



**HUMANS AND SAGO TREES
(A CONTEXT OF THEOLOGY EDUCATION
ABOUT MYTHS OF THE CREATION OF HUMANS FROM SAGO TREES)**

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Abstract:

This writing aims to provide a contextual description of theology of human nature, through the myth of the creation of humans from sago trees, whose process starts from examining the basic values of the myth, in order to uncover the basics of arguments and cultural concepts that live within the Nuaulu tribe. The research method used in this article heuristikum with this type of research is the study of literature and interviews to collect and complete the data in order to develop the analysis received from key informants to be a source of information. Furthermore, cultural hermeneutics is carried out, which leads to an interpretation of the structure and mythical narrative of the Nuaulu tribe, namely, the creation of humans from sago trees. The results show that myth is seen as an ethnographic narrative of literature which through a hermeneutical pattern without relating other approaches can be used as a framework for contextual theology. This concludes that the myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree, contains a set of codes or theological symbols that can be transformed in church life and society, to be used as a media or framework for constructing contextual theology in Maluku, through a set of theological values rooted in the practice of sago, among others: unity, tenacity, hard work, discipline, economic orientation, life and togetherness. So that physiologically, the value structure of the sago tree leads to the formation of human identity.

Keyword: *Humans, Myths, and Sago Trees*

INTRODUCTION

Contextual theology is a way of doing theology that elevates the spirit and message of the gospel; and the traditions of the Christian community; and the culture of a society from which someone has theology. Sensitivity to social change in local culture, whether because of the influence of Western theology or the struggle of the people articulates the spirit of equality, justice and freedom (Bevans, 2013).

According to Bevans, contextual theology is not an option but an *imperative* (Bevans, 2018), an attempt to translate social reality in response to the revelation of God in all experiences and activities of human life. God's revelation appears in the culture and social experience of the community; in all community actions and guiding the achievement of the ideal goal (*initial aim*). God uses social and cultural media to express His presence, then humans use these media creatively through a set of activities in all their experiences (Ford, 1977).

Myth is often interpreted as a collection of stories, which by various reasons, are considered as the appearance of the noble meaning of the universe and human life, an element in culture that contains elements of cognition (ethical-moral), legal and religious. Orality myths are also a medium for the process of growing faith and the gospel through socialization and narrative (disclosure). However, myths are often spelled negatively. This perspective labeled myths as illusory stories. Most rationalists, Christians understand it as a story or tale that cannot be trusted, because it does not contain faith and historical values.

Maluku has various myths such as; myths of Nunusaku, Hainuwele, Lake Rana, etc. In a long time the myths were stored in the *memori a of society*; a classic story, which represents heroics and a wealth of old stories (*folktales*). The mythical discourse in Maluku also tends to be the work of anthropological studies, so the myth is like "old stuff", a primitive era artifact. Until now even the mythical discourse in theological studies is still associated with its mystical dimension which has not completely escaped *super sition*. In fact, as a sacred story of society, this contains religious dynamics and a growth horizon of confidence in the people of Maluku.

Myth about "*the creation of humans from the Sago tree*". It is one of the myths that has grown and developed in the traditions of the lives of the people of Nuaulu on Seram Island, Central Maluku. This myth is rated, contains the codes theology that implies problems of cross-theology(*cross theology*) in people's lives.

The myth contains two basic assumptions that drive this study. *First*, the habit of working on sago and the perspective contained in it. The perspective of *daily activity* works on sago as a food ingredient by the community, and develops or changes from time to time towards a better way, which of course contains a meaningful structure for theology even (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1964).

The view of various value structures from the perspective of life as a source of motivation in working on *Sago* this rooted in the pattern of determining the location of settlements in ancestral times that are close to water sources (rivers) must be overgrown with trees *Sago* as food ingredients.

Second, the philosophy of the Ambonese (Central Maluku) of sago and the structural value of the tree *Sago* physiologically (knowledge of normal functions of living things). Ambonese view trees *Sago* as a symbol of their identity. This is reflected in the philosophy "*The Ambon parsis the Sago liar, the tarbae outside the mar barsi in the mastermind*" (Ambonese are like Sago trees, from the outside it seems bad, not attractive, rough, but the heart is clean).

