INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Interstitial Theology and Interreligious Reconciliation in Post-War Maluku:
The Work of Elifas Maspaitella and Jacklevyn Manuputty

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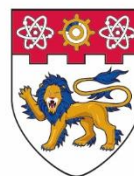
Abstract

This paper is an original, ethnographic account of the interreligious peacebuilding efforts by two Christian reverends, Reverend Elifas Maspaitella and Reverend Jacklevyn Manuputty, in post-war Maluku, Indonesia. Based on extensive fieldwork conducted by the author in 2014, and grounded in the theoretical framework of interstitial theology proposed by Tinu Ruparell, this paper highlights the narratives that these reverends employ to promote peace between Christian and Muslim communities in Maluku. Specifically, both personalities use contextualised forms of ecclesiology and cosmology within the context of Muslim-Christian reconciliation in Central Maluku. In doing so, they redefine "theology" as networks of thought and praxis that are intertwined with, and inseparable from, each other.

Introduction[1]

Inspired by my 2014 fieldwork in Ambon island, Maluku, Indonesia, this paper focuses on the narratives of peace constructed and employed by two Christian peacebuilders of the Protestant Church of Maluku (*Gereja Protestan Maluku*, henceforth GPM) in their ongoing efforts to heal the social wounds between the Ambonese Christian and Muslim communities in the post-1999 inter-communal conflict.[2]

The paper will specifically deal with the question of theological perspectives that some GPM religious peace activists employed and drew their inspiration from, in their interreligious peacebuilding work. The questions of, "how do Christian peacebuilders integrate local cosmologies and tradition into their Christian-based peacebuilding work?"[3] and "what kind of narratives (Christian and local) are foundational for their peacebuilding work?" comprise the core of this paper.

Methodologically speaking, the paper is based upon written primary sources by, and conversations with, two GPM priests who are actively involved in an ongoing interreligious reconciliation project in post-conflict Central Maluku. I will analyse their personal/theological accounts to identify contextualised forms of ecclesiology and cosmology within the context of Muslim-Christian reconciliation in Central Maluku. Throughout the discussion, the lens of interstitial theology is employed to understand the dialogical process within the theologising work of these two GPM priests.

Some Methodological and Theoretical Notes

This paper contributes at two discursive levels within the topics of interreligious dialogue and religious peacebuilding in post-war Maluku. At a more general level, the paper's analysis on the Ambonese Christian religious leaders and their post-war interreligious theologies can be seen as ethnographic examples of conceptual discussions on religious hybridity, religious in-betweenness, and multiple religious belonging (MRB).[4] At another, more specific level, the paper fills a lacuna of analysis on post-war Christian peacebuilding narratives in Maluku since studies that came before were either mostly focused on causes and implications of the conflict, or on conflict resolution processes[5]. In this context, the paper provides a discussion not only on the

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[2] On 19 January 1999, a fight broke out between a Muslim man and a Christian man at a bus terminal in the city of Ambon in Maluku, Indonesia. In just a few months, the confrontation escalated to a full-blown religiously-motivated conflict, and spread to other islands within both Maluku and North Maluku provinces.

[3] For detailed analysis on the elements of the Moluccans' local cosmologies and tradition, see: Lailatul Fitriyah, "Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku: Tiwery's Theology of the Mother (Teologi Ina) and Nunusaku-based Cosmology," *Interreligious Relations* 10 (2019): 1-12.

[4] Some literature on the topic, among others, feature a feminist take on religious hybridity within the context of globalization, see: Kwok Pui-lan, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012; an analysis of the rituals of interreligious encounters (interrituality) with an eye towards an expansive understanding of 'religion' in interreligious contexts, see: Marianne Moyaert, "Ritualizing Interreligious Encounters: Mapping the Field of Interrituality," *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* 1.2 (2017): 164-86; and, a discussion on multiple religious belonging (MRB) through the lens of theologies of multiplicity as a critique of logics of absolute unity, see: Rachel A. Heath, "Multiple Religious Belonging and Theologies of Multiplicity: Confluences of Oneness and Porosity," *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 21 (2017): 23-36.

[5] Existing literature on causes and implications of the Maluku conflict includes: Jacques Bertrand, "Legacies of the Authoritarian Past: Religious Violence in Indonesia's Moluccan Islands," *Pacific Affairs* 75.1 (2002): 57-85; Kathleen Turner, "Myths and Moral Authority in Maluku: The Case of Ambon," *Asian Ethnicity* 4.2 (2003): 241-263; Gerry van Klinken, "The Maluku Wars: Bringing Society Back In," *Indonesia* 71 (2001): 1-26; Jeroen Adam, "How Ordinary Folk Became Involved in the Ambonese Conflict: Understanding Private Opportunities During Communal Violence," *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-Land- En Volkenkunde* 166.1 (2010): 25-48; Noorhaidi Hasan, "Between Transnational Interest and Domestic Politics: Understanding Middle Eastern *Fatwās* on *Jihad* in the Moluccas," *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (2005): 73-92. Existing literature on the conflict resolution processes in Maluku includes: Birgit Bräuchler, "Cultural Solutions to Religious

construction of Christian peacebuilding narratives in post-war Maluku, but also on the ongoing negotiation of multiple religious belonging that serves as a path of reconciliation in post-war Maluku.

