LEMBARAN KATOLIK

No. 11 DJAKARTA -INDONESIA, NOPEMBER 1954

Katarina Tekakwitha, Putri Indian

mendjadi sutji karena Rosari

Tekakwitha mengintip dari pintu. Diluar orang² menari-nari disekeliling api unggun, diiringi tabuhan kendang². Tekakwitha merangkak keluar dari gubuk. Ia ingin melihat dan mendengarkan tjerita orang² itu tanpa dilihat siapapun. Dari belakang pohon besar ia mengamat-amati semuanja. Sampai djauh malam orang² beramai-ramai disekeliling api unggun. Dilihatnja ditengah-tengah orang² itu berdiri pamannja, jang mendjadi kepala suku Mohawk.

Tiba² berhentilah bunji kendang² ; orang² berhenti pula menari. Si dukun tua tampil kemuka. Ia berpaling kepada kepala suku, lalu berkata : „Si djubah-hitam akan datang. Orang itu akan membawa damai. Djimat²ku menjatakan, bahwa memang demikian adanja. Dengarkanlah orang itu !"

Mendengar itu Tekakwitha amat girangnja, sebab ia selalu ingin bertemu dgn si djubah hitam (pastor misionaris). Ibunja mendjadi penganut agama itu. Ibunja bukan dari suku Mohawk tetapi dari suku Algonquin jg kebanjakan beragama Katolik; hanja bapaknja jang dari suku Mohawk.

Ketika Tekakwitha berumur empat tahun, ia ditinggalkan orangtuanja, jang meninggal karena tjatjar. Djadi sedikit sekali jang masih diketahuinja tentang agama ibunja.

Setelah si dukun duduk lagi, pamannja berkata : „Perkataan dukun memang baik. Kita dengarkan sadja si djubah hitam nanti !"

Tekakwitha menjambut utjapan pamannja itu dengan tepuk tangan jang hampir² tak terdengar.

„Ajuh, pulang," bisik Fadjar merah, salah seorang bibinja, jang tidak suka akan semua orang jang bermuka putjat, apalagi akan si djubah hitam. Fadjar Merah marah².

Adapun pengetahuan Tekakwitha tentang igama si djubah hitam amat sedikit sekali. Ia masih ketjil, ketika ibunja meninggal. Jang masih diingat hanjalah ini, bahwa ia pernah diadjar ibunja membuat tanda, Salib. Selain itu ia hanja mewaris rosari ibunja, tetapi ia tak tahu akan arti dan gunanja. Rosari peninggalan Ibunja dibawanja kemana-mana. „Ajuh kembali kegubuk," teriak bibinja jang bengis itu. „Rapat itu hanja untuk orang laki² sadja. Kalau semuanja itu kutjeritakan kepada pamanmu, pastilah engkau akan dihukum.

Lilia suku Mohawk

Engkaupun tidak boleh melihat si Djubah Hitam. Mata Tekakwitha berlinang-linang kesedihan. Hatinja rindu akan si djubah hitam, jang akan datang kepada suku Mohawk. Tentunja si djubah hitam sama braninja dengan kepala suku Mohawk.

Tak ada sesuatupun jang dapat menakut-nakuti si djubah hitam. Ia tak takut akan siksaan dan maut. Bedanja dengan Mohawk ialah bahwa para djubah hitam (=para imam) itu tidak ganas seperti suku Mohawk. Mereka adalah pembawa ketenteraman. Mereka selalu merukunkan jang satu dengan jang lain.

Sedih hati Tekakwitha, tidak boleh melihat si djubah hitam. Mereka tak lama lagi akan datang, tetapi ia akan dikurung didalam bilik, sampai mereka pulang. Sunji dalam hatinja.

Beberapa hari kemudian datanglah si djubah hitam, menemui kepala suku Mohawk, pamannja Tekakwitha. Tekakwitha mendengar pamannja bertjakap-tjakap dengan si djubah hitam ; tetapi ia dikurung rapat oleh bibinja jang bengis itu.

Suara itu semakin mendjauh ; achirnja tak kedengaran lagi. Tekakwitha merebahkan dirinja ditempat tidur, menangis tersedu-sedu. Ditjarinja tasbeh, peninggalan ibunja, untuk mentjari hiburan padanja dengan mengenangkan mendiang ibunja. Tapi tidak diketemukan. Dimana tasbehnja ? Ah, mengapa djustru sekarang hilang tasbeh itu !

(Sambungan dihal. 4)

(Sambungan dari hal. 1)

Tiba² terdengarlah derap dua orang jang mendekati biliknja. Suara jang asing bagi telinganja didengarnja „Siapa itu ?" pikirnja. „Mungkin si djubah hitam ? !" Sedang bermenung demikian, tiba² didengarnja suara pamannja memanggil-manggil : „Tekakwitha, dimana engkau ?" Tekakwitha membranikan dirinja : „Disini, paman. Tapi pintunja dikuntji rapat !"