Trees *Sago* are a staple food source for Ambonese, which also presents a philosophy about the characteristics of their lives, namely, "*If you run people, you will have to share or love one another.*" Physiologically, the tree *Sago* grows in a large clump, not separated from one another. The tree structure is large, and all parts of the tree can be used for various purposes: bark (*waa*) for substitute wood fuel, leaves for roofs, stems or midribs (*gaba-gaba*) for the walls of the house, etc.

Today's dilemma is that *Sago* as a staple food is increasingly disappearing from the lives of the young generation of Ambon. As a result, the life philosophy of the Sago tree is increasingly eroded, and has a minor tendency. This is what needs to be explored in order to

assess the basis of the myth, in an effort to uncover the fundamentals of arguments and cultural concepts that live in various searches for the mythical narrative of trees *Sago* found in the lives of the Nuaulu tribe. This can be used as a novelty from the theological context based on the life of the Nuaulu indigenous people which can be significantly useful in laying the contextual paradigm of theology in the context of church service in Maluku (GPM) as a framework for the development and ministry of a life-rooted, deeply rooted gospel. in Maluku.

LITERATURE STUDY

Myth is understood as the way humans in their time capture reality, or the way people think at a certain time. This understanding explains the various perspectives of the world of society, because the aspect of truth in myth is an ideal picture of the social reality that humans live. In other words, the real myth is born of social events, and again explains those events as sacred stories.

Myths in gradation and the intention of storytelling are part of the belief (religious impression) of society that not only reveals why people believe, but also the purpose of believing. Social myth describes in detail the superstructure that underlies the life of the community. This means that the myth of representing the religious realm of society as a socio-religious reality, has a close relationship with the adat community order. Myth is a narrative that can be known from and through or through social structure, worldview, type of social organization and work system of society at a certain time (Luwiyanto, 2015).

In a social system, mythical narratives as explained earlier that the myths of living in the environment of indigenous peoples, and become indigenous narratives that have binding power, and spin a foundation on the adoption of human society. Here we see why, theoretically and functionally, myths are distinguished from legends, saga, or other forms of *folktales*. This fact shows the importance of the meaning and role of myths in the lives of indigenous heirs (Viora, 2018).

Etymologically, myth originates from the Greek word "*muthos*" which means a story or something someone said. Myth in a broader sense is understood as a statement, a story or a plot of drama. The word "*Myth*" in English is translated into Indonesian with fairy tales, figments or contrived stories (McCoy, 2012). Combined with the word myth, words often used such as: mythology, mysticism and myth. The word mythology, derived from English *mythology*, means the study of myths or the contents of myths as well as certain parts of a myth or knowledge, which concerns gods or characters in fairy tales. Whereas "mysticism" is defined as the science of kebatinan or teachings related to things that are occult. Mite is interpreted as the saga of gods (Rosmana, 2010). One of the words in English that has the equivalent meaning of myth is *folklore*, meaning tales, stories and folklore.

Folklore also word *matches the folktales*, which also means folklore where myths are included. *Folklore*, can also be defined as material or points in a culture or culture, traditionally circulating among tribal members from several groups or communities (Jones et al, 2007). The version of each myth is different from one another, some in the form of oral or understanding in the usual example (Tridarmanto & Soetapa, 2016). *Folklore* based on its type is classified into three groups, namely, oral stories (*Verbal Folklore*), stories which are partly oral (*partly verbal folklore*), and stories that are not oral stories (*non-verbal folklore*). In this writing, it is more focused on the type *verbal of folklore* which contains many meanings in cultures such as dialects or dialects, proverbs, proverbs, puzzles, stories, folklore, and others. Generally, folk tales or fables are classified into three forms, namely myths, legends and tales.

Simply put, to distinguish between myths and legends, can be seen in physical evidence. Myth has no physical evidence, while legends have physical evidence. For example, the legend of *Nene Luhu* in Ambon, is often associated with *Capeu Stone* (a place in Pertuanan Ambahusu village that looks like a capeu (Ambon Malay means hat or hood) which is believed to be the place of the *capeu*) as an embroidered hood worn by the princess.

