



Jip Lensink

Traditional Tunes and Lived Religion in the Protestant Church on the Central Moluccas, Indonesia

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Traditional Tunes and Lived Religion in the Protestant Church
on the Central Moluccas, Indonesia

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Cover illustration: I can worship the Lord as a Moluccan. With my face, with my hair, with my heart, with my mind, with my smile, with my voice, with my singing, with my dance.

Christian Izaak Tamaela – 2019

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Introduction

Abstract: The book asks how traditional music, as framed within Moluccan contextual theology, is interrelated with lived religion. The theological idea of the transposition of traditional Moluccan music to the Moluccan Protestant church is traced from its context of development to the religious and musical practices in congregational contexts. The work is embedded in the fields of World Christianity, Contextual Theology, and Ethnomusicology, and uses the approach of material religion. The anthropological methodology consists of fieldwork, participant observation, and interviewing. The concept of 'the Moluccan traditional' is introduced to analyze the relation between theology and lived religion regarding traditional church music.

Keywords: Moluccan; Anthropology of Christianity; World Christianity; Material religion; Heritage; Decolonization.

Small drops of sweat slide down from under his headband down his
concentrated face
With his palms down, he lowers his arms
Guided by his movements, we do not move
The colorful place slowly becomes silent
While holding the ukulele, he opens his hands and raises his body
We take a deep breath
Lifting our instruments to our heart, we wait
On his sign, we sound
Nature, drum, and shell mix into music
With our eyes fixed on his passion, we play
And together, we start singing
Through the songs, we are surrounded by the sweetness of Ambon
By the memories of our childhood and the taste of traditional food
In the Lord Jesus, we are all brothers and sisters
Bamboo hits bamboo, the *pong-pong* hits the floor
The calling sound of the echoing *tahuri* fills the room
The gong and *tifa* run the rhythm
We are the colors
His energy conducts our hands, our legs, our voices
We step back and forth in a dancing circle of traditional clothes
His smile and our smiles connect in a harmonious space of love for music
He is the theologian and musician Chris Tamaela
We are his students, standing, singing, and sounding in a classroom
This is Moluccan traditional music
An indescribable feeling of joy runs through my body
The lesson culminates in a cacophony of musical density
Following Chris' ascending and descending fingers, we alternate between
loud and soft
Until the sound of our instruments slowly fades away
Only in absolute silence, the eyes are opened

The experience described above marks the musical heart of this research and my anthropological fieldwork in the Central Moluccas, Indonesia.¹ The class, taught by theologian and musician Chris Tamaela, is called ‘Contextual Theology’ and took place at the theological university in Ambon, the Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku (UKIM). Our performance was an examination at the end of a series of lessons on how to use traditional Moluccan music in the Moluccan Protestant church. Dr. Tamaela taught his students how to theologize in a contextual way with a focus on music. He introduced his pupils to the traditional Moluccan instruments and their sounds, their playing techniques, and their rhythms. As a researcher, I was part of his group of students. During his lessons, I learned about contextualizing traditional Moluccan music. I was able to sing three songs: *Papaceda*, *Manise Manise*, and *Dalam Tuhan Kita Bersaudara*. I also played several traditional instruments, including the *bambu goyang*, the *toleng-toleng*, and the *pong-pong*. At the time of the examination, everyone was obliged to wear traditional Moluccan costumes. Many students wore typical blouses (the *baju cele*) with a colored, blocked motive in red, blue, light green, or black. Girls who originally came from other parts of the Moluccas represented their birth place with many different garments. Tanimbar, located in the south of the Moluccas, has one of the most outstanding dresses, with long, red scarves draped around the upper body in a triangular form, finished off with long golden earrings, a headdress, and half-moon jewelry on the forehead. Pak Chris lent his wife’s blouse to me, which fit me perfectly.² He also brought red headbands and green tree leaves for everyone. The bands were folded horizontally and tied around the head, with the leaf put vertically behind. Unified in our diverse colors, we played, sang, and danced barefoot on the upper level of the UKIM campus, slightly afraid of another earthquake but strengthened by the joy of the music.³

Although Moluccan music is not my own cultural tradition, the shared experience of the lessons, the sounds, and words I was able to express, and the way I dressed, made me definitely feel part of the group.⁴ The examination of Tamaela’s class is one of my most cherished and happy moments during the fieldwork, because this experience touched the core of my interest in this research. I played music that, according to Chris

1 In this book, the word ‘musical’ refers to the adjective of music.

2 *Pak* means ‘Mister’ or ‘Sir’ in the Moluccan dialect/Indonesian language.

3 At the end of September 2019, an earthquake destroyed many villages and homes on the Moluccas.

4 In this book, the term ‘Moluccan music’ means ‘traditional Moluccan music.’

Tamaela, should be transposed to the Moluccan Protestant church, with ministers-in-the-making knowing how to bring about this transition. What does it mean when traditional music constitutes a theological innovation? When the music is taught to a new generation of young theology students? And when the music moves from its 'original' context to the church?

In many Western and non-Western contexts, people, organizations, and nations are in the process of coming to terms with their colonial history as colonizer or colonized. Decolonization takes place in the many corners of society where museums, universities, and public spaces are confronted with their colonial roots. Christian religion is often forgotten in debates about decolonization. Not only is the concept of religion itself a Western-Christian construct (Meyer 2012; Hann 2014; Keane 2002), but Christianity became a colonial product. Indeed, in many parts of the world, colonization provided the context for the work of missionaries, who set sail for the newly 'discovered' and conquered regions (Chidester 1996/2014; Koschorke 2012). These religious histories continue to exert influence to this day, and it is important to take them into account when addressing colonial legacies.

An influential group of people seeking answers to questions of colonial Christianity are theologians. The development of so-called Third World Theologies addresses the search for self-identity located in the traditions, cultures, and social worlds in which Christians live, thereby rejecting theological agendas that are set by the West (Parratt 2004, 7).⁵ One of the places where people are occupied with the development of such a theology is the Moluccas. Referred to by Westerners as the 'spice islands,' the Moluccas are indicative for theological developments in Indonesia, because they are one of the rare regions where an Indonesian-ethnic theology is being built and exercised in interaction with international theological debates (Brinkman 2007, 218–19). Having been colonized by the Dutch for centuries, Calvinism became firmly rooted in Moluccan society.⁶ Dutch-Calvinist missionaries pursued a policy of complete displacement of the *agama Nunusaku*, the pre-Christian native religion that was qualified as 'paganism' (Patty 2018, 57).⁷

5 'Third-world theology' is a term that was introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. Nowadays, the term is often replaced by 'contextual theology,' which, in turn, consists of multiple strands, such as postcolonial theology, liberation theology, and inculturation theology.

6 In the book, I use the terms 'Dutch Reformed church' or 'Dutch Calvinist church.' To avoid any confusion when translating to English, it should be clarified that this refers to what is called the *Hervormde Kerk* of the *Oost-Indische Compagnie* in Dutch.

7 Nowadays, the Moluccas have a unique relationship with the Netherlands, since a large number of Moluccans, forming the biggest Moluccan diaspora in the world, have permanently settled there.

Moluccan contextual theology aims at the contextualization of Christianity in Moluccan culture.⁸ Moluccan identity forms the framework for developing a theology in accordance with Moluccan Christians' experience of faith. This contextual development is an iterative process. Theological thought influences religious practices and attitudes, while religious practices and attitudes inform theology. Although it is necessary to understand the viewpoints and works of Moluccan theologians in order to see how they contribute to an academic debate on postcolonial Christianity, it is equally important to study laypeople and how these people themselves deal with the colonial history of the church. Therefore, the aim of this research is to gain insight into the relationship between Moluccan contextual theology and lived religious attitudes and practices. Within the larger framework of Moluccan contextual theology, the focus of this research is traditional music. As one of the relatively concrete materializations of this theology, music evokes questions of religious practice, experience, and identity, which are central in understanding the overarching phenomenon of religious contextualization.

Moluccan contextual theology on the Moluccas is related to the foundation of the Moluccan Theological Council (MTB) in the Netherlands in 1992.⁹ Moluccan theology and Moluccan churches were experienced as replicas of the Calvinist Dutch church, frozen in colonial time (Ririhena 2014, 23).¹⁰ The perceived incongruence between Protestant theology and Moluccan congregational life led to the wish to develop a theology that incorporated Moluccan culture (Miedema & Ririhena 2014, 7). In light of theological collaboration between the MTB and the Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM – Moluccan Protestant church), several Dutch-Moluccan and Indonesian-Moluccan theologians have obtained their PhD at the theological faculty of the Vrije Universiteit (VU, Amsterdam) over the past ten years. Among them is Chris Tamaela, who advocated for the contextualization of traditional music in the GPM. Tamaela (2015, 14) encouraged the GPM to “foster the development of contextualized church music and liturgy, so that Moluccans can clearly understand the meaning of the Gospel in its worship services, as it is expressed through local cultural forms such as music, dance, arts, symbols, and local languages.”

8 Hereafter, in this book, 'Moluccan theology' is also used to refer to 'Moluccan contextual theology.' Furthermore, with Christianity, I mean Moluccan Protestantism.

9 Moluks Theologisch Beraad in Dutch.

10 'Moluccan church' means 'Moluccan Protestant church.' The terms are used interchangeably in this book.

Tamaela's work forms the starting point of this book, because of its focus on the contextualization of traditional music within Moluccan theology. The research asks how traditional music, as framed within contextual Moluccan theology, is interrelated with lived religion. Therefore, the study is about the theological interpretation and legitimization of Moluccan traditional music. Since the Moluccas have a centuries-long history of 'hybridization,' it is important to understand what is meant by 'traditional.' Moreover, in a complex, interreligious context, Moluccan theologians must legitimize their ideas in relation to religious practices and attitudes among ministers and church communities. Questions of identity formation play a large role, since the reevaluation of traditional music is situated on the interface of ethnic, religious, and national identity. In such a condition of tension and negotiation, a discourse originates regarding the interaction between theology and practice. I trace the transformation of this discourse among theologians, clergy, congregants, and musicians. The focus on theologians and music makes the 'direction' of the research innovative in two ways. Firstly, the research starts at the level of educated theologians and, hereby, corrects the "still lingering reluctance to study elites" among anthropologists (Robbins 2006, 286). Hence, the research counters dominant anthropological preferences toward 'bottom-up' perspectives. Secondly, religion is studied through music. Because music on the Moluccas is intimately related to daily social and religious life, the musical perspective provides unique insights into Moluccan cultural identity and religious practice.

Anthropology of Theology: Theoretical Embeddedness and Relevance

This research is embedded in three academic fields, based on place, topic, and focus. Firstly, because Christianity is studied in a local, non-Western context, the research is situated in the frame of World Christianity. The term 'World Christianity' refers to the increasing awareness that Christianity is not a Western religion, and that one can better speak of 'Christianities' in the plural (Phan 2008, 27–8; Frederiks 2009). World Christianity is mainly situated in a multireligious, postcolonial, and multicultural context (Phan 2008, 43). The field seeks to understand Christian communities, faith, and practice as they are found on six continents, expressed in diverse ecclesial traditions, and informed by the multitude of historical and cultural experiences in a globalizing world (Irvin 2008, 1). Peter Phan (2008, 35–9), who focuses on doing theology in World Christianity, identifies several – specifically

Asian – resources, as Christianity moves out of its hegemonic Western cultural context. Together with Christian sources of scripture and tradition, contextual realities have to be used, such as “the cultures of peoples, the history of their struggles, their religions, their religious scriptures, oral traditions, popular religiosity, economic and political realities and world events, historical personages, stories of oppressed people crying out of justice, freedom, dignity, life, and solidarity” (Phan 2008, 36). An important point that Stephan Bevans makes is the idea that ordinary people themselves, both Christian and non-Christian, form a resource for theology related to World Christianity: “The totality of life is the raw material of theology” (2018, 168). This research studies Protestant Christianity – in the locality of the south-east of Indonesia – which continues to be ‘appropriated’ by Moluccans in their own dynamic and diverse cultural experience. Although the Moluccas have not been given elaborate academic attention, this research builds on several – mainly historical – studies of culture and Christianity in Indonesia in general and the Moluccas in particular.¹¹ The research, then, contributes to the anthropology of Christianity in Indonesia. Anthropologists often regard Christianity as a colonial product rather than as ‘authentic’ local culture, especially in the Pacific context, as Robbins states: “Christianity is the perennial outside force – threatening, corrupting, or merely dusting the surface of the authentic focus of anthropological concerns. In and of itself, it is of no interest. It can never become cultural” (Robbins 2004, 27–8). The anthropological tendency to stay away from ‘hybrid’ cultures prevents a serious understanding of people who are living their lives partly in Christian terms (Robbins 2004, 29, 31). Focusing on the relation between Christianity and Moluccan culture in the context of a history of colonialism and contact, this research contributes to a reorientation in anthropological work on Christianity among non-Western groups.

