INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

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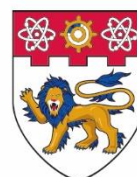
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Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku:
Tiwery's Theology of the Mother (*Teologi Ina*)
and *Nunusaku*-based Cosmology

Lailatul Fitriyah

Abstract

The Christian and Muslim communities in Maluku, Ambon, Indonesia have shared a long history of co-existence. This paper seeks to explain the breakdown in relations between the two communities which resulted in a sectarian conflict between 1999 and 2002. Specifically, in line with previous scholarship on the topic, the paper argues that the relegation of local traditional kinships (*Pela-Gandong*) and the cosmological worldview (*Nunusaku* cosmology) which undergirds these relations to the rear of the socio-cultural and religious dynamics of the Moluccan society was a main factor which led to the conflict. Briefly tracing the development of Christian-Muslim relations in Ambon through colonisation period, and through the lens of interstitial theology, the paper then proposes an emphasis on an indigeneous theology, *Teologi Ina*, as a crucial resource for post-war reconciliation efforts in Maluku.

Introduction[1]

On 19 January 1999, a fight broke out between a Muslim man and a Christian man at a bus terminal of the city of Ambon in Maluku, Indonesia. The confrontation was initially an exchange of slurs between two individuals but quickly became a religiously-motivated fight, with both sides mobilising their respective religious communities for support.[2] In just a few months, the quarrel escalated to a full-blown religious conflict and spread to other islands within both Maluku and North Maluku provinces.[3] The conflict itself was a result of an interplay of socio-political and economic factors, which then took on religious overtones.[4] The multi-faceted nature of the conflict, the involvement of multiple actors and interests, and the intractable military intervention from the central government painted a bleak picture for the signing of a peace treaty. By the time the Malino II Peace Treaty was signed four years later on 12 February 2002, thousands had died and tens of thousands were displaced.[5]

This paper will argue that one reason for the breakdown of relations between the Muslim and Christian communities of Ambon was a loss of traditional kinship patterns and the accompanying cosmology that supported them. A significant part of this is the *Nunusaku*-based relations between the Ambonese themselves. The loss of this, and the basis for it, will be explored here, alongside one attempt to restore the relations within Protestant Christian theology.[6] To this end, *Teologi Ina* ("theology of the mother"), promoted by the theology professor Weldemina Yudit Tiwery, will be explored, noting particularly the way it fits into peacebuilding efforts and how it can be read in relation to Tinu Rupparell's notion of an Interstitial Theology.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that though this paper has a strong feminist orientation, especially in relation to Tiwery's *Teologi Ina*, the author does not make the assumption that the line between 'peace' and 'violence' within the Moluccan conflict is decidedly written on a gendered ground (i.e., that Moluccan women are more peaceful than Moluccan men).[7] However, this paper will only focus on a feminist theological discourse offered by Tiwery in *Teologi Ina*, and therefore questions regarding how the Moluccan men responded to such a discourse is beyond the purview of this paper.

Central Maluku: A Binary that Comes with Harmony

Cooperation and contestation between Muslims and Christians have been key elements of Central Maluku's socio-political dynamics since the early 16th century until today. To understand this, we need to

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[2] Jon Goss, "Understanding the "Maluku Wars": Overview of Sources of Communal Conflict and Prospects for Peace," *Cakalele* 11 (2000):7-39, 8.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Gerry Van Klinken, "The Maluku Wars: Bringing Society Back In," *Indonesia* 71 (April 2001): 1-26, 2.

[5] International Crisis Group, "Indonesia's Maluku Crisis: The Issues," *International Crisis Group* (19 July 2000), available at: https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/indonesia-s-maluku-crisis-the-issues.pdf.

[6] This paper argues that religious peacebuilding can be differentiated from secular peacebuilding based on the understanding that religion plays a significant role in some conflicts and their resolutions. However, this does not mean that the author is dismissive of secular peacebuilding efforts. In fact, the author recognises the importance of combining religious and secular approaches in peacebuilding efforts since the nature of conflict is inherently multi-faceted. Yet, a discussion on secular peacebuilding approaches and its relations with religious approaches is beyond the focus of this paper. For a nuanced discussion on the dialectic between religious and secular peacebuilding approaches, see Slavica Jakelić, "Secular-Religious Encounters as Peacebuilding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, eds R. Scott Appleby, Atalia Omer and David Little, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015,124-45.

[7] Sumanto al-Qurtuby's work on women-led religious peacebuilding initiatives in Maluku documents the complexity of roles that the Maluku women have both in war and post-war settings. As al-Qurtuby argues: "The Maluku case shows that women are not simply passive victims of conflict… but also active agents of both violence and peace." See Sumanto al-Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace and Reconciliation in Contemporary Indonesia," *International Journal on World Peace* XXXI.1 (2014): 27-58, 33-34.

elaborate on what Adolf Heuken referred to as the Moluccan "dualism".[8] This dualism is inherent within the Moluccan socio-political imagination that it shaped and influenced their relationship with many colonial powers. Throughout the early 16th century until 1575, for example, Ternate Sultanate was in a close alliance with the Portuguese, while Tidore Sultanate and other rulers were allied with the Spanish in their competition with the Portuguese.[9] This divide between Ternatean and Tidorean factions then strategically played into the hands of colonial powers until the Dutch policies of monopolising the Spice Trade in the late 17th century shaped Ambon into a mostly Christian, colonial centre at the cost of development on other islands.