Myth is defined as "a true story of events that can be felt to have helped shape the world and the nature of moral action. This shows that myths determine the ritual relationship between humans and their creators, or with existing powers. " According to Dhavamony, myths are "true stories about events that have been felt to have helped shape the world and the nature of moral actions, and determine the ritual relations between humans and their creators with existing powers (Dhavamony, 1995). Myth is also defined as "a collection of stories from several facts that do not need to be doubted and some are imaginations that are considered as the appearance of the noble meaning of the universe and human life. (Sugihastuti, 2015)

According to Leach (2013), myths with a communication language approach, explain about "symbolic languages that work at various levels at once. A myth also fills a lot of information and cultural policies in very dense forms, in easily memorized languages to be passed down from generation to generation. Geertz (2013), put forward his definition of myth as a disclosure of psychological tensions, such as between the basic human drive and local cultural limitations. Whereas according to Maleves in Ladwig (1962), defines that *myths are traditional tales, which are collective sources, which are attempted to explain every kind of reality whether supernatural or natural: Essentially they are dynamic, irrational and they are transcend ordinary experience*. On the contrary, Eliade claims myths as "*absolute truth*" and "*true history*" are provided as a form of human life behavior (Larson et al, 2006).

Based on various definitions of myths above, various approaches, both traditional (conventional), historical, linguistic, psychological, religious and rational, are shown, so all of them tend to show some uniform elements regarding myths. These elements are oral stories - supernatural beings or gods (gods) of the past or sacred history, rites or rituals (Iswidayati, 2007).

Myth also has rite, ethical-moral and legal functions, namely; *First*, rite function, contains the basics of the beliefs of a particular tribe or group. Myth forms the basic impressions of the diversity of a tribe or group. *Second*, the ethical-moral function, which contains the principles of conduct and behavior in relation to each other (social life). There are basic criteria regarding the pattern of human social relations. *Third*, legal functions, containing basic sources and materials for the formulation of life norms, in the form of social law and / or religion. There are basic legal rules that have the power to bind a community.

The myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree is also a representation of the socio-religious reality of the people of Nuaulu. This reality is reflected in the life side (*Weltanchaung*) and / or *worldview* of the local community. The myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree from this side is not only known, but it is lived and believed by the people of Nuaulu, as an event that happened at the time of his ancestors.

In line with that, it can be said that the myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree is not only a code fication of *dictas* (words) that are passed down from generation to generation (*folklore / folk story*), but the myth has also given birth to *gesta-gesta* (action-action), through local societal rites (the Nuaulu community), such as initiations or religious rites which are in fact intended as the "reality" of the myth itself. That is, the myth must be allowed to live and develop in all the actions (*gesta*) of the community, because the reality of myth must be part of the reality of the struggle of the life of a society full of even profane actions. Starting from the framework, we want to explain the myth of the creation of humans

from the Sago tree, which lives in the Nuaulu tribe community on Seram Island. This myth is the primary reference for the analysis and development of the thinking of contextual theology.

RESEARCH METHODS

Type of research used is library research, with the intention to collect materials that contain both data and theory. In scientific terminology this research is called research *anesthetic* where researchers look for various sources and collect them by paying attention to the usefulness, validity and proportionality of the source. In addition, interviews were conducted with several informants, to complete the data and / or develop analysis. The informants consisted of adat leaders, state elders, and community members who were in accordance with their competencies as sources of information.

Next is cultural hermeneutics, which is directed at interpreting the structure and mythical narrative of the Nuaulu tribe, in this case the myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree. For this reason, myth is seen as an ethnographic narrative. Myths are interpreted by first describing the myth itself, exploring the values and benefits of myths for society, seeing cultural symbols in myths and other elements. This is what Geertz said as the *web of meaning* from a cultural system (Geertz, 1973). This is closely related to the model of contextual theology put forward by Bevans, especially the Anthropological model which emphasizes authentic cultural identity, but also does not deny the importance of scriptures or Christian traditions, social reality and cultural change (Bevans, 2013).

