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## **Theology of Sagu: A Contextual Theology Construction in Maluku**

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### **Abstract**

After the implementation of rice as a staple food for Indonesian society, including in Maluku, the society of Maluku has become very dependent on rice. *Sagu* which is a staple and particular food is no longer cultivated and utilized optimally in Maluku. Therefore, through this paper we try to offer theology of *sagu*, specifically for the Christian society in Maluku. By understanding *sagu* theologically as a blessing from God that can provide food for society and their harmonious relationship with God, mankind, and nature, this will have implications for the empowerment carried out by The Protestant Church of Maluku on human and natural resources in Maluku. Here the theology of *sagu*, which is proposed, is constructed from the cosmological view of the Christian society, the biblical basis of John 6:25-59, and some contemporary ecological theological ideas. The purpose of this paper is to add The Protestant Church of Maluku's ecological theology which is being developed to respond to various ecological crises in its context, Maluku. The theology of *sagu*, which is offered, is to strengthen the church's Church Teachings, which has been compiled, as the direction of the church's ministry in the future for its community.

**Keywords:** Christian Society; *sagu*, ecology; harmony; contextual theology; empowerment; Maluku

## INTRODUCTION

The study of *sagu* as a reflection of contextual theology in Maluku emphasizes two main things. First, *sagu* is a staple food for the society of Maluku. Second, the relevance and significance of *sagu* as a source of theological identity. These two objectives are important to be explained, because it has not received the attention of theologians in the context of churches in Maluku.

*Sagu (Metroxylon spp)*, according to Novita L. Ruhukail, is a local staple food that has been known for a long time, before 1960, in several eastern parts of Indonesia, including: Maluku, Papua, and Sulawesi.<sup>1</sup> Especially in Maluku, *sagu* is a traditional plant of the society that is quite potential and versatile, not wheat or rice. All parts of *sagu* without exception can be processed for the daily needs of the society in Maluku. Unfortunately, this adequate and versatile potential of *sagu* is not properly utilized. Ironically *sagu* as a staple food was replaced by rice because the New Order Government implementing a green revolution policy, which focused on rice development since 1966, and providing rice for the poor to

the villages.<sup>2</sup> M. E. Hetharia, quoted by Janes Berthy Alfons and A. Arifin Rivaie in their article also said about the shift from *sagu* as staple food to rice, because:

(a) there are transmigrants who encourage the conversion of *sagu* land into rice fields, (b) rice is a prestigious commodity, (c) the age of harvesting *sagu* is relatively long, (d) the local government pays little or no attention to *sagu* as local food, (e) there is weak socialization of *sagu* eating habits (traditions) from generation to generation, (f) there are unavailability *sagu* products in adequate quality, quantity, time, and place, (g) the product of diversification is still limited, and (h) there is increasing social status.<sup>3</sup>

Then, in 2009 Maluku was said by the Central Food Security Agency that was experiencing food insecurity due to the rice crisis. However, the General Company of the Logistics Business in Maluku still provided rice rations to anticipate food insecurity due to natural disasters and droughts as much as 100 tons per district/city and 200 tons for the provincial level.<sup>4</sup> This opinion shows that there is a problem related to the development of local food for the welfare of the society's economic life and concern for respecting the natural resources that God

<sup>1</sup> Novita L. Ruhukail, *Karakteristik Petani Sagu dan Keragaman, serta Manfaat Ekonomi Sagu bagi Masyarakat Dusun Waipaliti, Desa Hitu, Kecamatan Leihitu, Kabupaten Maluku Tengah* (Nabire: Universitas Satya Wiyata Mandala, 2012), 65.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ponco Anggoro, "Mengembalikan Citra Sagu," *Kompas* February 22nd (2012).

<sup>3</sup> Janes Berthy Alfons and A. Arifin Rivaie, "Sagu Mendukung Ketahanan Pangan dalam Menghadapi Dampak Perubahan Iklim," *Perspektif* 10, no. 2 (2011): 82.

