendered opportunities that altered the

political decision-makers' attitude about women's proper roles in the society. They argued that the analysis of movement success must specify circumstances that make political decision-makers willing to support such a change.

In contrast, in her dissertation entitled "Credentialed Women in the Foursquare Church: An Exploration of Opportunities and Hindrances in Leadership" (2013), Karen Ann Tremper strikingly shows how both structural opportunities and religious decision-makers are ambivalent and contingent when opportunities are culturally framed by the acting subjects. What the credentialed women perceived as opportunities turns out to be hindrances in reality. Tremper finds this contradiction between the women's perceived opportunities and the reality in the leadership dynamics and organizational dynamics. While the church heritage and the wider context of feminist movements support gender equality in church leadership, the real practices of the church show an opposite direction by having a male-dominated hierarchy and conservative attitudes toward feminist movements. Tremper found the reasons that even though the founder of the church was a female, this founder did not install gender equality as a practice. After she died, women disappeared from the leadership structure. She herself did not support feminist movements but held traditional view of male and female roles. The credentialed women were not aware of these reasons but only interpreted gender equality opportunity from the fact that this founder was a woman. The practice of "hiring the husband and getting the wife for free" and the lack of female role models are also the reasons.

Additionally, while the religious decision makers positively talked about supporting women in leadership, they did not practice what they said. Tremper found that this happened because of the segregation of men and women networks that made the religious decision-makers less accountable. The male leaders who had the power to appoint leadership candidates said that candidates must support women but they did not

include it as a standard for appointed candidates. Hence, perceived opportunities and practices are in contradiction.

Hence structural opportunities can bring both positive and negative results depending on the willingness of the decision-makers. In McCammon et al.'s model of analysis, the political decision-makers are positively affected by changes in women's roles which are perceived as opportunities by the researchers; while in Tremper's model of analysis, the religious decision-makers are negatively affected by changes in women's roles which are perceived as opportunities by the researched women group. Despite the different perceivers of opportunities, the common thing is that opportunity is perceived as opportunity because it supports women's leadership roles. The two findings can be read as two different responses of decision-makers toward the same type of opportunity. Positive responses bring structural change and negative responses reproduce the structure. Both found the explanation in the institutional and wider context dynamics. Therefore, these studies perfectly fit into Sewell's frameworks of structural transformation and structural duration, but they provide concrete frameworks for gender analysis which Sewell leaves open for the social researcher.

Their frameworks of analysis include both institutional dynamics and wider context dynamics that affect the decision-makers' attitudes toward women's movements. McCammon et al explains structural change to accommodate women's rights by identifying how formal leadership structure dynamics alters decision-makers' interest in women's new roles based on how this new practice can support their positions or agenda and how the gendered opportunity structures which are brought about by context dynamics change the decision-makers' attitudes toward women's new roles. This framework can be a concrete way of reading Sewell's proposed framework of structural transformation with a focus on formal religious structure or decision-making level. The structure of conjuncture and conjuncture of structures create new gen-

dered opportunities that enable the powerful agents to creatively reflect and alter the existing practices.

Beside McCammon's framework, Tremper's framework can be seen as a concrete way of reading Sewell's framework of structural duration; however, her framework is inadequate since it ignores how the wider context dynamics strengthens the religious decision-makers' reproducing the social practice. She only focuses on how leadership dynamics and organizational dynamics reinforce the patriarchal practices despite the presence of structural opportunities for women's advancement in leadership. As Sewell has proposed in his theoretical framework for structural duration, the analysis of structural reproduction must also include the ecological situations that shield this institution from the forces that destabilize it. Hence, both Tremper's concrete framework and Sewell's general framework can be combined to analyze structural duration of religious institutions.

In short, from various theoretical bodies on structural transformation, structural reproduction, and structural opportunities, a theoretical framework for the analysis of the different outcomes of gender structural change in the Toraja Church and The ECVN with a focus on the contestation between the gender Structure and contextual forces can be constructed. This analysis includes two tasks: One is to identify conjuncture of structures and structures of conjuncture that result in different degrees of transposability of schemas and unpredictable accumulation of resources that empower and enable the agency to push for structural change. The other task is to identify institutional dynamics and context dynamics or ecological situations that create different gendered opportunities that make religious decision-makers interested in supporting change or reinforcing the existing gender practices. In this analysis, both Geertz's interpretative cultural method or synchronic description and Sahlins's historical practice method or diachronic description are combined to describe process of transformation.

2.3 The Relationship between Agency and Structural Transformation and Structural Opportunities

Structural transformation is the outcome of not only the contestation between structure and external forces and structural opportunities but also the internal push of the agency. This part will explore theories of agency by Sewell (1992; 2005), Sherry B. Ortner (2006) and others to formulate a theoretical framework of a comparative analysis of agency.

2.3.1 Agency and Structural Transformation

Sewell defines agency as the ability to control and transform social relations to a certain degree. He views agency as the capacity to have intentions, desires, and creativity as inherent in all human beings but the form of agency is “culturally and historically determined.” As agents constitute the structures and structures are multiple and intersecting, agency can be enacted in two ways: the ability to apply schemas to new contexts and the ability to use resources in terms of new schemas other than the old ones that constituted the resources. Agents possess power differently depending on their positions in the social structures. Agency also varies depending on individuals’ intentions, desires, and knowledge and on categories of people such as gender, class, social status, and ethnicity. He views agency as both collective and individual. As collective agency, agency involves the ability to mobilize others, to form collective projects, and to monitor one’s own and others’ activities; whereas individual agency depends on individual positions in the collective organizations which are characterized by difference of power (Sewell 1992, 16–21).

Hence, agency in Sewell’s theory is similar to Giddens’s view that agency is knowledgeable and has transformative power; however, he departs from Giddens in the way that his agency actively possesses intention and desires; whereas, intention of agency in Giddens’s theory

is recognized as a process (Giddens 1979, 56). Sewell also incorporates power and inequality into his agency whereas Giddens views power only in two ways: institutionalized power or “domination” and power in practice or “transformative power.” By viewing agents as constitutive of structures which are multiple, intersecting, and transposable, Sewell’s agency overcomes the tightly mutual reproduction of structure and agency in Bourdieu’s and Geertz’s agency models. Based on Sewell’s model of agency, structural transformation can be explained by analyzing the acting subject’s creative use of symbolic symbols and meanings across structures and its dynamic use of resources.

Sewell’s model of agency is very useful for analyzing structural change; however, I agree with Sherry B. Ortner (2006:110) that his theory is “thin” in depicting the subjectivity of the agency. Ortner contributes to the concept of agency by constructing a cultural model of agency with complex subjectivity and politics in a world of power and inequality. She applies Geertz’s interpretative cultural method and builds her agency theory on major practice theories from Bourdieu, Giddens, Sahlins, Sewell, and her own work.

Ortner views subjectivity as the basis of agency. She defines subjectivity as cultural and historical consciousness apart from the unconscious dynamics in Bourdieu’s habitus. At the individual, it is the consciousness in Giddens’s sense which means subjects are partially aware of their situation and able to penetrate it to a certain degree. At the collective level, it is the consciousness in Marx’s sense as a collective sensibility of socially interrelated actors. Ortner defines subjectivity as composed of the inner states of the acting subject including “modes of perception, effect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects” and external “cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on.” (Ortner 2006, 107, 111).

Ortner's cultural model of agency as empowerment and pursuit of project in a world of power and inequality argues for a new way of understanding cultural transformation from social practice. While the culture informs the project and constitutes the subjectivity of the acting subject, this acting subject carries out the project in a world of asymmetrical power relations. She criticizes that resistance studies have been thin on the internal diversity of subordinate group's politics, thin on the richness of their culture, and their subjectivity. Traditionally domination refers to institutionalized domination and resistance as collective mobilization to resist this institutionalized domination. Then Foucault diverges power from centralized in institution to a more everyday form of power and Scott diverges resistance from organized form to a more everyday form of resistance. She argues that the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate is not always binary relationship of domination and resistance because the dominant also has something to offer and the subordinate are internally diverse in their categories and politics. Because of these complexities, individual and collective acts of resistance are always ambivalent, and internally conflicted. She argues for a thick description of agency which means agency is culturally and historically constructed yet still retains a sense of agency which is the capacity to "interpret and morally evaluate their situation and to formulate projects and try to enact them." (Ortner 2006, 48ff).

In her framework of cultural agency, she moves back and forth between the cultural formations of the subjectivity and the inner states of the subject. To construct this framework, she uses practice theories from Bourdieu, Giddens, Sahlins, Sewell, and her own work. In Bourdieu's theory, the acting subject well internalizes the structures to the point of taking it for granted. His emphasis is on how this "habitus" or internalization and disposition of the structure provide a range of choices and limits for the actor. Sahlins is like Bourdieu: his subject is struc-

turally driven; however, the subjectivity is a bit more complex. For Sewell and Giddens, although subjects are culturally and structurally constructed, they have partial knowledge of their situation and can to a certain extent modify it. However, Ortner argues that the subject's subjectivity in these theories is thin. She argues that the subject is "existentially complex, a being who feels and thinks and reflects, who makes and seeks meaning." (Ortner 2006, 110). Like Sewell, she finds Geertz's interpretive method useful for portraying the subject's subjectivity as shaped by the wider cultural frameworks. However, her framework is different because it depicts the subjectivity as complex structures of thought, feeling, and reflection that make subjects more than just occupying a particular position or a particular identity or a mere reflection of the symbolic system in Geertz's view.

In her formulation of agency model as pursuing "project" in a world of power asymmetry, she uses the word "serious games" to describe how social actors are oriented toward culturally constituted goals and projects. She views social life as "serious games" that all social actors participate with their own culturally informed projects or goals. Social actors have agency but always enact their agency in embedded multiplicity of social relations. This social embeddedness involves two levels: relations of solidarity: family, friends, allies, and the like, and relations of power, inequality, and competition. For her, agency is never a thing in itself but a part of a process of making and remaking of larger social and cultural formations. She shares Sewell's view of agency as inherently human and intentional but also culturally and historically constructed.

In Ortner's own view, agency is closely linked with social power. While Giddens views power operated in agency as transformative power and power institutionalized as domination, Ortner argues this is only one form of power operation. Orner sees that Bourdieu's strong emphasis on structural power tends to overlook the diversity of power

in practices. Sahlins describes interpersonal power but gives more emphasis on the impersonal power that regulates all the relationships in that hierarchical society. In Sewell's view, structures empower people differentially.

Different from these theorists, Ortner sees that agency has two intertwined faces: one is that agency is about intentionality and pursuit of culturally defined projects; the other is that agency is acted out in a world of power and inequality. She contrasts these two modes of agency: agency of projects is about intentions, purposes, and desires formulated in terms of culturally established projects or the locally logics of what is good and desirable to be pursued; while the other mode of agency refers to forms of power ranging from domination to resistance, defined more in terms of the dominant party. Project here refers to significant cultural ends. She views social actors as entering "a serious game" with each having a project and trying to establish it in a social system of power and inequality. For example, the capitalists enter the serious game of capitalism. Their project is the make profit and defeat competition, so they carry it out by dominating and exploiting the workers. She states: "Both domination and resistance then are, it seems to me, always in the service of projects, of being allowed or empowered to pursue culturally meaningful goals and ends, whether for good or for ill" (Ortner 2006, 153). This playing of serious games for the most part reproduces the structure in Bourdieu's sense; however, it also gives room for change because of the entry of external forces and internal instability of power relations. Social actors are never completely free to formulate and realize their own goals nor control social relations toward their own ends because they are embedded in webs of relations. (Ortner 2006, 139ff).

Ortner's theoretical framework is very useful to analyze the complexity of the acting subject's subjectivity and its politics. By viewing agency in two modes: agency of culturally defined project and agency

of power, Ortner's agency framework encompasses Geertz's interpretative method, structures in Sewell's sense and power relations in post-structural theories of power. By Geertz's interpretative method, social subjects are seen as constituted by cultures. By Sewell's sense of structures, social agents enact their agency through pursuing projects which are defined by existing symbolic structures which are multiple, intersecting and transposable. Hence, their projects are not static and fixed but open for modification and changes. By post-structural theories of power, since agency of power derives from agency of project, Ortner's agency of power is flexible and creative depending on the particular situation of power relations, so it is not limited to resistance model. Her agency model can be applied in both synchronic and diachronic descriptions of social transformation process by analyzing changes in the agency of projects which then entails the agency of power.

2.3.2 Agency and Structural Opportunities

However, the focus on cultural interpretation of agency shows inadequate in case of structural change or the emergence of structural opportunities. In political theories of opportunity structures, agency seems pragmatic rather than having a vigorous intention in their actions since they cannot anticipate changes in structures when they participate in collective action (Kriesi 2005, 83). Social agents' actions also depend on how they perceive opportunities since this helps them calculate how effectively they can achieve their desired goals. Both expansion and contraction of opportunities can equally affect social movement dynamics. The expansion of opportunities such as more openness of the structure to accommodate rights of the challengers and more vulnerability of the structure by internal conflicts can increase chances for social actors to achieve their goals. However, the contraction of opportunities such as repression and exclusion can also result in solidarity of the diverse and loosely connected agents (McCammon et al. 2001, 50–51; Suh 2001,

440–441). Despite this dynamic indications of structural opportunities, the point is that structural opportunities can affect the subjectivity of the acting subject and alter its project and strategies. Feminist studies of women's movements in religious organizations such as that of Satoko (2003) show that when women perceive danger of failure for women's movement as generated from the rigid and highly authoritarian hierarchy, they have fear and withdraw themselves. In contrast, the openness and friendliness of the leadership toward women's empowerment can increase women's hope and chances to press toward their goals (Noriko 2003; Syamsiyatun 2010).

To sum up, this part has explored theories of agency proposed by Sewell, Ortner, and others. Each theoretical body has something unique to contribute to the comparative study of agency in structural transformation. In Sewell's model of agency, agents are constitutive of structures which are multiple, intersecting, and transposable. Thus, structural transformation can be explained by analyzing the acting subject's creative use of symbolic symbols and meanings across structures and its dynamic use of resources. In Ortner's agency framework, agency is portrayed in two modes: agency of culturally defined project and agency of power. This framework combined with Sewell's framework can provide a good model for analyzing the complexity of the subject's subjectivities and politics as informed by conjuncture of structures and structures of conjuncture in the process of structural transformation. Additionally theories of structural opportunities can help to frame the shift in subjectivity, project, and strategies of the acting subjects. A comparative approach of agency in structural change can pay attention to the varying degrees of how these factors are present and combined in real practices.

2.4 Agency in the Struggle for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Religious Institutions

Besides exploring theories of agency from the above disciplines, this dissertation also benefits from feminist theories of agency. This part will explore some feminist theories of agency in religious studies in order to construct a workable framework for this dissertation.

Feminist studies of agency in religion have largely diverged from one another in terms of feminist agency and politics. For example, the mainstream of feminist scholarships on women's leadership in religion generally employs a common liberal Western model of resistance and subversion of old norms and practices or a progressive feminist politics (Adeney 2003; Leming 2007). Others (Hoodfar 2001; Mahmood 2005; Avishai 2008) criticize this model of feminist politics and agency as inadequate to study women's agency in fundamentalist movements. They show that the transformative power of women in these contexts comes from their embodiment of fundamentalist patriarchal values. As Sewell argues that agency is inherent in all human beings and its form is culturally and historically determined (Sewell 1992, 20), women's agency can be enacted in various ways.

However, instead of choosing one type of agency over the other, this study finds both liberal Western model of progressive feminist politics and other forms of feminist agency and politics useful but they need to be placed in appropriate place in the structure. This dissertation argues for the need to distinguish between feminist projects/ agency and non-feminist project/agency. Feminist projects and agency are those that challenge and transform the patriarchal norms and practices. This type of project and agency is important to assess change in the gender structure. The presence and successful establishment of feminist projects and agency can to a certain degree explain the process of structural transformation. In contrast, non-feminist projects and agency are those that embrace patriarchal values or avoid challenging the status quo. This

type of project and agency also has its own function in this study. Its dominant presence in the structure contributes to the reproduction of the existing gender structure. Since the terminologies of “feminist agency” and “feminist politics” have been variously used and also loaded with meanings, this study addresses the problems of the terminological usage and the weaknesses of the Western liberal model of agency, and constructs a comparative model of agency in the study of gender equality struggle at leadership level in religious institutions.

2.4.1 Feminist Agency and Feminist Politics

The term “feminist agency” is loaded with meanings because of at least two ways of terminological usage in religious studies: one is related to feminist studies of women’s agency, and the other is related to the categories of religious feminisms.

2.4.1.1 Feminist Agency

In the first usage, “feminist agency” is variously used by feminist scholars to claim women’s agency in different religious communities. At the one end, feminist agency refers to the liberal model of resistance and subversion of patriarchal norms and values such as the works of Adeney (2003) and Leming (2007). At the other end, this agency refers to the conservative model of embodiment and performance of patriarchal values and norms (Avishai 2008; Mahmood 2005). This gives the impression that there is no differential usage of the term as long as it is enacted by women. Consequently this makes an essential link between feminism and women.

The second usage of the term “feminist agency” is related to the categories of religious feminisms. Rita M. Gross (1996) recognizes two types of religious feminisms during 1960s and 1970s: reforming feminism and radical feminism. Reforming feminism was held by women who still remained in their religious traditions but worked to transform

the patriarchal aspects of these religions. Radical feminism was held by women who found no hope to redeem their patriarchal religions and left to seek a new spirituality. Deborah F. Sawyer (2006) recognizes three types of religious feminisms: conservative feminism which accepts religious patriarchal norms and gender roles but rejects women's subordination to men, traditional-liberal feminism which is the same as reforming feminism in Gross's term, and radical feminism which rejects both sacred texts and the traditions (Sawyer 2006, 467–468).

2.4.1.2 Feminist Politics

These different types of religious feminisms also entail different types of feminist politics. Underlying the conservative feminism is an ambivalent feminist politics which means these women do not support women's rights or gender equality but they reject women's subordination to men at the same time. A typical example of this conservative feminism and politics is The Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States. The women from this religious organization try to maintain a neutral position between women's rights and non-submissive model of womanhood. However, in practice, this neutral position has placed them in a dilemma because their distance from the struggle for women's rights has blocked the door for young female generations who feel called to enter religious career (Harvey 2002). Different from the conservative feminism, the traditional-liberal feminism or reforming feminism holds a progressive feminist politics which attempts to replace patriarchal norms and values with an egalitarian ones. For example, Asian religious feminists view leadership as equal partnership of women and men to transform the society based on shared power and mutual love, care, accountability and responsibility. They denounce any monopoly and domination in power relations (Antone 2004; Antone 2013; Devananda 2013, 93). As for radical feminism, this movement has been characterized as such because of its sepa-

ratist politics rather than gender politics even though gender inequality is the cause. Women who hold this view feel no hope to change the religious structure for an egalitarian gender relations, thus they abandon it and build something new. Now feminist politics has gone beyond the dichotomy of patriarchy and gender equality to move toward the abolition of patriarchy (Gross 1996) and gender division (Butler 2006; Gross 2015).

Having surveyed the different usage and meanings of “feminist agency” and “feminist politics”, I recognize that it is impossible to have a universal definition of these terminologies. However, for the purpose of this study, I will provide workable definitions of these terms. I find the progressive feminist politics the most helpful for interpreting women’s advancement in leadership in religious institutions since this model aims at restructuring of gender relations within the religious structure. It implies structural transformation; whereas, the conservative model and radical model have their limitations by either supporting the status quo or leaving the structure untouched. However, the liberal Western model needs to be reformulated to effectively serve the purpose of this study.

2.4.2 Weaknesses in Liberal Model of Agency and a Comparative Model of Agency

First, feminist studies using this liberal model seem to assume an intentional gender politics in the acting subjects. They tend to read the assumed politics into the subjectivity of the actors. Even though this is possible, they cannot avoid the trap of generalization and totalization. In this study, I treat progressive feminist politics as a process that moves toward the transformation of the gender structure to be more gender-inclusive rather than only an intention of the acting subject. This is because acting subjects do not always have a gender vision or goal for their actions but they might participate in this process from

pragmatic or other reasons. This can be clearly seen when the acting subject perceives new structural opportunities.

In my study, I use the word “feminist project” to describe the underlying culturally and historically defined goals or plans that result in challenging the existing gender norms and values; hence, this project brings the acting subject into the current of progressive feminist politics even though this project might not have such an aim or intention. For example, a woman has a project to become a pastor because she feels this special calling from her religious devotion. However, this project brings her into conflict with the religious structure which prescribes subordinate roles for women. Hence, her reason for the struggle is not gender equality but a space for the realization of her calling. Perhaps she might realize gender equality struggle as necessary later in the process when she and her colleagues encounter similar problems because of their gender.

Having said this, feminist project does not deny that it has a direct underlying gender equality goal because the acting subject can adopt gender equality values from other structures in Sewell’s perspective or because gender equality constitutes an integral part of the acting subject’s larger project. For example, in my study of Torajan men’s agency, gender equality is an integral part of their cultural and religious views of being a human being and a good religious leader. In this study, I distinguish “feminist project” from “non-feminist project”. While feminist projects lead to confrontation and transformation of the gender structure, non-feminist projects avoid confronting the gender status quo. These projects mostly explore other spaces open for women from the patriarchal structure.

Regarding “feminist agency”, I still find the liberal Western agency model of resistance and subversion of old norms and values useful for identify feminist agency. However, feminist studies using this model have restricted this agency to women and have a unified model of the

acting subject's subjectivity. I define feminist agency as the capacity to reflect on and transform the patriarchal structure for the purpose of establishing its feminist project. Hence the direct motivation for the acting subject's agency is the project which might or might not have an underlying gender goal. However, the transformation of gender relations becomes a tool and an outcome of establishing this project. I also distinguish "feminist agency" from "non-feminist agency" based on their projects. Feminist agency owns a feminist project while non-feminist agency owns a non-feminist project.

By treating "feminist projects" and "feminist agency" from an outcome perspective, I can include a wide range of actors and projects that participate in the process of transforming the gender structure. The trap of projecting the researcher's view into the acting subjects' subjectivities can be avoided. At the same time, this method allows complexity of subjectivities. The distinction between feminist project/agency and non-feminist project/agency can help me to a certain extent explain the different levels of gender structural change in religious institutions. The dominant presence and successful establishment of feminist projects and feminist agency can help to explain the transformation of religious institution toward gender equality while the insignificant presence of feminist projects and agency or the dominant presence of non-feminist projects and agency can help to explain the durable gender practices of the religious institution.

2.5 Toward a Comparative Approach of Agency and Structuration in Women's Religious Leadership Studies

After having explored and constructed different relationships: context- structure and agency-structure, this study proposes a theoretical framework for a comparative analysis of agency and structural trans-

formation in women's leadership struggle in religious institutions. This proposed theoretical framework is composed of two aspects:

First, employing theories of structural transformation and reproduction from Sewell (1992; 2005) and theories of structural opportunities, this study explains different forms of gender structure change by examining how contextual factors contest the gender structure. This includes the analysis of the intersection of this gender structure with other local and trans-local structures, which leads to the destabilization of the gender structure and creation of different opportunities for the empowerment of agency. It will also analyze how the institutional structures and ecological situation of each religious institution facilitate change or reinforce gender reproduction. This framework will be applied to interpret the data in chapter 4 of the dissertation.

Second, having explored and synthesized various bodies of agency theories proposed by Sewell, Ortner, structural opportunity theorists, and feminist studies of women's religious leadership, this study explains the different forms of gender structure change by examining the agency and its politics as internal push for structural change. It analyzes how agency and its politics are shaped, diverse, and reshaped by internal differences, multiplicity of external structures and historical changes that bring new opportunities. Diverging from previous feminist scholarships on the subject, which focuses on one type of politics or agency, it utilizes both progressive feminist agency and non-progressive one by placing each in its proper place. Particularly it pays close attention to the presence and success of feminist projects and feminist agency as compared to the absence or dominance of other forms of projects and agency in each site as an explanation of the transformation or duration of gender structure in each institution. Men's agency is included and analyzed in similar manner. The presence or absence of men's feminist agency and projects are explained by referring to the cultural and social formations and dynamic of historical contexts that open or con-

serve male leaders toward accepting women's roles in leadership. This framework will be applied to interpret the data in chapter 5 of the dissertation.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter of the dissertation has explored theoretical and methodological gaps in feminist studies of women's leadership in religious organizations. These gaps are found in their focus on separate aspects of the issue: either structure or agency; whereas there seems a lack of feminist scholarships that comparatively examine this issue from a process and outcome perspective. Their studies of structure generally lack historical dimension and the multiplicity of structures. Similarly, their studies of agency mostly focus on one group of women, one type of politics, and a unified model of agency. This chapter argues for a comparative approach of agency and structural change in this area of study that takes into account the multiplicity of structures, structural opportunities, historical changes, diversity of acting subjects, and complexity of acting subject's subjectivities.

This comparative framework includes two levels of analysis: the relationship between the gender structure and contextual forces and institutional dynamics, and that between the gender structure and agency. In the analysis of the former relationship, Sewell's framework of structure and structural opportunity theories are utilized. Differential levels of gender structure change are explained through the conjuncture of structures and structures of conjuncture that offer different degrees of structural opportunities that result in the empowerment of the agency and creative use and accumulation of resources. They are also explained through identifying religious structure dynamics and built-in environment that facilitate structural change or shield the structure from being destabilized and transformed by forces of change.

In the analysis of the relationship between the gender structure and agency, agency theories from Sewell, Ortner, and others are utilized. Differential levels of gender structure change are explained through the dominant presence and successful establishment of feminist projects and feminist agency that contribute to the contestation and transformation of gender practices in religious institutions; the insignificant presence of these projects and agency or the dominant presence of other non-feminist projects and agency can explain to a certain extent the duration of the patriarchal gender practices. Since feminist projects and agency are viewed from an outcome perspective rather than from a prior intention of the acting subjects, this analysis can accommodate a wide range of actors, projects, and subjectivities. The combination of synchronic and diachronic descriptions of agency and their politics can hopefully grasp a more comprehensive explanation of different forms of the gender structural change between religious institutions.

GENDER STRUCTURES AND THEIR DIFFERENT FORMS OF CHANGE: A DESCRIPTIVE COMPARISON OF TORAJA CHURCH AND THE ECVN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the different forms of the gender structural change between the Toraja Church and the ECVN by presenting continuities and discontinuities in women's roles and status as manifested in theological education practices, church regulations, and theologies. It provides a comparative historical description of the contestation process of the gender structure in each church. The purpose of this chapter is to set the background for the investigation and analysis of contextual and human factors behind the different forms of change in the next two chapters.

The gender structure is chosen for assessing the process of change because it directly relates to women's leadership status in both churches. Based on Sewell's definition of structure, gender structure is simultaneously composed of virtual schema, which can be patriarchal or egalitarian gender ideology, and actual resources. Actual resources can be rules, human and non-human resources that are affected by and allocated according to the schema. The changes in gender practices must lead to the

change in schema or the other way around or else it is incomprehensible to have new practices and contradictory old schema.

My research shows that the patriarchal gender structure in each church was adopted and reinforced by missionaries and conservative local leaders and has been contested to accommodate women in leadership to varying degrees as manifested in changes in theological education practices, church regulations, and theological articulations. Particularly the Toraja Church in Indonesia has been through a radical transformation of the gender structure from patriarchal to egalitarian one; whereas, the ECVN in Vietnam has reproduced its male-dominated gender structure with minor changes in gender practices.

3.2 Gender Perspectives of Missionaries and Their Sending Institutions

In order to understand the gender structure of Toraja Church and that of the ECVN, it is helpful to learn about gender perspectives of the missionaries and their sending institutions that established these two churches.

3.2.1 Toraja Church's Founder: The Gereformeerde Zendingsbond (GZB) and Its Male-Dominated Mission

The GZB was founded on 6 February 1901 in Utrecht, Holland. It was initiated by members of the Netherlands Reformed Church or Netherlands Hervormde Kerk who felt called to preach the good news to people in Dutch colonies because pastors and teachers who had been serving there were not effective due to the Dutch colonial government's control. They only served the Dutch workers and local Christians who had converted during Portuguese colonialism. Hence, GZB is actually not an independent missionary organization or a denomination itself but a nominated board of missionaries within the Netherlands Reformed

Church. In Toraja, the vision of GZB was to make Torajans Jesus' disciples. Their missions included: (1) witness Jesus Christ as God and Savior, (2) educate people by opening schools, and (3) provide health services. The first missionaries sent from GZB were the couple: Antonie Aris van de Loosdrecht and Alida Petronella Sizoo on 5 September 1913 (J.A. Sarira 1975, 18–19; Taruk 2013, 7–8, 39).

Regarding GZB missionaries to Toraja from 1913 to the establishment of Toraja Church in 1947, the missionary work was highly male-dominated. Female missionaries were mostly wives who accompanied their husbands to the mission field. There was no female missionary from GZB who worked in the areas of training church leadership and church development. For example, the first couple missionaries to Toraja: Antonie dan Alida van de Loosdrecht who came to Toraja in 1913. Ms. Alida did not go to school but had a private tutor who taught her French and German languages, how to write letters, how to entertain guests, and how to take care of the household. Before she went to the mission field with her husband, she took a one-month course in a big hospital in Rotterdam which was to train female missionaries. On the contrary, for Antonie, he had opportunity to study at the Theological Faculty of Heidelberg University for several years when he was 20s. He also graduated from a Missionary School in Rotterdam in 1913 before he was sent to the mission field in Toraja. For most of Alida's time in Toraja, she was a supportive housewife and sometimes taught the women in the neighborhood how to do the sewing. After her husband was killed in Toraja in 1917, she and three kids moved to Solo, Central Jawa where she worked as an administrator in a small hospital. She worked until 1922 and left for the Netherlands for good (Anthonia A. Van de Loosdrecht-Muller, Jan E. Muller, and Ani Kartikasari, 2005).

Before Toraja Church was established in 1947 and before the Toraja Women Fellowship (Persekutuan Wanita Gereja Toraja or PWGT) was founded in 1966, wives of GZB missionaries formed women

groups for sewing and Bible study. They brought this pattern from the Netherlands. There Christian women gathered once a week to sing, read the Bible, meditate briefly, and pray together. After that they started to do the sewing, handicrafts, and others. They also discussed family problems. However, their priority was to raise fund for the work of the missionaries and other social services. Then they went home. The products of their work were gathered and sold at a market once a year. Most of the income went to missionary work, and sometimes to social work. Hence, the funding for GZB missionaries to Toraja was also from these women groups. This was the pattern that wives of GZB missionaries applied in Toraja especially in big cities such as Rantepao, Makale, and Palopo (Theo Kobong 2006, 32).

Regarding church structure, in the Netherlands, the Netherlands Reformed Church recognized three offices: minister, elder, and deacon. These offices were still men's privilege in 1951. In 1954, proposals to allow women to be elected for church offices faced strong resistance from broad circles in the church. Tradition and biblical texts in which the right to speak in congregations was denied to women were used as reasons against women's holding church offices. In 1958, the issue was raised again. Finally the church decided to give women the rights to the offices of elder and deacon; while the office of minister was for women only in exceptional circumstances. In 1966, the minister office was completely open for women (Dijk 2001, 72; Karel Blei 2006, 117).

Since 1960s, there was improvement among GZB missionaries' gender perspective. For example, in 1960, Rev. A.J. Anggui observed that among 7 people sent from Toraja Church to attend the 4th general assembly of Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (now PGI) in Jakarta, there was a female missionary sent from GZB (A.J. Anggui 2011, 30). Since 1966, female missionaries were mentioned as teaching staff at The Theological School (STT) in Rantepao such as wife of Drs.

J.J. de Heer, Mrs. Snow, and Mrs. L. Benn (A. Kabanga' 2011, 184). However, regarding women's holding church offices, GZB missionaries to Toraja appeared to be very conservative. For example, in 1967, after joining an ecumenical women conference in the United States, Mrs. D.M. Anggui-Pakan had chance to visit Holland where she met the missionaries who had worked in Toraja. When she shared with them that Toraja Church needed both men and women to serve in the future, she did not get positive responses from them (Aleksander Mangoting 2011, 330). According to my interview with Rev. A.J. Anggui, it was until 1980s that for the first time GZB included women in their Missionary Managing Board. (Rev. A.J. Anggui 2015).

It seems that though the Netherlands Reformed Church recognized women's rights to all church offices as early as 1960s, the GZB missionaries to Toraja did not adopt this progress in their mission field in Toraja. This is clearly seen in most GZB missionaries' persistent objection to women's holding church offices until 1984 when the local leadership took a radical decision to give women equal rights with men in this area.

3.2.2 The ECVN's Mother Church: The C&MA and Its Open Mission but Close Church Polity for Women

The C&MA was established by A.B. Simpson, a Presbyterian pastor from Canada in 1897. It was a joint organization of two prior organizations: the Evangelical Missionary Alliance founded in New York in 1889 and the Christian Alliance founded also in New York in 1890. Their main purposes were to support overseas evangelism and build deeper spirituality of local Christians. In the beginning, the founder of this organization did not have the intention to build a new denomination. The first leadership of C&MA was composed of people from different denominations such as Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Mennonite. People who joined C&MA could still maintain

their loyalty to their own denominations. Hence the C&MA did not have its own theology and charter. However, later this organization developed and became a separate entity functioning as a denomination with church organization (Lê 2010, 87–95; T. X. Nguyễn 2013, 284–85). The C&MA had two cleric systems: (1) pastors, elders and deacons who worked with and under supervision of local churches; and (2) missionaries who worked abroad under the supervision of C&MA.

Despite its mixed background, the C&MA had clear gender patterns as manifested in its theological training, recruitment of missionaries, and church leadership structure. Regarding the first two areas, the C&MA was gender-inclusive while the latter had fixed gender roles. One of the objectives of the C&MA was to send both clergies and laypeople from all denominations as missionaries abroad as long as they were qualified (Lê 2010, 89). Both single and married men and women could enter Nyack Missionary Training Institute (MTI) which was established by A. B. Simpson in 1882 and were sent as missionaries to other countries. In Vietnam, these missionaries both men and women worked autonomously in preaching, teaching, and training local people. There seemed no gender restriction for their ministries in Vietnam. Evidently, the life stories of several female missionaries to Vietnam during this period show that they were independent missionaries or equal partners with their husbands in education and in their missionary works in Vietnam.

The story of the female missionary Homera Homer Dixon (1893–1942) is an example. Ms. Homera was born in Toronto, Canada in 1893. She was divorced and had a daughter. In 1927 she got training from Nyack Missionary Training Institute in New York and was sent to Vietnam with her daughter to work at schools for missionaries' children in Da Lat. She wrote Biblical stories for children in Thanh Kinh Bao newspaper. She opened Bible classes for Vietnamese people in Ha Noi and Meo ethnic group in Sa Pa until 1941. She also helped to teach at Da Nang Bible School to train Vietnamese leaders. Together with

other key missionaries, E. F. Irwin and D. I. Jeffrey, she opened Bible classes in Da Nang, Can Tho and Sai Gon. She remained an independent single-mother missionary in Vietnam until she died in 1942 (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 117–25). Ms. Dixon's life story shows that as a single mother with a daughter she could enter Nyack Training Institute and become a missionary in Vietnam where she could co-work with other male missionaries to train local leaders.

Another example is Ms. Grace Hazenberg (1876-1946), one of the most prominent missionaries in Vietnam. She is known to the Vietnamese Christians as Mrs. Cadman after her husband's name. Ms. Grace was born in a missionary family in Illinois, Mississippi in 1876. She earned her bachelor's degree in South Africa and furthered her study in Greek and Hebrew in Toronto, Canada. In 1913, she was one of the first six missionaries who were sent to Da Nang in Vietnam by the New York Mission Board. She met Mr. William Charles Cadman in 1914 and married him in 1915. From 1916 to 1920, she and her husband preached the Gospel in Hoi An, Hue and Hanoi. They also opened a printing house to print evangelical material. The most important contribution of Ms. Grace is her primary role in the translation of the Bible into Vietnamese thanks to her competency in Greek and Hebrew. Besides Biblical translation, Ms. Grace also worked with her husband to compose hymns, tracts, Sunday School lessons, and family devotional material in Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and Thuong dialects. She got a stroke and died while being kept in a French military camp in 1946 at the age of 69 (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 30–41). Ms. Grace bravely worked as a missionary in Vietnam during tough political situations even before she got married to her husband. After marriage, she and her husband worked as equal partners to maximize their talents and contributions to the development of the mission in Vietnam.

Therefore, regarding the missionary system, the C&MA is gender-inclusive and flexible to maximize human resources for mission work in foreign countries.

Female and male missionaries could work as equals in all areas of mission work such as evangelism, composing religious material, and training local leaders.

