



## NUSANTARA CHRISTIANITY: The Synthesis Contextual Theology and Culture in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Like other sorts of knowledge, thought, and behavior, Christian theology is influenced by the context in which it is employed. Contextual theology shows how thoroughly contextual Christian theology is. The significance of context has never been entirely disregarded in the development of contextual theology. The emphasis on context, however, has been most prominent at times when the Christian message appeared to be the least related to the circumstances in which it was being spoken. Indonesia as the largest archipelagic country in the world with hundreds of tribes and languages has made Indonesia an interesting place to study in developing contextual theology. Based on the various languages and ethnicities that have various kinds of differences, Indonesia is unique in building a down-to-earth theology in the archipelago. This article aims to find out how contextual theology becomes a liaison in bridging between the Word and the context to be able to provide understanding for both parties to God's truth based on synthesis contextual theology and culture in Indonesia. The research method used is qualitative literature research which is the process of studying books, references, and research results to get a better understanding of a problem or issue. This information is then used to build a theoretical foundation for future research.

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### Introduction

The vast Indonesian region is made up of numerous ethnic cultures from the western, middle, and eastern sections of the country. Regional culture or geo-culture produced by ethnic groups in the Indonesian archipelago. The pattern, qualities, language, values, and specific symbols are distinct and originated in the people's cultures. The long-rooted foreign cultures of India, Arab, Dutch, and others have impacted Indonesia's growing ethnic cultures.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Irmayanti Meliono, "Understanding the Nusantara Thought and Local Wisdom as an Aspect of the Indonesian Education," *TAWARIKH: International Journal for Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 221–34, <https://journals.mindamas.com/index.php/tawarikh/article/view/392>.

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Nusantara Christianity is a phrase used to describe a contextualized type of Christianity that originated in Indonesia, commonly known as the Nusantara archipelago. This method aims to merge Christian ideas and ideals with Indonesian cultures, traditions, and worldview. The history of Nusantara Christianity may be traced back to the advent of Christianity in Indonesia in the 16th century when European missionaries began to evangelize the native populace. Yet, these missionaries' original approach was sometimes combative and ignored local culture and context. This resulted in local opposition and a lack of large conversions.

In the twentieth century, Indonesian theologians and pastors began to establish a contextualized approach to Christianity. Nusantara Christianity refers to the contextualization of Christian theology and practice within the cultural and social context of Indonesia, also known as the Nusantara archipelago. It seeks to integrate Christian beliefs and values with the local customs, traditions, and worldview of the Indonesian people. Indonesian theologies are church-centered, tradition-conscious, and seeking for a separate identity that is tied to but distinct from their own "Western missionary" antecedents. They are about harmonious societies and creative force.<sup>2</sup>

One of the key figures in the development of Nusantara Christianity was Suhento Liauw, an Indonesian theologian who argued for the integration of indigenous culture and beliefs into Christian theology. He believed that the Bible should be read considering Indonesian culture and that Christianity should be seen as a continuation of the religious traditions of the Indonesian people.<sup>3</sup>

Today, Nusantara Christianity continues to evolve, with many Indonesian theologians and pastors seeking to develop a deeper understanding of the Indonesian context and to integrate local cultural practices and beliefs into Christian theology and practice. This approach has been credited with the growth of Christianity in Indonesia, which is now the largest Muslim-majority country in the world.

Historically, In the 16th century, Christianity was brought to Indonesia as a Roman Catholic tradition.<sup>4</sup> Although many historians believed that it has first arrived in Baros, North Sumatra in seventh century with the Thomas tradition as pointed out by Aritonang: "Some Indonesian writers took the conclusion that the first Christians had arrived in the

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<sup>2</sup> Eckhard Zemmrich, "Developing Christian Identity," *Ecclesial Practices* 1, no. 1 (2014): 111–33, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00101006>.