In an ethnographic study conducted in 2014, I analysed the process of narrative-building among the Muslim peacebuilders of Ambon.[6] However, though my study was focused on the Muslim community, I lived with the family of a Protestant reverend who is also a well-known peace activist.[7] I was so warmly welcomed into the family that the reverend asked me to be one of his daughters, and to use his family name whenever I needed during my stay on the island. Through meetings and conversations with the reverend and other Christian peace-activists in Ambon, I discovered that the challenges they faced were significantly different from their Muslim counterparts, and thus deserved further analysis.

The primary material for this paper consists of written thoughts by, and conversations with, two Ambonese Protestant priests, Reverend Elifas (Elifax Tomix) Maspaitella and Reverend Jacklevyn Manuputty. Both of them are religious leaders and public scholars, and their theological thoughts can be accessed through their articles, Facebook posts, blog posts, and on other online media platforms. In addition, having developed close relationships with Rev. Elifas (whom I referred to as Papa) and Rev. Jacklevyn (whom I referred to as Om or Uncle), dating back to my fieldwork in Ambon in 2014, I also gathered their theological insights through online conversations that I have had with them over the last five years.

That being said, my method in analysing these primary sources is a combination of ethnographic and literary-based analysis rooted in my work in Ambon in 2014, and the more current reflections and scholarship written by Rev. Elifas and Rev. Jacklevyn. It is important to mention that consent has been secured from the priest-activists to publish their real names in this paper.

Such methodological combination is needed due to the rarity of scholarly publications on the topic of Central Moluccan Christianity through the lens of its practitioners, and due to the rapid development that have been taking place since my fieldwork in 2014. Scholarship on Christianity(ies) in Central Maluku are still dominated by large-scale studies in which the Ambonese Christians are seen within the regional conflict dynamic.[8] Within those existing works, this paper would like to present some peacebuilding narratives that are rooted in specific post-conflict Ambonese Christian narratives as spoken and written by the GPM priests. In this sense, the paper complements the ethnographic findings on Moluccan Christianity(ies) by presenting some Ambonese Christian perspectives on peacebuilding, while also supplementing the discussion on Christians' involvement in the 1999-2002 conflict in Maluku by highlighting their approaches in post-conflict reconciliation.

The conflict in Ambon formally lasted from early 1999 to February 2002 when the Malino II Peace Accord was signed. As with many other violent conflicts, there is not only a single factor that can explain the occurrence of the Ambon conflict. One thing that is clear was that the conflict did not start as a religious one, but rather as a result of economic grievances following the long-standing transmigration policy that brought a wave of non-Moluccan business-savvy migrants to the island. Religious narratives were subsequently used, and they escalated the conflict following years of animosity between locals and migrants. Intervention from the Javanese Laskar Jihad (the Jihad Army) who came to Ambon under the pretext of helping their Muslim brethren represented the peak of the exploitation of religious narratives during the conflict. By the time the peace accord was signed in 2002, the conflict had resulted in thousands of casualties.

Conflicts? The Revival of Tradition in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37.6 (2009): 872-891; Johari Efendi, "Civic Engagement and Collaborative Governance in Post-conflict Societies: Case Study, Ambon, Indonesia," (MA Thesis), University of Oregon, 2013; Kirk M. Lange, "Prospects for Conflict Transformation in Maluku: Mapping Assets, Spaces and Moments for Peace Building," *Cakalele* 11 (2000): 135-157; Carmen Lowry and Stephen Littlejohn, "Dialogue and the Discourse of Peacebuilding in Maluku, Indonesia," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 23.4 (2006): 409-426.

[6] Lailatul Fitriyah, "Muslim Peacebuilders of Ambon: A Story of Building Peace After Interreligious Violence," (MA thesis), University of Notre Dame, 2015.

[7] The author has previously written about the Ambonese Muslims' post-war context, as well as their Islamic peacebuilding narratives. On a historical analysis of Muslim-Christian relations in Maluku, and the interreligious historical context that gave birth to their *Nunusaku* cosmology, see: Lailatul Fitriyah, "Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku". On the Ambonese Muslims' peacebuilding narratives, see: Lailatul Fitriyah, "Muslim Peacebuilders of Ambon".

