

## Ethnotheology Studies Concerning the Substance of Folk Religion as Local Theology of the Tugutil Ethnic in Halmahera Towards Contextual Ministry

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### Abstract

This article is an ethnotheological study of the substance of Folk Religion as Local Theology of the Tugutil Ethnic in Halmahera Island, North Maluku Province, Indonesia. This study examines and describes the elements of folk religion, namely beliefs about God, humans, sin and salvation as the fundamental beliefs of traditional societies with animism-dynamism patterns. The research was carried out using a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The results of this study show that the local theology of the Tugutil ethnicity regarding Jou Ma Dutu as God. He was the creator and owner of the universe; trichotomous human *nature o roche-o gikiri-o gurumini*; the human reality that is *o baradoha ma nyawa* which only causes the instability of the universe and disturbances to the ancestral spirits. Likewise, the concept of salvation they believe in is present and pragmatic, which does not give place to futuristic eternal life. The final result of this study shows that by examining deeply folk religion, the local theology was adopted by the Tugutil ethnic group. It becomes a consideration for implementing sociocultural approaches and contextual ministry, both spiritual and social ministry, for the Tugutil ethnic group as one of the isolated community groups in Indonesia.

Keywords: Contextual ministry, Culture, Ethnicity, Folk Religion, Local Theology

### Abstrak

Artikel ini adalah studi etnoteologi mengenai substansi Agama Rakyat sebagai Teologi Lokal Etnis Tugutil di pulau Halmahera, Propinsi Maluku Utara, Indonesia. Studi ini meneliti dan menjabarkan mengenai elemen-elemen agama rakyat, yaitu kepercayaan mengenai Tuhan, manusia, dosa dan keselamatan

sebagai keyakinan mendasar masyarakat tradisional yang bercorak animisme-dinamisme. Penelitian dilaksanakan dengan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan jenis etnografi. Dari hasil studi ini memperlihatkan bahwa teologi lokal etnis Tugutil mengenai *Jou Ma Dutu* sebagai Tuhan, pencipta dan pemilik alam semesta; hakikat manusia yang trikotomis *o roche-o gikiri-o gurumini*; realitas manusia yang *o baradoha ma nyawa* yang hanya menyebabkan kelabilan semesta dan gangguan kepada roh-roh leluhur. Demikian pula konsep keselamatan yang mereka percayai bersifat sekarang dan pragmatis yang tidak memberi tempat kepada kehidupan kekal yang bersifat futuristik. Hasil akhir dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa dengan meneliti secara mendalam agama rakyat yang adalah teologi lokal yang dianut oleh etnis Tugutil menjadi bahan pertimbangan untuk melaksanakan pendekatan-pendekatan socio-kultural dan pelayanan yang kontekstual, baik pelayanan spiritual maupun pelayanan sosial bagi etnis Tugutil sebagai salah satu kelompok masyarakat terasing di Indonesia.

Kata-kata Kunci: Agama Suku, Budaya, Etnik, Pelayanan Kontekstual, Teologi Lokal.

## Introduction

The Tugutil ethnic group is one of the isolated tribes on the island of Halmahera in North Maluku Province, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>. They occupy parts of the forest in the central part of the island of Halmahera, namely in Tobelo, Galela, Kao and Weda and in the northern part, namely in Wasile and Buli<sup>2</sup>. For generations, they often move between settlements in one family or small community in the forest, both inland and on the coast, they are often referred to as *o hongana ma nyawa* or *o fongana ma nyawa* (people who live in the forest) which are distinguished from with people who live in the village (*o bereraka ma nyawa*).<sup>3</sup> The term *o hongana ma nyawa* for the Tugutil ethnic group does not have a negative tendency, instead it is a source of pride for them, they don't feel angry or prestige as *tugutil* or

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Michael Taylor, *The Folk Biology of the Tobelo People: A Study in Folk Classification* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Dirk Teljeur, *The Symbolic System of the Giman of Halmahera* (Holland: Foris Publications, 1990), 9-13; see also in writing Nils Ole Bubandt, *Warriors of the Hornbill, Victims of the Mantis: History and Embodied Morality Among the Buli of Central Halmahera* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere and Sudiria Hura, "Kajian Etnologi Guna Menentukan Substansi Sosio-Kultural Sebagai Potensi Pengembangan Masyarakat Yang Kontekstual Kepada Suku Tugutil di Pulau Halmahera, Maluku Utara," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 8, No. 6 (April 2022): 59, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6420809>.

in other dialects it is called *togutil* and *gutili* for those who mean dirty related to their skin.<sup>4</sup> As for belief, in general the Tugutil ethnic adheres to traditional beliefs with animism and dynamism backgrounds. As will be revealed in this study, like the beliefs of tribes or isolated communities that are spread throughout the world, especially Indonesia, the visible symptoms related to socio-religious are dynamism and animism.<sup>5</sup>

Dynamism comes from the Greek term δύνάμις/*dunamos* which means power, strength and efficacy. Dynamism is the belief in something that has power or power beyond and above humans which is usually considered sacred or sacred, be it certain objects, animals or humans. While animism comes from the Latin term *animus* which means soul or life. Animists believe that everything has a soul or energy that often has power over humans.<sup>6</sup>

This study identifies and explains the important elements related to the animistic-dynamistic religious beliefs of the Tugutil people, namely elements of beliefs about God, humans, sin, and salvation. This research on the understanding of God, man, sin and salvation is the substance of the folk religion of a society. This understanding also shows that local wisdom formed through the process of inculturation of the Tugutil ethnicity on the one hand and on the other hand becomes an identity and dignity which have similarities and differences between the Tugutil people's religion and other ethnic groups. The study explains the elements of the Tugutil ethnic understanding of God, humans, sin and salvation which can be suggestions or proposals in a contextual and intact approach to social transformation and development or service, both spiritual, economic, social, and educational by empowering local theology as a result of studies to cultural and religious aspects of their people.