<sup>3</sup> Liauw, 1998

<sup>4</sup> Zakaria J. Ngelow, "Theological Education in Indonesia," *Commission on Theological Concerns Bulletin* XXIII, no. 1 (2006), <https://www.cca.org.hk/ctc/ctc06-01/ctc06-01c.htm>.

seventh century and established a community in Northern Sumatra”<sup>5</sup>. However, the Christianity in pre-colonial era in Baros did not leave any solid footprint that could be traced back to its original teaching since the Christianity community those time remained unclear for the historian as reported by Glinka: “From all these sources we can conclude that during the 7th century there were Christians in Pancur, now Kota Barus, Sumatra. In the 8th century in the Sriwijaya empire were an archbishop and two bishops but it is unclear where they did reside. Probably the places were Kalah, Malacca, and Palembang. It is unclear how big the Christian community in Sumatra was.”<sup>6</sup> All the doctrine and teaching of Christianity in Indonesia that we have today were introduced during the colonial era, where the local cultures always be taken for granted. Therefore, churches on the land always had to struggle between Christian theology that introduced to them with the local cultures where they were living in.

In 1963, a group of theological colleges established PERSETIA, an association of theological schools, with assistance from the National Council of Churches. Although only 33 large universities out of more than 100 institutions were members as of 2005, they are all backed by significant mainstream churches. Its primary duty is to help member institutions in Indonesia create high-quality contextual theology education.

It was during a theological consultation in 1971 that the term "double wrestle" was first used to discuss the necessity for Indonesia to build a meaningful theology. It was stated in the consultation's statement:<sup>7</sup>

“Rethinking of theology should produce relevant theology, i.e., structured theological thoughts based on the Word of God, reflecting the double-wrestle of the Church. The double-wrestle is the Church wrestling with her Lord in the sense of understanding the truth and grace of God in Jesus Christ on the one hand; and at the same time, on the other hand, is wrestling with the culture and society where the church lives.”

This contextual theological perspective can be viewed in the context of ecumenical and national development. The emergence of "Asian theology" as an alternative to inherited or imitated Western theology was the ecumenical background for this development. Asian theologians like Shoki Coe, C. S. Song, K. Koyama, Kim Yong Bock, and certain Asian feminist theologians produced ideas that reverberated at church conferences or theological

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Aritonang and Steenbrink Karen, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Netherlands: Brill Academic, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Glinka Josef, “Early Signs of Christianity in Indonesia,” *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2009): 1-3, <http://journal.unair.ac.id/IJSS@early-signs-of-christianity-in-indonesia-article-3091-media-35-category-8.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ngelow, “Theological Education in Indonesia.”

classes, much as their books decorated library shelves. The advent of Liberation Theology in Latin America, the formation of contextual theology in Indonesia, and the development of social commitment within the WCC as reflected in the topics of ecumenical conferences are all pertinent points to make in this regard.<sup>8</sup>

Since then, the contextual theology became prominent. It gave birth to the major leading contextual theologians from many parts of the nation. Lensink makes the argument that contextual theology is not only a postcolonial theological movement but that it can occasionally be seen as a component of a wider political nation-building enterprise that took place after independence.<sup>9</sup> He notes that postcolonial responses to the alleged rejection and denigration of native religion and culture during the colonial period may be seen in both contextual theology and heritage discourse.<sup>10</sup>

Library and online information offer a wide range of information resources and services. The nature of information and services evolves throughout time. The worldwide network internet has given modern digital libraries a new dimension. Our research will be provided with the most recent version of sophisticated technology to stay up with the online. The digital networking and communication architecture in this new library research provides a worldwide platform to design strategies, engage, communicate, cooperate, and search for information.<sup>11</sup> This research deals with the synthesis contextual theology and culture in Indonesia. It analyses and evaluates systems used and concludes with discourse on the relationship of synthesis contextual theology and culture in Indonesia. The study used a qualitative technique to recreate the Christian dimension of inculturation by utilizing literature, articles, books, and related references.

## Discussion

### The Synthesis Contextual Theology

However, how to contextualize the Gospel in particular cultural situations remains a challenge in ministry. This confusion stems from the need to combine adherence to the one Gospel with its meaningful manifestation in specific cultures, none of which are identical. No wonder, based on 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Wogu quote Dean Flemming concludes that "our

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<sup>8</sup> Ngelow.

<sup>9</sup> Jip Lensink, "Contextual Theology as Heritage Formation: Moluccan Culture, Christianity, and Identity," *Exchange* 50, no. 3-4 (December 14, 2021): 238-69, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-12341601>.

<sup>10</sup> Lensink.