Secondly, the overarching topic of contextual theology relates the research to the field of ‘Third World Theologies’/Contextual Theology. Contextual Theology replaces theological agendas that are set by the West with agendas that come from different questions asked in different contexts (Parratt 2004, 7). Although all theology ultimately is contextual, determined by its specific historical situation (Parratt 2004, 3), Western theology has long been the normative backdrop for theology in general. The guiding principle in Contextual Theology has therefore been that of contextuality (Parratt 2004, 13). Another present issue in doing Contextual Theology is the situation of religious plurality, especially in Asia (Parratt 2004, 7).

11 For instance: Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008; Schröter 2010; Bartels 1994.

These characteristics are apparent in Moluccan contextual theology as well. Moluccan theology searches for a basis of cultural self-identity, which, on the Moluccas, is based in an interreligious environment. This environment mainly consists of Muslims and other Christian denominations, as well as mixed influences from centuries-long intercultural religious contact. Apart from theology, contextual theologians also make use of social sciences to evaluate the context (Parratt, 2004, 8). As an anthropological study situated in the field of religious studies, this research inverts the theology/social science relation, by 'evaluating' and understanding Moluccan theology in interrelation with the religious practices of laypeople. In line with what Carroll (2017, 2) states, a reappraisal of what theology is within ethnographic practice is necessary when theology is present in the field site. By studying theology as a socio-cultural phenomenon that informs Moluccan Christian culture, this research contributes to the scholarly dialogue between anthropology, religious studies, and theology. Theology, thus, is not 'the other' against which religious studies is defined, but rather is regarded as a relevant field in interdisciplinary communication on the understanding of religious life. As mentioned earlier, for a long time, anthropologists rarely studied mainstream Christianity at all. The discipline was understood as the study of 'other' cultures and societies, and Christianity was deemed to be a Western phenomenon (Robbins 2017, 238). Although present-day anthropology pays more academic attention to religion in general and Christianity in particular, theology has so far not been an area of interest in studies as such (Robbins 2013, 329–30; Robbins 2017, 239). However, Robbins (2013, 329–30) states that one of the new ways "of taking religion seriously is to assume that theology is an important part of it, and not only a matter of interest to elite intellectual specialists." Theology should therefore be seen as "the wide range of places one can find either implicit or explicit expressions of well-developed religious ways of thinking that demand to be taken seriously as intellectual positions" (Robbins 2013, 330). Focusing on theology in context, in this anthropological research, I will introduce a new dimension in the anthropology of Christianity: the anthropology of theology. Although theology has been anthropologically studied, these inquiries have mainly focused on theology 'on the ground' among laypeople. This research explicitly takes as a starting point the context where theological innovation is produced and discussed, in order to be able to trace the relation between idea and practice in a content- and context-based way. Moreover, since religious practitioners are "as fully intellectually involved with the world as are those of us who study them," a focus on the intellectual side of religion next to "the body and its habits, routines, affects, and experiences" can

complement the more mainstream interest of the anthropology of religion in the latter (Robbins 2013, 331).

Thirdly, the focus on music places the research within the academic practice of musicology/cultural musicology/ethnomusicology. There is very little detailed field research on music and its context in *Maluku* (Kartomi 1994, 3).¹² The main reason for this lack has been the scholarly focus on “pure authentic musical forms” (Barendregt & Bogaerts 2013, 12), whereas the Moluccas know a centuries-long history of musical hybridization. ‘Purists’ feared so-called pollution that would disrupt musical hierarchies and notions of authenticity. Therefore, musicologists had little affinity with hybrid genres, which to many were an outright degradation of local arts (Barendregt & Bogaerts 2013, 12).¹³ One of the few scholars who focuses on the Moluccas is Margaret Kartomi. Giving insight into various music cultures in the province of *Maluku*, Kartomi (1994, 145) states that “*Maluku* contains many diverse micro-musics, each based on a unique, creative synthesis of local traditions and outside influences.” Round and martial dances, bronze gong chimes, drum ensembles, indigenous flutes, reed and string instruments, as well as instruments of European and Middle Eastern origin, are widely distributed all over the Moluccas, with the *tifa* drum being the dominant musical instrument (Kartomi 1994, 145).¹⁴ As Kartomi (1994, 145) makes clear, many Moluccan musical forms are linked to religious practices, and, in this research, I study religious practices through music in the context of postcolonial theology. Kartomi states: “a great deal of fieldwork [...] into the musical styles, repertoires, objects and social context of the thousand islands in *Maluku* remains to be carried out if this province is to become musicological *terra cognita*” (Kartomi 1994, 144).¹⁵ This field research addresses the lack of musical knowledge by providing detailed musicological information on hybrid Moluccan (church) music. Nevertheless, attention is also paid to the broader sociological and political aspects

12 The Indonesian term for the Moluccas.

13 I do not intend to say that there is no ethnomusicological research on hybrid music or traditional/ethnic music in other parts of Indonesia. See, for example, Aragon 1996; Hodges 2009; Manhart 2004; Okazaki 1998a/b; Poplawska 2016/2020; Rappoport 2004; Sutton 2010; Wiebe 2014/2016/2017. I just mean to provide some points of relevance for ethnomusicological studies in the Moluccas, and mention the disciplinary history for why this has – so far – not been done extensively.

14 With respect to Central *Maluku*, Kartomi (1994, 155) explains that the performing arts (including church music) are influenced by European models and local versions of dances and music that were popular in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, some of the pre-Christian ancestral, ritual musics and dances are well-preserved, especially on the island *Seram* (Kartomi 1994, 155, 162).

15 Latin for ‘known territory.’

of music. Music forms the starting point for drawing a larger analytical picture on religious-musical issues in historical and contemporary Moluccan society. As Barendregt and Bogaerts (2013, 1–3) state, music may offer possibilities to study colonial and postcolonial life and the intricate power relations involved. Indonesian-Dutch musical encounters can give insight into religious contestations, innovations, and transformations, as well as the structures behind discourses about these issues in a national, postcolonial context. Music can thus be considered “a particularly useful prism through which to study mutual forms of Indonesian-Dutch heritage” (Barendregt & Bogaerts 2013, 4). The study of the discourse and practices of implementing a musical-theological innovation in the Moluccan Protestant church is situated within a historical colonial and contemporary postcolonial context of contact, globalization, modernity, and nationalism. This situation brings broader contested discursive questions of tradition, heritage, politics, and religion forward. Music can hereby act as a ‘sonic monument,’ resonating encounters and offering a window to changing presents and pasts that continue to be present (Barendregt & Bogaerts 2013, 26).

Lastly, a disciplinary field that connects the anthropology of Christianity, contextual theology, and ethnomusicology is Christian Congregational Music. Congregational music is a fairly recent field of study that has been established with the aim of pushing the everyday reality of church music to the center of scholarly enquiry, since it hovered at the margins of various other disciplines, or “had fallen between several disciplinary stools” (Porter 2014, 151). Musicology tended to ignore the congregation in its focus on ‘elites,’ and theology, in turn, tended to focus on words rather than on music. In contrast, ethnomusicology has proven to be an integrating force, although its own disciplinary history has had to be addressed and accounted for. For a long time, ethnomusicologists were merely interested in ‘exotic musical systems’ far away, which led to scholarly blindness regarding hybrid musics in missionary areas in favor of the perceived ‘purity’ of indigenous musics. Nowadays, however, ethnomusicology, or cultural musicology, recognizing its implication in colonial encounters, has turned its ethnographic attention “to the wide variety of processes, social relationships, ideas, objects and events that surround musical practices and groups” (Porter 2014, 157). In the field of congregational music, church music is studied as a congregational practice within the worshipping life of Christian communities. Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Tom Wagner define Christian congregational music as “any and all music performed in or as worship by a gathered community that considers itself to be Christian” (2013, 2). They use the term ‘congregation’ in a broad sense, articulating the potential of such music in acts of

worship, which, besides the church service, spills over into private devotion or public ceremonies. Moreover, the music may be popular, traditional and contemporary, new and old, instrumental and textual, or voiced. In this book, I analyze traditional Moluccan music in the Moluccan Protestant church on the Moluccas. The topic entangles the different disciplinary fields. The musical practice, as an implementation of contextual theology, draws attention to the fluid and shifting boundaries between traditional music and church music. As such, my analysis of the idea and lived practice of traditional church music adds to the field of Christian Congregational Music.¹⁶

Theoretical and Methodological Stance and Aim

This is an anthropological study about the interaction between theology and lived religion, with a focus on music. Theology is approached as an ethnographic object. Theological insight and practice is included in the social scientific study of religion, and theology is regarded as part of larger, local, cultural systems. I follow Robbins in the idea that theology can be read as “data that can inform us about the particular Christian culture that produced it” (Robbins 2006, 286). In this research, theology is used as socio-cultural data that travels and is produced through various layers of voices of people (such as theologians, clergy, musicians, and church members), which provides insight into the ethnographic-theological interrelation under study. The dialogical focus is music. I study music by using two additional theoretical-methodological approaches, derived from the fields of religious studies and musicology. The first is cultural musicology/ethnomusicology, which uses both ethnographic and musicological techniques (Merriam 1960, 5). This discipline regards music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural phenomenon (Hood 1957, 2). The second is ‘material religion,’ which means studying religion through the vector of practices and other media through which religion becomes tangibly present (Meyer 2012, 7). As an auditive practice and activity, music is the medium through which religion is studied.

Material religion aims to correct the Protestant bias in the study of religion. The material approach counterbalances the tendency to emphasize text and inner belief over practice and lived religiosity (McGuire 2008; Meyer et al. 2010), asking how religious actors use and create material culture to shape

16 Other interesting authors who can be placed in (or even helped to form) the field of Congregational Music and/or focus on local/native/indigenous music, for example, are Engelhardt 2006; Engelhardt & Bohlman 2016; Ingalls, Reigersberg, and Sherinian 2018; Sherinian 2005/2014.

their religious world and identity (Morgan 2015; Vásquez 2011). In this way, the definition of religion is framed in proposition rather than in opposition to materiality (Meyer 2008, 227). As materiality is inextricable from religion, religion should be seen as a network of people, divine beings, institutions, things, places, and communities (Meyer 2008, 209). Birgit Meyer (2010, 210) states: “there is no such thing as an immaterial religion.” Material forms engage bodies, sensations, feelings, and experiences. The body is trained to mediate between the immanent and transcendent, leading to embodied practices that involve all the senses. Embodied practices link the material aspects of people’s lives with the spiritual (McGuire 2008, 13).

In the same light, already in 1992, the American theologian Bevans wrote that one of the internal factors for the imperative of contextual theology is the sacramental nature of reality: “The doctrine of the incarnation proclaims that God is revealed not primarily in ideas but in concrete reality. [...] Encounters with God and Jesus continue to take place in our world through concrete things” (Bevans 1992, 8). Bevans’ words point to the idea that mediation underlies theology, in the same way as mediation is brought forward by the material approach in religious studies. Religion is not an absolute entity. The transcendent becomes present in concrete reality through material mediation. Bevans (1992, 8) also names several clear examples: “God is encountered in the poured water of baptism, in the remembering of the Christian community gathered around the table with bread and wine, in oil given for healing or as a sign of vocation, in gestures of forgiveness or commissioning.” The quote demonstrates the indispensable role of the body and the senses in mediating religious experience through material forms. Although the statements made by Bevans are rooted in doctrinal and theological reflections, whereas material religion works from an empirical perspective, conceptual similarities about religion are apparent. The fundamental difference between the disciplines – centered on religious truth claims or claims about the existence of God – does not need to be a reason for non-communication between the two fields. Because theology incorporates perspectives from other disciplines, such as anthropology and religious studies, and because religious studies, by definition, is an interdisciplinary field, a dialogue would prevent similar trains of thought running separately from each other.¹⁷ Interdisciplinary exchange could mutually benefit the development of insightful ways of thinking about religion. The imperative for contextual theology that Bevans talks about also demonstrates similarity with material religion. In the same way as the

17 At UKIM, many contextual theologians have studied social sciences and theology.

term material religion is a pleonasm (because religion is always material), theology is also always contextual. Bevans (2018, xii) says: “there is really no such thing as theology, but only contextual theology.” Bevans even seems to support the correction of the Protestant bias, by negating the primacy of ideas over material reality. Material religion counters the long-standing perception that religion is about belief and canonical religious texts, and a contextual theological approach counters the idea that theology necessarily means texts. Bevans (1992, 12) states: “Theology is wider than scholarship, and various cultures have other preferred ways of articulating their faith. Works of art, hymns, stories, dramas, comic books, cinema – all these media can become valid forms for theology in particular cultures.”