During the reign of the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC/ The Dutch East India Company), three factors emboldened the politico-religious segregation between Muslims and Christians in Central Maluku. The first factor is the centralisation of the spice trade in Central Maluku (Ambon-Lease) that came with the centralisation of the VOC's political and religious activities in the same region.[10] Such a policy resulted in the centralisation of Christian demography in Ambon-Lease vis-à-vis their Muslim communities, which was buttressed by a hierarchical religious authority where Christian orthodoxy became the exclusive domain of colonial reverends and missionaries. The second factor was the VOC's approach to Christian mission that was not necessarily directed to convert the Muslim population in Central Maluku.[11] In fact, unlike the Portuguese, during the early presence of Dutch colonials in Maluku, winning converts was not a priority in the VOC's handbook as they primarily only cared about monopolising the spice trade.[12] Even after the arrival of missionaries in the 18th century (whose operations were eventually managed and funded by the colonial administration), the most common approach was to leave the Muslims alone, with missionary activities mostly aimed at converting the pagan Moluccans.[13]

At a quick glance, this approach might seem conducive for positive Muslim-Christian relations in Central Maluku. However, since dualistic norms ruled over the socio-political and religious realities, the co-optation of Ambonese-Christians' religio-political lives within the colonial structure made their differences from their Muslim counterparts more distinct. A dualism between Muslim and Christian identities was crucial for the Ambonese colonised society, so much so that one of the reasons for Thomas Matulessy's (publicly known as Kapitan Pattimura, a national hero in Indonesia) Ambon Revolt of 1817 against the Dutch was because the Dutch missionaries wanted to expand their missionary work to some Ambonese Muslim communities.[14]

The last factor that strengthened the Muslim-Christian dualism during the colonial era in Central Maluku was the favouritism that the Dutch colonials practised towards the Ambonese Christians over the Ambonese Muslims. This favouritism featured strongest after the interregnum of British rule in the 19th century and attempt by Dutch forces to retake control over the East Indies. Within this short period, the Dutch recruited thousands of Ambonese Christians into KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger*/ The Royal Netherlands East Indies Army), which at the societal level translated into the widening of the socio-political and economic gap between Ambonese Christians and Ambonese Muslims.[15] So deep was the gap among the Ambonese that the Ambonese Christians regarded themselves as '*Belanda Hitam*' (Black Dutchmen), with a social rank that placed them right below the Dutch and above everyone else.[16] This favouritism would soon be played in reverse when

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[8] Adolf Heuken, SJ, "Catholic Converts in the Moluccas, Minahasa and Sangihe-Talaud, 1512-1680," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, eds Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 24.

[9] Ibid, 26.

[10] Karel Steenbrink, "The Arrival of Protestantism and the Consolidation of Christianity in the Moluccas 1605-1800," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, eds Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 108.

[11] Ibid. It is important to note that this statement does not suggest that a colonial conversion would have brought a more constructive dynamics for the Moluccan society. What the statement implies is that such focus by the colonial powers had inadvertently sharpened the dualism within the Moluccan society.

[12] Ibid, 99.

[13] Ibid, 107.

[14] Karel Steenbrink and Mesakh Tapilatu, "Moluccan Christianity in the 19th and 20th Century Between Agama Ambon and Islam," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, eds Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 385.

[15] Dieter Bartels, "From Black Dutchmen to White Moluccans: Ethnic Metamorphosis of an East-Indonesian Minority in the Netherlands," paper presented at the First Conference on Maluku Research, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, 1990, 2.

[16] Dieter Bartels, "The Black Dutchmen: A Preliminary Study of the Colonial Roots of South Moluccan Terrorism," paper presented at the Conference of the Rural Community and Political Change in Asia and Africa, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977, 5.

Japanese colonial powers chose to play favourites with the Ambonese Muslims and left the Ambonese Christians behind.[17]

Nevertheless, we would be amiss if we only mention dualism without necessarily dealing with the other side of the coin, namely the network of cross-religious cooperation in Central Maluku. Far from being a mere mechanism of survival, networks of cooperation among the Central Moluccans are rooted in a local cosmology that places all of them as the descendants of ancestors who once lived on Mount Nunusaku, a sacred mountain on Seram Island.[18] These brother-and-sister relationships are taken almost literally by the Central Moluccans, complete with the familial implications that come with it.