Data collected is then analyzed by first classifying the data into stages as based on the myth of human creation from the Sago tree and the cosmology of the Nuaulu community (Ambonese). The data were analyzed by considering the cultural interpretation theory as explained above. The theological framework built in this thesis is an approach to analysis and reflection on anthropological and sociological data, which also leads to an understanding of God, as an answer to the faith struggle of the congregation who is aware of its existence. The theological framework is expected to be able to answer the struggles of Moluccan human life, on the other hand answering the functional reality of God.

RESEARCH RESULT

The story or story of the creation of humans from the Sago tree in the Nuaulu tribal community's beliefs, begins with the story of the arrival of a supernatural figure on earth. This figure, in the belief of the Nuaulu tribe, is known as *Upu Ama*. The story begins from: *Upu Ama*, when it descends from heaven to earth, the earth is still dark and filled with water. *Upu Ama* then *ran aground* between heaven and earth. Then after there was a dry part of the earth (precisely on Seram Island), he went down and walked around Seram island to look for humans, but what he found was only animals. *Upu Ama* herself had experienced five deaths and was resurrected by the sound of a rooster standing right on the head and hen at her feet. At the fifth resurrection he struck the "stone tree" with his ax until it broke and the Sun and Moon came out to illuminate the whole Earth.

Furthermore, the story or story tells of the journey of the *Upu* looking for humans, to the creation of humans from sago juice, the work of the *Upu* and his sister. It is told as follows: When traveling around Seram island to look for humans, *Upu Ama* did not find a human child, except the former foot of animals, namely Pigs and Dogs. *Upu Ama*, returned to her sister, *Natusahunauw*, who lived in North Seram, precisely in the village of *Besik* in the hamlet of *Sanawae* (a village full of Sago trees). One time, the two siblings "used Sago" by using *nani* (a tool for taking fiber from sago contents made of wood in the shape resembling the number seven). This work produces sago fiber, which is then squeezed with water to get the sago flour extract which is then accommodated in a *gutter* (The place to store sago flour that has been

filtered, made from sago tree trunks whose contents / flour has been taken. It looks like a boat without pigeon). The next one is made *tumang* (a place to store sago flour that has been smooth / filtered, made from sago leaves woven in a rounded elongated shape with a larger base from the tip) to fill it with flour later *Sago*.

When his younger brother *Natusahunauw* wanted to save or clean up the *tumang* to accommodate the smooth sago flour, he was shocked by an event that took place in the gutter. *Goti* which contains the processed sago flour, now contains white human heads. *Natusahunauw* conveyed what he saw to his brother *Upu Ama*. *Upu Ama* did not believe in hearing the news, because she herself had surrounded the island of *Seram* to look for humans but had never met her. Arriving at the gutter, his brother was surprised because it turned out that what his sister said was true. The *goti* is full of white human heads. He then forbade his sister who wanted to kill these humans. The two of them then took *lopa-lopa* (a place of betel and areca nut) to that place.

When he arrived at the gutter, one of the humans stood up from the gutters and spoke thus: "*Brother katong su become a human, sakarang mo asked brother par. Where is Katong Pung Kampong, what job do you offer with what bro, "* (our sister has become a human, now we want to ask brother. Where is our village, what are our jobs and what are our food). *Upu Ama* answered them: "*Later, beta, there will be Natusahunauw pigi between you and me. If you see puti sand, puti wood or sarba puti there, you can stay there.)* *Upu Ama*, then took the bones and leaves of the roof and gave them to them. Immediately, the roof of the roof turned into a pen and the leaves of the roof became paper, then he said: "*This is enough work, and the rice is ready to*"eat(this is your job, and rice is your food).