<sup>11</sup> Jie Sun and Bao-Zhong Yuan, "Development and Characteristic of Digital Library as a Library Branch," *IERI Procedia* 2 (2012): 12-17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ieri.2012.06.044>.

articulation of the gospel must be culture-specific but not culture bound.<sup>12</sup> Missiologists have tackled contextualization from various theological or methodological approaches, depending on diverse guiding assumptions, orientations, and attitudes toward culture, in an attempt to cling to both sides of this contradiction. Wogu explain that Stephen B. Bevans wrote a substantial study on contextual theology in which he provides six paradigms for practicing this theology: translation, anthropology, praxis, synthetic, transcendental, and countercultural theology.<sup>13</sup> Bevans mention the sixth model is the synthetic model, in which a theologian positions himself or herself "midway between an emphasis on the experience of the present (context: experience, culture, social location, social change) and the experience of the past (scripture, tradition)".<sup>14</sup>

Theology, according to the synthetic model, is a process of discussion among people who offer diverse perspectives, opinions, and concerns. It recognizes and attempts to accommodate people's concerns about adherence to the Gospel message, local culture, and present circumstances. The Praxis paradigm and the anthropological approach both assume that theology is performed by individuals in particular contexts. However, in contrast to the anthropological paradigm, the praxis model critically analyzes society in light of the Gospel and commits to altering social systems that do not conform Gospel norms.<sup>15</sup> This concept provides a means for persons who are oppressed, marginalized, or socially excluded to express themselves.

The researcher for this article chose this paradigm synthesis because it aims to create a balance between the importance of the gospel message and the legacy of traditional theological formulations. On the other hand, this approach recognizes the important role that culture has played and may play in theology.<sup>16</sup> What we now understand is that our experience in the present, as understood and interpreted by our scriptural and theological heritage, eventually verifies our experience in the past. As a result, we might describe "contextual theology" as a method of practicing theology that takes two factors into consideration. According to Bevans, contextual theology first takes the past, specifically the

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<sup>12</sup> Chigemezi-Nnadozie Wogu, "Constructs in Contexts: Models of Contextualizing Adventist Theology," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 43, no. 2 (2019): 146–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2396939318754759>.

<sup>13</sup> Wogu.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Ladislav Bučko and Jana Adamcová, "CURRENT MISSION MODEL IN THE GLOBAL WORLD," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 12, no. 2 (2016): 41–51.

<sup>16</sup> Yohanes Damianus, "Dayak Tunjung Cosmology and the Theology of *Communio Sanctorum* An Exploration of Contextual Theology in Synthetic Model of Stephen B. Bevans," *International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 1, no. 1 (June 2020): 41–53, <https://doi.org/10.47043/IJIPTH.VIII.5>.

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experience of our ancestors in the faith as it is recorded in scripture and doctrinal tradition, as a source and a criterion for contemporary Christian practice and theorizing. Second, it considers the experience of the present, or the context in which Christians of a specific time and place find themselves.<sup>17</sup>

## The Synthesis of Contextual Theology and Culture in Indonesia

### *Sadrach Community*

However, long before the term “Contextualization Theology” was introduced, there was Christian indigenous community, namely Sadrach Community that have taken the local culture seriously in his mission, which result in a vast growing of followers during the Dutch colonial era. The mission history in Central Java is a complicated story as Th. Sumartana, theologian from Indonesia mention. It consists of cooperation and conflict between the Javanese evangelist and the Dutch missionaries.<sup>18</sup> Sumartana continued to emphasize two characteristics that will at least always have an impact: a struggle with the problem of development, and cultural and religious pluralism. First, the problem with the development problem is how is the place and contribution of Christian-Islam in a large collective context to uphold human values? The overall situation, which includes injustice, poverty, hopelessness, environmental devastation, marginalization of people with disabilities, and discrimination against them in social, political, economic, cultural, and religious life. Second, the issue of pluralism - diversity which is still in the process of integration as a community is still in the formative stage. The Dutch missionaries were desperate to find a way to make the Javanese become truly Christians. The Javanese people do not want to be uprooted from the cultural roots that have been held firm long before Christianity came. Another case with the Indo-European lay missionaries who pay attention to local culture. Then the Javanese congregation appeared. They are called the "Sadrach congregation" because the leader is a charismatic Javanese evangelist, Sadrach Surapranata.