One of the most crucial expressions of *Nunusaku*-centered cosmology is the tradition of *Pela-Gandong* (lit. brotherhood/sisterhood from the same womb) which experienced a surge of revival after the 1999-2002 conflict in Ambon.[19] *Pela-Gandong* is a village-based kinship network that does not use consanguinity as its foundation. Within this perspective, any Ambonese can be a brother or sister to another due to the existence of *Pela-Gandong* ties between their villages. Once a *Pela-Gandong* relationship is established, an exogamous norm for marriage is in place for all villagers within the network.[20] Because they are all related like family, intermarriages within the *Pela-Gandong* network are considered incestuous and thus strictly prohibited.[21]

Seen from an interreligious lens, the praxis of *Pela-Gandong* also takes place across religious boundaries. An alliance consisting of two or three Christian villages with one Muslim village is common within *Pela-Gandong* networks.[22] Moreover, one of the major principles in *Pela-Gandong* alliance is for everyone in the network to help with the building or renovation of central buildings in the villages, including places of worship.[23] It is also common for the *Panas Pela* ceremony (lit. re-heating the *Pela*) to have an interreligious component in which Muslims pray in their *Pela-Gandong* brothers' churches, and vice versa.[24]

We would be gravely mistaken if we think that such interreligious solidarity comes from a modern conception of religious pluralism. Such interreligious relations are possible due to the Central Moluccans' priority in defining who they are, and hence, the way they see the other. As argued by Dieter Bartels, within the framework of *Nunusaku* cosmology (Bartels even referred to this perspective as the religion of *Nunusaku/Agama Nunusaku*), identities that are based on organised religions (Christianity and Islam, among others) are subsumed into the *Nunusaku* cosmology.[25] This means that in addition to the normative dualism that governs the Muslim-Christian relations in Central Maluku, there is a unifying principle at work that overrides dualism and makes such interreligious and familial relations possible. In other words, the Ambonese Christians see their Muslim counterparts first as familial brothers and sisters based on *Nunusaku* cosmology before recognising their distinct identity as Muslims. This balancing tension between dualism, and interreligious and

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[17] Steenbrink and Tapilatu, "Moluccan Christianity in the 19th and 20th Century," 407.

[18] Dieter Bartels, "The Evolution of God in the Spice Islands: The Converging and Diverging of Protestant Christianity and Islam in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods," paper presented at the Symposium "Christianity in Indonesia" at the Frobenius Institute of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University at Frankfurt/Main, 2003, 14-15.

[19] Jacky Manuputty, "The Turning Point on the Road of Basudara Relationships," in *Basudara Stories of Peace in Maluku: Working Together for Reconciliation*, eds Jacky Manuputty et. al, Monash: Monash University Publishing, 2016, 116.

[20] Dieter Bartels, "Alliances Without Marriage: Exogamy, Economic Exchange, and Symbolic Unity Among Ambonese Christian and Moslems," paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), 1977, 6-7.

[21] Ibid, 3.

[22] An example of this would be *Pela* between the villages of Tamilou (Muslim), Siri-Sori (divided into Siri-Sori Muslim and Siri-Sori Christian), and Hutumuri (Christian). See Sylvia Huwaë, "Divided Opinions About Adatpela: A Study of Pela Tamilou-Siri Sori-Hutumuri," *Cakalele* 6 (1995): 77-92.

[23] Dieter Bartels, "Your God is No Longer Mine: Moslem-Christian Fratricide in the Central Moluccas (Indonesia) After a Half-Millenium of Tolerant Co-Existence and Ethnic Unity," in *A State of Emergency: Violence, Society and the State in Eastern Indonesia*, ed Sandra Pannell, Darwin: Northern Territory University Press, 2003, 7, available at: http://www.nunusaku.com.

[24] The fact that *Pela-Gandong* serves as a strong interreligious bridge in Maluku does not mean that it does not have any potential to cause conflict. Sylvia Huwaë in her study on *Pela* alliance between the villages of Tamilou, Siri-Sori, and Hutumuri writes: "The *adatpela* provides advantages such as financial or material support; but it also restricts the emotional life of the pela members. *Pela* members are forced to supress their feelings of anger or love toward [other] *pela* members. In addition, the *adatpela* prescribes that they must not refuse any requests from another *pela* member. Such situations can lead to conflicts and force pela members to choose between observing the *adatpela* and following their own inclinations." See Huwaë, Divided Opinions, 82.

[25] Bartels, "Alliances Without Marriage," 4-5.

familial relations was and still is the defining characteristic of socio-religious life of the Central Moluccans. So much so that Bartels argued that the conflict in 1999-2002 erupted due to the erosion of the *Nunusaku*-based relations which made Ambonese Christians and Muslims rely only on their religious dualism without the balancing ties of shared cosmology.[26]

However, the dynamics between religious dualism and the *Nunusaku* cosmology is not simply black and white. Even during the 1999-2002 conflict, there were spaces in which *Pela-Gandong* ties were nurtured despite the almost total breakdown of its social infrastructure.[27] Hence, what happened with *Pela-Gandong* and religious dualism in Central Maluku during the conflict was the receding, instead of erosion, of *Pela-Gandong* into the background, and the foregrounding of religious dualism buttressed with conflictual dynamics that resulted from socio-economic and political inequalities. Nevertheless, *Pela-Gandong* and *Nunusaku* cosmology was never absolutely eradicated from the lives of the Ambonese, and therefore could still function as a foundation for post-war reconciliation efforts in Central Maluku.

1999-2002 Conflict: A Long Way Back to Teologi Ina

The invocation of religious sentiments during the 1999-2002 conflict can be categorised into three narratives. First, religion was used as a factor to explain the friction that came with a demographic shift. Second, religion was used as the sole mechanism to differentiate the 'Self' from the 'Other'. And third, imperial theologies were used to revive the ahistorical contexts of religious battles in which dehumanisation of the others can be justified.