[8] See, among others: Hermien L. Soselisa, "Sagu Salempeng Tapata Dua: Conflict and Resource Management in Central Maluku," *Cakalele* 11 (2000): 67-82; Jon Goss, "Understanding the 'Maluku Wars': Overview of Sources of Communal Conflict and Prospects for Peace," *Cakalele* 11 (2000): 7-39; David Adam Stott, "Integration and Conflict in Indonesia's Spice Islands," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 11.4 (2017): 1-15; van Klinken, "The Maluku Wars".

Finally, the lens of interstitial theology[9] is employed to analyse the connections between Calvinist-Protestant Christianity and localised belief systems and cosmology in Ambon that result in specific theological narratives. The concept of interstitial theology is utilised for its detailed elaboration on the balancing tension between 'commensurability' and 'incommensurability' between two or more belief systems that is the core of Ambonese Christians' narratives of peacebuilding.

Interstitial Theology

Tinu Ruparell's notion of interstitial theology 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 perspectives or standpoints for continuing the conversation of religions in a creative and open-ended way."[10] 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.[11]

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.[12] Hence, interstitial theology is the mode of interaction that takes place within daily conversations between different believers of different religions.

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."[13] 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.[14] 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.

The mostly pejorative reputation that the term "syncretism" got in theological discussions serves as a backdrop for Ruparell's conceptualisation of interstitial theology. Ruparell wants to recover 'syncretism' from its negative reputation by showing that it holds the key to interreligious relations.[15] For him, rather than representing an unprincipled – or even, unfaithful – mixing of diverse religious traditions, "syncretism" shows us one of the most concrete aspects of religious lives, that is the fact that religious traditions influence each other at doctrinal and practical levels.[16] The question for Ruparell is not whether competing religious truths can live side by side, but rather, whether we can acknowledge that those competing truths are not really "competing" because their borders are not impermeable. Only when we manage to do that will we be able to understand the interstitial spaces in interreligious relations that interstitial theology wants to use and create.

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[9] Tinu Ruparell, "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Interstitial Theology," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed Catherine Cornille, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 117-32.
[10] Ruparell, "Inter-Religious Dialogue," 121.
[11] 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.
[12] Ruparell, "Inter-Religious Dialogue," 122.
[13] Ibid, 124.
[14] Ibid, 125.
[15] Ibid, 118.
[16] Ibid, 119.

Following his aim to revive "syncretism" from its negative reputation, Ruparell constructs interstitial theology, among other things, to serve two practical functions in interreligious dialogue. First, it functions to articulate the religious locations of people who live in a religiously pluralistic society through the mapping of their religious hybridity.[17] Second, by identifying people's religiously hybrid locations, it functions to create interreligious bridge-builders who are able to weave peaceful interreligious relations through their hybrid religiosity.[18] As Ruparell states, hybrid religious adherents are the equivalent of skilful translators who are not only capable of translating overlaps and differences between different religious traditions, but also are the very proof of mitigated incommensurability between those religious traditions (i.e., that the borders of religious traditions have never been impermeable).[19] I argue that Rev. Elifas and Rev. Jacklevyn are two such skilful translators who, more than just translating differences and overlaps between different religious traditions, are also constructing novel interreligious theologies that are rooted in their religious hybridity and in the service of the peacebuilding process in Maluku.

Furthermore, it is important to elaborate here that the second pillar of interstitial theology, the interactionist view of metaphor, represents a degree of uncertainty that cannot be separated from the theory and practice of interstitial theology. The interactionist view of metaphor prescribes a constructive tension that is "…brought about by the simultaneous affirmation and denial of a resemblance which borders on identity."[20] This means that both in theory and practice, interstitial theology capitulates on the flux of uncertainty that comes from the encounter of at least two religious traditions. As in the play of metaphor that results from tension between its literal and metaphorical meanings, interstitial theology lives on constructive tension that sustains dialogical dynamics between different religious traditions. In other words, instead of looking for similarities where there are religious differences, interstitial theology uses those differences to construct insights for peaceful interreligious relations. That being said, contrary to the common presumption on religious "syncretism", interstitial theology shows that religious hybridity/syncretism "…avoids effacing its religious sources, (because) their traces remain in the hybrid."[21] Rev. Elifas' and Rev. Jacklevyn's interreligious theologies are forms of interstitial theology because what they are doing is not about erasing both the Christian and indigenous roots in their beliefs in order to produce an altogether new religious tradition. Rather, their theologies are about constructing peaceful religious insights that incorporate Moluccan indigenous belief and the teachings of Protestant Christianity. Their theologies are attempts toward "…a new meaning – making sense out of (metaphorical tension) apparent nonsense."[22]