For such a long period of time, Shoki Coe argued that “Colonized communities were mere consumers or recipients of a faith and theology of the colonizers. In most cases, people were made to believe in a theology that was constructed to satisfy the political and economic ambitions of the colonizers”.<sup>19</sup> Thus, M.P Joseph raised the important of Shoki Coe

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<sup>17</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>18</sup> Th. Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroad* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> M. P. Joseph, Po Ho Huang, and Victor Hsu, eds., *Wrestling with God in Context, Revisiting the Theology and Social Vision of Shoki Coe* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018).

contextualization way of doing theology, “Coe, like all prophets, made discernment of signs of the times key to this way of doing theology. Contextualizing theology and discerning signs of the times is not about making church more culturally “relevant” but more prophetically resistant. This equips the church to come together to be more radical and vibrant.<sup>20</sup> And before this name was coined, this is precisely how the Sadrach community resisted colonialism. Aritonang emphasized that Sadrach became well known as he was the founder of a few congregations of so-called ‘free Christians’ (*wong Kristen kang Mardika*).<sup>21</sup>

Sadrach received his education in a *pesantren* (a residential school for Muslim education), and the missionaries' pietistic ideas as well as Javanese Hindu-Buddhist history influenced his beliefs. As a result, he had a sharp eye for realistic approaches to understanding religion and church systems. His congregations were arranged according to his unique Javanese system, which included frequent meetings for the elders and significant annual assemblies (*kumpulan gedhe*). He observed the sacraments and followed his own kind of church discipline. Parts of his theology can be rebuilt. His Christology, for instance, placed a strong emphasis on Jesus' roles as a righteous king, *panutan* (a guide and mediator), and guru (teacher). Jesus imparted some *ngelmu* (knowledge) for achieving human salvation.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Sadrach's society grew to encompass the highlands as well as the lowlands. This also demonstrated that Sadrach's community could grow as a self-sufficient congregation without the assistance of outsiders who looked down on them, despite the break with the Dutch.<sup>23</sup>

Quarles van Ufford rightly draws the conclusion that the religious movement led by Sadrach was a “reaction against the colonial attitude of Dutch Christianity as superior to Javanese Christianity”.<sup>24</sup> In another words, they accepted the Christian faith but rejected the colonization and the colonizers culture that came together with it. In the churches of Central Java, there was a resurgence of interest in Sadrach and his community during the latter two decades of the twentieth century. The topic of whether Sadrach was only an archetypal figure of the nineteenth century or a charismatic leader whose vision and organization are still helpful to the church today, particularly in regards to Muslim-Christian relations, is one of the current debates.

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph, Huang, and Hsu.

<sup>21</sup> Aritonang and Karen, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph, Huang, and Hsu, *Wrestling with God in Context, Revisiting the Theology and Social Vision of Shoki Coe*.

<sup>23</sup> Raden Bima Adi, “Wedha Utama: A Framework for GKJ to Formulate Principal Teachings in the Context of Java” (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2015), <https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/wédha-utama-a-framework-for-gkj-to-formulate-principal-teachings->.

<sup>24</sup> Adi.

Joas quote from Tracy contends that Christian theology should always be public discourse that speaks to everyone by utilizing a generally accepted standard, i.e., "common human experience." Any public theology, however, also develops into a philosophical meditation on God, who is at the core of Christian tradition. He makes the compelling argument that theologians are not engaged in public theological discourse if they "are not involved, at least implicitly, in speech about God".<sup>25</sup>

Ecumenical theologians such as Eka Darmaputera, Emmanuel Gerit Singgih, J.B Banawiratma, Wayan Mastra, Mery Kolimon and many else are those who actively practice contextual theology. Kolimon, the feminist theologian from West Timor who was awarded the Swiss Sylvia Michel Price stated, "Only by willingness to lose its old identity, Christianity in Asia might be transformed into truly Asian Christianity".<sup>26</sup> Banawiratma with his 'Contextual Social Theology' where concrete situations are no longer related to specific Javanese culture but rather to social, economic and political situations of modern Indonesian society as a whole.<sup>27</sup> Daniel Nuhamara and Tabita Christiani those focus on religious pluralistic context of Indonesia. They stated that theological schools in Indonesia need to work together with other faiths' institutions and schools and they gave the example of how they are doing in their university, the joint program between Christian faith and Muslim faith.<sup>28</sup>