However, when it came to church organization, the C&MA had fixed gender roles. According to *Nghênh Đón Vua Trở Lại*, a guidebook on the history and perspectives of the C&MA which was used internally in the ECVN and has no publication date, the C&MA church had three levels: synod (episcopal), district (presbytery), and local church (congregation). Churches were connected together based on consensus on doctrines and constitutions. Synod assembly was the highest level that has the power to decide doctrines, constitutions, and important issues of the church. C&MA constitution recognized that both men and women could represent their churches to join the synod assembly. However, in church organization, the C&MA recognized three church offices: pastor, elder, and deacon. Women were mentioned only for the position of deacon (*Nghênh Đón Vua Trở Lại: Tài liệu giới thiệu về lịch sử và quan điểm của Hội Truyền Giáo Phước Âm Liên Hiệp [Welcoming the King Back: An Introduction to the History and Perspectives of the Christian and Missionary Alliance]*, n.d., 119–26, 152).

In practice, among missionaries who came to Vietnam, only men could get ordained no matter how female missionaries were equally competent in theological training and mission work. The life story of the male missionary Charlotte Stewart (1937-) and her husband Mr. Woody Clair Stemple is an example. Ms. Charlotte was born in Ohio in 1937 from a C&MA tradition. She offered her life to God to be a missionary at the age of eight. After high school, she studied nursing in Chicago, Illinois for three years. Then she joined Nyack Mission University in New York, where she met her husband, Mr.

Woody Clair Stemple. After graduation in 1961, they got married. From 1963- 1964 both researched and taught at a big C&MA church in Toledo, Ohio. They were appointed missionaries to Vietnam by the C&MA Mission Board in 1964. They learned Vietnamese language and served for three years in Quang Ngai. During this time, her husband was ordained, but she was not. They served among the refugees in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. She helped to train nurses for local children hospitals. They left Vietnam in 1973 and could not come back to Vietnam because the communists took control of the whole country since 1975. They instead served in Malaysia for six years. In 1980, they went back to serve in a church in New York. He became Head of the C&MA headquarters in Northeast part of the U.S. for nine years. During these years, Mrs. Charlott guided American women to be missionaries. She became the first President of the C&MA Women Union of the region and later of the whole country for 18 years. Her husband continued his study and got a Doctor of Ministry from Luther Rice Institute; while she was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Nyack University. Being gifted with rhetoric ability, she has travelled to each C&MA presbytery and more than 45 countries to give speeches (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 306–12). Ms. Charlotte's life story shows that she was a compatible partner with her husband in missionary works and was very gifted in preaching and leadership. She could get special awards such as the honorary doctoral degree from Nyack University. She could preach and lead big organizations; however, ordination was exclusively for men in the C&MA system.

As C&MA was originated in North America, specifically Canada and the United States, it is helpful to examine the development of these C&MA mother churches regarding women's leadership participation in these two countries up to the present. According to the official website

of the C&MA in the United States in 2016, this church has not accepted women for two offices: elder and pastor. It says:

“Women may fulfill any function in the local church which the senior pastor and elders may choose to delegate to them consistent with the Uniform Constitution for Accredited Churches and may properly engage in any kind of ministry except that which involves elder authority.”

The website also says that within the United States women may hold all offices and serve in all kinds of work including preaching, teaching, training, and directing institutions except the positions of elder and pastor (“Women in Ministry” 2016).

Concerning the C&MA in Canada, recently there has been improvement in women’s roles in church leadership in this country. In the 2010 Manual (article 8 of local church constitution), women were recognized for the position of elder with the condition of getting two-thirds majority vote from a duly called meeting of membership (“Manual of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada 2010 Edition” 2016). The manual of this organization in 2016 (articles 8 and 9 of local church constitution section) recognized women for both positions: elder and senior pastor as long as their participation is approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at a duly called meeting of membership (“Manual of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada in 2016” 2016). However, no actual ordination of women has been officially published in its website.

In brief, the C&MA’s gender perspective is flexible in missionary area but patriarchal and conservative in church polity. Women have been equal with men in participating theological education and missionary work; however, women have been restricted from two leadership positions of elder and pastor in church governance in the C&MA in the United States. Since nothing is immune to change, the C&MA

in Canada has recently been transformed to formally recognize women's equal rights in leadership with condition.

If comparing the two missionary traditions: Dutch Reformed Church and the C&MA in North America, the Dutch Reformed Church had a fast and radical change regarding women's roles despite its lower starting point regarding women's participation in mission, whereas the C&MA Church, with better starting point, changed very slowly regarding the same issue. In other words, the former church went through a complete transformation of gender perspective while the latter reproduced its gender perspective with little change to accommodate women's new aspiration into the structure. Nevertheless, the missionaries seemed to have freedom to decide whether or not to conform to changes regarding gender roles in their sending institutions. This is evident in the case of the GZB missionaries in Toraja. They persistently objected women's leadership as long as they could even though their sending church had already accepted women's rights in church leadership.

3.3 The Transformation of Toraja Church from an All-Male-Dominated Structure to an Egalitarian Structure and the Reproduction of the ECVN's Male-Dominated Structure

The expression "all-male dominating structure" is adopted from Dr. F. L. Cooley's expression that "*Gereja Toraja adalah gereja laki-laki*" (Toraja Church is a male church). Dr. Cooley articulated this statement when he joined Toraja Church's Pastor Meeting in October in 1970. He was from the Research and Studies Foundation under DGI (now PGI). (Markus Rani 2011b, 17). In the beginning, the conservative GZB missionaries, with the support of conservative local leaders, imposed a highly patriarchal gender structure on the Toraja Church as seen through theological education practices, church polity, and theologies. However, this gender structure was contested and has completely trans-

formed under the leadership of local leaders and also with the support of few open-minded GZB missionaries.

While Toraja Church has transformed its gender structure, from 1911 to the present, the ECVN has had a dynamic development regarding women's roles in church leadership. It has shown some continuities and discontinuities with the C&MA. The missionaries had significant influence and even decisive influence on the ECVN in terms of theological training, church constitution, and women's participation in leadership in early period. With the reunification of the country in 1975 and the dismissal of all missionaries from Vietnam, the ECVN has been managing its own internal affairs in the later period. The male-dominated structure tends to reproduce itself despite some effort to give women more space in the system. Due to the lack of data on theological articulations regarding women's role from the church leadership, I will focus on only changes in theological education practices, church regulations of women's role in leadership regarding the ECVN.

3.3.1 Changes in Theological Education Practices

Theological education is the key to women's empowerment and access church leadership. This part will focus on tracing changes in theological practices as an important factor in improving women's leadership status in both churches. Data reveal that access to theological education has been improved in both institutions. Particularly Toraja Church had a radical change from complete exclusion of women to full access for women in theological education; whereas the ECVN did not completely exclude women but imposed restrictions on them in the beginning. However, recently women from this church have had open access to theological education.

3.3.1.1 Toraja Church: From Exclusion to Inclusion

Since the beginning, the GZB missionaries paid attention to training church leadership; however, they completely excluded women from accessing this training. In 1917, van de Loosdrecht opened a Teacher Training School (*Sekolah Guru*) in Barana' to train teachers for public schools and also for preaching the gospel. In 1930, J. Belksma opened courses for Gospel Teachers (*Guru Injil*). Only men were admitted to these programs (Taruk 2013, 21, 58). From 1951 to 1960, the missionaries opened a Toraja Bible School (Sekolah Alkitab Gereja Toraja) to train teachers for congregations. There were no female students.

However, since church teachers' (*guru jemaat*) family was expected to be example for the community, the missionaries also opened informal training classes for wife candidates of church teachers called *ma'muri*'. They prepared these women to be teachers' wives by providing them household skills such as sewing, cooking, arranging household (including cleaning), and educating children. These skills were then transferred from teachers' wives to the girls who lived in the same house (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006, 67). This was also the model that missionaries' wives brought with them to Toraja.

Beside controlling women's subordinate role by blocking their access to formal theological education, the GZB missionaries also controlled it through financial support. Despite the fact that women were restricted from theological education in Toraja, they could take theological education in Jakarta Theological Seminary (STT Jakarta). For example, Ms. Damaris Pakan entered STT Jakarta in 1959 and Ms. Henriette T. Lebang in 1972 (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006, 69). However, getting equal chance with men for financial support from the church was an issue. For example, in 1960, seven students from Toraja: six males and one female, asked for financial help from Toraja Church; however, only 6 male students were given financial aids (A.J. Anggui 2011, 30–

31). In this period: 1913 – 1960, theological education was mainly handled by GZB missionaries. However, since 1964, theological education was under the leadership of Toraja people (A. Kabanga' 2011, 176). Changes regarding women's access to formal theological education emerged.

When STT Rantepao was open on 1 October 1964, female students were not admitted. This was because women had not been accepted to hold church offices by this time. Nevertheless, some female students could join the Christian Religion Teacher Training Program (Pendidikan Guru Agama Kristen (PAK)) in Tangmentoe in 1962. A few years later, women were also admitted to Christian Education Program at STT Rantepao in 1967. Many women became religion teachers during this time (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006, 69).

During the 12th synod general assembly in 1970, Rev. A.J. Anggui proposed a revision of both the Christian Education Program and the Theological Education Program at STT Rantepao to have the same subjects except for the last year so that students from Christian Education Program could take subjects from Theological Program if they wanted to become pastors (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1970b, 13). In 1971, curriculum revision of these two programs took place (A. Kabanga' 2011, 183–84). As a result, women from Christian Education Program could take subjects from Theological Program even though they were not allowed to hold church offices during this time. Due to the lack of students enrolled, the STT Rantepao stopped recruiting new students in 1979. In 1984, it was open again to offer bachelor's degree in Theology (A. Kabanga' 2011, 185–86). This was this very year that the Toraja Church officially recognized equal rights for men and women in church leadership. Therefore, since then theological education has been completely accessible to women in Toraja.

3.3.1.2 The ECVN: From Restriction to Open Access

Different from Toraja Church in which theological education practices were mainly decided by the missionaries and the local leadership without any significant interruption from external context, the political situations in Vietnam have had major impact on theological education practices in the ECVN. Theological education in this church is differently affected in two periods: The Missionary Period 1911-1975 and the Post-1975 period to the Present. Women's status also experiences significant changes between these two periods.

3.3.1.2.1 Missionary Period: 1911-1975: Women's Education for the Benefit of Men

This period was marked with the two successive wars against the French and Japanese colonialism (1911-1954) and the American imperialism (1954-1975). In 1954 when Vietnam was divided into two countries at the 17th altitude with two governments: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam led by the communist party in the north, and the Republic of Vietnam led by U.S. - Ngo Dinh Diem Alliance in the south, the ECVN was also separated into two churches. The ECVN in the north officially formed its own synod "*Tổng Hội*" in 1958 and is called the ECVN-North with around 20 churches, and 12 pastors and preachers (T. X. Nguyễn 2002a, 388; Lê 2010, 270). The remaining ECVN from Quang Tri province southward is called the ECVN-South with its own synod "*Tổng Liên Hội*". Despite some restrictions from the colonial authorities and war situations, the C&MA missionaries and the ECVN enjoyed the freedom to propagate their faith and train leadership. In the beginning, the C&MA missionaries played a decisive role in regulating access to theological education.

In the very beginning, the C&MA missionaries established a patriarchal gender pattern which was different from that of the Nyack MTI. While women regardless of their marital backgrounds could freely join

Nyack MTI, the ECVN's Bible School only accepted women who were wives of the male seminarians. Their education was to support their husbands' ministry. This could be explained because the purpose of theological training in Vietnam was to provide leaders for local churches while women were not accepted for this position.

In 1921, the first Bible School to train local pastors was established in Da Nang or Tourane, Vietnam, by D. I. Jeffrey. Later this Bible School was moved to Nha Trang in 1960 and became the Biblical and Theological Institute (BTI). The ECVN-North also opened its own Bible School in 1962 and recruited 10 students including 2 women (T. X. Nguyễn 2002a, 388–89). The Da Nang Bible School was run by the C&MA missionary Rev. John Drange Olsen from 1923 to 1952 when the leadership was transferred to Rev. Ong Van Huyen, a local pastor; however, Rev. Huyen co-directed the Da Nang Bible School with Rev. Olsen since 1949 (Lê 2010, 114–15; *Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 136–37, 271).

While Nyack MTI was open for both men and women whether they were single or married, the Da Nang Bible School as an imitation of Nyack model recruited only men and required their wives to join them at this school in the second year so that these women could also be trained to better support their husband in the ministry. Hence, all single students had to urgently look for a wife before entering their second year at this school (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 18–19, 48, 237).

According to Rev. Dr. Le Hoang Phu, the inclusion of women in this Bible School was also thanks to the push and training of the female missionary Edith Frost who later became Rev. John Drange Olsen's wife in 1932. Because of the low level of literacy of Vietnamese women during this period, their training program was much simpler than that of the men. All the subjects were designed for the purpose of

training them to become deaconess and pastors' wives. Women were trained for two years at this Bible School. (Lê 2010, 115). Available evidence from published pastors' wives' autobiographies suggests that single women were not allowed to enter the Da Nang Bible School until 1950 (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 108; Ms. Phạm 2012, 28–29). Though single women could enter this Bible School and the BTI in Nha Trang after 1950, they were allowed to study for only two years instead of full program as their male counterparts. This pattern was maintained until 1975 (N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016). Additionally despite their being allowed to enter these theological institutes, the leadership had no policy to use these women. There is evidence that they were expected to marry single male students as a way for them to utilize their training and fulfill their religious calling.

My correspondence with a female leader (62 years old) from the ECVN, who migrated to the U.S. after 1975, confirmed this practice of these Bible Institutes. This is an extract from her letter to me:

“My parents are servants of God. When 18 years old, after finishing high school, I had a desire to learn God’s Word and wanted to enter the seminary in Nha Trang; however, my father disagreed. He said, “though the seminary does not forbid girls to enroll (in 1970), any girl, who enters the seminary there, is stereotyped as seeking husband as the only purpose for women there, and if she does not have any engagement with a “pastor-to-be” at the same seminary, after graduation, she returns home and becomes an “ordinary church member” which she was before entering the seminary.” Then my father pointed to me three or four women in the church who graduated from the Nha Trang seminary and said that after coming home, they could not

do anything else but “teach children” which anyone without a seminary degree could do.”

(A.T. 2014)

For Chinese ethnic churches, the women had more choices since they could go to Chinese speaking countries such as Hong Kong or Taiwan to get their theological education. Seminaries in these countries were open for both men and women, and women could serve as ministers in local churches during that time. The female preacher To Ngan got her bachelor’s degree in theology during the period 1965-1970 in a C&MA seminary in Hong Kong and returned to Vietnam in 1970 to assume her ministry in Chinese ethnic churches in Sai Gon. During that time, Chinese ethnic churches were still an internal part of the ECVN-South. The ECVN-South wrote her a recommendation letter before she went to Hong Kong for her study (T.N. a 71 year-old female preacher 2016).

These pieces of evidence suggest that the C&MA established a highly patriarchal model of theological education which was different from the Nyack MTI’s model. Women were accepted to Theological Program in the ECVN only for the benefit of their husbands instead of women’s autonomous religious mission as what took place in Nyack MTI. Since 1950, single women from the ECVN could participate in theological education; however, they were not utilized by the church unless they were married to male pastors. This acceptance of women to theological education was due to both the ECVN’s purpose of theological education and the push from women which will be investigated in details in Chapter Five. These patriarchal practices were imposed mainly on Kinh ethnic majority women whereas, Chinese minority women had more freedom and choices, since the Chinese ethnic church was quite autonomous from the ECVN- South due to their use of Chinese language.

3.3.1.2.2 Post-1975 Period: More Opportunities Open for Women

In 1975, the BTI in Nha Trang was allowed to open one course 1975-1976 before it was ordered to be closed by the authorities. The ECVN-South got permission to reopen its theological program in Ho Chi Minh City in 2003. During this last theological program in Nha Trang, Rev. Pham Xuan Thieu was nominated as Director and professor. He made another move in improving women's status by allowing them to take full subjects as their male counterparts did while previously single women could study only for two years. Now single women could get the same bachelor's degree as the male counterparts (N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016).

In 2003, the ECVN-South was permitted to reopen its theological program for bachelor's degree in Ho Chi Minh City after 27 years. Men were given priority to study for the first three batches because the government allowed a small quota of students for each year. Single women could only join in 2009 when the BTI recruited the fourth batch. The old patriarchal pattern was used with a minor change. Wives of male students were required to join their husbands in the last year instead of second year as before 1975. This period sees the full participation of women in theological education since 2009 despite earlier restriction. Women have also demonstrated their competence. The best graduate student of batch IV was a female student (Phạm 2014).

Table 3.1 The Number of Male and Female Students of Each Batch Since 2003

| Year | Batch | Male students | Wives of male students | Single female students |
|------|-------|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2003 | I | 50 | - | - |
| 2005 | II | 100 | 75 | - |
| 2007 | III | 102 | 56 | - |
| 2009 | IV | 109 | 48 | 25 |

| | | | | |
|------|----|-----|--|----|
| 2011 | V | 102 | | 19 |
| 2013 | VI | 48 | | 19 |

Source: This table is built on Rev. Phan Quang Thiệu’s report on the BTI in Ho Chi Minh during the Fourth Synod General Assembly of the ECVN-South from 12 to 15 November 2013. (Q. T. Phan 2013).

Beside theological education inside the country, since 1990s, opportunities for theological education outside the country have been open for both men and women. For example, the Union University of California (UCC), established by overseas Vietnamese evangelicals in the U.S. offered bachelor’s degree in theology in 1991 as distant training at first and onsite training in Vietnam in later years. In 2003, it offered master’s degree program for Vietnamese students by sending them to Cambodia. Since these programs did not have permission from the government, their operations were not stable. The Master’s program only operated for 4 years. This program trained several leaders for house churches and theological schools and training centers in VN. Since 2005, UCC has offered online theological programs at bachelor, master, and even doctorate levels. More than 100 students had enrolled by 2012. Additionally in 1997, UCC brought 30 students to study in prestigious institutions in the US. Since 2006, UCC has helped another 30 students to study master’s degree in Divinity at McGilvary College of Theology in Thailand. (Truong 2012, 95–96). Among these students, there are 12 women both single and married. Beside the U.S. and Thailand, theological seminaries in Hong Kong, Korea, Philippines, Australia, and Singapore are also destinations for Vietnamese students. A number of women have graduated from these countries. Recently the ECVN-South has recognized a few students both males and single females who have received theological education abroad as clergies of the church after they have been through a process of re-training and serving in local churches.

To sum up, the post-1975 period up to the present sees the improvement of women's participation in theological education compared to previous period. Women can fully participate in theological programs inside and outside the country. Married women, whose husbands might not be pastors, can get theological education outside the country while it was not possible for them before 1975 and even now in the ECVN. Despite this progress, the number of women who get higher theological education is still small and a recent phenomenon. This period also continues the previous practice in which wives of male students are required to join their husbands in the last year of the program so that they can better support their husbands' ministry. This is a bit different from previous period when wives of male students had to join them in the second year and were trained for two years. Generally this period has produced a significant number of theologically well-educated women for the ECVN. An increasing number of women have master's degrees, and some of them even obtain doctoral degrees in theology, or Christian education from prestigious institutions abroad.

In general, both Toraja Church and the ECVN (South) have been through a process of change to improve women's access to theological education. Toraja Church seems to have a linear development while the ECVN has a dynamic development regarding this issue. Toraja Church moved from the position of excluding women to giving women partial access in 1972 and later full access in 1984. The development of women's access to theological education also went with the Toraja Church's opening access to religious professions: first as Christian Education teachers and later as female pastors. In contrast, the ECVN-South has been through various behaviors ranging from restricting the access to wives of male students to allowing single women to join but having no plan to use them, from giving men priority over women to accepting single women but not married women. This is understandable because the ECVN-South has not had any policy to accept female

pastors who are married to non-clergy. Despite the increasing number of theologically well-educated women, this church has not had suitable policy to accommodate all of them.

3.3.2 Changes in Women's Roles in Church Regulations

Beside theological education practices, church regulation is another criterion for assessing the changes in women's roles in these two religious institutions. Regarding this aspect, a similar pattern took place. Toraja Church experienced a radical transformation in its formal structure from no rights to full rights for women. In contrast, the ECVN has been through a dynamic contestation of its gender structure. Forward and backward moves have been made along the church development. Changes in women's rights have been made but the male-dominated structure has also been reinforced.

3.3.2.1 Toraja Church: From No Rights to Full Rights for Women

Since Toraja Church's establishment until 1955, only men had the right to elect and to be elected for church offices; whereas women were excluded from both rights. The fifth general synod assembly in Rantepao in 1955 marked the first stepping stone in improving women's rights in Toraja Church. After a heated debate, the assembly voted and agreed to give women the right to vote but not the right to be elected. In the next synods in 1961, 1965, 1970, 1972, women's rights to church offices was discussed. There was a developing openness regarding women's participation in church leadership. More voices for women's rights dominated the scene. However, no decision was made (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1961, 13; 1965, 43; 1970a, 53; 1972, 11, 66).

The second stepping stone was made during the general synod assembly in 1978. This assembly discussed three big issues concerning Toraja Church: the name, church structure, and women's offices. This

assembly had the longest and most heated debate regarding the issue whether or not women with theological education were allowed to lead worship services. The assembly was polarized by two views: pro-women's rights held by Toraja local leaders and cons-women's rights held by GZB missionary representatives. For example, Dr. J. Bruekuis, a GZB missionary, presented his objection against women's rights:

“Basically we need to differentiate between two things: (1) general office (Algemene Amte); (2) special office (Byzondere Amte). General office can be held by all believers. We are not allowed to mix these two offices. If in an emergency, we allow women to serve in worship services, it also means that we will allow them to assume special offices (pastor, elder, and deacon) in urgent situations. So what is the use of educating pastors? Biblical foundations need to be studied more deeply. We need to review the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down. If we have not agreed to give women special offices but now we allow them to lead worship services, we oppose the spirit with the spirit.” (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja, 1978, 138–39)

Despite the opposition from the missionary, Torajan leaders at the assembly agreed to struggle for the issue: John Tanan: agree to allow women with two categories: (a) those with theological education are allowed to lead Sunday worship; (b) those without theological education are allowed to lead other worships but not Sunday one such as family worship.

“Rev. S. Sesa: We agree with this decision but we don't agree if saying 'only in urgent situations' because women were witnesses of Jesus' rising from the death. They also preached the good news. So we add 'after the involved church council has agreed.’”

“Rev. Lambe: when remembering the roles of women in congregations, we strongly support this proposal, but we also add ‘upon the agreement of the involved church council.’”

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 139–40)

The assembly came to an agreement that women were allowed to lead worship services upon the agreement of the involved church council. The next synod general assemblies in 1981 was preparation for new church structure which officially gave women equal rights with men in the church life at the seventeenth synod general assembly in Palopo in 1984. This assembly issued a regulation stating: “Receive women for all church offices (pastor, elder, and deacon); this decision be executed by the church council in each congregation” (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1984, 12). According to my interview with Rev. D.M. Anggui- Pakan, this declaration of Torajan men leaders made the missionaries sent from the Dutch partner church angry and left the room. This might result in the withdrawal of funding and other resources from the Dutch church partner; however, the Torajan church leaders said “Let’s move forward by ourselves with whatever we have” (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015).

Finally, in 1984, the adopted patriarchal gender structure was uprooted. It was for the first time after 71 years of the gospel establishment in Toraja land that women were recognized full rights in church participation including church offices such as ordained pastor, elder and deacon. Though the Toraja Church was slower than other Christian churches in Indonesia to ordain women, the number of ordained women in this church quickly increased after a short period of realizing the right.

Table 3.2 The number of female pastors as compared to male pastors ordained each year in Toraja Church from 1986 to 2015

| Year | Female Pastors | Male Pastors | Total Number |
|------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1986 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| 1987 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 1988 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| 1989 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| 1990 | 4 | 15 | 19 |
| 1991 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| 1992 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 1993 | 5 | 17 | 22 |
| 1994 | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| 1995 | 4 | 15 | 19 |
| 1996 | 9 | 10 | 19 |
| 1997 | 10 | 18 | 28 |
| 1998 | 9 | 16 | 25 |
| 1999 | 14 | 30 | 44 |
| 2000 | 11 | 25 | 36 |
| 2001 | 8 | 16 | 24 |
| 2002 | 13 | 20 | 33 |
| 2003 | 15 | 12 | 27 |
| 2004 | 32 | 22 | 54 |
| 2005 | 30 | 30 | 60 |
| 2006 | 10 | 9 | 19 |
| 2007 | 14 | 4 | 18 |
| 2008 | 16 | 14 | 30 |
| 2009 | 13 | 3 | 16 |
| 2010 | 12 | 14 | 26 |
| 2011 | 12 | 14 | 26 |
| 2012 | 14 | 13 | 27 |
| 2013 | 16 | 22 | 38 |
| 2014 | 40 | 24 | 64 |

| | | | |
|-------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 2015 | 22 | 10 | 32 |
| Total | 345 (45.6%) | 412 (54.4%) | 757 (100%) |

Source: Sinode Gereja Toraja: Daftar nama pendeta yang sudah diurapi dalam lingkungan Gereja Toraja mulai tahun 1941 s.d. sekarang

Two years after the institutionalization of women’s rights in Toraja Church, the first woman was ordained. From 1986 to 2015 or within 30 years, the number of ordained female pastors is 345 or 45.6% compared to 412 ordained male pastors during the same period. This is a leap of realizing women’s rights in Toraja Church if compared with the Javanese Church GKJ. While GKJ recognized women’s rights to church offices in 1964, it ordained its first female pastor in 1991 after 27 years. In 2008 or after 45 years, there were totally 28 female pastors in GKJ (Markus Rani 2011a, 37). Women also started to be present at the hierarchical level. In 2001, a woman became one of the four chairpersons of the synod. In 2011, the synod had a female chairperson and a female general treasurer.

Generally, Toraja Church experienced a leap in installing women’s rights to church offices from non-recognition to full-recognition. The process of realizing women’s rights in the local community also experienced a leap in time and quantity. The above evidence shows that the exclusion of women in the early period and the slower recognition of women’s rights in Toraja Church compared to other Christian churches in Indonesia were mainly due to the influence and control of GZB missionaries.

3.3.2.2 *The ECVN: A Dynamic Contestation*

Regarding the ECVN, even though there were variations in church structure between the C&MA in North America and the ECVN, women’s role in the church was not much different. Later under the leadership of local leaders, few efforts were made to improve women’s

rights; however, the patriarchal structure always found ways to push back the boundary.

3.3.2.2.1 Definitions of Local Terminologies

Due to the localized and complex usage of terminologies, it is necessary to provide definitions and usage of the terminologies which are used in this section. In the ECVN, there are 4 church offices: pastor, minor pastor, preacher, and deacon.

A **pastor** (*mục sư*) is an ordained man and can perform sacraments (baptism, Holy Communion, wedding ceremony, funeral, child dedication, oil healing), govern the church, and chair meetings of the board of deacons and local church assembly. In English, the word “Reverend” is used for a clergy person and its abbreviation is “Rev.” In this dissertation, I used “Reverend” or “Rev.” for ordained clergy in both churches.

A **minor pastor** (*mục sư nhiệm chức*) is a man who is a candidate for ordination and is given privilege to perform sacraments as an ordained pastor does, however, only in his own church but not in other churches (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2008, 6).

Preacher (*truyền đạo*) is an official office and classified into two: male preacher (*truyền đạo*) and female preacher (*nữ truyền đạo*). Both must graduate from Theological Education but only a male preacher can become candidate for positions of minor pastor and pastor. Preachers are given all the rights that an ordained pastor has except two sacraments: baptism and wedding ceremony.

Both ordained and non-ordained clergies who run or manage local churches are called “**minister**” (*quản nhiệm*). Men of these offices are allowed and encouraged to marry while a female preacher is required to be celibate for life (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2002, 36).

Deacon (*chấp sự*) is a leadership position for lay-men and lay-women.

There are women from the ECVN who have higher theological degrees but have not been recognized for any offices because either they are married or they are not interested in church offices or any other reasons. However, they have been actively serving in the church such as teaching, leading, preaching, and training people. These are classified into three groups: those who are married to pastors or preachers, those who are married to lay-men, and those who are single. I call those who are married to pastors and preachers as “pastors’ wives” or “preachers’ wives” respectively. I call the other two groups “female theological graduates” or “female leaders”. The word “ministry” is used to refer to any area of religious work such as youth ministry, women ministry, and social ministry.

3.3.2.2.2 Missionary Period: 1911-1975

Before the C&MA officially established the ECVN, they had an Indochina missionary conference in Da Nang in 1922 to discuss what a local church should be like. The C&MA missionary, Jaffray, presented his idea on C&MA policy for local church development in which he suggested three principles: self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. In self-governing principle, three church offices were mentioned: pastor, preacher, and deacon. Pastor is an ordained clergy while preacher is a graduate from a theological seminary but has not been ordained. Women were mentioned for the position of deacon (Lê 2010, 104–5).

Different from the C&MA model of the sending countries which has an elder office as a highest lay leadership position in the church polity, the C&MA missionary Jaffray proposed the position of preacher as another office for clergy. He also suggested that deacons would be organized into two boards: the Board of Deacons and the Board of Standing Committee which was responsible for the church affairs. Though women were excluded from clergy positions, this pro-

posed policy allowed women to be elected to the Board of Standing Committee which managed the church while in the C&MA church in North America only men were qualified for the Board of Elders that managed the church.

According to Rev. Dr. Le Hoang Phu, although a local leadership board was nominated to work with the missionaries for preparing the ECVN's first Charter in 1927, only the missionaries including J.D. Olsen, E.F. Irwin, Wm. C. Cadman, D. I. Jeffrey, I. R. Stebbins worked among themselves to decide the Charter draft. Vietnamese leaders contributed few changes to the draft before it was presented for approval in the next general assembly in 1928. This 1928 Charter followed the C&MA three levels of church organization: synod, district, and

local congregation. The local church government was organized according to the suggested model by Jaffray which had three church offices: pastor, preacher, and deacon. Women could become deacons. Each church had the right to nominate any representatives to participate the general synod assembly; however, gender was not stated (Lê 2010, 150–55).

a) Failed Efforts to Improve Women's Rights

At the synod general assembly in 1934, the local leaders made “a strange decision” regarding women's role. They refused a proposal from the Central District assembly which proposed that women be allowed to serve as church representatives at synod general assemblies (Lê 2010, 196–97). It seems that the 1928 Charter was interpreted by churches in male-dominated terms which means only men could represent local churches to attend synod assembly level.

However, a progressive move was made at the synod assembly in Gia Dinh in 1955. It was for the first time the ECVN considered the possibility for women to hold cleric positions. Two single women were appointed as “female preacher” to Nha Trang primary school belonging to the church orphanage. The leaders, who made this deci-

sion, also planned to establish a new church office system which acknowledged not only single women but also wives of ordained pastors and pastors for church offices. However, this program was dismissed two years later at the synod assembly in 1957, stating “now this program is not feasible”. This assembly decided that women could only become representatives at the district and synod assembly as normal Christians only from the areas of education and medicine (Lê 2010, 277).

The ECVN-South’s revised Charter in 1958 acknowledged only two clerical offices: pastor and preacher while female preacher was not mentioned. However, it clarified that women must account for one thirds of the total membership of the Board of Deacons. Each church nominated two representatives (the minister and one lay member) to attend the synod general assembly (*Điều Lệ Của Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam 1936, Tu Chính và Tái Án 1952, 1957, 1958 [The Charter of the ECVN 1936, Revised 1952, 1957, 1958] 1958*). However, it did not clearly state the gender of the lay representative and his or her right at the synod assembly. This was the official Charter of the ECVN-South until 2001 when a new Constitution was made.

b) The Unofficial Status of Female Preachers

In 1967 and 1968, the ECVN - South had a regulation on the recognition and assignment of female preachers based on the ECVN’s 35th General Assembly meeting in Da Nang from 27-31 March 1967 and the meeting of the Synod Board in Sai Gon (Ho Chi Minh city) from 9-12 January 1968. The committee who prepared the regulation was composed of five male ordained pastors. It stated that female students who graduated from Bible Schools, Nha Trang BTI or Theological Schools of the same doctrine could be recognized as female preachers of the ECVN. They could serve in the ECVN’s related organizations and offices but did not hold a ministerial position in a local church and were not allowed to perform sacraments (articles 1 and 2, Part I). If they

married a man who was not a preacher or a pastor, their office as a preacher would be terminated (Article 3, Part II). For wives of pastors and preachers, if they had certificates granted from the ECVN's Bible School or Theological Institute or if they did not have any certificate but had served with their husbands for more than 10 years, they would be recognized as female preachers of the ECVN. The only authority they had was to be representatives at the ECVN's General Assemblies (Article 1, Part IV). (*Người Chăn Bầy* 2004b, 48–49).

Despite effort to improve women's rights, the regulation obviously places women in a disadvantaged position. They were barred not only from ordination but also from administering to local churches; while their male counterparts had full access to such rights because they are male. The single women were allowed to work in institutional offices which, in fact, did not require theological degree. Moreover, they were not allowed to marry men who were not preachers or pastors if they wanted to keep their office. This regulation did not give women their own freedom in church ministry and still subordinated them to male leadership.

It is strange that no single female preacher was listed or counted in any official documents or scholarly works found for this period and even up to 2000 despite the existence of this official regulation. For example, in the letter of the ECVN-South's synod to call for the preparation for the general synod assembly and legal recognition of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam on 24 October 2000, there was no mention of female preacher in the addressing of audience in this letter. (*Ban Vận Động Đại Hội Đồng Tổng Liên Hội* 2000, 70–75). However, my interviews with a few male and female leaders suggest that there had already been several female preachers who worked as evangelists among ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and as female preachers in Chinese churches in Sai Gon, now Ho Chi Minh City by 1975 (Rev. L.H.P. 2014; T.N. a 71 year-old female preacher

2016). One of the female preachers, who graduated from the Nha Trang BTI in 1976, said:

“I got my degree. Whenever I joined synod assembly, I was called ‘female preacher’. We are called ‘female preacher’ but we can ‘do whatever we want’ so it was like a normal Christian. Even my family didn’t know that I had the theological degree.”

(N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016)

That means up to the year 2000, female preachers were not officially recognized, but unofficially accepted.

c) Pastors’ Wives – the Shadow of Men: The Most Accepted Role for Women

During this period, the most accepted female role was pastor’s wife or preacher’s wife. Though it was not officially and explicitly stated, there were commonly understood principles for this female role within the ECVN circle. Pastor’s wife “*bà Mục sư*” and preacher’s wife “*cô Truyền đạo*” shared one ministry and one title with their husband. Members of the ECVN addressed the pastor or preacher and his wife with the same title. In his book *Bước Đầu Tìm Hiểu Đạo Tin Lành trên Thế Giới và ở Việt Nam [Preliminary Understanding of Protestantism in the World and Vietnam]*, the religion scholar, Nguyen Thanh Xuan, when listing the number of clergies in the ECVN-North, recognized the existence of “pastors’ wives” as the invisible number behind the listed number of male clergies. He wrote “This (reported number of clergies) does not include wives of these pastors and preachers. According to the ECVN tradition: Wives of these men also share their office” (T. X. Nguyễn 2002a, 388–90).

However, sharing the same ministry and the same office does not mean that these women were equal partners with their husbands in the ministry. Dominant discourses from church publications and my interviews suggest that they were expected to support their husbands through

prayers behind the scene, bearing and raising children, and doing chores at the church so that their husbands could focus on preparing Sunday sermons and managing church affairs. There were exceptions which will be presented in Chapter Five of this dissertation; however, the majority of pastors' and preachers' wives conformed to this rule. They were the invisible unpaid workers in the ECVN. In her master's thesis entitled "Sự Kêu Gọi của Người Vợ Mục Sư trong Bối Cảnh Hội Thánh tại Việt Nam [Pastor Wives' Calling in the Evangelical Church of Vietnam]", Ms. Phan Thanh Khiết wrote:

"Unlike Buddhist bikkhunis and Catholic nuns who have earned public recognition for their social work, pastor's wife is still unfamiliar to Vietnamese society. These women 'only appear in church area', 'hide in the shadow' of the pastor and silently work in the parsonage so they are rarely known to the public."