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<sup>4</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo, *Orang Tugutil di Halmahera Tengah Sebuah Catatan Etnografi* (Bandung: Universitas Negeri Padjadjaran, 1984), 6; see also in writing C. Duncan, *Ethnic Identity: Christian Conversion and Resettlement Among and Forest Tobelo of Northeastern Halmahera, Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> A. G. Honig, *Ilmu Agama* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2005), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Harun Hadiwiyono, *Religi Suku Murba di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006:15); Honig, 53.

## Theory of Anthropology as a Reference for Research Finding and Discussion Analysis

The theory that becomes the reference in this research is anthropology or ethnology. Anthropology or ethnology places great emphasis on culture as the essence of human life. Culture is essential when we know how people perceive their world and what they perceive as reality in life. Culture shows where the values of life and the types of needs that humans have. Culture also helps to understand where changes are taking place in human life and society. To think that culture is an adequate guide to all truth is wrong, but culture itself can be a good vehicle for communicating gospel truths.<sup>7</sup> According to Stephen Bevans, the cultural anthropological model that governs theology is not Scripture or tradition. Contextual theology does not mean putting old tested wine in a new bottle. Contextual theology means developing entirely new wines. This model does not see that culture can be evil or corrupt.<sup>8</sup>

Cultural anthropology has a vital contribution or contribution to the study of translation and cross-cultural communication in missions. According to him, there are many methods and principles of cultural anthropology that provide an understanding of certain cultural situations and conditions so that relationships and communication between missionaries and evangelical community groups will occur. Thus, cultural anthropology in relation to service (mission) will be able to help missionaries to understand the reality and strength of cultural systems, including languages, patterns of behavior, ceremonies, myths and worldviews and have benefits in Bible translation. and contextualization of the Bible.

## Method

This study was investigated using qualitative research methods that emphasize understanding social situations and phenomena that occur in a particular society, in this case the Tugutil ethnic group on Halmahera Island, Indonesia. The approach strategy or type of qualitative research carried out by the researcher is ethnography.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Dean Gilliland, *The Word Among Us-Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 313-317.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Model-Model Teologi Kontekstual* (Mauwere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2002), 97-109.

<sup>9</sup> See previous research from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an out-of-the-way place* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 52-53.

type of ethnographic research is the making of documentation and analysis of certain cultures of certain human communities or ethnic groups.<sup>10</sup> The content of ethnography is a description of ethnic culture, including the religious component of the people of a particular ethnic group or ethnic group that is the object of research.<sup>11</sup>

The first step of ethnographic research on the Tugutil ethnic group is the “finding the field” stage, where the researcher enters into the structure of the activities of the Tugutil community. This was carried out by researchers through field observations carried out by researchers in the village of Dodaga, in the interior of central Halmahera. This is where the researchers obtained data about the daily norms and culture of the Tugutil community. The next step is to carry out an investigation to find (Discovery) and collect (Getting) data according to the needs of the research problem<sup>12</sup>. At this stage the researcher through field work seeks to find important elements in the Tugutil people's folk religion.

The next step is the researcher brings and interprets the data that has been obtained (reading, interpretation, and getting straight). Processing and analysis of data regarding the substance of folk religion which is the local theology of the Tugutil ethnic group using an exploratory qualitative descriptive method. descriptive method is a problem solving procedure that is researched or investigated by describing the state of the subject/object of research, whether a person, institution or community and so on, both in the past and now based on the facts that appear or as they are. While the descriptive qualitative method which is explorative aims to describe the state or status of a phenomenon or symptom and wants to know the object of research and what problems are contained in the phenomenon or symptom, in this case the phenomenon regarding the local theology of the Tugutil people regarding God, humans, sin and salvation. This exploratory qualitative descriptive method as data analysis was used to identify the substance of the Tugutil ethnic people's religion on the island of Halmahera. In this

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<sup>10</sup> Roger M. Keesing, *Antropologi Budaya Suatu Perspektif Kontemporer Jilid 1* (Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga, 1999), 250; James P. Spradley, *Metode Etnografi* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana Yogya, 2011), xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi Edisi Baru* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2009), 1.

<sup>12</sup> See perception of Jerome Kirk and Marc Louis Miller, *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* (New York: Sage Publication, 1986).

case, the researchers explain their understanding of God, humans, sin and salvation which can be a reference and consideration in a comprehensive approach that empowers their local theology wisdom.

In the end, this study will produce an ethnotheology study, which is a theory that combines Christian theology and cultural anthropology or ethnology theory. It has been widely researched that cultural anthropology will help to create relationships between agents of transformation of society who have a certain culture and other and different cultural groups that exist in different areas.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is important to utilize research with this approach in the effort to transform society. Ethnotheology tries to carefully distinguish what in Christian doctrine is a supracultural reveal from God from what constitutes a “cultural appearance or dress” to that reveal. Ethnotheology primarily examines all the basic expressions of biblical theology to determine which of them express eternal truth and which express interpretations of truth. Expressions of truth can be conveyed to Christians from various cultural backgrounds as a fundamental part of Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the preaching of the truth will take into account the cultural context in which the message of God has revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ from the perspective of the Christian faith.

