

Harmony of Contextualizing the Gospel and Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity

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Abstract

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This article reviews an in-depth study on the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity, focusing on history, ethnic origins, perspectives on God, and the contextualization efforts of the Gospel. With a long history, Bolaang Mongondow carries a cultural richness reflected in their Local Theology, examined through content analysis methods on relevant literature. Beliefs in Ompu Duata and ancestral spirits serve as the foundation of cultural authenticity, particularly in wedding and funeral customs. The worldview of this ethnic group is shaped through the elements of ancient belief in Ompu Duata. This research reveals contextualization strategies that empower Local Theology through content analysis, emphasizing the importance of preserving local terms while assigning new meanings consistent with Gospel teachings. Overall, this study provides a profound understanding of the harmonious balance between Local Theology and Gospel teachings, laying the groundwork for meaningful relationships with this ethnicity, and contributing to discussions on belief pluralism and cultural heritage preservation amid global dynamics.

Keywords: Local Theology, Bolaang Mongondow, Contextual Gospel, Content Analysis, Worldview

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INTRODUCTION

The Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity, a richly historical and cultural group, carries an extraordinary legacy from the past that continues to influence their lives to this day. As a community that has thrived in the context of religious and belief diversity, they possess a Local Theology that reflects a unique balance between traditional beliefs and the world religions that have entered their region. One central aspect of this ethnic Local Theology is their perspective on the divine, as mirrored in the ancient beliefs in *Ompu Duata* and *Dimukud in Mogoguyang*.

The long history of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity encompasses the period prior to the introduction of Christianity and Islam when beliefs in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* or *Kitogi* and traditional religious practices heavily dominated their lives. Despite the infiltration of world religions into this region, these elements of traditional beliefs have remained integral to their daily lives, particularly in the context of marriage and death customs, as well as specific rituals like *metayok*. This history provides us with profound insights into how the Local Theology of this ethnic group has evolved over time.

Understanding the worldview of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity is key to unlocking the essence of their Local Theology. This worldview reflects the community's perspective on the world and, in the context of Bolaang Mongondow, is closely associated with traditional cultural values, such as loyalty to leaders and

ancient beliefs. The concept of this worldview is elevated as the foundation in the efforts to contextualize the Gospel to the Bolaang Mongondow community, where expanding the meaning and interpretation of Local Theology becomes a crucial step in conveying a relevant and meaningful Gospel message to them.

A crucial step in this effort of contextualizing the Gospel is the empowerment of Local Theology. By delving into and respecting local beliefs related to God, traditional ceremonies, and worldviews, we can create a more effective approach in delivering the teachings of the Gospel. Therefore, this article will discuss the efforts of contextualizing the Gospel to the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity by embracing and leveraging their Local Theology, especially in interpreting the foundational concept of Worldview in their perspective on the world.

In pursuing the goal of Gospel contextualization within the Bolaang Mongondow community, we are not only confronted with differences in beliefs but also with the strong influence of feudalistic values that still color their views on leadership. It should be noted that Local Theology, with its richness in integrating elements of ancient beliefs and customary norms, reflects the community's ability to maintain and root themselves in their spiritual identity amidst the dynamics of time.

Thus, an approach considering the history, Local Theology, and Worldview of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity becomes a solid foundation in the efforts of Gospel contextualization. This article will intricately review the elements of Local Theology that characterize the life of this ethnic group, detailing contextualization strategies that not only respect but also empower local values in achieving a profound understanding and meaningful relationship with the Gospel message. Through this approach, it is hoped that harmony can be created between the teachings of the Gospel brought by world religions and the spiritual richness inherited by the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity.

METHOD

This research adopts a literature study approach with a focus on content analysis as the main technique in data collection and analysis. Literature study was chosen as the primary method because it provides a comprehensive framework to explore the substance of the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity through the examination of various written sources, journals, and related research. This approach allows researchers to detail and understand various aspects of Local Theology more deeply, including views on God, religious rituals, and the worldview of the Bolaang Mongondow community.

The main technique in data collection is content analysis. This content analysis is used to detail and identify patterns of meaning in writings relevant to the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity. The obtained data involves literary texts discussing the history, beliefs, and customs of this community. During the content analysis process, researchers systematically identify, categorize, and analyze various elements of Local Theology that characterize the worldview of this ethnic group.

The analysis procedure begins with the selection of literature sources relevant to the Local Theology of Bolaang Mongondow. Subsequently, the

researchers identify key concepts related to views on God, religious rituals, and the worldview. Next, data is categorized and grouped based on key themes that emerge in the literature. This content analysis aims to gain a deeper understanding of the elements of Local Theology and how these elements are interrelated in shaping the worldview of the Bolaang Mongondow community.

From the results of the content analysis, the conclusions drawn will be careful and comprehensive. These conclusions will detail key findings related to the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity, including views on God, religious practices, and how their worldview is reflected in daily life. These conclusions not only provide a general overview but also offer a profound understanding of the balance and harmony between Local Theology and world religions in the lives of the Bolaang Mongondow community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Footsteps of Historical Synopsis from the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity

The Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity is one of the major ethnic groups residing in the North Sulawesi Province, precisely in the land they refer to as Totabuan. Paransa (1983:2) reveals that during prehistoric times, the governance system in Bolaang Mongondow was based on a democracy led by a Bogani, which signifies a brave and courageous figure. The Bogani not only served as leaders but also as role models (*doduduyan*) chosen to lead a group or familial cluster, selected through a consensus-building and mutual agreement (*bobahasaan*) process by the people. Criteria to become a Bogani included courage (*mokodotol*), intelligence, physical strength, responsibility for the well-being and security of the group from enemy threats, readiness to perform duties for the common good (*mokodia*), wisdom, bravery, and other qualities essential for a leader (Mawikere & Hura, 2020:3).

The Bogani did not stand alone but were accompanied by the *tonawat*, individuals knowledgeable in celestial navigation, medical expertise, and its treatment. Moreover, they served as advisors to the leaders (Ginupit, 2003:8). In this context, *tonawat* not only possessed expertise in celestial navigation and health but also played a role as partners providing advice to the leaders.

Thus, the democratic governance system in prehistoric Bolaang Mongondow was based on meticulous selection of Bogani candidates, prioritizing leadership qualities encompassing courage, intelligence, health, and responsibility for the group's well-being. The presence of *tonawat* as advisors to the leadership further underscores the importance of wisdom and specialized knowledge in the governance tasks.

In the 14th century, a transitional period occurred in the governance system of Bolaang Mongondow, shifting from the leadership of the Bogani to a kingdom-based governance system. This change was triggered by external influences through the arrival of traders from India, China, Spain, and Portugal in the Nusantara region. The impact of these influences extended into the hinterlands of Bolaang Mongondow, transforming the role of the Bogani into assistants to the king in matters of defense, security, and order (Ointoe & Mokodompit, 1996:64).