Seen from the perspective of both disciplines, music is the material means from which one can approach questions of religious experience, and music is also an essential part of theological practice. By emphasizing the fruitful interconnection between contextual theology and material religion, this research shows how music points to a broadening of the concept of theology. This broadening might further develop into the existence of a strand of thought on what could be called a ‘material theology.’

Traditional Transformed: Goals and Concepts

This anthropological research asks how traditional Moluccan music, as framed within contextual Moluccan theology, interrelates with lived religion. In order to study the interrelation, it is important to understand what Moluccan contextual theology entails and how this theology relates to Christian everyday life, practices, and attitudes on the level of the congregations. Furthermore, it is important to understand what Moluccan traditional music is, how the religious and musical practices, attitudes and experiences among clergy, congregants, and musicians can be characterized, and how the theological idea of introducing traditional music in the Moluccan Protestant church is apprehended in congregational life.

Context

Contextual theology is a widespread way of doing theology among theologians in today’s world. It is an internationally entangled academic practice that started in the 1960s. In the Moluccas, contextual theology began to blossom after the year 2000, which was an immediate effect of the religious conflict that happened from 1999 to 2002. Theologians who do contextual theology aim at developing theology based on the cultural context in which

people are situated. In the Moluccas, this means that Moluccan cultural traditions, customs, and identity, as well as current societal issues, form the inspiration for theological ideas. Thus, 'context' constitutes the central concept when talking about contextual theology. I argue that three different 'operational modes' of context are important to consider: 1) the context in which contextual theology develops in the Moluccas; 2) the Moluccan context as a resource for doing contextual theology; 3) the context of the discourse about contextual theology that is taking place.

The Moluccan Protestant church originated over the course of three centuries of Dutch colonialism. The Dutch Calvinists modeled their efforts after their Reformed church in the Netherlands. The Dutch missionaries wanted the perceived 'pagan' native belief systems and religious practices to disappear. The missionaries envisioned and employed a strict break between religion and culture, which often resulted in contestations about the allocation of agency and power to materiality or other spiritual beings.¹⁸ This colonial legacy, and the imposed incommensurabilities surrounding culture and religion, are part of – and continue to exert influence on – the postcolonial present.

Evidently, the Moluccan Protestant church is not a copy of the Dutch Reformed church. Moreover, many missionaries also worked from a Moluccan cultural perspective themselves to convert locals and build the Protestant faith in the Moluccas. Hence, over the four centuries that Protestantism has been present in *Maluku*, a specific Moluccan Christianity has developed, which, in itself, should be seen as a kind of 'natural contextualization.'¹⁹ Nevertheless, generations of Moluccan Protestants have been taught that culture should not interfere with Christianity, in order to prevent heretic mixtures. This historical reality forms the counterpoint against which Moluccan contextual theology is being developed.

The theological shift to cultural revivalism and contextuality, which has been happening in the past decades, offers possibilities for a fusion of Christianity and Moluccan culture.²⁰ Through theological processes and

18 According to the Dutch Calvinists, only God has absolute power, which means that things or ancestors do not have the animated agency to control human life (Keane 2007).

19 With Moluccan Christianity, I mean Moluccan Protestantism. I did not study Moluccan Catholicism.

20 With fusion, I do not mean syncretism. Syncretism has some negative connotations among Moluccan Christians themselves. Syncretism generally refers to the belief in both the Christian God and in powers of the ancestors (a fusion of native religion and Christianity), whereas the accommodation of Moluccan culture in Protestant Christianity should be regarded as one form of Christianity among many Christianities.

practices, Moluccan culture and tradition are being accommodated in the church. It is a mistake to think that these cultural resources form static objects of appropriation, well-preserved in a frozen past. Moluccan culture and identity are not the same as they were in the colonial past. The Moluccas are situated in a national context with consecutive political regimes, and in a millennial era that is characterized by modernity, digitalization, and globalization. Moluccan culture, therefore, is not uncritically and directly transposed from the past to the present and from tradition to church, but rather is accommodated through a conscious and filtered process. Hereby, Moluccan culture becomes transformed and even produced. Meyer and Van de Port (2018, 2) poignantly state that argumentations in anthropological writings often present as a conclusion “that the history is ‘assembled,’ the community is ‘imagined,’ the tradition is ‘invented’ or the identity is ‘staged,’” and that “[s]uch conclusions [...] stop at the point where the research should begin.” This research responds to the encouragement of moving beyond the premature closure of constructivist argumentation, since the interest of this study is the process of selection and transformation.

Heritage

The concept of heritage plays a central role in the above-described process of selection. Heritage formation “denotes the processes whereby, out of the sheer infinite number of things, places and practices that have been handed down from the past, a selection is made that is qualified as a precious and irreplaceable resource, essential to personal and collective identity and necessary for self-respect” (Meyer & Van de Port 2018, 1). As Meyer and De Witte (2013) explain, heritage formation entails a ‘sacralization’ through which cultural forms are lifted up and set apart. Although heritage refers to the past, it is not automatically and directly inherited from the past. Rather, it is the outcome of a selection of cultural forms that become canonized (Meyer & De Witte 2013, 276). Selected heritage items are therefore not given, but fabricated (Meyer & De Witte 2013, 280). However, the appeal of cultural heritage partly lies in its denial of being merely made-up. The appeal lies “on its promise to provide an essential ground to social-cultural identities.” Nevertheless, the process of heritage formation does not guarantee ‘success,’ in the sense that the cultural forms that have been singled out may found to be lacking ‘authenticity’ and thus fail to be persuasive for the intended beholders. Moreover, heritage formation entails inevitable contestations, paradoxes, ironies, doubts, and tensions, which is why it is important to carefully consider the system of authorization and lived experiences involved (Meyer & De Witte 2013, 276, 280).

In the Moluccan discourse on contextual theology, the selected items of traditional culture are frequently referred to as heritage. Furthermore, the theological process of selecting traditional items from the Moluccan context shares many characteristics with heritage formation. Traditional culture, handed down from the past, is selected on the basis of its approved value, which is in accordance with Christian doctrine, and is subsequently transformed to fit the liturgical context. Traditional customs are elevated to the collectively binding status of culture. The customs are neutralized and made innocent. As Meyer and Van de Port (2018, 13) note, the power of heritage lies in the fact that it is curated, which is why heritage can be easily harmonized with larger collective structures and values, such as human rights, political directions, religious doctrines, and ethnic or national identity. Despite the conscious selection and transformation of traditional cultural forms, these traditions are believed and felt to be authentic pillars of collective Moluccan ethnic and Christian identity.

Spyer (2000), who has conducted many studies on Aru in the Moluccas, gives some general clues for the area as a whole. The underlying notion of a stable Moluccan identity lies in the linkage between the local and *adat*.²¹ *Adat* is “the customary usage (i.e., religion, manners, cultural traditions, customs, social organization and rights) which has been handed down by the ancestors and which is passed on from generation to generation” (Ririhena 2003, 22; Hendrik 1995, 18). *Adat* concerns the focal point in Moluccan people’s idea of ethnic identity, because *adat* is seen as the locus of tradition (Spyer 2000, 31–2). The important argument that Spyer (1996, 28) makes, is that *adat* is perceived as having evaded the influence of time. The idea that the *adat* rules come from and are enforced by the ancestors plays a central role. I believe that this revived focus on cultural tradition in Moluccan society involves a sense of ‘Moluccanness,’ which is increasingly framed as a disappearing past.²² This Moluccanness, related to ethnic identity and *adat*, must be protected and preserved, because it is perceived as Moluccan heritage.

Tradition and Traditional

In the discourse of contextual theology, the concept of tradition plays a central role. ‘Tradition’ is a commonly used word. The term is elusive, value-laden, and of varied application (Finnegan 1991, 104–5). In general, tradition (in Latin literally meaning ‘something handed over’) refers to both

21 In Arabic, *adat* means custom.

22 I introduce the term Moluccanness in the book.

the process of handing down from generation to generation, and a thing, custom, or thought process that is passed on over time (Graburn 2000, 6). Tradition is important for the construction of identity, and people grow more conscious of it in historical situations of change, when tradition is deemed to be continued and preserved (Graburn 2000, 6). In the public sphere, tradition is often associated with notions of conservatism, orthodoxy, and continuity. 'Traditional' regularly means the opposite of 'modern.' Yet, as Graburn (2000, 8) makes clear, tradition is very much present inside modernity. Traditions are continually being created, while assumed and authorized to be timeless. Thus, although the concept of tradition is still associated with something old, it is no longer taken for granted that tradition implies 'time immemorial.' Finnegan (1991, 112) states: "the questions now followed up when something is classified as 'tradition' or 'traditional' are often those like 'how old?' or 'old in what sense?' or 'in whose eyes?'"

An influential work on creating tradition is the book *The Invention of Tradition* by Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012). The authors claim that traditions which appear to be old are often quite recent and invented. By 'invented tradition' they mean a set of practices – normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual and symbolic nature – which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012, 1). According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012, 4–5), the invention of tradition occurs more often in times of rapid transformation, times that produce new patterns to which 'old' traditions are no longer applicable. Former materials are used to construct novel traditions for novel purposes (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012, 4, 6).

Invented traditions are closely connected to the idea of tradition as a reservoir. Nowadays, with tradition being composed of selected aspects of a past, it is a "strength to draw upon, a source of historically defined identity, and a source of a sense of safety, specialness, or difference" (Graburn 2000, 8–10). This reservoir of tradition is not static and bounded by questions of accepted and possible use. Tradition, therefore, has a certain openness and closedness at the same time. According to Bruns (1991, 8), the openness of tradition means that tradition is not the persistence of the same and not irreducible to institutions of interpretation. Conversely, various authors critiqued the idea of invention by stressing the closedness of tradition. Turner (1997, 347) states that the emphasis on the malleability negates that traditions are a product of their historically situated action. Societies are embedded in certain pasts that limit and explain the process of self-identity. Therefore, one must acknowledge continuity and constraint as aspects of

tradition (Turner 1997, 356–7). In the same light, Appadurai (1981) questions the assumption that the past is an infinite and plastic symbolic resource, wholly susceptible to contemporary purposes. Instead, he suggests, the past is a rule-governed, finite, cultural resource, whereby “anything is possible but only some things are permissible” (Appadurai 1981, 218).

I study tradition in the light of Moluccan identity, *adat*, and the formation of contextual theology, with a specific focus on music. Through the contextual process, musical traditions from an *adat* context are selected, transformed, and produced for their transposition to the Moluccan church. These traditions are constructed as authentic, immemorial tokens of Moluccan identity through the ancestral lineage. On the one hand, the traditions are open to contact and merging in relation to present and novel needs and times; on the other hand, the traditions are constrained by a strict, rule-governed theological practice. I will work with the noun ‘the Moluccan traditional,’ to grasp the contextual approach in which Moluccan traditions constitute the central source of Moluccan theology. With the Moluccan traditional, I emphasize the constructivist, hybrid quality of Moluccan music. Rather than a concrete practice from the past that is called tradition, the traditional refers to the historical process that makes something traditionally Moluccan. ‘Traditional’ as an adjective is defined by openness and mixing, and the traditional refers to the process by which a cultural form starts to be perceived as traditional. The traditional enables me to capture the relation between theology and lived religion concerning traditional church music.²³

Place and Culture

Situated in a modern era, characterized by rapid change through the force of globalization and encircled by local, regional, and national political parameters, various figures (i.e., theologians, musicians, citizens) construct, preserve, and revive a traditional Moluccanness. The selection and interpretation – or invention – of the Moluccan traditional, relating to novel circumstances, are bounded by specific religious and political historically formed pasts and presents, as well as by a cultural logic. At the same time, the openness and vagueness of the traditional fit a broad frame of use and give way to a range of understandings and contestations. In the Moluccas, traditional can mean innovative and conservative, colonial and postcolonial, old and modern. In any case, the traditional is authorized to be a real connection between contemporary Moluccans and their ancestors. What is important to bear in mind is that the cultural forms, which are deemed

23 I will elaborate on this new concept in Chapter 6.

authentic and which are drawn upon, are not necessarily connected to a demarcated place. In their famous essay 'Beyond Culture,' Gupta and Ferguson (1992) deconstruct naturalized conceptions of spatialized cultures. In a postcolonial, globalized, mass-mediated world, space as a neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed is no longer viable. Instead, the relation between space and place becomes important: "the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality" (Gupta & Ferguson 1991, 8). Cultures, thus, are not mapped onto places and peoples. In other words, space is deterritorialized and becomes reterritorialized again under the politics of place (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 11, 13, 19–20). Therefore, one should pay attention to the way spaces and places are "made, imagined, contested, and enforced" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 18). Hybridity should be taken as a starting point, rather than the exception.