Wayan Mastra uses "stomach theology" because of Bali's extreme poverty. Characteristics of ecumenical contextual theologians in the land that derived from liberation theology root are: 1) Bottom up, here they spend more time and energy to hear the voice of "orang kecil" (the needy people). Rebuking the churches in Indonesia, Singgih stated, "They have done much for the poor in terms of charity, but they don't want to listen to the poor, or "orang kecil" (the needy people). They precisely want to join hands with "orang besar" (the ruling class). And when they succeed in securing some position, they are unwilling to risk

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<sup>25</sup> Joas Adiprasetya, "In Search Of A Christian Public Theology In The Indonesian Context Today," *DISKURSUS - JURNAL FILSAFAT DAN TEOLOGI STF DRIYARKARA* 12, no. 1 (April 22, 2013): 103–24, <https://doi.org/10.36383/diskursus.v12i1.121>.

<sup>26</sup> Mery L.Y. Kolimon, *A Theology of Empowerment, Reflections from a West Timorese Feminist Perspective* (Berlin, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Intan Fleming Benyamin, *"Public Religion" and the Pancasila-Based State of Indonesia: An Ethical and Sociological Analysis* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Nuhamara and Christiani Tabita, "The Challenge to Developing Contextual Theology in Pluralistic Society in Indonesia," *World Council of Churches*, June 6, 2008, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-challenge-to-developing-contextual-theology-in-pluralistic-society-in-indonesia-dr-daniel-nuhamara/dr-tabita-christiani>.

that”.<sup>29</sup> Thus, they always describe themselves as the people who side to the poor, weak and oppressed. 2) For them, contextualization must begin from the context to text, not vice versa. Singgih argued, “Thus, theology research could not be abstract, but empiric or at least begin from empirical things. This is the characteristic of doing theology contextually, which are inductive and start from social-cultural contexts”.<sup>30</sup> They perceive God is bigger than Bible and His salvific action is greater than the Christian scriptures.<sup>31</sup>

Herer is the contextualizing the theology core there are some boundaries that must be followed: 1) The various types of theology that arise from different context must be complementary, not contradiction. 2) Contextual theology cannot contradict theology core. 3) The theme of contextualization theology cannot be the foundation of theology. 4) Motivation behind contextualization theology is limited only as a bridge for evangelization. 5) The motivation to break away from “Western theology” is not the noble motivation for contextualization theology. By doing this, they claimed the doers do not show respect to the history.<sup>32</sup>

Evangelical theologians strongly hold the authority of Bible above the context. If a current context contradicts the Scripture, then they will refer to the text than context. Vincent Tanzil stated, “The Bible is indeed confrontational with local culture. This is because the local culture itself is not neutral, sometimes even contrary to the Bible”.<sup>33</sup> Clark also criticized, “But we must notice something: giving special views of the oppressed presupposes certain answers to important, logically prior theoretical questions. And these theoretical answers deserve critical evaluation.” According to J. Andrew Kirk, a British evangelical sympathetic to liberation theology, taking praxis as a starting point already presupposes theoretical commitments. The very concept of praxis is *theory laden*. Those who support praxis understand that there is no pure theology. They, and we, need to see that there is no pure, neutral experience either <sup>34</sup>. Since, they hold firm to the orthodoxy of the

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<sup>29</sup> E. Gerrit Singgih, “Evaluasi Teologis Dan Inovasi Teologis,” in *Teologi Operatif: Berteologi Dalam Konteks Kehidupan Yang Pluralistik Di Indonesia*, ed. Natar N. Asnath, Cahyana E. Purnama, and Karmito (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Singgih.

<sup>31</sup> Ebenhaizer I. Nuban Timo and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, “THE BIBLE IN CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGICAL WORK IN INDONESIA,” *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 10, 2021): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.24>.

<sup>32</sup> Handoko Tri Yakub, “Upaya Pembentukan Teologi Yang Indonesiawi: Perspektif Reformed Tentang Teologi Kontekstual,” *Apologetika*, 2016, <http://star-exodus.org/publikasi/artikel/2016/02/05/upaya-pembentukan-teologi-yang-indonesiawi-perspektif-reformed-tentang-teologi-kontekstual>.

<sup>33</sup> Vincent Tanzil, “Teologi Injili Di Indonesia Dan Usaha Kontekstualisasinya Dalam Era Globalisasi,” *Jurnal Amanat Agung* 7, no. 1 (2011): 105–24, <https://ojs.sttaa.ac.id/index.php/JAA/article/view/175>.

<sup>34</sup> K. David Clark, *To Know and Love God* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2003).