Nevertheless, this period of leadership transition is colored by legends and myths still held by the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group to this day. It is narrated that the leadership transition from the Bogani to a kingdom-based governance system in Bolaang Mongondow began with the appointment of Mokodoludut as the king with the titles *Punu Molantud*, *Tule Molantud*, or *Tomunu'on*. The legend of Mokodoludut's birth is infused with myths that have become a significant part of the cultural heritage of the Bolaang Mongondow community (Mawikere & Hura, 2021:6-7).

According to the legend, Mokodoludut is derived from the terms Moko (name/symbol of royal descent) and *Daludut* (roar). The story begins after the dispersal of the community to various regions, with a couple, *Kueno (Ama i Lie)* and *Obayow (Ina i Lie)*, who were Bogani for the community on Mount Bumbungon, Dumoga. They lived as fishermen on the Ongkag River, Dumoga. One day, during a flood, they failed to catch fish but found an egg on a pile of drifting branches. The egg was considered a newly flown bird's egg, but it turned out to be the baby pouch of *Salamatiti*, still wrapped from her mother's womb. The baby, named *Mokodoludut*, was discovered by *Kueno* and *Obayow*.

News of Mokodoludut's birth spread, and many people came to see the baby who was considered miraculously born after heavy rain and thunder. The Bogani also came and decided to appoint Mokodoludut as *Punu Molantud* or *Punu Bulawan* or *Punu Modeong* or *Tule Molantud* or *Tomunu'on*, becoming the highest leader of the entire Bolaang Mongondow community. This decision was made because Mokodoludut's birth was deemed an extraordinary event and was considered a revered entity (*Inibo ibo*) by the local community. To this day, for the people of Bolaang Mongondow, the legend of Mokodoludut signifies that the Bogani bestowed the honor upon Mokodoludut as a king and imparts a lesson for future generations to always appreciate what God bestows upon humanity. Mokodoludut, believed to originate from an egg, is considered a gift from *Mongo Ompu*, making him a human and the first king of the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group (Kobandaha, Palar, & Pangemanan, 2023:1997).

Similarly, the birth of Mokodoludut's wife, the first queen, is also filled with legends (Mawikere & Hura, 2021:7-8). It is narrated that *Punu Mokodoludut*, the inaugural king of Bolaang Mongondow born miraculously, had a queen named *Baunia*, who was also born with a similar miracle. When Mokodoludut needed to be bathed, *Kueno* and *Obayow (Ama i Lie and Ina i Lie)* used a section of yellow bamboo as a container to fetch water. Although the yellow bamboo had no sections, the water inside remained intact. The yellow bamboo containing water for Mokodoludut's bath was kept under the house. The miracle occurred when the yellow bamboo grew larger over time and eventually burst open. From inside, a baby girl was born with extraordinary beauty and health. Later, the baby, named *Baunia*, meaning 'born from yellow bamboo,' was lovingly raised by *Kueno* and *Obayow*. When *Mokodoludut* and *Baunia* reached adulthood, they were betrothed with the approval of the Bogani, solidifying a relationship colored by the miracles of birth and community approval.

The Bolaang Mongondow region during the transition to the kingdom system was divided into four autonomous kingdoms: Kaidipang Besar, Bintauna, Bolaang Uki, and Bolaang Mongondow, each with its own self-governance

(Zelfbestuurende Landschappen). The kingdom system of governance began with the appointment of *Mokodoludut* as *Punu* (king or *datu*) with the titles *Punu Molantud*, *Tule Molantud*, or *Tomunu'on*. The rule of *Punu Mokodoludut* lasted from 1400 to 1460, and the highest leadership was hereditarily passed down to the crown prince or descendants of *Punu Mokodoludut* (Ginupit, 2003:8-9).

A significant change occurred when *Tadohe*, the son of *Punu Mokoagow*, became *Tompunu'on*, which later, due to the influence of Dutch traders, the term *Tompunu'on* was changed to *Datu* (King). *Tadohe* successfully united all community groups with their respective *Boganis* through deliberations at *Tudu* in *Bakid* in *Pontondon*, which is close to the current *Kotamobagu*. He established a new governance system that regulated hamlets and villages, introduced currency as a trading tool, and implemented a farming system by introducing crops such as rice, corn, and coconut. In addition, *Tadohe* also categorized society into the government (*kinalang*) and the people (*paloko*), with the aim of improving welfare through development in various fields (Ointoe & Mokodompit, 1996:68).

During the rule of *Punu Tadohe* (1600-1650), new regulations regarding customs, governance, and the caste system in *Bolaang Mongondow* were established. This agreement, reached through deliberations with the *Bogani* leaders and the community at the summit of *Tudu* in *Bakid*, defined six castes in *Bolaang Mongondow* society, such as *mododatu* (royal family), *kohongian* (nobility), *simpal* or *paloko* or *tuangi lipu* (common people), *nonow* (workers), and *yobuat* and *tahig*, referring to those who were slaves or the lower class that could be traded (Ointoe & Mokodompit, 1996:68).

The leadership system with the title *Punu* persisted until the rule of *Punu Loloda Mokoagow*, also known as *Datu Binangkang* (1650-1694). During this period, there was resistance against the *Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (V.O.C) or the *Dutch East India Company*. Although *Punu Loloda Mokoagow* formed an alliance with the king of *Makassar*, the defeat of the *Makassar* king by the V.O.C in 1667 brought his authority under the control of the V.O.C. The appointment of subsequent kings no longer followed traditional customs but was subjected to the intervention of the V.O.C government (Ointoe & Mokodompit, 1996:69).

This intervention began with the appointment of the tenth king in 1695 by the *Dutch Colonial* government. Appointments continued until the last king, *Henny Yunus Cornelis Manoppo*, who held the position until the establishment of the government regulations of the *State of East Indonesia*. In 1950, the *Bolaang Mongondow* kingdom integrated into the *Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia* (Ginupit, 2003:22).

The civilization of the *Bolaang Mongondow* kingdom experienced rapid progress during the reign of *King Datu Adrianus Cornelis Manoppo* (1905-1928). Despite being illiterate, this king had a broad and open-minded perspective towards change. His study trips to *Malesung* or *Minahasa* enriched his insights into community development, especially for the common people. During his rule, roads were improved, bridges were constructed, and housing for the common people was organized. The construction of schools, markets, hospitals, and coconut and coffee plantations in various areas was also initiated by *King Datu Adrianus Cornelis Manoppo*. *Kotamobagu* was officially inaugurated as the new capital of the *Bolaang*

Mongondow Kingdom in 1911, followed by the opening of hospitals, markets, and Dutch-language schools. The leadership of King Datu Adrianus Cornelis Manoppo reflected the closeness and trust of the people in him, with a primary focus on improving the lives of the people (Ginupit, 2003:21).