A postcolonial setting is one particular reality that poses problems to the assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 7–8). The question about to which places the hybrid cultures of postcoloniality belong is highly relevant in the Moluccan case, as the colonial encounter created new cultures in both the colonized and colonizing country, and destabilized the connections between people, culture, and place. The Moluccan traditional is constructed from a hybrid base point, since Moluccan culture has been in contact with other cultures and religions as long as one can remember. Elements from the Dutch colonial church, native religion, a globalized world, and a diverse nation are all incorporated, knitting imagined identity, culture, and place together within the possibilities available. Although nothing is a crucial marker of community, as Spyer (2000, 7) says, this fact does not mean that traditional Moluccanness is not real. On the contrary, hybrid pasts and presents are interpreted by people to make, express, and practice lived identities. In the process, colonial church culture and traditional Moluccan culture can unite.

In short, tradition and traditional are concepts that are complex and not fully agreed upon. The traditional is open to change, interpretation, development, and manipulation (Finnegan 1991, 106, 112–13). This book traces the contested, hybrid, and diverse construction and transformation of the Moluccan traditional.²⁴ I mean to complicate the traditional in a contemporary Asian context.

24 Whereas the concept of tradition has been addressed in academic literature, the overall focus has been on Africa (i.e., Olupona, Jacob. K (ed.), *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious*

Music

Music is the heart of the traditional. I study traditional Moluccan music in both an anthropological and a musicological way in the light of contextual theology and lived religion. Lived religion refers to religion experienced and practiced in everyday life among people (Morgan 2010, 18). The internal coherence of a lived religion requires a practical coherence, whereby it needs to make sense in one's everyday life (McGuire 2008). Hence, lived religion – besides beliefs, ideas, and morals about everyday practices – involves bodily, emotional, and religious experiences and expressions. I study religious and musical practices, attitudes, and experiences on the level of Moluccan Protestant congregations, to see how these experiences and practices are interrelated with contextual theological ideas on traditional church music.

John Blacking (1969, 71) defines music as “humanly organized sound.” In general, sound refers to ‘aesthetic sound,’ such as rhythms, melodies, songs, tunes, instruments, and singing (Ter Laan 2016, 6). Music has affective power and is embedded in socio-cultural power structures (Ter Laan 2016, 29). In relation to religion, music can be seen as a ‘technique of the self,’ forming religious subjectivities and communities through sensory experience. Therefore, music is a ‘sensational form.’ A sensational form is a relatively fixed, authorized mode of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental (Meyer 2006). Sensational forms refer to a configuration of religious media in which a believer's sensorium is tuned through techniques of the body (Meyer 2012, 26–7). The role of sensational forms in the construction of religious subjectivities and communities is described by the term ‘aesthetic formation’ (Meyer 2009).

Of central importance to this work is the fact that music can be looked at as a way of expressing and constructing individual and group identities, discourses, worldviews, and experiences. Music can thus serve as a site where identity discourses are displayed, constructed, reinforced, and contested (Ter Laan 2016, 7). In this study, music is taken as the entry point to trace the discourse of contextual theology on Moluccan culture and identity. Moving from a musical core, more relevant and broader issues come to the fore. Because people actively use music to form identities, people position themselves in moral, political, and aesthetic terms. The articulation of music, therefore, is connected to larger questions, for instance about ethnicity and religion (Barendregt 2014, 17). Moluccan traditional music is used, constructed, and transformed in the discourse on contextual

theology and Moluccan identity. Authenticity is of little relevance, while hybridity, change, and continuity are so much the more: “in most cases no one actually seems to know what the original repertoire or style was. One knows only what people did within living memory, or what is thought to have been earlier practice” (Barendregt 2014, 8). Music, by its nature, is suitable for connecting the familiar with the new and the foreign with the local (Barendregt 2014, 7). I look at Moluccan traditional music as existing on the interface of ethnic and modern, national, and international, local, and global, ‘pagan’ and Christian.

Discourse

As has been brought to the fore, music can serve as a site where discourses are constructed and contested. I study the theological idea of traditional Moluccan church music in relation to its apprehension in congregational life. In a condition of negotiation, the transformation of the discourse on this theological idea, the practical process, and the concepts involved are traced through theologians, church leaders, clergy, congregants, and musicians.

‘Discourse’ is interpreted along Foucauldian lines. Discourse concerns the rules and structures that produce particular utterances and texts (Mills 2004, 6). Discourses are highly regulated groupings of statements with internal rules that are specific to discourse itself (Mills 2004, 43). A discursive structure is characterized by “the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving” (Mills 2004, 15). Moreover, discourses are not fixed, but are the site of constant contestation of meaning. Discourses are embodied groupings of sentences that are enacted in a social context, both determined by it and contributing to the way that social context continues its existence (Mills 2004, 9–10, 13). In this study of the discourse on contextual theology and traditional Moluccan music, I analyze the actual utterances as well as the structures and rules – the ‘support mechanisms’ that are both intrinsic to discourse itself and socio-culturally extra-discursive (Mills 2004, 44–5). The first will be named the ‘lexicon’ of the discourse, which consists of several open and contested terms, of which the most important are ‘traditional,’ ‘context,’ ‘ancestors,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘ethnic.’ The latter will be named the ‘grammar’ behind the discourse, which also involves the historical situation in which discourses develop. Moluccan pasts and presents form the context for this second analysis.

Robert Stalnaker (2014) developed a notion of context as ‘common ground’: an evolving body of background information about the subject matter of

the discourse, about the discourse itself, and about the situation of the participants in the discourse that is presumed to be shared by the people involved in a conversation. The course of a discourse and the interpretation of what is said in it are guided by that body of information and by the way it evolves in response to what is said (Stalnaker 2014, 3). In these discursive dynamics, people negotiate what the common ground should be and how it should unfold (Stalnaker 2014, 10). In the Moluccan case, Dutch colonialism, missionization, Indonesian postcoloniality, and national independence are the contexts that structure the contextual discourse and have discursive effects (Spyer 2000, 5, 36).

Semiotic Ideology

Connected to discourse, the concept of semiotic ideology, proposed by Webb Keane, is important. Semiotic ideology refers to people's underlying assumptions about what signs are, what functions signs serve, and what consequences signs might produce (Keane 2018, 64). Semiotic ideology directs attention to the full range of possible sign vehicles and the sensory modalities they might engage (Keane 2018, 65). Semiotic ideology provides the relationship between sign vehicle and object (Keane 2018, 74–5). Different ontologies underwrite different sets of possible signs, and assumptions about what signs are contribute to the ways people use and interpret them (Keane 2018, 66–7). Clashes over semiotic ideologies have consequences that can be matters of ethical and political value: “To take a sign a certain way is to take seriously the world it presupposes and the life that world recommends. It is perhaps above all for pragmatic questions, more than any epistemological or metaphysical ones, that semiotic ideologies matter” (Keane 2018, 83). In this book, I pay attention to the semiotic ideologies of language, tunes, spiritual powers, and music in the light of the effects of colonialism and the clashes that colonialism caused.

In sum, this study aims to disclose the resonances and dissonances between contextual theology and lived religion – the everyday religious and musical practices, attitudes, and experiences on the level of the congregations in the Moluccan Protestant church – with a specific focus on Moluccan traditional music. In order to do this, I will explicate the process of selection, production, and transformation of Moluccan tradition and identity in contextual theology. Furthermore, Moluccan traditional music will be anthropologically, theologically, and musicologically described. I complicate the Moluccan traditional, and lived religious and musical experiences and practices will be characterized. I trace the discourse on the musical interrelation between theology and lived religion along various ‘figures’ involved,

whereby both the lexicon and the grammar of this particular discourse will be dissected. I demonstrate that the relation between contextual musical theological ideas and lived religious practices, attitudes, and experiences is strongly influenced by the understanding of several key terms in the discourse under study. These conceptualizations transform when they move through the voices, perspectives, and practices of the actors in this discourse, such as theologians, church leaders, clergy, congregants, and musicians. Dissonance, discussion, friction, and contestation occur when conceptualizations differ among and between the people involved. When conceptualizations resonate through linkages between actors, a connection between theological idea and religious practice is made. The resonance between theology and lived religion, therefore, is riveted by a harmonious association between discursive conceptualizations of key terms on the theological innovation of traditional music in the Moluccan Protestant church.

Research Methods and Analysis

For this anthropological research, I carried out fieldwork over the course of three months, from October 12 until December 28, 2019. The main location where the fieldwork took place was Ambon, the administrative center of the Moluccas. In addition, I visited three surrounding islands (Haruku, Seram, and Saparua), each for two to six days.

Indonesian language acquisition formed part of the preparation for the fieldwork. I laid a foundation in the Netherlands in the summer months, building vocabulary through individual home study and nine private lessons. From September 21 to October 11, 2019, a three-week language course (consisting of ninety hours) was completed at the prominent language school Alam Bahasa in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which resulted in a certificate that indicates the level of Indonesian as 'natural communicator' and 'working Indonesian.' During the fieldwork period in the Moluccas, language skills were improved by practice and use, through which I also learnt the Moluccan dialect.

During the fieldwork, the central research methods were participant observation and interviewing. The former refers to the method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 1). The latter can be divided into informal conversations (relevant casual talks), semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions based on a prepared topic guide), unstructured interviews (following the lead of the informant),

focus groups (interactive discussion between pre-selected participants), and 'vox pops.' Vox pops is the name I ascribed to the planned, short interview activity in and around churches. After church services, several congregants were asked five similar, open-ended questions.²⁵

There were three important research sites. The first was the theological university on Ambon, UKIM. The group of theologians developing contextual theology is working and teaching there. In-depth interviews were conducted with many of these theologians, in order to understand the content, importance, motivation, and consequence of the different facets of their theologies in the context of their personal lives. The starting point of this research was the work of Chris Tamaela, who was one of the essential informants. Participant observation was also carried out in Tamaela's classroom to see how contextual theology and Moluccan music are taught and transmitted to students, with whom I spoke as well.

I hope this book provides relevant insights for both UKIM and the GPM on the process of and opinions on the implementation of contextual theology. Furthermore, I hope that a broader public gets acquainted with the academic, theological institution UKIM. UKIM provides high-quality education and develops interesting theories that may be useful in an interdisciplinary and international dialogue.

The second field site was various churches on Ambon, both in Ambon City, in villages, and on surrounding islands. I visited three churches in the city: the central and largest Maranatha church, the Rehoboth church, and the Silo church. Four churches in villages on Ambon were visited: in Poka, Soya, Amahusu, and Tuni. On Seram, I visited the church in the village Rohua Baru, and on Saparua two churches in the village Haria: Petra and Imanuel.

Participant observation provided data on the diversity of church services in general and the religious-musical practices in particular. Other related religious activities where I conducted participant observation were the synod meeting on the island Haruku and an evaluation meeting of a church council in Haria.²⁶ I held informal conversations, interviews, and vox pops with clergy, laypeople, and musicians, to gain insight in religious attitudes, opinions, and musical experiences in relation to contextual theology. I also conducted several interviews with church leaders.

25 I came up with the idea of the vox pops because I realized that the time after a church service is not the right moment for a long, in-depth interview. Nevertheless, for me, the church was the most logical place to meet congregants.

26 The synod meeting is held once a year. Synod leaders and ministers from many congregations assemble to discuss GPM policy.

The third research site was less-official religious and cultural contexts. For instance, I travelled to an ‘indigenous,’ traditional village, Yalahatan, on the coast of Seram.²⁷ Furthermore, I spent one week in the home of my friend, experiencing her family life and participating in family prayers. Together, we celebrated Christmas. Lastly, I studied traditional Moluccan music by visiting concerts, musical rehearsals, and so-called *sanggars* – music workshops where children learn to play traditional music.