Elifas Maspaitella and His Muslim *Ana Piara*

It was an exceptionally hot month in Ambon, Maluku, and I was preparing myself to fast for the month of Ramadan while also working on my fieldwork study on Muslim peacebuilders of Ambon. I had stayed for a few weeks with the family of Rev. Elifas Maspaitella in Rumah Tiga, one of the few religiously-mixed post-conflict areas left in Ambon. The family and I lived in a house that was specifically built by the church's congregation for Rev. Elifas's family. To the left of our house was the Ebenhaezer Church of Rumah Tiga, where Rev. Elifas and his wife, Rev. Desembrina, usually led their congregations in weekly mass and other forms of congregational worship on a daily basis. The church was also always crowded with youth from the village who organised diverse training and empowerment programs within the church. Every night, there were people from nearby villages and downtown Ambon who would come to see Rev. Elifas or Rev. Desembrina in order to get their advice on a variety of issues. Whenever I was in the house, Rev. Elifas would introduce me to these guests as his daughter.

The first night of Ramadan, I prepared some snacks in my room for *suhoor* (the late-night meal before fasting begins at dawn) and turned on my alarm clock. Imagine my surprise when Rev. Desembrina woke me

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[17] Ibid, 121.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 123.
[20] Ibid, 124.
[21] Ibid, 125.
[22] Ibid, 124.

up at three in the night, and I found that they had prepared a *suhoor* meal for me on the dining table. Not only that, Rev. Elifas was also there at the dining table to accompany me for my first *suhoor*. During our meal, he said, "*Kaka* (lit. my older daughter), don't worry, I cannot promise you, but I will try my best to fast in Ramadan with you." In the morning, Rev. Elifas also started the daily morning prayer by praying for me and the fast that I need to do. I fell on my knees, tearful and grateful, when I heard of their prayers for me.

It seems like the Maspaitella's house has always served as a safe-haven for those who want to learn about Ambonese society in the post-1999 conflict. Before my stay, Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, an expert in interreligious dialogue and an anthropologist who wrote many articles on post-conflict Ambon, also stayed for a year in the Maspaitella's house during his ethnographic fieldwork on the island in 2010-2011. Rev. Elifas and Rev. Desembrina regarded both of us (Al-Qurtuby and I) as their *ana piara* (lit. foster children), and it is through this concept of *ana piara* that Rev. Elifas elaborates on his understanding of Christianity in post-conflict Ambon.

Much like many other Ambonese, Reverend Elifas lives by the principle of *Pela-Gandong*.[23] For him, an Ambonese would cease to be an Ambonese when they disown *basudara* relationships (lit. siblinghood) in their lives: "For us as Ambonese, the *basudara* relationship is a concept, a definitive fact, or as expressed by Durkheim, an ideal fact, concerning a relation between individuals that is moved by self-understanding and cannot be replaced by any other relationship."[24] Furthermore, for Rev. Elifas, the *Pela-Gandong* relationship can be extended to those who are non-Ambonese. Once he is committed to extend a familial relationship to a friend, that individual would have a place within the larger *Nunusaku* cosmology as his sibling and/or his children.[25] Speaking about his relationship with Al-Qurtuby, Rev. Elifas said: "Because we (my wife, my daughter and I) had promised to help him, it meant that we had taken an oath that I could not break, and, moreover, I could not ask for payment for the things I did. The entire Maspaitella extended family was part of this relationship."

Rev. Elifas used the notion of *ana piara* to frame his familial relationships with Al-Qurtuby and I. As Steenbrink and Tapilatu discussed, the concept of *ana piara* originated from *Pela-Gandong*-based relationships between Christian and Muslim villages in Central Moluccas during the Dutch colonial period.[26] As the Dutch colonisers favoured the Ambonese Christians over their non-Christian counterparts, development and infrastructure were unequally distributed between Christian and Muslim communities. As a result, Christian schools were much better developed, and the education sectors in Muslim communities were underdeveloped. In this context, children from Muslim villages were living with Christian families from their *Pela-Gandong* networks in order to gain a higher quality of education by attending Christian schools, while being raised in a Muslim way by their Christian/*Gandong* families. Hence, they were known as *ana piara*.[27]

As a religious and community leader, Rev. Elifas bases his peace activism on the strength of *Pela-Gandong* networks and their concomitant values. Not only does he build bridges by expanding *Pela-Gandong* relationship to non-Ambonese, he also develops a post-colonial liberation perspective that provides a critique against the encroachment of a developmentalist economy that disempowers many Moluccans.[28] Furthermore,

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[23] *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. For an elaboration on *pela-gandong* relations, see Lailatul Fitriyah, "Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku".

[24] Elifax Tomix Maspaitella, "Two of Abraham's Children: A Snippet from the Fajar Hidup Vicarage," in *Basudara Stories of Peace in Maluku: Working Together for Reconciliation*, eds Jacky Manuputty et. al., Monash: Monash University Publishing, 2016, 148-49.