With the embedded legends and myths accompanying every historical step of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnic Group, it can be understood that their journey not only reflects the transformation of the governance system but also weaves a tale of courage, wisdom, and the miracles of birth that form the cultural foundation they strive for. From the strict selection of Bogani candidates through the transition to a kingdom and the leadership of Punu Mokodoludut to the modern era, this historical journey shows resilience in the face of change and efforts to preserve their rich cultural values. Thus, in this profound conclusion, it can be inferred that the historical footsteps of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnic Group are not just a record of political changes but rather a legacy of local wisdom that continues to inspire to this day.

The Mythical Thinking of Ancestors in the Tradition of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnic Group

Based on previous research, the mythological story about the origin of humans in Bolaang Mongondow depicts a flood that covered the land, submerging almost the entire region except for one place, *Huntut Buludawa* or Mount Komasaan. Four main figures in this mythology are considered the ancestors of the Bolaang Mongondow community, namely *Budulangit* or *Gumalangit*, *Tendeduata* or *Sango-sangondo*, *Tumotoi Bokol*, and *Tumotoi Bokat*. They lived in *Huntut Buludawa*, now known as *Huntut Baludaa*, at the headwaters of the Ilanga River. During the flood, the only human left in *Huntut Buludawa* was *Gumalangit* or *Budulangit*, who is said to have descended directly from the sky. After several relocations, he encountered a miracle while trying to fetch water from a piece of bamboo, leading to the emergence of a woman named *Sango-sangondo* or *Tendeduata*. The legend continues with the story of *Tumotoi Bokol* and *Tumotoi Bokat*, who emerged from the sea waves. When *Gumalangit* and *Tendeduata* had a daughter named *Dinondong*, and *Tumotoi Bokol* with *Tumotoi Bokat* had a son named *Sugeha*, this mythological story involves lineages that gave birth to important figures, such as Princess *Silagondo* and others. Over time, the flood receded, and the land reappeared, allowing the spread of humans throughout Bolaang Mongondow. New settlements formed, and the ancestors chose intelligent and brave tribal leaders, known as Bogani. The name Bolaang Mongondow itself, according to etymology, is a combination of the word *Golaang*, meaning to be bright or sea, and *Nomondow*, meaning to shout or cry, referring to the mythological ancestors shouting at *Huntut Buludawa*.

Therefore, the mythological thinking of the *Mogoguyang* in the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group provides a rich foundation of spiritual values, ethical norms, and wisdom to navigate through life. The epic story of *Huntut Buludawa* and the four main characters, *Gumalangit*, *Tendeduata*, *Tumotoi Bokol*, and *Tumotoi Bokat*, not only presents the origin of humans but also serves as a bond of togetherness, the selection of leadership, and a perspective on *Ompu Duata* as the ruler of everything. Through this *Mogoguyang* mythology, the Bolaang

Mongondow ethnic group teaches the importance of unity, cooperation, and adherence to the customary norms handed down through generations.

Exploring the Uniqueness of Local Theology in the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity Regarding Beliefs in God

As mentioned earlier, in ancient times, Bolaang Mongondow was governed by the Bogani, who were democratically selected by the community. The Bogani selection process was guided by a customary figure known as *guhagnea* or *guhanga*. The responsibility of *guhagnea* or *guhanga* involved organizing from the initial stages to the coronation of a Bogani (*pu'dui'an*). The selection process began by inviting all community members to gather at the head of the family's place (*bontean*). Once gathered, the selection process commenced with a prayer request (*mogitu-gitum*) to God (*Ompu Duata*) for the smooth progress of the event. The proceedings continued with traditional art performances (*motolibag* or *mobondit*), presented by *guhagnea* or *guhanga* as a customary figure serving as a sort of priest or intermediary between humans and the spirits of ancestors (*mogoguyang*). *Motolibag* or *mobondit* contained calls and hopes for unity in choosing the Bogani. For example, *mogoguyang* delivered *tolibag* in the Mongondow language, urging unity in selecting a strong leader. *Tolibag* served as an introduction before seeking responses from community members as constituents. The event continued with the exchange of *tolibag* or *bondit* (*mogabat kon tolibag/bondit*), where community members could express their aspirations directly in public. The method of expressing opinions was also manifested in the form of *tolibag* or *bondit*. For those who did not wish to express their opinions, they could simply say *naa dega kodukodudui kon na onda mopia* (I follow the best). After all group members had conveyed their aspirations, the event proceeded with a conclusion of the deliberation (*monimpod kon o'uman*). *Guhagnea* or *guhanga* summarized all opinions and suggestions, then designated the elected Bogani with the highest support. The coronation date (*podui'an*) was announced on the same day. As a conclusion, a reconciliation ceremony (*rimang*) was held to resolve conflicts or differences that arose during the selection process. The *rimang* ceremony, interestingly, was often organized by *mogoguyang* after each meeting (*bakid*). Remarkably, when the monarchy system was in place in Bolaang Mongondow, the *rimang* ceremony became less relevant, as seen in the democratic system of Bogani leadership.

In ancient times, the Bolaang Mongondow community, under the leadership of the Bogani, acknowledged the existence of the Almighty, whom they referred to as *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* or *Kitogi* (The Almighty Owner). *Ompu Duata* refers to the God who rules over everything. Before embarking on significant tasks, Bolaang Mongondow tradition involved ritual ceremonies as a form of reverence for *Ompu Duata*. Every commencement of a venture, activity, or healing ceremony (*monayuk*) began with a prayer to *Mongo Ompu*, establishing a desired connection with and approval from the Almighty. Wedding ceremonies (*mogama*) also involved prayers to *Ompu Duata*, recited by a *guhanga*. According to their belief, any violation of the will of *Ompu Duata* risked sanctions like being ostracized from the community.

To honor *Ompu Duata*, each Bolaang Mongondow settlement had a *sigi*, a sort of temple for worship (*monibi*) dedicated to *Ompu Duata*. *Sigi* served as a place to store ancestral artifacts and as the location for worship ceremonies and the atonement of sins. These ceremonies involved the entire community contributing sacrificial animals such as pigs, female goats, and chickens. *Sigi* also served as a venue for community discussions, conflict resolutions, and symbolized the unity of Totabuan.

Although *Ompu Duata* was recognized as the Almighty, this concept was more abstract and less personally known. In everyday life, the Bolaang Mongondow community tended to be more actively engaged with ancestral spirits (*dimukud in mogoguyang*). Their ritual ceremonies were often directed towards *dimukud in mogoguyang* and other supernatural beings believed to inhabit their surroundings. Some ceremonies included *momolapag*, a worship ceremony for *dimukud in mogoguyang* involving offerings, and *metayak*, a dance to ward off evil spirits. *Metayek* or *tayok* was a healing method for individuals suffering from illnesses. This process involved dances accompanied by hymns to *Ompu Duata* through the mediation of the *mogoguyang* spirits believed to possess mystical powers. In this context, the dancer or *Bolian* performed the dance in a trance-like state. *Metayek* was a traditional dance form in the Bolaang Mongondow region. During the dance, the dancer was believed to be possessed by a spirit considered a spiritual entity needed to seek help or *Ilapidan*. This spirit was believed to have the ability to determine the type of medicine or herbal remedy required to cure the ongoing illness. The community also conducted *mamalenga*, seeking mystical guidance in their daily lives with the assistance of *dimukud in mogoguyang*.