(T. K. Phan 2008, 2-3)

Ms. Khiết told a story about a well-respected pastor in the ECVN. When this pastor was preparing for marriage, he asked his close friends to pray for him as follows: "I only need a wife who stands behind the pulpit to pray for me." Ms. Khiết also said that "praying for the husband is the highest calling for a pastor's wife." (Phan 2008, 42-43). Rev. Ong Van Huyen (1902-1999) praised his wife as a good wife because "she never interfered into his public work except praying" (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 142). My interview with a pastor's wife (81 years old) also confirms this. She said:

"For me, my role is no important. I am a woman who just knows to sacrifice for the husband's ministry. So I just stood behind my husband to serve God. People don't know much about me. They just know that I am wife of a preacher. We graduated in the year 1960 and my husband got ordained in 1965. In remote

areas, people call me Mrs. Reverend, but I did not do much for God. Generally, my role is to sacrifice.

When serving at B.C. church for 21 years, though I did not work outside, I did all the work inside. The congregation loved me because of that. They did not have to pay any penny to hire security guards or cleaners to clean the place. I did all these things. After 10 years, the church felt pity on me because I did all these hard work so they hired people to do it. If hiring people to take care of the parking lot, stealing might happen. But when I was in charge of it, nothing was lost.”

(Pastor’s wife Q., 2015)

To sum up, the ECVN inherited the patriarchal tradition of the C&MA in terms of excluding women from ordination and church polity by restricting their role to deacon. However, changes were also made. The ECVN-South attempted to improve women’s role by including women in the cleric order for the position of “female preacher” in 1955, and again in 1968. However, these efforts appeared to fail. The patriarchal structure pushed back the boundary. Consequently though female preachers existed, their existence was invisible in official records.

3.3.3 Post-1975 Period: New and Old Roles for Women

Since 1975, there have also been changes in women’s roles in church governance compared to previous period. The ECVN-South officially installed the cleric office of female preacher in its Charter. However, patriarchal view has still been reinforced.

In 1974, the synod general assembly of the ECVN-South in Nha Trang passed a new Charter draft. However, this Charter did not have chance to be approved until 2001 when the church was officially recognized by the government and able to organize its synod general assem-

bly again. (T. X. Nguyễn 2002a, 521). Rev. Pham Xuan Thieu was elected chairman of the ECVN-South's synod for a four-year term 2001-2004; however, he could lead for only one year and passed away in 2002. Few changes were made under his leadership. He created and granted the office of "minor pastor" for all male preachers who had been ministering to churches and gave them the privilege to perform sacraments as a pastor does but in their own church (Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants] 2011, 343; Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2008, 6). This was a strategy to meet the needs of sacraments for local churches which had been deprived of leadership supply for 21 years. Since this year, the ECVN-South has had four offices: pastor, minor pastor, preacher (male and female), and deacon.

a) An Official Office for Women: Celibate and Subordinate

An important change regarding women's role was that the office of female preacher was officially recognized in the church's new Constitution in 2001. Article 48 chapter 6 of the Constitution states: "The executive board of the church synod will consider the recognition and placement of female preacher position for single female students graduated from theological seminary" (my emphasis) (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2002, 36). This Constitution left out the proportion of women in the Board of Deacons as stated in the 1958 Charter. No gender was explicitly stated for the position of deacon and representative at general synod assemblies (articles 17 and 29). What was added was that these representatives had the rights to discuss church issues, to elect and be elected. (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2002, 13-14, 21-22). Though women were recognized for the office of "female preacher", they were required to be single. This has caused much problem and resistance from a number of women in this church, which will be presented in details in chapter V of this dissertation.

My interviews with two pastors, who are presently members of the church synod, the requirement of celibacy for female preacher was because of the male decision-makers' belief in women's subordinate position to men. For them, a woman cannot become a leader if she gets married because her husband will be her leader. If the husband is not a pastor, it is difficult for the ECVN-South's male leaders to understand how she can lead the congregation (Rev. L.V.N.K. 2016; Rev. L.H.P. 2014). One of them seemed to suggest that the acceptance of women as female preacher was also the male leaders' strategy:

“In 2001, the church was officially recognized and had a new constitution regulating the role of female preacher. Due to the church's need, and to support men, men are limited due to the authorities. In some cases, it is more convenient to have female preachers. Women are accepted as a strategy.”

(Rev. L.H.P. 2014).

On 15 July 2003, a draft on female preacher regulation was made by a committee nominated by the ECVN-South synod. This committee was composed of 4 male pastors and 3 women. Patriarchal view was still reinforced in which female preacher office completely depended on their marital status. If a female preacher married a non-clergy, her office would be terminated. A female preacher who was married to a clergy, her leadership would be subordinate to her husband's leadership and her service would be terminated when her husband retired. However, several improvements were made regarding women's participation in leadership compared to the 1968 regulation. A single female preacher could become mobile preacher and even minister to churches and perform sacraments except baptism, wedding, and benediction if she was gifted and competent and was assigned by the church synod. Pastors' widows could be considered by the synod to minister to churches if they were competent and send a request letter to the synod. For wives of

active pastors, minor pastors and preachers who got certificate for their theological training for at least one year and had served with their husbands for more than 10 years, they could be recognized as female preachers but they had to follow their husband's leadership and terms of service. The only right they had was to participate in meetings of the Board of Deacons and discuss church affairs, but they were not allowed to make decisions. Female preachers had the right to be official participants at church assemblies and synod assemblies (Người Chấn Bầy 2004a).

Nevertheless, my interview with one member of this committee reveals that this draft never had chance to be presented in the next synod general assembly in 2005 and until the present. This informant perceived that at the 2005 synod assembly the male leaders did not want this draft to be presented so they kept talking until time was out. During the following synod assemblies, there were men who spoke for women, but they were soon left aside so they could not say anymore. The women (wives of clergies) had no voice because they only joined the assemblies as guests (N.H. 82 years old 2016).

In the *Giáo Nghi* – a guidebook for rituals in the ECVN-South in 2008 which is in fact a revised version of Pastor Guidebook written by Rev. John Drange Olsen in 1957 and later published with the name Ministerial Guide by the synod committee 2001-2004, female preacher was included in the category of “minister” to churches in a four-year term similar to pastor and minor pastor. That means female preacher has the right to perform sacraments except baptism, wedding, and benediction (*Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam)* 2008, 4,6). However, when it came to regulation on Holy Communion, the male language was used and it became an all-male performance. It states “The minister of the church is responsible for carefully preparing Holy Communion. He can prepare it by himself or with other male deacons to prepare enough

amount of bread and wine for the congregation” (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2008, 37).

My interviews and fieldwork in Vietnam from February to May 2016 reveal that female preachers who minister to churches are still very few and fall into special cases. Among 38 recognized female preachers of the ECVN-South in 2016, only 5 of them are ministers to churches. Twelve others are minister assistants. (“Danh Bạ [Directory]” 2016) These female ministers are those who had been silently building local churches and serving for 30 to 40 years through tough socio-political situations and their work cannot be discredited or replaced easily by others.

Chinese ethnic churches give women more freedom to serve. Most female ministers or minister assistants are from Chinese ethnic churches. They can perform Holy Communion. One female preacher even confirmed in an interview that during the difficult period after 1975 she was given some privilege by the church synod to give baptism. The synod even offered to ordain her as pastor but she refused it because she did not have the intention to serve for long in Vietnam (T.N. a 71 year-old female preacher 2016). Female deacons from Chinese churches can also actively participate in preparing and distributing bread and wine; whereas, in Kinh ethnic majority churches even in big cities as Ho Chi Minh City, female deacons are excluded from preparing and distributing bread and wine. There are perhaps exceptions but I have not found any. A female leader from one of these churches in Ho Chi Minh City told me that her pastor explained this exclusion of women by referring to women’s menstruation as pollution (K.H. a 38 year-old theological graduate 2016). A female leader from an ethnic minority church in Dak Lak even said that her pastor used to forbid women to part-take communion if they were menstruating during that communion service (D.H. a 46 year-old female lay leader 2016).

b) Pastor's Wife: Old Role and Changes

The old model in which the church hires one man and uses his whole family including his wife and children free has still been maintained and promoted. Wives of pastors, minor pastors, and preachers have still been expected to conform to the old patriarchal rule. I had chance to interview a few pastor wives who have been serving since 1975, they confirmed that pastor wives are expected to do all the chores and not allowed to interfere church affairs if they want to keep their husband's position. For example, a 65 year-old pastor's wife said:

“In my opinion, a woman of God do 70% of the work of the church. Men only do 30%. The man is God's servant, but he is only responsible for preparing sermons to preach. The wives must care for general things. Today many churches have failed because of the women.

Pastor's wife was not allowed to sit and discuss anything regarding the church life. Now it is still the same. When any male or female deacon in the church needs me to help anything in the church, they themselves must come and talk to me personally. They can meet the pastors and ask anything they want because this thing is men's thing. This has formed a habit in me. Men have their own organization to do things. For example, in the church, women are not successful in their ministry because they interfere the church's issues. For me, I don't do that because they already have their own groups. When they can't do it and they ask for my help, I will do it. No interference, no over-hearing, and no need to ask.”

(T.D. a 65 year-old pastor's wife 2014)

Non-interference into the husband's work and prayer as the main task are still reinforced to young women who are wives of the clergies. For example, a reflection on a training class for 350 wives of clergies in

the ECVN-South in 2011 reveals that these women were taught they hold the key to their husband's success in ministry by supporting the husband emotionally and prayerfully and not interfering the husband's work because this was viewed as destroying his career ("Cảm Nhận về Khóa Bồi Dưỡng Kiến Thức cho Quý Bà Mục Sư Nhiệm Chức, Truyền Đạo [Reflection on a Training Program for Wives of Minor Pastors and Preachers]" 2011, 23).

However, changes have been taking place. Though the old model of pastor's wife is still maintained, recently there is an emergent trend to distinguish between clerical office and his marital relation within the ECVN-South and even in the church's official documents. Wives of pastors, minor pastors and preachers no longer share the same title and office with their husbands as they did before. The word "phu nhân" or "lady of" is used to address these women (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam (Miền Nam) 2013, 142).

In the ECVN-South, an increasing number of clergies' wives are well- educated and competent. In big cities like Ho Chi Minh City, many of them are not completely attached to the husband's ministry and economically dependent on the husband's salary as pastors' wives used to be. They have their own jobs and run their own businesses. They no longer hide behind the husband in the parsonage. Many have come out to establish themselves in the church community based on their own merit or utilizing their husband's position. These women can freely move about to preach in regional women gatherings, which is also a source of income for them. According to the official website of the ECVN-South, from January to August 2016, there are 28 women's revival gatherings in 24 provinces in which clergy wives were invited to preach ("Women's Revival Gatherings" 2016). Many churches have hired guards and maids to do the cleaning and take care of the church area.

In summary, the process of the ECVN's development since 1911 has witnessed dynamic contestations regarding women's roles and status in church leadership participation. Forward moves were countered by backward moves. Patriarchal norms which were inherited from the C&MA missionaries were maintained and reinforced. The role of women as wives of clergies was widely accepted in the pre-1975 period. Women's independent leadership from men was discouraged and forbidden. Pastors' wives could share the title and office with their husbands, but in fact their main tasks were to pray, raise children, and do chores behind the scene. The church made some effort to improve women's status by including them in the cleric order for the position of female preacher. These efforts failed in the face of patriarchal reinforcement. Single female preachers existed but they were not officially recognized.

The post-1975 period sees more improvement of women's status in church leadership. The ECVN-South has officially recognized them for the office of female preacher. Few of them have ministered to churches. However, the patriarchal norm of women's subordination to male leadership is still reinforced. The ECVN-South still requires women to be single if they want to become female preachers. Wives of clergies are still expected to support their husbands behind the scene. However, these women no longer share the same title and office with their husband. Some of them gain more independence from their husband's ministry by establishing their own professions and reputation in the church.

Generally, the underlying patriarchal ideology or scheme has been maintained throughout the ECVN's life journey.

3.3.4 Changes in Theology (Toraja Church): The Reinforcement of Gender- Biased Theology, Emergence of Gender Equality Theology, and Its Final Victory

Due to the lack of data regarding theological criterion, this dissertation will present only the case of Toraja Church. The Toraja Church's journey from its establishment in 1947 to its transformation to give women's full rights in church polity in 1984 also witnesses the reinforcement of women-discriminative theology from the GZB missionaries and conservative local leaders along the journey. At the same time, gender equality theology also emerged and existed alongside with the patriarchal theology until it finally uprooted this imported patriarchal theology in 1984. As a researcher, I am fortunate to find theological development in Toraja Church as recorded in details in the minutes of Toraja Church synod general assemblies from the first one to the 1984 one when the turning point of women's leadership participation in Toraja Church history was made.

In 1947 when Toraja Church was established, there was a debate between the guru Injil F. Bura and two GZB missionaries, Ds. D. J. Van Dijk as chairman of the assembly and Dr.van der Linde, regarding women's participation in church governance. Women-discriminative theology was also articulated by the two missionaries to silence Mr. F. Bura's questions.

Mr. Bura: "(1) Why can't women hold church offices?

(2) Why aren't women allowed to vote in the church?

(3) What does church governance mean?"

Chairman: "For the first question, let's look at Corinthians 14:34-35. The second question is related to the first question meaning women should be quiet. The meaning of church governance is that church offices are not the

same as what is outside the church.”

Mr. Bura: “Please read Romans 16:1.”

Chairman: “This is not about the office of elder but deacon.”

Dr. Van der Linde: “We should not think that women are inferior to men but Paul said that women should rule over men but men are head of the households. Only this can be used in the Reformed Church’s rule.”

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1947, 3)

In this debate, the GZB missionaries imposed a gender-biased interpretation of anti-women biblical passages such as I Corinthians 14:34-35 which denies women’s rights to speak in the church as follows:

“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

This debate also showed the emergence of gender equality theology from Mr. Bura. He encountered the gender-biased theology by quoting Romans 16:1 in which the woman Phoebe was a Servant of the church in Cencreae. The missionaries successfully silenced voices for women’s rights from this first synod to the fifth synod in 1955. Gender equality theology was more clearly articulated from local leaders, but gender-biased theology articulators still outnumbered. For example, when a Makassar proposal for women’s rights to vote in the church was raised, both kinds of theologies were articulated:

- Rambu: "That right of women belongs to her husband."
- Sumbung: "After the Second World War, women demanded their rights. This means that Jesus has given women permission. If women are given the right in social matters, they also need to be given the right to vote but not the right to be elected."
- Palesang: "I agree with the proposal but that right must be limited. Women's labor and thoughts are needed but their voices are not."
- Z.v.d. "I agree with the proposal from Makassar."
- Hoof: "I disagree with this proposal with the reason that the household will have two kings if women are given this right"
- M. Lebang: "It is needed to give them the right to vote, but not the right to be elected."
- J. Linting: "Give this right to women by seeing the community development.
In the beginning, Jesus lifted up women's status. Why are we now viewing women as lower than we are. I agree to give women the right to vote with our guidance."
- Siahaya: "The Bible doesnot allow in I Corinthians 14:34-35.

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38–39)

At this synod general assembly, patriarchal theology continued to be articulated by the majority of the voices. The gender-biased scripture I Corthians 14:34-35 was quoted again to discredit women's right in church leadership. However, compared to the first synod general assembly in 1947, gender equality theology was more clearly articulated and supported by more people such as Sumbung, and J. Linting. Finally

the assembly voted and agreed (23 votes) to give women the right to vote but not the right to be elected for church offices such as pastor, elder and deacon.

Right after this general synod assembly, the issue of women's right to be elected for church offices were continuously raised by both members of GZB missionaries and Torajan church leaders during the sixth synod assembly in Rantepao in 1957 with both practical and theological reasons; however, oppositions were also raised from both parties. During this synod assembly, a proposal from Makale requested women be given the right to hold church offices. Immediately there was a heated debate as follows:

- Chairman: Church regulation allows only men to hold these offices.
- Ds. C. Balke: In Romans 16:1, what does it mean regarding this issue? The Greek word (diakonos) in Romans 16:1, in church history generally, there was no deacon office. In practice, usually women were deacon assistants to help in things only women could do, however, they should not hold church offices...
- Kesu': we need to hold firm to church regulation. As what was said by the proposer that it is easier for women to earn money, women can help but they should not hold the deacon office.
- Zuster vd. The congregation needs to lift up the deacon office
- Hooff: because there are things men cannot do but only women can.
- M. Lebang: Agree with Zuster vd. Hooff.

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1957, 60–61)

Again at this synod, gender-biased interpretation of Romans 16:1 was articulated by the GZB missionary, Ds. C. Balke, to exclude wom-

en from church offices while the other missionary Zuster vd. Hoof supported women for the deacon office based on practical reason that there are things which only women can do. Finally the leadership of the assembly decided to reject the proposal from Makale and held firm to the church regulation which had been reached at the previous assembly.

The issue of women's holding church offices was raised again by a proposal from Rombon/Ulusalu at the seventh synod general assembly in Makale in 1959. Similar to what had happened to the previous synod assembly, this proposal immediately ignited a heated debate in which gender-biased biblical texts and patriarchal interpretations were articulated to turn down the proposal:

Rombon/Ulusalu: the proposer explains: this proposal discusses that when Jesus resurrected, where was Mary sent to preach the good news to her brothers and sisters? When Jesus went up the the heaven, he said: "Go, all of you!" There was no gender discrimination. Also in the church now, should the worship be close if there are no men?

By the leader-ship: This is a global problem. Regarding this issue in churches in Indonesia, women have already held church offices even become pastors.

However, Toraja Church has not had any regulation to open church offices for women.

Ecclesiastical committee: The answer is from Timothy 2:9 and Corinthians 14:34-36. If something happens in the congregation, we should not use it as the reason to criticize church regulation. We are trying to negotiate based on the Bible.

Pare-Pare: According to the church regulation, only men can become cadidates for the offices of pastor and el-

der. Any idea? They are not able to hold these offices (give examples). We need to conform to the church regulation.

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1959, 76)

At this synod assembly, both types of theologies were articulated. The proponent of women's rights argued for women's inclusion in church ministries by pointing to biblical foundation of the gender-inclusive calling under Jesus' leadership. However, it was turned down by the dominant number of opponents who quoted the church regulation and the biblical misogynistic passages in I Timothy 2:9 and I Corinthians 14:34-36.

Another stepping stone was made during the fifteenth general synod assembly in Tagari, Rantepao in 1978. Perhaps this was the most heated debate which took several pages in the record of that the synod assembly. Interestingly this synod got consensus from local leaders to support women's full rights based on gender equality theology while opponents to this were only from the GZB missionaries based on women-discriminative theology. According to the record, when the synod leaders brought the issue of women's holding church offices to the front for discussion, it was quickly objected by a missionary representative, Rev. van Roest:

“As a church partner, we need to suggest that church issues need to be based on the Bible. It is not clear that Debora was promoted to be a judge. It was because of Barak's laziness (a man) that Debora was forced to rise up and act as a judge. In Israelite society, there was no female priest. In the New Testament, there was no woman who was lifted up to be a disciple, even though many followers of Jesus were women. In Romans 16, Paul mentioned Febe as a deaconess. This service did not include serving the Word, but only serving food. Paul insisted that

women be silent. If we give women opportunities in church offices, it means we intend to build a church which is obsolete (in primitive society, women were lifted up to be priestesses). Only what was said above is based on the Scripture. For us, do we want to be loyal to the Bible or do we want to change the foundation of the church which is the Bible?"

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 125)

Despite the harsh and accusing objection of this Dutch missionary toward the acceptance of women in church offices, the Torajan leaders of the assembly declared that "We have already been aware that the roles of God's people both men and women are not different" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 130). This declaration marked the victory of local believers' belief in equality for men and women in all aspects of the religious life. This conviction was institutionalized in 1984. It is obvious from the evidence that gender-biased theology was first imposed and reinforced by GZB missionaries. At first this theology was supported by a few local men but gradually it could not take root in Toraja Church when more and more men embraced gender equality theology.

In summary, the Toraja Church's journey from the time Protestant faith was planted in Toraja in 1913 by GZB missionaries from the Netherlands to the time it recognized women's full participation in church leadership in 1984 witnesses the gradual and complete transformation of this church's gender structure as manifested in theological education practices, theologies and church polity. The GZB attempted to construct an all-male dominated church structure by allocating and controlling resources in these above-mentioned areas by excluding women's access to such areas. However, as an imported product, the patriarchal gender structure could not survive for long in Toraja Land where many men and women have proved a high awareness of gender equality since the

very beginning. Their creative practices in these three areas throughout a long process have finally altered and replaced the underlying gender ideology or schema established by the GZB missionaries with an egalitarian one.

Table 3.3 Summary of findings on different forms of gender structure contestation between Toraja Church and the ECVN

| Aspects for Comparison | Toraja Church: from All-Male- Dominated to Egalitarian | The ECVN: Reproducing Male-Dominated Structure |
|--|--|---|
| Missionary tradition | GZB and its male-dominated mission | C&MA: open mission but close church polity for women |
| Changes in theological education practices | From Exclusion to Inclusion ➤ Complete exclusion:1913-1967 ➤ 1967: Christian Education ➤ 1972: partial inclusion in theological education ➤ 1984: equal access | From Restriction to Open Access. Missionary Period: ➤1911-1975: Women’s Education for the Benefit of Men ➤ Post-1975 Period: More Opportunities Open for Women |
| Changes in women’s roles in church regulations | From No Rights to Full Rights for Women ➤ Before 1955: no rights ➤ 1955: right to vote ➤ 1978: right to lead worship ➤ 1984: full rights | A Dynamic Contestation. Missionary Period: ➤ 1911-1975: pastor’s wife and unofficial status of female preacher ➤ Post-1975 Period: official status for female preacher (celibate, subordinate), pastor’s wife. |
| Changes in theologies | The Reinforcement of Gender-Biased Theology, Emergence of Gender Equality Theology, and Its Final Victory | Lack of data |

Source: secondary data and primary data from fieldwork.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

The Toraja Church and the ECVN were both products of conservative missionaries from the Netherlands and North America respectively. The patriarchal gender structure of each church in the beginning was an obvious heritage from these missionary traditions as both churches reflected the gender structure of their mother church. Creative practices happened in both churches; however, those in the ECVN were not collectively strong and persistent enough to alter the patriarchal schema such as those in Toraja Church. Consequently while the Torajan Church has transformed into an egalitarian structure, the ECVN has generally reproduced its male-dominated structure with few changes to accommodate women into the structure.

Regarding the missionary period, C&MA tradition and the ECVN opened more space for women's participation in church mission and church government than the GZB tradition and the Toraja Church. Female missionaries from C&MA could equally obtain theological education and work actively and independently in the mission field. They could teach and train local leaders similar to what the male missionaries did. However, it seemed that GZB female missionaries did not have access to theological education in their own country. Hence their role was mainly housewife even though in later period some of these missionary wives were included in the teaching staff at Rantepao Theological School. GZB female missionaries' role seemed insignificant in the history of Toraja Church if compared with the C&MA female missionaries' role in the ECVN. Regarding church offices, the C&MA tradition allowed women to hold only deacon office whereas the Reformed Dutch Church excluded women from all church offices.

Despite the lower starting point regarding women's role and status, the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands quickly recognized women for all church offices during 1960s; the C&MA churches in North America have still barred women from elder and pastor offices except the C&MA in Canada which has recently transformed to accept women for all offices with a condition.

The same pattern also happens between the Toraja Church and the ECVN regarding women's role. While women were completely barred from accessing theological training and church leadership in Toraja Church until 1970s, those from the ECVN could access to theological education and church leadership in the beginning with restrictions. They must be wives of male students and until 1950 when single women started to be admitted to theological training. Women in the ECVN could hold the office of deacon and could manage churches since there was no elder office in the church system. In these respects, the ECVN's theological education system and church polity vary from the C&MA mother church. Even though changes regarding women's role were made in the ECVN, these changes were carried out under the schema of patriarchy which places men's power and control over women.

Even though the Toraja Church was highly patriarchal regarding women's participation in church leadership, it completely changed its perspective regarding this issue in 1984; meanwhile the ECVN has still marginalized women in church leadership. The highest position that women can hold in this church is female preacher with the condition of celibacy and subordination to men. At the surface, this recognition of female office appears to be an improvement, however, it can be viewed as a highlight of women's subordination to men in an official way.

Regarding theological articulation, gender equality theology emerged since the beginning of the establishment of Toraja Church. It is surprising that Toraja men articulated their gender equality theology

even before the birth of Western feminist theology, before Toraja leaders had any contact with the outside world, and before women had a voice for themselves. As the church grew, this kind of theology came dominant and collective to encounter the gender-biased theology imposed by the GZB missionaries. Finally this local theology triumphed in 1984. This explains why Toraja Church was slower than other mainstreamed churches in Indonesia to ordain women. It was mainly due to the influence and control of GZB missionaries through doctrine and other resources.

Regarding the ECVN, due to the lack of data in this aspect, this dissertation abstained from presenting this issue. Future research should focus on whether theology plays a role in regulating women's role in the ECVN.

INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN CONTEXT AND GENDER STRUCTURE CONTESTATION: COMPARING TORAJA CHURCH AND THE ECVN

4.1 Introduction

The Toraja Church and the ECVN represent two different forms of gender structural change. The Toraja Church has been through a radical transformation from a patriarchal structure to an egalitarian structure; whereas, despite within the same length of time, the ECVN has reproduced its male-dominated gender structure with few changes. This chapter explains the interconnection between the context and the differential contestation of the gender structure between two churches by employing theories of structural transformation and structural reproduction from William Sewell Jr. (1992; 2005) and structural opportunity theories.

According to Sewell, structural change takes place due to two mechanisms. The first mechanism is called “structure of conjuncture” which means any social structure or system is not static and timeless but pragmatic and dynamic. Since structure is composed of simultaneously symbolic meanings or schemas and actual resources, social actors do not always conform to the conventional meanings when using resources. Structure becomes destabilized either when social actors use the same

resource with different meanings or when they accumulate more resources which no longer fit the old meanings. Though structure is driven by social actors' interests, it does not conform to their intention or convention. The second mechanism is called "conjunction of structures" which means structures in time and space are multiple, overlapping and transposable. As a result, social actors can reflect and adopt schemas or values across structures and modify, to a certain extent, the existing structures which they are part of. However, the outcome of structural transformation is beyond the control of any social actor.

Beside structural transformation, Sewell also builds a theoretical framework to explain why some structures endure or reproduce themselves with little change in the midst of historical changes. He proposes that this analysis has to look into both the ecological situations, or the wider context that prevents the structure from being destabilized by external forces and the institutional structures that reinforce the social practice.

In opportunity structure studies, different religious structures and contexts offer different structural opportunities that affect the transformation of the religious structure and dynamics of the group struggle. McCammon et al (2001) shows that both formal leadership structures and gendered opportunity structures brought about by context dynamics can affect the decision-makers' attitudes toward women's new roles. Tremper (2013) also demonstrates that leadership styles and organizational dynamics play an important role in supporting or hindering opportunities for women's leadership.

Based on these theoretical bodies, this chapter analyzes the two case studies. Indeed, Sewell's framework of "conjunction of structures" and "structure of conjunction" is helpful to analyze the transformation of gender structure in Toraja Church. On the one hand, "conjunction of structures" is evident in the intersection of three structures: gender equality values in Torajan culture, progressive gender practices in other

Indonesian Christian churches, and the patriarchal gender structure of Toraja Church. The meeting of these three structures has resulted in the adoption of progressive gender values across structures into Toraja Church. On the other hand, “structure of conjuncture” takes place when Torajan agents accumulate more resources from education and international exchange due to favorable political context and the openness of Toraja Church as an institution. Once these agents are empowered, they start to modify the Toraja gender system. The long-existing equality gender values in Toraja culture, the emergent progressive gender practices in other Christian communities, favorable political situations for education and international exchange, and the openness for reform and support for women’s rights of leadership in Toraja Church can be viewed as both structural opportunities and forces that have contributed to the transformation of the gender structure of this church.

Regarding the ECVN, employing Sewell’s framework of structural duration and opportunity structure theories, the reproduction of the male-dominated gender structure of this church can be explained by investigating how the wider cultural, political, and religious contexts and institutional dynamics have prevented this religious institution’s gender structure from being destabilized and changed. From the wider context perspective, the resonance of dominant patriarchal values between Vietnamese culture and the ECVN, the close and repressive political situations, and the isolation of this church from other national and international Christian communities have shielded it from being destabilized. From the institutional perspective, the ECVN tends to be conservative and resistant to change. Gender bias, the authoritarian manner of leadership, and the practice of “hiring the pastor and using his whole family” have still thrived and functioned as obstacles to women’s advancement in leadership in this isolated and economically poor institution.

This chapter argues that the varying degrees of gender structure transformation between two churches are, to a certain extent, due to both external forces and institutional dynamics. Particularly the cultural, political, and religious contexts of Toraja Church offer a higher degree of gender equality opportunities, the empowerment of the agents, and pressure to change than those of the ECVN. The intersection of these structures with the gender structure of each church, to a certain extent, leads to different levels of transformation. Institutionally while the Toraja Church has been flexible and open to reform, the ECVN seems to become more conservative and resistant to change regarding women's roles. This factor also contributes to the different forms of gender structure transformation. For a comparative reason, this chapter analyzes the two case studies in parallel.

4.2 Gender Equality Opportunities from Cultural Contexts

In cultural studies, scholars are more aware of the dynamic of cultural structure in a given society. For instance, Geertz admits that “[c]ultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is” (Geertz 1973, 29). As for Bourdieu, what is understood as culture is actually produced by authorized discourses, practices and institutions. Culture is first of all an authorized product of historical forces, which Bourdieu calls “structured structure.” Second, this authorized product functions as the means to shape the society by the representations it makes. Bourdieu calls this “structuring structure” (Bourdieu 1990, 53; Bourdieu 1977, 72). Thus, the field of cultural production is always a contested field of competing discourses and values. In gender studies, this reality is rightly marked by Howell (quoted by Waterson 2009, 225) that “[i]t

is no longer valid to assume that there is one single model of gender in any one society and that the job of the anthropologist is to elicit it.”

Therefore, this part of the paper attempts to explore how dominant discourses of Toraja culture and Vietnamese culture offer different degrees of gender equality opportunities that function as a basis for destabilizing or reinforcing the patriarchal gender structure of the Toraja Church and the ECVN. Indeed Toraja cultural context provides a higher degree of gender equality opportunities than that of the ECVN. Particularly the dominant discourses of Torajan culture promote gender equality and give women high social status while those of the Vietnamese culture promote women’s subordinate roles to men.

4.2.1 Conflicting Gender Values between Toraja Gender Equality Culture and Toraja Church’s Patriarchal Structure as Basis for Structural Change

In Roxana Waterson’s ethnographic work on Toraja culture entitled *Toraja culture Paths and Rivers: Sa’dan Toraja Society in Transformation* in 2009, she describes Toraja culture as bilateral kinship and unmarked gender society which means gender is not an important category to mark the society as what happens in other societies. Even though she avoided classifying Toraja culture, her work and other scholarly writings about women’s roles in Toraja culture testify to dominant gender equality values in Toraja society which even gives women a strong social position (Nooy-Palm 1979; Suryadarma 2006; Waterson 2009).

Concerning local custom or *adat*, Waterson states that “[s]o far as *adat* is concerned [...] where I could discover no point of *adat* law which discriminates against women” (Waterson 2009, 229). In family organization, there is no gender preference or discrimination among children. Both boys and girls are valued and share equal inheritance rights; however, women are given strong positions in several aspects. For instance,

in the Toraja custom of marriage, a man has to move to stay with and contribute his labor to his wife's family after the wedding. In Toraja culture, each big family is represented by an origin house or *tongkonan*. Women are the ones who represent the *tongkonan* and manage the rice-barn of the family. In terms of death ritual, women are given more honor than men in the sense that the number of animals sacrificed for their funeral is higher than that for their husbands' who had passed away (Suryadarma 2006, 123; Waterson 2009, 230, 234–37). Torajan custom also regulates that the funeral of a dead person must be celebrated in his or her maternal *tongkonan* regardless how high rank his father's *tongkonan* is. This means children are considered as the mother's descendants. Their mother social status decides their social status. In kinship terminology, the Torajans rarely distinguish between sexes. For example, they use the same words for both sexes such as *sampu* (cousins), *api'*, *ulu'*, *unu'*, *siulu'* (local variants for siblings), *nene'* (grandparent) (Nooy-Palm 1979, 26–29). Thus, women can be said to have a special position in Toraja culture of kinship.

In terms of religious rituals, Waterson observes that there is no concept of female pollution such as rule against intercourse during a woman's period or any idea of female menstruation as a threat to men's spiritual or mental health in Toraja culture. Women participate in all Toraja rituals and their participation is even a must. According to *Aluk To dolo* tradition, there were women who became ritual leader. However, this tradition later became rare and has almost died out after Dutch evangelists came and converted the majority of Torajans to Christianity (Suryadarma 2006, 123; Waterson 2009, 232–33). Hence, at the symbolic level of Toraja custom or *adat*, women are bestowed with high social status.

However, there are also counter-trends of gender practices. In Toraja society, it is not gender but class status that divides the society. Women from upper class are not allowed to marry men of lower

class; whereas this is not applied to men (Nooy-Palm 1979, 31; Tangdilintin 2006, 115–16). Because women represent *tongkonan* and manage family property, they are attached to the home and household responsibilities, which limits their opportunities for self-expressions and capacity development beyond this domestic world as their male counterparts. Tangdilintin argues that men's opportunity to widen their network and self-development leads to their dominant role in rituals such as death ritual and their ability to contribute more sacrificed animals for their parents' funerals. This also means that their portion of inheritance is bigger than women in the family. This has occurred in several places in Toraja (Tangdilintin 2006, 115–16).

In addition, Waterson sees that women play a little part in Toraja politics and they rarely speak authoritatively in public. When she asked people for an explanation, they said, "men are superior, but actually men and women are equals" (Waterson 2009, 240). However, Waterson also finds evidence that women became leaders of villages and districts during the pre-colonial or colonial times. The coming of Christianity to Toraja and the New Order Policy also restricted women's roles to wifehood and motherhood. Similarly the New Order Government established women organizations which were composed of wives of civil servants and army officers to promote domestic orientation for Indonesian women notably since 1974. In Toraja, this organization was headed by the Bupati's wife (Waterson 2009, 240–41).

Despite these counter-gender practices, the dominant gender discourses of Toraja culture promote gender equality and respect for women. Research data show that the intersection of conflicting gender regimes between the Toraja Church and Toraja culture did become tension and ground for resistance at both small and larger scales. In another interpretation, this intersection of two conflicting gender structures have created gendered opportunities that change Torajan leaders' attitudes toward women's leadership. Toraja church documents and writings

show that Torajan men struggled for gender equality very early even before the church was established and before the birth of Western feminist theology and any encounter with it. While Western feminist theologies emerged during 1960s (Gross 1996) and the first Indonesian feminist theology was articulated by Marianne Katoppo in 1979 (Katoppo 2007), the struggle for gender equality in Toraja Church emerged much earlier.

For example, in a discussion on women's rights to vote for church offices at a Missionary Conference in Rantepao in 1937, four out of total seven people agreed to give women the right to vote while only three members disagreed. However, this decision was not realized because the GZB missionary board did not approve (Anggui 2006, 42). Since the Toraja Church became established in 1947, this struggle of male leaders became more obvious and heated through several synod general assemblies in 1955, 1959, 1970, 1972, and 1978. These struggles have already been presented in chapter 3 of the dissertation.

There are also strategic gender equality practices that were carried out within the patriarchal gender regime of the church. For example, in 1960, there were 7 students sent from Toraja Church to study at Jakarta Theological School. They all requested financial aid from the church; however, the church gave financial support to only 6 students. The other student did not get support because she is a woman. Instead of conforming to the church gender discriminative practice, the six male students agreed to divide their scholarships into 7 so that the female student also got the same amount (Anggui 2011, 30–31). This female student later became the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church.

The above evidence shows that in the earlier period their gender equality source is drawn from nowhere else but their own culture. Toraja church leader Rev. A.J. Anggui and the sociologist Suryadarma agree that the gender equality value of Toraja culture is one of the sources of resistance and transformation of this church gender regime (Anggui

2011, 32–33; Suryadarma 2006, 124). In other words, the co-existence and intersection of these conflicting gender structures in Toraja Church context serve as the basis for resistance of Torajan agents. It also functions as a destabilizing force for change.

4.2.2 Resonance of Patriarchal Gender Discourses between Vietnamese Culture and the ECVN as Basis for Structural Reproduction

While there are conflicting gender values between Toraja Church and Toraja culture, there is a resonance between dominant gender discourses in Vietnamese culture and gender practices and discourses in the ECVN. The dominant gender discourses of Vietnamese culture prescribe women's subordination to men despite the existence of gender equality discourses and advanced gender framework promoted by the communist government. This resonance of patriarchal gender discourses is one of the mechanisms that have shielded the gender structure of the ECVN from being transformed.