Gaining access to the field sites and research participants was made possible through the various networks of (Dutch-)Moluccan Protestants, theologians, and musicians in which I am involved. Furthermore, UKIM helped me in establishing contacts with ministers and church officials. After having built trustworthy relations, the so-called snowball technique led to additional informants.²⁸ In total, thirty-eight sessions of participant observation were conducted, and 110 interview activities were held. The interview activities consisted of thirteen informal conversations, sixteen semi-structured interviews, thirty-nine unstructured interviews, three focus groups, and thirty-nine vox pops. The average duration of an interview was forty-eight minutes, with five minutes being the shortest and 240 minutes being the longest. Twenty-seven interviews were done in English, eighty-two in Indonesian, and one in Dutch. I talked to eighteen theologians, four students, five GPM church officials, thirteen ministers, seven church council members, twenty-three congregants, twenty-five musicians, and fifteen ‘other’ people.²⁹ The gender division consisted of seventy-four men, twenty-six women, and various mixed group combinations. The age of the informants can be split into twenty young, forty-nine middle-aged, and thirty-three old people.³⁰

27 Christian Moluccans and Westerners working in this area refer to this village as ‘animist,’ because the inhabitants adhere to their native religion, believing in the powers of the ancestors.

28 Almost all research participants were Moluccan Protestants (with the exceptions of one or two participants who identified as Muslim. The reason is the research focus on Moluccan Protestant contextual theology and its reception among Protestant congregants. I do not mean to exclude Moluccan Muslims in this book. The words of the Protestant participants include Moluccan Muslims. For example, Moluccan theologians and students, as well as musicians and ministers, talked about Christian-Muslim realities, mostly regarding the pluriform nature of Moluccan society. The traditional instruments that I describe in Chapter 6 also point to an Islamic musical world in relation to Moluccan (traditional) culture.

29 These were people who had knowledge about topics either related to theology and church services or to music (i.e., journalists, people working at the Ambon Music Office, teachers, artists, and people working for Wycliffe (Wycliffe is an organization that produces Bibles in local languages)).

30 This is not a precise division of age, since the exact age of many people was not asked. The division is based on flexible categories. Approximately, young should be seen as below thirty-five, middle-aged as between thirty-five and sixty, and old as above sixty.

To safeguard ethical principles, I explained to each participant the subject, goal, and procedure of the research, so that the people whom I talked to could give informed consent regarding their participation. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the informants, and I offered to send them the research results. The real names of the interviewees are only used with their approval. Without approval, anonymity is maintained through pseudonyms or the absence of names. With regard to objectivity and possible biases, my own position as a researcher should be taken into account. I am a young, white, female researcher from the Netherlands (the former colonial power). My background might have influenced access to certain places and people, as well as information provided to me.

The fieldwork resulted in many visual materials (photos and videos), fieldnotes, and transcriptions of the recordings of interviews, which, according to an iterative process of data collection and analysis (Boeije 2010), produced grounded analytical insights. I coded all textual material with the use of the software NVivo.³¹

Summary of Chapters

The book consists of seven chapters and a conclusion. Chapters 1 to 3 dissect the grammar in which the Moluccan contextual discourse is afforded to operate. First, I delineate the cultural and historical context. As a continuous tradition passed down from the ancestors, *adat* forms the core of Moluccan culture. The *adat* ceremonies, comprising an ensemble of clothes, dance, language, and music, form the original context from which Moluccan contextual theologians draw their inspiration. The history of colonization and missionization, the post-independent nationalist and developmentalist governments, the establishment and evolvement of the GPM, and the religious conflict of twenty years ago have shaped the past and present realities of contemporary Moluccan culture and identity. Chapter 2 is devoted to the religious context. The congregations, liturgy, worship services, culture, and music of the Gereja Protestant Maluku are part of the

31 Unless indicated otherwise, all information in the book is based on the interviews and participant observation that I conducted. Information based on academic literature is referred to according to the Chicago Manual Style, and quotes from informants are specifically referred to in footnotes. My own analytical statements are made clear as well. When the information presented is based on an interview with a specific person, the first time, the complete reference, including place and date, will be given. Consecutive references to the same interview only state the name of the informant.

background against which the theological innovation of traditional church music is set. I employ the image of the layers of the *spekkoek* to demonstrate how Moluccan Protestantism is and continues to be built. Chapter 3 depicts UKIM as the actual context in which contextual theology on the Moluccas is being developed. UKIM is embedded in the organizational structures and doctrinal basis of the GPM. The history of UKIM, its educational goals, the theologians (and their specific academic focus) and the political relations all forge the setting in which UKIM exists. From the grammar, I turn to the lexicon of the contextual discourse, which consists of the contested terms 'traditional,' 'context,' 'ancestors,' 'culture,' and 'ethnic.' Situated in a modern, national, globalized, and postcolonial reality, the content and meaning of the contextual practice introduces 'lived context' as a fundamental theological source, in addition to tradition and scripture.

Chapter 4 concludes the section about the overarching framework of contextual theology. The process of Moluccan theology is based on a theological transformation of cultural forms – Moluccan contexts – which are selected on the basis of their accordance with Christian values. I argue that contextual theology enables the preservation of a Moluccan sense of self through the construction of a 'new old.' The 'new old' is a sentiment of Moluccanness that affirms the ethnic community in modern society. I articulate the implementation of contextual theology through the image of the spiral. A top-down and bottom-up approach are constantly combined, although UKIM stirs the motion and determines the direction. I state that a gap between theology and lived religion originates when the congregational context of traditional-conservative Calvinist worldviews and the historical process of practical, automatic contextualization are ignored or disapproved of.

Chapter 5 zooms in on the central theme of this book – the theological idea of traditional church music. Chris Tamaela's background, musical products, dissertation, vision, and classes lead to his central academic contribution: music is the heart of theology. Chapter 6 serves to describe Moluccan traditional music. I analyze the characteristics of this music and present the stories of five traditional music groups. I identify the process of naturalization, ancestral transmission, and musical use over a long period of time as forces that authenticate traditional music as part of Moluccan identity. This musical feeling of Moluccanness is the reason for the wish of maintaining, preserving, and developing traditional music. As part of the project of preservation, traditional music moves from its original *adat* context to other public, political, and religious contexts.

Chapter 7 focuses on the theological transposition of traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. Firstly, I conceptualize the *suling* as

a culture-theology bridge, forming part of both practical (or natural) and theological contextualization. I describe the practice of the ethnic service, in which traditional clothes and language are the elements that are used the most. Subsequently, I theoretically construct the contextual process of ethnic worship as heritage formation. The terms tradition, contextualization, and preservation are implicated in the discursive network of the heritagization of culture and Christianity. I discuss language and music in more detail. I argue that practical limitations as well as the historical encounter between semiotic ideologies account for the current reality in which music is one of the least-developed ethnic elements. The implementation of the ethnic service and traditional church music is effectuated by an ensemble of understanding, knowledge, capability, creativity, quality, and context concerning the idea-to-practice process that ministers and their *majelis* teams execute. Most congregants appreciate the ethnic service on a 'superficial' level (seen from the perspective of theological intention). Criticism is related to perceptions about bad quality, *adat* relations, confusion over the term *etnis*, and disrespectful appropriation. Opinions on traditional church music are strongly linked to preferences of accompanying instruments and hymnbooks. I assert that most Moluccan congregants enjoy traditional church music because they feel preservation is important, and not because of a personal effort of theological contextualization.

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1. Culture, Colonialism, and Church: The Historical Context

Abstract: The Moluccas are an Indonesian archipelago. The author describes the Moluccan traditional culture and the colonial and postcolonial religious history of *Maluku*. Traditional village life, the *adat* system, cultural customs, native religion, and the central importance of music constitute the traditional basis of Moluccan identity and culture. From the fifteenth century, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism were introduced on the Moluccas. The Moluccan Protestant church was established during three centuries of Dutch colonial rule. Under the governments of Sukarno and Suharto, the Moluccan church adapted to the postcolonial national context and pursued a policy of religious purification. A political shift from centralization to diversity happened in the last decades. In 1999, a religious conflict broke out on the Moluccas.

Keywords: Moluccas; Adat; Indigenous; Missionization; Independence; Religious conflict.

In the first weeks of my stay in Ambon, on the first of November, we climb the slippery mountain road in the remaining rays of sunlight as the day comes to an end. The simmering sound of the motorcycle that we are sitting on reveals the steepness of this terrain amidst valleys of bright, green trees. We smell the pyres of burning garbage, we hear the birds, we taste the twilight fog, and we see the sea surrounding this island. We feel fresh and free.

Passing small houses, colorful villages, white churches, and large families, gradually, our journey becomes higher, darker, and colder. We cross a narrow bridge made of old, sagging planks and turn right, onto a sandy path that leads to the most spacious and pretty view over Ambon *Manise*.

We are in a place called Tuni. In the dense darkness, I descend the stairs and arrive at the round, dry, brown compound in front of the brick house that is owned by the musician who lives here. He is sitting on a tree trunk; I sit on a red, plastic chair. There is no light. The absolute silence is only interrupted by zooming insects, barking dogs, and our voices. It is as if we are alone in the world. Two boys approach us, both have a bamboo flute in their hands. In this humid, tranquil atmosphere, they play for me.

In the last weeks of my fieldwork, on the nineteenth of December, I again find myself on the back of a motorcycle. This time, we almost fly through the mountains and jungle, avoiding holes and bumps in the road. Halfway, we stop at a lonesome stall to buy a plastic bottle filled with green fuel, to fill up the tank. Then, we continue on our way.

In a small group, we sit in the green garden of another musician. From our simple chairs and bamboo benches, we look out over the village Hutumuri, which at its edges is protected by the deep blue of infinite water and the light gray of sharp, looming cliffs. The man next to me is old and active. He runs, plays, moves, and smiles to the point that his few black teeth are openly visible. His young wife and sons help to carry the instruments from the house to the grass area.

In a long row, from left to right, from very big to very tiny, they are laid down: the conch shells from the Moluccan sea. This is the traditional *tahuri*, an indigenous wind instrument. A group of children joins us, picking up the shells of various sizes, carefully holding the circular forms in their hands. On the musician's sign, the children take a deep breath, place their lips around the single hole on top and blow their round cheeks full of air. The hollow, echoing sounds are carried away by the wind, into the night.

These musical moments in these beautiful places are connected in their bliss and felicity. Sitting in the inexplicable vastness of nature, amidst darkness, silence, and kindness, I learnt about Moluccan music. The openness, cordiality, generosity, tranquility, and flexibility not only made possible my entire research on traditional church music, but also form the core values of collectivity that define Moluccan culture and identity. This chapter sketches the basis of the concept of Moluccanness. The chapter describes the place *Maluku*, the native religion, the organization, values, and ritualistic ambience of Moluccan society, the musicality of Moluccans, and the Moluccan colonial and religious history. The descriptions form the context of the Moluccan church, Moluccan theology, and Moluccan music. This context is the foundation of the themes that I address in this book.

The Moluccas

The Moluccas are situated in the east of Indonesia on both sides of the equator. *Maluku* consists of a total surface area of 851,000 square kilometers, ninety percent of which is water. The distance between the most northern and most southern point is 1300 kilometers, and the Moluccas are comprised of approximately 1300 islands, many uninhabited (Bartels 1994, 17–8). Geographically, the Moluccas can be divided into three areas: the north Moluccas, which are predominantly Muslim, the south Moluccas, which are predominantly Catholic, and the central Moluccas, which are predominantly Protestant. The central Moluccas form the focus of this study. The central Moluccas include Ambon, Seram, the Lease islands (Haruku, Saparua, Nusa Laut), Buru, the Banda islands, and some other small islands (Bartels 1994, 18–9).

The Moluccas are characterized by an enormous ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, although connected by the lingua franca, Malay.¹ Malay continues to be used as everyday language in a variety of local dialects, while the official language is Bahasa Indonesia (which derives from Malay). In some places, such as in the inlands of Seram or in coastal Islamic villages, native languages are still spoken (Bartels 1994, 21).

Characteristic of the Moluccan kitchen is a dish called *papeda*. Sago flour from the sago palm and water are the main ingredients of *papeda*, a semi-transparent sticky kind of porridge that is often eaten with a fish

¹ Originally, Malay comes from East Sumatra and the language dates back three centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese (Bartels 1994, 21).

sauce (Bartels 1994, 23–6). By turning two sticks together, a ball of *papeda* is cut loose from the mass, after which it is gulped down without using any cutlery. Over the course of three months, unfortunately, I did not manage to master the technique of kissing the dish and slurping the continuous line of *papeda* in. Afraid of an unstoppable supply of this sticky material, I used a spoon the two times I tried it, to be able to swallow the *papeda* fast and in one go.