Ginupit (1996:30-31) reveals that in the ancient beliefs of the Bolaang Mongondow community (*kitegi*) towards *Mongo Ompu* or *Ompu Duata*, several ethical norms still apply to this day. Some of them include that young individuals who get acquainted or court without marriage are not yet subjected to customary sanctions, even though they have shared memories with each other. Engagements not known to the customary leaders and village heads, if not leading to marriage, still do not incur customary sanctions. Engagements witnessed by customary leaders or village heads, if canceled, potentially result in a sanction where half of the dowry is given to the aggrieved party, along with a fine known as *monuntun kon tobotak*. False accusers without evidence must pay a *momogoi* fine to the injured party and the customary leader. A man who kisses a woman without permission must pay a *momogoi* fine to the woman and her family. If a man touches a woman, and she feels disturbed, the man must pay a *momogoi* fine to the woman as compensation. A man who impregnates a woman must marry her if she is unmarried and pay a *momogoi* fine to the woman's family if she is already married. A man who impregnates his blood sister will face severe punishment, such as being placed in a large cage and thrown into the sea. A father who impregnates his biological child will be buried halfway with his child and stoned to death. A proven poisoner will be buried halfway and burned to death. A man who captures a woman at her house to intimidate her (*domok*) will face a fine (*bobogoi*) or be matched if both are still single. A wife who commits adultery (*nokituling*) will face a heavy fine in the form of a dowry according to customary rules, payable to her husband or his family and the customary leader. A wife abducted by a man who is not her husband will

receive a fine consisting of various symbolic antique items, such as copper legs, antique fabric, and antique plates, along with payment for every river crossed. Anyone who insults another person must pay a fine (*momogoi*) to the customary leader or the elders of the village who hold the hearing if the offended party objects. Anyone causing a disturbance in the village must pay a fine (*mogompat kon lipu*) to the village, received by the customary ruler. Anyone who curses without clear reason must pay a fine (*momogoi*) to the customary leader and the offended party. A child who injures another person's child must pay compensation to the injured child as wound treatment (*bobodan*). It is not allowed to take back something given to someone else because it can cause minor disasters (*mokobungkoit*).

Regarding the belief in *Mongo Ompu* or *Ompu Duata*, there are legends and ethnic rituals of the Bolaang Mongondow (*momolapag*) that reveal this. In the mythology of the Bolaang Mongondow community, there is a story about an incestuous marriage that resulted in a natural disaster, the union of *Mokoapa* and *Pinomuku*. They were the son and daughter of Punu Yayubangkai and Bua Silagondo, residing on Mount Babo. The marriage between the two siblings was unintentional, occurring when *Pinomuku*, who had long left her parents, accidentally encountered *Mokoapa* while hunting. At that time, *Pinomuku* inadvertently damaged her mother Silagondo's weaving tool (*gogabolan*), angering her mother who struck *Pinomuku*, causing her injuries. As a result, *Pinomuku* left her parents' home and sought residence in the hinterland. Upon reaching adulthood, *Pinomuku* met *Mokoapa*, who fell in love with her, and they eventually married. While Silagondo was searching for lice on her daughter-in-law's head, she noticed scars on *Pinomuku*'s head. That was the moment Silagondo discovered that *Pinomuku* was her biological daughter and *Mokoapa*'s sister. This event triggered a natural disaster, with heavy rain for 40 days and nights accompanied by thunderstorms and severe storms, causing Mount Babo to break, forming the *Gogabolan* island (meaning a place for weaving). This incestuous marriage was considered a violation of the Almighty God's prohibition (*Ompu Duata*). The two siblings were placed in a large moloben cage and thrown into the sea in an attempt to appease the natural disaster. This experience prompted the Bogani to formulate new regulations. They agreed that if two people with blood relations entered into a marital bond, preventive measures must be taken to prevent a recurrence of natural disasters. If such an incident had already occurred, the guhanga must organize a ceremony to sever family ties known as *momontow kom bui'an* (Ginupit, 2003:9-10).

This is also evident in the ritual (*momolapag*) of bringing a baby outside the house (*mopuluai i adi*). The ceremony of bringing the baby outside the house or placing it on the ground, known as *mopuluai i adi*, is a ritual aimed at seeking protection from *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* for the baby and its mother. This ceremony also aims to familiarize the baby with its surroundings. The implementation of this ceremony takes place after the mother has passed the confinement period, namely on the fortieth day after giving birth, at the threshold of the baby's and mother's bedroom door. The parties involved in this ceremony include the father and mother of the baby, family or relatives, neighbors, and the traditional healer (*tonawat* or *talenga*). Before the ceremony begins, the traditional healer explains the process that will be carried out. The event starts with the *tonawat*

heading towards the door, followed by the baby's father and close family. Meanwhile, the baby's mother is neatly dressed inside the room. The father is signaled to enter the room and bring the mother and baby outside. The baby is then lifted by the father and handed over to the *tonawat* at the door. The *tonawat*, after welcoming the baby, utters a mantra (*odi-odi*) and leads the ceremony participants outside the house. At the end of the ceremony, the baby's parents announce the baby's name, and the *tonawat* returns the baby to its parents in front of the house exit. The baby then descends to the ground for a while before being brought back inside the house. Before leaving, the *tonawat* provides a piece of root and a sealed orange. These ingredients are often used in traditional medicine and are always carried by the mother when traveling with the baby as a charm. This ceremony signifies an effort to seek protection from *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* for the baby and its mother. During the confinement period, the baby and its mother are believed to emit a pleasant aroma that attracts the attention of benevolent spirits, thus keeping them away from the outside world. The ceremony also includes taboos, such as prohibiting noise during the ceremony to avoid provoking the wrath of *Ompu Duata*, which could impact the lack of protection for the baby and its parents. For the Bolaang Mongondow community, agricultural work is closely related to *Ompu Duata*, and therefore, several rituals are performed.

According to Ginupit (1996:34-35), the Bolaang Mongondow community has a tradition of acquiring land for gardens, either through collectively clearing the forest (by a family) or individually. Land cultivated together becomes communal ownership (*gogaluman*), while individually cultivated land becomes private ownership (*im batangan tontani*). Ownership rights of garden land (*dogami*) usually expire if left uncultivated for 10 years without planting annual crops such as coconut and sago. However, if the land is continuously cultivated, the ownership rights remain valid. If someone cultivates abandoned land, the yield is shared according to an agreement with the landowner.

