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## **The Theological and Inculturative Values of Lamentation Songs In Good Friday Services**

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### **Abstrak**

Many Christian communities in Sumba practice a unique tradition of incorporating lamentation songs in regional languages into their Good Friday services. These poignant melodies, born out of the local Christian community, trace their roots to the *ngi'o teki* tradition—a practice characterized by the expressive mourning of the departed through carefully crafted and emotional words. Despite the fact that such lamentations diverge from the official Good Friday services outlined in the widely accepted Roman Liturgy of the Catholic Church, they play a significant role in the cultural and religious fabric of these communities. This qualitative research aimed to delve into the historical and cultural context of these lament songs, unveil their theological and inculturative values, and discern their specific place within the Good Friday service. The findings of this research underscored the intrinsic theological and inculturative values embedded in lament songs, emphasizing their crucial role in rendering the Good Friday liturgy more resonant and meaningful for the local population.

**Keywords:** inculturation; liturgy; *ngi'o teki*; theology of sorrow; the passion

## INTRODUCTION

Good Friday is a day to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, celebrated by Christian believers in churches. In certain regions, such as Sumba and Timor, local Christian communities have a unique tradition of incorporating lamentations in their Good Friday services. In Sumba, the Catholic Church of the Weetebula Cathedral of the Holy Spirit carried out lamentations during the Good Friday service in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in Timor, in 2022 and 2023, Catholic communities that practice such tradition include St. Antonius Padua Church, Parish of Wekfau,<sup>2</sup> and St. Damian Mnelalete Church, South Central Timor Regency.<sup>3</sup> These lamentations are specific to the local culture and are not officially recognized in the standard Good Friday liturgy. The songs performed during these services have deep cultural roots, allowing the worshipers to mourn the loss of a loved one in a meaningful way.

In the official liturgy of Good Friday, a significant component is the *passio*, which narrates the Lord's passion according to the Gospel of John and is sung in a la-

menting tone that lasts for about 30 minutes. The author observed the inclusion of wailing songs that extended over a considerable duration and questioned the significance of these wailing songs and their importance in the faith of the local people. The phenomenon mentioned above indicates local people's strong desire to integrate cultural elements into their religious practices. People certainly hope for a liturgy that is more relevant, understandable, and in line with their religious preferences. Church institutions and theological experts have also understood such needs, by developing a theology of inculturation and liturgical inculturation.

The Second Vatican Council, through its document on liturgy, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” opened up the possibility for liturgical inculturation. While the universal Catholic Church adheres to the official rites, namely the Roman Liturgy (*Liturgia Romana*), there exists room for incorporating local customs and traditions. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has embraced this opportunity, as evidenced by the document “*De Liturgia Romana et Inculturatione*.” This

<sup>1</sup> Palce Amalo, “Tradisi Ratapan Dalam Jumat Agung Di Waitabula,” *mediaindonesia.com*, 2018, <https://mediaindonesia.com/nusantara/152278/tradisi-ratapan-dalam-jumat-agung-di-waitabula>.

<sup>2</sup> Setapak Rai Numbei, *Tradisi Ratapan Jumat Agung Di Paroki St. Lukas Wekfau Oleh Umat Kapela St. Antonius Padua Numbei* (Indonesia:

Youtube, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0DsxGiynko>.

<sup>3</sup> Apolinaris Laga Lejab, “RATAPAN// Ibadat Jumat Agung/Kapela St. Damian-Mnelalete-Paroki Madros Soe-Timor” (Youtube, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhTvXS0WU8U>.

document not only provides options for inculturation but also emphasizes the importance of maintaining faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures and the liturgical traditions of the Church.<sup>4</sup> This balanced approach allows for the enrichment of the liturgy while ensuring continuity with the sacred teachings and heritage of the Church.