<sup>4</sup> "Rawan Pangan di Maluku Akibat Krisis Beras," *Ambon Antara News*, 2016, accessed August 7, 2016, <http://ambon.antaranews.com/print/7816/>

has bestowed in Maluku. Then, the government has made a policy, namely Presidential Regulation no. 22 of 2009 concerning the Policy for the Acceleration of Diversification of Food Consumption Based on Local Resources, which the efforts of diversifying food consumption must be based on local or regional food sources.<sup>5</sup>

The Protestant Church of Maluku (*Gereja Protestan Maluku/GPM*)'s seriousness, besides the government, in developing *sagu* as a natural resource in Maluku should also be something important and urgent to address the reality of the food needs and poverty of its members, as part of the whole society in Maluku. Based on data from the Central Bureau of National Statistics of September 2014, the percentage of poverty in Maluku Province is still relatively high at 19.13 % with the largest distribution in rural areas (26.28 %). This figure places Maluku in the 4th poorest province in Indonesia after Papua, West Papua, and East Nusa Tenggara.<sup>6</sup> The GPM has realized this and encouraged its community to utilize and manage their agricultural lands as an effort to provide food and a source of financial income.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will try to offer theology of *sagu* as a small contribution to add the reference of The GPM's ecological theology in fulfilling its calling in the Maluku context with such reality. By understanding *sagu* theologically, then human and natural resources are important to be empowered by the church. Here we limit the focus of the study on *sagu* in relation to God, mankind, and the universe.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Research method which is used in this paper is literature study. By conveying the problem that is researched and analyzed by cosmological view of the Christian society, then this paper is constructed by the biblical basis of John 6:25-59, the cosmological view of the Christian society, and some contemporary ecological theological ideas. Especially John 6: 25-59 is the focus of this construction of theology, because Jesus can be seen as the fulfillment of the needs of human lives.

Then, the cross-textual interpretation in Asia which is from Archie C. C. Lee is used here. That approach is to help to re-interpret the multiplicity of texts by analyzing

<sup>5</sup> Food Security Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Indonesia (BKPKPRI), *Roadmap Diversifikasi Pangan 2011-2015* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pertanian, 2012), 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Pola Induk Pelayanan dan Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pelayanan (PIP/RIPP) GPM. *PIP/RIPP Tahun 2016-2025* (Ambon: Sinode GPM,

2016), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Simson M. Reskir, "GPM & Advokasi Lingkungan," in *Delapan Dekade GPM Menanam, Menyiram, Bertumbuh, dan Berbuah. Teologi GPM dalam Praksis Berbangsa dan Bermasyarakat*, ed. Elizabeth Marantika, et al., 536-51 (Salatiga: UKSW & GPM, 2015), 536.

ing the historical, social, cultural, political, contexts and combining them to construct the novel theology.<sup>8</sup> Here the texts are the Christian text and the Asian text, especially Moluccan text. By quoting Kwok Pui-Lan's statement, Daniel K. Listijabudi also confirms that this approach correlates the Asia's legends, mites, and stories with the Bible.<sup>9</sup>

## RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

### The Cosmological View of *Sagu* of the GPM Community

The society in Maluku has a culturally wise paradigm and attitude towards nature. According to Aholiab Watloly, the archipelagic society in Maluku has a genuine understanding and belief that the overall cosmological structure of society, universe, and its supernatural nature is created in a harmonious circumstance.<sup>10</sup> Everything that exists in the overall structure of the cosmos is lived as something that is alive, has spirit and feeling, also works.<sup>11</sup> In order to maintain order, harmony, unity, and the sacredness of their archipelagic cosmos, Watloly says that they must always develop an atti-

tude of harmony and respect for themselves, others, nature, and the supernatural nature in various situation of their lives.<sup>12</sup>

The Watloly's statement gives us an understanding that as part of the universe and the society in Maluku, The GPM's community also regards *sagu* as something that is in harmony with themselves, as well as with supranatural nature in their overall cultural beliefs. For them, *sagu* is created with body, soul, taste, and life to work. Therefore, they treat *sagu* with respect and harmony with themselves, others, universe, and the supranatural nature within the scope of their cosmology.

The question that arises then is: why do their unique cosmological views emphasize the harmony of all the elements in those views? According to Watloly, the entire cosmos does not only have a physical or material appearance, but also metaphysical or spiritual values that unite identity and ideology strongly on the basis of its community and archipelagic nature.<sup>13</sup> That's why they involve those views in various forms of traditional rites or traditional symbols, such as: mountain, land, sea cape, and

<sup>8</sup> Archie C. C. Lee, "Cross-Textual Interpretation and Its Implication for Biblical Studies," in *Teologi Operatif: Berteologi dalam Konteks Kehidupan yang Pluralistik di Indonesia*, eds. Asnath N. Natar, Cahyana E. Purnama, and Karmito ((Jakarta & Yogyakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia & Programme for Theology & Cultures in Asia, 2003), 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel K. Listijabudi, *Bergulat di Tepian: Pembacaan Lintas Tekstual Dua Kisah Mistik (Dewa Ruci & Yakub di Yabok) untuk Membangun*

*Perdamaian* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2019), 36.