Tengkiura-menile or *Tengkiuna-menilen* is a ritual performed when preparing to clear the forest by offering betel nut to the *Mogoguyang* spirits initially considered the owners and guardians of the forest. The process of clearing the forest begins with *bontang* (cutting around) the area to be turned into a garden. The day to start clearing the forest is determined by *tonawat* or *talenga*, who possess knowledge of celestial events, diseases, remedies, and serve as advisors to the Bogani. *Tonawat* or *talenga* listens to the sounds of birds (*monalenga*) to determine an auspicious day and avoid disasters that may occur if these mystical indications are not heeded. *Mamelenga* involves listening to guidance from mystical forces through the call of an owl (*menikulu*). This is done to obtain information about the outcome of battles, the success of plans such as moving to a new house, travel, construction, or making changes in the forest. Other signs considered are dreams and the death of a lamp (*kopiongan in toga*).

As mentioned earlier, before clearing the forest, a ceremony called *mopoka'an kon dimukud* or *tengkiura menilen* is performed, led by *tonawat* or *talenga*, as a request for permission from the ancestral spirits (*dimukud* in *mogoguyang*) who are the owners, protectors, and guardians of the forest to be cleared. There is also the *Menelepak* ritual, derived from the word *pelapag*, referring to a deliberately created place for various dishes made from sago. This

sago is then filled with various offerings, such as feathers, yellow rice, chicken, and eggs, as an offering to the *mogoguyang* spirits believed to have mystical powers known as *Kitegi Duta* or *Ketegi Bontung*. This practice is usually carried out by someone in the gardens during planting, with the aim of seeking protection so that the crops are not damaged by animals and to ensure a satisfying harvest.

Ginupit (1996:34) also noted that in ancient times, the Bolaang Mongondow community demonstrated a sense of togetherness in the cultivation of agricultural products, especially during the rice field harvesting (*monugal*). Before commencing the harvest, a ritual ceremony called *memajakaan-mepakean* was conducted as a request to *Ompu Duata* for a smooth and bountiful harvest. The harvesting process was conducted in an orderly manner under the guidance of an elder, either a man or a woman, leading the rightmost row (*modia kon tosis*). During the harvest, restrictions on noise and children playing were enforced. After the rice was cut, the measurement was done systematically. The abundant harvest ensured an adequate supply of rice for several subsequent harvest seasons. The rice was stored in various traditional containers such as wooden bark (*sikaku* or *luit*), large *enau* leaves shaped like gourds (*sinombalongka*), or bamboo sections (*potolo*). While harvesting, women usually sang *odenon* songs in a call-and-response fashion to alleviate fatigue. In the cultivation of rice fields (*monugal*), the community also engaged in mutual cooperation. Before planting rice, a *memajakaan-mepakean* ceremony was held, offering food to *Ompu Duata*. After the field was cleared, tools such as *totugal* (hoe), *o'ibu* (large broom), *kompe* (basket), and others were prepared. Neighbors or family members were invited to work together. *Memajakaan-mepakean* was a ritual involving the act of offering food to the deities believed to possess mystical powers and who had provided successful results since the beginning of planting. This ritual was performed after the planting process was completed as a form of respect and gratitude to the deities considered responsible for the success of the crops. The night before *monugal* was filled with joyous activities such as playing the *gambus*, reciting *pantung*, dance performances, and shows watched by young girls. In the morning, the work began with men digging holes, women filling them with rice grains, and elderly men covering the holes with soil using brooms. Once finished, all workers had a communal meal and exchanged water as a gesture of hope for a bountiful harvest.

In a similar vein are the rituals associated with mystical matters that they conduct in connection with their belief in *Ompu Duata*, such as conducting a protective ritual before marriage (*tompo una yoko*). According to Manorek (2004:54), the *tompo una yoko* ritual, which involves bringing a protective weapon before marriage, is performed on the night before the traditional wedding ceremony. The groom's family prepares a machete, which is escorted by a *guhanga* to the location of the wedding. There, the machete is received by the *guhanga* from the bride's side and tied to the king post of the bride's house. The carrier of the machete then offers a prayer to *Ompu Duata* to avoid obstacles and obtain protection. The meaning behind the delivery of this machete is as a protective measure against potential disruptions such as thunder, lightning, rain, and wind that could hinder the wedding ceremony. The Bolaang Mongondow community believes that protection from *Ompu Duata* in marriage will be obtained after the *tompo una yoko* ceremony is performed (Manorek, ed, 2004:54-55). Additionally, there is a ritual for the

termination of familial ties called *momontow kom bui'an*. In Bolaang Mongondow customs, marriages between individuals who are still closely related by blood are prohibited, such as between brothers and sisters, cousins, and others. If a difficult situation arises, such as pregnancy between individuals who are forbidden to marry, then a courtship (*pinogumanan*) is conducted after a customary ceremony, namely the termination of familial ties (*momontow kom bui'an*). The courtship involves a ritual where the prospective husband and wife step on an old iron, pass through two plates containing turmeric and charcoal as a sign of an oath. After that, an animal is slaughtered as an offering, and its blood is used on the steps of the *sigi* and the feet of the prospective couple. The meat of the animal is cooked to be given to the village head, *guhanga*, and the parents receiving the dowry. Afterward, the *guhanga* utters *itum-itum* to signify the agreement, and the prospective couple opens the plates, concluding the ceremony. The purpose is to avoid natural disasters and other catastrophes (Notosoesto, 1973:7).

In addition, there is a ritual for healing the sick (*monibi*). According to Ginupit (2003:6-7), the healing of the sick begins since Punu Mokodoludut was still a baby and has been passed down from generation to generation. The *monibi* ceremony involves bathing the sick person (*mongula mokitayuk*) and singing specific songs for 40 days and 40 nights (*mokiambu mo uput*). The *Mongula mokitayuk* ritual is carried out using seven wooden twigs that were once perched by a large bird and placed in a bath made from palm leaves. This ritual is followed by *mokiambu mo uput*, where traditional songs are sung for 40 consecutive nights. Another method of treating the sick is called *medeangongou*, where a person taps an object such as a piece of bamboo to determine the medicine to be used in curing a particular illness. *Mendeangongou* is an act of tapping an object like a piece of bamboo, about an inch long, used as part of the healing process to cure a specific disease. The procedure involves tapping the bamboo, surpassing its actual size, while mentioning the type of medicine to be used. The medicine mentioned during this tapping is then taken to treat the ongoing illness (Talumena, ed, 1979:80). Until now, certain rituals such as *Motayok* are still held and carried out by specific communities as a tradition in treating the sick in Bolaang Mongondow (Mokodompit, Dolot & Akbar, 2022).