## **Result and Discussion**

In an ethnographic study by a well-known Indonesian anthropologist named Koentjaraningrat, information was obtained that the knowledge of Indonesians in everyday life regarding the number of ethnic groups or ethnic groups themselves is very limited. In general, the Indonesian people only know and can mention a few vague descriptions of the number of ethnic groups, namely as many as fourteen or fifteen large ethnic groups. In fact, a Western anthropologist named Le Bar argues that there are 962 ethnic groups in Indonesia, including ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> Duane Elmer, *Cross Cultural Connections* (Downers Grove-Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll-New York: Orbis, 1979), 87.

groups found in Kalimantan, Malaysia, the Andaman Islands and Madagascar.<sup>15</sup>

Given the diverse ethnic realities in Indonesia, learning about cross-cultural and contextual community groups in Indonesia must have an important place. If efforts to build a complete Indonesian human or social transformation efforts want to greet and convince the Indonesian people who have a variety of cultures (multi-culture), then to recognize the reality of diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia requires assistance from social sciences such as cultural anthropology and social sciences. ethnographic research.<sup>16</sup>

Research into the substance of the religion of the people of a community or ethnic group as a component of culture is also important to utilize disciplines such as sociology (society) and anthropology (humans and culture). Therefore, researchers use these disciplines in examining the dynamics of the Tugutil ethnic understanding of God, humans, sin and salvation as their unique local theology that can be empowered in social transformation efforts for ethnic groups who are one of the most isolated communities in Indonesia.

### **Tugutil Ethnic Beliefs about God**

The Tugutil ethnic belief system is centered on ancestral spirits as spirits that inhabit the entire ecosystem and ecology, both natural ones such as the sky, mountains, caves, forests, trees and man-made objects such as houses, arrows, machetes.<sup>17</sup> In addition to spirits, they believe there is a supernatural power attached to every extraordinary object and influences the success and failure of a business or human activity in everyday life. Because the Tugutil ethnic believe that every object has a certain soul and feeling, they place and treat and respect every object like humans. In general, the Tugutil people believe in a supreme power or power which they call and greet *Jou Ma Dutu* (*Jou* means “master” and *Ma Dutu* means “owner”). Thus, *Ma Jou Ma Dutu* is the power or power as the

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<sup>15</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Manusia dan Kebudayaan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 2000), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Niko L. Kana, *Agama, Budaya dan Konteks* (Jakarta: Institute for Community and Development Studies, 2006), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993), 246.

owner of the entire universe.<sup>18</sup> *Ma Jou Ma Dutu* is the “master owner” or “owner of the entire universe”.<sup>19</sup> Another greeting for *Jou Ma Dutu* is *O Gikiri Moi* (*O Gikiri* means “soul or life” and *Moi* means “one, only or foremost”). Thus, *O Gikiri Moi* is the main soul or soul. The meaning of *O Gikiri Moi* is He who exceeds other *gikiri-gikiri* because the Tugutil ethnic believe that all living things and inanimate objects such as soil, trees and rivers have a soul or *gikiri*. The Tugutil ethnic belief in the highest power to *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* seems to have been widely known in the community in Halmahera since ancient times until now.

The Tugutil ethnic group recognizes and believes in the power of *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* over humans and the entire universe as God, the creator, owner, ruler and preserver of all humans and the universe. But they believe in *Jou Ma Dutu* not personally, but as an unknown or unknown God (*Ma Jou i wi hiori kua*, *Ma Jou i wi nako ua*). For them, *Jou Ma Dutu*, even though as a real reality, is not a person of God, but as a “power” or “influence” that exceeds humans who are the owners of life and helpers.

Meanwhile, *Jou Ma Dutu* is where the Tugutil people lean when they are interacting with nature, such as when they are hunting animals (*hoyia*), catching fish (*nawoko hatagoko*), planting or gardening (*ho ma dumule*) or looking for food (*o inomo*), then the Tugutil people will pray to *Jou Ma Dutu* like: *Jou tanu nomihi duaka o inomo*, which means “God, may you give us food.” Even so, for the Tugutil people *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* is still an impersonal and unknown God. This is supported by the social situation of the Tugutil people who have never performed rites or ceremonies of direct worship to *Jou Ma Dutu*.<sup>20</sup>

As in the ancient belief that dynamism-animism that God does not directly relate to humans, but uses the media either in the form of spirits

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<sup>18</sup> J. D. M. Platenkamp, *Tobelo Ides and Values of a North Moluccan Society* (Leiden: Repro Psychologie, 1988), 10-12; see also in writing J. D. M. Platenkamp, “Transforming Tobelo Ritual”, in Daniel de Coppet, ed., *Understanding Rituals* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); The latest publications from the same researcher can be seen in the book J. D. M. Platenkamp, *Tobelo, Moro, Ternate: The Cosmological Valorization of Historical Events* (Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 246-247.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-247.



or certain objects, this is also evident in the beliefs of the Tugutil ethnic group. For them, even though *Jou Ma Dutu* exists, those who are more actively involved and intervene in daily life are the spirits of the ancestors called *o gomanga*. As for the belief and worship of ancestral spirits, it is intended to strengthen the basic structure of traditional society, namely the heredity aspect.<sup>21</sup> *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* is the head of *o gomanga*, therefore to come to *Jou Ma Dutu* must go through *o gomanga* as a medium of surrender (*ma ngaku*).<sup>22</sup> Through the observations of researchers, the various rituals that the Tugutil people carry out are usually aimed directly at the spirits of the ancestors (*o gomanga*) or to the spirits (*o gumatere*) that inhabit the natural environment around their settlements. Some of these rites are healing ceremonies, namely healing diseases, honoring ancestors, facing big jobs, facing enemy attacks in conflict or war, burning forests for settlements and gardens, marriage and death.

Belief in *Jou Ma Dutu* and worship of *o gomanga* remains a belief embedded in the life of the Tugutil ethnic group for generations. They do not know and never mention a taxonomic term or a special name for their own native religious system. They follow it and carry it out from generation to generation.<sup>23</sup>

From the explanation above, it is found that the Tugutil ethnic believe in the existence of power and position above them, namely *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* and the power of the ancestral spirits around them, namely *o gomanga*. But there are also other subtle powers found in fellow humans, animals and things, namely *o gumatere*. The power is not personal but as a reality. Although the Tugutil people acknowledge the power of *Jou Ma Dutu*, practically no worship is directed to him. The rituals carried out by the Tugutil people are usually intended to seek favor and help from the *o gomanga* and *o gumatere* who are believed to be active in carrying out daily interventions in their lives.