The first narrative reflects upon the local Central Moluccan dynamics that allowed for the conflict to erupt in the first place. Even before the conflict started, there had already been widespread anxiety about the influx of majority Muslim migrants to Ambon who, equipped with a business-savvy attitude, threatened the balance between religious dualism and *Nunusaku*-based relations amongst the Ambonese.[28] In this context, the societal fault lines were still located at the distinction between locals and migrants in which both Ambonese Muslims and Christians felt a similar socio-economic pressure from the arrival of non-Ambonese migrants. However, at one point, this fault line shifted from local Ambonese vis-à-vis non-Ambonese migrants, to Muslims against Christians and vice versa.[29]

The second narrative followed from the first. Since the fault line came to be located between Muslim and Christian communities, the cosmological unity that resulted from a shared belief in Mount Nunusaku as the ancestral place of all of Central Moluccans receded to the background. Within this conflictual interreligious narrative, both Ambonese Muslims and Christians defined themselves and others based on their religious identity. *Pela-Gandong* relations became dysfunctional because the starting point of defining the 'Self' was located at the membership of organised religions (Islam or Christianity), rather than the familial ties within *Pela-Gandong* relations as a way of life.[30] From this point onward, justifications to kill were provided through the third narrative that employed ahistorical contexts of a theological cosmic war to turn the proximate into an absolute 'Other'.

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[26] Bartels, "Your God is No Longer Mine," 9-10.

[27] Jacky Manuputty, "Gandong'ee, Let's Sing!" in *Basudara Stories of Peace in Maluku: Working Together for Reconciliation*, eds Jacky Manuputty et. al, Monash: Monash University Publishing, 2016, 293.

[28] Christopher R. Duncan, *Violence and Vengeance: Religious Conflict and Its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013, 33.

[29] Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, "Christianity and Militancy in Eastern Indonesia: Revisiting the Maluku Violence," *Southeast Asian Studies* 4.2 (2015): 313-39, 315.

[30] Al-Qurtuby writes, "The collective conflict, furthermore, undermined and destroyed local cultural traditions of interreligious cooperation, such as the *pela-gandong* ("inter-ethnic/village alliance system") and the *salam-sarane* ("Muslim-Christian unity"), which had once provided the cultural resources for some measure of peaceful coexistence between Ambonese/Moluccan Muslims and Christians. Since the outburst of fighting, relations among these local religious groups have been marked by suspicion, mistrust, and misunderstanding. Each religious group prefers to live with their co-religionists." See Sumanto al-Qurtuby, "Ambonese Muslim-Jihadists, Islamic Identity, and the History of Christian-Muslim Rivalry in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 12. (2015): 1-29, 2.

In the third narrative, the religious alterity that was established through the second narrative was strengthened by way of presenting them within an apocalyptic context of 'good' versus 'bad', and 'victim' versus 'oppressor'. Within this context, alterity is perceived not through a continuum where some forms of it could be accepted on the basis of *Nunusaku* cosmology, but rather on the basis of a binary where membership in organised religions became the one and only distinction that mattered. Sumanto al-Qurtuby's research on theological narratives that were used by Ambonese Christian militias during the conflict showed us that in order for them to justify acts of violence against Ambonese Muslims (some of whom were in their *Pela-Gandong* families), the invocation of ahistorical Old Testament (OT) heroic stories was needed. The Amalekite theology – that refers to the narratives of Israelites' conquest against the Amalekites amongst others – was deployed to give a justification to kill the others.[31] In this case, the OT verses were used to reproduce the ahistorical time and place in which versions of Christian and Muslim holy wars were fought. In the Christian context, such reproductions included a construction of the Ambonese Christian identity as a lost tribe of Israel, and thus the island of Ambon as an extension of the Canaanite land.[32]

As with many other peacebuilding processes, the heaviest lift was not the signing of the peace treaty – although bringing at least five different armed militias to the negotiation table was not an easy job either – but rather the process in which previously warring parties must live side by side again in a post-war setting. Within the context of the post-war peacebuilding process in Ambon, the roles of both Muslim and Christian religious leaders were crucial in attending to the social wound and envisioning a future Ambon where religious plurality is an imperative. In fact, since most Ambonese are either devoted Christians or Muslims, and since the conflict was partly an interreligious one, an interreligious peacebuilding process is precisely what was needed.

In conjunction with the interreligious peacebuilding process, the Ambonese peacebuilders were also tapping into the traditional belief system that is rooted in a specific Moluccan cosmology to creatively envision a better future for a peaceful Maluku. Taking into consideration the delicate balance between religious dualism and *Nunusaku* cosmology that was elaborated above, the Muslims' and Christians' interreligious peacebuilding narratives in Ambon cannot be separated from its crucible that consists of the roles of the ancestors, non-consanguinity familial relations, and Mount Nunusaku as the primordial place and time on which everything started.