For the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group, there is another known ritual called *toimama*, which emerges as a crucial element, especially in the implementation of offering ceremonies. *Toimama* is not merely a ritual but a form of offering performed with the aim of connecting oneself with *Ompu Duata*. The community views it as a manifestation of respect for the ancestral spirit, *dimukud mogoguyang*, considered as an intermediary to convey hopes for a peaceful life. The *toimama* ritual, as a local cultural heritage since ancient times, is still acknowledged today (Ismail, 1998:61-63). It is conducted, particularly in situations deemed threatening, such as pest attacks or widespread contagious diseases. The community believes that these events are reactions to the anger of the ancestral spirits (*mogoguyang*), caused by violations of customs or immoral actions in society. Although *toimama* has undergone shifts in meaning and been influenced by other cultures, the ceremony is no longer seen as the sole solution to address social problems. Some groups even attempt to relate it to Islamic teachings (Ismail, 1998: 62-63). *Toimama*, with its broad dimensions, encompasses various aspects of

human life, especially in the context of agriculture and fish pond opening. The implementation involves a ceremony leader chosen based on their credibility in society. The place and time of the ceremony are adjusted to its purpose, often performed in the middle of the night to avoid noise disturbance. Before the ceremony begins, participants must undergo a self-cleansing process, particularly in purifying the soul through reflection and repentance for past mistakes. The ceremony leader then guides the proceedings by reciting mantras in the Bolaang Mongondow language. These mantras are not just ritualistic but have the purpose of shaping a mental attitude that relies on the strength of *Ompu Duata*. Throughout the ceremony, there is a hope that humans can lead a better life, distancing themselves from negative things that can harm themselves and the community.

Finally, there is also a ritual related to death. According to Talumena (1979:98-99), the Bolaang Mongondow community in ancient times conducted death ceremonies following their customs. This ceremony was specifically performed when a noble or *kohongian* individual passed away, known as *kingopangan* or *mongalang*. The process involved placing the deceased in wood with a hole in the middle. The hole was tightly sealed with resin to prevent air and water from entering. The ceremony was complemented by art, such as *dete-dete* poetry and *kulintang* music played with melancholic and mournful tunes. Additionally, the mourning area was adorned with yellow coconut leaves (*pobang onan arkus*), with pillars covered in white cloth, and decorations throughout the house were covered with white cloth. The bed where the deceased was laid was adorned with a mosquito net, a black umbrella above the head and feet, and a carpet on the floor. Food served during the funeral ceremony was *paramaka*, in the form of rice cakes shaped like animals such as birds, fish, and ducks. Mourners could usually be identified by the use of a white scarf (*lutu*), worn over the shoulder or head while walking. Over time, funeral ceremonies in Bolaang Mongondow began to be adapted according to Islamic teachings, but the influence of the community's customs and culture remained strong (Manorek, ed, 2004:60). Before the funeral, the initial stages involved bathing the deceased (*moginggu*) to cleanse the body of impurities. The bathing area was usually inside a room with supplies such as clean water, basin, camphor, soap, and a cloth used to cover and dry the deceased. The person responsible for *moginggu* was called a *jouw*, matching the gender of the deceased (female or male). After the *moginggu* stage, the ceremony continued with the process of shrouding the deceased (*taputon*), where the body was wrapped in white cloth. The necessary equipment involved a burial shroud, scissors, and shaved sandalwood. After the body was shrouded, the ceremony proceeded with prayers (Manorek, ed, 2004:61-62). Praying for the deceased is part of the ceremony following Islamic teachings and still influenced by cultural traditions. This ceremony is performed before the body is taken to the burial site and involves an imam, a traditional leader (*guhanga*), family members, and mourners. Following the prayer, the next procession is escorting the body to the burial site. It was a customary practice for the body to be carried from the house to the gate, then returned to its original place. In front of the house's door, the *guhanga* would utter words like *dikanodiak ko adik boomp*, meaning that the departed should no longer remember the family left behind. The body would then be carried to the burial site and lowered into the grave. The wrapping of the body would be opened, the body

tilted to the right with seven lumps of soil as support, and then covered with a board. Family and attendees participated in filling the grave with soil. The funeral ceremony concluded with the pouring of water and prayers for the deceased, following Islamic teachings (Manorek, ed, 2004:62-64). After the funeral ceremony, the family continued the ceremony at the mourning house with commemorations from the first day to the one hundredth day after the death. The purpose of this ceremony is to plead with *Ompu Duata* for the departed soul to find a spacious place and forgiveness of sins (Talumena, ed, 1979:99). From the first day to the one hundredth day, the house was called *tonggoluan* (mourning house). People who visited the mourning house were said to go to *tonggoluan* to console the grieving family as a substitute for the departed. The status of *tonggoluan* ended with a ritual slaughter of a goat or cow, where the animal would be adorned with frangipani flowers and a golden chain. The flowers and chain were placed on plates and trays covered with white cloth, held by the traditional leader (*guhanga*), who also held an umbrella. This ceremony symbolized the end of days of mourning, marked by the rearrangement of yellow coconut leaf decorations (*pobang onan arkus*) and the deceased's bed, as well as the recitation of *itum-itum*. At this stage, the white scarf (*lutu*) as a symbol of mourning for the family could be removed (Talumena, ed, 1979:99-100).

Thus, rituals such as the selection of Bogani, *momontow kom bui'an*, and *tompo una yoko* embody the belief in supernatural forces, simultaneously serving as the foundation for shaping a balanced and harmonious society. In every ceremony, whether related to leadership selection, agriculture, healing, or marriage, the Bolaang Mongondow community always acknowledges the role of *Ompu Duata* as a revered ruler to whom offerings are made. The continuity of this mythological ancestral thinking is deeply rooted in daily life, reflecting a balance between spiritual beliefs and local wisdom. Therefore, the mythological thinking of the ancestors of the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group is not only a part of their history but also a foundation for a rich and profound cultural life and continuity.