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan H. Tuner, *Herbert Spencer a Renewed Appreciation* (England: Sage Publication, 1985), 136-137.

<sup>22</sup> As James Haire wrote in the book from Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, *Contextual Theology for the Twenty First Century* (Cambridge: James Clark and Co, 2012), 24-27.

<sup>23</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 246-247.

The traditional belief in *Ma Jou Madutu*, *O Gikiri Moi* and *O Gomanga* is not only the traditional belief of the Tugutil and Tobelo people, but is also believed by other ethnic groups on the island of Halmahera such as the Sahu tribe, which is located in the western part of Halmahera.<sup>24</sup>

### **Tugutil Ethnic Beliefs about Human**

One of the main concepts underlying the religious system or folk religion of the Tugutil ethnic group is their view of human nature, which in the mother tongue of the Tugutil people is called *o nyawa* and human life in this world. The Tugutil people understand that human or *o nyawa* is a trichotomy consisting of three main elements which form a single unit, namely the physical body (*o roche*), soul or life (*o gikiri*) and spirit (*o gurumini*). The three main elements complement each other in a unified phenomenon which at the same time describes the existence and nature of the human being (*o nyawa*) itself. The body (*o roche*) is the visible body or physical flesh of a human being with members from head to toe. As for the soul or life (*o gikiri*) is something that dwells in the human body (*o roche*) and which causes motion or life in the human being (*o nyawa*).<sup>25</sup> While the spirit (*o gurumini*), which literally is a shadow is the spirit, dignity or self-esteem inherent in the life of every human being (*o nyawa*). So, in the nature and nature of human existence, the Tugutil people view that the soul (*o gikiri*) is what makes every body (*o roche*) come alive in the sense of being able to think, speak and move. Meanwhile, the spirit element (*o gurumini*) which gives meaning to humans is the motivation and self-esteem of every human life (*o nyawa*). Thus, for the Tugutil people, human existence (*o nyawa*) is considered complete and perfect if the three main elements, namely the body (*o roche*), soul (*o gikiri*) and spirit or dignity (*o gurumini*) are in balance. The element called *o gurumini* makes humans (*o nyawa*) substantially different from other creatures.<sup>26</sup>

The Tugutil people's basic beliefs about human nature have helped shape the world view as a belief system and various rituals and beliefs in everyday life. When a human (*o nyawa*) dies (which they call *o honenge*),

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<sup>24</sup> James Haire, *The Character and Theological Struggle Church in Halmahera, Indonesia 1941-1979* (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter D. Lang, 1981), 233-234.

<sup>25</sup> J. D. M. Platenkamp, *Tobelo Ides and Values of a North Moluccan Society*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 247.

then the soul (*o gikiri*) and the human spirit (*o gurumini*) will leave the human body (*o roehe*) which then becomes a corpse. Even though the human body (*o roehe*) has become a corpse and then becomes soil, the Tugutil people believe that the soul (*o gikiri*) and spirit (*o gurumini*) that are fused will still live and be in the environment around the Tugutil people. These two intangible elements then become ancestral spirits (*o gomanga*) for the next generation who are then worshiped and respected from generation to generation.

Animistic understanding affects the Tugutil ethnic understanding of humans (*o nyawa*). Fragmentally, the Tugutil people believe in *o gikiri* (soul or life) and *o gurumini* (spirit or dignity) and *o roehe* (physical body) separately. In this case, the unity of *o gikiri* and *o gurumini* which is an intangible element in the human being (*o nyawa*) is understood as a force that can live and stand alone outside the body (*o roehe*). Therefore, if a human (*o nyawa*) dies, the *o gikiri* and *o gurumini* will continue to live around them and even remain active both in helping and in trouble. For the Tugutil people, death (*o honenge*) is not the return of *o gikiri* and *o gurumini* to *Jou Ma Dutu* as the Lord because even though his body (*o roehe*) is no longer there, *o gikiri* and *o gurumini* are still together in their daily activities. This belief causes the Tugutil people to be unable to let go of the spirits of the dead such as *o gomanga* who is also believed to be a medium and intermediary from God, *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi*.

For the Tugutil people, humans (*o nyawa*) are very important in job mobility, individual life cycles and religious systems. The existence of humans (*o nyawa*) is very important for the Tugutil people because only humans can carry out the individual life cycle cycle such as forming a family or household (which they call *o tau moi ma nyawa*). Humans also carry out economic cycles such as carrying out activities such as building or working on houses (*o tau*) and establishing unit houses (*o tau moi*) in one settlement (*o gogere*) as a place to live, study, socialize and rest. As creatures that are different from animals, humans (*o nyawa*) also actively work for food and life such as hitting sago (*hofelata*), hunting animals (*hoiya*), looking for fish (*nawoko hatogoko*) and planting food in the garden

(*ho ma dumule*).<sup>27</sup> Thus, even though humans are not everything, they have a central place in the worldview of the Tugutil ethnic community.

### Tugutil Ethnic Beliefs about Sin

In general, for isolated people, sin or violation or error is a disturbance to the natural order or damage to the harmony of life in the cosmos which is dangerous, taboo and tends to bring disaster and misery.<sup>28</sup> Even so, sin is something abstract that is only manifested in actions that violate ethical and moral matters. The new understanding of sin is most evident in sexual offenses. In this animist belief, sin is not a violation of the law against God, but rather a disturbance to the natural order. For this reason, the various peace rituals carried out are not intended as a means of peace with and for God who are angry because of human sins, but aim to restore disharmony, namely balance in nature so that it becomes harmony.