[25] The *Nunusaku* cosmology unites Moluccans, regardless of religion, under the shared belief in the sacredness of Mount Nunusaku as the origin and ancestral place for all Moluccans. For an elaboration on *Nunusaku* cosmology, see: Lailatul Fitriyah, "Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku".

[26] 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, 393-94.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Freedom, (because) occupation, monopoly, (and the) grabbing of people's rights are not the Moluccans' characteristics of leadership. The Moluccan leadership is (a leadership that) defends the people, defends togetherness (*belarasa*), and keep the people, land, and homeland secure. Monopoly is not the Moluccans' way of life. Sharing and working together is our way of life (*masohi, maren, sosoki*). If you have something, you remember your brothers (*ale dapa, inga sudara*). When you eat, eat with your families (*ale makang, buka tampa garang*)." (translation is author's) See: Elifas Maspaitella,

his post-colonial perspective also criticises the danger of what he termed *agama dari luar* (lit. "religions from outside") that do not take local cosmology seriously and, due to their rigid boundaries, provoke conflict amongst the Moluccans.[29]

Nevertheless, the complexity of Rev. Elifas' thought and activism cannot only be seen through his praxis in living up to the values of *Pela-Gandong* and *basudara* siblinghood. As a priest, Rev. Elifas' thoughts on interreligious dialogue are also significantly shaped by theological discourses. In this context, he emphasises the praxis of "encounter" as a crucial component of interreligious relations in post-conflict Ambon. For instance, he quoted Mark 7: 24-30 and Luke 19:1-10 as biblical foundation for the praxis of 'encounter'.[30] Therefore, this "encounter" does not only consist of physical and religious meeting with the others, but also an elimination of "otherness" itself since in both verses, Jesus Christ encountered those who were paradigmatically positioned as "sinners" in his community. For Rev. Elifas, this encounter needs to lead us to the practice of *kenosis*: "…the individual reaches the peak of universalising faith and has made the decision to be involved with the One Almighty, as the foundation and source of everything. However, this can only happen when he frees himself from his ego (kenosis) and of thinking that ego is the central reference point and the standard for absolute life."[31]

Rev. Elifas' understanding of kenosis in light of Muslim-Christian encounters in Ambon can be seen as a space where an enactment of interstitial metaphorical traffic takes place. By freeing himself from self-centric theological perspectives, Rev. Elifas opens up a field of uncertainty in which meanings are constantly negotiated interreligiously. This means that his interreligious theology depends more on an ever-changing perspective on religiosities, rather than on a permanent view on them. Within this framework, the goal of interreligious encounter is not limited to simply understanding each other's religious tradition, but rather on inhabiting that in-between space among religious traditions in order to sustain a creative flexibility needed for weaving interreligious solidarity.

Within the framework of interstitial theology, Rev. Elifas' way of expanding the notion of *Pela-Gandong* while taking into consideration a Christian's socio-ethical praxis in deconstructing boundaries between "the holies" and "the sinners", can also be seen in terms of the traffic of metaphors between two religious traditions, i.e. Christianity and *Nunusaku*. That being said, for Rev. Elifas, boundaries between *Nunusaku*-based cosmology and Christianity are permeable and influence one another. A parallel between a violent socio-religious structure that alienated some marginalised groups in Jesus' time, and a violent socio-religious structure that allowed for the Ambon conflict to erupt, is an interstitial space from which he expands his understanding of *Pela-Gandong* relations to include his non-Ambonese *ana piara*. The combination of genuine practices of encounter as espoused within the life of Jesus and the principle of *Basudara* siblinghood that is rooted in *Nunusaku* cosmology makes up his perspective on interreligious dialogue. For Rev. Elifas, the church is a "living rock" (*batu hidup*) whose task is to strengthen the *Pela-Gandong* families, and to actively eliminate discrimination and stand with marginalised groups.[32]

Jacklevyn Manuputty, the Peace Provocateur

If Rev. Elifas chose to build peace by way of extending and reconceptualising the *Pela-Gandong* network, Rev. Jacklevyn, whom I dearly refer to as Om Jack, chose to play his part by way of creating friendship networks among the Ambonese youth, many of whom were involved as child soldiers during the 1999-2002

"Kapitang Game Kapitang: Renungan Jelang 202 Tahun Pattimura (2)," Facebook Note (3 May 2019), available at: https://www.facebook.com/elifas.maspaitella/posts/10215075553868489.

[29] "We became a 'market' in which 'religions from outside' were sold, and we became 'consumers' who liked to buy everything that they sold, and then making them exclusively ours. …we became more 'Arabic' than the Arabs themselves, more Hellenistic than the Jewish and Greek Christian societies…" See: Elifas Maspaitella, "Kebebasan Beragama Dalam Bangsa yang Aneh," Facebook Note (7 March 2011), available at: https://www.facebook.com/notes/elifas-tomix-maspaitella/bangsa-aneh/199128460116450/.