This research explores the theological and inculturative meaning of lament songs in Good Friday services as a unique feature in the local Christian community. With this in-depth study, we aim to uncover the meaningful contribution of lament songs, enriching the Roman liturgy and rendering it more accessible, thereby enhancing its value in the spiritual lives of the people. In addition, the author investigates the position of lamentation within the Good Friday service, aligning with the opportunities and guidelines outlined by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Inculturation theology and liturgical inculturation have been interesting topics for many people to look into. Mugok and

Chai, when discussing the inculturation of the Christian faith in Malaysia (Kalimantan Island), argue that through inculturation, Christian beliefs can seamlessly merge with local customs, fostering a harmonious integration between the two. Conversely, local culture can also be well integrated into Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Okigbo, delves into the South African context, emphasizing the role of music and liturgical inculturation as mediums through which Africans articulate their religious beliefs while preserving their Christian heritage.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Nguyen's 2021 research addresses the issue of inter-generational tension among Vietnamese immigrants in the USA and their children raised in the modern American society.<sup>7</sup>

In Indonesia, numerous studies have contributed to the understanding of inculturation within the Church. Rukiyanto researched the Church's efforts to become more rooted in society by studying many essential documents from the Indonesian Bishops' Conference. Rukiyanto demonstrated that the Catholic Church in Indonesia has transformed into the Indonesian Church,

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<sup>4</sup> Congregatio de Culto Divino et Inculturatione, *De Liturgia Romana et inculturatione*, no. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson bin Benedict Mugok and Elena Chai, "Inculturation: Blending Christianity Into Local Culture," *Journal of Borneo Kalimantan* 3, no. 3 (2017): 44–54, <https://doi.org/10.33736/jbk.617.2017>.

<sup>6</sup> Austin Chinagorom Okigbo, "Liturgy and Musical Inculturation in a Post-Apartheid South African

Catholicism," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* 7, no. 2 (2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1190>.

<sup>7</sup> Ho Thi Nguyen, "A Brief Theology of Inculturation: A Pastoral Method to Understand and Ease the Generational Tension between Vietnamese Immigrants and Their U.S.-Born Children," *The Student Journal of Loyola Marymount University Theological Studies* 4, no. 1 (2021).

actively engaging with the culture and real-life struggles of the people.<sup>8</sup> In the context of Bethel Church, Untung et al., discussed the views on liturgical inculturation and emphasize that adapting the Gospel to the context of the local congregation proclaims the Gospel more understandable.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Widiasih and Rachman discussed in general the renewal of the Church's liturgy in Indonesia after independence, and in this renewal, among other things, local cultural elements were used.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Safitri et al., conducted research in Kalimantan, focusing on the inculturation of liturgical music.<sup>11</sup> Their findings underscored the positive impact of integrating local musical elements into worship, enhancing congregational participation and engagement, particularly in the act of singing.

The aforementioned researchers have explored the broader concepts of theology of inculturation, liturgical inculturation, and liturgical music within specific cultural contexts. However, this particular research

focuses on a specific aspect within the realm of cultural integration. It delves into the theological significance and inculturation of lament songs during Good Friday services, specifically within the cultural backdrop of Sumbanese traditions.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research regarded data that were collected from observation, interviews, and local texts analysis. Hudaeri stated that qualitative method is a method rooting from interpretivism paradigm suitable for religious research.<sup>12</sup> Through this method, the author attempts to reveal the meaning and appreciation of the people for the lament songs in the Good Friday service.

The research process comprises distinct stages, starting with a comprehensive literature review involving the collection of data from books, journals, and documents. This literature study serves as the foundation, providing an initial understanding of the research topic. Subsequently, the study

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<sup>8</sup> B. Agus Rukiyanto, "Inculturation in the Catholic Church in Indonesia," *Journal of Asian Orientation in Theology* 1, no. 1 (2019): 49–80.

<sup>9</sup> Naftali Untung, Benyamin Priskila Issak, and Yogi Mahendra, "Inkulturası Liturgi Gereja Bethel Indonesia," *Thronos: Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 2, no. 2 (2021): 65–74, <https://doi.org/10.55884/thron.v2i2.22>.

<sup>10</sup> Ester Pudjo Widiasih and Rasid Rachman, "Reshaping Liturgy in Postcolonial Indonesia," *Liturgy* 37, no. 1 (2022): 55–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2022.2026696>.