Specifically regarding discourses of women's roles in Vietnamese culture, there have been debates among scholars. Several Vietnamese and foreign feminist scholars have argued that Vietnamese women maintained a high level of autonomy even among Southeast Asian countries before the coming of Confucianism during the Chinese invasion that occurred over a thousand-year period. They point to the Au Co myth of the origin of Vietnamese people which testifies to the matriarchal system in northern Vietnam. They use archaeological, textual, and ritual materials such as goddess worship codes to support this unique feature of early Vietnamese society. They also appeal to historical evidence of Vietnamese women as heroines and warriors, such as the Trung sisters (14-43 CE) and lady Trieu (226-48 CE), in the struggles against Chinese invaders. Vietnamese people have been proud of these female heroines in their pantheon of brave patriots (Andaya 2008, 3, 45–

46; Chiricosta 2010, 125). Based on this, feminist scholars argue for a different position of Vietnamese women from the subordinate one as seen in the present.

These feminists argue that women's autonomy and high social status in early Vietnamese societies gradually changed due to the successive invasions of the Chinese and the reinforcement of Confucian values during the tenth and fifteenth centuries by Vietnamese kings and elites. For example, Chiricosta shows that there was a double standard for women during the fifteen century. The Hong Duc code of this time gave women high status, such as respect for female dignity, prohibition of marriage without the woman's consent, women's initiation of divorce, and equal property division for boys and girls. Women could also take the Mandarinate exam and serve in the Imperial Court during the thirteenth century. However, at the same time, women were also expected to marry, take care of children, and obey their husbands and parents-in-law. Preserving family harmony was the women's first duty because Confucianism believed that family was the foundation of community and national stability. The concept of 'family harmony' also implied that women must sacrifice for the sake of the male family members (Chiricosta 2010, 126).

During the nineteenth century, the first Nguyen emperor (1808-19) drastically reduced women's rights due to the influence of a Qing Legal Code. He forbade women from taking the Mandarinate examination, and instead promoted a Confucian-inspired book of 'manner' the *Gia Huan Ca* (Family Training Ode). A woman was taught to keep their virginity before marriage and be absolutely faithful to her husband whether he is alive or dead. From birth to death, a woman had to submit to three male authorities called "Three Submissions." She had to submit to her father before marriage, to her husband after marriage, and to her eldest son after her husband's death. Additionally, a good woman must master the "Four Virtues": *công* (work), *dung* (physical appearance),

ngôn (appropriate speech), and *hạnh* (proper behavior). Normally these included cooking, sewing, and embroidering but not reading or writing (Chiricosta 2010, 126–27; Marr 1976, 372). For feminist scholars of Vietnamese cultural studies, this long process of indoctrination by Chinese colonial administrators and subsequent Vietnamese monarchs has substantially altered general Vietnamese perception of women's roles in the society.

During the French colonialism (1858-1945), Marr shows that discourse of women's rights started to emerge; however, it was restricted to upper- and middle-class people. He noticed at least three perspectives toward women's roles: reactionaries, moderates, and radicals, evidently during the period up to 1930. The reactionaries were those of a generation earlier, who took for granted the traditional morality for the females or the Confucian teachings of female morality and found no reason to discuss it. The moderates believed that equality was a long process of empowering women through public work skills and education. For the radicals, gender equality required a radical change in the society (Marr 1976, 372).

During the next period (1945-1975), several Vietnamese women adopted Marxist feminism arguing that women's equality and liberation could not be obtained without the liberation of the country from the colonial powers. Women started to fight side by side men against the French colonialism (1945-1954) and the American imperialism (1954-1975). The north gained independence in 1945 and the communist government was established. There have been conflicting discourses under the communist rule: on the one hand, the government has constructed one of the most advanced gender framework in Asia; on the other hand, the traditional model of womanhood has still been promoted.

The Communist government's gender equality policies regarding women's participation in education and leadership were developed as

early as the Communist government was established in the North in 1945 and have been in a process of development. For example, women occupied 4% of the seats in the First National Assembly on November 8, 1946. In the Second National Assembly on May 8, 1960, this percentage increased to 10.8% (Ginsburgs 1975, 614, 625). The 1960 Constitution stated that:

“[t]hose who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and those who have reached the age of 21 have the right to stand for election, whatever their nationality, race, sex, social origin, religious belief, property status, education, occupation, or length of residence, except insane persons and persons deprived by a tribunal or the law of the right to vote or stand for election.”

(Ginsburgs 1975, 627)

Women were also given equal rights with men in all aspects of life: political, economic, cultural, social and familial in article 24 (Ginsburgs 1975, 627). This principle of non-discrimination between men and women was affirmed in the 1992 Constitution and in its amendment in 2002. For example, the laws on educational and political participation (articles 54 and 63) assure equal rights for boys and girls in education and women’s equal rights with men in voting, standing for election, and participating in State management. The law also regulates the proportion of women in elected positions and agencies of State management. It strictly prohibits any act of discrimination against women and any act “damaging their dignity”. (Wells 2005, 45). This commitment of the government can be seen in the fact that since 1992 the position of national Vice President has been occupied by women. Though the percentage of women’s seats in national parliament has dropped from 27% in 2006 to 24% in 2011 and remained the same until 2013, according to the latest statistics by the World Bank, Vietnam still has the second

highest percentage of women's representation in parliament in Asia. Only Laos (25% in 2013) is higher. (The World Bank Group 2014).

In 2016, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has just elected a new leadership for the period 2016-2021. A woman, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, was elected as Chairperson of the National Assembly which represents the highest authority of the nation. Mrs. Tong Thi Phong was elected as Vice Chairperson and three other women as members of the National Assembly Leadership Board. As a custom, the Vice President of the country is also occupied by a woman, Mrs. Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh ("Bộ M ỹ Lãnh Đạo Nh Ɣớc, Chính Phủ, Quốc Hội Nhiệm Kỳ 2016-2021" 2016).

Despite this advanced gender framework, the Vietnamese communist party constructed a new image of womanhood, which was in fact a combination of Marxist and Confucian values. It promoted gender equality by encouraging women to be excellent in both public and private spheres. Though Vietnamese women enjoyed improved rights, such as voting, divorce, abortion, education, wage equality, outlaw of polygamy and child marriage, they were burdened with workload and responsibilities. For example, in 1961 the Vietnam's Women Union had a "Five Goods" campaign to exhort women to: (1) Fulfil the goals of production and economize well; (2) Follow all state policies and laws; (3) Participate in leadership; (4) Advance in their studies; and (5) Raise their families and educate their children well (Chiricosta 2010, 134). Such a campaign connotes family and child care are women's sole responsibility.

In 2002-2003, Schuler and her research group conducted research in Vietnam and showed that the Vietnamese Women Union has continued to promote the traditional role of women as mother and nurturer as seen through the "Three Criteria Campaign," which says 'Study Actively, Work Creatively, Raise Children Well and Build Happy Families' (*Phụ nữ tích cực học tập và lao động sáng tạo, Nuôi con giỏi và Xây dựng*

gia đình ấm no hạnh phúc) (Schuler et al. 2006, 386). This current campaign is no different from the 1961 campaign in terms of womanhood models. Women have been seen as the sole nurturer and care-taker of the family. Similarly, the latest report on gender situation in Vietnam by Asian Development Bank in December 2005 also stated that Confucian gender norm had strong influence among the Kinh majority and Chinese ethnic group in Vietnam. It reads as follows:

“Most Vietnamese people, both men and women, expect women to behave in a socially constrained way. As such, women often do not exercise the rights accorded to them by law and policy. This traditional and restrictive way of thinking contributes to most of the gender inequalities outlined in this report: from women’s lack of representation in leadership positions to vulnerability to trafficking for prostitution.”

(Wells 2005, 8)

Similarly the USAID Vietnam Gender Analysis in 2012 also confirmed this influence of Confucian gender norm in Vietnam. It says that Vietnamese women face obstacles in public participation because of the “widely held gender stereotypes that men have superior qualities which prime them for leadership positions” and the “traditional values and attitudes related to women’s roles which creates resistance on the part of many men to women taking on leadership positions but also among women themselves” (Ray-Ross 2012, 24).

The gender discourses in the wider cultural context of Vietnam can serve as both opportunities for women’s leadership advancement if gender equality discourses are adopted and hindrances if dominant patriarchal discourses are promoted for the ECVN. In reality, the latter has proven to be a strong tendency in the ECVN. A female pastor and

scholar from the ECVN, who now resides in Germany, reflects on Vietnamese culture and the ECVN as follows:

“Because of Confucian influence, Vietnamese people have a very strict, narrow, distorting and prejudiced view of women. Women are considered as a weak creature and dependent on men. They are given too many duties and responsibilities, but their rights are rarely mentioned or only symbolic. Are women second-class citizens...? They are not to be equal with men?

In Vietnam, after several generations, women’s positions and roles in family and society have changed much. Parents have been more open-minded toward their children... Women can raise their voice, choose their career, life path, and married partners... They have acquired high positions in the society, admirable achievements in leadership and professional roles.... They are trusted and become more self-confident.... Sadly in many areas in Christian communities in Vietnam, women’s roles are very much differently viewed from those in the society. Women’s roles are very narrowly-viewed within the church tradition.”

(B. B. D. Nguyễn 2013, 11, 15)

My research also confirms that patriarchal cultural discourses have been adopted and promoted within the ECVN by most male and female informants of older generations. Four out of five male informants aged above 60 and seven out of thirteen female informants aged above 55 held traditional view regarding women’s role. Most younger female informants (five out of six) strongly supported gender equality. There are two reasons to object women’s leadership revealed from the older informants’ opinions. The first reason is similar to what was found in the USAID Gender Analysis in 2012 that men are stereotypically believed to own superior leadership qualities. For instance, during an interview, a male pastor said “men lead better because women are selfish

and talkative. They might cause problem because of this habit.” (Rev. L.V.N.K. 2016). His wife then added:

“Generally women are bad and untrustworthy. Women hate each other and gossip each other. Men are better. Men must be the head of the family. I am a woman but I don’t support women to lead. They’re not as good as men. They don’t have the capacity to lead.”

(K.M. 56 year-old pastor’s wife 2016)

I even found this pattern of thinking from a well-educated single female preacher who has received her theological education abroad. She said:

“We are women. We are not better than men. God created men. God gave them many things. We are just helpers. A woman’s brain can’t be compared with a man’s brain. Even though men don’t study, they still have their own intelligence. Women are not as good as they. We need to realize this.”

(T. X. a 58 year-old female preacher 2016)

Beside this stereotype, the older generations also oppose women’s equal leadership with men due to their belief in men’s authority over women and their essentialization of women’s domestic roles. For example, when I asked a pastor’s wife why women are required to be single if they want to become a clergy, she said:

“Because when a woman gets married, she will be under the authority of her husband; while God’s work is leadership. If we are under the husband’s authority, he will direct us. Then how can we fulfill our tasks? Personally I think God gives the men the role of leadership, they have their determination. If a woman has a special call and if she is influenced by her husband, how can she decide anything?”

(H.P. 60 year-old pastor's wife 2016)

This shows that this pastor's wife and many others from the ECVN believe that women are always under men's authority and leadership once they are married. Hence it is unthinkable for them to think of equal sharing of leadership and authority between men and women in the house and in the church. Beside that these older female informants also essentialized women's domestic roles and promoted the Confucian teachings of "Three Submissions" and "Four Virtues". For instance, a female preacher complained to me with frustration:

"Never think that we are as men. A woman needs to know her duty. Our house, kitchen, and other things must be tidy. It is not as men who just let whatever be there. I think a woman must keep four virtues: *công, dung, ngôn, hạnh*, if not much, at least a little. It is unacceptable if a woman after serving at the church, get home tired, eat and leave the bowls unwashed, or doesn't have time to clean the table. I can't bear this. I always react if I see this wherever I go. Even though we serve God, our kitchen must be clean. If we can't clean our kitchen, how can we serve others. I think this is what women need to guide other women to do this."

(T. X. a 58 year-old female preacher 2016)

It seems that this female preacher was not aware of the double standard that she imposed on women while she took for granted men's escape from domestic responsibility. This essentialization of women's domestic and subordinate roles to men perhaps has rooted so deeply in older generations that even those who support for women's leadership still take it for granted. For instance, a very recent study guide book for Christian women in this church in 2013, which was written by a fe-

male preacher who was perhaps a pioneer in voicing women's rights in church leadership, stated:

“When mentioning women's virtue, we cannot ignore the Vietnamese thousand-year heritage. The Vietnamese moral tradition for women is ‘Three Submissions’ and ‘Four Virtues’. These are beautiful and unique characters of Vietnamese culture for thousands of years.... As Vietnamese women, we are proud to grow up in such a culture which has a good view about women's virtues. These are unique features that need to be practiced in order to show the beauty of Vietnamese women. As Christian women, we not only demonstrate these unique manners of our people, and good virtues of Vietnamese women, but we also show the female virtues according to the biblical teachings”

(Tran 2013, 66–67)

Strangely enough, while the author defends and promotes women's submission to male authority, she also argues for gender equality in public spheres such as church leadership and economic and social participation (Tran 2013, 73–75, 131–37). It is hard to understand how the author can reconcile between her support for Confucian teachings of women's submission to male authority and her argument for gender equality in church, family and society.

In short, despite the existence of various discourses of women's roles in Vietnamese culture and society, the dominant discourses obviously authorize the Confucian model of womanhood which prescribes women a subordinate position to men. These discourses resonate with those inside the ECVN, which consequently strengthens its patriarchal position rather than destabilizes it as what has happened in the Toraja Church.

4.3 Opportunities for the Empowerment of Agency from Political Contexts

Beside the cultural context, the political context also plays a role in the differential transformation of the gender structure of Toraja Church and the ECVN. Particularly the Torajan political context highly facilitates educational pursuit, religious profession, and international exchange that increase the agents' accumulation of resources; whereas politically the ECVN has suffered a long period of leadership training crisis and unrecognized status, which has resulted in the lack of opportunities for personal empowerment through education, religious profession, and international exchange.

4.3.1 Torajan Favorable Political Context: The Empowerment of Torajan Agents

The Indonesian political context in general and the Toraja political context in particular give religion, especially major religions, a public role and religious people opportunities to actively participate in political and social life. In Toraja, there have been political disruptions and tensions between Muslims and Christians and those between the majority Christians and indigenous religious adherents, however, since the colonial period to the present, the political context in general has facilitated opportunities for education and international exchange. This has resulted in the accumulation of resources and empowerment of Torajan agents.

Since Independence in 1945, Indonesian political stance toward religion has been based on the philosophy of Pancasila established by the founding fathers of the nation. This Pancasila includes five pillars, namely, "Belief in One God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, the democracy guided by the Consultative Representative Policy Lessons, and social justice for all Indonesian people" (Abdullah 2014, 4). Though Muslim community accounted for more than 90 per-

cent of the population, the founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia chose the nation-state governance system based on constitution, democracy, plurality, equality and protection of human rights, instead of Islamic theocracy (Abdullah 2014, 7–9). Despite this non-confessional political model, religion has been given important roles in the political and social life of Indonesia. Religious groups can participate in the government through forming their own political parties such as the Islamic party Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Christian political party Parkido, and Catholic political party Partai Katolik (Vickers 2005, 122; Nasution 1992, 52). Confessing one's religion is not something to hide as it is in Vietnam but it is a requirement in Indonesia and must be stated in one's identity card. Students from kindergarten to college are required to study their religion for two hours a week in government classrooms (Hefner 2001, 35). Religious groups can open their own universities and hospitals. For example, in Yogyakarta, there are Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Duta Wacana Christian University, and Sananta Dharma University (Catholic). Students with religious degrees can seek employment in both religious and public institutions. Both the government and religious sectors in Indonesia have been active in boosting religious harmony through sponsoring interreligious dialogues and disseminating this spirit through a network of religious higher education in the country and social activism (Abdullah 2014, 6; Muji-burrahman 2006, 253). Though tensions have remained within Indonesian politics of religion such as the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, religious violent conflicts, and the marginalization of local religions, to name a few, this intermingling of religion, politics and social life have given religious Indonesian people more opportunities to actively participate in public life.

Concerning Toraja's political context, in 1906, Toraja was subjected to the rule of the Dutch colonial government and a portion of the population was Christianized by Dutch missionaries. By 1945, Toraja land

was again under the rule of the Japanese. Though the Japanese provided protection to the Christians from the low-land Muslim aggression, the Toraja population was required to contribute to the war effort (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 466, 471). The period 1950 – 1965 was marked with violent attacks by Darul Islam guerrillas against Toraja highlands, which led to the mass conversion of Toraja people to Christianity as a strategy to protect themselves from potential attacks by the Muslims (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 472; Waterson 2009, 353). This tension between the Muslim lowlanders and Christian highlanders was renewed in the face of several violent events during 2000s such as ethnic massacre in Ambon and Central Sulawesi, the uncovering of Jemaah Islamiah terrorist training camps in Poso (Central Sulawesi) in 2001 and 2002, the Bali bombing in 2002, the subsequent bombings in Makassar in early December, and bomb threats that year against churches in Rantepao and Ma'kale, and new bomb attacks and the rap of three Christian schoolgirls by a Muslim fanatic in Central Sulawesi in June 2005. The fear of being attacked by Muslim lowlanders has been the topic of conversations in Toraja today and this has also reinforced the Christian identity allegiance instead of preserving the Alukta local identity (Waterson 2009, 362, 431). As Christians become the dominant identity and politics, the local Alukta religious group has become target of Christianization.

Despite all these political disruptions, Christian women in Toraja enjoy opportunities for education. During the colonial period (1900-1942), the Dutch colonial government soon invested in education for female children and protected women. Indonesian women, who were benefited by this European educational system, such as Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879-1904) started to speak out the need and desire for empowerment (Blackburn 2004, 17–18). Kartini has become a symbol of women's empowerment throughout Indonesia. In Toraja during this period, the Dutch government opened two public schools which used Toraja and

Melayu language in 1908. They also opened another school that used Dutch language in 1929 and one more with the name Christelijke Torajase School in 1938 in Rantepao. Since the beginning, female kids were admitted to these schools (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006b, 65–66). According to Rev. A.J. Anggui, in 1926, the number of female students in Rantepao accounted for 30% of the total number of students at schools managed by the missionaries. (Anggui 2011, 26). In 1967, women were allowed to take Christian education in STT Rantepao and several women became teachers of Christian education at public schools during this period. Even though women were not allowed to take theological education in Toraja Church's theological institution like STT Rantepao before 1984, other theological seminaries or structures such as STT Jakarta opened this opportunity for women. Indeed, women pioneers such as Damaris M. Anggui-Pakan and Henriette Hutabarat Lebang were able to get theological education in STT Jakarta in 1959 and 1972 respectively. (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006b, 69–70). This shows that the operation of multiple incompatible structures at the same time can result in the accumulation of resources by the agents.

After Independence in 1945, Indonesia opened the country to the outside world to boost the process of industrialization and international relations (Vickers 2005, 126–33). This integration of Indonesia in the global context has facilitated, among all, international travel, personal empowerment through higher education and international interaction

with women's rights movements. As an administrative unit in Indonesia, Toraja also benefits from this policy. For example, Rev. A.J. Anggui, who later became chairman of Toraja Church synod and a key figure in Toraja Church reform including gender reform, earned his Master of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1965. His education from the U.S. and his worldwide knowledge and experiences qualify him for a leading position in Toraja Church. Perhaps the worldwide experience also broadens his vision of a women-

inclusive leadership church. Upon his return to Toraja Church, he assumed a leading position of The Theological School in Rantepao and the church synod. Under his leadership, in 1967 women were admitted to Christian Education Program. In 1970, he carried out the revision of Christian Education and Theological Education Programs at this school to give women an opportunity to get theological education thanks to his clever design of the two program curricula. In principle, only male students could take theological education and become pastors, in practice, the women could take advantage of the curriculum design to get theological subjects as optional subjects. The inconsistency of gender practices can be a factor that leads to the accumulation of resources by the women agents. However, above all, it is Rev. Anggui's empowerment through accumulating resources offered from both local and trans-local structures that to a certain extent enables his agency.

Another typical example is Rev. Damaris M. Anggui-Pakan who later became the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church and a key figure in the struggle for women's rights. She was present at the Asia Church Women's Conference (ACWC) in Japan in 1966 (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006a, 58). She was also sent by Toraja Church to other countries such as The United States, India, Philippines, Taiwan, and others to join ecumenical women conferences. She said that her participation in these ecumenical events had built her strength, confidence and maturity in her struggle for women's rights. (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015). Therefore, by empowering the agency, the political context of Toraja Church in particular and Indonesia in general plays a role in detabbling the Toraja church gender structure.

In brief, the political context of Toraja Church provides good opportunities for both Torajan men and women's empowerment through education and international exchange of ecumenical experiences. Some Torajan male and female leaders proved to be benefited from such opportunities. They became reforming figures of gender structure in Toraja

Church, which will be presented in details in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Thus by empowering the agency, this favorable political context of the Toraja Church functions as a destabilizing factor of the gender structure of this church.

4.3.2 The Unfavorable Political Context of the ECVN: Lack of Opportunities for the Empowerment of Agency

Different from the Toraja Church, politically the ECVN has suffered a long period of leadership training crisis and unrecognized status due to repressive religious policies and unfavorable political context, which has resulted in the lack of opportunities for personal empowerment through education, religious profession, and international exchange.

The political context of the ECVN can be divided into two periods: colonial period before 1975 and Communist government period after 1975. Each period restricts women's opportunities for religious education and profession in a different way. The period before 1975 was marked with the two successive wars against the French imperialism (1911-1954) and the American War or Vietnam War (1954-1975). This period of political turmoil was characterized with severe exploitation, suffering, and death. During the French colonial period, Vietnamese people suffered landlessness, starvation, and disease due to the exploitative policies of both the French and Japanese colonizers (1942-1945). The French exploited the Vietnamese to benefit their own country; whereas the Japanese exploited the Vietnamese for military interests. Consequently, the French's exploitation resulted in landlessness of almost two million northern farmers and the Japanese's led to a famine that starved half a million Vietnamese to death in 1945 (Woods 2002, 46-48, 60). In 1954, the Communists liberated the North and the country was divided into North and South. The South was ruled by Ngo Dinh Diem government, a Catholic regime, supported by the U.S. to fight against the expansion of the northern communists. There was a

massive exodus of 860,000 people from the North to South to escape Communist rule. Two thirds of them were Catholics and around 1,000 were Protestants (Nguyen 2009, 8; Sunquist 2001, 879). The U.S. sent aid and human resources to the South to help the Southern government resettle the refugees and build a new nation. From 1955 to 1956, the U.S. disseminated \$93 million to South Vietnam for refugee resettlement programs (Elkind 2005, 65). Starting in 1959, the northern communists started a war against the Southern government and the U.S. troops to reunify the country. Samuel R. Hope, Director of the U.S. Personnel Service in South Vietnam from 1966-1968, wrote in his report that death and injury were a common scene. People's life expectancy prior to the war's escalation was 35 years. Each doctor was responsible for 22,500 persons. Only 20-30% of the south population was literate (Hope 1969, 106).

Within such a cultural context, which already discouraged women's literacy, - as mentioned above-, opportunities for women to get education became even more limited. Within the ECVN before 1975, though the CMA missionaries and the ECVN had freedom to train leadership, men were given priority to get theological education; while single women were restricted from having it (Ms. Phạm 2012, 15, 28-29). Some pastors' wives only started to learn how to read and write in order to join the Bible School after getting married to their husbands (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 105). As I have presented in Chapter Three, even though women were allowed to get theological education after 1950, they could not study full subjects as their male counterparts and their training was not utilized after their graduation. Hence, women's religious education and religious profession were very restricted during this period.

After 1975, the entire country was under the rule of the communist government. While Indonesia had better opportunities to boost eco-

conomic and international exchange, Vietnam faced economic crisis and isolation from the outside world for a couple of decades. After Reunification, Vietnam applied the socialist model of economy in which individual and family-based economy was banned and discouraged. All land was common property and farmers had to work in collective farms and their households got the share of the output based on their recorded working hours in the communal land. However, this collective model brought very low economic results. Consequently Vietnam became a net importer of rice (Do and Iyer 2008, 534–35). Facing this economic crisis, Vietnam started its economic reforms (Renovation) in 1986 by changing from a collective economy to open-market economy based on family household as the basic unit of the economy. Households could own, rent and sell land and their agricultural produce (Taylor 2007, 7). The economy started to take off.

Regarding international relations, from 1976 to 1989, Vietnam relied heavily on the support from the Soviet Union. During this period, the U.S. also prevented the world financial institutions and nations trading with the US from giving aid to Vietnam (Woods 2002, 79). As a result, Vietnam was isolated from the outside world. This was also a disadvantage for Vietnamese Christians to have international opportunities for education, work, and cultural and experience exchange with developed countries.

Moreover, the Vietnamese communist government's religious policies also restricted the Christian community from theological education and leadership development until recently. Right after Reunification, the communist government planned to build a socialist and secular society in the whole country. The communist government viewed traditional rituals and religious activities as backward superstition, wasteful of resources, antithetical to national construction, and incompatible with Marxist-Leninist ideology (Luong 2007, 440–41). Based on this understanding of religion, the government started to "impose anti-religious

(especially anti-Christian) policies” (Sunquist 2001, 882). The government confiscated church property, closed religious schools, arrested priests and sent them to re-education camps (Chu 2008, 163; Nguyen 2016, 200). For the ECVN, the state dismissed all missionaries, sent 90 pastors to reeducation camp, and closed all theological schools and ninety-nine percent of churches of ethnic Vietnamese origin (Truong 2009, 52; Sunquist 2001, 879–80).

This political situation severely affected the ECVN’s theological education and church leadership. The government’s religious policies have led to the impoverishment of the ECVN’s church leadership by causing the drain of leadership and the lack of theological opportunities. Due to the fear of the communist government, many pastors and laity from the ECVN migrated to the U.S. by boat after 1975 (Sunquist 2001, 882; Truong 2012, 95). Many of the remaining pastors were jailed and later migrated to the West after having served their term in the prison. Hence the church suffered the loss of many leaders.

Moreover, the state religious policies have also impoverished the ECVN’s leadership by making the ECVN-South’s status illegal until 2001 and closing its only BTI in Nha Trang until 2003 when the ECVN-South was allowed to reopen its theological training in Ho Chi Minh City. Though the ECVN-North was allowed to open its theological program in 1988, it could operate only for one batch 1988-1993 and trained only 15 preachers. Hence, during the period 1976-2003, both men and women from this church were deprived of theological education which was important to provide leaders for the growing church.

However, since 1990s, Vietnam changed its policy on domestic and international relations. Vietnam normalized its relationship with China in 1991 (after the war in 1979). In 1994, the US lifted its embargo on trade against Vietnam and normalized its diplomatic relations with Vietnam a year later. Vietnam became a member of ASEAN in 1995

and a member of World Trade Organization in 2008. It was also for the very first time that the Vietnamese communist government recognized lifelong existence of religion and the positive roles of religious culture and ethical values. This integration of Vietnam into the world started to open opportunities for foreign investment activities, and religious booming (Nguyen 2016, 201–6). This also means that opportunities for international travel and religious education have also been open.

As a result, after 1990s, overseas theological education became an option for Christians from Vietnam despite the fact that the government had not allowed theological education inside the country until 2003. For example, the Union University of California (UCC), established by overseas Vietnamese evangelicals in the U.S. has offered theological education both bachelor and master levels for Vietnamese students in Vietnam by distant training or sending them to other countries such as Cambodia and Thailand since 1991 (Truong 2012, 95–96).

Though women could access overseas theological education after 1990s, it is hard for women to improve their status within a short period. Additionally, since religion does not have a public role as it is in Indonesia, a religious or theological degree can only be utilized by religious institutions. In Vietnam, religion is not allowed to be taught at public schools and universities. Nor are religious organizations allowed to open public schools, universities and hospitals as they are in Indonesia. In the inputs to the Draft Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in 2015, the Vietnamese Government explains that:

“For the purpose of harmony and equality among religions, the Education Law as well as other laws prohibit the preaching of religion in schools to guarantee that all students and pupils have the independence and freedom to choose to follow a religion or to follow none. This is popular in many countries in which no religion is chosen as a national religion, and this is ab-

solutely not contrary to the international standards on human rights.”

(United Nations Human Rights 2015, 9)

Despite recent opportunities for theological education and international exchange open to Christian women in Vietnam, the long period of wars, the isolation of the country from the outside world, the repressive religious policies of the communist government, and the marginalization of religion in the public are strong factors that have shielded the gender structure of the ECVN from being destabilized.

4.4 Pressure to Change from Encounter with Other Progressive Christian Communities

Beside the cultural and political settings, the religious contexts of the ECVN and the Toraja Church also play a role in their own transformation toward women-inclusive leadership. For religious context, I limit the scope of my study to the relationship between these two institutions with other local and translocal Christian organizations. Indeed, the openness and encounter of Toraja Church with progressive Christian movements and alternative gender practices from neighboring churches motivates and pressures the Toraja Church to change; while, despite the existence of gender progressive Christian organizations inside and outside, the ECVN has mainly isolated itself from these Christian communities. This makes this church become a close system and prevents it from being destabilized.

4.4.1 Toraja Church: High Integration into the Wider Christian World

The Toraja Church became member of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (former name “DGI” and present name “PGI”) in 1950. It joined the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) which later be-

came Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) since 1964. In 1967, Toraja Church became member of the World Council of Churches and member of World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 1973 (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006a,55). Since these Christian ecumenical movements promote, among all, human rights, contextual theology, and gender equality, the Toraja Church, as a member, cannot escape from their influence. At the level of practice, churches in Indonesia started to ordain women as early as 1950s. For example, GMIT or The Evangelical Church of Eastern Indonesia ordained the first woman in 1953 (Sipora E. Niap 2015, 4). Therefore, the participation of Toraja Church in progressive Christian movements and its encounter with gender equality practices in neighboring churches possibly increased the church's awareness of alternative gender practice for the church. This can become both a motivation and a pressure for Toraja Church to change its patriarchal gender structure.

In fact, evidence from research data shows that this encounter did become the ground for change. For instance, one of the reasons raised for women's right to vote in the church during the Fifth General Synod Assembly of Toraja Church in Rantepao in 1955 shows an awareness of Torajan church toward gender structure reform in other Indonesian churches. This awareness was articulated by Musa "I agree with Rev. Sumbang that in the Indonesian Protestant Church, women also vote" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). Change did take place at this synod assembly which agreed to give women to right to vote for the first time. In the next synod assembly in Rantepao in 1957, feeling of under pressure by women's emancipation movement in other churches was expressed by Ds. C. Balke, a Dutch missionary:

"In Romans 16:1, what lesson is learned from this? According to the Greek word (diakonos) Romans 16:1, there was no deaconess in general church history. In practice, women were often helpers of deacons to do things which only women can, but they

should never hold church offices. What about today? In several churches, many women have already become elders and other church offices, because they bring emancipation reason into the church...”

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1957, 60)

The assembly was divided into two groups: pros and cons women’s right to be elected for church offices. The assembly leaders refused to change the church gender structure. Similarly in the next synod assembly in Makale in 1959, the assembly leaders turned down the proposal from Rombon/Ulusalu for women’s rights to church offices showing their awareness of women’s rights development in other churches as follows: “This is a worldwide problem. In Indonesian churches, women have already held church offices even become ordained pastors. However, Toraja Church has not had any regulation on this issue.” The proposal was again rejected (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1959, 76). The issue was brought up again in the Tenth Synod General Assembly in Makassar in 1965. This awareness of women’s emancipation in other churches was articulated by L.P. Tulung: “Basically is it right that Toraja Church does not want to use women resources in the church? While in other churches such as G.P.I.B have already used women in the church life.” The assembly leadership turned down this proposal again with the same reason as in the 1959 assembly (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1965, 43). The pressure from outside Christian agency on Toraja Church gender problem was also clearly expressed in the opinion of Drs. Th. Kobong during the Thirteenth General Synod Assembly in Palopo in 1972:

“[...] In relation to what Dr. Cooley said during the Pastor Conference in 1970 that Toraja Church was Men Church, this raised several challenges from many people because they paid attention to the issue of women’s church offices. However,

what was meant is that when listening to reports and seeing that women composed more than 50% of Toraja Church membership, he questioned why these reports did not mention women. The youth don't have to be afraid... If we want to draw their great potentials into the church, they can participate in any area that they can."

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1972, 66)

In this context, he was addressing the youths who were concerned about the exclusion of young women from church leadership perhaps after their hearing about their church gender problem from Dr. Cooley who was from the Research and Studies Department of PGI. There was openness toward women's participation in church life since this synod assembly. The next four synod assemblies in 1975, 1978 and 1981 saw the reformation of Toraja Church structure to accommodate women's rights and the complete change of the church gender structure in 1984. My interview with Rev. Angui-Pakan also shows that her Torajan male students felt regretted that Toraja Church did not use women such as their teacher, Rev. Anggui-Pakan; whereas other churches benefited from her services when she was working as a professor at Makassar Theological School. They later strongly supported women's equal rights with men in Toraja Church (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015).

To sum up, the Toraja Church's encounters with progressive Christian communities and gender equality practice in neighboring churches in Indonesia and in other parts of the world have proved to be strong external destabilizing forces to the church gender regime. The conjunction of these local and translocal structures have resulted in the transposibility of gender equality value and practices to Toraja Church. Though Toraja Church has inherited a gender equality culture before any other influences from GZB missionaries and other Christian churches, this cultural structure alone was perhaps not strong enough to speed up the transformation process without pressure from the emergent

gender equality practices from other Christian counterparts. Evidently the intense struggles for women's rights in this church started over in 1955 after a long period of silence since the first voice was raised in the first synod assembly in 1947. The period 1950s was the time when Toraja Church joined national and international ecumenical Christian movements. This intersection of Toraja Church's patriarchal gender structure with other gender equality structures from other churches served as the basis for resistance and transformation of the Toraja Church through time.

4.4.2 The ECVN: An Isolated and Close Religious Institution

While Toraja Church has a high degree of integration into the wider Christian world, the ECVN has been isolated not only from international progressive Christian movements but also from other Christian denominations inside the country. This factor also functions to strengthen the church's gender practices.

The ECVN is located in a nexus of other Protestant churches. During the period 1954-1975 in the south, several Protestant groups entered Vietnam such as Seven Day Adventist (1929), Mennonite (1954), Vietnam Christian Mission (1956), Baptist (1959), World Vision (1959), Disciples of Christ (1963), Jehova's Witness (1965), Assembly of God (1970), Presbyterian, Korean Protestantism, Bible Society, Summer Language Institute, World Council of Churches,... After Reunification in 1975, international organizations left Vietnam. Many of the new denominations also gradually disbanded. However, after Vietnam applied market economy policies at the end of 1980s, there was a revival and repenetration of many Protestant denominations in Vietnam. In 2005, more than 50 Protestant organizations and denominations operated in Vietnam. They can be divided into three groups: those before 1975 and still operating regularly until now such as Seven Day Adventist, Baptist, Truyen Giao Co Doc, Disciples of Christ; those after 1975

which stopped operation for a period of time and now operate again such as Mennonite, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Jehova's Witness; and those newly introduced to Vietnam or separated from existing denominations such as Christian Inter-Fellowship Church, Mormon, Nazarene, New Apostle, Foursquare Church, Brethren. The communist government has recognized several of these denominations such as Vietnam Christian Mission (2007), Baptist Church- Southern Grace (2008), Seven Day Adventist (2008), Baptist Vietnam-Southern (2008), Presbyterian Church of Vietnam (2008), Mennonite Church (2009), Vietnam Christian Inter-Fellowship Church (2010), and others (T. X. Nguyễn 2013, 303–6).

In 2016, the Vietnamese World Christian Fellowship listed 87 Protestant organizations and denominations in Vietnam. At least 16 organizations and denominations have ordained women such as Vietnam Christian Inter-Fellowship Church, Baptist Churches in Vietnam, United Presbyterian Church of Vietnam, the United Methodist Ministries, United Gospel Outreach Church, Vietnam Mennonite Church, Inter-Evangelistic Movement, Revival Ekklesia Mission, and others (Directory of Vietnamese Pastors and Churches Vietnam and Overseas 2016-2017, n.d.). A few of these denominations were separated from the ECVN- South such as Vietnam Christian Inter-Fellowship Church (1974) (C. T. Nguyễn 2016), Revival Ekklesia Mission (1983), and Inter-Evangelistic Movement in Vietnam (1988). The Inter-Evangelistic Movement Church ordained women in 1991 (Rev. D.T.T. 2016), and the Revival Ekklesia Mission ordained women in 2000 (Rev. V.X.L. 2016). Most of these denominations have charismatic orientation. This is also the reason that these organizations separated from the ECVN because this church does not accept charismatic ways of faith expression. My interviews with three ordained female pastors from three different denominations reveal that there is

little or no gender discrimination against them as female pastors (Rev. V.X.L. 2016; Rev. V. H. K 2016; Rev. D.T.T. 2016).