[30] Maspaitella, *Two of Abraham's Children*, 151-53.

[31] Ibid, 149.

[32] Elifas Maspaitella, "Batu Hidup," *Kutikata* (2 July 2008), available at: http://kutikata.blogspot.com/2008/07/batu-hidup.html.

conflict.[33] Rev. Jacklevyn was one of the signatories of the Malino Peace Treaty that formally ended the conflict.[34] His peace activism was expanded into the national level when he was tapped as one of the Assistants to the Presidential Ambassador for Interreligious and Intercivilisational Dialogue and Cooperation in 2017. In December 2019, he ended his term for that position after he was elected as the General Secretary for the Council of Churches in Indonesia (Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia/PGI) for the next five years.[35]

At the outset of the conflict in 1999, Rev. Jacklevyn was among those who used his authority in the pulpit to justify the violence done by Ambonese Christians against their Muslim neighbours.[36] Indeed, it was hard for any religious leader (Christian/Muslim) at that time to not play such a role since the degree of interreligious violence, and the intensity of the deployment of religious symbols in the field, was unsurmountable.[37] Nevertheless, he was also quick in changing his position, and has dedicated his life to interreligious dialogue ever since.

There are two points that differentiate, though they do not exclusively separate, Rev. Jacklevyn's practices of *Pela-Gandong* principles from Rev. Elifas'. First, Rev. Jacklevyn relies on a custom of informal meet and greet (*bakudapa*) that grew out of daily life practices within the *Pela-Gandong* familial network: "I grew up and experienced the strong social relationships in the custom of 'dropping in' and 'chatting' as part of the community's way to become one and mix every day."[38] Inspired by this intimate praxis of encounter, Rev. Jacklevyn dedicated his life to 'weave' the network of peace by reviving the local custom of *bakudapa*.[39] Secondly, instead of starting his dialogical practices from the deep place of religiosity and spirituality, he chose to start an encounter in concentric circles from mundane everyday topics to theological discourses: "The basic assumption tested during this long process of interaction was that developing a relationship like that of a close friend or a family member, made possible the growth of mutual acceptance in the midst of the existing differences, including differences in religious beliefs. This did not mean that theological aspects were taboo in every encounter. Conversations about similarities and differences in points of theology were discussed later, when trust had been developed, as between close friends…"[40] For Rev. Jacklevyn, engaging in interreligious dialogue is like eating a bowl of hot porridge (*makang bubur panas*), where you start from the rim of the bowl, and make your way to the centre where the hottest part of the porridge is.[41]

In the midst of the 1999-2002 conflict, Rev. Jacklevyn's faith in the Central Moluccans' indigenous familial structure was expressed through his involvement in the *Baku Bae* Movement (lit. Movement for Good Meetings).[42] This movement was initiated by some Ambonese community leaders (Christians and Muslims) who initially met outside of Ambon in order to minimise the overflow of conflict from the island, and to create a friendlier context in which those Christian and Muslim leaders could meet without any suspicion of each other.[43]

In the Baku Bae Movement, Rev. Jacklevyn found that even in the midst of conflict, the *Pela-Gandong* spirit is alive and well in the imaginations of the Ambonese. Talking about a heart-wrenching experience of listening to some Moluccan songs in one of these meetings in the island of Bali, Rev. Jacklevyn said: "Tears fell one by one, a sign that the series of melodies had drawn each person into a *sangkan paran* (lit. "a realisation

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[33] Endang Nurdin, "Crossing Divides: The Battle to Unite Former Child Soldiers in Peace," *BBC Asia* (24 April 2018), available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43459461.

[34] Jacky Manuputty, "Deklarasi Malino II Tahun 2002," Facebook Note (18 January 2019), available at: https://www.facebook.com/notes/jacky-manuputty/deklarasi-malino-ii-tahun-2002/10157057097819673/.

[35] Siwalima, "Manuputty Terpilih Jabat Sekum PGI," *Siwalima* (13 November 2019), available at: https://siwalimanews.com/manuputty-terpilih-jabat-sekum-pgi/.

[36] Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, "Christianity and Militancy in Eastern Indonesia: Revisiting the Maluku Violence," *Southeast Asian Studies* 4.2 (2015): 313-39, 325.

[37] Ibid.

[38] 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, 112-20, 115.

[39] 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, 292-96, 293.

[40] Manuputty, "The Turning Point", 118.

[41] Jacky Manuputty, "Gerakan Provokator Damai," Facebook Note (18 January 2019), available at: https://www.facebook.com/notes/jacky-manuputty/gerakan-provokator-damai/10157056894569673/.