<sup>11</sup> Gita Safitri et al., "Musik Liturgi Inkulturası Dayak Sebagai Pendekatan Pastoral Dalam Meningkatkan Partisipasi Umat Paroki Katedral Santa Maria Palangka Raya," *Sepakat: Jurnal Pastoral Kateketik* 8, no. 2 (2022): 58–73, <https://doi.org/10.58374/sepakat.v8i2.100>.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamad Hudaeri, "Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan Kritis Sebagai Alat Bantu Dalam Kajian Living Hadis," *Jurnal Holistic Al-Hadis* 2, no. 1 (2016): 25–46.

transitions into the field research phase, involving data collection at the specified location: Pogotena Station, St. Arnoldus Janssen Parish of Tambolaka, Southwest Sumba Regency, during the period from July 15 to August 10, 2023. The final stage involves data analysis, integrating the insights gathered from both the field research and the reviewed literature. By employing this analytical approach, the study aims to reveal the theological and inculturative values inherent in lament songs performed during Good Friday services.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Inculturation Theology and Liturgical Inculturation

According to Boli Ujan, the term and concept of inculturation first emerged through the writings of G.L. Barney in 1973.<sup>13</sup> From 1974 onward, inculturation gradually entered the realm of theology, as observed by Bate. According to Bate, inculturation was discussed in a discussion series by Jesuit priests in 1974–1978.<sup>14</sup> This series of discussions eventually led to a significant seminar on inculturation held in Jerusalem in 1981. Moreover, the concept of incultu-

ration gained official recognition within the Church's documents, notably in the Apostolic Exhortation "*Catechesis Tradendae*," following the synod in Rome in 1977. In a relatively short span of time, the term also became a topic of discussion among missiology experts within Protestant circles.<sup>15</sup> This evolution highlights the rapid integration of inculturation into theological and ecclesiastical discourses across various Christian traditions.

Before inculturation was widely used, there were several conceptions related to the encounter between the Bible and culture. Until the 1970s, some concepts were commonly used, including adaptation, acculturation, accommodation, enculturation, and indigenization. However, a new perspective emerged in the 1970s, replacing these concepts with a more comprehensive understanding known as contextualization.<sup>16</sup> One of the famous definitions of contextualization was proposed by Luzbetak, who described it as a process through which the local Christian community integrates the Gospel message and the realities of everyday life by merging Scripture with the local context, creating a unified expression of Chris-

<sup>13</sup> Bernardus Boli Ujan, "Penyesuaian Dan Inkulturasi Liturgi," *Jurnal Masalah Pastoral (JUMPA)* 1, no. 1 (2012): 13–27.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Bate, "Inculturation: The Local Church Emerges," *Missionalia* 22, no. 2 (1994): 93–117.

<sup>15</sup> Julian Chukwuemeka Ibe, "A Review of Niebuhr's Christ and Culturor: Towards a Theology

of Inculturation," *Ochedo: An African Journal of Innovative Studies* 4, no. 1 (2023): 120–35.

<sup>16</sup> Abraham Adebajo Okunade, "New Testament Contextualization and Inculturation in Nigeria," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103, no. 2 (2022): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.103.2040>.

tianity that aligns with God's desires, known as living Christianity.<sup>17</sup> Compared to other terms, contextualization has broader coverage, which not only concerns traditional cultures but also includes all actual realities, including current contexts such as secularity, technology, and the struggle for humanity.<sup>18</sup>

In contemporary discourse, the terms contextualization and inculturation carry distinct meanings yet are inherently interconnected. According to Schreiter, as a theological concept, the definition of contextualization is broader than inculturation. Inculturation theology is part of contextual theology, akin to Liberation Theology.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, there are two contextual approaches, inculturation, and liberation, although the two do not have to be opposed to each other. Inculturation theology emphasizes the relationship between the Bible and local culture, while liberation theology emphasizes the relationship between theology and social realities that have a broad impact on concrete human life, such as political and economic situations.