The ECVN also has a separated sister church abroad called Vietnamese- American District which has about 100 local churches with a membership of 15,000. The Vietnamese Christian Fellowship Directory estimates about 350 Vietnamese churches of all denominations in America alone, and another 150 in Canada, Australia, and other European countries (Truong 2009, 56). The Vietnamese Protestant Fellowship in Europe decided to ordain women in 2012 after 10 years of struggle. 24 out of 32 votes supported women's ordination (B. B. D. Nguyễn 2013, 119). In 2013, the Vietnamese church in Europe ordained its first women. (Rev. Thanh Dung. 2016). However, the C&MA Vietnamese Church in the U.S. have not ordained women (A.T. 2014).

Admst these radical changes concerning women's leadership that have taken place inside and outside the country, the ECVN has remained firm in its position regarding gender practices. Perhaps, the strongest factor that strengthens this stance is the isolatedness of the ECVN from progressive Christian organizations both outside and inside the country.

Since its establishment, the ECVN has not joined any international Christian ecumenical movements such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and any other International Christian Women Organizations. This isolation of the ECVN from the worldwide religious movements can be explained through the church's theological understanding of mission and the political context of Vietnam. Since the beginning, the church has inherited and maintained the CMA missionaries' understanding of mission as evangelism or converting people into the Christian faith. They view it as the only purpose of a Christian's life (Truong 2009, 75–76; Woods 2002, 155–56). Nguyen Thanh Xuan, a non-Christian Vietnamese scholar, commented on the ECVN- South' zeal for evangelism as follows:

“The evangelists of the ECVN-South in 1954-1975 were patient, clever and practical. Wherever they went, they were zealous to organize social activities, cared for daily needs such as food, clothes, shelter, funerals to leave good impressions, then gradually introduced the new faith. Especially, they also exploited the difficult socio-economic situations, the depressing situations of wars and disasters to draw people to the faith.”

(T. X. Nguyễn 2002, 393)

This zeal comes from the view that Christian faith is the only way to salvation, consequently the ECVN has ridiculed and discredited other religions in Vietnam such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The following is one of the views from the missionaries about religions in Vietnam, quoted by Nguyen Xuan Hung:

“Christianity (meaning Protestantism - author) is the only religion that can make Vietnam flourish. The false beliefs in Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Cao Daiism, animism, and sacrifice systems to gods of the ethnic minorities cannot save this people! Only Christ can help them. As Christians, our task is to bring Christ to them, because He can save them from illiteracy, superstition, dark power and witchcraft. Making Christ known to them is a respectable task of evangelists!”

(X. H. Nguyễn 2000a, 54)

Thus, it is difficult for the ECVN to accept the view of the equality of all faiths and interreligious dialogue as being promoted by WCC and CCA. Beside this, the ECVN has been under suspicion and close observation by the communist government for any of its connection with the outside world since this church is historically connected to colonial powers (Keyes 1996, 284–86; Woods 2002, 156–57; V. T. Lê 2010, 82). Hence, connection with international Christian organizations has not been a favorable choice for the ECVN. Therefore, this

narrow understanding of mission of the ECVN and its disconnectedness to progressive Christian movements such as the WCC and CCA have strengthened its conservatism. As a result, the system becomes stronger in its resistance to change, including the accommodation of women in leadership.

Beside isolating itself from the outside Christian world, the ECVN has also insulated itself from other Christian denominations inside the country. While Protestant groups in Indonesia started to unite all Protestant churches in the country into an ecumenical body called Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (now Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (PGI)) in 1950, Protestant churches in Vietnam have not been able to form such an ecumenical body. While other smaller Protestant groups have attempted to connect with each other such as Vietnam Evangelical Fellowship, Christian Fellowship of Vietnam, and Ha Noi Christian Fellowship (Directory of Vietnamese Pastors and Churches Vietnam and Overseas 2016-2017, n.d.), the ECVN, as the oldest and biggest Protestant church, has not shown any interest in connecting with other denominations around it. Due to historical and political situations of Vietnam, there exists deep divide between the ECVN and other denominations. According to an essay published in *Người Chấn Bậy*, a journal internally circulated within the ECVN-South, the leadership of the ECVN-South felt that other denominations fall short of the standard of being an equal partner with the ECVN. It stated: “The unrecognized status of the church created groups of people (inadequate to be called a denomination), individually separated from the church to form groups, self-train, self-assign, self-ordain and form churches of their own (“Phát Triển Hội Thánh Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại [Developing the Church at the Present]” 2000, 45).

My interviews with a couple of male leaders of the ECVN also confirm this attitude. For example, when I asked why the ECVN does not have fellowship with other denominations, one of them explained:

“The ECVN has a unique context. While denominations in other countries are good, denominations in Vietnam use leaders who are excommunicated by the ECVN. They become pastors after 2 weeks. Because of this, how can the leaders of the ECVN sit equally with leaders of other denominations? This includes the acceptance of women in leadership. These denominations use whatever they have. They have no quality. It is good to have strict rules as the ECVN. Most pastors who are excommunicated are because they don’t obey the church.”

(Rev. L.V.N.K. 2016).

Therefore, by isolating itself from other Christian communities both outside and inside the country, the ECVN has become a close community with its own rules. As being presented above, this isolation of the ECVN is caused by religious, historical and political contexts of Vietnam. The doctrinally fundamentalist orientation of the ECVN and the sensitive political context of Vietnam have contributed to the isolation of this church from the outside Christian communities. Additionally, the long period of unrecognized status of the ECVN and the instability of other denominations’ operation and leadership have become reasons for separation of this church from other Christian communities inside the country. This isolation also means that the patriarchal gender structure of the ECVN has fewer opportunities to be destabilized by external forces.

4.5 Institutional Dynamics: Toraja Church’s Openness to Reform versus The ECVN’s Patriarchal Conservatism

Beside cultural, political and religious forces, the institutional dynamics including leadership styles is also a strong factor that contributes to the differential transformation of the gender structures of the

Toraja Church and the ECVN. Indeed, Toraja Church and the ECVN seem to develop into different directions regarding their openness for reform. Specifically, while the Toraja Church has been flexible and open to reform, the ECVN seems to be conservative, authoritarian, and resistant to change. Additionally the integration of Toraja Church into the society and its provision of space for women's activism have expanded opportunities for women's participation in leadership. By contrast prejudices against women's leadership, the authoritarian manner of leadership and the practice of "hiring the husband and using his whole family" in the ECVN: have still thrived and functioned as obstacles to women's advancement in leadership, in this isolated and economically poor institution.

4.5.1 Toraja Church: An Open and Reforming Institution

In the process of development, the Toraja Church has been directed toward reformation seen through its perspective toward culture, doctrine, and intellectualism. Its integration into the society through public education ministry and its support for women's activism including feminist activism in the church have increased opportunities for women's participation in leadership. These factors facilitate change of church leaders' attitude toward women's role in the church.

Since its establishment, the Toraja Church has been through several reforms. One of them is the contextualization of Christianity into Toraja culture. Since 1923, the relationship between Toraja culture and the Christian faith has been the topic of discussion among the missionaries and Toraja church leaders. In 1929, they came up with specific restrictions regarding rituals. For example, it was forbidden to offer meat to the dead or to spirits, to sing song for the deceased in its narrative old version, and to believe that the souls of animals follow the dead (Rappoport 2004, 387). After 1965, the Toraja Church no longer viewed traditional culture as something shameful to suppress. In contrast, vari-

ous cultural aspects were adopted into the church such as costume, dance, music, and social stratification which means that office holders of regional and central boards were expected to come from upper social class. In 1980s and 1990s, the church even discussed whether or not to allow the practice of the tau-tau (statues of the dead) and the church reached a compromise in 1984. It strongly discouraged this practice; however, if the family of the dead wanted to have it, they should not have it paraded and displayed in the ritual (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 473). In Toraja Christian community today, two kinds of rituals – funerals and house festivals are lively practiced with “much of the old religious dramaturgy, including adornments, decorum, sacrifice of buffaloes and pigs, and certain dances and songs” (Rappoport 2004, 387–88). Hence, in this cultural respect, the Toraja Church is very contextual and flexible.

Regarding doctrine, the Toraja Church’s leadership was open-minded, democratic, and reformative. Since the beginning, local leaders of Toraja Church dared to raise their voices against doctrines and gender injustices which they viewed as inappropriate in the church. Torajan Christians have had democratic atmosphere for doctrinal criticism and doctrinal reform. As a result, after 1965, the Toraja Church not only contextualized Christianity into Toraja culture but also made a number of changes in its religious structure by dropping some of the Dutch conservative Calvinist features inherited from the missionaries. In 1981, the church adopted a new confession which expresses the Christian faith in a more contextual way; this church completely eliminated the classic Calvinist forms six years later. In 1984, the church admitted women to full church leadership (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 472). This is really a reformation.

Additionally, Toraja Church’s leadership is very supportive of intellectualism. Investment in education has also become a priority in the Toraja Church’s leadership training strategy since the beginning of the church life.

The church started to send people for higher theological education in liberal prestigious institutions such as Jakarta theological seminary and Union Theological Seminary in New York very early. For example, in 1960 Toraja Church sent 6 students including 1 female to Jakarta Seminary (Anggui 2011, 30–31); Rev. Theodorus Kobong was sent to Rijks Universiteit, Utrecht, Holland and Rev. A.J. Anggui was sent to Union Theological Seminary in New York (A. Kabanga' 2011, 180–81). The Toraja Church has made good use of these intellects after they graduated and returned home. Both Rev. Kobong and Rev. Anggui became leading and reforming leaders of theological education and church synod of Toraja Church. The case of Damaris M. Pakan is also an example of how Toraja Church values intellectualism. She was the first woman from Toraja who got theological education from Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1965. Even though women had not been accepted in church leadership by that time and only men could become professors at Rantepao Theological Seminary, she was invited to teach at this seminary to train pastors for this church. She has taught several important subjects such as Christian Education, Liturgy, Greek, Pastoral Care, Church History, and Ecumenism (Aleksander Mangoting 2011, 327). Once women are given opportunities to prove themselves, they can change history. Indeed, the presence and contribution of Damaris M. Pakan did bring changes to Torajan leaders' attitude toward women's role. She said that her students later strongly supported her ordination and women's rights in the church (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015).

Inherited from the GZB missionaries, the Toraja Church has had a strong social orientation especially through public education system. The GZB missionaries came to Toraja with three missions: (1) witness Jesus Christ as God and Savior, (2) educate people by opening schools, and (3) provide health services (Taruk 2013, 39). After the missionaries left, Toraja Church has inherited and developed 171 primary schools, 24 secondary schools, 1 high school in Rantepao, 1 Vocational School in Tagari, 1 university in Makale, a Theological School in Rantepao,

Elim Hospital in Rantepao, and other foundations (Taruk 2013, 37–38, 92–99; A. Kabanga' 2011, 167–200). The need of teaching personnel to supply these educational institutions became an impetus for the Toraja Church to open opportunities for women. Starting in 1962, women were admitted to Christian Education Teacher Training Programs (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006b, 69). This helped to increase the number of theologically educated women in Toraja Church in a short time. The presence of these women became a force for Toraja Church's leaders to create room for them to serve in the church. During the general synod assembly in 1978, the majority of Torajan leaders agreed to allow women with theological education to lead Sunday worships and those without theological education to lead family worships even though the church regulations had not admitted women to such rights (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 138–40).

Beside that, women in Toraja Church, through Toraja Church Women Fellowship (Persekutuan Wanita Gereja Toraja or PWGT) which was established in 1966, were also given space and freedom to carry out various activities including empowering women in family economy, spirituality, work skills, ecumenical activities, and leadership skills. This organization started to prepare women for teaching Sunday school, leading worship and preaching. As a result, women became more confident to raise their voice in church meetings and public gatherings and served side by side with men in the church and in the community. (Anggui-Pakan 2006, 26–29). Their contributions did bring change to the church leaders' attitude toward women. Women were allowed to have their voice at the general synod assembly in 1970. Mrs. A. Lebang represented PWGT to speak out for women's rights to lead church worship (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1970, 53). At the synod assembly in 1978, Rev. Lambe's supported women's rights by recognizing the women's contributions to the church life: "When remembering women's roles in churches, we strongly support this proposal but we

add that their involvement in leadership must be approved by the local church board.” The synod for the first time elected two women, Mrs. G.S. Kobong and Mrs. A. Lebang, as members of the synod committee (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 40, 168).

In short, as an institution, Toraja Church is flexible, democratic and open to reform through its contextualization of the Christian faith into Toraja culture, its courage to criticize and reform its doctrines and church structure including women’s leadership rights, and its support for intellectualism. Beside this openness to reform, this church had a strong social orientation especially through public education investment which gave women opportunities to acquire theological education. Moreover, by giving women space for feminist activism in the church, Toraja Church increased women’s opportunities to participate in leadership. All these factors have led to the change of church decision-makers’ attitude toward women’s roles.

4.5.2 The ECVN: Conservative and Authoritarian Leadership

Different from the Toraja Church, the ECVN seems to be conservative, and resistant to change seen in its attitudes towards Vietnamese culture, doctrine, and intellectualism. The authoritarian manner of leadership, prejudices against women’s leadership, and the practice of “hiring the man and using his whole family” in the ECVN have still thrived and functioned as obstacles to women’s advancement in leadership in this isolated and economically poor institution.

Over a hundred years of establishment, the ECVN has still maintained its conservative perspective toward Vietnamese culture through its doctrine and practices which demonize everything that belongs to the local culture. Rev. Dr. Truong, a theologian from the ECVN, commented that Following the approach of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Vietnamese Protestant Churches have negligently demonized almost everything that belongs to Vietnamese culture, seeing it as either

Satanic or unclean. Many Vietnamese Protestants devalue and denigrate the human and cultural treasures of their community, considering their fellow countrymen and women and their cultures to be worthless or demonic” (Truong 2009, 3).

Similarly Woods observes that due to its fundamentalist theology Vietnamese Protestants refuse to participate in any local traditions such as annual festival celebrations of municipality’s patron god and animistic-based rituals; thus social interaction is severely disrupted between Protestants and local people (Woods 2002, 155). Consequently the ECVN has been alienated to its own culture and people. Rev. Dr. Le Van Thien remarks “The church has become a close society with Christians living together and having no relationship with anything deemed “non-Christian”” (V. T. Lê 2010, 84). According to Nguyen Xuan Hung, a Vietnamese religion scholar, since 1970s, few leaders from the ECVN realized the problem rooted in theology, doctrine, and perspective. They dared to propose a substantial reform of the faith. However, he concluded that “in practice, it has not been clear” (X. H. Nguyễn 2000b, 84).

Recently there have been attempts from the ECVN’s scholars to inculturate the church through theological literature such as Rev. Dr. Le Hoang Phu, Rev. Dr. Le Van Thien, and Rev. Dr. Truong Van Thien Tu. However, their approach is still limited to intellectual conversations and most of them are residing in foreign countries except Rev. Dr. Le Van Thien who is still working with the ECVN in Vietnam but has not held any significant position in this church. Hence, their impact on the ECVN is not significant.

In addition to its alienation to Vietnamese culture, the ECVN has also held an anti-intellectual attitude, which has led to a poor and conservative leadership. According to Rev. Dr. Truong, from the very beginning, the C&MA missionaries aimed at missionizing the lower class. Consequently they have produced an “unhealthy church: poor and un-

educated”. By focusing on increasing membership and targeting at poor people, many churches are unable to pay salaries to their pastors on a regular basis. (Truong 2009, 59–60). The ECVN’s anti-intellectual attitude was originated from the C&MA missionaries’ fear of heresy and losing faith in the face of science and rationality. He remarked:

“[T]he anti-intellectual spirit that came from the fear of the CMA’s missionaries that in pursuing reason and rationality one could lose faith in God. Vietnamese Protestants were taught to be careful with knowledge and science. Many Vietnamese Protestants became literalists, and they found that many scientific claims went against their beliefs.”

(Truong 2012, 100)

“[W]hen asked about education, a vast majority of church members would answer that God only used those who had passion for God’s works, that knowledge would turn the church into a secular organization, and that the academy would lead the church astray and lead it to heresy.”

(Truong 2009, 62–63)

Perhaps it is this fear of heresy that has created no room for doctrinal criticism and reformation as what has taken place in the Toraja church. Such a fear has resulted in the ECVN’s discouragement of young preachers for further education and its underestimation of knowledge and intellects (H. P. Lê 2010, 392). A serious consequence of this fear is that the quality of the present leadership of the ECVN and its theological education is very poor. Rev. Dr. Truong observed the common situations of theological education in the ECVN and other Protestant churches in Vietnam as follows:

“Often the heads of the churches serve as the heads and deans of the schools, the vice presidents of the churches as the vice presi-

dents of the schools, although many are not qualified to serve as deans of theological schools. Besides, many of these church leaders hold many other official positions. Faculty members in many schools are unqualified. A number of teachers for bachelor programs did not even have a bachelor degree. Some schools do not have a sufficient number of qualified teachers for bachelor programmes but still offer master programmes.”

(Truong 2012, 97–98)

This leadership crisis has entailed other problems. One of the problems is inferiority complex which then turns into defense mechanism. For example, Rev. Dr. Le van Thien commented:

“The ECVN exists with an inferiority complex, isolating itself from all social relations, people around, culture and social responsibilities. However, this inferiority complex is covered by a superiority complex that emphasizes the separation of the church from the world. Some pastors in remote areas are not aware of their weaknesses. Some cover their weaknesses by struggling for a higher or more powerful position in the church in order to use their power to appropriate and cover their inferiority complex. Regarding the lack of updated knowledge, pastors of the ECVN are not aware that this is the time for them to equip themselves and the church necessary knowledge to adapt a new age”

(V. T. Lê 2010, 82–83)

Perhaps this inferiority complex is also a reason for the marginalization and even intolerance of the intellects within the ECVN. Evidently since 2000s several people from the ECVN-South have received their master’s and doctoral degrees in theological education and have returned to serve; however, very few people have been used. Those, who can enter the system usually after a long period of patiently waiting, do

not have much space to develop their ability. For example, regarding the teaching staff and the distribution of subjects among them in the ECVN-South's BTI in Ho Chi Minh City for the period 2011-2015, those top leaders of this Institute, who have just graduated from an internal five-year church training program and have not experienced any tertiary education, taught 10 to 12 subjects each, whereas most of those who have master's and doctor's degrees could teach only one to three subjects (Kỷ Yếu 2011-2015, n.d.).

I had chance to talk to a few women who have received their theological education abroad and returned to serve in the ECVN-South. They share a common marginalized situation. For example, Ms. T.X. has served in the ECVN-South for 10 years after getting her master's degree abroad. She said:

“In the first year after coming back home, I just volunteered to do anything. I just voluntarily got myself involved in any work. No one invited me. I quietly participated in my church. I used to be treated as a torn cloth for people to clean their feet. After a few years, one church noticed me and invited me, so the synod assigned me there. However, I have done all things voluntarily. I don't ask for anything.”

(T. X. a 58 year-old female preacher 2016)

Similarly, Ms. T.L. has received a doctoral degree in theology abroad. When I met her in 2015, she had been waiting for being recognized as female preacher for five years. She has just received this recognition in 2016. She confided:

“You see, as women, when we pop up, they look at us in a strange way, no respect at all. In the church, I just help the women in the kitchen to do the cleaning. Often I think If we continue like this and don't know the position that God has given us, that means we lower ourselves down. But if we know our

position, what will we do here? A young minor pastor has just been assigned to my church. He has been in ministry for only 8 years, but he looks at me in a very annoying and disrespectful way.”

(T.L. 58 year-old female preacher 2016)

With a doctoral degree, she was invited to teach at the BTI of the ECVN- South. She was eager to contribute her knowledge and ability to this task by writing and publishing books and teaching material. She confessed:

“For teaching material, I have to make them by myself. Even to ask permission to display my books there, they don’t allow it. I feel so sorry. For this, I invested a lot, but received no encouragement. I gave them the books, but they even didn’t say a word of thanks to me. I wanted to contribute, but the situation is like that. I surrender. Now i don’t want to do it anymore.”

This problem is not only faced by Ms. T.L. alone. Another woman who gets her master’s degree from the U.S. also said that she is not allowed to display her master thesis at the library of the Institute with the reason of preventing her from being arrogant (T.Kh. 60 year-old pastor’s wife 2016). My conversations with some other church leaders both men and women who who have received theological degrees from Vietnamese Theological Institutes in the U.S. such as UCC. They said that they even have to hide their degrees because they will have trouble if they make known their degrees to the leaders of the ECVN-South.

Beside this marginalization and intolerance of the intellectuals, perhaps what has blocked this church from being transformed is the authoritarian manner of leadership that has suppressed and silenced critical voices from the church. According to the Authoritarian Personality Theory, four of the nine characteristics of an authoritarian personality are (1) conventionalism: rigid adherence to conventional, middle-class

values; (2) authoritarian submission: submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the ingroup; (3) authoritarian aggression: tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, reject, and punish people who violate conventional values; and (4) power and "toughness": preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader- follower dimension; identification with power figures; overemphasis upon the conventionalized attributes of the ego; exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness (Sanford et al. 1950, 228).

Indeed, these characteristics are manifested in the leadership style of the ECVN-South. The discourses of submission, humility, unquestionable obedience to the hierarchy, and excommunication as the punishment for the disobedient often appeared in my interviews with church leaders and also in this church's publications. For example, in an essay addressing the development of the ECVN- South in 2000, it listed disobedience, as one of the reasons that made this church slow to develop. It stated "A few didn't obey the church organization, despise the church synod and districts, and manage their churches according to their own will" ("Ph t Triể̃n Hoi Th nh Trong Giai Đoạn Hiệ̃n Tại [Developing the Church at the Present]" 2000, 45). In an interview, a synod leader said "Most pastors who are excommunicated are because they don't obey the church." (Rev. L.V.N.K. 2016).

My interviews with female informants also revealed that the common leadership style of the ECVN-South is very authoritarian. One of them said "the church leaders follow the "ask-and-give" mechanism, and perhaps "whatever older people say is always right" (X.T. 35 years old 2015). Another informant revealed that the students at the BTI of the ECVN-South felt afraid to raise their opinions. She said:

"We studied abroad, every year students have an evaluation form. They have the freedom to speak out what they need to say. It is not to lower down the teacher, but to let the teacher know

his or her strengths and weaknesses so that he can improve himself. However, the students here told me that “If we speak out, we will die immediately”.

(T.L. 58 year-old female preacher 2016)

Regarding the issue of women’s discrimination in the church, I asked a few female informants both old and young why no one raised any voice. They all said the same thing that no one would listen to them. For example, Ms. T.X. said: “When we are in a system, we need to obey that system even if we don’t like it. I am quiet. It doesn’t mean that I accept it. It is just that I know well it is no use to talk. No one will listen. If we talk, it might have bad effects.” (T. X. a 58 year-old female preacher 2016). A well-respected pastor’s widow, 82 years old, also revealed that “In the church assembly, we (women) don’t have a voice. Women just sit and listen. They only join as guests.” She was also frustrated about the common leadership of the church. She stated:

“God’s work really need people who have special gifts and ability. I say a good leader must lead those who are better than him or her. If seeing anyone who is better, then don’t dare to use him or her, it is a loss for God’s work. Many people are like that, if seeing anyone better than him or her, then don’t dare to use, find way to suppress. It is not right, especially in Christianity. It should not be.”

(N.H. 82 years old 2016)

This authoritarian style of leadership is also found among top female leaders in this church. A couple of female informants who work under this top female leader complained that this female leader does not allow her lower-rank fellow workers to debate with her. She demands absolute obedience from her subordinates. She does not allow anyone to have a personal reputation. For example, she does not allow writers to state their names in their own books. Authors of books under her supervision

must be anonymous. (T. X. a 58 year-old female preacher 2016). Another female informant said she felt hurt and discouraged when she was reprimanded as being boastful by a senior female leader after she testified about God's blessings in her life at a women gathering (T.Kh. 60 year-old pastor's wife 2016). Facing such authoritarian leadership style, it is hard and risky for people of lower rank to raise their critical voices for improvement and transformation.

In the context of Vietnam, there are at least two factors that strengthen the ECVN-South's authoritarian leadership. First, since religious degrees are not utilized outside of religious institutions as they are in Indonesia, this situation leaves religious intellectuals very few choices and the religious system absolute power to decide what to do with these intellectuals. Second, the Vietnamese have long had the moral tradition of loyalty which is used to judge whether a person is good and trustworthy. While other emerging competitive denominations welcome these intellectuals, these religious intellectuals face this moral dilemma. A few have chosen to leave the ECVN to find a better place for their personal development ("Phát Triển Hội Thánh Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại [Developing the Church at the Present]" 2000, 45); however, many have chosen to stay within the ECVN-South to serve and hope for a miracle that the situation will change.

As I have presented in the cultural section that the majority of leaders of the ECVN have still held a strong prejudice against women's leadership, this makes the situation not only difficult for women to have opportunities to prove their ability but also discouraging for women to take up the leadership roles. For example, a female preacher confided:

"Whenever I was invited to preach, there was always problem. The male deacons question: "Why invited her?" For example, my colleague in Buon Ma Thuot invited me to preach. On that Sunday the church pastor was absent and he had assigned a male preacher to replace him to preach. This preacher saw me so he

invited me to preach. The male deacons reacted strongly. When the pastor came back, he also reprimanded this preacher for inviting me.”

(N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016)

Finally perhaps one stronger factor that has prevented the gender structure of the ECVN from being destabilized is the practice of “hiring the man and using his whole family” which means the church only hires a pastor but uses his his wife and children for free. This practice has flourished in this church because of the low economic condition of the majority of member churches. As being mentioned above, most churches within the ECVN-South are not able to pay their pastors’ salary on monthly basis. Hence, this practice is still favored by the church. My interviews with a couple of synod leaders also revealed another aspect of this practice. They both were very proud of this practice of the church. One of them said proudly: “The pastor is hired but his whole family must serve. I and my household will serve the Lord” (Rev. L.V.N.K. 2016). Perhaps for the men, this practice proves their success as head of the family by having their whole family follow and support their career. For the church, this is an extra gain because it pays one but uses three; whereas women are required to be single if they want to serve in the church and they have also suffered prejudices regarding their leadership capacity as having presented in Chapter Three of this dissertation. As a result, the old gender structure has still been resistant to change.

In brief, the conservative attitudes toward the culture and doctrine, and the marginalization and intolerance of intellectualism of the ECVN together with its authoritarian leadership style and the practice of “hiring one and using three” have shielded the gender structure of this religious institution from being destabilized and radically transformed as what has happened in the Toraja Church in Indonesia.

Table 4.1 Summary of findings on interconnection between context and gender structure contestation between Toraja Church and the ECVN

| Aspects for comparison | Toraja Church | The ECVN |
|--|--|--|
| Gender Equality Opportunities from Cultural Contexts | Dominant gender equality culture | Dominant Confucian patriarchal culture |
| Opportunities for Empowerment of Agency from Political Contexts | Favorable Political Context: education, religious profession, and international exchange | Unfavorable Political Context of the ECVN: long periods of wars, political isolation, repressive religious policies |
| Pressure to Change from Encounter with Other Progressive Christian Communities | High Integration into the Wider Christian World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of national and international Christian bodies | An Isolated and Close Religious Institution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet joining any national and international Christian bodies |
| Institutional Dynamics | An Open and Reforming Institution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open towards culture, doctrine, and intellectualism • Support of women's activism | Conservative and Authoritarian Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative toward culture, doctrine, and anti-intellectualism • Prejudices against women's leadership |

Source: secondary data and primary data from interviews, and fieldwork.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explained the different forms of accommodating women in leadership between the Toraja Church in Indonesia and the ECVN in Vietnam by examining the interconnection between cultural, political and religious contexts, institutional dynamics, and the contestation of the gender structure in each institution based on a combination of theoretical frameworks from William H. Sewell, Jr. (1992; 2005) and structural opportunity theories.

Regarding the cultural context, the intersection or conjuncture of conflicting gender values between the Toraja Church and Toraja culture did become tension and ground for resistance at both small and larger scales, which functions as a destabilizing force for the gender structure of this church. In contrast, despite the existence of gender equality discourses under the communist government and among the intellectuals, the dominant cultural discourses of Vietnamese culture obviously authorize the Confucian model of womanhood which prescribes women a subordinate position to men. These discourses resonate with those inside the ECVN, which consequently strengthens its patriarchal position rather than destabilizes it as what has happened in the Toraja Church.

Concerning the political context, the context of Toraja Church provides good opportunities for both Torajan men and women's empowerment through education and international exchange of ecumenical experiences which enables them to become reforming figures of the church including gender structure. On the contrary, in Vietnam, the long period of wars, the isolation of the country from the outside world, the repressive religious policies of the communist government, and the marginalization of religion in the public have shielded the gender structure of the ECVN from being destabilized. Recently opportunities for theological education and international exchange have been open to

Christian women in Vietnam; however, this period is not long enough to see the fruit of it.

Regarding the religious context, the Toraja Church's integration and encounters with progressive Christian communities and gender equality practice in neighboring churches in Indonesia and in other parts of the world have proved to be strong external destabilizing forces to the church gender regime. This intersection of Toraja Church's patriarchal gender structure with other gender equality structures from other churches served as the basis for resistance and transformation of the Toraja Church through time. Unlike the Toraja Church, the ECVN has isolated itself from other Christian communities both outside and inside the country due to religious, historical and political reasons. The doctrinally fundamentalist orientation of the ECVN and the sensitive political context of Vietnam have contributed to the isolation of this church from the outside Christian communities. Additionally, the long period of unrecognized status of the ECVN and the instability of other denominations' operation and leadership have become reasons for separation of this church from other Christian communities inside the country. As a result, the church has existed with its own world and rules.

Beside cultural, political and religious contexts, the institutional dynamics is also a strong factor that contributes to the differential transformation of the two churches. While the Toraja church has directed toward openness and flexibility to reform seen in its attitudes toward culture, doctrine and intellectualism, the ECVN has moved toward conservatism and resistance to change in these areas. The Toraja Church has provided more space for criticism and intellects to contribute to the church development. In contrast, the ECVN has generally shown an authoritarian and intolerant attitude toward criticism and intellects. Additionally the integration of Toraja Church into the society and its provision of space for women's activism including feminist goals have expanded opportunities for women's participation in leadership.

By contrast, the authoritarian practices of “hiring the pastor and using his whole family free”, in the ECVN, have still thrived and functioned as obstacles to women’s advancement in leadership, in the context of this isolated and economically poor institution.

Sewell’s theory of “conjuncture of structures” is helpful to explain structural transformation by referring to the transposibility of symbols or meanings across structures. However, it cannot explain why social actors are willing or unwilling to adopt certain values. For instance, the Torajan Church is willing to adopt gender equality values from their culture and other Christian churches whereas the GZB missionaries and the ECVN refuse to adopt such values despite the existence of these values in their own contexts. This study suggests that the willingness to adopt values across structures depend on not only personal preference such as the GZB missionaries but also structural opportunities. The context of Toraja Church creates more gendered opportunities for altering the religious leaders’ gender perspective whereas gendered opportunities are few in the context of the ECVN. The biggest opportunity is from the communist gender framework; however, this opportunity seems hindered by the problematic relationship between the communist government and this church.

Similar to what Tremper found in her study about credentialed women in the Foursquare Church in the United States (2013), gender prejudices and the practice of “hiring the husband and using his wife and children free” have been a strong obstacle to women’s leadership in the ECVN. Women have faced the stereotypes that they are inferior to men in leadership capacity. For pastors’ wives, though many of them are equally qualified with their husbands in terms of education and leadership skills, only the husbands get ordained and the title of “pastor”. The wives are to support their husbands through wifehood and motherhood. For female preachers, they have to be single. Hence, they lack similar support as the men do. This can be a hindrance for younger

female generation to enter the religious career. These elements function to prevent the ECVN's male-dominated structure from being decayed at least for the past 100 years.

INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN AGENCY AND GENDER STRUCTURE CHANGE: COMPARING TORAJA CHURCH AND THE ECVN

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how human agency contributes to the differential transformation of the Toraja Church and the ECVN based on a synthesized theoretical framework of agency from William H. Sewell, Jr., Sherry B. Ortner, structural opportunity theories, and feminist theories of agency. In Sewell's model of agency, agents are constitutive of structures which are multiple, intersecting, and transposable. Thus, structural transformation can be explained by analyzing the acting subject's creative use of symbolic symbols and meanings across structures and its dynamic use of resources. This chapter uses Sewell's theory as a tool to explain the formation of the acting subject's subjectivity by examining how the intersection of wider cultural, political and religious structures results in the acting subject's adoption of gender values from these structures to transform the church structure. Indeed, Sewell's theory is applicable for analyzing the agency in Toraja Church where the acting agents are located in a web of different longstanding and emergent gender values and practices. Research data also strongly support the transposability of egalitarian gender values across structures which leads to the persistent struggle of the agents. However,

Sewell's theory cannot be fully applied for the agency in the ECVN since its agency is pragmatic, momentary, and dependent on changes in political context. For this case, I will use opportunity structure theory to explain the formation and sources of the agency in this religious institution. According to this theory, acting subjects generally do not have a prior plan before their act. Their agency often comes after the changes of the context which create new opportunities for them. Nevertheless, both theories are flexibly applied where deemed appropriate.

In this chapter, Ortner's framework of two modes of agency is used as the primary method of agency analysis for both case studies. Ortner adopts Sewell's view that agency is inherent and intentional in human beings. She views agency always as the pursuit of culturally and historically constituted projects whether good or evil in a world of power asymmetry. Every social actor enters the social life always with a project which is informed by the wider cultural and historical contexts similar to a player entering a serious game with his or her own goal which is formed according to existing rules. He or she tries to achieve the project or goal in a web of unequal power relations. This chapter will apply her theory to analyze the two modes of agency in each case by examining the subjectivity of the agency and its strategies to achieve the projects. Through the lens of her agency framework, agency is lively in all social actors including those who are viewed as being deeply indoctrinated because they also have their own project and try to achieve it. This method is helpful to picture various agents in both cases.

However, in order to trace structural change, this study distinguishes two types of projects: feminist project and non-feminist project. Feminist project is the one that pushes for structural change while non-feminist project embodies or avoids confronting the existing patriarchal structure. This chapter will pay attention to two types of projects.

Employing these theories, this chapter argues that the different forms of gender structure transformation between the Toraja Church and the ECVN is to a certain extent due to: (1) the degree of support and identification with the struggle by male leaders; (2) the dominant existence of women's feminist projects and the degree of their success in turning their feminist projects into a collective effort. The findings reveal that the struggle for women's rights in Toraja Church involved powerful male leaders and their collective support in the early period. The Torajan women agents have developed clear common feminist projects and successfully turned them into a collective effort under the leadership of influential feminist leaders. In contrast, the struggle for women's rights in the ECVN has faced more resistance than support from male leaders. The Vietnamese women agents have diverged in their projects most of which direct toward community needs and avoid challenging the gender status quo. Feminist projects in the ECVN have been present but minimal and have not successfully mobilized a collective support from the women and are mostly carried out at individual basis due to the gap of gender worldviews among the women and the lack of influential feminist leaders.

5.2 The Support and Identification with Gender Equality Struggles by Male Leaders

It is undeniable that men have generally played the main role in defining women's roles, restricting and excluding them from public domains as being reflected in feminist and other literature (Carr & Schuurman 1996:12-13; Ellison 2001:41-67; Rambachan 2001:17-39; Stearns 2000). However, there are scholars who see the important role of men in transforming gender relations in religious and other structures. For example, Bob Pease argues that "Unless one is positing a separatist vision of a world without men, women's prospects for libera-

tion require the capacity of men to change” (Pease 2000:18). Thulani Ndlazi, an ordained minister in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, states that “Religious men have an important role to play in transforming gender relations and ensuring gender equality in religious institutions and groupings” because of “the platform that they already have and influential position they hold in society” (Ndlazi 2004:63). In the same light of thought, this dissertation argues that male leaders play significant roles even decisive ones in the success of gender equality struggles in religious institutions as exemplified by the Toraja Church and the ECVN.

The process of transformation of Toraja Church toward women-inclusive leadership is a process of active participation of male leaders especially top leaders. The male leaders play a dominant role in this church transformation in the early period in which they persistently struggled for gender equality until the formal structure was transformed. In contrast, this struggle in the ECVN has a dynamic development. There have been progressive moves and backslides made by male decision-makers regarding women’s rights throughout the church journey. The men’s support for women has shown to be pragmatic and momentary rather than well-planned and persistent as their Torajan counterpart’s.