Segera pintunja dibuka pamannja. Tekakwitha diantarkan keluar. Diluar dekat pohon jang rindang duduklah seorang jang berdjubah hitam. Mukanja riang. Setelah Tekakwitha duduk disebelahnja, maka paderi itu memberi berkat kepadanja dengan tanda salib.

Tekakwitha teringat akan tanda-salib itu, maka dibuatnja tanda salib djua.

„Dimanakah kau beladjar membuat tanda-salib, 'nak ?" tanja father Fremin, — demikian nama paderi itu.

Tekakwitha mentjeritakan semuanja tentang ibunja.

„Nah, kalau begitu, sekarang terang djuga bagiku, mengapa aku disini menemukan potongan rosari," kata father Fremin, sambil mengeluarkan sepotongan rosari dari kantongnja.

„Oo, itu rosari saja !" teriak Tekakwitha.

Father Fremin memandang Tekakwitha dengan keheran-heranan. Diberikannja kepadanja sebuah rosari baru ; lalu diadjarkannja pula, bagaimana rosari harus dipergunakan.

Sebelum father Fremin pulang, Tekakwitha dilatih sembahjang rosari.

Ia akan kembali, demikian djandji father Fremin.

Pekan berganti pekan, bulan berganti bulan, tahun berganti tahun tapi father Fremin tidak djuga kembali²-nja. Sementara itu Tekakwitha dengan radjinnja berdoa rosari setiap hari, sambil mengharap-harapkan kedatangan father Fremin.

Tekakwitha mengantjik umur delapanbelas tahun, ketika ada paderi lagi datang mengundjungi pondoknja. Ia diadjar seperlunja oleh paderi lain itu, kemudian dipermandikan dgn diberi nama permandian : Katarina. Sesudah itu Tekakwitha meninggalkan suku Mohawk, untuk hidup ditengah-tengah orang² Indian jang beragama Katolik. Ia sangat disajangi orang², karena ia suka menolong orang² sakit dan orang² jang menderita. Ia demikian baik dan murah hatinja, sehingga orang² menjebut dia : „Lilia suku Mohawk". Kemurnian dan kesutjiannja semerbak mewangi sehingga orang² mengharapkan Katarina Tekakwitha tidak lama lagi diresmikan mendjadi beata, dan kemudian mendjadi santa. Kini ia sudah disebut : venerabilis, jaitu jang patut dihormati. Inilah langkah pertama untuk diangkat mendjadi santa. Amat besar harapannja Katerina Tekakwitha akan mendjadi santa pertama dari kalangan bangsa Indian.

Tamat

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May Be First Native-Born Saint

One of the most popular paintings of Tekakwitha, Mohawk Indian girl who was born and raised near Schenectady and who may become the first native born saint in America. The shawl is a typical part of her dress, since her eyes, weakened by smallpox, needed protection from the sun's glare.

Tekakwitha, Mohawk Maid, May Be First Native Saint

(Editor's Note—Should Kateri Tekakwitha ever be declared a saint by the Catholic Church, residents of the Schenectady area will be unusually interested since much of her life was spent within a few miles of this city. To present her dramatic story, the Gazette offers a series of three articles, the first of which follows.)

By BARNETT FOWLER

Spruce paddles dug deep in the Mohawk, ramming the birch canoe hard and fast aganist the river's north shore. From it leaped two men.

The third figure in the craft was a 20-year-old girl, dressed in buckskin. She was of fragile build and despite the heat of the day, wore a shawl around her shoulders.

Of her physical features, her face was outstanding. It was tranquil, delicately formed, savagely scarred by smallpox.

She stepped painfully to shore and instantly one of the men lifted the canoe bodily, concealing it along the pathway leading into Wolf Hollow and the long trail to Canada. There was haste rather than fear in every movement made by the group.

History records this episode as occurring about 10 miles west of Schenectady, 273 years ago. The year: 1677, just 30 years after the martyrdom of Isaac Joques, Jesuit missionary to the Mohawks at Ossernenon, now Auriesville.

The incident is important to a portion of today's religious world because the girl was Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk Indian whose fame even after two-and-one-half centuries is such that there is the possibility that she will become the first native born saint in America.

It is interesting to the entire Mohawk valley because Tekakwitha was born only 28 miles west of this city, at the site of Auriesville, and her land dash to religious freedom actually began in the Town of Glenville, near the Montgomery county line. At no time in its long history has Schenectady been able to trace so closely the life and activities of a person whose future is to be watched with international interest. Tekakwitha already is a widely discussed figure in European countries.