Moluccan Religious and Cultural Identity

The origin myth of the Moluccan people starts with the *waringin* tree on the top of a mountain on the mother-island Seram, *Nusa Ina*, from where the first ancestors came. The mountain bears the name *Nunusaku*, which is the first land that arose from the sea (Ririhena 2014, 51–3). The first humans are called *Alifuru* and the name refers to the tribes of the inlands (Bartels 1994, 107–8; Ririhena 2014, 52). A general division of tribes is made along the lines of the *Patasiwa* and *Patalima* groups.² Traditionally, societal organization consisted of clans that can diffuse over various villages.³ Each clan has its own leader and a *kapitan*, the captain of warfare. The village is governed by the *saneri negeri*, the village council. In addition, the *marinyo* is the village messenger and the *kewang* is the village police. One of the police's tasks is to protect the *sasi*. *Sasi* are the measures to protect natural ecological regeneration through a temporary prohibition on, for example, fishing or harvesting. The *raja* is the head of the village and is responsible for maintaining the *adat* rules. The *raja* is assisted by the *kepala soa*. The *kepala adat* is the most authoritative figure in all *adat* matters (Bartels 1994, 47, 307–12). As previously mentioned, *adat* is one of the most central cultural systems in Moluccan cosmology. Adhering to the *adat* rules supports the harmony of daily existence, as well as the relationship between nature and the divine. To prevent malediction and disaster, honoring the ancestors is of utmost importance (Patty 2018, 58). In more detail, *adat-istiadat* means 'the way of life of the ancestors,' which is the way that should be followed. *Adat* is seen as a formative core of Moluccan identity and cosmology, and transcends religious affiliation. In connection to *adat*, the *baileo* occupies a

2 *Pata* means people, *siwa* means nine, and *lima* means five.

3 'Traditionally' refers to the fact that, although mainstream Moluccan society is no longer organized in the traditional way, some villages are still organized as such. I mean traditional as a place-based phenomenon, not as something confined to the past.

central position. Symbolizing the fundamental place of *adat*, the *baileo* is the house where the village leaders assemble. The *baileo* is an open building on posts, made from wood with a thatched roof and veranda (Patty 2018, 52–3).

The Original Context of the Moluccan Traditional

Because *adat* ceremonies form the ‘original’ context of the Moluccan tradition, which is being used as a resource for contextual theology, it is fruitful to devote attention to these ceremonies and their entangled elements of clothes, dance, language, and music.⁴ *Pendeta* (minister) Matatula of the *Silo* church poignantly described the importance of *adat* for Moluccan people:

Since childhood, we are formed with *adat*, because we are born in *adat* society. [...] We are not only guided by the Word of God to lead a moral life, but there is also *adat* that helps us in this process.⁵

Before Moluccan people came into contact with Christianity, the *orang tua tua* (ancestors) regulated every aspect of daily life according to the *adat*: spiritually; economically; politically; and socially. The idea of *adat* as a continuous tradition via the ancestors remains of central importance. Theologian Tamaela stated: “This is from generation to generation, from the past to the present, maybe the future. It is already tradition from the beginning of our ancestors. [...] Till now we keep it and practice it as a part of our life. That is called tradition.”⁶

Although the *adat* system is comprehensive, some cultural principles are often mentioned when talking about Moluccan culture. *Pela* is a native cultural symbol that refers to a social-metaphysical alliance between two or three villages. The bond is endorsed by the involvement of the ancestors during the ceremony. The villagers become blood brothers who must support each other always (Ririhena 2014, 60). *Pela* is seen as a strong cultural pillar that guarantees that people relate to one another as brothers and sisters, especially with respect to Muslim-Christian relationships. Sharing with and giving to each other (*saling berbagi*) is also an important *adat* value.

4 Traditional cultural forms that are used for contextual theology are transported from their original context to a Protestant church context. Here, I describe the original context.

5 Interview with Jan Z. Matatula, minister of the *Silo* church in Ambon (November 28, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

6 Interview with Christian Izaak Tamaela, theologian and musician at UKIM (October 30, 2019, Ambon). Many interviews were held with Chris Tamaela, both formally and informally, on different dates. Hereafter, any quotes from Tamaela are referred to as ‘Interview with Chris Tamaela.’

Moluccan culture is very much characterized by collectivity. This ideal of togetherness is expressed in values such as *masohi* or *kerja sama*, which mean that people combine their skills, energy, and resources to achieve certain goals that exceed the capacities of individuals. This collaboration takes place in many daily activities, such as building a house, or during more special occasions, such as weddings or funerals (Bartels 1994, 360–1). The philosophy behind the solidarity is illustrated in sayings such as *tolong menolong* (mutual help) and *ale rasa beta rasa* (what you feel, I feel).

Nowadays, the *adat* rules are more commonly followed in villages than in cities. The term *negeri adat* denotes the rare villages that hold on to and protect the original *adat* system. As Bella, a student from the village *Soya* explained: “We think it’s a ritual from the ancestors. So we don’t destroy it. Because it is hereditary, so it is our identity. We always maintain our identity.”⁷ However, despite the difference between people who live in the city and people who live in traditional villages, all Moluccans state that they are aware of and honor their culture, precisely because they feel that *adat* culture is who they are.

There are many *acara adat* (*adat* ceremonies) that are mentioned by Moluccans as the ritual context for traditional Moluccan customs and practices. Festive activities include the receiving of guests, weddings, the celebration of the harvest, and *makan patita*, a communal dinner whereby everyone shares homemade food. Ritual activities include the cleaning, closure, opening, or building of the *baileo*, the inauguration of a new *raja*, or the so-called *masuk minta* or *kawin minta*, when a boy asks a girl to marry him. *Panas pela* literally means the heating of the *pela* bond between villages, a ceremony that is repeated each year. Moreover, when young people enter puberty or adulthood, initiation rituals mark the transition. Funerals fall under the category of sorrowful ceremonies, and practical activities, like building a house together, should also be seen as *acara adat*.

Clothes, dance, language, and music are the inherent elements that together form the package of *adat* ceremonies.⁸ Traditional clothes are called *pakaian adat*. The red headband or red cloth, the *ikat kepala*, is the most visible and well-known symbol of the *Alifuru* people. In traditional villages, men wear the headband after initiation. During rituals, red scarfs are often worn around the neck. The traditional costume is called *kebaya*. For girls, the costume consists of a long skirt with a shiny motive and a white top

7 Interview with Bella Soplanit, a Master’s student at UKIM (December 18, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

8 Music will be addressed in Chapter 6.

with a tie around the belly, covered by a white, transparent blouse that has flowery, round motives and glimmering details. The hair is tied in a bun with a string of shells or pearls. For boys, the traditional costume is composed of white trousers and a white blouse, supplemented with a colored, long, open jacket. Apart from the *kebaya*, the *baju cele* is a popular garment. The checkered motive is most commonly colored in red and white. Nowadays, many modern versions are available, with symbols like the *parang* (machete) or typical natural products, like nutmeg and cloves.

There are many Moluccan dances, characterized by their own meaning, musical rhythm, and movements. The most famous are the *cakalele* and the *tari lenso*. These dances are accompanied by traditional music and the dancers wear traditional clothes. Originally, the *cakalele* is a war dance, performed in preparation for headhunting or war (Bartels 1994, 41). Today, the *cakalele* is used in several *acara adat*, such as the *panas pela*. Most often, the dance is used to welcome and protect guests, also in public and political contexts. The *cakalele* is danced by men who are in a position of attack: bended knees, low to the ground, and leaning forward. In one hand, the men hold a shield, which can either be round or thin, long, and vertical. In the other hand, the dancers hold a stick or spear. With their feet positioned crosswise, weighed down and slowly turning, the dancers move back and forth from one foot to the other, from heel to toe. At the same time, their arms drift menacingly from back to front, where they hit the shield with the stick to the rhythm played by the *tifa* drum and *totobuang* gongs.

Tari lenso is performed by women, also to welcome guests and accompanied by the *tifa* and *totobuang*. *Lenso* refers to the white handkerchiefs that the women have tied around one finger of each hand. Standing straight, the dancers move on their feet from back to front, turning their hands and arms both ahead and behind, as well as next to their bodies, which makes the handkerchiefs swing in a meditative way.

Other dances are the *maku maku* (circle dance), the *tifa* dance, *tari obor* (torch dance), and the exciting *gaba gaba* dance. The latter is danced by four men and four women. The men hold the ends of four bamboo posts and hit them on the ground and against each other in a fast rhythm. The women, moving in a circle, synchronically jump in between the bamboo posts.

Some traditional Moluccan dances are from the Moluccas and other dances have foreign influences, such as the *tari lenso* and the *katreji*, both of which come from Portugal. The *katreji*, originally a farmers' dance, is danced in male-female pairs, mostly during weddings or other parties. It is characterized by waltz music and played by the ukulele and *totobuang* or in Hawaiian style.

For some *adat* rituals, native languages (*bahasa tanah*) are used if possible. The languages relate to specific ethnic groups and places, and are spoken – among other things – in the communication with the ancestors. These native languages are now only spoken in remote (often Islamic or traditional/native) villages on the islands of Seram and Buru.⁹ Usually, only specialists know how to use the native old and sacred words in specific *adat* rituals. On Ambon, Haruku, and Saparua, especially in Christian villages, the native languages are almost lost, because the Dutch Protestant colonialists prohibited all native cultural elements in church, including language. The general secretary of the GPM (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church) stated: “The church is our language. Colonialization made the local language dead in every Christian congregation.”¹⁰ Moreover, the GPM and national political regimes of modernization also pursued a policy of banning local languages. Nowadays, rapid change because of globalization, media, and mass communication increases the loss of linguistic cultural heritage. As a minister in Haria on Saparua said: “Language is our identity. The Dutch speak Dutch, the English speak English, the Israelis speak Hebrew. We are Moluccans, but where is our language? It is not there. It is such a pity.”¹¹ *Melayu* as a *Bahasa daerah*, a language of the region, is the daily language spoken by all Moluccan people, although villages have their own dialects, which can be recognized by intonation and rhythm. Furthermore, in contemporary Moluccan society, almost everyone speaks Indonesian, especially in Ambon City.

Moluccan Native Religion

In relation to *adat*, the ancestors occupy an important position in Moluccan cosmology. Moluccan theologians and Moluccans in general use the term *agama suku*, tribal or ethnic religion, when referring to the native religion that Moluccan people adhered to before they came into contact with other religious systems (and to which some Moluccans in remote, traditional *adat* villages adhere). The native religion is an ethnic, monotheistic religion (although the religion shows several polytheistic characteristics) in which the worship of one highest God, the *Upu Lanite*, is central. The *agama suku* has formerly been classified under animism, as there are higher and

9 ‘Native’ in the sense that people adhere to Moluccan native religion, formerly referred to as ‘animism’ by outsiders. Because I am aware of the problems associated with this word, I use ‘native religious practitioners’ to indicate a Moluccan ethnic group in indigenous-religious terms.

10 Interview with Elifas Maspaitela (November 19, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

11 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua). Translation by the author.

lower gods of which the ancestors, the *tete-nene-moyang*, also form part. Ancestors are seen as a kind of 'living dead,' who can intervene in the lives of human beings and with whom one can get in contact (Patty 2018, 57–8; Ririhena 2003, 24).

Somewhere halfway through my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to visit the native village Yalahatan, on the south coast of Seram. The description below serves as an impression of indigenous *adat* life, which is often invoked in general stories that research participants told me about Moluccan tradition.

When me and my friend approached Yalahatan, we encountered a large group of men with bare chest and red cloth, on their way to the swamp in the jungle to bury a deceased, old woman. In the village, we were received by a family that lives in a contemporary home: a very hot concrete building with a corrugated iron roof. Inside, there were no windows or furniture. On dusty plastic floor mats, we drank a cup of tea, surrounded by many others who were sitting or lying on the ground and were watching TV. The bedrooms were located behind several curtains. In the adjacent room, there was a kitchen where a group of women was cooking dinner in a large pot on both a kerosene paraffin stove and on natural fire. The smoke tickled our noses and eyes.