The beliefs in *Upu* (the Absolute Reality in Its variety of Forms), *Nusaina* (the female universe from which the Moluccan ancestors came from), and *Tete-Nene Moyang* (the ancestors) are inseparable from the lives of the Moluccans and strongly define their perceptions of the world, and their places in it. The Moluccan cosmology is centred around the presence of the All-Knowing, All-Powerful *Upu* in its two forms, *Upu Lanite* (the Male God of Sky) and *Upu Ume/Ina Ume* (the Female Goddess of Earth).[33] The combination of those two forces then created the Moluccan's ancestors who resided on Mount Nunusaku. After a while, a fight ensued between them that left the ancestors split up and residing in the islands of Ambon, Lease, West Seram, and Central Seram, who then developed and expanded into the Central Moluccan society of today.[34]

The pre-Christian, pre-Islamic religious tradition of the region was aptly called the *Nunusaku* religion and there are three main components to it: first, the belief system was built around a devotion to Mount Nunusaku as the origin of humanity, and the ultimate place where all humans will eventually return.[35] The centrality of Mount Nunusaku in the Central Moluccans' belief is proven within certain praxis of Christianity and Islam in which Mount Nunusaku fulfils the conception of 'heaven', 'hereafter', and a sacred place for pilgrimage.[36] Thus, Mount Nunusaku is at the centre of the cycle of life and is therefore sacred. The second component of the *Nunusaku* religion lies in the fact that all people of Maluku came from the same divine forces,

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[31] Al-Qurtuby, "Christianity and Militancy in Eastern Indonesia," 332.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Tounusa, "Kedudukan Tete-Nene Moyang Dalam Pengakuan Iman GPM: Beberapa Tanggapan Kontekstual," available at: https://tounusa.wordpress.com/2011/08/26/kedudukan-tete-nene-moyang-dalam-pengakuan-iman-gpm-beberapa-tanggapan-kontekstual/.

[34] Dieter Bartels, "Religious Syncretism, Semantic Depletion and Secondary Interpretation in Ambonese Islam and Christianity in the Moluccas," paper presented at the 75th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), 1976, 4.

[35] Bartels, "Your God is No Longer Mine," 8.

[36] Ibid.

namely *Upu Lanite* and *Upu Ume*. As elaborated earlier, this non-consanguinity based familial relation includes practices of exogamous marriage that distinguishes it from a mere altruistic-based brotherhood. In fact, the socio-economic norms that follow a *Pela-Gandong* relationship also prescribe a communal property ownership in which every *Pela-Gandong* member can take their *Pela's* agricultural products when they need it.[37] Lastly, the third component of the *Nunusaku* religion requires a devotion to the ancestors (*Tete-Nene Moyang*) who serve as intermediaries between human and the *Upus*.[38] Though the practice of ancestral worship has been mostly eliminated by the presence of Christianity and Islam, we can still identify traces of it within the praxis of Christianity and Islam at large.[39] Furthermore, the relationship between pre-Islamic, pre-Christian ancestral worship with both the monotheistic traditions is not always straightforward. As argued by Bartels, the negotiation between Christianity, Islam, and the ancestral belief system resulted in patterns of indigenisation (of Christianity and Islam) and secularisation (of ancestral worship) in Central Maluku.[40] One area in which this negotiation can clearly be seen is the unceasing importance of *Adat* leaders (*Rajas*) as counterparts for the Christian and Muslim leaders, and the importance of *Baileo*[41] as a central building in which public decisions are made in addition to the churches and mosques.[42]

There is a fresh emphasis on the teachings of *Nunusaku* religion in post-war Ambon, especially its second element that is expressed through the *Pela-Gandong* inter-village relations. This is not surprising since *Pela-Gandong* has proven to be a sustainable resource for reconciliation, even in the midst of the conflict. It seems that regardless of the intensity of the oppositional forces between Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon, the organic roots of *Pela-Gandong* networks cannot be undone. Therefore, in light of interreligious conflict, the *Pela-Gandong* system serves as a cause for reconciliation at a time when Islam and Christianity have largely failed to do so.

There is a question on whether it is appropriate to see the lines of religious belonging among Central Moluccans as atomistic as a modern conception of 'religion' would have it. As I understand it, the question needs to be seen in light of differentiated contexts in Central Maluku. In the context of 'popular religion', I agree with Bartels, who argued that a major pattern of interaction between Christianity (and Islam) with the traditional ancestral worship is one of co-optation, in which Christianity (and Islam) is placed within the larger *Nunusaku* cosmological order.[43] In this case, the conversions of Central Moluccans into Christianity (and Islam) is not equal with the total adoption of the religions' cosmological perspective, and even rituals.[44] Hence, when it comes to defining their identities, the Central Moluccans always see each other in *Pela-Gandong* familial relationship first, and as Christian (or Muslim) second.[45]

However, within the context of elite religious leaders, there is a different mode of interaction between Christianity and *Agama Nunusaku*. The relationship is not so much the placement of Christianity under the cosmological supremacy of Mount Nunusaku, but rather dialogical dynamics between Christian theology, *Nunusaku*-based cosmology, and conceptions of dialogue. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyse such interactions between permeable religious boundaries through the traffic of metaphors, as elaborated in the notion of interstitial theology.