Generally this struggle has faced more resistance than support from male leaders throughout the church life. The support and identification of Toraja male leaders with the struggle brought transformation to this church while the momentary support and distance of the ECVN’s male leaders from gender equality struggle gave room for the reinforcement of the male-dominated structure.

5.2.1 The Long and Persistent Struggle of Toraja Men for Gender Equality

Male leaders in Toraja Church have played a significant role in the transformation of this church toward women-inclusive leadership through various strategies ranging from persistently confronting gender discrimination, to utilizing their position to empower women through education and raise gender equality awareness in churches, and to creating room for women to serve and prove themselves.

a) Persistent Confrontation of Gender Discrimination

Men's support for women's rights in Toraja Church began even before the church was established in 1947. For example, in a discussion on women's rights to vote for church offices at a Missionary Conference in Rantepao in 1937, four out of total seven people agreed to give women the right to vote while only three members disagreed. However, this decision was not realized because the missionary leaders did not approve (Anggui 2006, 42).

Since the Toraja Church became established in 1947, this struggle of male leaders became more obvious and heated through several synod general assemblies. Prominent leaders such as F. Bura, Rev. J. Sumbung, Rev. J. Linting, M. Lebang, and Rev. A.J. Anggui continued to struggle for women and men to have the same rights and duties in the church. Among these leaders, Rev. J. Sumbung, Rev. J. Linting, and Rev. A.J. Anggui held the highest position (general chairman) in Toraja church synod for several periods. The men's struggles were recorded in details in the records of these assemblies especially during the first assembly in 1947, the fifth assembly in 1955, the seventh assembly in 1959, the twelfth assembly in 1970, the thirteenth assembly in 1972, and the fifteenth assembly in 1978.

b) Utilizing Personal Positions to Empower Women and Raising Gender Awareness

Besides persistently raising their voices against gender discrimination in the church assemblies, Torajan male leaders also made use of their influential positions to empower women and raise gender awareness in the Christian community. Prominent among these leaders is Rev. A.J. Anggui (M.Th.). He was elected general chairman of Toraja Church synod for four periods. He was also former rector of The Theological Seminary Intim Makassar (Rev. A.J. Anggui,

2011:36). Rev. Anggui had seen that the future of Toraja Church must include women, so he managed within his power to help women step by step. Toraja Church began to admit women to Christian Education program to become religion teachers in 1967, but did not allow them to study theology to become pastors as their male partners at that time. There were two separate programs: one to train teacher of religion and the other to train pastors for churches. Only male students could enter the latter program. During that time, Rev. Anggui was general secretary of the synod and also led the Theological School in Rante-pao. He saw that women also needed theological education to become effective church leaders. He was advised by Rector of Jakarta Theological Seminary at that time that he needed to train more female theologians before he raised a voice for them. He knew that he would face objection from the missionaries if he directly struggled for women to enter the Theological School. Missionaries had strong power because they funded these schools during the time. Therefore, he wisely designed the curriculum for both programs to have the same subjects except the last year subjects.(Rev. A.J. Anggui 2015; Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015). The advantage was that students from the Christian Education Program could take extra subjects from the Pastor Program if they wanted to be pastors. There were women who later became pastor from this program such as Rev. Ribka Sinda, the second ordained female pastor of Toraja Church.

In the first period of accepting women as pastors in churches, there were objections from conservative men who felt that they needed to hold firm to biblical passages that forbid women to speak in public. As a synod leader, Rev. Anggui felt responsible for opening the mind of these men. He had theological conversations with them using biblical passages which support women to become prophets and equality of men and women in work of the Spirit. (Rev. A.J. Anggui 2015). A female lay-leader also told me in an interview that whenever Rev. Anggui was invited to preach at churches on special occasions, he inserted in his sermons that men and women were the same in front of God. By this way and with his high position in the Toraja Church synod, he could make great influence on Torajan Christian community regarding the acceptance of women in church leadership.

c) Creating Room for Women to Serve and Prove Themselves

Another strategy used by Torajan male leaders to support women's leadership is to create room for women to serve and prove themselves. This was lively in the experiences of female pastors of the first generation.

For instance, according to Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan, the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church, after she graduated from Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1965 and came back, Toraja Church had not admitted women to church ministries at that time. Only men could become professors at The Theological School in Rantepao. However, thanks to the support of male colleagues, the church synod immediately lifted her to teach at this theological school and later at The Intim Makassar Theological Seminary until 1985. For 20 years as seminary professor, she had trained many generations of church leaders for Indonesia. Many of them later strongly supported her ordination in Toraja Church.

Rev. Ribka Sinda also shared in an interview that in the early period of accepting women in church ministries, there were reluctance and objections from local churches toward receiving women as church leaders since women's leadership was still a new practice. However, within this situation, she experienced help and encouragement from male church leaders. After she graduated from Christian Education School in 1979, she became teacher of religion and was active in the church women organization. She attended church in Tangmentoe. There was a shortage of pastors so many churches did not have preachers. The board of deacons (all men) at her church decided to invite her to preach at the church. An elder who had high status in the community assured her that she should not be afraid if there was anyone who did not receive her. Because of this, she became motivated and confident to serve as preacher at this church until 1984.

Rev. Ribka also revealed that in this early period, Rev. A.J. Anggui was general chairman of the Toraja Church synod and he played a significant role in placing and assisting female pastors to serve at local churches. The placement of female pastors to local churches faced much difficulty since the churches were not used to women as leaders. However, Rev. Anggui had confidence in women's ability to serve. He was patient to connect and negotiate with leaders of churches so that female pastor candidates could be given a chance to serve and prove themselves. Thanks to his care and help, several female pastors including Rev. Ribka herself and her supervisees were accepted and succeeded in transforming the church's view toward women. (Rev. Ribka Sinda 2015).

Indeed, it was the sharing of opportunities and support from powerful church leaders that help Torajan women of early period gain confidence and prove their ability. The ordained minister of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Thulani Ndlazi, correctly stated that it is the very "platform" and "influential position" that reli-

gious men hold in religious organizations and the society that make their role important in “transforming gender relations and ensuring gender equality” in these religious organizations (Ndlazi 2004:63). The case of Toraja Church is a typical example. The Torajan male leaders have utilized their powerful positions to struggle for gender equality through various strategies as found in this research, namely persistent confrontation of gender discrimination, utilizing personal positions to empower women and raise gender awareness, and creating room for women to serve and prove themselves.

5.2.2 The Pragmatic and Momentary Struggle of the ECVN’s Men

In contrast to the long and persistent struggle of Torajan male leaders for gender equality in Toraja Church, the male supporters of women’s rights in the ECVN, for the most part, seem pragmatic and momentary without any long-term plan. Another striking difference between Toraja case and the ECVN case is the underlying gender perspective of their struggles. While Toraja male leaders directed the struggle toward gender equality, those of the ECVN directed their struggle toward helping women or solving urgent needs of the church without changing the underlying gender schema. Based on fragmented data collected from various sources, this argument is preliminary.

a) Helping Women without Planning

For instance, around 1950, single women were admitted to the Bible School in Da Nang. Perhaps it was for the first time that single women could access theological education. This was under the leadership of Rev. Ong Van Huyen and Rev. J. D. Olsen (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God’s servants]* 2011, 136, 271). These women were accepted to the Bible School; however, the leadership of the ECVN had no plan to use them. They were expected to find husbands among the male students if they wanted

to fulfill their calling and utilizing their training. If not, they would just return home and live life of a normal Christian.

Evidence shows that these male leaders allowed single women to enter the Bible School possibly because they could not refuse the wishes of their fellow workers and their female children. It was their pragmatic and momentary response to the quest of others. For example, Ms. Huynh Thi Hoang entered the Da Nang Bible School in 1950 as a single woman. She was the 11th daughter of Rev. Huynh Kim Luyen. After finishing the first year, she was pushed by Rev. Ong Van Huyen, Head of the School, to marry a male student or else she could not fulfill her calling to be an evangelist to the ethnic minorities (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 105–8).

Another example is Mrs. N.H. She was a pastor's kid. In 1950, as a pastor's wife, her mother joined a pastor's wife meeting. Mrs. J.D. Olsen was the speaker. Mrs. Olsen urged these women to encourage their children to follow the footstep of their parents. Her mother felt touched. Coming home, she encouraged her single daughter, Ms. N.H. to offer life for God. This young girl agreed. However, they did not have money to pay the school fees. Her mother wrote a letter to the head of the school, Mr. Olsen, to express her wish to offer her daughter for God and ask his opinion. It was quite late for the school year. Mr. Olsen asked them to pray while he found ways to raise funds for her studies at the Da Nang Bible School. Later he replied and said that Ms. N.H. could join the Bible School. She entered this school in 1951 as a single woman. There she met her husband (N.H. 82 years old 2016).

The conversation between Ms. Huynh Thi Hoang and Rev. Ong Van Huyen and the correspondence between Ms. N.H.'s mother and Mr. Olsen illuminate that the close relations between these male leaders and the female agents and their families is likely to be a strong force that made these men open the opportunity for women to enter the Bible

School. However, they could not do much to help these women after they graduated.

b) Fighting for Women and Accepting Women Because of the Urgent Needs of the Church

From 1976 to 1999, the ECVN-South was not recognized by the communist government, so was its synod and leadership. Several leaders migrated to the West. Several others were sent to re-education camps by the government. There was a leadership crisis. This church synod was led by Rev. Ong Van Huyen (1976-1999) and Rev. Doan Van Mieng (1976-1994). (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 131, 193). Despite this unrecognized status, the synod's authority was recognized and obeyed within this church. Since the local authorities only recognized local churches and their leaders, assigning new leaders or moving leaders from one place to another was not possible. In this situation of leadership crisis, a few women stood up to take the leadership roles. Consequently they faced resistance from male leaders because they were women. There were local men who fought for women's leadership in emergency and there were reluctant acceptance of women's leadership from top leaders. For example, the life story of pastor's widow N.H., 82 years old, is an example. She said:

"I and my husband served at M.T. church for 26 years. Then in 1988 my husband passed away. The painful thing was that our church leaders didn't agree for women to lead the church (laughing with bitterness). When the church invited me to minister to the church in the place of my husband, the district level strongly objected. However, the church council strongly supported me and wanted me instead of the two young male pastor assistants to lead the church because they reasoned that these two young men were inexperienced and compitative and would not obey

each other. They said to me, “Mrs. Pastor, you are like our mother. You need to lead us or else the church will be chaotic.” Seeing their genuine support and the urgent need of the church, I advised them to bring the issue to the two top leaders, Rev. Ong Van Huyen and Rev. Doan Van Mieng. They followed my advice and went to see these two leaders. The two leaders understood well the situation and they issued a letter to the district level to recognize my leadership. I understood that these two leaders had no other choice than accept my leadership because of the difficult political situation. When the district leaders got this letter, they had to accept me because it was order from the top leadership. However, they granted me only one term of 2 years for my leadership there and only recognized me as acting “on behalf of minister” instead of “minister” to the church. I served joyfully and built a new parsonage within my two-year term. After my term was ended. The district leaders sent a letter to the church and asked me to leave. The church again voted (100%) for me to stay and lead the church. However, the district male leaders disagreed. Consequently the church council and the district male leaders were fighting for a period of time. The church even brought the issue to the local authorities. However, the authorities refused to get involved because they did not recognize the district leadership. Because of God’s name and the need of the church, I agreed to stay and help the church. I told the two male pastor assistants to lead the church while I was behind to advise and assist them. When seeing these two pastors became mature, I left the church.”

(N.H. 82 years old 2016)

Mrs. N.H.’s story shows that her leadership was fought for and accepted because of the emergency of the situation. The local men fought for her leadership because they were afraid that the church situation

would get worse with the leadership of two compatible young male pastor assistants. Since they did not have any plan to fight for gender equality, their support did not last long until the two young leaders were mature enough to lead to church. Regarding the top leaders, they reluctantly accepted her leadership because of the urgent situation.

Soon after her term was finished, the male leaders from the district level dismissed her. No interference was made from the synod level to solve the problem, either. This shows that there was no intention from top leaders to struggle for gender equality in the church. Their acceptance of women was rather pragmatic and momentary.

c) Giving Women Space but Must Be Subordinate to Men

This is evident in several efforts made by men along the ECVN's history. For example, in 1955 and 1968, the male leaders made effort to improve women's status in the church by giving them an office called "female preacher" with several conditions that subordinated women to men. They were barred not only from ordination but also from administering to local churches; while their male counterparts had full access to such rights because they are male. The single women were allowed to work in institutional offices which, in fact, did not require theological degree. Moreover, they were not allowed to marry men who were not preachers or pastors if they wanted to keep their office. Nevertheless, these efforts failed. In 2001, the ECVN-South's synod made another effort to formally recognize single women graduated from theological seminary as female preacher in its constitution. After this official recognition, the number of female preachers increases within a short time. According to the official website of the ECVN- South, there were 19 female preachers in 2012 ("Danh Ba [Directory]" 2012). This number was doubled or 38 female preachers in 2016 only within 4 years' time ("Danh Bạ [Directory]" 2016). There is evidence that there was recognition of women's ability and contributions from some male

leaders; however, women were still viewed as subordinate to men. For example, an essay published in an internal journal of the ECVN-South in 2000 stated:

“We need to pay attention to women in the church who account for 2/3 of the church membership. We can train female preachers and deaconess according to the Charter. The Charter needs revising regarding this issue to assign more women in ministry so they can contribute to developing the church. Encourage single women to participate in Women Mission Programs.”

(“Phát Triển Hội Thánh Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại
[Developing the Church at the Present]” 2000, 47)

Similarly Mr. Tu Anh Truong’s master thesis in 2002 reflected the idea of Pastor Son Xuan Nguyen as follows:

“The female students of today will become active agents in the society of tomorrow. In some other countries, such as Singapore and Korea, female students play many important roles in the development of the church. They are eager in teaching and training. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam needs to recognize the role of women in the church and create many chances for them to serve in different areas. The church should also encourage male students to become leaders and should help them to recognize their talents and abilities in serving God.”

(Truong 2002, 80)

Though these leaders support women to participate more in church ministries, it seems that they still place some restrictions on women’s leadership such as stressing celibacy as a requirement for women’s participation in leadership and restricting women’s fields to women ministries, teaching and training. However, until now after 15 years, no male

leader has raised their voice against this gender discrimination in the ECVN-South. Though these men recognize women's roles and contributions to the church, they are still gender-biased.

To sum up, similar to Toraja church, the male leaders in the ECVN play a significant role in deciding the space for women in this church. However, what differentiates the ECVN from Toraja Church is the gender perspective underlying their struggles. While Toraja men aimed at gender equality, the men from the ECVN did not have such an intention. They still viewed women as subordinate to men. The one term that can explain the men's agency that supports women's rights in the ECVN is pragmatic rather than having a planned project. Their agency was formulated primarily from social relations with the female agents and their families and from the changes in political context. When they were able to help, they acted within their power perhaps without any long-term plan or strategies. Though there have been sympathetic voices from men who recognize women's ability and contributions to the church, the overall situation shows that male leaders from the ECVN generally have not had a concept or plan to struggle for gender equality. This can help to explain, to a certain extent, the duration of the male-dominated structure in the ECVN.

5.2.3 Sources of Agency

The above evidence shows that men's agency exists in both Toraja Church and the ECVN. Their agency even plays a decisive role in the process of gender structural change. The Toraja men sought to change the conservative and patriarchal elements of the structure. They struggled for women's rights even before the church was established and before women had a voice for themselves. Many of them are top leaders of the structure. These men situate in powerful positions and superior status sanctioned by the religious structure. What made them willing to share it with the women? Similarly some male leaders from the

ECVN also made efforts to improve women's rights though their support was mostly momentary and pragmatic. What enabled their agency?

The study assumes that men are not merely driven by women's interest but they also have their own interest or project which gives them power and commitment to pursue it. This group of agency which can be called sympathizers or empathizers of women's cause has been left out in most feminist studies of this issue. Yet this study argues that their role is significant in women's rights struggle. It is not easy to exhaustably grasp the men agents' subjectivity which leads to their agency even though their change-seeking strategies can be identified.

Regarding Toraja men, since their struggle involved a collective effort and through a long period of time, their struggle can be said to move beyond individual interest. It is possible to assume that their agency is informed by common values that run deep and widespread in the life of several Torajan men throughout time. The author perceives, to a certain extent as the data reveal, in these men's agency project a sense of gender justice and empathy which is informed by their cultural, religious and social frameworks. Treating women with justice and being empathic to the needs of women are integral to the Torajan cultural and religious views of being a good man and a good leader. Structural opportunity also plays a role in Toraja men's agency; however, it is more a catalyst rather than the main motivation.

Concerning men's agency in the ECVN, their support for women was mostly pragmatic, momentary, and individual. They have still viewed women as subordinate to men. Data show that their agency is dominantly motivated by structural opportunities and oftentimes by empathy. Gender justice agency has not emerged since they have still taken for granted the patriarchal system. Their projects are generally how to accommodate women's needs in the structure and how to help men deal with changes in political context.

5.2.3.1 Gender Justice Agency (Toraja Church)

A sense of gender justice is treated here as a moral value that men and women must be treated with equal dignity and opportunities regardless of their gender. As being argued above, since men supporters from the ECVN have still viewed women as subordinate to men or taken for granted the patriarchal gender paradigm, gender justice agency has not emerged in this church. Therefore, this part will focus on analyzing gender justice agency in Toraja Church.

Gender justice is built into Toraja men's project from their cultural and evolving theological frameworks. According to Toraja culture, a good person or a good man must treat their women with respect and their children equally as the previous chapter on Torajan culture has shown. As the example of the seven Torajan students who requested for financial aid from Toraja Church to study at Jakarta Theological School in 1960 has revealed, while the church gave financial help to only six male students but not the female student, the six male students decided to share their scholarships into seven so the female student could get the same amount of financial aid (Anggui 2011, 31). This is a sense of gender justice as part of being a good human that the male students' culture has cultivated in them. This enables their agency to resist the discriminative treatment of the church.

Another example is the story of Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan who is the female student in the above story. She is the fourth child of a twelve children family. Her father treated them equally. When she felt called to enter Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1959, her father supported her even though women had not been accepted as pastor in the church. A Dutch missionary questioned her father "Why did you send your daughter to the pastor school?" He answered "Uh, I want her to be useful for her female neighbors. Even though she can't become a pastor, she can be useful for the women group." (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015).

This counter-trend practice of the father is indeed empowered by the cultural sense of gender justice.

The fact that the Torajan male leaders struggled for women's rights very early even before Western feminist theology was born and their persistently raising voices for women's rights through several church synod assemblies as presented in the cultural section of this paper shows that their sense of gender justice must come from their culture.

Beside the cultural source, the theological source also builds into the male agents' projects a sense of gender justice as it is shown in their discourses developed through several Toraja Church synod assemblies. To be a good Christian, one must treat others with equal dignity and to be a good leader, one must follow Jesus's example to uplift women. For example, during the church synod assembly in Rantepao in 1955, for the first time, a clear theological articulation on women's rights emerged through two church leaders who became General Chairman of the church synod in the following church synods.

Sumbung: I agree with Mr. Ramba' that after World War II women demand their rights. Indeed Jesus has permitted them to do so. If women are given social rights, they should be given rights to vote but not to be elected.

J. Linting: I agree with Sir. Schrotten. Give women the right to vote with consideration of the church development. In the beginning, Jesus lifted up women. Why do we now view women as lower than we are? I agree to give rights to women with our guidance.

(Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38–39)

In these men's theological discourses, to be a good leader is to follow Jesus' example to uplift women and treat women as equal with men. Since these synods, these prominent leaders and others of the same mind continued to struggle for women and men to have the same rights and duties in the church by persistently raising their voices for women's rights in later synod assemblies.

Similarly at the synod assembly in 1965, a proposal from the Youth of Toraja Church raised the issue of women's participation in church leadership with a strong gender equality theology. It states: "So that women also take part in the the church life because: a) female young people are pillars of the church; b) in front of God there is no difference between men and women." (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1965, 43). Finally in the synod assembly in Rantepao in 1978, the Toraja leaders made a theological consensus and declared "We have already been aware that the roles of men and women in God's congregation are not different." (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 130).

This shows that theology of gender justice together with Torajan egalitarian cultural value has become the force to enable the men's agency to transform the gender structure. The intersection of cultural structure with the church patriarchal gender structure and the conjunction of this gender structure with other Christian structures have resulted in the transposibility of gender equality values and theological reflections of Torajan agents in their own church context. They are able to creatively utilize their power to make a decision to benefit women, but above all to serve their own project of how to be a good man and a good leader which is shaped by their cultural and theological frameworks.

5.3.3.2 Empathy Agency

Empathy here is treated as the ability to understand the feelings and needs of others and feel compelled to help. In this case, it is the men's ability to understand the women's feelings and needs and feel obliged

to act on behalf of women. The content and expressions of empathy are supposed to be culturally diverse. Research data show that empathy agency exists among male agents in both Toraja Church and the ECVN. This type of agency is informed by the cultural context of both churches.

a) *Toraja Church*

According to Douglas W. Hollan's work "Vicissitudes of "Empathy" in a Rural Toraja Village" published in *The Anthropology of Empathy: Experiencing the Lives of Others in Pacific Societies* (2011), Toraja society is built on a system of dependency and reciprocal exchange. He states "Exchange is so central to sociality in Toraja, so basic to what is considered human, that there are moral and emotional aspects to it as well" (Hollan 2011, 199). Torajan people feel obliged to help if they feel the needs and concerns of the other are legitimate. People can feel deep shame if their needs are neglected or they fail to help others or let others down. In Toraja, the concept of "love" involves the concern and compassion for the other's needs, and plights and take action for help as if one has no other choice. If the appeal for help is from a kinsman, this can stimulate a "powerful feeling of love/compassion/pity for that person" (Hollan 2011, 199).

Hollan also finds that the Torajans' empathy is restricted when they perceive the appeal for help is not genuine or beyond their capacity. Nor do they extend their empathy toward the lowlander Muslims and animals (Hollan 2011, 196, 204–5). Whether or not this sense of empathy also comes from the Christian values of love and compassion is not clear. Hollan seems to assume this but he does not have enough evidence. However, in my opinion, it is not likely that this sense of empathy has its foundation from the Dutch missionaries' Christianity because these missionaries were insensitive and even hostile to women's rights as clearly shown in the Toraja Church synod records. Their subordina-

tion of women and indifference to women's needs and concerns were widespread.

Despite this ambiguity, the Torajan cultural source of empathy is very helpful for this study. With a sense of empathy, the male agents' project has one more solid ground for their agency. Being empathetic to the needs and concerns of others especially their women is a moral obligation to be a good human being. This sense of empathy is built into their subjectivity and forms their agency to act. Evidently the male leaders' sense of empathy can be seen clearly in their discourses in a few records of Toraja Church synod assemblies both in terms of sharing concerns with women and in terms of feeling ashamed for leaving the women behind.

For instance, at the Fifth Toraja Church Synod Assembly in Rantepao in 1955, a church leader from Makassar presented a proposal to appeal for women's right to vote. He said: "We are from Makassar. We often received insistence from the women who requested that they also be given the right to run the congregation. What we mean is that: "Until now only men have the right to speak". We expect that women will also be given the right to vote" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). His discourse reveals that the men from Makassar felt obliged to help the women because they felt and understood the needs and concerns of the women. When they presented the proposal, it was not only the women's problem. They made it their own problem by using the first-person expressions "we mean" and "we expect". Their agency is embedded in their word choice and also their courage to speak out for women against the patriarchal structure.

The author also finds a strong example of empathy agency in the struggle of Rev. A.J. Anggui for gender equality in Toraja Church. He can be considered as a key figure in this process. His sense of empathy is not only rooted in Torajan culture which has no gender discrimination and cultivates in each person a sense of responsible compassion

toward the needy neighbors but also grounded in his enmeshed relationships with the female agents especial his wife. She had been patiently working and waiting for the opportunity to be ordained for 20 years. It is not difficult to draw from Rev. Anggui a sense of love, compassion, and empathy for wife's concerns and wishes for these 20 years long sharing life together. Therefore, empathy can be argued as one of the main components of Toraja men's agency.

b) The ECVN

While empathy in Toraja is built on a system of dependency and reciprocal exchange, empathy in the ECVN's cultural context is based heavily on emotion or relationship. For example, Rev. Dr. Le Van Thien, a Vietnamese theologian, remarks "The Vietnamese are more directed toward emotion rather than rationality. They have the tendency to follow their experiences rather than the reasons why they do things." Vietnamese folk songs also testify to this lifestyle:

Thương nhau củ ấu cũng tròn

(In love a water chestnut looks round)

Ghét nhau quả bồ hòn cũng méo

(In hatred, a soapnut also looks square)

Thương nhau chín bỏ làm mười

(In love, number 9 can be made 10)

The above folk songs say that, for the Vietnamese, love makes them view the crooked nut such as the chestnut round and number 9 as number 10. In hatred, a round-shaped nut can look crooked for them. In other words, in love or good relationship, they can leave aside all mistakes and weaknesses. If they get upset or hate someone, the nice and right things about the person also becomes ugly and wrong. These folk songs reveal that when Vietnamese people have good relationship with each other, everything even irrational things can also be done. This way of life has both positive and negative consequences. Positively it helps

family members and friends easily forgive and tolerate one another's mistakes and weaknesses. Harmony in the relationship can be maintained. Additionally, it also helps people accomplish things which are difficult to be done in formal ways. For example, dealing with the local authorities regarding permission for religious activities has been an issue for religious leaders in Vietnam. The Catholics seem to have a better relationship with the local authorities than the Protestants. A Catholic priest revealed this secret in an interview by Chu (2008) that:

“When we speak to the state, we speak with goodwill. In our dealings with them, we use the tactic of being persistent. In Vietnam, things are done by sympathy or feeling. This means that if the Church is in need of something, the priest will request it from the state, but his request will be made as one brother to another. If the communists says ‘no’ at first, they eventually say ‘yes’ to your request, and everyone here knows that’s how things are done. It’s the underlying feeling of fraternity that matters most in Vietnam.”

(Chu 2008, 170)

However, this kind of culture also has negative effect because it makes people especially those in decision-making positions biased. For example, the issue of giving favor to family members in recruiting staff in government organizations and state-owned companies has become chronic problem in Vietnam.

In the ECVN, this empathy agency often emerged among male supporters of women's rights. The aforementioned case of the two male leaders of the Bible School in Da Nang during 1950s is an example. These two male leaders accepted single women to the school without any planning. This can be explained mainly through their empathy agency. Though they knew well that the women would face problem

after graduation, they could not reject the requests to study from these women and their families.

Another example of empathy agency among male leaders in the ECVN is the incident in 1975 when single women were allowed to take full courses as their male counterparts at the BTI in Nha Trang. Behind this decision was a process of struggle that involved the sympathy and effort from individual male decision-makers whose agency was enabled by their close connections with the women.

My interview with N.T.B. a female preacher who was part of this struggle process is revealing. It started when Rev. Pham Xuan Tin was Academic Dean at the Biblical and Theological Institute in Nha Trang during 1960s. Rev. Pham knew Ms. N.T.B. personally, so whenever he met her, he always urged her to enter the BTI. She felt called and decided to enter the BTI in 1969. According to the rule, women could study for only two years. After graduation, they could only teach children. In the second year, she wrote a letter to BTI to request that she be allowed to study for 5 years as the male students. Rev. Pham Xuan Tin called her and said "I have received your letter. However, now at our BTI, women have not been allowed to study like this. However, I will duplicate your letter into 5 and send to the synod and other districts and keep 1 at our Insitute." Ms. N.T.B. was afraid so she asked him not to do that. However, he answered "No problem. I must do it hopefully there will be a future for women." Ms. N.T.B. graduated in 1971 and took care of the children at the church orphanage in Nha Trang (N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016). It is obvious from this story that the close relationship between Rev. Pham Xuan Tin and Ms. N.T.B. that enables this male leader to act on behalf of this female student and women.

In 1975, Rev. Pham Xuan Thieu came back from the U.S. after getting his theological degree and became Head of the BTI Nha Trang in this year. He met Ms. N.T.B. and said "I have read your letter. Now you

can study and send your papers back to the Insitute as the male students do. Whatever subjects you have not studied, please study.” Finally Ms. N.T.B. could fulfill her dream. She graduated in 1976 which as the last program at the BTI Nha Trang (N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016).

These pieces of evidence have shown that the empathy value of Vietnamese culture does become a strong force to enable the male leaders to act on behalf of women sometimes beyond their rationality.

5.2.3.3 Opportunity Agency

The study also reveals that opportunity agency was dominant among male leaders in the ECVN; while structural opportunity played the role of a catalyst rather than the main force for the struggle in Toraja Church. Opportunity agency refers to the type of social actors who are pragmatic rather than having a long- term plan in their actions since they cannot anticipate changes in the structures (Kriesi 2005, 83).

a) Structural Opportunity as Catalyst in Men’s Struggle in Toraja Church

The role of structural opportunity as catalyst in the men’s struggle in Toraja Church is seen clearly since 1950s when Toraja Church integrated into the wider Christian world. As being presented in Chapter Four, during this period, changes regarding women’s roles took place in many Christian churches in Indonesia. They started to admit women’s rights to church offices such as deacon, elder, and pastor. This structural change in the Christian communities in Indonesia created gendered opportunity for Toraja Church to alter their gender perspective. This opportunity functions as catalyst in this struggle in Toraja Church because their struggle for gender equality started much earlier and was enabled by the long- standing gender equality value from Toraja culture. This struggle became intense in several successive synod assemblies since 1950s. Therefore, the changes in women’s role in the outside

Christian world created pressure or catalyst for change in the Toraja Church.

b) Opportunity Agency in the ECVN

Different from Toraja Church, the political situation has had significant if not decisive impact on the internal politics of the ECVN especially since 1975 under the communist government. Since the ECVN (South) has still held firmly to its patriarchal stance, the acceptance of women's leadership at various points of time showed to be temporary strategies of the male leaders to deal with sudden changes in the political context.

For instance, during the period 1976-2000, the government did not recognize the ECVN-South. Local authorities only recognized local churches in their own places but not the district and synod leadership of this church. A number of churches lacked male pastors because they were jailed or passed away. As a result, a number of women especially pastors' widows rose up to lead their congregations such as Mrs. Diep Thi Do and Mrs. N.H. Their leadership stirred up strong resistance among high ranked leaders in this church. The aforementioned lifestory of Mrs. N.H. is an example. However, the synod and district leaders had to accept the women's leadership because of this special political situation, but this acceptance was just temporary. As long as the situation changed, the men took over the women's leadership.

Since 2001, the ECVN-South formally recognized the cleric office of female preacher for single women; this decision showed to have a mixed motive.

There were male leaders who supported the decision from their sympathy and recognition of women's contributions. However, my interview with a current church synod leader reveals another motive behind the decision. That means women were used as the men's strate-

gy due to the difficult political context as the leaders of the ECVN used to do before. This leader stated:

“In 2001, the church was officially recognized and had a new constitution regulating the role of female preacher. Due to the church’s need, and to support men, men are limited due to the authorities. In some cases, it is more convenient to have female preachers. Women are accepted as a strategy.”

(Rev. L.H.P. 2014)

Therefore, opportunity agency has seemed a dominant type of agency in the ECVN-South since 1975. While agency which is enabled by long-lasting cultural values such as gender justice and empathy seems to lead to long-termed effect and even transformation of gender relations, opportunity agency proves to be a change in the surface rather than in the substance.

In summary, the male leaders play a significant role if not decisive role in the transformation of Toraja Church’s formal gender structure. On the one hand, the men’s struggles for gender equality serve as a constitutive part of their project which is to make themselves become good human beings and good leaders. On the other hand, it can be assumed that their politics is genuine since it originates from their understanding of gender justice and empathy for women’s needs. This understanding has presumably moved their gender politics beyond women’s and personal interests. It is genuine because it is not just allowing women to join men’s club as subordinates, but it is a process of sharing power, giving space, and lifting women up until they become equal partners. Structural opportunity has proved to be a catalyst rather than the main force for their struggle.

In contrast, the one term that can explain the men’s agency that supports women’s rights in the ECVN is pragmatic rather than having a planned project. Their agency was formulated primarily from social

relations with the female agents and their families and from the changes in political context. Their project was mainly to survive the church in response to the changes in political context. Consequently opportunity agency has dominated their struggle for women’s leadership. Occasionally they also tried to accommodate women’s needs into the structure without changing its gender structure. In this respect, their actions were motivated by empathy which is a Vietnamese cultural value.

Table 5.1 Summary of male leaders’ strategies and sources of agency in Toraja Church and the ECVN

| | Toraja Church | The ECVN-South |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Persistent confrontation of gender discrimination ➤ Utilizing personal positions to empower women and raising gender awareness ➤ Creating room for women to serve and prove themselves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Helping women without planning ➤ Fighting for and accepting women because of urgent needs of the church ➤ Giving women position but must be subordinate to men |
| Sources of Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender justice from cultural and religious frameworks ➤ Empathy from cultural framework ➤ Structural opportunity as catalyst | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empathy from cultural framework ➤ Opportunity agency: temporary responses to changes in political context |

Source: Field work, church documents and publications from Toraja Church and the ECVN-South

5.3 Women's Feminist Projects, and Collective Effort in the Struggles

Beside the men's agency, the women's agency also plays an equally important role in the differential transformation of Toraja Church and the ECVN toward women-inclusive leadership. This dissertation argues that the different levels of accommodating women in leadership between the two religious institutions are to a certain extent due to the dominant existence of women's feminist projects and the degree of their success in turning their feminist projects into a collective effort. The findings reveal that Torajan women agents have developed clear common feminist projects and successfully turned them into a collective effort under the leadership of influential feminist leaders. In contrast, the Vietnamese women agents have diverged in their projects most of which direct toward community needs and avoid challenging the gender status quo. Feminist projects in the ECVN have been minimal and have not successfully mobilized a collective support from the women and are mostly carried out at individual basis due to the gap of gender worldviews among the women and the lack of influential feminist leaders.

5.3.1 Toraja Church: Dominant Feminist Projects and Collective Efforts

Women's agency in Toraja Church is a complex category for analysis and even more complex than the male leaders' agency. They comprise the subordinate group and are diverse within themselves regarding their social status, education and aspirations. Their projects are diverse and shifting in different periods, but most of their projects are feminist since they are directed toward gender equality goal. As far as the data suggest, the shifting of their feminist projects is seen clear in three periods: pre-1984, 1984-2001 period, and contemporary period. In

each period, women successfully turned their feminist projects into collective voices and efforts.

5.3.1.1 Pre-1984 Period: Pushing for Women's Participation in Leadership

In this period, the women's projects are diverse. Their projects are dominantly feminist because these projects aim at pushing for structural change to accommodate women's rights. Their target of resistance is church patriarchal regulations and leadership. Their strategies are more directed toward gaining support from the male agents or male sympathizers. There are basically three groups of women. However, they were not separate but successfully mobilized into an organization called PWGT which aims to empower women in different aspects of life including church leadership.

a) Appealing to Men for Help

The majority group includes lay women who demanded for the right to manage the congregation. This is their project which might be inspired by a sense of gender justice and a negative sense of empathy derived from their culture. Torajan culture prescribes men and women to be treated equally. Torajan women were very active in their household management, in local religious traditions and society beside the men, now suddenly they were deprived of this role in the church. When their needs and concerns are neglected, this produces shame in both themselves and the church leaders according to their cultural framework. As a result, this enables their agency to transform the situation. To establish their project, these women rely on both the male sympathizers and the women's collective power and voices to gradually accomplish their rights.

The earliest voice of Torajan women was found in the record of the Synod General Assembly of Toraja Church in Rantepao in 1955 through a proposal from Makassar. It says "We are from Makassar.

We often receive insistence from women who request that they be given the right to manage the congregation. What we mean is that only men have the right to speak, so we expect women will also be given the right to vote.” (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). The discourse reveals that the women felt excluded or neglected from participating in the church life. Since they were not allowed to have a voice, they appealed to the men’s help. The women demanded the right to vote as the first step. They successfully achieved it during this synod assembly.

b) Raising Voice: A Gentle Offer

The direct collective voice of women emerged at the General Synod Assembly of Toraja Church in Makale in 1970. It was just four years after PWGT was established. Perhaps it was the first time that women were present at Toraja Church synod assembly. At this synod, Mrs. A. Lebang represented PWGT to present a proposal which says “We bring the decision from PWGT First Conference in Tangmentoe that there are several places without preachers. Because of this, how if women can take part in it rather than letting the congregation go home without getting anything” (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1970, 53). In this sense, instead of directly demanding the right, Mrs. A. Lebang made use of the church situation to offer women’s resources. This can be seen as a strategy to avoid direct confrontation and at the same time uplift women – one more step to leadership positions at a practical level: the right to preach and lead the congregation.

c) Being Present and Patiently Serving

The second group of women consists of few well-educated female pioneers who went against the current to take a different path for their life. They left their hometown to seek theological education outside Toraja Church which had blocked the door for women’s religious career at that time. They have a clear sense of religious calling and want to make it their life career. This is their project. They are also fully

aware of the subordinate position in the church but believe that this is not the final scenerio. Their strategies are more directed toward showing their longing for the recognition of their presence, aspiration, and contributions. However, these women did not isolate themselves but got involved with other women to form a collective effort for women's empowerment.