After getting everything, the white humans had asked for *Tupu-tupue* (flowering bark as a substitute breastplate) which was worn by *Upu Ama* at the time, but was not given. Then the white man asks: "*what do you want to do with you?*" The *goti* suddenly changes into a ship. At that moment, came the Pigs gouging out the land and fish *Saku* stabbed the pile of land where the ship was located. So the water came out so hard that the boat floated and could sail. On the voyage, the golden chair belonging to *Natusahunauw* fell in *Sahulau* (the name of a village now taken from the name *Natusahunauw*). Such is the myth narrative above, which describes a reality of the life of the people of *Nuaulu*. The description of this myth then shows the dramatic world and the world of action of a society (Barash, 2011), which explains a daily activity (*daily activity*) that occurs in the *space* real social of society.

A work activity of a family (*Upu Ama* and her sister *Natusahunauw*) over the urgency of their family's subsistence needs. The activities that characterize and work the *Nuaulu* (Maluku) people generally are the reality of meeting "local people" with "foreigners". The encounter that occurs through gradations and intentions of myth, is a factual encounter that is idealized or materialized as a sacred story. That is, with that myth, the *Nuaulu* people want to express the people's struggle in order to defend their rights. They are guardians of their original heritage, both material, feudal and immaterial. Here, Cassirer's theory of the dimensions of struggle and power conflicts is contained in myths (Kaufmann & Cassirer, 2006), and is a framework for understanding the encounters of the *Nuaulu* people with "white people. It is this preference for transposition which in the myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree shows the *body of value* of the *Nuaulu* people or Ambonese people who describe:

a. Human Existence of Supernatural

Understanding of supernatural human beings, or divine humans, is evident in the figure of *Upu Ama*, the transcendent aspects and immanent aspects. *First, the transcendence figure Upu Ama*, believed to be a being *transhuman* or *the supreme-being*. The story of *Upu Ama* in the *Nuaulu* tribe community, starting from the story of his arrival into the world which shows his position as a supernatural being, with a characteristic feature that is truly amazing as the

ruler of the world throne. He is believed to be the subject of the Nuaulu tribal religious belief. So that he is in a transcendent reality, which voices beliefs, determines rites, and acts as a map of social regulation as well as a permanent model of moral behavior.

Second, immanent figure. Apart from the transcendence side above, the supernatural creature *Upu Ama* also showed her faith. *Upu Ama* lives in the social reality of the Nuaulu people and works in a practical sense to meet their economic needs (cf. work *sago* or gathering Sago trees). immanent image *Upu Ama's* appears in the kinship relationship of the Nuaulu people. *Upu Ama* is part of a family social unit with her sister *Natusahunaw*. They involve themselves in daily activities in the economic field. Therefore *Upu Ama* is not just a being *transhuman*, but a person who is historical and active in the social environment of the Nuaulu people. This story of myth provides a set of norms for community action. For example, people can learn about how a social activity can or should be done or how to maintain and manage their lives.

b. Understanding Human Existence Human

Existence in the myth of human creation from sago trees is not atomic existence, which stands apart from its divine, cultural, and social reality. But a dynamic existence, which is realized through work and communication between minds (*pro-creation*). People of Nuaulu, therefore, can always find their existence in work, as not merely operational technological actions or mere economic actions, but as calls for existence that link obedience, discipline and criticality, in addition to honesty and sincerity in building a life.

The full picture of this myth requires an in-depth introduction to the life views of the Nuaulu tribe, especially regarding the nature of humans. Clearly there are two basic substances in the description of human existence according to the myth. *First*, humans are worker beings. This picture of existence appears in the immanent nature of *Upu Ama*, as "*sago mason*" to fulfill her daily needs. This can be seen in ethical social responsibility towards the maintenance and utilization of the surrounding environment for the sake of life. That is, human Nuaulu in this myth is a group of people who are dynamic and responsible (bound) to the environment, in the sense, maintain and manage the surrounding environment (*earthbound*) where he lives.

Second, the ego in relation to fellow humans (other people). Ego as the essence of an individual gets its own strength in the myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree. Ego is not an absolute person, regardless of social relations with other people. Instead the new ego gets meaning in the relation. Therefore *Upu Ama* is not a single human being in the reality of this myth. He is part of the relationship with *Natusahunaw*, so that the ego is in a family unit.