Ruparell's notion of interstitial theology[46] is defined as, "a mode or methodology for the comparative philosophy of religion which exploits the structure of metaphor (…) and aims at the construction of liminal, hybrid

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[37] Bartels, "Alliances Without Marriage," 4.

[38] Tounusa, "Kedudukan Tete-Nene Moyang."

[39] For more on this, see Birgit Bräuchler, "Integration and Exclusion: Islam Adat in Central Moluccas," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 38.110 (2010): 65-93; Bartels, "The Evolution of God in the Spice Islands."

[40] Bartels, "Religious Syncretism, Semantic Depletion," 7.

[41] *Baileo was* the main building in every Moluccan village which originated as a sacred place where pre-Islamic and pre-Christian religious sacrifices and rituals took place. Later, after the spread of Islam and Christianity, it was secularised to serve as a government building.

[42] Bartels, "Religious Syncretism, Semantic Depletion," 7.

[43] Bartels, "Alliances Without Marriage," 4.

[44] Steenbrink, "The Arrival of Protestantism," 108.

[45] Bartels, "Alliances Without Marriage," 5.

[46] A further explication of this is found in Lailatul Fitriyah, "Interstitial Theology and Interreligious Reconciliation in the Work of Elifas Maspaitella and Jacklevyn Manupatty in Post-Conflict Maluku," *Interreligious Relations* 11 (December 2019).

perspectives or standpoints for continuing the conversation of religions in a creative and open-ended way."[47] As a mode of interreligious encounter, interstitial theology stands upon two conceptual foundations, namely, a mitigated version of the incommensurability thesis, and the interactionist view of metaphors as proposed by Paul Ricoeur.[48] The first foundation serves as a critique and a starting point for the notion of interstitial theology. It is widely known that the incommensurability thesis holds that interreligious dialogue is an impossible feat due to the belief that each religious believer's experience is absolutely unique and that there is no way for religious believers to completely and genuinely understand each other's experiences. The mitigated version of this thesis provides nuance to the explanation by arguing that there are experiences, expressions, and sensibilities that can be shared by means of genuine conversation in interreligious encounters. Ruparell argues that a level of incommensurability might only exist in the theological differences among religious believers, but not within their lives as believers.[49] Hence it is the mode of interstitial theology that takes place within daily conversations and ongoing interactions between different religious believers.

The second pillar in Ruparell's interstitial theology is the Ricoeurian interactionist view of metaphor. In this framework, metaphor is understood as "figures of speech which bring into constructive tension minimally two semantic units or subjects in a metaphorical utterance."[50] Therefore, within a dialogical context, metaphor is used as a vehicle to sustain constructive-conflictual relations between literal and metaphorical interpretations that also represent the two semantic subjects in Ruparell's definition of 'metaphor' above.[51] In other words, the metaphorical pillar of interstitial theology represents the creation of a liminal space of interreligious encounters in which the creativity and vitality of dialogue depend on the conflictual dynamics between the relative stability of the literal interpretation and the flux of the metaphorical one.

Weldemina Yudit Tiwery and Teologi Ina

Another major element in the post-war theological expressions in Ambon can be found within the concept of *Teologi Ina* (lit. theology of the mother).[52] The concept was proposed and constructed by Weldemina Yudit Tiwery, a priest who is also a theology professor at the State Christian University of Ambon, but it has been widely interpreted and implemented by various Christian peace activists of Ambon.

Tiwery proposed the concept of *Teologi Ina* in order to serve two purposes. First, it functions as a critique of the Western-centred Christian teachings that had been brought to Indonesia by means of colonisation, and a critique of the patriarchal interpretation of Christianity that has marginalised the position of women within its teachings. Secondly, it exists as a framework to accommodate the imperative of embracing the local *Nunusaku* wisdom that was and still is crucially influencing the religio-cultural imagination of the Amboneses.[53]

Cosmologically speaking, *Teologi Ina* comes from yet another version of creation narrative within Central Moluccan society. In this version of the creation narrative, women have a special place because it is believed that the 'first human' (*Alifuru*) created by God was a woman named *Hulamasa* (lit. *Hula* = sacred, *masa* = time) who lives in a metaphysical kingdom called *Lomine*.[54] This first Woman, also known as *Alifuru Ina* (lit. the primordial mother), does not seem to be a physical person, but rather an archetype of humanity who became

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[47] Tinu Ruparell, "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Interstitial Theology," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed Catherine Cornelle, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013, 121.

[48] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John S. J. Costello, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

[49] Ruparell, "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Interstitial Theology," 122.

[50] Ibid, 124.

[51] Ibid, 125.