For example, Rev. Anggui-Pakan had a clear calling of becoming a female pastor when she finished high school. She decided to enter Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1959 when the Toraja Church had not accepted women to become pastor. She wrote in her book *Berbuah dalam Kristus (Bearing Fruit in Christ)* that "I had a strong belief and hope that this situation will surely change one day, so I firmly went on with my study at STT Jakarta." (Pdt. Ny. D.M. Anggui, n.d.,

5). After graduation in 1965, she came back to Toraja Church and was accepted to teach at Rantepao Theological School. Nowhere in her writings nor in her conversation with me did she show any verbal demands or confrontation with the church. Instead, she showed it through her emotion and her work as her strategy. She wrote in her aforementioned book "Beginning from the period of study in STT Jakarta to the period of intense struggle, it was to show the longing so that a woman can also be accepted." (Pdt. Ny. D.M. Anggui, n.d., 4). She patiently and faithfully carried out her duties as a theological professor to train several male pastors for Toraja Church for 20 years. She said this reality – a non-ordained woman trained male pastors – became an issue for the church. Her students later became sympathizers and supporters of her ordination (Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan 2015). Rev. Anggui-Pakan participated in PWGT since the beginning. She found solidarity and strength from the Toraja women and international women which enabled her activism for women's leadership in Toraja Church.

The story of Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang is another example. She is usually addressed Rev. Dr. Ery. She felt called to enter Ja-

karta Theological Seminary in 1972 and graduated in 1977. After graduation, she was offered to work as an assistant for the General Secretary of the PGI, which was a very good offer; however, she decided to go back to Toraja Church which had not ordained women by that time. She said “Because of that, I go back home. I think that if I don’t go, don’t return, the Toraja Church may think that once women go they don’t come back. They can make it a reason to reject or ignore women.” She went back and waited for three months. Everyday she went to the synod office and told them “I am here. I come back. Send me!” The church did not know where to place her. Finally, the synod assigned her to serve at the Leadership Training Center of Toraja Church led by her father. She worked there for two years before she was promoted to work for PGI. (Rev. Dr. Henriette H. Lebang 2015). Hence, the two stories show that since these women are minority among the women, they have to work out their strategies individually. They both use soft manner to approach their project through emotional appeal and proving contributions.

d) Grasping the Opportunity

The third group of women includes a few women who did not have a clear calling, but eventually found it in the later period. However, during this period, their project was to have a decent life. When the Christian Education was open for women, it became an opportunity for them to accomplish their project since this program could offer them a teaching position at public schools. For example, in an interview, a female pastor confessed:

“In the beginning, I actually did not desire to be a pastor because I knew that there were no female pastors but only male pastors. Second, I saw that pastors suffered a lot and got very little financial support. So I was not interested to become a

pastor. Therefore, I entered the Theological School to become a teacher of religion.”

In this sense, their agency is not to resist but to flow with the new opportunity. In brief, this early period of women’s struggle for leadership in Toraja Church sees the diversity of women’s motivations, goals, and strategies. Despite this diversity, their projects are feminist in nature because they directed toward the transformation of the patriarchal structure. They used soft power to approach their struggle and appealed to powerful men to act for them. It can be concluded that the success of women’s struggle in this period was for a large part due to their success in mobilizing a collective effort and voice for women’s rights through the organization PWGT. If deeply looking into the leadership of PWGT, it illuminates that top leaders of this organization are wives of top synod leaders of Toraja Church such as Mrs. A. Lebang, Mrs. G. S. Kobong, Mrs. E. Pongkrekun, and Mrs. D. M. Anggui. This connection with powerful male leaders could facilitate the confidence and success of their feminist activism. Hence, the growing number of theologically educated women, the birth of PWGT, and the strong connection of PWGT leaders with male leaders of Toraja Church are emergent opportunities that positively serve the women’s feminist projects. As shown above, their strategies are mostly soft ranging from appealing for men’s help and attention to their presence and contribution to directly requesting for women’s rights to lead the church. As a result, under the collective effort of both women and men, the Toraja Church was completely transformed in 1984 to recognize equal rights for both men and women in church leadership.

5.3.1.2 The 1984-2001 Period: Transforming Grassroots Prejudices and Building New Image of Female Leadership

The year 2001 marked another turning point of the Toraja women’s struggle. It was this year that a woman was elected as one of the

chairpersons of the church synod. In this period, Toraja Church had already formally recognized equal rights for men and women in church leadership. All opportunities for theological education and institutional leadership were open for women. The challenge now was only prejudices against women's leadership capacity from the local communities. According to several male and female pastors, the reasons for rejecting female pastors from local churches are not theological but practical. Among these are that women are weak, emotional, and difficult to move about at night time and to serve when pregnant and rearing children. There is a shift in women's agency. It is more about the struggle of the educated women group who have been through theological education and want to become female pastors. Their project now is to have a female leadership model which shows that women are not only able to do the work as men do but they are even superior in some aspects.

In this period, the women's project is built upon the gender prejudices against women from local communities which had been used to reject women for leadership positions. The women's strategies are targeted at the local Christian community or the grassroots level. They were well aware of these prejudices and ready to model a life and service that would transform these prejudices. Such awareness and strategies show to be collectively applied by the majority of women who enter this path. In this period, according to Rev. Ribka Sinda, the second ordained female pastor, Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan played the role of a feminist leader and motivator for the women to take courage to enter the new path when the opportunity was open. Rev. Ribka shared in an interview:

“When there was already the decision to accept women, Mrs. Anggui said to me “Please don't let this decision go by. Now you and I are colleagues working for PWGT. Let's make a breakthrough. We should not show the men that now the op-

portunity is open, but we, women don't want it. We definitely should not let this happen. This is what motivated me.”

Once entering the new path, the women had to deal with the existing prejudices against women in the local community. The story of Rev. Ribka is an example. She has led a single life. A month after ordination, she was assigned to a local church. The church synod sent a letter to the church to introduce her; however, the church did not answer. After waiting a long time, the synod wanted to send her to another church, but she refused and wanted to wait for the answer from this church no matter how long it took. After several months, during a harvest time, this church requested the synod to send a pastor to serve baptism for 85 persons at this church. The synod immediately offered this chance to her and she agreed to serve. After she had baptized around 40 persons, Rev. Anggui sent her piece of paper suggesting her to ask a male pastor who was present there to continue the baptism because he was concerned about her health. However, Rev. Ribka kept giving baptism until the last person. Later when asked by Rev. Anggui why she did not invite a pastor to help her, she said that she believed that she was tested whether she was able to do the job as a female pastor. She wanted to prove to the church that a female pastor was able to serve and finish the work. Finally she was received as the pastor of this church after this incident. She learned that the church was concerned about her difficulty to visit church members at night time as a single woman. For eight years of her service there, she did not ever ask anyone to accompany her at night time because she wanted to show the church that this should not be the reason to reject God's servant. She always tried to keep calm and held back her tears during heated church meetings where male deacons hit the table. She did not want people to see her tears, but in her room she cried to God. She also took courage to visit and contact sick people who usually had bad smell because of their sick condition. Before becoming a pastor, she usually got vomitted if

she contacted such people. Throughout her ministry as pastor, this did not happen to her. All this was her struggle. She said “When I was ordained, I prayed that God help me not to become an obstacle to my younger sisters who want to become pastors.” (Rev. Ribka Sinda 2015). This shows that Rev. Ribka not only resists the prejudices by counter-practices, but she also builds a image of female leadership which is calm, bold, and caring.

Another story is the testimony of Rev. Dina, the third ordained female pastor of Toraja Church. She is married and has three sons. When she became a pastor, pastors were still poor and suffered a lot. She had to walk bare feet through paddy fields and up the mountains for around six kilometres to serve her congregation since there was no paved street and public transportation as it is now. Facing these difficulties, she said “I can’t withdraw because I am the first one entering the congregation. If I withdraw, surely I will bring consequences to my female friends because the church will reject them saying “Women don’t have any strength.”” She said she had never asked anyone to accompany her. There were times she was asked to serve eight times a day, but she did not refuse. She quickly came back home changing her clothes without having time to take a bath. When she got pregnant, she still walked distance to serve the congregation until the day before the day she gave birth to one of her sons. She and her husband managed to care for the kids in a way that did not affect her service to the church. She said she did not have any problem with raising children and serving the church at the same time for her whole life ministry. (Rev. Dina 2015). Hence, Rev. Dina has similar strategies with Rev. Ribka, but she also shows a female leadership model of tireless devotion.

There are cases of female pastors who are married to pastors or civil servants. They face another difficulty. According to Toraja Church regulation, pastors must be rotated after each term of five years. For

female pastors who are married to pastors, sometimes both of them are sent to different places far away from each other. For those married to civil servants, their husbands cannot move to work near them when they are sent to another place. This entails the challenge of raising and educating their children. However, the female pastors in this situation commonly manage to overcome the challenges with giving priority to their calling commitment. They are ready to take the challenge, sometimes sacrifice family togetherness to fulfill their calling. One female pastor said “The key to solve the problem is understanding, support, and transparency with the family and the church.” For her, the congregation must be informed about the situation of the pastor so that people can understand and sympathize. The married partner and the kids must understand their wife’s and their mother’s special calling and commitment since the beginning. There are few who chose to postpone their service to be with the family, but the majority of them have chosen to live with their calling while negotiating and maintaining their family with their best. In this sense, Torajan female pastors have discredited the prejudice that women cannot fulfill their ministry because their roles are traditionally attached to husbands and children.

These stories show that the women agents do not only resist to the gender prejudices, but they also intentionally build a female leader image which can bring merit to women’s leadership such as calmness, caring, and extraordinary devotion to their service. Some female pastors even jokingly said that female pastors are pleasing to the eye of the congregation because they can wear different and colorful dresses while the male pastors look boring because they wear only one or two types of clothes. In this period, male agents played as the bridge between the female agents and the community; however, the transformation of the gender prejudices from the local community relies solely on the female agents. Different from Frances S. Adeney (2003)’s finding about Indonesian women who sustained their new chosen religious

path based on their moral agency which theoretically argues that moral decisions are processes of cognitive development, relational interactions, and skill acquisition through practice (Adeney 2003, 153–71), this study shows that what sustained the Torajan women's religious path is their belief that they represent their gender. They believe that if they fail to model leadership, they might block the way for their younger sisters who want to enter the path. This has become the common reason for female pastors to unite in the struggle.

5.3.1.3 Contemporary Period

Since 2001, the number of women holding church offices has been increasing. In my observation during the fieldwork in Toraja in 2015, women outnumbered men in the church council in majority of churches. Despite the dominant number of women in church leadership, their presence in the church hierarchy is still small. Improving leadership quality also becomes the concern for both men and women. This is best articulated by Rev. A.J. Anggui:

“The challenge for both male and female pastors is how they as individuals are capable to best serve the congregations, minimize negative impacts that harm their image as God's male and female servants. The struggle for gender equality in Toraja Church has long ended. Hopefully in the future both men and women will race and shoulder together to improve their service in the church which belongs to God alone.”

(Anggui 2011, 35)

This period sees another shift in women's agency. Basically there are two separate collective feminist projects. One is to push for gender equality at the hierarchical level, which is promoted by a few well-educated and competent women. Another is to improve the quality of women's leadership, which is held by the majority of female pastors.

Data for this part rely on both my interviews with female informants and participant observation.

*a) Struggle for Gender Equity at Hierarchical Level:
The Rhetoric of “Partnership”*

Struggle for more gender equity at the hierarchical level has become one of the main feminist agenda of the Toraja women. It is built on a sense of gender justice that women and men must be given equal opportunities in all aspects of life. Though women could enter the synod structure in 2001 and 2011, many female pastors have criticized that the top position (general chairperson) has been exclusively held by men and the number of women at synod level is very small. This leads to their various strategies. During my fieldwork in Toraja, I had chance to participate in a women gathering in Makale. The speaker, very much respected by the women group, gave counselling to the local female layleaders to solve their church issues. However, her agenda was also to lobby for women’s representation at synod level in the next synod assembly. On another occasion, I had chance to participate in an Indonesian Women Christian Conference in Manado with a Torajan female pastor. She was a committee member of this conference. At the same time, the Toraja Church synod also had an important meeting of which she was the only female committee member. She finally decided to miss a couple of days at the women conference in order to join her church meeting. She told me that she must be there to represent women’s voice because they were all men. When interviewing these women and also listening to their public speeches, the word “partnership” was frequently used. It means we are equal partners to work for the common good of the church, but it also means equal sharing of power and opportunities. Perhaps this rhetoric is their strategy to gain support from male leaders and not to pose threat to them. I have also found challenge in the women’s politics. While the women are lobbying for gender equity in the hierarchy, they seem to set a so-called male-advantaged standard for

a top woman leader. Through a conversation with a female pastor, I learned that the women generally expect a top woman leader to have extraordinary knowledge, skills, and international experiences. By setting this standard, chance for women to hold this position is smaller and it is more restricted to the elite. Men continue to be more qualified because they are freer than women to move about and to learn new things; whereas the majority of women are attached to family responsibilities.

b) Improving Leadership Quality and Mutual Criticism

Improving leadership quality is another major feminist project of the women in this period. There is a sense of fear underlying their project. During my fieldwork in Toraja, some female pastors kept telling me stories about pastors who were incompetent in their work and were dismissed by the church. Some pastors with problem were refused several times when sent to local churches because churches now have good networking. A female pastor told me: "Now the congregation is very smart and many are well-educated. If we don't update our knowledge, they will look down on us."

The female pastors also fear of the resurgence of a male-dominated church. I had chance to join a few female pastors' discussion at a local church in Palopo. The women became very critical about an incident in Toraja Church. One of them even raised the concern to the synod. It was about the gathering of the Men Fellowship of Toraja Church. The men chose the theme "The Priesthood of Men in the Family" for their meeting. Later I asked one of them why they reacted, she said:

"That is their interpretation. They linked the role of family head to priesthood. I don't think this theology should be developed in Protestant church. We do understand that we are all equal in front of God. Only Jesus is the great priest "imam". The word imam has to be understood as being a good example for

the family, but it should not mean that man represents God in the family.”

Perhaps this sense of fear has enabled the women’s agency to seek a secure prospect for women’s leadership through strategies such as the above criticism of patriarchal theology and building a community of sisterhood for mutual support and empowerment in ministry. Beside the grassroots PWGT which was founded in 1966, the Torajan female pastors also formed a special community to support one another in their life and service. It is member of a larger Christian women body in Indonesia called The Fellowship of Theologically Education Women in Indonesia (Persekutuan Perempuan Berpendidikan Teologi di Indonesia or PERUATI). Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan and Rev. Dr. Ery have been active, committed and influential leaders of the group. Whenever there are gatherings, these two leaders are present and share their experiences and motivate the female pastors. The female pastors often organize feminist intensive training courses to improve their knowledge and leadership skills. My interviews and participant observation confirms that there is a strong unity among the women. Young female leaders show respect and trust in the leadership of the senior female leaders such as Rev. Anggui-Pakan and Rev. Ery who have had strong passion for women’s rights and continued to inspire and encourage women even in their old age. Additionally the female pastors in each area also have weekly meetings to share preaching materials to prepare for Sunday service. (Rev. Esti 2015). The women’s exclusive gatherings sometimes drew criticism from some male pastors who felt that the women violated the so-called partnership rule by being women-centric.

To sum up, in the struggle for gender equality in Toraja Church, the women’s agency is more dominant in later periods compared to the men’s agency. The women’s projects are diverse and shifting in different periods depending on the challenges perceived. In all three periods, their projects are dominantly feminist as they are mostly directed toward

gender equality goals and can mobilize collective effort to realize their goals. This, to a certain extent, contributes to the success of their struggle.

5.3.2 The ECVN: Minimal Feminist Projects and Individual Struggles

While the women in Toraja Church dominantly owned feminist projects and successfully mobilized collective effort for common goals throughout their struggle, the majority of female agents in the ECVN focused their projects on serving community needs and avoided challenging the gender status quo. Feminist projects in the ECVN have been minimal and have not successfully mobilized a collective support from the women and are mostly carried out at individual basis. There is a lack of unity among the women due to the gap of worldviews and lack of influential feminist leaders. The struggle of women in the ECVN can be divided into three periods: missionary period 1911-1975, 1975-2000 period, and contemporary.

5.3.2.1 Missionary Period 1911-1975

This period sees three groups of women with three different types of projects. The majority of women conformed to the culturally and institutionally prescribed roles namely to be submissive and supportive wives behind their husbands. The second group of women included lay women and a few leadership-gifted clergies' wives who actively involved themselves in various areas of ministries including male-dominated areas, which to a certain extent changed male leaders' attitudes toward women's roles. They were able to form a grassroots women organization at national level. However, their enthusiastic leadership and women-activism were not long enough for a possibility of feminist activism due to the changing political-historical context of Vietnam. The third group of women consisted of very few single wom-

en who individually struggled to fulfill their religious calling and even push for structural change. Hence, the last two groups of women can be considered as having a feminist projects.

a) *Women as Shadows of Men*

These are the majority of clergies' wives from the ECVN. They internalized the cultural and religious prescription of their roles which are to support men from behind. The dominant discourses of Vietnamese culture and gender structure of the ECVN prescribe women a subordinate role to men. They were expected to support their husbands through prayers behind the scene, bearing and raising children, and doing all the chores at the church so that their husbands could focus on preparing Sunday sermons and managing church affairs. When these cultural and religious gender values were internalized, they enabled these women to act in order to meet the prescribed goal which is to be a good wife and mother. For instance, Mrs. Q., 81-year old pastor's widow, proudly shared with me her lifestory in an interview:

“Generally, my role is to sacrifice. I often told people that I am Martha instead of Mary because my husband already took the role of Mary. He already chose the best position. I was just a servant standing behind my husband according to what the Bible teaches. My role is also important because if a pastor does not have a sacrificial wife, he will have much trouble. It is very difficult. The ministry is not as simple as people see.

Honestly saying, I have sacrificed all for my husband, so I did not go out or contact with people much. My life is limited within the family. So I don't know much. Honestly saying, during the past years 1960s, I did not join any church councils because I had to take care of the children. So you see, my role is very important for the family, i did not go out to socialize with people. Though i did not go out to socialize with people, if take

Proverbs 31 as the standard, I have met 80% of that female model in the sense that I have brought benefits to my husband and children. I never let them in want. I got up early and stayed up late to benefit my husband and children.”

For women like Mrs. Q., the prescribed role is not viewed as something unjustly imposed to be resisted, but it is internalized as her own goal of womanhood model to strive for. Mrs. Q. views sacrifice for husband and children as her choice though it is already dictated by the structures. For her, it is not oppression but an establishment. According to a reflection published in an official journal of the ECVN-South, these women are praised as “anonymous heroines”. It says “Millions of women in Vietnamese history in general and in the ECVN in particular are good mothers, bricks that build family, anonymous heroines in suffering, educating children, and guiding children, raising the children in laughters and in tears until the children become adults.” (Đo n 2015, 19). Indeed, the sacrificial devotion of the majority of women to this traditional project to a large extent helped to sustain and reproduce the patriarchal system of the ECVN during this period.

b) Women Shining in the Absence of Men and beside Men

Beside the traditional women group, there was an emergent group of women that was composed of lay women and few leadership-gifted clergies’ wives. Because of the war situations, many churches saw their young men leaving to join the army. This also created opportunities young women to take the leadership in youth groups. Beside this, there were few outstanding gifted pastor wives who gained recognition for their talent in church leadership. With their influential ability and positions, they could mobilize and form a national women organization. However, their activism and leadership were short-lived due to changes in political context in Vietnam. The contributions of women during this

period somehow altered several church leaders' attitude toward women's roles.

During 1960s, due to the acceleration of the Vietnam War which demanded more soldiers, the ECVN and other religious groups saw their young men to join the army. Church membership decreased. Youth groups were left with more women than men. As a result, these groups were often led by women. Rev. Dr. Le Hoang Phu commented that "In one sense, this situation created a healthy tendency in many churches where women led, in many cases no less competent; which was unbelievable for several church leaders ten years before." (Lê 2010, 296).

One of the outstanding and influential female leaders of this period was Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan (1916-2015), wife of Rev. Pham Van Nam. She was highly gifted in language, music, teaching and preaching. Through marriage to her husband, she could fulfill her religious calling and gradually shined beside her husband. During 1950s, she and her husband went to evangelize among the ethnic minorities in Da Lat and Central Highlands. At first, she exercised her preaching talent in emergency situations since the ECVN had not allowed women to preach. Her language ability gave her opportunities to use her talent. Her preaching talent was even known beyond the ECVN when she had chance to join a library training program in India in 1961. She was invited by Rev. Rattansingh Chavan, Chairman of the C&MA Church in India, to preach at an evangelistic meeting without any prior preparation. Her preaching gift amazed the leaders here, so they asked permission from the ECVN-South to allow her to stay longer in India to preach around. She preached for all classes of people both poor and intellectual. She even preached at an inter-denominational conference of a thousand people including missionaries, pastors, and lay people from 7 different Protestant mission organizations in India. This reputation did bring changes to the ECVN. After returning to Vietnam, she was then continuously invited to preach at women gatherings, evangelistic

meetings, and training programs. In some places, her audience also included men (“Tiểu Sử Bà Mục Sư Phạm Văn Năm – Phần 3” 2015; “Tiểu Sử Bà Mục Sư Phạm Văn Năm – Phần 4” 2015; Ms. Phạm 2012).

Until 1974, there had not had any national women fellowship. Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan traveled around to preach and encouraged women to rise up to serve God. She together with other women activists such as Mrs pastor Nguyen Nam Hai and Ms. Huynh Thi Ngoc Tram established a Women Fellowship called “Capital Christian Women Fellowship” in Sai Gon, now Ho Chi Minh City. Many women had the ability to serve but didn’t have environment. These women worked enthusiastically and also faced strong objections, but they were patient to tolerate, ignored these objections and focused on serving the Lord. In May 1974, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan wanted to have a national revival meeting for Christian women. With her determination and effort, the national women assembly finally took place with the attendance of 500 participants from all over the southern country for three days in September 1974. This was the first and also the last women assembly before the political situation changed in 1975 when the communist government took control the whole country. Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan and other prominent female leaders such as Nguyen Nam Hai migrated to the West (Ms. Phạm 2012, 219–24).

Though Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan or Pham Van Nam did not raise any voice for women’s rights to ordination in the church, her outstanding talent in various male-dominated areas to a certain extent contributed to the change of the ECVN- South’s male leaders’ attitudes toward women’s roles. The Vietnamese Protestant Library Website published her autobiography after her passing away in 2015 with a remark:

“How God used Mrs. Pham Van Nam in India more or less influenced the ECVN. The majority of Christians from the ECVN hold a traditional view according to the apostle Paul’s teaching

in I Timothy 2:11-12 which forbids women to teach; therefore, women are not allowed to be ordained. However, through what God has shown in Mrs. Pham Van Nam's life and ministry, leaders of the ECVN – based on teaching in Joel 2:28-29 which the apostle Peter used during Pentecost – in later years allowed some women with gift and grace to preach, and in special circumstances to give sacraments as a pastor.”

(“Tiểu Sử Bà Mục Sư Phạm Văn Năm – Phần 4” 2015)

The lifestory of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuan shows that what she did and achieved, for the most part, went with the flow of both opportunities and her extraordinary ability. According to her writing, whenever facing new opportunities, she was not aware of her talent until she took courage to act. (Ms. Phạm 2012). One of the rare moments that involved her intention and struggle was her activism in women ministry in the ECVN-South. Her enthusiasm and determination were shown in her tireless effort to travel around to encourage women to stand up to serve in the church and to organize the first national women assembly. Perhaps her unusual experiences in the realm from which women had long been excluded became a strong motivation and example for her and other women to view themselves in a different way. Perhaps gender equality was something unthinkable for her and the women in the church during that time; however, what she had done and activated was an indirect message that women were competent and they should be given space to contribute their talent to the church without any gender discrimination. Hence, her activist project can be considered feminist even though it did not have such an intention because it somehow led to the transformation of the structure.

c) Single Women and Their Struggles

Beside the above two groups of women, there was a third group. This was the most minority group of the three and experienced the most

marginalization from the church structure. However, this very marginalized position made these women more aware of their choice and strategically struggled for their different chosen path. Ms. N.T.B.'s lifestory is an example. She confided in an interview:

“I knew God’s calling me. However, before that God had already used my life to teach children and evangelize. So I entered the BTI, but at that time, women could study for only two years. After graduation, they only taught Bible for children. In the first year, I prayed to know where God wanted to send me and what God wanted me to do. In the second year, I wrote a letter to the BTI to request that I be allowed to study 5 years as the male students. Rev. Pham Xuan Tin called me and said: ‘I have received your letter. However, now at our BTI, women have not been allowed to study as what you have requested. However, I will photocopy your letter into 5 and send to the synod and other districts and keep 1 at our insitute.’ Because he was also close to me. I said, ‘It is alright. Please don’t do that. I feel ashamed.’ He said ‘No problem. I must do it hopefully there will be a future for women.’”

(N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016)

Ms. N.T.B.'s story shows that she has a clear sense of being called and strategically struggles for its realization. By writing a letter to the leadership of the Institute and requesting equal rights for women to study, Ms. N.T.B. made a move to push the gender boundary. This shows her well-thought plan and courage because she did take time to pray and consider it before she decided to act. As a result, her request was granted five years later in 1975. Women could take the same subjects as men did.

To sum up, the period before 1975 witnesses three groups of women with different projects. The first group of women consisted of the ma-

majority of pastor wives who conformed to the prescribed roles dictated by the culture and religious structure of the ECVN. Their project was to become good wives and mothers through submissive and sacrificial roles behind the scene. This group of women helped to sustain and reproduce the patriarchal structure. The second group of women included lay women and few leadership-gifted pastor wives. Their project emerged with the flow of opportunities. The absence of men due to war situations and golden opportunities for using outstanding talent of a few women created a new awareness of women's roles among women and male leaders in the ECVN.

The women discovered that they could successfully do things which only men were allowed to do before. Experience after experience built up their project which was to encourage women to stand up and use their talent and ability. This also led to the change of male leaders' attitude toward women's roles in later period. The third group of women consisted of few individual single women who had a clear awareness of their calling and marginalized situations. Struggling to realize the calling as a single became their project. Pushing for structural change was one of the strategies they used to achieve their goal. Of the three groups of women, the latter two groups can be regarded as having feminist projects since their projects more or less led to gender structural change. The second group of women could mobilize a collective effort to empower women; however, their activism and leadership did not last long due to the changing political situation.

5.3.2.2 The 1975-2000 Period: The Rise of Women's Extraordinary Leadership

The 1975-2000 period sees the ECVN-South's leadership crisis due to the changing political context. In 1975 the communists took control of the South and reunified the country. Soon after Reunification, the ECVN-South suffered the loss of several leaders. Several leaders migrated to the West to escape the communist rule. Several others were

sent to reeducation camps or imprisoned. The ECVN- South was not recognized by the government until 2001. Theological education was not allowed until 2003. Consequently leadership training and supplying leaders for local churches were not possible. Many local churches lacked leadership. However, this time of crisis created opportunities for the rise of several individual women's extra-ordinary leadership within the ECVN-South.

They included both pastor wives and single female preachers. Their projects mostly directed toward serving the community's temporary physical and spiritual needs until men were able to assume the leadership again. These women also acted individually and no collective effort was made to push for formal structural change. What sustained their choice was their strong sense of calling and compassion for the needs of the community. Their strategies were various: advising and leading from behind men, appealing to the top leaders for help, raising their voice for the community's spiritual rights, faithfully and patiently serving in adversity.

a) A Joyful Leader and Counsellor behind Men

The life story of pastor widow N.H., 82 years old, which was mentioned above, is an example. After her husband passed away in 1988, the church council decided to invite her to minister to the church instead of the two young pastor assistants. This decision faced strong objection of male leaders at the district level. Seeing the sincerity of the church council and the needs of the church in this urgent situation, she wisely advised the male leaders to appeal to the synod leaders for help. They followed her advice and met the two top synod leaders who were open-minded and knowledgeable enough about the situation. Hence, they agreed for her to lead the church and sent a letter to the district level. Because this was an order from the top level, the district male leaders had to accept her leadership; however, they restricted it to only a two-

year term and did not recognize her status as “minister” but “on behalf of minister”. She served joyfully for two years and build a new parsonage. After that the district male leaders dismissed her from the position. The church voted 100% for her to stay. She stepped aside to let the church leaders and the district leaders settle the issue. They had a long fight and even asked the local authorities to settle the issue. The situation was chaotic and the issue remained unsolved. Because of the needs of the church, she agreed to stay and help them. However, she decided to lead from behind the two pastor assistants by training and giving them advice until they were mature enough to take over the leadership (N.H. 82 years old 2016).

Mrs. N.H.’s life story demonstrates that she was compelled to take the leadership because of the urgent situation of her church. Facing strong oppositions from the district male leaders, she wisely and strategically helped the church leaders settle the issue by appealing to synod leaders for help and distancing herself from the men’s fight. She remained a calm and peaceful spiritual leader of her church during the chaotic and provoking situation of the church during that time.

b) A Competent Leader Who Fought for Her Church

This competent leader is Mrs. Diep Thi Do (1924-2008). She was wife of Rev. Dang Van Sung. They served among ethnic minorities in Central Highlands. They built churches in Phuoc Long. In January 1975, the authorities called her husband and their third son to reeducation camps and they disappeared for ever since then. Another son died in a bombing. Only she remained with 7 children and the orphans in poverty. She worked in the farm to support the family and worshipped God on Sunday. The church members scattered but continued to witness wherever they were during the difficult period 1975-1980. Since 1980, people gathered in her coffee garden to worship. Many people returned to God through exorcism. Many prayer houses were built. In

1988 she and the church built a new big church. If in 1960, there were only one prayer house and 100 members, now there are 44 prayer houses and 1 church with 3,096 families and 7,000 baptized members (*Tuyển Tập Tiểu Sử Người Phục Vụ Chúa [Collection of autobiographies of God's servants]* 2011, 318–19; Phan 2008, 67–68).

Mrs. N.H., a contemporary of Mrs. Diep Thi Do's reveals that facing the dramatic growth of the church and the lack of pastors to meet the spiritual needs of the church members, Mrs. Diep Thi Do started to fight. She went to see the synod leaders and said "if inviting pastor, no one can come because the authorities don't allow. So it is not possible to invite pastor to give baptism, and communion. My congregation has been too much deprived of their spiritual rights. If the synod doesn't give exception, nothing can be done." Finally the synod had to assign her as female preacher and minister to that church as an exception. She performed everything including communion, wedding, and baptism. If she did not do it, no one would do it. The church continued to multiply (N.H. 82 years old 2016).

Mrs. Diep Thi Do's lifestory shows that she was a competent leader evidently through the dramatic growth of her church membership. Despite being left in poverty with many children and with the loss of her husband and 2 children, she could overcome these challenges to successfully build a big church with thousands of members. Because of her compassion for the church's spiritual needs, Mrs. Diep Thi Do stood up to fight by appealing to the synod for help. No men fought for her as in the case of Mrs. N.H., so she had to fight for her church.

c) Single Female Preachers Faithfully Serving in Adversity

Beside pastor wives who stood up to lead, there were also a few female preachers who established their leadership and positions within the ECVN in this crisis situation.

Ms. N.T.B. is one of them. She was the one who fought for women's equal rights with men to study at the BTI in Nha Trang. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in theology in 1976. She went back to her hometown and taught the Bible to children and adolescents in the village. She saw that male pastors in these remote areas did not care for their church members. It was also impossible to send new pastors there during that time. Many places had no leaders. Since the ECVN-South had no policy to use female preachers, she was free to do whatever she could. Therefore, she went from village to village to teach children and then adults. Villagers started to know her and other villages invited her to come and teach them. The police were always after her. Sometimes the villagers did not let her get into their houses for fear of the authorities. She was arrested several times and once imprisoned for 15 days with the accusation of illegal propagation of religion.

Despite these challenges, her labour brought revival and growth to churches in the area. She helped to build one big prayer house for a village. She also trained lay-leaders and sent them to take care of groups that she had built. After seeing that a place was well-taken care of by male leaders, she moved to another place to begin a similar work. Being unable to stop her, the authorities sent a letter to the church synod. As a result, the synod leaders had to act on her case. To solve the problem, the synod leaders felt obliged to assign her to minister to a church even though the church had not had any tradition to use a single female preacher. They finally assigned her to minister to T.T. church in 2007. She had to build the church from zero since the old church property was confiscated. Under her leadership, she and the congregation could buy a piece of land and build a big church. Now she has two female preacher assistants who work with her there (N.T.B. a 67 year-old female preacher 2016).

Ms. N.T.B.'s story reveals her extra-ordinary courage and determination to follow her religious calling even in the toughest situations. Her

calling together with her compassion for the spiritual needs of the people who were without leadership in remote areas motivated her to take risks and sustain her chosen path. Ironically this adversary situation also created opportunity for her leadership ability to shine and get herself established in this male-dominated church.

This period sees not only women who established themselves among Kinh majority churches but also women from Chinese ethnic church. Ms. To Ngan is a typical example. She went to Hong Kong for her theological education in 1965 and returned to Vietnam in 1970. In 1974, people started to migrate to the West. After Liberation, more people migrated including her family. Because Chinese churches had no leaders and no one could replace her position, she remained and served. She was often “visited” by the authorities. She patiently and calmly dealt with the situation because she believed that whatever happened to her was God’s will. Since the authorities did not allow new leaders to come and the Chinese church did not want to be led by Kinh majority people, she had been ministering to 4 Chinese churches in Ho Chi Minh City by 2000. Because of this, the ECVN- South’s synod also granted her special rights to give communion and baptism. She said once they wanted to ordain her, but she refused because she did not have intention to serve for a long time (T.N. a 71 year-old female preacher 2016).

Ms. To Ngan’s life story reveals that the situation of leadership crisis created opportunities for her to develop her leadership ability. However, above all, it was her usual courage, a strong sense of calling, and compassion for churches without leadership that motivated and sustained her chosen path. By relying on God, patiently and faithfully serving, she successfully established herself as some others of her Kinh female contemporaries during this time.

In short, the post-1975 period witnesses both the leadership crisis of the ECVN-South and the rise of women’s extra-ordinary leadership.

These women stood up due to the urgent needs of the community rather than having a planned project for their own interest or benefit. What sustained them in this difficult situation was their strong sense of calling and compassion for the people without leadership. This situation also sees these women's wisdom, unusual courage, and determination. As a result, several women could establish themselves within the male-dominated ECVN-South. However, their rising leadership was more an individual phenomenon rather than a collective movement which could turn into a force for women's support and push for structural change.

5.3.2.3 Contemporary Period: Lack of Common Feminist Goal and Influential Feminist Leaders

In 2001, the ECVN-South was recognized by the communist government and the new Charter was approved in this year. The Charter officially recognizes the office of "female preacher" as the highest position for "single" women with theological education in the church. In this contemporary period, old projects continue and new projects emerge. There are basically three different types of women's projects. The first type of project is to maintain and protect the livelihood of a pastor's family. This project is held by the majority of pastor wives. For them, the livelihood of the family depends on the success of the husband's career. These women believe that they play the main role in this success. This leads to their various strategies to protect the husband's ministry. The second type of project is held by a few leadership-gifted pastor wives and female preachers who have a clear sense of religious calling and are aware of their marginalized and subordinate position in the ECVN-South. However, in order to have a place to serve and realize their calling, they have no other choice than conform to the rule of the system. They have somehow given up on reforming the system even though they feel uneasy with it. This period especially sees the emergence of reforming feminist project which is held by few individual women who strategically and individually resist women-

discrimination elements and hope for a gradual transformation of the system. However, generally the women's struggle lacked a common feminist goal and influential feminist leaders.