Inculturation theology, according to the International Theological Commission, is the embodiment of the Gospel into local cultures and, at the same time, the acceptance of cultural elements into the life of the Church.<sup>20</sup> Suppose the definition above is related to the meaning of the inculturation itself (from the words *in* which entry, and *cultura* mean culture), it becomes evident that what permeates the culture is the Gospel itself. In this context, Gospel is ultimately integrated into the culture where the authenticity of its content is maintained, while the cultural elements that are accepted act more as a way of expressing the Gospel that is in line with the cultural context. In this way, the Gospel messages are increasingly understood.

Liturgical inculturation can be understood as the practical application of the theology of inculturation to the Church's liturgy.<sup>21</sup> It represents a deliberate effort to align the liturgical practices with the specific cultural context of a community while preserving the authenticity of the Gospel message and the established liturgical traditions of the Church.

<sup>17</sup> L. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (Maryknoll - New York: Orbis, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> F. Mashoko, "The Need for Contextualization in Inter-Cultural Communication of the Gospel" (University of South Africa, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll - New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 12-16.

<sup>20</sup> International Theological Commission, "Faith and Inculturation," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1989): 142-161, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002114008905500205>.

<sup>21</sup> Lamberty Y. Mandagi, "Kontekstualisasi Ibadah Sebagai Usaha Kontekstualisasi Teologi," *Titian Emas* 1, no. 1 (2020): 59-65.

The intimate relationship between inculturation theology and local culture means that the process of inculturation in the liturgical domain shares similarities with older concepts such as adaptation or acculturation. However, there are notable distinctions. Boli Ujan provides a useful comparison between acculturation and inculturation.<sup>22</sup> Acculturation typically involves starting with the Roman liturgy and making adjustments by incorporating local cultural elements, resulting in a Roman liturgy enriched with new expressions derived from the local culture. In contrast, liturgical inculturation begins with ceremonies already present in the local culture, which are then adapted to align with the Christian faith by removing superstitious elements. The outcome is a liturgical celebration rooted in the fundamental structure of local cultural ceremonies but transformed into a Christian ritual, expressing the essence of the Christian faith while respecting the cultural context from which it emerged.

Regarding liturgical inculturation, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has placed some limits and boundaries on authority within the Church. The primary power lies directly under the papacy through the Congregation for Divine Worship, and only wi-

thin certain limits is authority granted to the Bishops' Conference and local bishops. The Congregation for Divine Worship also firmly reminds us that adjustments to the liturgy should not be carried out on the initiative of individuals or groups. Due to such limitations, not all church liturgical ceremonies can be inculturated. Boli Ujan said that only one sacrament ceremony can be inculturated, namely marriage, while other sacraments, such as the Eucharist and Baptism, remain as they are in the Roman liturgy.<sup>23</sup> Other non-sacramental ceremonies have a wider possibility of being inculturated, such as funeral ceremonies and blessing ceremonies (for example, blessing a new house, garden, and seeds to be planted).

One element of liturgical inculturation is musical inculturation or liturgical singing. The inculturation of liturgical music integrated local cultural elements to create stronger connection and feeling among people from that culture. Inculturation of liturgical music often includes incorporating musical instruments or songs from the local culture into liturgical celebrations. In Java, for example, there is a custom of using Javanese gamelan and songs in Eucharist celebrations. In North Sumatra, there is a custom of singing Batak songs in liturgical celebrations. Inculturation of liturgical mu-

<sup>22</sup> Ujan, "Penyesuaian Dan Inkulturasi Liturgi."

<sup>23</sup> Ujan.

sic is one effort to create an inculturation church that can adapt to local culture.

Songs of lament in the Good Friday service are integral to the process of liturgical song inculturation. Despite being sung over a substantial duration, these songs maintain the traditional pattern of the Roman liturgy. It's worth noting that the implementation of liturgical song and music inculturation is not as strictly regulated by the authority restrictions set forth by the Congregation for Divine Worship. However, the content of liturgical songs in different local languages continues to be supervised by the liturgical commission at both diocesan and bishops' conference levels.

### **Good Friday Worship and the Theology of Sorrow**

Good Friday worship is the leading service in the Church. This service is included in a series of Easter celebrations with three holy days, namely the memory of the Lord's Last Supper (Maundy Thursday), the memory of the Lord's Passion and Death (Good Friday), and the memory of the Lord's Glorious Resurrection (Easter vigil on Sunday night and the Easter holiday on Sunday).