[52] Weldemina Yudit Tiwery, "Manusia Pertama Itu Namanya Ina: Membaca Narasi Mitos Penciptaan dari Perspektif Perempuan Maluku," *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 5.2 (December 2017): 211-26, 212.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Weldemina Yudit Tiwery, "Nusa Ina: Bermula Dari Perempuan," in *Ketika Perempuan Berteologi: Berteologi Feminis Kontekstual*, ed Asnath Niwa Natar, Yogyakarta:Taman Pustaka Kristen, 2012, 166.

the ultimate ancestor of Moluccans (or even of all humans across the world), and the ultimate expression of Divine Creativity.[55]

> *… Hulamasa itu adalah manusia suci, dan tidak pernah mati. Ia selalu jujur di hadapan Yang Maha Kuasa sehingga pada waktunya ia diangkat hidup-hidup oleh Yang Maha Kuasa. Setelah Hulamasa diangkat hidup-hidup oleh Maha Kuasa Pencipta Alam Semesta dan Manusia sehingga yang ditinggalkan pada anak cucu (...) sebagai warisan yaitu berupa 'matitinia' yang artinya 'kelimpahan'.*

> … *Hulamasa* is a holy woman, and she never dies. She is always honest in front of The Almighty, and thus she was raised to heaven by Him. After *Hulamasa* was raised to heaven by the Creator of the Cosmos and Men, she blessed her descendants with a legacy of abundance (*matitinia*).[56]

The quote elaborates two things about *Hulamasa*. First, that because of her holiness, *Hulamasa* does not die but rather is kept alive by God who saved her by lifting her up to Heaven, and second, due to *Hulamasa's* embodied goodness, God grants her divine benevolence that she lets flow to her Moluccan descendants. Therefore, *Alifuru Ina* does not only represent God's creative power in creating the first human being on earth, but also *Alifuru Ina*'s active role in sustaining life on earth:

> *Ia yang mengandung, melahirkan, memberi makan, dan membesarkan semua anak-anak Maluku dengan air susunya yang mengalir dari gunung menyuburkan tanah dan semua hasilnya, sekaligus menyediakan makanan dan minuman bagi anak cucunya.*

> She bears, gives birth to, feeds, and raises all of the children of Maluku with her breastmilk that flows from the mountain, fertilises the soil and all that it produces, and provides food and drinks for her descendants.[57]

In addition, for Tiwery, the Womb of *Hulamasa* as *Alifuru Ina* is not only a metaphysical context for the birth of Moluccans, but also a pivotal space that unifies the past, present, and future within the Moluccans' social imagination:

> *…kandungan itu memiliki makna yang luas, sebagai tempat pertemuan dari apa yang sudah berlalu, apa yang ada sekarang, dan apa yang berada di masa depan. …Alifuru Ina menjadi pengikat orang Maluku pada masa lampau, masa kini dan masa yang akan datang. Ia adalah lambang dari kandungan yang melahirkan, sedang mengandung dan akan mengandung. Ia menjadi tempat mengingat realitas dan harapan.*

> … the womb has a broad meaning, as a meeting place for what has happened, what is present, and what will be in the future. … *Alifuru Ina* is a tie for the Moluccans to their past, present, and future. She is a symbol of the womb that gives birth, is pregnant, and will be pregnant. She is the place for recognising reality and remembering hope.[58]

In this case, *Teologi Ina* functions as another cosmological foundation for the *Pela-Gandong* spirit in Central Moluccan society. Just as the *Pela-Gandong* spirit constructs a cohesive non-consanguinity familial relation among the Central Moluccans, *Teologi Ina* gives a feminist theological basis to sustain such relations. The Central Moluccans are indeed one big family because they were 'born from the same womb', the womb of *Alifuru Ina*. Here, it is important to recall a statement from Reverend Etha Hendriks, who wrote the manifesto for Gerakan Perempuan Peduli (Concerned Women Movement, or GPP for short), one of the largest women-

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[55] Ibid, 168.
[56] Ibid, 169.
[57] Ibid, 175.
[58] Tiwery, "Manusia Pertama itu Namanya Ina," 221.

led interreligious peace initiatives in post-war Maluku. She stated, "In the Moluccan culture, Christians and Muslims are like brothers and sisters, or in [the] Ambonese term, *sagu salempeng dipata dua* (lit. a block of sago shared between two people) meaning that we share each other [as a family]"[59]. Such statement significantly reflects the *Nunusaku* paradigm that is rooted in the conceptualisation of *Alifuru Ina* as the primal Mother of the Maluku people. Though herself a Christian, Reverend Hendriks calls on the primal *Nunusaku* ties in order to build an interreligious bridge between Christians and Muslims in Maluku.

In her theological analysis on *Alifuru Ina*, Tiwery also employed *Teologi Ina* as a critique against the phallocentric creation narrative in Christianity. By highlighting the *Hulamasa*-based cosmology, Tiwery shows that such a phallocentric creation narrative is not indigenous to the Moluccans, but was instead imposed on the community through the arrival of (European) Christianity in the region.[60] Furthermore, parts of the cosmological narrative also made the compassionate, life-giving characters of *Hulamasa*, which Tiwery made parallel with the Feminine face of God.[61] Thus, the belief in *Hulamasa* in the Central Moluccans' creation narrative made three things possible that contribute to the Central Moluccans' peaceful reconciliation. First, it allows for the Central Moluccans to have a metaphysical maternal basis for their *Pela-Gandong* spirit; second, it functions as a postcolonial critique against the phallocentric, Eurocentric Christian teachings; and third, it offers an important theological critique against the commonly held notion of 'God as The Father'.