<sup>10</sup> Aholiab Watloly, *Cermin Eksistensi Masyarakat Kepulauan dalam Pembangunan Bangsa: Perspektif Indigenous Orang Maluku* (Jakarta: PT Intimedia Cipta Nusantara, 2013), 378-379.

<sup>11</sup> Watloly, 379.

<sup>12</sup> Watloly, 378-79.

<sup>13</sup> Watloly, 379.

lake.<sup>14</sup> They do not want to separate the universe in their custom, because the universe is considered something sacred.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Watloly said that they focused their cosmological view on the spirit of *Tete* (male) *Nene* (female) *Moyang*, the ancestor, which they interpreted as "God in the sky" and "master on earth."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the basis of their relationship with themselves, others, and universe is the spiritual values they adhere both centered on God in the sky and their deceased ancestors on earth.

Regarding the harmony in their social relation, Watloly said that the unity of harmony between the awareness (energy) of the body, soul, thought, and action of the society in Maluku with the physical nature and energy of the cosmos is also believed to be able to provide relief, healing, peace, freedom, and prosperity.<sup>17</sup> Such harmony is evident in the social systems of the society in Masohi (Central Maluku), Maren (Kei Islands), and Heware (Kisar Island, Southwest Maluku). They have some distinctive terms, namely *hidop orang basudara* (fraternity), *sagu salempeng dipata dua* (mutual sharing). They adhere to the collective principle, that they must build social relationships that help them each other in a harmonious cooperative system. By develop-

ing a life by caring for each other, they believe that they can survive in the facing of various challenges and natural selection that are so hard and tight.<sup>18</sup>

According to Julius Palijama, the Christian society in Siri Sori Serani manage *sagu* by working together in the same place (*dusun sagu*<sup>19</sup>) and maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature (*dusun sagu*) and the other members. In general, the *sagu* that they cultivate is private property; family or *dati*. The results from the processing of *sagu* are then shared, so that both the owner and the workers get benefit from it. While working on *sagu*, they know each other, who are close and help each other.<sup>20</sup> When working on *sagu*, each of them has a strong loyalty to the work group to which they belong. On the one hand, they are people that maintain a sense of unity that do not discriminate religion, age, culture, and economic status. However, on the other hand, the relationship between their *sagu* working groups is exclusive, because what stands out is the process of closing themselves off and drawing boundaries based on their *sagu* working groups. A person is more comfortable with the *sagu* working group, which he/she joins.

<sup>14</sup> Watloly, 378.

<sup>15</sup> Watloly.

<sup>16</sup> Watloly, 348-49.

<sup>17</sup> Watloly, 378.

<sup>18</sup> Watloly, 417-18.

<sup>19</sup> *Dusun sagu* is the name of the place for planted *sagu* land or garden of society in Maluku.

<sup>20</sup> "Rawan Pangan di Maluku Akibat Krisis Beras," *Ambon Antara News*, 2016, accessed August 7, 2016, <http://ambon.antaranews.com/print/7816/>

In producing *sagu*, the main requirement is hard work and discipline. The job opportunities to manage *sagu* are opened to all levels of society. Furthermore, Ruhukail said that the way to make *sagu* produced the final product had to go through several stages that were not easy to do: (1) the felling of *sagu* trees; (2) the crushing of the pith, known as *nani sagu*; (3) the storage and deposition of starch; and (4) wet starch is packaged in baskets made from *sagu* leaves, called *tumang*.<sup>21</sup>

The GPM's community and the society in Maluku developed such a hard work ethic and perseverance, not because of puritanism but because of the harsh condition of nature. Masao Takenaka also observes that the pattern of hard work of Japanese is shaped by the culture and natural environment, not puritanism.<sup>22</sup> The problem is that their *dusun-dusun sagu* are not developed and even left abandoned like what happened in Siri Sori Serani. The only remaining *sagu* palms are the surviving trees, which were actually planted decades ago. In fact, almost every family, that is the church's community, has *dusun sagu*. Due to national government policies regarding rice, *sagu* is no

longer a staple food in Maluku and eventually *sagu* is not cultivated. Likewise, the influx of modern religions, as Watloly had previously stated, and the implementation of village government that replaced the leadership of the traditional elders<sup>23</sup> caused the cosmological views of the GPM's community and the society in Maluku regarding *sagu* beginning to fade in their traditional rites.

The utilization, management, and preservation of *sagu* among the church's community have also not been maximally promoted to cultivate *sagu*, meet the food needs of the community, and improve their economic standard. If there is seriousness in developing and empowering *sagu*, which is environmentally friendly, then *sagu* will continue to be sustainable with its unique values in their cosmological views. Besides that, their food needs will always be available and avoid the danger of food insecurity. It is also possible for their economy to be improved from the processing and production of *sagu* without having to be threatened by the greed and arbitrariness of the capitalists, who "hijack" their natural resources. Therefore, we consider that this theology of

<sup>21</sup> Watloly.