The Good Friday celebration begins at exactly 15:00, the hour of God's death, as mentioned in the Holy Bible (Luk. 23:44).

This service is characterized by sorrow. The sorrowful atmosphere can be seen from the condition of the church room, which is not decorated without cloth covering the altar and pulpit. Apart from that, during worship, musical instruments and sounds such as bells are not used. The entrance procession of the priest and other officers took place in silence. Upon reaching the altar, the priest lies prostrate for a brief moment, a symbolic gesture mirrored by the congregation, who kneel in reverence, honoring the sacrifice of Christ. The priest then rises, facing the congregation, and delivers the opening prayer, initiating a sequence of ceremonies that unfolds in four distinct parts:

- The Liturgy of the Word
- The solemn prayer of the faithful
- The veneration of the cross
- Holy Communion

In the Catholic Church, the selection of Bible readings for Good Friday remains consistent from year to year. The Liturgy of the Word is preceded by Old Testament readings, usually taken from the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah about the suffering Servant of Yahweh (Isa. 52:13–53:12). Then a psalm is sung, followed by a reading from the Letter to the Hebrews about Christ the High Priest and the subject of eternal salvation (Heb. 4:14–5:9). The culmination of the Liturgy of the Word is the singing of



the story of the Lord's Passion (*Passio*), taken from the Gospel of John (18:1–19:42). During the *Passio*, a song with a meditative tone is played by the attendants, who take turns playing the roles of the figures involved in the story of the Passion: Jesus, Peter, the Apostles, Pontius Pilate, the High Priest, and the Jewish people. Among the *Passio* bearers, there is also a narrator who functions as a narrative bearer who weaves together the story of the misfortune and the characters' words. The Liturgy of the Word ends with a short sermon.

The second part is a festive prayer for the faithful by an officer and is interspersed with a refrain, which is sung together by all the people present. The prayer usually is made for specific intentions, such as prayers for the repentance of sinners, for the repentance of unbelievers, for sufferers, for world peace, for religious leaders, and state leaders.

The veneration of the cross marks third part, preceded by a cross procession by the priest and officers. Upon reaching the altar, the priest and officials pay homage to the cross. After that, every congregation member present is invited to come forward to

express their respect (such as by kneeling, worshipping, and kissing the foot of the Lord's cross). The final segment is the holy communion, where the priest and people receive the body of Christ in the form of bread (holy hostia).

The somber liturgical tradition as described previously roots from ancient history. Sweeney records the testimony of Egeria, a Christian writer at the end of the fourth century, that the people who attended the celebration of the commemoration of the Lord's passion and death in Jerusalem, both old and young, wailed and shed tears.<sup>24</sup> Sweeney revealed the reality that is different from the general understanding for more than seven centuries, where it is believed that the custom of mourning on Good Friday is a medieval legacy. Anselm of Canterbury, who lived in the 10th century has been seen as the originator of a form of piety characterized by the *passio* on Good Friday.<sup>25</sup> Apart from Sweeney's findings above, several other researchers, including Shoemaker, argue that the Byzantine tradition, long before Anselm lived, had practiced a form of Christian piety in the form of mourning on Good Friday. The initiator of this devotion is attributed to

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Sweeney, "'The Wailing of the People': The Lay Invention of Passion Piety in Late Antique Jerusalem," *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 129–148, <https://doi.org/10.1353/joc.2019.0020>.

<sup>25</sup> Sweeney.

many third-century Christian confessors, including George of Nicomedia.<sup>26</sup>

Sweeney notes a significant difference in the fourth century between the formal understanding of the clergy (priests and bishops) and the laity (other faithful). While bishops and priests teach about the joy of the victory of the cross and the joy of the redemptive work accomplished through the passion and cross of Christ, the vast majority of the lay faithful practice deep mourning for the Lord's death on the feast day of Good Friday.