Scripture, thus their characteristic of doing theology usually from top to bottom and their motive of contextualization is evangelization.

We have seen the practice of doing theology contextually in Indonesia since the era of Sadrach community until today era. While evangelical theologian raising a question about the defining the meaning of theology, Stephen Bevan in contrast pointed out, “There is no such thing as “theology”; there is only contextual theology: feminist theology, black theology, and liberation theology. The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative”.<sup>35</sup> While radically different from the idea of traditional theology in many ways, a contextual approach to theology is also closely related to it. To assert anything both new and traditional is to perceive theology as contextual.<sup>36</sup> Here he explained the relation between text and context, “Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression. And so today we speak of theology as having *three* sources of *loci theologici*: scripture, tradition, and present human experience – or context”<sup>37</sup> and he concluded “doing theology contextually means doing theology in a way that considers two things. First, it considers the faith experience of the past that is recorded in scriptures and kept alive, preserved, defended – and perhaps even neglected and suppressed – in tradition. Second, contextual theology considers the experience of the present, the context”.<sup>38</sup> Both past that recorded in Scriptures and today experience must be able to speak to one another.

Because God is present and acts in context, Christian theologians must do theology in that situation.<sup>39</sup> Evangelization had to be perceived as something that must speak to every aspect of human life. Paul VI emphasized that it must be aimed at illuminating and transforming men and women as they are: “what matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures..., always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God”.<sup>40</sup> It is not sufficient for the church and Indonesian Christians to simply listen to the Word of God in the Bible, in Nuban Timo's

<sup>35</sup> Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>36</sup> Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*, 1st ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>37</sup> Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>38</sup> Bevan; Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*.

<sup>39</sup> Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>40</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html).

opinion. Instead, Indonesian Christians must give Indonesian genetics to theology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, etc.<sup>41</sup>

Contextualization demonstrates the necessity of theology's engagement and discussion with social change, new ethnic identities, and the tensions that arise when the modern phenomenon of globalization interacts with the diverse peoples of the world.<sup>42</sup> The world is unifying into a single entity where diverse institutions work as components of the same system and distant peoples coexist peacefully on the same planet. This global society has a culture, and it instills a growing awareness of global society in many people. We thereby give culture and consciousness to relationships and organizations. The process that haphazardly pulls these facets of global civilization together is known as globalization.<sup>43</sup> Contextual theology that we are practicing now is also come from the product of globalization that happening in the third world countries.

### Nusantara Christianity

The terms *nusa*, which means "island," and *antara*, which means "in between" or "inclusive," are the roots of the idea *Nusantara*. It is mentioned in ancient Javanese writings, where "other islands" are indicated by the phrase "*nsntara*." However, the phrase's definition has evolved over time. Copperplate inscriptions from 1305 and Javanese manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries both include the word *nusantara*. The *Pararaton*, a Javanese treatise detailing the Javanese kingdoms of Singhasari and Majapahit and its legendary progenitor Ken Angrok, is the most well-known piece of written literature. According to this scripture, Gadjah Mada, the Majapahit Empire's top minister, signed an oath (*sumpah palapa*) in declared 1334 that he wouldn't add spices to his cuisine until several countries on the periphery of the Majapahit Empire in Nusantara were conquered. This pledge must have been taken extremely seriously given the significance of sambal for all Javanese meals. The list of realms demonstrates the scope of Majapahit, or at the very least the peripheral marine regions outside of Java, as well as the overall territory encompassed by

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<sup>41</sup> Ebenhaizer I Nuban Timo and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "The Bible In Contextual Theological Work In Indonesia," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 10, 2021): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.24>.

<sup>42</sup> Frans J. van H. Hancke, "God's Missional People: Reflecting God's Love in the Midst of Suffering and Affliction," *Acta Theologica* 32, no. SUPPL. 16 (2012): 89–105, <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i1S.6>; Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>43</sup> A. Harold Netland, "Globalization and Theology Today," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006).