<sup>22</sup> Masao Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993), 20.

<sup>23</sup> According to Jacky Manuputty and Daniel Watimanela, by the issuance of Law No. 5 of 1979, concerning Village Administration, the existing

community system/institution of society in Maluku is no longer recognized. Then, as a value system, various local wisdoms require structural devices that can refute them. See Jacky Manuputty and Daniel Watimanela, "Konflik Maluku," in *Potret Retak Nusantara: Studi Kasus Konflik Di Indonesia*, ed. Lambang Trijono, et al. (Yogyakarta: CSPA Books, 2004), 91.



*sagu* is contextual and relevant to the context of the GPM.

### Understanding *Sagu* According to John 6:25-59

According to William Temple, Jesus's statement about Himself "I am the bread of life" in John 6:25-59 means that He presents objectively and externally what God has to offer and makes it subjective inwardly. For Temple, this is a sacramental principle, whereby Christ feeds us and strengthens us in our fellowship with Him both spiritually and physically.<sup>24</sup> Paul's emphasis on this, judged by Temple, was more institutional in what Jesus did at the Lord's Supper. However, according to Temple, John, in the Gospel he wrote, did not link it at all with the Lord's Supper, but rather a sacramental communion with Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Jesus is the Word of God Who is present (Divine Presence) and Act (Activity) in the church called the Body of Christ and in the world. All our labors in producing food or bread and its wages are His grace.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, according to Temple, His creation has no reason to oppose Him as the Creator.<sup>27</sup> Besides that, Temple also interprets the statement "bread" is Jesus who gave life to human beings and was not Moses as they under-

stood in the past *manna* events. The Incarnation of Jesus is a gift that transcends the normal rules of nature or human history. The Incarnation is the divine embodiment in all of God's creative works.<sup>28</sup> We conclude that the Temple texts see Jesus as both Creator and Incarnation who guarantees the fulfillment of the needs of human lives both physically and spiritually beyond the historical time and place in human lives.

In line with Temple, in the book "Earth Keeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources," edited by Loren Wilkinson, it is stated that the apostle John used the image of Christ in nature to speak of Jesus as the *Logos*.<sup>29</sup> It means that Christ is understood as transcendent and immanent. However, in contrast to Temple, Wilkinson asserts that Christ does not only create, but also redeems or saves all of His creation.<sup>30</sup>

Complementing these two theologians' ideas, we see that besides talking about Christ's work in creation and His redemption or salvation of all creation, the text of John 6:25-59 also talks about how all of God's creation is also "embraced" by Christ in His work of providence. Therefore, human beings should not see themself-

<sup>24</sup> William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (Wilton: Morehouse Barlow, 1985), 77, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Temple, 78, 92.

<sup>26</sup> Temple, 80, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Temple, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Temple, 85-86, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earth Keeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources* (USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 216.

<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, 217-18.

ves as superior creations and be exploitative towards all of God's other creations. This is confirmed by the opinion of Francis C. Moloney, who says that the work of God in John's text leads to two things: "laboring for the possession of this food" and "believing in the one whom God has sent."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Moloney revealed that the context at that time Jesus was teaching many people, especially from Capernaum, about "the nourishment, bread from heaven, and revelation provided by God." These three themes are welcoming the Jewish celebration of Passover. At that time, Jesus reinterpreted the *manna* for them. Moloney conveys: "The Mosaic *manna* provided nourishment for Israel; the true bread from heaven gives life to the whole world. There is both contrast and continuation here."<sup>32</sup> It means that even though *manna* as physical food is temporal and the true bread is supernatural, both are still a need for mankind, which is fulfilled by Him.

Therefore, the relationship between human beings who believe in Him must be established. Moloney calls it as "the mutual indwelling (*menein en*) of Jesus in the believer and the believer in Jesus."<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile,

Donald Guthrie calls it as "an absolute dependence."<sup>34</sup> Later, Benjamin W. Robinson calls it as "partnership and union with Jesus."<sup>35</sup> For Guthrie, a strong feeling of oneness with Jesus as well as with others occurs because of the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup> This unique and special relationship cannot be understood separately from the rest of God's creation, because the relationship is built by the power of the Holy Spirit also works in other creations of God.