The nature and action of the Tugutil ethnic group is not something that is clearly and clearly defined like a doctrine or dogma teaching. The Tugutil ethnicity knows the forms of violations and mistakes committed by humans which they call *o baradoha*. However, even that is not a clear concept of sin, but a term that emerged due to assimilation with the concept and talk of Indonesians about sin. Practically, what is referred to as *o baradoha* is bad behavior (*manga kalakuanga i to torou*), disorderly life (*takaruang*), lying (*elu-eluku*), murderer (*yo toma-toma*), and stealing (*o tohoiki*).

The Tugutil people do not understand who they are *o baradoha*. They never admitted that they sinned against *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* as the Lord. They feel more guilty to *o gomanga* and *o gumatere* as spirits. If the Tugutil people are in one place and if they feel careless and careless in their surroundings, then they must apologize to the *o gomanga* who is suspected of living in that place. Usually the evil spirits (*meki* or *tokata*) are so feared by the Tugutil people that they must be careful not to disturb the *o gomanga* or *o gumatere* who inhabit the place.<sup>29</sup> The Tugutil

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<sup>27</sup> Mawikere and Hura, 62-70.

<sup>28</sup> Honig, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 248; see also in writing Christopher R. Duncan, "Social Change and the Reformulation of Identity Among the Forest Tobelo of Halmahera Tengah," *CAKALELE* 8 (1997): 5,

people recognize the existence of stratification or structure in the spirits they call *meki* or *tokata* who are believed to control certain places or villages (*o bereraka*) and certain forest units (*o hongana*). For example, in the observations of researchers, there is a belief that the Tugutil people live in the forest and the village of Dodaga in Wasile District, northern Halmahera island. They believe in a spirit called *meki rabena* as the head or ruler of the entire Dodaga area. As for under the rule of the spirit of *meki rabena*, there are two wives, namely *fafaiti* and *loufanga-fanga*. Furthermore, there are also their children, namely *meki jalanjao*, *meki pulutunu*, *meki bisoli* and *meki bihuruk* who control certain places within the territory of the Dodaga forest unit. The Tugutil people are very afraid of *meki* or *tokata*, if they disturb the location that is considered the residence of the spirits like *meki* or *tokata*, then they commit an offense that needs to be corrected.

One thing that stands out which is considered a sin (*o baradoha*) for the Tugutil people is when there is a broken family and divorce occurs because of adultery. However, such violations still only affect the relationship between one human being (*o nyawa*) and other humans as well as the relationship between humans and ancestral spirits (*o gomanga*), not affecting the relationship with *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* because for them God is not known to be active. monitor, judge and punish every human transgression. Even like traditional society in general, the Tugutil people do not know about inherited sins (*original sin*), but they only know actual sins that cause disharmony between humans and each other, with the surrounding nature and with the spirits of their ancestors.

### Tugutil Ethnic Beliefs about Salvation

To get a big picture and understanding of the Tugutil ethnic understanding of salvation, it is important to see what their understanding of the human condition after death (*o honenge*) is like and their understanding of the realities of the world.

The Tugutil people believe that around their environment there are many spirits (such as *o gomanga*, *o gumatere*, *o meki*) that inhabit natural

objects, namely trees, rocks, corals, caves, soil, rivers, springs, and so on. All these spirits according to their beliefs come from the spirits of people who have died (*o honenge ma nyawa*). As has been revealed in their belief that when a human die, the soul (*o gikiri*) and spirit (*o gurumini*) will come out of the human body (*o roehe*) or physical body, then they will become spirits who are considered to still remain around. humans (*o nyawa*) who are still alive. In general, the Tugutil ethnic group believes that between spirits and humans who are still alive there is still a mystical or magical reciprocal relationship and interaction.<sup>30</sup>

The Tugutil ethnic belief regarding the condition of humans (*o nyawa*) after death is very unique, namely if *o gikiri* (life or soul) and *o gurumini* (spirit, self-respect or dignity) have left the body (*o roehe*), then humans will become spirits. which are divided into two categories: First, the category of humans who die naturally which generally comes from the spirits of the ancestors (*o gomanga*). The spirit of *o gomanga* is always considered good and will help humans (*o nyawa*) in everyday life. Because of that, Tugutil people often call it *o gomanga ma oa* because it is often considered a good spirit. For example, there are *o gomanga* or ancestral spirits that are considered extraordinary or powerful who specifically accompany certain people which they call *o dilikine* or *o gomanga ma buturungu*<sup>31</sup>. But on the other side, *o gomanga* can also be evil to humans (*o nyawa*) if they are not served through certain rituals so that they can become *o gomanga ma duru*, which is a fearsome enemy.<sup>32</sup> Second, the category of humans who died unnaturally due to suicide, fell from a tree, fell into a ravine, drowned, was attacked by a wild boar, died due to childbirth, and so on. The spirits of people who die unnaturally are usually called *meki*, *hetana* or *tokata*, namely evil spirits that are considered evil and tend to disturb and harm humans. Why is it considered evil? Because for the Tugutil people, people who die unnaturally feel curious

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<sup>30</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 248.

<sup>31</sup> J. D. M. Platenkamp, *Tobelo Ides and Values of a North Moluccan Society*, 103.

<sup>32</sup> Radios Simanjuntak, Ervial A. M. Zuhud and Agus Hikmat, "Etnobotani Masyarakat O Hongana Ma Nyawa di Desa Wangongira, Kabupaten Halmahera Utara," *Jurnal Media Konservasi* 20, no. 3 (Desember 2015): 254, <https://journal.ipb.ac.id/index.php/konservasi/article/view/12633>

and will vent it by trying to interfere with the existence and lives of other humans.<sup>33</sup>

As is well known, the existence of animism-dynamism beliefs is also related to spiritistic beliefs as found in tribal or folk religion. In the traditional belief of the Tugutil people, there are three evil spirits which are generally called *o meki*, *o putiana*, and *suanggi*. The three evil spirits are greatly feared by humans (*o nyawa*). This demonic reality can appear at any time when the Tugutil people feel disturbed or when humans are not careful and act recklessly in the natural environment, especially when they are carrying out activities in the forest (*o hongana*). But in general, Tugutil people have realized this since childhood and usually they will equip themselves with various kinds of amulets or sacred drugs to deal with or avoid interference from these evil spirits.