Lay believers mourn on Good Friday because the dominant reading in the service is the story of the Lord's passion and some other verses that speak of the suffering of the righteous one. For example, suffering of innocent Yahweh's servant, who were treated unjust (Isa. 52 and 53). The quoted Psalms highlight the lamentations of people who ask God for help when they receive unjust treatment, such as Psalm 31:2, 6, 12, 13, 15, and 25. For lay people, these verses are easily applied to Christ, who experienced unfair treatment by Roman soldiers who tortured him despite his innocence. Several other verses speak of Christ's suffering, such as his inner struggle in the

Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–46) and his cry on the cross (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34). Meanwhile, during the Good Friday celebration, there is little time for sermons even no sermons at all from clergy or theologians, thereby people often miss the interpretation of the cross and suffering of Christ as understood by the Church.

In many commentaries, the Church Fathers highlight the triumphant joy of the cross. In one of his sermons, John Chrysostom emphasized that the cross carried on Jesus' shoulders was a badge of victory over the power of death.<sup>27</sup> According to Sweeney, it was a common opinion among the clergy in the fourth century that lamentation and sorrow over the cross and death of Christ were wrong, even sinful. Why do they think it that way? According to Sweeney, the clergy of that era were heavily influenced by the ethical teachings of Stoic philosophy, which viewed every lament as heresy.<sup>28</sup> Stoic philosophy categorized emotions into four main areas: desire, fear, pleasure, and sorrow. Desire can be transformed into goodwill, fear can be transformed into caution, which is the basis of wisdom in behaving and acting, and pleasure can be transformed into joy. Mean-

<sup>26</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Maximus' Life of the Virgin and the Marian Literature of Middle Byzantium," *Journal of Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2016): 115–42.

<sup>27</sup> Yohanes Chrisostomus, Homily 85 dalam *Patrologia Graeca* [PG] 49:459. <https://scholarios.graeca.org/public/pgfront/>

<sup>28</sup> Sweeney, "'The Wailing of the People': The Lay Invention of Passion Piety in Late Antique Jerusalem."

while, there is no good value in sorrow since every sorrow is a mistake.<sup>29</sup> Even when people die, although sadness is almost inevitable, Stoic ethics teaches that in this situation, people must be able to endure feelings of sorrow. The ability to withstand sadness indicates strong emotional mastery.<sup>30</sup> According to this viewpoint, Christ's death represented his triumph over death, sin, and all forms of evil. Therefore, it was deemed unworthy of tears but rather a cause for joy and gratitude. Christ's victory was celebrated, and his sacrifice was viewed as a source of redemption and liberation, inspiring a response of rejoicing and thanksgiving among the faithful.

In contemporary era, the theme of sorrow and lamentation has reappeared in discussions among many theologians. These theologians acknowledge the presence of suffering and sorrow within humanity. Through studying the Holy Scriptures, they discovered that God also has emotions such as anger, sadness, and even crying.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, they also saw God's genuine suf-

fering in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, who died because of His love for sinful humans who needed to be saved. McConville, in his interpretation of Jeremiah 14:17–18, stated that God was also grieved over the situation of the Israelites, God's nation.<sup>32</sup> Jurgen Moltmann said that a God who cannot suffer is a God who is not involved with human life, and if God cannot be involved in human suffering, he also cannot love.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Japanese theologian Kazoh Kitamori acknowledged the existence of suffering in God.<sup>34</sup> In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, theological writings have emerged, exploring the concept of God's suffering in the face of widespread human pain and loss.<sup>35</sup> These discussions reflect a nuanced perspective that embraces the idea of a compassionate and empathetic God who shares in the suffering of humanity.

Modern thinkers have drawn a connection between God's suffering with His deep empathy for humans who suffer. As God empathizes with human suffering, humans crying out to Him with tears is considered

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Garver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 48-54.

<sup>30</sup> Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> Amos Winarto Oei, "The Impassible God Who Cried," *Themelios: An International Journal for Students of Theological and Religious Studies* 41, no. 2 (2016): 238–47.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon McConville, "Jeremiah," in *New Bible Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

<sup>34</sup> Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965).