### **The Relationship between *Sagu* and God**

According to Masao Takenaka, an understanding of God and proof of His existence cannot be obtained through a rational argumentative approach. To see the reality of God, which is the task of theology, each person must awaken in him a sense of appreciation for the living reality, which is God. God as a living reality has a direct connection with nature as the fruit of His work.<sup>37</sup> According to Ignatia Esti Sumarah, who developed the Agus Rahmat's idea, the beauty and majesty of nature must be lived in relation to the divine's power that works in nature. Therefore, nature is able to revive, grow, and process everything that seems old and wasted to be new and growing.

<sup>31</sup> Francis C. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> Moloney, 45-47.

<sup>33</sup> Moloney, 57.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Teologi Perjanjian Baru* 3

(Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 54.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin W. Robinson, *The Gospel of John* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1925), 148.

<sup>36</sup> Guthrie, *Teologi Perjanjian Baru* 3, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen*, 9.



Sumarah calls it as “the creativity and regularity of nature.”<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the view of the reality of God living in and over nature, Takenaka uses the Gospel of Matthew 6:28-29 as his foundation. This text, according to him, wants to emphasize the reality of the living God and God’s work in the world.<sup>39</sup> Between God and nature should be understood as a unified whole.<sup>40</sup> The complete unity is that God is inseparable from nature, because God encompasses and transcends nature. By having such an understanding of the divine nature of nature, humanity can grow with ecological spirituality.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it is clear that God is the source of life who is real through nature.<sup>42</sup> We believe that this God of life is also the One who has revived the society in Maluku in general from their ancestors to the present generation by bestowing *sagu* for them. The life that is obtained from nature through *sagu* as staple food should be seen as a real gift of life from God to them.

As Takenaka’s opinion about rice in the context of theology in Japan, we also see *sagu* as a symbol of God’s love for the so-

ciety in Maluku. For Takenaka, God’s love for all people can be seen in the symbols of people’s daily food. The most popular original food since ancient times for Japanese people is rice. The Japanese knew bread, after the Portuguese missionaries and traders brought it to Japan around the middle of the 16th century. However, they still use the Portuguese word (*pan*) for bread in Japanese. Therefore, for him, it is very appropriate to say “God is rice” rather than to say “God is bread.”<sup>43</sup> Actually, the Takenaka’s contextual approach is quite relevant and supported by Japanese culture, which upholds their culture more than the Western culture.

For the context of the Christian society in Maluku, the GPM’s community, *sagu* has become something foreign because of the various factors that we have mentioned before. However, reviving people’s attention, pride, and love for the unique *sagu* in their own environment is important, because God creates and make *sagu* grow in their native land. In the context of the Christian faith, *sagu* is not placed as an object to fulfill the needs of human lives but a very valuable subject for Christ. *Sagu* is

<sup>38</sup> Ignatia Esti Sumarah, “Moral Lingkungan Hidup: Pentingnya Merawat Lingkungan,” in *Semakin Menjadi Manusiawi: Teologi Moral Masa Kini*, eds. B. A. Rukiyanto and Ignatia Esti Sumarah (Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2014), 121-22.

<sup>39</sup> Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen*, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Takenaka, 13-14.

<sup>41</sup> Sumarah, “Moral Lingkungan Hidup: Pentingnya Merawat Lingkungan,” 122-23.

<sup>42</sup> Timo Eben Nuban, *Pemberita Firman Pecinta Budaya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006), 35.

<sup>43</sup> Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen*, 17-18.

not created and simply disappeared without the meaning of its purpose in this universe. Sumarah says that nature should be accepted as a neighbor, because nature was created by God and God is actively present in nature to care for His creation with love.<sup>44</sup>

This is in line with what is contained in the text of John 6:25-59, as previously stated. Jesus as the Creator as well as the Incarnation works in the works of creation and His redemption or salvation of all creation. He guarantees the fulfillment of *manna* or the needs of human lives physically and also the spiritual needs of human beings who have a unique and special relationship with Him, that transcends time and place in human lives historically. The relationship was named: “the mutual indwelling (*menein en*) of Jesus in the believer and the believer in Jesus”; “absolute dependence”; “partnership and union with Jesus”; “harmony between society, universe, and the supernatural nature.” Therefore, the GPM’s community needs to be given an in-depth understanding of this matter by the church, so that they are empowered spiritually and physically to be responsible for themselves, *sagu*, and nature as God's creation. This is what Moloney meant by the work of God (work of God). In the context of the Christian faith, this

strong feeling of “oneness” can only occur because of the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Relationship between *Sagu* and the Society in Maluku**