The Tugutil people know *o meki* as a forest-dwelling evil spirit who likes to live in large trees, soil, large rocks, or parts of deep rivers. They consider *o meki* as a forest ranger that they fear because *o meki* is unavoidable in everyday life, especially when the Tugutil people hunt animals in the forest, so a hunter must be careful throwing sharp weapons at the target. A hunter in his heart must first ask permission and at the same time apologize to *o meki*, if the weapon he released accidentally hits a tree trunk or a large rock or the ground where *o meki* lives.<sup>34</sup> Next is the Tugutil belief in the existence of *o putiana* (in the name of the Javanese is *kuntilanak* or *sundel bolong*) which they call *o ngohaka ma hetana* or female evil spirit. The understanding of the Tugutil people is generally the same as the traditional animist understanding that *o putiana* is the spirit of a woman who died during childbirth. If a woman dies in this way, it is considered unnatural because she died in a forced and tortured situation. This unnatural and tormented death causes the spirit concerned to always feel curious and wander as a demon or evil spirit in the forest or village. The Tugutil people believe that *o putiana* will often come and disturb people in the forest and people living at home, especially pregnant women and small children. Furthermore, the Tugutil people believe in *suanggi* as a type of evil spirit who always borrows the

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<sup>33</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 248-249.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-249.

hands of others to disturb certain humans. As for the evil spirits of humans who are the perpetrators of the disturbance itself, they are then called *suanggi*. If someone in everyday life shows symptoms of strange behavior, then the people around him will be suspicious of him as someone who will one day become a *suanggi* so that little by little the person will be shunned by the group.

The Tugutil ethnic religious system believes that around their environment there are spirits that inhabit natural objects (such as land, water, forests, mountains, trees) as well as cultural objects (such as houses, machetes, arrows, amulets, clothes, and sticks). The spirits come from the spirits of people who have died and are classified into two types, good and evil. For the Tugutil people, salvation can be interpreted as release or liberation from interference or the influence of evil spirits such as *o meki*, *suanggi*, *tokata*, *o putiana*, *hetana*, *o gumatere* and even *o gomanga* who have turned into evil like *o gomanga ma duru*. Therefore, it takes human attitudes and efforts to make these evil creatures calm so that they will not disturb humans.

The Tugutil people do not only believe in themselves but also always respect and worship spirits, especially spirits who are considered good, such as *o gomanga*. For them, the spirits who are considered good are always active in intervening and helping, such as protecting from accidents while traveling and hunting. Respect is carried out in the form of rituals called *gomanga hohakai* and *giamoka*. There is also a ritual for *o gomanga* for the protection of the village or *o berera* called *dodofo* and a ritual for hunting for food called *wonge ma inomo*. While the ritual of healing the disease is called *o gumatere* by using a shaman called *o houru ma nyawa*.<sup>35</sup>

The Tugutil people's belief in safety is material and oriented to the present. They have no hope in a life to come and have no end. For the Tugutil people, sin is not considered a violation of the rules of *Jou Ma Dutu* or *o Gikiri Moi* that humans must be held accountable for in eternity with threats that bring judgment to *o baradoha ma nyawa* (sinners). In the soteriological understanding of the Tugutil people, the awareness of sin

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<sup>35</sup> Safrudin Abdulrahman, "Ritual Gomatere: Praktek Shamanisme Pada Orang Tugutil," *Etnohistori* 1, no. 2 (2014): 65, <http://ejournal.unkhair.ac.id/index.php/etnohis/article/view/811>



is never directed to the consciousness of *Jou Ma Dutu* or *o Gikiri Moi*, but to *o gomanga* and even to *o meki*. The suffering experienced as *o baradoha ma nyawa* is incidental and horizontal, the suffering that will be experienced eternally as a consequence of unforgivable sins, is almost unknown to the native Tugutil people. In the belief of the Tugutil people never know the term hell.<sup>36</sup> Even today, the Tobelo people and some of the Tugutil ethnic groups are familiar with the term *o wuku* (fire of hell), this is the result of acculturation in this case the process of translating the gospel message to them when missionaries from Europe came to serve by preaching the good news about God. Jesus Christ to the Tugutil people on the island of Halmahera.<sup>37</sup>

Likewise, with the nature of heaven, which the understanding of the Tugutil people is not like other ethnicities or cultures who have a belief in the existence of a land from another world, the abode of the idols or Gods. For the Tugutil people, this life is now, while for life after death will only be faced with two possibilities. If someone lives well and dies naturally, then that person will become *o gomanga*. Meanwhile, if a person experiences an unnatural death, then that person will become *o tokata* or a demon. Even though today the Tobelo people and some of the Tugutil ethnic groups are familiar with the term *horoga ika* (heaven), this is also the result of acculturation in the form of translating the gospel message to the Tugutil people.