Exploring the Substance of Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnic Group Through Their Concept of Worldview

In the preceding section, it has been revealed about the historical, cultural, and belief context of the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group, indicating a significant concern for customs, belief in *Ompu Duata* as an unknown God, and faith in ancestral spirits or *Mogoguyang*. All of these are not just local wisdom but are also formed as their local theology through a conventional/traditional worldview concept. With the advent of Christianity and Islam and the progression of time, the influence of customary norms began to weaken. However, four types of customs remain crucial in the Bolaang Mongondow community, namely ancient beliefs, loyalty to leaders, marriage customs, and funeral customs (Ginupit, 1996:38-39). Hiebert (1992:372-376) explains that the culture or customs of a society reflect the expression of religious beliefs, with their symbols aiding in understanding the worldview of that society. Kraft (1996:228) adds that the concept of the life cycle believed and practiced by a community is rooted in the worldview of that society. Therefore, understanding the elements of local theology as a cultural component can provide insight into the concept of worldview as the deepest values of the

Bolaang Mongondow community. Before Christianity and Islam arrived in Bolaang Mongondow, the community believed in *Ompu Duata* (The Almighty) and ancestral spirits known as *dikumud in mogoguyang*. Despite the introduction of Christianity and Islam to Bolaang Mongondow, the belief in *Ompu Duata*, ancestral spirits, and the practices of ceremonies related to them have persisted, albeit not as prominently. The Bolaang Mongondow community, with its rich history and culture, pays special attention to its customs and traditions. Despite the changing times and the influence of Islam, the customary norms have weakened; the four essential elements, namely ancient beliefs, loyalty to leaders, marriage customs, and funeral customs, remain the main pillars of the community. According to Hiebert (1992:372-376), understanding the culture and customs in Bolaang Mongondow reflects the expression of religious beliefs, with symbols being the key to understanding the community's worldview. Meanwhile, Kraft (1996:228) emphasizes that the concept of the life cycle within a community is rooted in that community's worldview. The religion and traditional beliefs of Bolaang Mongondow, especially before the arrival of Islam and Christianity, reflect a belief in *Ompu Duata* and ancestral spirits (*dimukud in mogoguyang*), which are integral parts of community life. Marriages that adhere to strong cultural traditions and practices of ancient beliefs, such as *momolapag* (expelling evil spirits) and *metayak* (seeking mystical guidance), continue to exist. This indicates that the Bolaang Mongondow community essentially adopts religion as a behavior, while their worldview remains rooted in animistic and dynamic beliefs that persist to this day, as evident in the *intau* community of Bolaang Mongondow in Bilalang, near Kotamobagu (Rivo Ronaldo Inkiriwang, Tampake, & Pilakoannu, 2023).

The loyalty of the Bolaang Mongondow community to their leaders, both at the kingdom and traditional levels, reflects strong feudalistic values. Although the feudalistic form of governance has been abolished, these values continue to influence the behavior and perspectives of the society (Lantong, 1996:21). This loyalty affects the community's choice of religion, as seen in the religious conversions followed by the kings. The religion embraced by leaders serves as a reflection for the majority of the society. Nevertheless, the broadened perspectives and open-mindedness of leaders can influence the choice of religion and the development of the community, as exemplified during the reign of King Datu Adrianus Cornelis Manoppo (1905-1928).

In the realm of customary marriage, the Bolaang Mongondow community regards it as something sacred and noble. The marriage ceremony involves lengthy stages rich in symbols. Marriage is not just an individual matter but also involves both families. The process of paying a customary fee becomes an indicator of the legitimacy of the marriage, reflecting the significance of inter-family agreements (*tali* or *yoko*) (Lantong, 1996:49-50). These stages of marriage not only adhere to religious norms but also deep-rooted customs, demonstrating that marriage for the Bolaang Mongondow community is an unignorable bond.

The funeral customs in Bolaang Mongondow reflect a blend of culture and religious teachings. Although the four stages—bathing the deceased, shrouding, praying, and burial—follow customary practices, religious elements are also involved in these proceedings. The funeral ceremony is accompanied by prayers, yet it maintains traditions like *dete-dete* and the sounds of *kulintang* in the house of

mourning. This ceremony signifies not only a farewell to the departed but also an expression of grief for the bereaved family. Thus, the Bolaang Mongondow community incorporates religious and traditional elements in funeral ceremonies, showcasing the richness and complexity of their culture.

The Bolaang Mongondow community, through their understanding of the local theology of their ethnicity, adds a deeper layer to their worldview. History, culture, and religion, especially before the arrival of Islam and Christianity, mark the existence of a deeply rooted local theology. Beliefs in *Ompu Duata* and ancestral spirits or *dimukud in mogoguyang*, which remain central elements in their worldview, continue to serve as a vital foundation even though world religions have been accepted as mere formalities.

For the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group, their local theology rooted in animistic and dynamistic beliefs still forms the core of their worldview. The concepts of *Ompu Duata* and *dimukud in mogoguyang*, though not always openly apparent, remain elements that add color and meaning to everyday life. In the context of loyalty to leaders, this local theology also appears to play a role. The influence of feudalistic values, ingrained in society since the feudal kingdom era, creates behavioral patterns and perspectives that are challenging to change. Leaders, both in the context of the kingdom and the traditional structure, become decisive in religious decisions, illustrating how local theology collectively influences the community's religious choices.

In terms of marriage and death, local theology emerges through customary ceremonies rich in symbols and specific meanings. Marriage, beyond being a bond between individuals, also serves as an agreement between families, reflecting the richness of local theology in interpreting human relationships. Similarly, death ceremonies maintain traditional customs involving symbols and rituals rooted in local theology. The worldview existing in the Bolaang Mongondow community, as outlined above, is shaped by traditional cultural values that steadfastly endure despite facing continuous dynamics of change. Key elements forming this worldview include ancient beliefs, loyalty to leaders, customary marriage, and death rituals. Ancient beliefs in *Ompu Duata*, regarded as the Creator God, and *dimukud in mogoguyang*, ancestral spirits, continue to have continuity in the form of ceremonies and rituals practiced by the community. Despite the introduction of world religions, these beliefs remain a spiritual foundation influencing various aspects of daily life. Thus, through a profound understanding of local beliefs and customs, we can discover that the local theology of the Bolaang Mongondow community plays a very strong role in shaping their worldview and the values that underpin their daily lives.

Carving Harmonious Balance: Contextualizing the Gospel and Empowering Local Theology in the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity

As detailed above, the Bolaang Mongondow community has a rich history and maintains their cultural context. Despite Islam becoming the majority religion and the continuous passage of time, the customary norms of Bolaang Mongondow are preserved through specific rituals. Even with external influences and societal changes, there are customary elements that remain the mainstay, notably the ancient

belief in *Ompu Duata*, which serves as the key to understanding the worldview and local theology of the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic group.

Therefore, the contextualization of the Gospel for this community cannot be separated from a profound understanding of the belief in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu*. To introduce God to the Bolaang Mongondow community, an approach using translation or adaptation models can be employed. The ancient belief in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* can still be retained by explaining the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the redeemer of sins according to the teachings of the Bible. In the context of the Bolaang Mongondow community's ancient beliefs in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu*, a Gospel messenger can still use these terms but with a different meaning in line with the Gospel's understanding. This can be achieved through a surrogate role, where local terms are maintained but their content is transformed with the Gospel, bringing cultural transformation (Tomatala, 1997:41-42).

To introduce Lord Jesus Christ to the Bolaang Mongondow community, an evangelist can use the terms *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu*, but still explain that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of *Ompu Duata*, who became human to redeem sins according to the Bible. It is also important to explain the salvation work of Jesus Christ through the sacrifice on the cross with the power of His blood, differing from local practices that involve animal sacrifices for sin atonement (Mawikere & Mewengkang, 2020:166-167).