[42] Manuputty, "The Turning Point," 13.

[43] Ibid.

of one's roots"), the *basudara* cosmological content lying at the heart of the music. Every beat of the melody was like a sharp bamboo blade, paring away the clump of anger and resentment, finding its way through to the place where we owned our own identity, the 'feelings of being a Moluccan', which had been long suppressed during the conflict."[44]

Eight years after the Malino II Peace Treaty was signed in 2002, Rev. Jacklevyn initiated yet another *Pela-Gandong* based network of friendship among Ambonese youth. The movement that is known as Provokator Damai (lit. "Peace Provocateur") consists of Christian and Muslim youth activists who are not only trying to weave peaceful relationships between them, but were also actively countering conflictual narratives with peaceful ones amidst the eruption of violence in Ambon in 2011.[45]

Provokator Damai arose partly as a response to a change in the popularisation of bigotry that, unlike in the 1999 conflict, utilised social media as a channel to spread hate.[46] In the changing landscape of bigotry, Rev. Jacklevyn mobilised young activists to do two things online and offline. In the virtual sphere, in addition to providing peaceful counter-narratives, the Provokator Damai clarified hoaxes through a network of interfaith friendships that was able to cross the hostile religious boundaries at that moment.[47] The name that Rev. Jacklevyn uses for this movement, Provokator Damai, reflects the kind of reconciliatory intervention that he offers in the context of the conflict. On one hand, the name is an attempt to reclaim the word "Provokator" (provocateur) from its negative connotation within the context of the conflict (i.e., conflict provocateur), while on the other, the name also represents a form of hermeneutic intervention that he has been carrying out in the community.[48] Such hermeneutic interventions focus on planting the seeds of peaceful, instead of hateful, vocabularies amongst the people mainly through exchange of stories of interfaith encounters, and constructing counter-narratives against the narratives offered by mainstream media that provoke more violence.[49]

Furthermore, just like the Baku Bae Movement, Provokator Damai also capitalised on the Central Moluccan's *Pela-Gandong* praxis to construct interreligious relationships among the Ambonese youth through informal meetings in public and private spaces. Rev. Jacklevyn explains this strategy as "peaceful offensive acts" against hatred:

> Narasi-narasi (perdamaian) yang sifatnya ofensif harus diproduksi karena karakternya lebih dinamis untuk memobilisasi perlawanan terhadap pelintiran kebencian dan kekerasan. Provokator Damai adalah bentuk kontra narasi kekerasan yang bersifat lebih ofensif. …masyarakat diajak tidak saja untuk membangun sikap resistensi, tetapi sekaligus untuk melawan provokasi konflik.

> Offensive (peaceful) narratives must be constructed because they are conducive for mobilizing struggle against hate speech and violence. The Peace Provocateurs is an offensive counter-narrative. …(we) invite the society to not only be resistant towards conflict, but also to take a stance against it.[50]

To understand Rev. Jacklevyn's peacebuilding praxis, it is important for us to highlight the first pillar of interstitial theology that aims to bridge religious difference through the spaces of encounter in everyday life. He is aware that immediate confrontation at the level of theological differences would be risking the fragile peace of Ambon. Thus, his activism within the Baku Bae and Peace Provocateur movements are focused on weaving day-to-day interreligious life, rather than on theological discourses. Rev. Jacklevyn's "eating a bowl of hot

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[44] Manuputty, "Gandong'ee," 293.

[45] Manuputty, "Gerakan Provokator Damai".

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Anon, "Provokator Damai, Gerakan Perdamaian dari Tanah Maluku," *1001 Indonesia* (8 March 2018), available at: https://1001indonesia.net/provokator-damai-gerakan-perdamaian-dari-tanah-maluku/.

[49] The group also uses social media to promote peaceful messages, and combat fake news that aims to incite animosity between Muslims and Christians. See, for instance, Andrew Stroehlein, "How 'peace provocateurs' are diffusing religious tension in Indonesia," *The Independent* (12 March 2012), available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/how-peace-provocateurs-are-defusing-religious-tensions-in-indonesia-7562725.html.

[50] Anon, "Provokator Damai".

porridge" strategy is a formation of interstitial space in which the Ambonese encounter each other in an everyday context.

In line with the principle of mitigated incommensurability, theological differences were not the primary focus of Rev. Jacklevyn's peacebuilding activities since what is important for him is not conceptual, but rather familial encounters. However, this does not mean that robust interreligious theological discourse is forsaken altogether because what he builds is a distinct form of theologising that lies not in logical explanations of the Divine, but rather on the embodiment of the Divine's compassion in everyday actions. Furthermore, in light of the second pillar of interstitial theology, it is important to note that Rev. Jacklevyn's peacebuilding practices take place within the porous boundaries of Protestant Christianity and the Moluccan local cosmology that produced traditions such as *Baku Dapa* and *Baku Bae*. In the context of post-war Maluku, it is almost impossible to imagine a scenario of interreligious reconciliation that does not involve the creation of such liminal spaces in which expressions from two or more religious traditions are criss-crossing each other to form a communal healing space.