### Folk Religion, Local Theology of the Tugutil People and Contextualization

With regard to the relationship between the Bible and culture and its components, the term “contextualization” must be viewed broadly. John Mark Terry argues that missiological contextualization is seen as an effort to enable the message of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ to come to life when it is conveyed to vital issues of a socio-cultural context

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<sup>36</sup> Haryo S. Martodirjo in Koentjaraningrat, *Masyarakat Terasing di Indonesia*, 248-250; Martodirjo, 6; also see Haryo S. Martodirjo, *Orang Tugutil di Halmahera, Struktur dan Dinamika Sosial Masyarakat Penghuni Hutan* (Bandung: Universitas Negeri Padjadjaran, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> A. Djurubasa, “Sasi Gereja: Suatu Kajian Teologis Tentang Praktek Sasi Gereja di Lingkungan Gereja Masehi Injili di Halmahera Khususnya Wilayah Kao Timur dan Kao Barat” (Tesis, Tomohon: Universitas Kristen Indonesia Tomohon, 2000).

and transforms worldviews, values and values. and the target.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, mission expert Darrel Whiteman argues that contextualization is more than just communicating a message in a new worldview context, but then how the message becomes part of the culture of the recipient of the message. In this sense, contextualization tries to communicate the gospel in words and actions and build the church in ways suitable for people in the local context. Presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets the deepest needs of the people and penetrates the views of the worldview of these people, then allow them to follow Christ and remain in their own culture.<sup>39</sup> The same explanation as above regarding the notion of contextualization in relation to the mission of evangelism was expressed by Stan Guthrie. According to him, contextualization is finding points of contact within the context of people in a community group and removing things from those people's contexts that hinder communication so they can hear the gospel. This can be done verbally and nonverbally. Contextualization will continue to be an approach to cross-cultural missions in continuous languages, belief systems, and worldviews that constantly demand it.<sup>40</sup>

Contextualization is a must in preaching the gospel that applies to all nations (πάντα /*panta ta ethnē*) and is cross-cultural in accordance with the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Contextualization is very important because the gospel of Jesus Christ must be presented attractively into the context of the community group. Every believer accepts the task of presenting the gospel through words and actions in his life, so every believer must understand and implement contextualization of the gospel in their respective contexts.

As the essence and strategy of preaching the Gospel, contextualization is an effort to understand and pay serious attention to the unique and special life context of each human group from its own point of view which includes their respective cultural, religious, social, political and economic components. Contextualization also assesses

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<sup>38</sup> John Mark Terry, "Indegenous Churches" dalam A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 318.

<sup>39</sup> Darrel L. Whiteman, "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 1 (1997): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693939702100101>

<sup>40</sup> Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century* (Waynesborn: Paternoster, 2005), 102.

what the Bible says to people in their own context. Therefore, the contextualization of the Bible requires in-depth empirical research and analysis (field research) of the context instead of superficial judgments or a priori/prejudiced judgments. Jesus Christ is the main model in contextual preaching of the gospel. In doing ministry, Jesus Christ has a sensitive and careful way or method when offering the gospel to everyone related to their respective contexts. Thus, the main principle in contextualization is to imitate Jesus Christ who became one person to another. Christ for other people and groups (becoming like Christ to others).<sup>41</sup>

For churches and Christian institutions that will serve cross-culturally and contextually to the Tugutil people, it is better to prepare a missionary who has character, integrity and a trustworthy family, adequate knowledge and skills of cultural mapping and a commitment to learning, living and associate with the Tugutil community. The person must be willing to learn and master cultural features, especially language or linguistics, both in form, nature and meaning as a means of communication to approach the Tugutil people and as a means of communication to proclaim the gospel. The gospel message that will be conveyed to the Tugutil people should be packaged by utilizing the results of studies of cultural anthropology or ethnographies in the form of animism-dynamism beliefs about *Ma Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi*, the Tugutil people's world view of holistic humans (*o nyawa*) regarding *o roehe*, *o gikiri* and *o gurumini* and the importance of cultural transformation regarding their belief in *o gomanga*, *o gumatere*, *o baradoha* and *o honenge*. Of course, the use of these cultural components and values as well as the concept of their worldview needs to be given a "new meaning" through the transformation of gospel values in accordance with the Bible.

### Local Theology of Tugutil Ethnic as a Potential for Contextual Ministry

As stated above, in the substance of folk religion as the local theology of the Tugutil ethnicity, it is found that the Tugutil people believe in the existence of God, namely *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* as the creator, owner and preserver of the universe. This belief in *Jou Ma Dutu* or

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<sup>41</sup> Duane Elmer, *Cross Cultural Servanthood* (Downers Grove-Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2006), 144-152.

O Gikiri Moi is a local theology held by the Tugutil ethnic group as identity, dignity but also as their survival of the fittest. Their belief in *Jou Ma Dutu* or O Gikiri Moi is not a personally known God (*ma Jou iwi hiori kua* or *ma Jou iwi nako ua*), but a power that is far from creation (transcendent). Meanwhile, the power over humans who are more active in intervening both to help and to disturb are spirits such as *o gomanga*, *o meki* and *tokata*. The nuances of animism and spiritism are inseparable from the Tugutil ethnic understanding of God and ancestral spirits which remain a mystical reality in human existence and their environment. The belief of the Tugutil and Tobelo people in these spirits was lived before Christianity entered the island of Halmahera and persisted after they received the gospel.<sup>42</sup>

The Tugutil people also believe that humans (*o nyawa*) have both material (*o roche*) and non-material (*o gikiri* and *o gurumini*) natures, so that humans are not on the same level as living creatures or other inanimate objects. For the Tugutil people, sin (*o baradoha*) is understood as a violation of the laws of nature and not rebellion against *Jou Ma Dutu* or O Gikiri Moi. Sinful humans (*o baradoha ma nyawa*) will meet the consequences of instability in society, and interfere with *o gomanga* and *tokata*, but this is not the responsibility of *Jou Ma Dutu* or *o Gikiri Moi*.

Salvation for the Tugutil people is contemporary, including being described through a peaceful life, because all the necessities of life, especially food, have been fulfilled. Safety also means the help of *o gomanga* which is always real at any time, situation and place, as well as being healthy, safe and free from interference from *o meki* and *tokata*. Such an understanding of safety is material, namely everyday safety where a person always feels safe, healthy, peaceful and calm.