<sup>35</sup> Calida Chu, "Theology of the Pain of God in the Era of Covid 19: The Reflections on Sufferings by Three Hongkon Churches through Online Services," *Practical Theology* 14, no. 1–2 (2021): 22–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1864101>.

an authentic form of prayer and is heard by God.<sup>36</sup> Katongole believes that expressing suffering through wailing serves as a means for individuals to anchor their hope in God, enabling them to endure hardship without falling into despair.<sup>37</sup> Apart from that, public expression of suffering through lamentation is also a way of tapping the hearts of other people so that they do not ignore the reality of the suffering experienced by others. Given the public expression of despair, people cannot argue that they are unaware of suffering.<sup>38</sup>

From the explanation above, it is evident that expressing sorrow for the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross is not inappropriate for Christian believers. Likewise, if God grieves because of His empathy for human suffering, believers do not just stop lamenting the death of Jesus on the cross in the Good Friday service. Jesus' statement to the women of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children" (Luke 23:28), is appropriate to apply in the context of Good Friday. Wailing in the

Good Friday service expresses humanity's suffering, which regrets its sins, and can also express empathy towards fellow humans who suffer. Jürgen Moltmann wrote that the cross of Christ is where God meets us in our sin and suffering, and on the cross, we experience God's love and forgiveness while also finding hope for the future.<sup>39</sup>

### **Theological and Inculturative Value of Lamentation on Good Friday**

Singing with regional musical patterns and styles, and using the local language are essential for the local community. Katherine H. Morehouse wrote that with the inculturation of liturgical singing, local congregations increasingly felt that Christianity is their religion, and that the God does exist.<sup>40</sup> It bridges the gap, making the religion and its messages accessible and relatable to people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The lamentations performed in the Good Friday Service roots in traditional Sumbanese culture. Traditional society recognizes wailing when someone dies, called *Ng'i'o Teki*, which means crying with words.

<sup>36</sup> June Dickie, "Practising Healthy Theology in the Local Church: Lamenting with Those in Pain and Restoring Hope," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2021.v7n1.a3>.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, *Born from Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Dickie, "Practising Healthy Theology in the Local Church: Lamenting with Those in Pain and Restoring Hope."

<sup>39</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*.

<sup>40</sup> Katherine H. Morehouse, "'They're Playing Our Song': Functions of Western Hymns and Indigenous Songs," *Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith* 5, no. 1 (2017): 18–46.

Because of this, *ngi'o teki* is differentiated from ordinary crying, namely by sobbing or making sounds while shedding tears. While both forms of crying convey deep sorrow, *ngi'o teki* is characterized by the inclusion of well-structured, meaningful words.

Within Sumbanese tradition, a unique practice surrounds the deceased. The community stands guard around the body for several days, starting from the moment of death until the funeral ceremony.<sup>41</sup> During this period, selected women from the family and friends sit beside the body, taking turns performing *ngi'o teki*. They sing lamentations accompanied by heartfelt words, expressing their grief through melancholic melodies. These mournful songs have a profound impact, evoking emotions, and often leading listeners to tears. The individuals who engage in this practice possess a specific skill set: they can articulate words poignantly and possess a melodious voice, enabling them to convey the depth of their emotions through this traditional form of expression.

During the *ngi'o teki* wailing ritual, standing guard around the corpse have some meanings. First it narrates the story about the death and how it occurs, followed

by the story about his service, kindness, and even behavior that is not in line with the family's expectations. Apart from that, the wailing also becomes a conduit for profound emotions associated with the loss. Feelings of abandonment, overwhelming loss, and deep regret are articulated, providing an outlet for the mourners to express their intense grief for the departed soul. Family members and friends of the person who died are also called to unite their hearts, apologize for their mistakes, and apologize for the mistakes they made towards the person who has died. At the end of the lament, prayers, and hopes are expressed that the deceased will be forgiven and rest peacefully in the presence of the Creator.