As a fellow creation, I Ketut Eddy Cahyana states that between human beings and nature there is a mutualistic dependence. For him, human lives (economically) depends on the earth (ecology) and earth also depends on human beings. Human beings, he argues, should show solidarity with the earth and treat the earth as a fellow creation. The destruction and suffering of the earth mean the destruction and suffering of human beings. Therefore, quoting the opinion of Robert P. Borrong, Cahyana emphasizes that the earth should be made a “home” for human beings and all creatures.<sup>45</sup> The cosmological view of the society in Maluku regarding *sagu* also contains such harmony as previously explained. Because it is considered sacred, *sagu* as part of the universe, which was created on earth, is believed to be able to provide relief, healing, peace, freedom, and prosperity, when *sagu* is placed in its relation to the society in Maluku, the universe, and the supernatural nature (*Tete Nene Moyang* who understood as God and ancestors). This harmony will ensure a

<sup>44</sup> Sumarah, “Moral Lingkungan Hidup: Pentingnya Merawat Lingkungan,” 122-23.

<sup>45</sup> I Ketut Eddy Cahyana, “Manusia Hidup Bukan dari Roti saja: Ekonomi yang Menuju Kesejahteraan

Bersama dan Berkesinambungan,” in *Teologi Ekonomi*, ed. Robert Setio (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2002), 55.

decent life for all of God's creations as neighbors to one another with "The Supernatural One." On the other hand, without this harmony all of God's creation cannot live properly on earth as a common home for all of God's creation. In the context of Christian faith, ancestors who have died actually also remain "present" through the legacy of wisdom, experience, and history that they left for their descendants. In Christianity we inherit the beliefs of our ancestors, the teachings of the fathers of churches, the examples of Christ's disciples and apostles. Therefore, it is important that the surviving cultural values are preserved and criticized, so that these values can enrich our civilization of life in a better direction.

Talking about inhabiting and managing a "common home" on earth as fellow creatures of God, Leonard Andrew Immanuel says that it means "sharing a 'home' and living space, even in the actual act of replacing or giving the 'world' of my life to the *Liyan* (substitution) is a central theme for me to be an authentic I."<sup>46</sup> We do not agree with Immanuel, if human beings have to lose their identity, when they want to take care of the "common home." Besides that,

in the context of Christian faith, it is not the human self who is merely the center of empowerment for him to take care of the "common home." According to Daniel Susanto, the substantive, relational, and functional image of God in His people has implications for their roles in managing God's creation.<sup>47</sup> The image of God that is the work of Christ that incarnates in us empowered by Him to take care of the "common home."

Then, how should *sagu* as part of nature be treated in relation to meeting the needs of the society in Maluku in the "common home" that God has entrusted to him? Suluh Sutia says that although human beings need nature, injustice against nature should not occur. Nature is treated unfairly, if nature is forced to work very hard and is allowed to get sick, so that it suffers and is damaged. Nature and human beings are a unity that needs each other and requires balance.<sup>48</sup> Humanity never rule over nature, for nature is both subject and one with themselves. Therefore, nature must also be treated like what human beings want to do for themselves.<sup>49</sup> According to Borrang, here we need to be critical of Christian theologies that legitimize irresponsible human at-

<sup>46</sup> Leonard Andrew Immanuel, "Menyediakan Rumah Bagi yang Lain: Suatu Renungan Filosofis-Teologis," in *Teologi Ekonomi*, ed. Robert Setio (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 115.

<sup>47</sup> Jan S. Aritonang, et al., eds., *Berteologi dalam Konteks: Meretas Jalan Menuju Perdamaian, Keadilan, dan Keutuhan Ciptaan* (Cipayung: PGI

dan Persetia, 2012), 42-43.

<sup>48</sup> Suluh Sutia, "Kembali ke dalam Diri: Usaha Kembali Bersahabat dengan Alam," in *Teologi Ekonomi*, ed. Robert Setio (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 119-20.

<sup>49</sup> Sutia, 120-21.

titudes towards building a harmonious relationship with nature and in their work to care for nature.<sup>50</sup> Reflecting on the opinion of Immanuel, Sutia, and Borrong, we see that placing *sagu* as a subject that must also be interpreted critically. Either the *sagu*'s self or the human beings' selves can exclude the other or either themselves.