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the notion of Nusantara.<sup>44</sup> The cultural, religious, and linguistic identities that constitute Nusantara provide the parameters of an idealistic community that is characterized by integration.<sup>45</sup>

The Nusantara philosophy builds its epistemology on axiological ideals, in contrast to Western epistemology. They possess a spiritual idea that may be metaphysical and is ethical, social, moral, psychological, cultural, and spiritual. As a result, although being a part of Indonesian culture, Nusantara philosophy directly conflicts with many of the cultures and value systems of Indonesia's ethnic groups. The seven components of universal culture—religion, language, knowledge, arts, organizational structure, economic system, social technology, means of subsistence, and tools—form systems appropriate to those seven components that possess the epistemological foundation because they include a framework for thought or knowledge as a cultural obligation.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, local knowledge is a way for Indonesian ethnic groups to express themselves. From this, individuals act and behave in ways that are consistent with the notion, which leads to the creation of specific works. Examples include the magnificent Prambanan and Borobudur temples, regional architecture, the Subak water system in Balinese rice fields, and the well-known art form of batik. They all demonstrate that there are underlying concepts and processes involved in the creation of different types of beautiful and magnificent ethnic creations from Indonesia.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, it shows that the local knowledge of the depth of Indonesian culture is a synthesis of ethnic cultures, a process shown in the daily lives of a people by studying customs. Local wisdom is a set of collective meanings rather than personal ones, and in its subsequent evolution, it takes the shape of a social process as opposed to a personal one.

Many things can be done theologically when we take Indonesia as the context. With total population in 2019 around 269.000.000 people that come from more than 300 ethnicities, or 1340 tribes, in 17.504 islands with 6 official religions beside folk religions, united together in a land that we called “Nusantara” with the slogan “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversities) and *Pancasila* (Five Principles) as the state ideology of Indonesia.

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<sup>44</sup> Hans-Dieter Evers, “Nusantara: History of a Concept,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 89, no. 1 (2016): 3–14, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ras.2016.0004>.

<sup>45</sup> Guat Peng Ngoi, “Editorial Introduction: The Pluralistic Thoughts and Imagined Boundaries in Nusantara,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 313–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1353399>.

<sup>46</sup> Meliono, “Understanding the Nusantara Thought and Local Wisdom as an Aspect of the Indonesian Education.”

<sup>47</sup> Meliono.

Geographically and culturally, we are different from each other, with the different social political situations that happening everywhere from Sabang to Merauke of this island. Another feature that highlighted by Koyama is “Many spirits, several spirits, One Spirit” to describe Indonesians as “spiritual” people.<sup>48</sup> Many issues, phenomenon, practices, arts, cultures of the local people could then become a very interesting thing to discuss to find out the presence of the universal God in the past, present and future. Therefore, when contextualization has taking place, many local theologians have responded it positively and vibrantly giving their voice to the voiceless from the grassroots.

Mojau quote Yusak Tridarmanto, in his book "The Face of Christ in the Eyes of the Citizens of Indonesia's Multicultural Society", asserts that, as a result of Indonesia's national symbol, the Garuda Bird, whose motto is "Different but One," Indonesians are multicultural, whether they practice the religion or not. In this context—after examining Jesus' face as the judgment of most Asian theologians, who are considered triumphalism and imperialist—he urged Indonesian Christians to advance Christology. It is more mature and knowledgeable. A Christology that not only emphasizes the ontological "equality of Jesus with God" and the portrayal of Jesus as the "Cosmic Ruler" Therefore, but it would also be difficult for Indonesian Christians to communicate their Christological identity.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

Theology contextual is the study of the community's self-reflection on itself and its values, not God's revelation to the community. From this vantage point, it is simpler to incorporate their cultural background, beliefs, and local tales into a local contextual theology. It is not antagonistic to Christian doctrine, but rather a part of the community's history, identity, and vision. This should not be misconstrued as a call for doctrinal arbitrariness: the job of re-denying faith should always entail the effort to compare the (growing) tradition to the evidence of the biblical canon. The faith community itself performs this synthesis contextual theology, which raises the theological standing of current ecclesial activity so that it is not only contextual fulfillment of biblically and theologically acknowledged objectives, but also jointly constituting in each context what might be referred to as "Christianity." Since the Sadrach community began to integrate contextual

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<sup>48</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology-25th Anniversary* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> Julianus Mojau, "Identitas-Identitas Teologis Kristen Protestan Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru: Sebuah Pemetaan Awal," *GEMA TEOLOGIKA* 2, no. 2 (October 2017): 109, <https://doi.org/10.21460/gema.2017.22.290>.

theology into their faith and community and claim their beliefs as a part of their culture, Nusantara Christianity has grown and developed.

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