Miraculous Cures

Miraculous cures have been credited to her intercession. Her case for possible sainthood began in 1923; in 1943 by papal decree she was given the title of "venerable," the second step in the process by which the Catholic church recognizes a saint.

Her mortal remains exist in a vault 250 miles from Schenectady, at the Caughnawaga Indian reservation, near Montreal, in a small, glass covered casket at the Jesuit mission house. One of the men who guard the sealed casket is Rev. Real Lalonde, a forthright and affable Jesuit.

Father Lalonde is no unfamiliar visitor to Schenectady; he is the cousin of Mrs. Rose Alexander Cloutier of 21 Hawk street, and he has traveled with the reservation's choir on its visits to Schenectady and the Auriesville Shrine.

Caughnawaga is tied to this area: The 3,000 Mohawks residing there are descendants of the clans that once ruthlessly ruled the Mohawk valley from Schenectady westward, the same Indians who once held the balance of power in colonial conquests by European powers. In the days of the valley missions, Mohawks who migrated to Canada were known as the "praying Indians." Little love was lost between the split clans. When the French moved south, stopping in the Ballston lake area for a breather and eventually moving in for the Schenectady massacre in February, 1690, "Christian Mohawks" accompanied them to their former valley home.

Fled Northward

In 1677, before Tekakwitha dashed northward from the spot now known as Hoffmans (Route 5) it is probable that she stood on the summit known as Touereuna hill, overlooking the Mohawk valley. History records that one of her companions hurried into Schenectady for provisions before the long trek to Canada. And in the waiting period, as the girl watched the river for pursuit, there was time to remember—mostly perhaps, the life she was leaving. Certainly she could not anticipate the dangers ahead nor the turn that history would take.

Kateri's mother was a captive Algonquin Christian, her father a pagan Mohawk. She was four when smallpox swept away her parents and brother. The disease left her with a pitted face, a weakened body and impaired eyesight, the later the reason for her shawl. Much of the time it was drawn over her head to protect here eyes from glare. After the death of her parents, Kateri was adopted by her pagan uncle.

As she matured, she became extraordinarily retiring. Despite the physical damage of smallpox, she retained a natural charm which did not escape notice. Twice she refused arranged marriages. And thus came to notice, according to early records, the first inkling of her "purity of soul and body," an unusual trait amongst the early Indians whose moral code was loose by white standards.

Her absorption in religious teachings grew and Father James de Lamberville was the man destined to prepare her for baptism. Much of 1675 was taken up by instruction and a close scrutiny of her life and conduct. There was unanimity in proclaiming her virtue and she was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676.

The ceremony, according to old records, occurred amidst primitive, colorful surroundings at the lower Mohawk castle near the site of Fonda. The entire village rejoiced.

But the inconsistency of the savages changed admiration for Kateri into hatred; her people mocked her, contemptuously calling her "the Christian." One man threatened her life. There were rumors of infidelity, circulated by her own aunt. Her uncle persecuted her unmercifully; drunkards and libertines of the village insulted her and children threw mud as she walked to her daily devotions. These trials she bore quietly, but in her was the conviction that she must migrate to Canada to join the Christianized Indians.

Aided by Indian

Her big question was how to do it? A heavy wilderness blanketed the land between the Mohawk and the St. Lawrence river, streaked here and there only by the Indian paths. Her answer came in the person of a chieftain known as Louis Garonhiague to the whites, Hot Ashes to the Indians. Hot Ashes was a powerful Oneida who lived with the Christianized Indians in Canada, presumably because he repented of his part in the murder of a Jesuit years before.

Percy M. Van Epps, Schenectady county historian, has this to say about the Oneida and the escape: He had noticed Tekkawitha while visiting the valley. With him was a Mohawk relative of the girl. The three obtained a canoe and began their long journey while the girl's uncle was in Albany. Their first stop was at the Kinaquariones (Hoffmans) where the Canadian trail dipped to the river's edge. This pathway led through Wolf Hollow, into the Town of Glenville in the area of the Greens Corners road, thence northward to Lake George.

The small group took to the trail with disquieting knowledge. Kateri's relative, who had obtained provisions in Schenectady, reported that he had seen the girl's uncle. Recognition had not been mutual, but it was obvious that the older man was racing madly to his village, aware that his niece had left.

Knowing of his murderous rages, the party utilized its short lead and as fast as the sickened girl cold travel, hurried toward safety in the north.

(Next: The uncle pursues).

The Free State of Dade, county in northwest Georgia, raised the U.S. flag for the first time in 85 years, ending its "secession" from the Union, July 3, 1945.