The contextual approach to the Gospel can also be applied to various rituals performed by the Bolaang Mongondow community. Ceremonies like *monibi* and *momolapag*, which were previously a means of worshiping *Ompu Duata* and *dimukud in mogoguyang*, can be redirected towards worship with a different meaning. Genuine expressions of gratitude, as an act of faith in the grace and sacrifice of *Ompu Duata* Jesus Christ, can be manifested in one's lifestyle, worship, and obedience to Him. Although the ancient beliefs of the Bolaang Mongondow community differ from Gospel beliefs, a worldview substitute is necessary. Introducing that *mogoguyang* refers to their deceased ancestors, not evil ancestral spirits, is crucial in understanding this difference. Adequate explanations about the person and work of God as the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of life according to the Bible must be taught to the Bolaang Mongondow community. It must be convinced that *dimukud in mogoguyang* is actually a spiritual darkness that blinds them to the Gospel truth about the glory of *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* Jesus Christ (Mawikere & Mewengkang, 2020:167-168).

This approach is also relevant in explaining the meaning of the community's ancient beliefs regarding ancestral spirits and traditional ceremonies. In contextual efforts, local terms like *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* are still used, but their meanings are altered and connected to Gospel teachings. Understanding that the community's ancient beliefs, such as *dimukud in mogoguyang*, need a shift in worldview is crucial. Explaining that ancestral spirits are actually evil spirits and enemies of Jesus Christ involves a dimension of spiritual warfare. Evangelism should lead to a profound explanation of God's person and work as the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of life, in line with the teachings of the Bible, to open the eyes of the Bolaang Mongondow community to the truth of the Gospel.

Therefore, despite changes in the lives of the Bolaang Mongondow community due to the influence of Islam and Christianity, and the progression of time, the continuity of customary norms through special rituals remains the primary foundation, especially among the elderly and traditional communities. A deep understanding of belief in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* becomes key to the contextualization of the Gospel. This approach not only involves using local terms but also transforming their meanings in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. By retaining traditional terms like *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* while conveying the uniqueness of Lord Jesus Christ as the redeemer of sinful humanity, evangelistic efforts can lead to profound understanding and cultural transformation.

In exploring the long history and cultural context of the Bolaang Mongondow society, this research documents the continuity of customary norms through specific rituals despite being confronted with the influence of the majority Islamic religion and the ongoing development of the times. This continuity highlights the importance of customary elements, especially the ancient belief in *Ompu Duata*, as the primary foundation for understanding the worldview and local theology of the Bolaang Mongondow ethnicity. However, this continuity does not hinder the contextualization approach of the Gospel. In introducing God to the Bolaang Mongondow community, this research offers a translation or adaptation model, preserving the ancient belief in *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu*. Through this approach, locally held terms such as *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* are retained, but with meanings adapted to the understanding of the Gospel. This contextual approach involves the use of traditional terms alongside the transformation of their meanings, bringing about cultural changes that can accommodate the uniqueness and novelty of Biblical teachings.

Furthermore, this research delves into the context of specific rituals such as *monibi* and *momolapag* in Bolaang Mongondow society. These rituals, previously associated with worshipping *Ompu Duata* and *dimukud in mogoguyang*, are directed towards worship with a different meaning. Genuine expressions of gratitude, as an expression of faith in the grace and sacrifice of *Ompu Duata* Jesus Christ, are integrated into daily life, worship, and obedience to Him. The acknowledgment that local terms like *mogoguyang* refer to their deceased ancestors, not malevolent ancestral spirits, reveals a new dimension that enriches understanding and awakens society's awareness of the truth of the Gospel.

Moreover, this research highlights the urgency of explaining the meaning of the community's ancient beliefs in ancestral spirits and traditional ceremonies. In contextual efforts, local terms like *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* are still used, but their meanings are changed and connected to the teachings of the Gospel. The transformation of worldviews related to ancient beliefs, such as *dimukud in mogoguyang*, becomes the focus of the research to enlighten society about the truth of the Gospel. In-depth explanations of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of life, in line with the teachings of the Bible, especially as the sole Savior of humanity and the world, form the basis for cultural transformation and personal life transformation, including for the Bolaang Mongondow ethnic community.

Thus, this research provides concrete evidence that, although customary norms remain the mainstay of life in the Bolaang Mongondow community, the

contextualization approach of the Gospel can offer new and relevant perspectives. Preserving local terms in line with the transformation of their meanings is key to building a deep understanding and supporting a positive cultural transformation process, creating a bridge between traditional beliefs and the teachings of the Gospel. Therefore, this research dedicates efforts to bring innovation to the worldview of the Bolaang Mongondow community through a holistic and transformative approach.

CONCLUSION

In exploring the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity, literature study and content analysis provide profound insights into the spiritual richness and worldview of this community. The long history, especially before the penetration of Christianity and Islam, demonstrates the resilience of Local Theology in integrating with customary norms that still play a central role in their lives. Beliefs in *Ompu Duata*, ancestral spirits, and traditional religious practices remain foundational, persisting despite the flow of time and the dynamics of societal changes.

Content analysis highlights that the key elements of Local Theology, namely the ancient belief in *Mongo Ompu* or *Ompu Duata*, not only serve as religious symbols but also reflect a distinctive worldview. This illustrates that the Bolaang Mongondow community doesn't merely follow religion as a formality but maintains their spiritual wealth as an inseparable part of their cultural identity.

In the effort to contextualize the Gospel to the Bolaang Mongondow community, a strategy centered on empowering Local Theology emerges as the most relevant approach. Preserving local terms such as *Ompu Duata* or *Mongo Ompu* while detailing new meanings in line with Gospel teachings becomes a crucial bridge. The context of ancient beliefs in ancestral spirits and traditional ceremonies also needs to be understood and directed towards a profound understanding of Gospel teachings, fostering a shift in worldview aligned with Biblical truth.

In conclusion, this study provides a deep understanding that the harmony between contextualizing the Gospel and empowering Local Theology is not just a fusion of concepts but also a quest for balance between local spiritual richness and the universal values brought by the Gospel. Overall, this article emphasizes that comprehending and respecting the Local Theology of the Bolaang Mongondow Ethnicity is the key to weaving harmony that enriches their worldview and life values on their journey towards a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ as the sole Redeemer, the way and goal of salvation, and a profound understanding of themselves in the context of their culture, locality, and worldview.

In addition, the novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the only Savior, reaching out to serve people of every cultural group. This underscores a unique and transformative aspect of the study, highlighting the universal relevance of the Gospel message in embracing and transforming diverse cultural contexts.

Overall, it can be concluded that this research successfully highlights the importance of harmony between the contextualization of the Gospel and the empowerment of Local Theology in the Bolaang Mongondow community. With a

specific emphasis on the uniqueness of the study, asserting the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the sole Savior contributes to a universal understanding that can transform various cultural contexts.

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