Looking at Rev. Elifas' and Rev. Jacklevyn's perspectives on interreligious peace, it is clear that their ecclesiology involves more than an orthodox view of the church as formal place for worship. For them, 'the church' is located right at the heart of interreligious relations in Central Maluku that stands on *Nunusaku*-based cosmology. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their ways of positioning multiple religiosities are to subsume Christianity under the *Agama Nunusaku* (lit. "the religion of Nunusaku"). I argue that instead of placing Christianity within the framework of *Agama Nunusaku*, what both personalities had done was to expand the notion of the Church to be a mirror of, and in conversation with, the *Nunusaku* cosmology. In their perspective, the Church represents *'hidop orang basudara'* (lit. "the lives of the people who are siblings with one other").[51]

The message of unity of the Church and the unity of congregations is repeatedly emphasised in the thoughts of these Christian peace-activists. The message resonates strongly with the experience of displacement and separation that is suffered by most of the Christian and Muslim population in the island. Thus, within this narrative, 'the Church' is a place where unification-after-separation takes place, as well as a unified embodiment of congregants who had previously been separated by the conflict.[52] It is in the Church and within the congregation that the healing process occurred, and the Church itself was also rejuvenated only when the congregants were back in its embrace.

Conclusion

I have elaborated on the various expressions of Christian interreligious theologies that developed within the context of post-conflict Maluku. Those theologies grew as parts of local interreligious reconciliation efforts that also aim for a resuscitation of *Nunusaku* cosmology within the lives of the Moluccans. It is important to remember that, in this case, *Nunusaku* cosmology does not only fulfil a role as an indigenous source for peaceful interreligious relations, but is also being revived in combination with Protestant Christianity as an indigenous religious tradition and expression of faith. The same thing can also be seen in Yudit Tiwery's *Teologi Ina* – which was the focus of discussion in the previous paper[53] – in which a local Creation narrative that was based on *Nunusaku* cosmology was incorporated into an indigenous-Christian feminist theology that does not only function as a paradigm for the Moluccan interreligious reconciliation effort, but also as a decolonial critique against Euro-centric, patriarchal Christianity.

In Rev. Elifas' and Rev. Jacklevyn's interreligious theologies, as in Yudit Tiwery's *Teologi Ina*, doctrinal elements within Christianity (ecclesiology, creation narrative, etc) are understood within an interstitial framework that allows the Moluccans to reclaim Christianity (a religion that was imposed on them by the Dutch colonial power) as their own. In addition to their importance in the construction of decolonial Christian theologies, the

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[51] Elifas Maspaitella, "Saniri 3 Negeri Gandong," Facebook Note (29 September 2011), available at: https://www.facebook.com/notes/elifas-tomix-maspaitella/saniri-3-negeri-gandong/281322881897007/.

[52] Weldemina Yudit Tiwery, "Teologi Ina dari Rahim Maluku," available at: http://www.satuharapan.com/read-detail/read/teologi-ina-dari-rahim-maluku.

[53] See: Lailatul Fitriyah, "Religious Peacebuilding in Post-War Maluku".

Moluccan interreligious theologies show us two things: first, that a combination between an indigenous belief system and Protestant Christianity that does not try to subsume one into the other is possible. This means that, as argued by Ruparell, religious syncretism does not always bring with it an erasure of the original religious sources when it occurs. Secondly, that a genuine and successful interreligious peacebuilding process can only come from the involvement of all of local religious traditions, and the creation of interstitial spaces among them. In other words, Protestant Christianity would not have served as a source for the Moluccan interreligious peacebuilding had it not been reclaimed through a process of religious hybridisation with the Moluccan's indigenous cosmology. It is the sustained constructive tension between two or more religious traditions within an interstitial space that partly makes the Moluccan interreligious reconciliation possible.

The last, and probably the most important factor in the Moluccan interreligious peacebuilding context, is the crucial role that religious leaders like Rev. Elifas, Rev. Jacklevyn, as well as Professor Yudit Tiwery,[54] play in the process. Though conventionally known as pastors and scholars, the three of them do not limit their roles only to conceptual engagements in interreligious theologies. Rather, they redefine "theology" as networks of thought and praxis that are intertwined with and inseparable from each other. In other words, because their interreligious theologies were born out of actual engagement with the social dynamics and indigenous teachings, those theologies function as active sources for an interreligious conflict resolution that does not include an imposition of colonial values and norms that have been proven to be destructive for the social fabric of the Moluccan society.

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[54] Ibid.

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