This then became the cultural belief of the Nuaulu tribe, about who the white humans were or emerged from the sewers. The cultural identification of white humans is rather difficult to trace the truth, but from that myth there is a set of truths that are believed and internalized by local people, that the myth of "*the creation of humans from the Sago tree*" is not a transcendent fantasy, but a social product of society; because it is compiled, told repeatedly, believed, and lived as a life story (*life-story*).

C. Values in the Myth of the Creation of Humans from Sago Trees as a theological Framework.

The description of the myth as exposed in the previous chapter and then further reviewed in this chapter, shows some basic values that can be used as a theological framework. These values include: "hard work and perseverance", which appears in *sago hours* using traditional equipment and techniques, through several processes including:

1. Preparation phase. There are several activities that usually occur at this stage. First of all people have to prepare a *gutter*, which is usually made on the river, river or water source in the Sago trees. After making a *gutter*, people have to prepare equipment for *sago at the time of nani*.
2. Stage of cutting Sago trees. The felling of Sago trees is carried out by the principle of selective cutting, which is the filling of a Sago tree that is considered ready to be worked or is old. Before logging is carried out, the tree trunks are first cleaned from the lower cutting limit, to the midrib at the top of the tree . This is done to facilitate logging, Logging is usually done traditionally, namely by using the ax (*mancadu*). If the tree is located near a resident's house or a plant belonging to the population (garden), it is usually pulled using a long rope so as not to damage the house or plants.
3. The work phase, which includes activities:
 - Splitting a tree trunk. Not all Sago trees are split. Cleavage is usually carried out for approximately 1.5–2m. This is done because the activity *sago o'clock* lasts for quite a long time, usually 1-2 weeks.
 - *Hit sago*. This activity is carried out by dredging the fiber content of the Sago tree (*ela*) using *nani*. Usually, there are more than three people working on this activity.
 - Transporting fiber from Sago trees. After the fiber of the sago contents is dredged out, the fiber content (*ela*) is ready to be squeezed with water to get the *sago stable*. The transport of these contents of fiber usually occurs from where the *sago hit* to where the made *gutters* are.
 - Squeezing the fiber content of the Sago tree (*ramas ela*). This process is part of a series of sago processing to obtain *reliable sago*. Fiber filled with Sago trees or *ela*, squeezed using water. The results of the juice which is still mixed with water, flowed and accommodated in a long sized container (*gutters*), shaped like a boat (sometimes also used a boat) for a period of several days. The results of the juice will settle into white deposits (such as deposits that occur in rice washing water). The result of this sediment is called *sago mantah*, which is the end result of the sago processing process.
 - lug *Sago mantah* or production phase. This stage is usually done after all the work *sago*. This process is done by road, inserting the results of the sago deposits into containers made from sago leaves (*tumang*). One Sago tree can produce 30-50 *stir-fry sago*.

The activity of working on sago is a fairly simple process, but requires "discipline, togetherness and life orientation (consumption)" as other values of *sago*. The usefulness of sago trees, explains the importance of life and the existence of human workers. The value of "trust in the divine power", "honesty and utilization of knowledge" and "life skills" are also seen in this mythical narrative. What is also evident in the life of man Nuaulu, who "obeyed" what had been revealed from *Upu Ama* to them.

CONCLUSION

Myth is an oral tradition that lives between generations of an indigenous community (inherited), and is believed to be the truth and sanctity of the community. Myth contains social events *profane* which describe the life side and life view of the mythical heirs. At this level it

is revealed that *dictations are* intergenerational patterned in *gesta-gesta* the mythological community and manifest through rites and customary enforcement.

The myth of the creation of humans from the Sago tree, contains a set of codes or theological symbols that can be transformed in church life and community. The myth can be used as a medium or a framework for constructing contextual theology in Maluku. The basic assumptions are: in this myth illustrated a set of theological values that are rooted in the habit of working on sago, including modesty, tenacity, hard work, discipline, economic orientation, life and togetherness. Also illustrated is the philosophy and structural value of the Sago tree physiologically, which leads to the formation of human identity.

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