5.3.2.3.1 Pastor Wives and Their Struggles

Being a pastor's wife is the most accepted position for women in the ECVN. The majority of male leaders and pastor wives believe that the wife plays the main role in determining the success of a pastor's career. In an interview, a pastor's wife shared her experience and opinion about being a pastor's wife:

"In my opinion, a woman of God does 70% of the work of the church. Men only do 30%. The man is God's servant, but he is only responsible for preparing sermons to preach. The wife must care for general things. However, it is not simple for a woman to solve a problem in the church. Most of the time, she talks but they don't listen. But when the pastor talks, they listen. Today many churches have failed because of the women...Here, it is believed a church is successful is because of a pastor's wife and the church fails also because of her. So the woman loses her reputation because of that. For me, I rely on God's grace to overcome these things. That means my husband is successful or not and people respect me or not all depend on me myself."

(T.D. a 65 year-old pastor's wife 2014)

According to the ECVN, a pastor's wife's success is not measured by how competent she is in leadership or how much she has contributed to the development of the church but by how much she obeys the rules of the church. As being presented in Chapter Three, a pastor's wife is expected to support her husband through prayers behind the scene, bearing and raising children, and doing all the chores at the church so that her husband can focus on preparing Sunday sermons and managing

church affairs. The more invisible and sacrificial she is to the husband, the more she is believed to contribute to her husband's success. He must become bigger and she must become smaller. Interference into his leadership is a taboo. Hence, for the livelihood of the family, pastor wives have to struggle hard to keep the rules through various strategies ranging from distancing themselves or being indifferent to church affairs, to actively controlling the conduct of their husband, children, and other perceived threats to the husband's career. For example, Mrs. T.D. a 65 year-old pastor's wife said:

“This has formed a habit in me. Men have their own group to do things. For example, in the church, women are not successful in their ministry because they interfere the church's internal issues. For me, I don't do that because they already have their own groups. When they can't do it and they ask for my help, I will do it. No interference, no overhearing, and no need to ask. For example, when my husband has a meeting with 12 deacons, I bring cake and drinks to them then I disappeared immediately. I don't want to overhear or hear anything.”

(T.D. a 65 year-old pastor's wife 2014)

This shows that distancing and even being indifferent to the church affairs becomes this pastor's wife's strategy to protect herself and her husband from having problem with the church. Another pastor's wife confessed that she often heard people gossip and sometimes get wrong information about her; however, she pretended as if she did not know anything and hear anything. In front of people, she has to show respect to her husband though she knows well that he is not as wise and skilled as her in communication (T.K. 60 year-old pastor's wife 2016). This is her strategy to minimize the problem with other church members. Another pastor's wife even withdraws herself from most of the activities as her strategy to protect herself. She said “it is

better to know nothing because it might minimize problems and conflicts with church members.” She then pointed to those smarter pastors’ wives who have more conflicts with church members because they get more involved in church activities. She has served in this church for 9 years but has never been invited to pray or share in morning devotion or women group. She even did not participate in women group. She felt being looked down by the well-educated members of the church. However, she said that her lack of talent and involvement in church activities somehow saved her from having problems with the church. She regards this not as failure but as a contribution to her husband’s success during these years (K.M. 56 year-old pastor’s wife 2016).

Beside distancing and being indifferent to church affairs as a strategy to minimize problems with church members, some pastor wives also actively control the conduct of their husband, children, and prevent any perceived threats to their husband’s ministry. One of the reasons leading to a pastor’s failure in his ministry is sexual misconduct. Hence, preventing this problem has become one of a pastor’s wife’s tasks. For example, Mrs. T.K. shared her experience how to deal with this issue. Once there was a girl asking her for permission to stay at the personage for a day. Mrs. T.K. immediately refused and frankly told the girl that she could not let her stay because this might harm the pastor’s ministry. Not only controlling the situation around her husband, she also controls the conduct of her children who are already married and live away from her. She wants to make sure that the children do not do anything harmful to the family’s reputation. Whenever, the children have problem with their spouses, she immediately gets involved to make sure anything in control (T.K. 60 year-old pastor’s wife 2016).

These women that I interviewed have been regarded as ones among successful pastor wives in the ECVN-South because their husbands have been clean from negative rumors and some have held high positions in

the pastor circle. Despite this achievement, these women have a common concern. They are aware of their dependent and disadvantageous position at retired age in the ECVN. For instance, the pastor's wife, Mrs. T.D. confided about this concern in an interview:

“I feel sorry for Vietnamese women who serve God. A woman of God is nothing, no value in the church's sight. For example, I am staying here. If you hear my husband passes away, from 3 to 6 months, I have to leave this place. No one cares if I have a house or not. For the communists, a widow can have a charitable house. But for the ECVN, there is no such thing. The church will give some tens of millions and the widow can go anywhere she wants. She can stay with her children or go to the home for the elderly in Ben Tre. I ask you: if I go there and if my children don't take care of me, who will? No one. But if I die first, my husband can stay here until the church asks him to leave. He can stay as long as he wants. There is no problem. It is suffering for a woman like me. It is like that for a woman of God in Vietnam.”

These pieces of evidence reveal that even though being a pastor's wife is the most accepted position in the ECVN, it is not an easy task for several women in this position. Their project is built on the rules prescribed by the system, namely to protect and sustain the ministry of the husband and the livelihood of the family. They have to play an invisible and subordinate role, but take the most part of responsibility for the success and failure of the husband. Their strategies range from distancing themselves from or being indifferent to the husband's work to actively controlling the conduct of husband, children, and any threats to the husband's ministry. However, these women are concerned about their status since they do not have any benefit and rights of their own. The benefits they enjoy are only through their husbands.

5.3.2.3.2 Conforming in Order to Serve

Beside the above women group who builds their project on the rules of the ECVN's patriarchal system, there is another group of women who are generally well-educated, gifted in leadership, and have a strong sense of calling. Their project is to pursue and fulfill this religious calling. They are aware of their marginalized status; however, they accept to play the game with its rules so that they could have a chance to realize their calling despite the imposed limitations. These women tend to explore areas which are open to them and avoid confronting the patriarchal system. Patience, tolerance, and sacrificial serving attitude become their strategies to gain access more space to serve in the system.

For example, Mrs. H.P., a 60-year-old pastor's wife, is one of the most active and leadership-gifted women in the circle of pastor wives in the ECVN. With her good English command, she has been abroad for short training programs on various women's issues. Seeing the need of helping women to develop their spirituality and household skills, Mrs. H.P. and another pastor's wife voluntarily went from church to church to encourage churches to support women and form women groups. She has used her knowledge and selected materials from these training programs to teach women in the ECVN-South. She often travels from one place to another to conduct women seminars and guide women to learn by following a series of study books. Her purpose is mainly to encourage women to study the Bible and provide them necessary knowledge and skills to build a strong Christian family. Beside that she also aims to train female leaders for the church by upgrading their biblical knowledge and encouraging them to practice and develop their teaching and preaching skills. She could freely move around and carry out her project for 10 years because it did not disturb the church nor the church doctrine. However, two years ago, the synod called her up to clarify her work and stopped her from carrying on her project because

some other higher ranked women in this church wanted to take over the work. With a sarcastic tone, she said:

“Because we accept to stay in a system, we have to obey. Now they say: “You have to stop the program, we have another group.” We have to say “Amen”. If other groups feel that they need me to cooperate, I will. If not, it is fine. God will prepare us for other tasks. Perhaps this time God uses us in this area, in other time, God uses us in other things.”

With patience and tolerance, Mrs. H.P. obeyed the sudden decision from the synod because she knew well it would be no use fighting. This tolerance also helps her remain in the system and have chance to contribute. After recovering from the pain and disappointment with what had happened, Mrs. H.P. now tries to explore space still available for her in her own province. She voluntarily organizes and encourages the women in the province to study. If she knows any opportunities for women’s training programs, she tries to introduce other women to participate in these programs in order to prepare leaders for the future.

Similar to Mrs. H.P., Ms. T.X., a 58-year-old female preacher, is a well- educated and leadership-gifted woman. She has a clear sense of calling to serve full-time in the ECVN-South. She quit her position as a university lecturer and went abroad for her theological education. She returned and served in the ECVN- South. She is well-aware of the marginalized status of women in the ECVN and feels uncomfortable with it; however, she accepts its rules in order to have a chance to serve. She confided:

“I had to go through a program required by the ECVN-South’s synod. Then I was accepted to serve. Actually do you know this? The ECVN-South does not respect women. That is the church situation, so we have to accept it. We need to obey the church regulations. There is nothing to be questioned about. For

me, the thing that helps us serve God successfully is submission to God, and to the church. When we submit to God, God will do many things for us.”

She shared that after a period of voluntarily and sacrificially getting involved in church activities, she started to get attention by a church. This church invited her to serve as a pastor assistant. She said they invited her because they saw that she did not demand anything. Gradually she got more work to do. She was invited to work with the national women organization of the ECVN-South. Almost every month she has to travel to serve from one place to another. She said she has done everything voluntarily until now. However, to achieve all this, she has paid for it.

She shared that there were times she felt herself as a door mat for people to step on. She had to be patient and tolerate difficult senior leaders who hurt often her and made her cry. She had to pretend not to hear anything when people gossiped her. She views these as key to her success in the church system (T. X. a 58 year- old female preacher 2016).

The two lifestories reveal that conforming to the system is a strategy of this women group in order to have a space to realize their calling. To widen their space to serve, these women use patience, tolerance, and selfless serving attitude as their strategies. These characteristics help them sustain their position in the system and gain attention and opportunities to expand their service. Conforming for them does not mean that they agree with the system but it means they accept to play according to the rules. While the first group of women build their project around their husbands’ career, this group of women have their own projects. However, their projects cannot go beyond the boundary allowed by the patriarchal system. This is their limitation.

5.3.2.3.3 *Reforming Women and Their Change-Seeking Strategies*

Beside the above two women groups, there emerges third group of women with a feminist project that demands a gender reform of the ECVN-South. They include both old and young women. They employ various strategies; however, they mostly act on individual basis and have not successfully mobilized a collective effort for the struggle.

Reforming old women are usually those who successfully led their churches during the difficult times after Reunification. From their own leadership experiences, they have become aware that women are not only capable of being a leader but some women even excel men in this area. For example, Mrs. N.H., 82- year-old pastor widow who successfully led her church through the most difficult time despite the strong objections from the district male leaders, stated:

“We need to be open-minded. It is not that I am a woman and say good about women, but there are women who are given gifts not only equal to men but also better. Why don’t give them room to serve God? That is part of the leaders’ responsibility. We need to see their ability and gifts which God gives them, we need to give them opportunity and condition to serve.”

These gifted women themselves have experienced resistance from the patriarchal structure just because they are women. These experiences and awareness have enabled their agency to fight for gender justice in the church. In contrast, reforming younger female generations are usually those who are well- educated and want to devote their life for the religious path, but find themselves discriminated by the system. While the second group of women accept to play with the rules of the system, this group of women envision and struggle for a better place for women to serve. This enables their agency to resist gender discrimination treatment in the church.

a) Resisting the “Contract of Life-long Celibacy”

My interviews and fieldwork in the ECVN-South reveal that the heated issue of these women’s struggle at the moment is the church’s gender discrimination regulation on female clerics. This regulation requires women to be single if they want to become clerics in the ECVN-South. The synod leaders reinforce this rule by making the female candidates to sign “a contract of life-long celibacy” before these women are accepted as female preachers of the church.

This regulation and this way of reinforcement the regulation have stirred up concerns and resistance from several women.

One of the resistance strategies from the young women is to refuse to sign the “contract of life-long celibacy”. The first batch of female students who graduated from the BTI in Ho Chi Minh City in 2013 has 19 young women. However, according to a female informant, only around 10 girls agreed to sign this contract and were granted the office of female preacher while the rest of them refused to sign. Another female witness of this event shared that some girls even burst out crying when facing this pressure. The penalty for this resistance is that the synod will not take any responsibility to assign them. That means these women cannot utilize their degree and education. It is for them a waste of their five-year education. They even have to suffer gossips from other people because their study becomes useless. However, later some of these young women started to change their strategy. Some senior female preachers advised these young women to sign the contract as a strategy to have an official status. Once they have status, they can utilize their education and can prevent further stereotypes and prejudices against them. If they happen to marry, they can resign from their position (K.H. a 38 year-old theological graduate 2016). Even though this can be a solution for the problem for the meantime, it can not solve the problem of gender discrimination and women’s long-term welfare. Since this rule is applied only to women, it is obviously a

discrimination against women and will become an obstacle to younger female generations who want to take a religious career. Furthermore, it makes women dependent on men for livelihood once they get married because they can no longer have a career of their own and cannot utilize their education. This also means they have to choose between marriage and their religious calling which is one of the deepest and most sacred part of a human being.

This struggle also involves few senior women who are well-respected and relatively influential in the ECVN-South. The pastor widow, Mrs. N.H. is one of them. When being asked about this issue, she became very emotional and frustrated. With a high tone, she shared her struggle experiences:

“That is what I have been fighting a lot. A few years ago, the synod assigned a committee to devise regulations on female preacher. There were me, a couple of women, and some other pastors. After we have finished it, we were about the present in front of the assembly. Pastor H. proposed that he was the one who presented. However, the male leaders found way to let it aside. They kept talking until time was out, so no chance to present it. I planned if I could go up, I would speak out everything... They should not forbid them to marry. It is irrational. I don't understand. But we are not allowed to say (laughing). Last synod assembly, there was a session for suggestions and ideas, I emailed a number of pastors and preachers about the issue of female preacher. Some of them agreed, but I don't understand that our voice was not heard... I often mentioned the issue when meeting pastors who are close. I said, “You must speak out. In the assembly, we (women) don't have a voice, but you (men) have a voice. You need to speak out, how come you keep silent?” They just smiled, like that (laughing). I said, “If I can be a representative like you, I will speak out. That is because

women just sit and listen. They only join as guests. You need to ring the bell.” There were men who spoke out, but gradually they were dismissed. They couldn’t say anything (laughing).”

Mrs. N.H.’s sharing reveals her resistance strategy which is to recruit male sympathizers and appeal to their help by raising a voice for women since women do not have a voice at the church synod assembly. As a result, some men spoke out for women; however, their voice was not heard, either. Some senior female preachers who have established themselves in the ECVN-South have tried to help these young women by taking initiative to invite them to be preacher assistants at their churches since it might take a lot of time for the synod to assign these young women. As a result, churches led by female preachers tend to have female assistants. If this tendency continues, it will create a high segregation of all-men- led church and all-women-led church.

b) Raising Voice for Gender Equality through Theological Articulations

In this period, feminist theology articulation becomes one of the strategies to struggle for women’s rights in the ECVN-South. Available data suggest that since 2004, feminist theologies started to emerge in the ECVN-South through an article published in an internal journal *Người Chăn Bầy*. The anonymous author of the article reinterpreted misogynistic biblical passages that are often used to forbid women to lead the church and argued for equal partnership of men and women. However, the article also shows disappointment with the patriarchal system to the point of losing hope in its transformation. Hence the author encouraged women to explore other vast areas of ministry rather than wasting their time and talent in the narrow system which does not value them (“Những Vấn Đề Liên Quan đến Phụ Nữ Giữ Chức Vụ Thuộc Linh [Some Issues Related to Women’s Holding Spiritual Offices]” 2003).

In 2013, Ms. Tran Thi Ly, a female theologian in the ECVN, published her book entitled *Christian Women in Family, Church and Society*. She directly and strongly argues for gender equality in the church:

“Male and female are created in the image and likeness of God, both are equal. In the blood of Christ, they are free from the bondage of injustices and sin. However, in reality of the church, there is a clear division between male and female roles. There are roles and offices which refuse and restrict the participation of women. The question is: Why the church as the place of highest spirituality has an inequality of male and female roles? Why are men given the right to spirituality but women have to keep silent and depend on male spirituality?

(Trần 2013, 132)

Ms. Tran Thi Ly even uses Jesus’ radical teachings on women’s role in Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28, in which Jesus declares that the first priority of a woman in life is not to be a mother or to do housework, but to understand God’s Word and obey God’s will as men do, to argue against the traditional view of women’s role (Trần 2013, 26). However, it is hard to understand her approval of Confucian patriarchal teaching of “Three Submissions” for Christian women. (Trần 2013, 66–68). Perhaps this is the limitation of this book. Nevertheless, these are early feminist voices which dare to speak out within this male-dominated system.

c) **Raising Gender-Awareness among the Youth**

Another strategic option chosen by some individual female leaders in this church is to gradually raise gender-awareness among young people because they are still fresh and flexible to learn and change their perspective. For example, the female preacher, Ms. N.T.B., shared that when she was assigned by the synod to minister to her church. She was very discouraged by older people because they disrespected her and did

not want to go to church. Since then, she has focused on training young people and children. Now many of them have grown up and served effectively in her church and other places where they study and work (N.T.B. a67 year-old female preacher 2016).

Similarly another female informant, Ms. K.H., who gets a master's degree in theology but serves as a layleader in the ECVN-South because she is married, shared her experiences when working with the church youth. She tried to incorporate gender topics in Bible study groups. She discovered that young people did not have any awareness of gender discrimination in the Bible and the church. They took it for granted. After discussion sessions with her, these young people started to realize the problem. On an occasion, she organized a seminar on women's rights for young people. She invited the pastor of her church and a relatively popular pastor's wife to be the speakers. To her disappointment, it turned out that this pastor's wife, who claimed to have often attended women conferences and training abroad, did not have any awareness of gender equality when she took gender discrimination practices for granted and even claimed that women in this church were better treated than those in other developed countries. The male pastor turned out to have a better gender awareness when he tried to sympathize women's low status and explained why the church had such discrimination practices against women. After this event, whenever the youth group intended to invite this female speaker again, as leader of the youth, Ms. K.H. immediately prevented it (K.H. a 38 year-old theological graduate 2016). Though slowly, these two female leaders hope that the future ECVN-South will be a better place for their male and female children to serve and contribute.

d) A Failed Attempt to Build a Women Network

Among the reforming women, there are few who are aware of the importance of uniting women of the same status for mutual support. However, it seems that this strategy did not work in the context of the

ECVN-South. I had chance to interview one of them, Ms. T.L., 58 years old. She is a newly recognized female preacher of the ECVN-South even though she has been serving it for decades. She found that women who get their theological degrees abroad scatter and do not connect to each other. For those who are in the church system, they do not have any support from family and the church, so she wanted to initiate networking among female preachers for mutual attention, prayer and support. She emailed all the female preachers about the idea, but none replied. She said these women were afraid because this idea was not initiated by the male leaders or any other person in power. She also shared the idea with the top female leader of the women. This leader liked the idea; however, later she heard that the male leaders learned about the idea and accused that this female leader wanted to build a monastic order similar to the Catholic Church. Hence, the attempt failed.

e) The Women's Challenges

The women's struggle for gender reform in the ECVN-South has faced some dilemmas. One of the biggest challenges for a collective effort is the gap of gender views among the women. The majority of women in leading positions has still held a patriarchal view of women's role or have directed their focus to other goals rather than struggling for gender justice in the church. Some of the women even strongly condemn and resist the struggle for gender equality in the church. For example, a pastor's wife, who has been active to empower women for a decade, reacted strongly to my question about women's rights in the church:

“The issue is that women can serve God in all areas of ministry, but not necessary that “I need to sit in that position”. If we insist on the position, it is no longer a calling or a heart to serve. If God wants to put us in that position, God will have ways to solve the problem if we walk with faith. If we insist on having

the position, we don't follow the calling anymore. Only with that thought, we have already failed. The church is only an aspect. The important thing is our relationship with God. If God calls us to be a leader, it is not necessary that we have to lead a church. Perhaps God wants us to lead in a small group. It is also leadership. The spiritual meaning will be lost if we persistently think that leadership always mean leading a church and becoming a pastor."

(H.P. 60 year-old pastor's wife 2016)

By equating spiritual calling with submission to a religious institution, this informant excludes the struggle of gender justice as part of this calling. In other words, she narrows the meaning of religious calling to a pure and uncritical submission to a religious system no matter how this system is. The human effort to transform living condition was dismissed when she entrusted this task completely to God.

Another challenge for the gender reform struggle is the lack of influential feminist leaders. Ms. T.L. confided in an interview that the present leaders of women organization in the ECVN are not interested in gender equality struggle. Most of the women programs in the church are centered on improving spiritual life and how to be a good wife and mother.

In short, there are basically three types of women's projects in this contemporary period. The first type of project, which is held by the majority of pastor wives, is to maintain and protect the livelihood of a pastor's family by safeguarding his ministry. The second type of project is owned by a few leadership-gifted pastor wives and female preachers who are well-aware of their marginalized status but agree to play with the rules of the system. The third group of women owns a feminist project which works for a transformation of the church gender structure through various strategies. However, the gap of gender views among the

women leaders and the lack of influential feminist leaders are big challenges to forming a collective effort for the gender reform struggle.

Table 5.2 Summary of women’s agency and their projects in Toraja Church and the ECVN Toraja Church the ECVN

| | Toraja Church | | The ECVN | |
|-------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Feminist projects | Dominant feminist projects and collective efforts, influential feminist leading figures | | Minimal feminist projects and individual struggles, lack of unity and influential feminist leading figures | |
| Strategies | Pre-1984 period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushing for women’s participation in leadership | Pre-1975 period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional role: pastor’s wife • Emergence of women’s leadership participation • Single women’s rare push for structural change |
| | 1984-2001 period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming grassroots prejudices and building new image of women’s leadership | 1975-2000 period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The momentary rise of individual women’s extraordinary leadership in time of crisis |
| | Contemporary period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle for gender equality at hierarchical level and improving leadership quality | Contemporary period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastors’ wives’ traditional role • Conforming and reforming women with their individual struggles |
| Sources of agency | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender justice • Religious calling and hope | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious calling and hope • Compassion |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural opportunity • Representing one's • gender | | <p>and sacrificial spirit for communal needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural |
|--|--|--|--|---|

Source: interviews, participant observations, church documents and publications

5.4 Concluding Remarks

In summary, this chapter has analyzed agency dynamics and how the human agents have contributed to the contestation of the gender structure in the Toraja Church and the ECVN by using various theoretical bodies from Sewell, Ortner, Opportunity Structure theory, and feminist theories. The chapter has also explained the differential transformation between the two religious institutions by referring to two factors: (1) the degree of male leaders' support and co-struggle for gender equality and (2) the dominant presence and degree of success in turning women's feminist projects into collective effort. The research findings have suggested that Toraja Church has a higher degree of fulfilling these two factors than the ECVN specifically as follows:

The radical transformation of Toraja Church's gender structure is to a large extent due to the active and persistent collective effort of both men and women in this church. Sewell's and Ortner's theoretical frameworks are effective to analyze the Torajan agency and its subjectivity. The male leaders play a prominent role in transforming the formal gender structure in the early period whereas the female agents are more prominent in later periods to transform grassroots prejudices against women's leadership. The long and persistent struggle of several powerful male leaders of Toraja Church for gender equality is strong evidence to the embodiment of long-lasting cultural gender egalitarian and empathy values by Torajan agents. Structural opportunity played the role of a catalyst for this struggle. The acceleration of the struggle

after 1950s, when emergent progressive gender practices took place in Christian churches in Indonesia, illuminates the intersection and transposability of these values and practices to Toraja Church. This also created gendered opportunities to alter the Torajan men's perspective toward women's role. This finding is in line with McCammon et al's (2001) argument that the emergence of gendered opportunities altered decision-makers' attitude about women's proper roles in the society.

In contrast to the Toraja Church, the ECVN goes through a dynamic contestation of the gender structure. Though there are few occasional improvements in women's status, the patriarchal schema are still the underlying foundation of gender practices in this church. While men in Toraja Church are actively involved in a long a persistent collective struggle for gender equality, which illuminates a connection to wider long-standing cultural values that inform their agency, those in the ECVN are mostly pragmatic and their support is momentary depending on changes in the political context. However, their agency was also enabled by empathy which is a long-standing Vietnamese cultural value. Gender justice agency did not seem to exist among the men agents in the ECVN since they have still taken for granted the patriarchal system. Although gender equality structures exist in the context of the ECVN, it seems that this value has still been alien to most male agents in the ECVN. Hence it is hard to explain the male agents' subjectivity by using the wider cultural framework as suggested by Sewell and Ortner. Opportunity structure theory is more helpful; however, it still fails to grasp the subjectivity of the men's agency.

Regarding the women agents in both churches, the women's struggle in Toraja Church was dominated by feminist projects. Their agency also shifts according to perceived opportunities and changes in context. The women have clear feminist goals and successfully mobilize collective effort under active and influential feminist female leaders who are gen-

erally wives and daughters of top male leaders. Like the men's agency, the women's subjectivity can be explained by referring to the wider cultural and religious frameworks that inform gender equality and gender justice. However, their agency can also be explained by structural opportunities that form their new plan and project. This happens to those women who enter the pastor career after the structure opens the opportunity for women. Once entering it, their project is built upon emergent challenges. Different from Frances S. Adeney (2003)'s finding about moral agency as what sustained Indonesian women's new chosen religious path, this study shows that what sustained the Torajan women's religious path was their belief that they represented their gender.

Regarding women's agency in the ECVN, while feminist projects and collective effort dominate the struggle of women in Toraja Church, the women's struggle in ECVN is dominated with non-feminist projects and pragmatic individual effort. While the Toraja women can come to a consensus in perspective regarding women's roles and have influential feminist leading figures, the women in the ECVN are divided by different gender perspectives and lack influential feminist leading figures. Those in power generally hold patriarchal view of women's role and have not shown interest in gender equality struggle. Women in the ECVN have displayed extraordinary leadership in times of crisis throughout the church history; however, this has not turned into a collective power for women's empowerment and rights struggle. They had to gradually turn over their leadership to men when the political situation got better. However, this time of crisis also created opportunity for few female preachers to establish themselves in this male-dominated church. Reforming agents from the ECVN are mostly enabled by their built experiences and awareness of gender discrimination when they want to realize their religious calling. They have carried out their gender reform project mostly at individual basis.

With the exception of feminist project in the contemporary period which has a direct feminist goal, those projects in previous periods can be judged as feminist projects mostly through the effect rather than the direct intention. For example pastors' widows who excellently led their churches during the crisis time. They struggled for their rights to lead the community not because of gender equality purpose but because of their compassion for the urgent needs of community. Their struggle pushed the structural boundary to a certain extent. Due to the lack of long-term gender goal, the patriarchal boundary was expanded once the situation changed. However, in terms of experiences and evidence of women's leadership competence and contribution, these women's struggle could have a long-term effect. Hence, the distinction between feminist project and non-feminist project from an outcome perspective is not a clear-cut division.

Concerning sources of agency, there are common sources that enabled the women in both churches to take the new religious path. One of the common sources is religious calling and hope. Several women from both institutions chose to enter the challenging path because they felt a deep religious calling and hoped that the situation would change. Another common source for their agency is structural opportunity. The Toraja women quickly grasped the opportunities as soon as these opportunities were created for them. Similarly the Vietnamese women also took courage to stand up and lead their congregations when the political situation created such opportunities. However, the difference between the two groups of women is that opportunity in Toraja context was created by the church to accommodate women; whereas the opportunity in the ECVN was created by the changing political situations that gave the ECVN no other choice than reluctantly and temporarily accepting women's leadership.

Beside the common sources, each group of women also experienced their unique source for their agency. Perhaps one of the unique

sources for the Toraja women's agency is their belief that they represent their gender. This belief has given them strength to transform the grassroots prejudices and build a new image of women's leadership. This can be understood because women in Toraja Church have already been accepted for all church offices. Once they are given equal chances with men in the same area, proving themselves through quality is expected. In contrast, the women in the ECVN embraced compassion and sacrificial spirit for the needs of the community. They were heroines created by the situations. Once the situations got better, they retreated and gave way for the men.

For the analysis of women's agency in the ECVN, both Ortner's theory and structural opportunity theory are effective to analyze the emergence and changes of the women's agency when these theories are flexibly combined together. Ortner's theory is helpful to examine the formation of the subjectivity of agents who hold patriarchal projects; however, for pragmatic and emergent reforming agents, structural opportunity theory becomes more helpful. However, the weakness of structural opportunity is that it cannot grasp the subjectivity of the social actors. Sewell's theory of intersection of structures is not helpful for the case of agency in the ECVN since the majority of agents chose to hold on to patriarchal values despite the existing gender equality structures around them.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation is a comparative analysis of the interconnections among agency, context, and the different levels of the gender structural change between the Toraja Church in Indonesia and the ECVN in Vietnam based on a synthesized comparative theoretical framework built on various theories: agency and structural transformation from William H. Sewell, Jr. and Sherry B. Ortner, structural opportunity theories, and feminist theories of agency.

Basically my research reveals that the patriarchal gender structure of both churches was adopted and reinforced by the patriarchal Western missionaries and conservative local male leaders through different mechanisms, namely restrictive access to theological education, gender-biased church polity and theologies. However, through time, the gender structure of both churches has been through a process of transformation to varying degrees. The Toraja Church has replaced the patriarchal gender structure with an egalitarian one; whereas the ECVN has been through a dynamic contestation of its gender structure. There were some forward moves and backward moves regarding women's roles along its history. Generally the ECVN has maintained a highly male-dominated system with a slow and little improvement of women's status in theological education participation and church polity.

A comparative examination of the context and agency in both institutions shows that the gender structure of each church has been

destabilized to varying degrees and reshaped in different forms today largely due to: (1) the degree of gender equality opportunities from cultural contexts, the empowerment of the agents from political contexts, pressure to change from encounter with progressive Christian communities and the openness of the institution to reform; (2) the degree of support and identification with the struggle by male leaders; and (3) the dominant existence of women's feminist projects and the degree of their success in turning their feminist projects into a collective effort.

Based on the theoretical framework of structural transformation and structural duration by William H. Sewell, Jr. (1992; 2005) and structural opportunity theories, this dissertation has analyzed the interconnections between cultural, political and religious contexts, institutional dynamics, and the contestation of the gender structure in each institution by identifying conjuncture of structures and structures of conjuncture that created gender equality opportunities, chances for agents' empowerment, and pressure to change. The findings show that the cultural, political, and religious contexts of Toraja Church offer a higher degree of gender equality opportunities, the empowerment of the agents, and pressure to change than those of the ECVN. Institutionally while the Toraja Church has been flexible and open to reform, the ECVN seems to become more conservative and resistant to change regarding various aspects including gender relations.

Specifically, the dominant gender egalitarian discourses of Toraja culture gave Toraja church more opportunities for gender reform whereas the dominant Confucian patriarchal discourses of Vietnamese culture strengthened the male-dominated structure of the ECVN. The political context of Toraja Church provided good opportunities for the empowerment of Torajan agents through education and international exchange of ecumenical experiences which enabled them to become reforming figures of the church structure including gender aspect. In

contrast, the unfavorable political context of Vietnam, namely the long period of wars, the isolation of the country from the outside world, the repressive religious policies of the communist government, and the marginalization of religion in public sphere shielded the gender structure of the ECVN from being destabilized. Beside these two elements, the active integration and interaction of Toraja church with national and international progressive Christian communities that practice gender equality created pressure for Toraja Church to change. On the contrary, the ECVN has isolated itself from other Christian communities both outside and inside the country due to religious, historical and political reasons. This isolation created less pressure for the ECVN to reform.

Institutionally, while the Toraja church showed an openness and flexibility to reform, seen in its attitudes toward culture, doctrine and intellectualism, the ECVN tended to be conservative and resistant to change in these areas. Additionally while women in Toraja church had supportive space for activism including feminist activism, the authoritarian manner of leadership and the practice of “hiring the pastor and using his whole family” in the ECVN have still thrived and functioned as obstacles to women’s advancement in leadership in this isolated and economically poor institution.

Sewell’s theories of structural transformation and structural duration are useful for the analysis of the interconnection between context and the gender structure between the two religious institutions which have differential transformation. His theory of the existence of multiple structures and transposibility of values across structures can help to explain structural transformation. However, it cannot explain why some social actors are willing to adopt values from other structures but some others do not.

Regarding the interconnection between agency and the differential contestation of the gender structures between the Toraja church and the ECVN, this dissertation argued that these differential outcomes are

due to: (1) the support and identification with the struggle from powerful male leaders; (2) the dominant existence of women's feminist projects and the degree of their success in turning their feminist projects into a collective effort under influential feminist leaders.

The findings reveal that the struggle for women's rights in Toraja Church involved powerful male leaders and their collective support. The Torajan women agents have developed clear common feminist projects and successfully turned them into a collective effort under the leadership of influential feminist leaders in various periods of church development. In contrast, the struggle for women's rights in the ECVN has faced more resistance than support from male leaders. The Vietnamese women agents have diverged in their projects most of which directed toward community needs and avoided challenging the gender status quo. Feminist projects in the ECVN have been present but minimal and have not successfully mobilized a collective support from the women. They are mostly carried out at individual basis due to the gap of gender worldviews among the women and the lack of influential feminist leaders.

This study argues that a feminist analysis of women's struggle for gender equality in religious institutions would not be adequate if it overlooks the role of men's agency and the relationship between the male and female agents since this study shows that these factors are significant to the diagnosis of change. The advancement of women's church leadership to a large extent depends on the support and struggle of male leaders to transform the gender structure.

In Toraja Church, the male leaders' agency plays a dominant part in the transformation process of the church patriarchal gender structure in the early period. Their agency is to a large extent founded on the symbolic expressions of gender justice and empathy as ethical cores of being a good human being and leader, which is derived from their cultural and theological frameworks. This enables them to strategically

restructure the power relations and transform the gender structure of the church. Their strategies include resisting gender discriminative practices, persistently raising their voices for women's rights, maneuvering their personal powerful position to empower women and raise gender equality awareness, and creating room for women to serve and prove themselves.

In the ECVN, there have been few male leader sympathizers and have uplifted women to a certain extent; however, they have not identified themselves with the struggle for gender equality as the Torajan male leaders because they have still taken for granted the patriarchal system. The number of supportive male leaders has not been significant.

The study also reveals that Asian resources such as the ethical values of gender justice and empathy of Toraja culture did become the source for agency to transform the patriarchal gender structure of Toraja Church. The empathy value in Vietnamese culture also proved to be a strong force for male leaders to help women in the ECVN. However, the Toraja case also shows that these values alone are not enough for the transformation of this church. This is evident in the fact that Toraja church took much longer time to recognize women's rights than many other Christian churches in Indonesia. This transformation required other forces: the pressure from other Christian communities that emergently practiced gender equality and the presence and push of Torajan women who were eligible for the new positions. Overall, the struggle for gender equality in religious institutions require not only favorable context but also joint effort of both men and women who want to prepare a religious environment that gives space and opportunities to all to contribute to the common good regardless of their gender.

Sewell's and Ortner's theories of agency were useful especially for the case of Toraja church. Their projects and subjectivities can be, to a large extent, identified by referring to the larger cultural frameworks.

However, their theories prove inadequate in the case of the ECVN since some agent groups in this church tend to act pragmatically and momentarily depending on political situations in each historical period. Structural opportunity theories become more helpful. However, it is hard to grasp the acting subject's subjectivity and project.

The study also suggests that the distinction between feminist and non-feminist projects based on their outcome is not a clear-cut distinction because some of non-feminist projects might have transformative effects in the long run. Some feminist projects might have negative effects if facing resistance from the religious structure.

Since the scope of this dissertation is limited to two case studies, the findings of this dissertation may not sufficiently reflect the situations of gender equality struggles in other religious institutions in these two countries. Additionally due to insufficient data regarding the ECVN, some of the findings especially those regarding male leaders' agency are preliminary. The early historical period of the ECVN and its men's agency need more research in the future. As both Indonesia and Vietnam are diverse in religious groups, ethnicities, and cultures, future research can take more case studies and apply this comparative framework to have better knowledge of the interconnection between context, agency, and religious institution transformation toward women-inclusive leadership.

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Rev. Luther Taruk. 2015 22. Rev. Martha. 2015. 23. Rev. Masak. 2015. 24. Rev. Monika. 2015. 25. Rev. Norma Bunga. 2015. 26. Rev. Paongan. 2015 27. Rev. Ribka Sinda. 2015. 28. Rev. Rita. 2015. 29. Rev. Veronika. 2015. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Outsider informants</p> | <p>30. Ibu Anna Marianna. 2015. 31. Ibu Astri. 2014. 32. Mr. Steve. 2014. 33. Rev. Linda, Bali Church. 2015. 34. Rev. Monris. HKBP. 2014. 35. Rev. Ruth Wangkai. Ketua PERUATI. 2016. 36. Rev. Zaitun. HKBP. 2014. 37. Ibu Ketua GMIBM. 2016.</p> |
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Struggles for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam

Agency and Structural Change



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Traditionally, women in Vietnam have been seen as the sole nurturer and care-taker of the family. Similarly, recent reports show that both men and women in Vietnam expect women to behave in a socially constrained way.

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