Three different clans live in Yalahatan. The village is situated at the foot of a mountainous jungle terrain of the deepest and brightest green colors that I have ever seen in my life. Everywhere, the coconut trees rise out of this dense canopy of color, as little tropical parasols. Stone houses alternate with traditional houses, made of the wood and leaves of the sago tree. The houses where the families of the clan leaders live and the *baileo* are located in the middle of the village. Sago trees and palm trees are used for these higher constructions that are standing on posts. On the corners, the images of the clan totems, linked to origin myths, are visible. At the edge of the village stands a little secluded hut, intended for female initiation and childbirth. When girls have their first menstruation, they have to spend one month inside, keeping the fire on and receiving water and cooked food in bamboo tubes. After one month – or more; when another girl joins and the counting starts again – the initiated girls are ritually washed, after which their teeth are filed during a painful procedure.

Village life is characterized by the drying of cloves, the peculiar sharp smell of which can be recognized from afar. Village women are able to squat down for ages, washing clothes and dishes at the public water source. Naked little children run and play around. The hunters wear red

cloth and a rope around their hips and carry machetes, spears, bows, and guns. Elderly people only speak the native language. Knowledge about the religion and history of each clan is highly secret. The villagers fear the spirits and punishments of the clan-related ancestors, whom they satisfy with material fines.

In the evening, lying on a thin mat underneath my mosquito net in the excruciating heat, I pondered my experiences in Yalahatan in the absolute darkness and silence that was only interrupted by the sounds of dogs and chickens, and the light of innumerable stars.

Moluccan Identity

Although knowledge about *adat*, the ancestors, and related traditional practices has been decreasing, the associated values remain important in the lives of all Moluccan people. However, one should not forget to look beyond the traditional *adat* system for a (general) characterization of Moluccan culture and identity. Research participants metaphorically described the character of Moluccans as the sago tree: rough from the outside and soft on the inside. In their own view, Moluccans are generally outspoken, loud, and honest. People easily judge others and love to laugh. Moluccans do not shy away from their emotions and are perpetually loyal to persons whom they regard as family. The family is also the place where the core, cultural value of respect is taught and passed down – respect for elderly people, leaders, and acquaintances.¹²

Moluccan people love music and singing, from before they are born to after they have died. Someone explained to me that, in every family, at least one person can be found who has a good voice, because that is Moluccan identity: “People internalize music in their life. Music is in the Moluccan DNA. [...] We have the rhythm in our soul.”¹³ A beautiful interpretation that I heard is the idea that the sound of the waves of the sea causes the musicality of Moluccan people. Moluccans have a high degree of musical intuition. Moluccan voices have many different colors and people especially love harmony and middle frequencies.

Traditional Moluccan music is specifically seen as an important part of Moluccan culture and identity. A musician narrated: “Music is a cultural

¹² The characterization of Moluccan people is based on how Moluccan people describe and see themselves as a people. I am aware of the generality of the characterization. The description is meant to show how Moluccan people themselves construct their cultural and ethnic identity.

¹³ Interview with Jacky Manuputty, GPM minister and peace worker (November 26, 2019, Amahusu).

identity of humans. When you travel to a certain place and people ask, 'where are you from?' 'what do you have?' I answer I have music."¹⁴ Music is played everywhere, from the beach to the mountain. Traditional music is regarded as heritage, containing cultural values that bring this music in touch with people's feelings. A minister explained: "When hearing this music, Moluccan people unite. We have our land; we have our culture. Wherever you live, the sounds of the instruments certainly cause tears."¹⁵

Nevertheless, Moluccan people grow up in a globalized world with many circulating music styles, which merge the ethnic and modern together in Moluccan culture. Church music is also part of this constellation. Church music accompanies many life stages of Moluccan Christians. The boundaries between music in traditional culture and in church culture cease to exist, as, for instance, Moluccan mothers sing Christian songs as lullabies while rocking their babies, and as traditional Moluccan songs become part of Protestant liturgy. For Moluccan Christians, their culture and faith are one, indivisible identity. One of the informants stated: "My identity as Moluccan and my identity as Christian are the same identity."¹⁶

According to Bartels (1994, 422–5), the core of Moluccan ethnic identity still lies inside the cultural values of the *agama Nunusaku*. Through *adat*, together with Christianity or Islam, this common identity is being preserved to this day. However, Moluccan identity does not have a single, static core (as is the case for all identity constructions), because Moluccan identity has always been blended. Minister Jacky Manuputty explained that the only single Moluccan identity is diversity. From the early days, *Maluku* has been a place of plurality and migration, where languages, cultures, and religions are exchanged. Mixture is literally in the blood of the Moluccan people. At the same time, many Moluccans experience a fundamental continuity in their cultural identity, whether one's connection to traditional culture is strong or not. One of the ministers with whom I spoke made the comparison with a container of water and a drop of blood. The more water, the less visible the blood. However, the blood continues to be there, just like the memory and feeling of Moluccanness. In other words, Moluccan identity is not only perceived to be a construct, but also as holding something ancient of the ancestors. When Moluccans move to other places, they bring their

14 Interview with Maynard Reynolds Nathanael Alphons (Rence Alphons), musician and leader of a children music group (November 1, 2019, Tuni).

15 Interview with Jeffrey Leatimia, GPM minister (December 5, 2019, Haria, Saparua). Translation by the author.

16 Interview with Jance Rumahuru, theologian and teacher at the IAKN (another school in Ambon City) (December 2, 2019, Ambon).

tradition. An artist beautifully stated: “That’s me. What you have yourself, you have to hold on to, because it’s where you come from. You have to be proud! Because if there is no Moluccan identity, who am I?”¹⁷

Colonial and Religious History

The Moluccas have always attracted foreigners because of their spices (Bartels 2010, 225). In the first century AD, the islands were already known in the Roman empire. Trade between the archipelago, China, and India also started in this period. Through merchants, contact originated with other religions, such as Hinduism (Patty 2018, 63). Arabic traders transported spices to the Persian Gulf and introduced Islam to the Moluccas from the fifteenth century onward. Moluccans learnt about the lifestyle of these Islamic tradesmen, but were not forced to adopt the Islamic religion (Bartels 2010, 225; Patty 2018, 65–71). In 1534, the Portuguese brought Catholicism to the Moluccas. The Roman Catholic church quickly set up missionary work to win souls, which happened via mass baptism. Ultimately, the Portuguese lost the battle over a trade monopoly on spices. The Dutch arrived on the Moluccas in 1605, and the VOC – the United East India Company – established this monopoly. Although the Dutch presence was motivated purely by economic gain through the trade in cloves and nutmeg – leaving a trace of violence and destruction behind – along the way, Calvinism was introduced (Patty 2018, 73, 77). After 1815, in particular, the Dutch tried to reform Moluccan Christianity to Protestantism (Bartels 2010, 241). Strands of Pietism also played a significant role in the attempt to evangelize Moluccan culture and to promote a ‘triumphalist’ Christianity, which refers to a perspective of superiority in relation to people of other religions. Local culture was qualified as ‘pagan.’ The legacy of this endeavor – to separate Moluccan existential expressions from Christianity – is still strong.

The VOC became bankrupt in 1799 and two periods of seven years of English domination (from 1796 and from 1810) resulted in better circumstances for the Moluccans and an intensified focus on religious conversion. Moreover, political decisions offered expanded possibilities for the work of missionary organizations. Although the administration in Batavia directly controlled the Protestant Church of the Dutch East Indies, known as the *Indische Kerk*, the colonial authorities allowed the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) to enter the colony after 1848 (Kruithof 2014, 61–2). Josef Kam worked

17 Interview with Rudi Fofid, poet and peace worker (December 3, 2019, Ambon).

for the NZG and is known as ‘the apostle of the Moluccas.’ During his initial months in the Moluccas, he had already baptized more than 1500 children. Kam recognized the essential value of education. He organized the supply of Christian teachers, offered catechism lessons, and printed the Bible and Christian school books in Malay. Most importantly, Kam worked through music and singing. He imported several organs, he printed psalm books in the lingua franca (Malay), and – making use of available natural materials – he introduced bamboo flutes for the accompaniment of congregational singing (Patty 2018, 86–90).

In the first instance, Protestantism adapted to and interacted with *adat*, resulting in localized religious forms (Ririhena 2003: 37; Bartels 2010, 244). Gradually, Christianity became an Ambonese cultural identity marker, called *agama Ambon*. In 1935, the Moluccan Protestant church was granted autonomy.

Independent Indonesia

On August 17, 1945, after the cruel occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese during the Second World War, Sukarno and Hatta declared Indonesia independent. A bloody war followed, in which the Netherlands tried to recuperate its colony, making use of the KNIL army (the royal Dutch Indian army), which, for an important part, consisted of recruited Moluccan men. Their Protestant religion and military duties on the Dutch side, plus the economic and social privileges granted to the Moluccan Christian elites, gave the Moluccans their nickname of ‘black Dutchmen.’ This reality resulted in the myth of Moluccans’ perpetual loyalty to the Dutch (Bartels 1994, 255–6). Under international pressure from the United Nations, a decolonization process was started in 1949. The Netherlands recognized the Republic of Indonesia. However, discontent among many Moluccans about the decision to turn Indonesia into a republic instead of a federalist state led J.H. Manuhutu to declare the RMS (the Republik Maluku Selatan or the Republic of the South Moluccas) on April 25, 1950. Although the Indonesian army defeated the RMS soldiers, and although the RMS has never exercised authority over the south Moluccas, the RMS continues to be a highly sensitive topic.

As Robert Hefner explains (2018, 1, 4), Indonesia is a richly complex country and home to more than 400 ethnic groups. As has been true for the development of all modern societies, attempts were made to “establish ground rules and sensibilities for public co-existence and civic recognition,” by which identity-based groupings are to relate to each other (Hefner 2018, 5). Important in this respect is the Indonesian state ideology that is called

Pancasila, the five points of righteousness. The first principle affirms that the state is based on the belief in a singular and almighty God (*Tuhan yang Maha Esa*). Hence, Indonesia is a religious nation, not a secularist state. It is important to realize that the first principle, in the original form, included seven words “that stipulated that the state was obliged to carry out Islamic shariah for Muslim adherents” (Hefner 2018, 212). The original principle is famously called the Jakarta Charter. One day after the Declaration of Independence, Hatta encouraged the committee to delete the seven words, because of the danger that Christian areas in eastern Indonesia might withdraw from the republic if the Indonesian state implemented Islamic law. The removal resulted in the constitutional reality that, although approximately eighty-seven percent of the Indonesian population identifies as Muslim, Indonesia does not have one religion as the state religion.¹⁸ The first principle of Pancasila recognizes six religions (*agama*) as official religions: Islam; Catholicism; Protestantism; Hinduism; Buddhism; and Confucianism (Hefner 2018, 211–2). Moreover, the 1945 constitution states that “under certain conditions, religious freedom can be limited, especially when it imperils the rights and freedoms of others, or is in some way deleterious to the moral considerations, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society” (Hefner 2018, 212). Since the final years of Indonesia’s ‘Guided Democracy’ and during the authoritarian New Order regime, this clause has been used to justify restrictions on religious freedoms (Hefner 2018, 212). In 2017, Indonesia’s Constitutional Court affirmed the rights of people adhering to other religions or faiths outside the country’s officially recognized religions. The court recommended an extra ‘believers of the faith’ category. In light of the increase of intolerance towards minorities, the court stated that Indonesians would not be required to identify their religion on national identification cards. The ruling has been interpreted as a positive step towards religious freedom, as, for example, people who did not choose one of the recognized religions had limited access to education, restricted employment opportunities, and were denied legal marriage.

The first president of Indonesia was Sukarno, who ruled from 1951 to 1967. The national motto, ‘Unity in Diversity,’ was established with the Declaration of Independence. The motto represents the congruence underlying the astonishing variety of peoples and cultures within the nation’s borders.

18 As Aritonang and Steenbrink (2008, 189–90) describe, the Islamic faction of the Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) agreed with the decision, because the ‘belief in the oneness of God’ is not contrary to Islam, and because a win in the general election was expected, after which the Jakarta Charter could be reinstated. However, this reinstatement never happened.

Since the beginning of the existence of the Indonesian republic, the contest between Muslim and secular (which is a broad category) nationalists has been at the core of Indonesian politics, relating to disputes over religion and citizenship.¹⁹ The first group strives for religiously differentiated citizenship, whereas the second group works with the notion of a people united by a common culture – thus, advocating for universal citizenship (Hefner 2018, 12–3).

In the late 1950s, the Indonesian Communist Party became the largest communist party in the non-communist world. The party mainly consisted of ethnic Javanese and non-Muslim minorities. The popularity of the party was based on the opposition toward an Indonesian Islamic state. After a failed coup in 1965, conservative army generals mobilized religious organizations to hunt down communists. In six months, half a million alleged communists died (Hefner 2018, 14).