Borrong says that Francis of Assisi preferred to speak and preach to birds, animals, and plants as a way of establishing close and communicative relationship with them as "his siblings."<sup>51</sup> For us *sagu* can still be used for food and medicine for human beings, not only for face-to-face communication. For example, the important teaching written in the Church's Teaching of the GPM is making efforts to guarantee the nature's rights from all kinds of destruction and threat around them.<sup>52</sup> Then, the church's community is trained by the Church's Development Participation Agency with various trainings related to *sagu* cultivation starting from their own *dusun-dusun sagu*, so that they can care for and maintain its sustainability. The other strategies of the GPM are improving its role and access to information and policies on environmental and natural resource manage-

ment by building collaboration with government and many other organizations.<sup>53</sup> However, the ecological spirituality, which Francis of Assisi offered to us, is also important not to treat the universe destructively. Sumarah explains that by such ecological spirituality, all of God's creatures are involved in cosmic liturgy to praise God the Creator.<sup>54</sup> Creating a liturgy that involves *sagu* in cosmic worship with the Protestant Church of Maluku's community, can be considered by the church, so that the community can grow in their ecological spirituality. Analyzed from the cultural aspect, their cosmological heritages also open up space to involve the universe and the supernatural nature in their traditional rites. Thus, the theological praxis in the context of Maluku also becomes creative and relevant to the cosmological background of the society in Maluku.

### **Collaborating and Sharing *Sagu* Products (A Reflection of Christian Spirituality of Society in Maluku)**

Regarding the uniqueness of human responsibility to nature in maintaining the works of God's creation, human beings also have responsibility one another. Wilkinson says:

(Ambon: Sinode GPM, 2016), 126.

<sup>53</sup> Tim PIP/RIPP GPM. *PIP/RIPP Tahun 2016-2025*, 649-51.

<sup>54</sup> Sumarah, "Moral Lingkungan Hidup: Pentingnya Merawat Lingkungan," 123-24.

<sup>50</sup> Robert P. Borrong, *Teologi Ekologi: Peran Pendidikan Teologi dalam Mengembangkan Teologi Ekologi* (Jakarta: STT Jakarta, 1998), 1-8.

<sup>51</sup> Borrong, 23-25.

<sup>52</sup> Tim Ajaran Gereja GPM, *Ajaran Gereja GPM*

Creation is not just for human benefit. It is good in the very strength of its strangeness and diversity (Job 38-39). ... humans do have a unique place in creation and a unique responsibility to all of it. ... The more one contributes to total wealth, the more one should receive. ... A nation or a world will have a just economic system only if it provides opportunity for all the people to have sufficient income to draw enough from the earth's resources to meet basic needs.<sup>55</sup>

Nature that is not managed exploitatively should also not be managed by “empowering” others who work together in an exploitative way. According to B. A. Rukiyanto, because work is an act of creation as well as redemption, work means doing something for others and the results of the work provide opportunities to experience encounters with other people.<sup>56</sup> For Rukiyanto, Paul commanded all people to make work an honor not to live at the expense of others (2 Thess. 3:6-12; 1 Thess. 4:12) but to practice solidarity by sharing the results of labor with others, who are in need so as to improve the general welfare (Eph. 4:28).<sup>57</sup> This opinion is evident in the lives of the people in Maluku who work together for their welfare by managing the natural resources and

dividing them fairly as shared rights between workers and owners of the *dusun-dusun sagu*.

By fostering a spirit of togetherness in *sagu* processing in the midst of context in Maluku, the church can actually foster the participatory lives of the people in a contextual and real way. Besides the value of cooperation and sharing as characteristic of Christian life to share joy, there is also suffering through long work to produce *sagu*. Takenaka saw togetherness having theological significance, when he constructed his theology of rice. He said that they had “become human.” Like Jesus’ example in the crucifixion he experienced, because of oppression and injustice, God’s people share their experiences of suffering one another while working together.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, God is with them and gives blessings as results of their joyful labor. By having senses of belonging, they also have stewardship and ethical awareness that their shortcomings will be met if they cover the shortcomings of others from what they have.<sup>59</sup>

This kind of harmonious solidarity can empower the society. Sri Bayu Selaadji says that sharing, solidarity, mutual coope-

<sup>55</sup> Wilkinson, *Earth Keeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources*, 207, 241, 244.

<sup>56</sup> B. A. Rukiyanto, “Moral Sosial,” in *Semakin Menjadi Manusiawi: Teologi Moral Masa Kini*, eds. B. A. Rukiyanto and Ignatia Esti Sumarah (Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2014), 98-99.

<sup>57</sup> Rukiyanto.