When *ngi'o teki* was modified and made into a song of lament in the Good Friday service, the lyrics of the piece of lament were adapted to the story and reasons for Christ's death from the crucifixion. The lament songs can be sung by a woman or a group of women, embodying the sorrow of the Virgin Mary grieving her son's crucifixion, or by a group of women, symbolizing the grieving women of Jerusalem mourning alongside Mary for the loss of Jesus. The place for songs of lament in the Good Fri-

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<sup>41</sup> Herman Punda Panda, "Perjalanan Jiwa Ke 'Kampung Leluhur': Konsep Kematian Menurut Kepercayaan Asli Masyarakat Sumba (Marapu) Dan Perjumpaannya Dengan Ajaran Katolik," *Lumen*

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day service is when the cross of Jesus has been placed in front of the altar. After the priest pays homage to the cross and returns to his seat in the priest's chair, a woman or several women covered in black or purple cloth come forward and sit around the cross and sing a song of lament.

The Good Friday lament song uses the same melody as the *ngi'o teki* when someone dies. The themes narrate the stories about death, the reasons for death, and

Jesus' redemptive services for sinful humankind. Moreover, feelings of sorrow are also expressed because of human sin, which caused Jesus' death, and an invitation to believe in Jesus as the Savior. In the end, there is a prayer that is intended to seek for forgiveness and asking for the humans to be saved. The comparison between *ngi'o teki* and lamentations in Good Friday services presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of *Ngi'o Teki* Tradition and Lamentation in Good Friday Services

Point of comparison	<i>Ngi'o Teki</i> Tradition	Lamentation in Good Friday Service
Officiants	The women from the family members or relatives of the deceased	The women who act as family members or relatives of Jesus (Mother Mary and the women of Jerusalem)
Melody	Same	Same
Stories about how the person died	It varies according to the situation of the person who died (it could be illness, accident, murder, or old age).	Jesus died at a young age; he was an only child, killed by crucifixion even though he was innocent.
Remembering	The good deeds of the person who died, for his/her family and friends.	Jesus' self-sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of humankind
Reasons for grief	Regretting the loss of a loved one. Regretting his/her behavior, which is not in line with family expectations.	Mourning the death of Jesus, a beloved and innocent one. Regretting the sins of humanity that caused the death of Jesus.
Invitation to the people present	To unite as a family. To Forgive the person who died. To apologize for the wrongdoing towards the deceased	To unite as followers of Jesus. To believe in Jesus as Savior. To repent and ask his forgiveness for sins
Prayers and hopes	May the person who died will receive forgiveness and rest peacefully in the presence of the Creator	May Jesus forgive sins and grant eternal salvation to humankind.

The comparison above highlights both the similarities and differences between *ngi'o teki* and the songs of lament in Good Friday services. The inculturation value of the Good Friday lament tradition is evident in the use of local languages and the use of similar melodies and themes the ones used in the *ngi'o teki*. The theological message in the lamentation is delivered through the poetry or words that have been modified. Some of the prominent theological notices that the songs of Good Friday lament emphasize on the death of Jesus in the crucifixion for the eradication of humanity's sins and expressions of regret for sin. Additionally, the lamentation extends an invitation to believe in Christ as the Savior, urging listeners to seek forgiveness for their sins and instilling hope in Jesus for the eternal salvation of humankind.

## CONCLUSION

The lamentation during the Good Friday service roots in the *ngi'o teki* traditions among Sumbanese people. The lament song is a modification of the *ngi'o teki*, making it an authentic Sumbanese response to the suffering of Christ as told in the *passio*. Unlike the *passio*, which is a reading of God's Word recounting Christ's passion according to the Gospel of John and lacks direct application to the lives of the participating faithful, lamentation songs bridge this

gap. They complement the *passio* by offering heartfelt expressions in regional language, making the narrative of Jesus' death relatable and meaningful to the worshippers. Apart from conveying the messages of Jesus' death according to the Holy Bible and its theological message that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins, the songs of lament in the Good Friday service also serve as invitation and hope to believe in Christ as Savior. Even though this theological message is not new, it is a core and eternal subject of Christian faith and needs to be continuously pondered. In this context, the lament song functions as a proclamation (complementing the sermon) for local people who speak the regional language. The annual occasion of Good Friday is an opportunity for the people to reflect and express the essence of their faith. Therefore, as an inculturation of liturgical singing, the practice of lamentation in Good Friday services warrants preservation and enhancement

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