We can also place Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* within the second pillar of interstitial theology. Tiwery's feminist perspective on Christian theology allows for the formation of loose boundaries between Christianity and *Alifuru Ina* cosmology. Aware of the dangers of an androcentric creation narrative for women and fragile peacebuilding in Central Maluku, she replaces it with a metaphysical insight from the Central Moluccan context. The traffic of metaphors can be observed especially between narratives of God's creative activity and the *Alifuru Ina*'s birth to all Moluccans, and the Eurocentric, misogynistic Christian creation narrative that are replaced by the *Hulamasa's* gynocentric creation narrative. In addition, a similar traffic of metaphors can also be gleaned from the narrative about *Hulamasa's* immortality that may be read side by side with Jesus Christ's Resurrection as conquering Death.

Within the contemporary context of white, misogynistic, Christian theologies, Tiwery's perspective on *Teologi Ina* is a crucial antidote that has the potential to not only bring a lasting peace to Maluku, but also to construct a Moluccan-Christian gynocentric theology that is significant for criticising the mainstream, androcentric Christology. With all things considered, Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* is an essential contribution to the larger field of Christian feminist theologies of colour that offers a different view of the creation narrative.

Tiwery and Peacebuilding Work in Maluku

One important aspect that is often forgotten in many contexts of conflict reconciliation is the place for the marginalised groups of the conflict-torn society at the reconciliation table. In Maluku, though it is widely known that mothers and women were at the front line of conflict, worked as first responders, and opened up one of the first reconciliatory communications between Muslims and Christians in the region[62], their place at the reconciliation table is still non-existent. This absence can be explained by a patriarchal presumption that places importance on formal religious, social, and political authorities in the reconciliation process. Since those formal authorities are the traditional domains of men, then it is inevitable that the formal reconciliation process was dominated by men.

It is in this context that Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* is crucial for the peacebuilding work in Maluku. By highlighting the sacredness of women's position within the indigenous cosmology, Tiwery does not only offer a feminist critique against patriarchal, Eurocentric Christian theology, but also provides an ancestral legitimacy for the involvement of women in the Moluccan post-war reconciliation effort at large. According to *Teologi Ina*

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[59] Al-Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace and Reconciliation," 40.
[60] Tiwery, "Manusia Pertama itu Namanya Ina," 222.
[61] Ibid, 224.
[62] See al-Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace and Reconciliation."

women are not only crucial, but also inseparable from the reconciliation process in Maluku because Maluku, metaphysically, came out of them.

Personally, Tiwery is known for her scholarly work on the intersection between Maluku's indigenous legacy and Christianity. In addition to her teaching work at the State Christian University of Ambon, she also leads her congregation in Ambon and is often invited to give lectures on women, peacebuilding, and Christian theology in many cities throughout Indonesia. As is commonly found with the women peacebuilders in Maluku, Tiwery's peacebuilding work is often focused on women's movements that are intertwined with the rhythm of daily life. Unfortunately, this is also the reason why such peacebuilding work does not get the acknowledgment that it deserves.

Tiwery's work shows us two things. First, that the Moluccan women belong not only at the negotiation table, but also within the very metaphysical fabric of the society. Secondly, that the myopic focus on formal conflict reconciliation processes that only involve men as the holders of official religious, social, and political authority will not do us any good. In fact, that focus would only serve to sustain the false binary between 'formal' and 'informal' peacebuilding processes in which the 'informal' one that commonly becomes the domain of women was seen as less crucial than the 'formal' one. As Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* teaches us, a communal conception of peace is not a product of formal negotiation that results in a peace treaty, but rather is a growing awareness that is rooted in an indigenous cosmology and evolves with the communal lived experience. That being said, Tiwery's conception of a Moluccan feminist cosmology also brings forth a decolonial critique against any peacebuilding process that is imposed by external actors on a conflict-torn society, especially in cases where such a peacebuilding process comes as a part and parcel of an imperialist agenda. *Teologi Ina* teaches us that genuine peace has always been born out of the communal womb.

Conclusion

The creative re-construction and re-interpretation of doctrinal teachings cannot be separated from the socio-political, cultural, and economic lives of the society. The actual dynamics of the society are especially important in places like Ambon, where the cohesiveness of societal life has been shattered by a long violent conflict that involved relatives and neighbours killing each other. Within this context, theological frameworks that can accommodate the multiplicity of faithful expressions and local values are imperative.

Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* is one such theological-cosmological framework that can be explored as an indigenous foundation for peaceful interreligious relations, and an indigenous source for the communal peacebuilding process. Meanwhile, at the epistemological level, *Teologi Ina* also functions as a feminist critique against patriarchal elements within Christianity, as well as a decolonial critique against a Eurocentric interpretation of Christianity. For these reasons, *Teologi Ina* is not only an inseparable part of the communal peacebuilding process in Maluku, but also a crucial contribution to the field of Christian theologies in general.

Furthermore, when we see it through the lens of interstitial theology, *Teologi Ina* represents a constructive combination of theoretical-theological metaphor with the metaphors of life, that is the lived experience of the Moluccans. In this context, theological teachings inform the people about their origins and presence as a community, while the interreligious interactions of the people in their daily lives allow for a sustainable re-interpretation of the theological teachings. It is only through a constructive interaction between theological teachings and everyday experiences that religion can be a healing factor in the peacebuilding process.

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