<sup>58</sup> Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen*, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia/DGI (Council of Churches in Indonesia/CCI), *Dalam Kemandirian Gereja: Lokakarya dan Konsultasi Keuangan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1981), 145.



ration, and togetherness are tools for joint struggle for economic empowerment. He also suggests that the quality of life of the society can be improved, if the empowerment carried out is oriented to the process of strengthening the society based on local's ability.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the harmony between God, the owners, workers of *sagu*, and *sagu* does not only occur in certain situations, but also in all situations as the cosmological view of the GPM's community. However, the relations based on solidarity between *sagu* workers who are still exclusive in their working groups need to be transformed, so that they can understand the relational relationship between human beings universally. According to Anwar Tjen, Christian equality should indeed go beyond the similarity of identity or primordial ties.<sup>61</sup> In the context of Christian faith, the soul of Christians is love without limits, exceeding the village, country, and world. Then, according to Takenaka, Christianity understands ecumenism to all inhabited corners; covers the wider world community.<sup>62</sup>

According to Ignatius L. Madya Utama, discipleship spirituality and life dialogue are basic requirements for the mani-

festation of a participatory church that responds to the struggles of its complex context. Through discipleship spirituality with characteristics, namely: incarnatory, Christocentric, centered on the word of God, sacramental, ecclesiastical, and communal, Christians build solidarity with local society to care for fraternity, help the weak, and care about ecological issues.<sup>63</sup> Such an empowering approach reflects the basic principles of Christian stewardship that applies love and justice to fellow human beings as CCI's concerns when churches struggle to become self-reliant.<sup>64</sup> However, love and justice for all creation and cooperation are also necessity and hope in the current era of ecological crises, especially in Maluku.

Then, through life dialogue, both in their internal relationship in the church and their external relationship with people of other religions, Christians fight together for the spirit of openness and neighborliness, and also share experiences of sorrow, joy, problem, and human concerns.<sup>65</sup> Christians need to radically reorient their relationship with God and one another by showing faith, hope, and visible love with people of other religions. Through their words and actions

<sup>60</sup> Aritonang, et al., *Berteologi dalam Konteks: Meretas Jalan Menuju Perdamaian, Keadilan, dan Keutuhan Ciptaan*, 216-17.

<sup>61</sup> Aritonang, et al., 25.

<sup>62</sup> Takenaka, *Nasi dan Allah: Kebudayaan Asia dan Iman Kristen*, 25.

<sup>63</sup> Ignatius L. Madya Utama, *Gereja Partisipatif*

(Yogyakarta: Pusat Pastoral Yogyakarta, 2010), 44-46.

<sup>64</sup> Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia/DGI (Council of Churches in Indonesia/CCI), *Dalam Kemandirian Gereja: Lokakarya dan Konsultasi Keuangan Gereja*, 191.

<sup>65</sup> Utama, *Gereja Partisipatif*, 34.

both personally and communally Christians spread the Gospel by tackling various global problems together.<sup>66</sup> According to Aloysius Pieris as quoted by Vitus Rubianto, its manifestation is possible if the church departs from the classical ecumenical model or interecclesial ecumene, namely the encounter of churches which are still fragmented because of their respective doctrinal boundaries. Now the church must live the transecclesial ecumenical model, namely the encounter between Christ-centered and world-oriented churches, and abandon the attitude of bibliolatria (no revelation outside the Bible) and ecclesiolatria (no salvation outside the church).<sup>67</sup> This transecclesial ecumenical model can be developed by the Protestant Church of Maluku in the context of local, national, and global to express God's universal love. Nugroho says that the transecclesial ecumenical model provides space for the church to synergize with other religious communities as a moral force, which actively and critically calls for ecological conservation on the basis that nature and everything contained in it belongs to God.<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The theology of *sagu*, which we offer in this paper, is expected to enrich the Teachings of the Church and the application of the GPM's ministry. It is relevant to the context in Maluku, which is experiencing ecological crises, specifically *sagu* is highlighted here. The church's motto ("I plant, Apollos waters, but God gives growth" [I Cor. 3:6]) will become meaningful, when the church can build ecological theologies that highlight the natural wealth in Maluku, which will have implications for various efforts to empower human and natural resources as gifts from God. Of course, this requires church's participatory actions or practices that are always open to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, so that the church can also renew the world around it. The GPM in the context of its ministry in Maluku can conduct the development of studies of this theology of *sagu*. Besides that, further actions related to real praxis starting from the level of the Congregation, District (*Klasis*), Synod, and government with a transecclesial ecumenical model also need to be carried out. Then, hopefully the society will experience an advancement in food, econo-

<sup>66</sup> Raja Oloan Tumanggor, *Misi dalam Masyarakat Majemuk* (Jakarta: Genta Pustaka Lestari, 2014), 69-70.

<sup>67</sup> Vitus Rubianto, *Paradigma Asia: Pertautan Kemiskinan & Kereligiusan dalam Teologi Aloysius*

*Pieris* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997), 91-92.

<sup>68</sup> Wahyu Nugroho, "Ekonomi yang Membagikan Kehidupan: Sebuah Upaya Menuju Masa Depan Berkelanjutan," in *Teologi Ekonomi*, ed. Robert Setio (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2002), 49.

mic, social, and various other aspects of life as God's will.

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