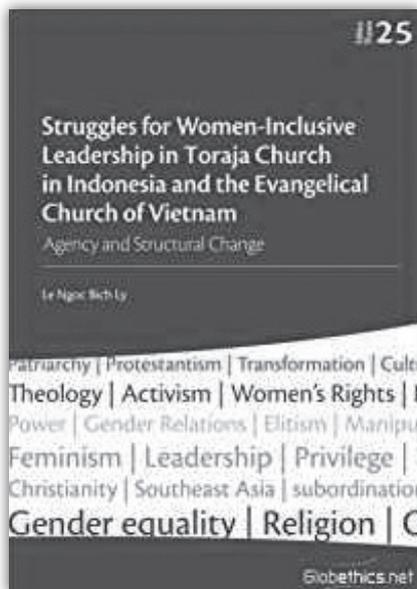


**STRUGGLES FOR WOMEN-INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN TORAJA
CHURCH IN INDONESIA AND THE EVANGELICAL
CHURCH OF VIETNAM**

Agency and Structural Change



Book Title : *Struggles for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam—Agency and Structural Change*

Language : English

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ISBN : 978-2889312115

Published : 2017

Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Thickness : 292 pages

Publisher : Globethics.net

Reviewer : Rey Ty*

This book belongs to the fields of sociology, adult education, Asian history, church history, and women's studies. It addresses the problem of the unequal statuses of women and men in the church to which both sexes have responded over time. The title suggests that, structurally, women are not treated equally in at least two different Asian church contexts. Hence, deliberate efforts had to be accomplished in order for women's position and equal status to be recognized in church circles, one in mainland Southeast Asia and another in insular Southeast Asia.

Hailing from Vietnam and completing her doctorate in Indonesia, the author is currently a professor and the director of the Institute of Peace, Culture, and Religion at Payap University in

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Thailand, all of which make her qualified to conduct a research and write a book about the status of women in churches in Vietnam and Indonesia.

In this book, the intention of the author is to explain the different levels of church's structural change to accommodate women in leadership, through which she added a nuanced and complex study to the rich literature on gender studies. The scope of her work is limited to two Asian case studies, one in Vietnam and another in Indonesia. Using a gendered perspective, the author is guided by the theory according to which there is a dialectical relationship between agency and structural transformation. Focusing on the Toraja Church in Indonesia and the ECVN in Vietnam, the author, employing a comparative approach, described in detail the changing gender structures in both churches through time. Thereafter, Le revealed the nuances in the interconnectedness between context and gender structure contestation in both churches. The key argument revealed in this book is that there is a complex interconnection between agency and gender structure change in both churches.

On a positive note, the concepts of agency and structure are well defined. The language used throughout the book is not only clear but more importantly also convincing. The ideas are well developed both thematically to focus on gender structures, agency, changes, context, and contestation as well as chronologically to illustrate their changes through time. The arguments in the conclusion are fully warranted, as the claims are all well substantiated with facts the author has gathered through her field visits and interviews.

On a negative note, luckily there really is none. I hunted high and low for loopholes and gaps but my search was in vain, which is a positive thing indeed. Seriously, this book only deserves superlatives, for the author has covered all grounds and explored different angles of the intricate relationship between structure and agency in both the Indonesian and the Vietnamese case studies on hand, as they affect the status of women in the church institutions under scrutiny.

Compared to most other works in the field of gender studies, this one is highly nuanced, as the author here did not make a sweeping binary statement about the absolute negative role of men or the absolute ever-affirmative role of women to advance women's status in the churches. Rather, she laid bare the intricate historical development of the changing status of women in church institutions with the dialectical interplay of the roles of both women and men in pushing forward or hindering the advancement of the status of women in the Toraja and EVCN churches.

Readers who would benefit from this book where they can learn about the complexities of gender relations in church contexts, especially in Southeast Asia, include church leaders, laity, students, researchers, and academicians in the fields of history, sociology, adult education, anthropology, gender studies, feminism, peace studies, cultural studies, Asian studies, Southeast Asian studies, theology, divinity, church administration, church history, and development studies, among others.