The local theology or the substance of the Tugutil people's folk religion shows their belief in the spiritual world, namely the unknown

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<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Leith, "Resettlement and Restless Tree Spirits: Shifting Identities and Resource-based Livelihoods in North Halmahera," *CAKALELE* 10 (1999): 68-69, <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/4255/1/UHM.CSEAS.Cakalele.v10.Leith.pdf>; See also previous publications from the same researcher, namely Jennifer Leith, "Resettlement History, Resources and Resistance in North Halmahera," in S. Pannell and F. von Benda-Beckmann, ed., *Old World Places, New World Problems: Exploring Issues of Resource Management in Eastern Indonesia* (Canberra: Australia National University, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, 1998).

and unknown God as well as in other supernatural forces such as spirits. This is important to be considered in carrying out a contextual and holistic service approach that must touch the spiritual element of the Tugutil ethnic group. Likewise, the Tugutil ethnic belief that humans are trichotomous which polarizes material and non-material elements should be the basis for approaching Tugutil humans with their worldview which categorizes physical and spiritual humans in the reality of the integrity of humanity, both male and female.

The results of the ethnotheology study above explain that the Tugutil people's belief in God, humans, sin and salvation has shaped the worldview as a "life value" for them, namely the Tugutil people are not allowed to close the door of their houses (*o tau moi*) or settlements (*o gogere*) for them. others. A settlement (*o gogere*) must be open to accept and welcome all people because life as a community together without clear boundaries in a forest unit (*o hongana*) and village (*o bereraka*). As for the Tugutil people, although some of them live as isolated people, they do not live isolated individually but live together in a community with other people. Therefore, all people who have no family relationship or have not been known for a long time are still addressed as friends called *hobata* or *dodiawo* or *olo*.<sup>43</sup> The open attitude of the Tugutil people, which is the potential for acculturation and social transformation, will certainly facilitate efforts to approach holistic services both spiritual and social as well as contextual services that touch and empower the cultural aspects that have become the inculturation of the Tugutil people such as their special local theology described above.

This ethnotheology study also shows the possibility or potential (and also the crisis related to their belief in spiritism) for social transformation efforts for the Tugutil ethnic group. The social transformation that is expected to bring about change and complete improvement in the elements of spiritual, character, mentality, physical, health, education and dignity for the Tugutil ethnic group as an isolated community is important. Such social transformation efforts must also take into account their proximity to forests, land and water and their belief in the inseparability between the material world and the spiritual world. Thus, the social transformation is expected to continue to respect

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<sup>43</sup> Mawikere and Hura, 71.

and empower local theology which is the local wisdom of the Tugutil ethnic group.

This study shows that in ancient beliefs the Tugutil people recognized the existence of God (*Ma Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi*) as well as ancestral spirits (*o gomanga*). This belief is still held by the Tugutil community with the belief in *o gomanga* (as a medium for *Ma Jou Ma Dutu*), *o gumatere* (exorcising evil spirits through certain rites as well as looking for supernatural clues in everyday life). Therefore, the gospel message that will be conveyed to the people of Tugutil must be packaged by utilizing the ancient belief in *Ma Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi*. Evangelists can preach about Jesus Christ as God who saves contextually in their language, namely: *Ma Jou Jesus Christ, O Gikiri Moi wo na halamati*. Likewise with human nature (*o nyawa*). Humans are God's creation (*O Gikiri Moi*). Human life can continue in eternity by becoming *o gomanga* in Sang Gikiri Moi, human *gomanga* becoming "life gomanga" (*o gomanga ma oa*). Because of the power of sin, there is an evil life (*o gomanga ma dorou*).<sup>44</sup> Even so, there is salvation for mankind through Jesus Christ who is *O Gikiri Moi wo na halamati* (Lord and Savior).

## Conclusion

This ethnotheology study shows that the Tugutil ethnic group has traditional beliefs as a folk religion. They believe in God (*Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi*) as the creator and owner of the entire universe, but *Jou Ma Dutu* or *O Gikiri Moi* is an unknown God. They also understand that humans (*o nyawa*) consist of the material (*o roeche*) and the immaterial (*o gikiri* and *o gurumini*). This reveals the local theology that characterizes the daily life of the Tugutil ethnic group.

As stated above, in the substance of religion, the Tugutil people do not understand sin (*o baradoha*) as a direct violation of God. Sin is only a violation of the laws of nature that can be overcome by creating a stable condition for society or the environment. Thus, there is no responsibility required by *Jou Ma Dutu* or *o Gikiri Moi* as the God to humans. In this regard, the Tugutil people understand salvation that is "now" and

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<sup>44</sup> Julianus Mojau, *Religiositas Kekristenan Halmahera* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2022). 33.

"material", namely the fulfillment of all life needs, a sense of peace and security. They do not recognize the concept of "the life to come" as a reality, because they do not have a personal knowledge of *Jou Ma Dutu* or *o Gikiri Moi* and the existence and life of *o nyawa* (self and others) which is *o baradoha ma nyawa*.

The local theology of the Tugutil people regarding God and humans can be a meeting point and a critical point in dialectics and dialogue in social transformation approaches. It is a common goal for the Tugutil people to experience social transformation from an isolated society to a settled, open and advanced society. However, this social transformation does not only hope that it will bring about change and improvement for the Tugutil ethnic group as an isolated community, but also considers and empowers socio-religious substances as local wisdom and local theology which may be important aspects in encouraging social transformation to the Tugutil ethnic group. When will the social transformation of the Tugutil people occur? If there is an encounter with the principles of social transformation in the form of "personal and communal repentance and awareness" as well as "significant change" across sectors (spiritual, economic, social, cultural, environmental) with the cultural values contained in the religion of the people or local theology of the Tugutil people.

In connection with the results of the study of the Tugutil community, there arose the need to formulate a "contextual evangelism paradigm" that departs from the Bible which at the same time touches the culture of the people who receive the gospel. The paradigm is in order to answer the need for preaching the gospel that is relevant to the community and to answer the community's need to hear and reflect on the gospel message in their cultural context.

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