The second president, Suharto, ruled from 1967 to 1998. Suharto reduced the number of official political parties to three, and elections were reduced to state-managed affairs (Hefner 2018, 14). Suharto's New Order regime was characterized by Indonesian centralization, which effectively meant 'Javanization.' Javanese culture had to become Indonesian culture. The 'trickle down' paradigm prioritized Java and stigmatized people far from the center. Under the umbrella of 'development' and 'modernization,' equal rights were disrespected, as well as local traditions. Some Moluccans feel that the political regimes have disadvantaged *Maluku* as a place and people.²⁰

During Suharto's regime, Muslim cultural influence grew steadily. In the 1960s, mandatory religious education in public schools was introduced, which also led to the decline of local variants of Islam. The concept of religion, or *agama*, was not extended to native religions or localized traditions, which were seen as syncretic spiritual beliefs or even as superstitions (Hefner 2018, 217). The New Order promoted a more circumscribed interpretation of the Pancasila. Islamists have interpreted sections on 'God's Oneness' in the constitution to mean that the state has the right to limit full rights of

19 For example, the Darul Islam was a rebel and separatist movement that had the goal to erect an Islamic state (Negara Islam Indonesia – NII). This state has even been proclaimed twice (Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008, 195).

20 For example, the Indonesian government tried to unify and standardize many structures in Indonesia according to Javanese models. Moreover, the policy of *transmigrasi* (resettlement of Javanese farmers in the Moluccas, aimed at relieving economic pressure in densely populated areas on Java) caused resentment among Moluccan people, whose land is expropriated and who feel that the central government wanted to destroy *adat* in order to impose a uniform national culture (Bartels 1994, 33).

religious expression to citizens who profess a 'religion' recognized by the Ministry of Religion. Furthermore, the presidential edict on blasphemy became a national law in 1969 (Hefner 2018, 15). The Blasphemy Law allows the state to take action against people who defame any of the recognized religions of Indonesia (Hefner 2018, 215).²¹ Since the beginning of the Suharto regime, Muslims and Christians have felt threatened by each other. Long-heard claims against the Indonesian Christian minority, in the words of Aritonang (2018, 260), have been that the Christians seek to "dominate the nation through evangelism, education, health ministry, the founding of new churches, the economy and business, and the control of government positions."²²

After the fall of the New Order in 1998, the democratic renewal consisted of expansions of press freedom, legalization of independent political parties, administrative decentralization, and constitutional amendments for strengthening religious freedom (Hefner 2018, 17–8). Regarding the latter, however, the amendments did not protect public practices associated with religion. During the same Reformation period, conservative Islamists proclaimed that shariah law is of higher standing than national law. Such groups have been trying to restrict the building of Christian churches and have been using the frameworks of decentralization to implement regional bylaws that promote shariah-compliant behavior.²³ Although not on a national level, conservative Islamists have secured representation on the semi-governmental Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI). The MUI, for instance, has issued *fatwas* that condemn liberalism, secularism, and pluralism as un-Islamic (Aritonang 2018, 262). Nevertheless, Indonesia still has a strong network of intellectuals, activists, and organizations of multi-religious backgrounds that commit to multi-religious citizenship (Hefner 2018, 212–20).

21 As Hefner (2018, 215) explains, the law had far-reaching consequences: "It 1) affirms the state's right to restrict religious activity in the name of public order, 2) distinguishes a higher and more legally authoritative category of 'religion' (*agama*) from a less extensively protected category of 'spiritual beliefs' (*kepercayaan*), 3) authorizes the state to take action against those who show 'enmity' toward or otherwise misuse, dishonor, or deviate from state-recognized religions, and 4) encourages the state in conjunction with religious authorities in society to protect orthodox religion from religious deviation."

22 At the same time, the New Order regime developed a pluralistic variety of Islamic education, whose educators led the way in the development of a democratic curriculum of civic education (Hefner 2018, 17).

23 The building of a place of worship requires the consent of ninety congregants and sixty people of other faiths, a construction permit, and the approval of the Interreligious Harmony Forum (Aritonang 2018, 260–1).

Indonesian Christians are well-represented among the higher economic, political, public, intellectual, and artistic ranks, although they comprise less than ten percent of the population (Hefner 2018, 218).²⁴ As Aritonang (2018, 257–9) describes, among the many denominations and organizations, the Moluccan Protestant church is one of the biggest Protestant churches, and the Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations are the fastest growing. The latter's evangelical efforts have increased Christian-Muslim tensions in Indonesia. The Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (DGI, the Council of Churches in Indonesia) is an ecumenical institution, established in 1950. In 1984, the name DGI became Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (PGI, Communion of Churches in Indonesia). Most Charismatic and Pentecostal churches do not form part of this ecumenical institution (Aritonang 2018, 259).

Inter-religious coexistence within the framework of the independent nation has always been a contested matter. Nevertheless, one should not forget that after the return to electoral democracy in 1998–99 (before that, Indonesia had thirty-two years of authoritarian rule), Indonesia has become the third largest democracy of the world. Furthermore, Indonesia is seen as one of the freest countries in Southeast Asia. It is growing rapidly economically, and women are prominent in higher societal positions (Hefner 2018, 3–4, 19). Despite the continuing challenges regarding religion and citizenship, the tradition of an inclusive, civic Indonesian national identity and a widely used national language have proven resilient in the consciousness of many Indonesian (including Moluccan) citizens (Aspinall 2011, 312).

Ethnic Destruction and Revival

At present, the younger generation of Moluccan people no longer have memories of a colonial past or the RMS. This generation has been educated according to pan-Indonesian, nationalist ideas. Almost all Moluccans identify themselves as Indonesians, while being proud of their Moluccan identity as well (Bartels 1994, 288–9).

In recent years, a revival of interest for Moluccan traditional culture is happening, which is also related to changes in political policy. Democracies after the regime of Suharto, with the current president (at the time of the fieldwork in 2019) being Joko Widodo, encouraged a focus on local identities (Prabowo Subianto became president in October, 2024). Centralized power made way for self-managing autonomy and authority of Indonesian regions,

24 Aritonang (2018, 264) states that, in recent years, few Christians have been appointed to high positions in the army or police.

which ignited a sense of 'original' identity. At Moluccan schools, children learn about local language, dance, music, and Moluccan traditions. For example, school children start to play traditional instruments, such as the *suling* (horizontally played bamboo flute). Also, in official political contexts, traditional Moluccan music groups are invited to perform their local music. Furthermore, Indonesia has many so-called culture gardens (cultural centers), *taman budaya*. The centers aim at the preservation, development, and education of traditional culture.

The Moluccan Protestant church and local government are partners in the renewed focus on local culture. The general secretary of the GPM stated that the church has to adapt to political policies to serve the people. Being part of Indonesia is an important element of the eschatological basis of the GPM. In turn, government officials always visit religious events to show their involvement. Also, political positions are strictly divided between people of different religions (in the Moluccan case between Muslims and Christians).

When Indonesia became independent, the GPM tried to adapt to the national context. The GPM consciously separated from RMS ideals.²⁵ The GPM, together with the local government, succeeded in a purification of Protestantism from the 1960s onward. This purification was intended to eradicate *adat* and ancestor worship. The basis for this effort was a document called *pesan tobat*, which literally means 'message of repentance.' During the synod meeting in 1960, the GPM called for a reformation of the church. Everything that was not directly related to scripture became regarded as pagan. In other words, the church broke with Moluccan cultural traditions to form a central part of national Indonesian society. The theological idea that drove this effort was that, without cultural influence, one could become a 'pure' Christian (Patty 2018, 157).

The Moluccan Conflict

The diminution of local cultural values is perhaps one of the reasons for a bloody civil war between Christians and Muslims in 1999. The war experiences are forever stored in Moluccan memory and always play a central role in current religious, political, and personal issues. The war marked a surprising divergence from the *pela* alliance system that assured the peaceful and much-praised coexistence between Christian and Islamic villages. The religious violence resulted in the deaths of thousands of people

25 For more information about the history of the GPM, see the book *Delapan Dekade GPM: Teologi GPM dalam Praksis Berbangsa dan Bermasyarakat* (2015), by Elizabeth Marantika, Steve Gaspersz, Markus Takaria, and Elifas Tomix Maspaitela.

and numerous displacements. People were killed in sadistic ways with home-made and primitive weapons. Mosques, churches, homes, and whole villages were burnt to the ground.

Interestingly, religion was not the initial cause of the conflict. Economic, political, and social disputes paved the way for increased tensions that resulted in the war. Firstly, the economic crisis, which started in Japan in 1997, disseminated across Asian countries. This crisis hit Muslims and Christians differently, due to unequal economic positions and functions (Van Liere & Van Dis 2018, 376). Secondly, the rapid democratic transition at the national level caused a fear of marginalization among Moluccan Christians. When the New Order regime of Suharto fell in 1998, during the Indonesian Revolution, the Christian positions of privilege and dominance – based on a colonial legacy – changed (Bertrand 2002, 85). The resulting situation of increased Islamic visibility, the perceived loss of high-up positions, and the openness regarding the renegotiation of resources polarized the communities. Thirdly, the historical division and inequality between Muslims and Christians and the large immigration flow of Muslims to the Moluccan islands fueled the tensions. Moreover, the arriving Muslims were not affiliated with customary *adat* rules, such as the *pela* system. Together, these factors caused the Moluccan war, which only subsequently (or during the conflict) became framed in religious terms. Religion as identity marker was mapped onto the conflict (Bräuchler 2003, 125).

Spyer (2008, 207) observes the effect of what she calls the ‘sedimentation of violence.’ The hardening of religious communal identities must be understood as an outcome of the conflict. Over time, and to a much greater extent than in previous times, religion acquired a publicly visible dimension. For example, nowadays, almost all Islamic Moluccan women wear the hijab whereas, before the conflict, this was not the case. Officially, the war ended in 2002 with the signing of the *Malino* peace agreement. Nevertheless, violence continued until 2004 and reverberated up to 2011.²⁶

Sitting at the kitchen table of the well-known minister Jacky Manuputty, surrounded by the tropical sounds of the open little garden, I asked him about the war. For many people, it is hard to talk about the euphemistically called *kerusuhan*, the ‘unrest’ or ‘riot.’ Minister Manuputty was one of the few persons who was able to share his experiences. As only his own words do justice to this traumatic Moluccan history, an excerpt is presented below.

26 A novel-like Dutch book about the Moluccan civil war and people's experiences in this war is *Het Verdriet van Ambon: Een Geschiedenis van de Molukken* (2008), by Tjitske Lingsma.

I participated in the conflict since the first day till the end. The next question that always is addressed to me is: why do you dedicate yourself so deep[ly] in the peace process? I pay back my debt. I never carried a gun, but my prayer is more powerful than the most powerful gun that is produced. Because we sacralized the conflict, it became a stupid sacred conflict. By even blessing the youth groups, the grassroots, they could sacrifice themselves. [...] But I had no choice sometimes. We have been forced to choose: kill or be killed. So don't judge from the normal situation. You cannot just sit while the crowd came, killing your pregnant wife, taking the fetus out. Or eating the dead body. You have to defend yourself! Your beloved ones! [...] After the conflict I got numb for two years. No emotion at all. No emotion at all! I feel no feeling. I cannot cry, I cannot laugh. For two years! Every day I took the dead body, the brain from the street, put it in the helmet. Almost every day. I was on the street; I was on the battleground. I prayed for the people. For the people who have been killed, for the people who want to kill. It's like my daily life. I let my emotion behind.²⁷

Experiences such as the one above are countless. Ministers needed to bury or burn killed people in overcrowded graves. People, more dead than alive, had to flee into the mountains, living there for eight months with too little food for too many people. Traumatized young people were child soldiers during the conflict. The children believed they were fighting a sacred war and killed an innumerable amount of people.²⁸

With all these violent, emotional stories in my head, I felt uneasy when I drove through a flat, green grassland on Saparua island. The terrain somehow looked unnatural, although I could not say why. Then, at the moment when I saw the carcass of a mosque, my friend told me that this place used to be the Islamic village Iha. Twenty years ago, the village was burned down by Christians. Even as an outsider, I could sense the pain of these ever-lasting memories.²⁹

27 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

28 I met Ronald, a former leader (ten years old at the time) of Christian child soldiers, whom Jacky Manuputty helped to overcome his traumas. Nowadays, as an artist, Ronald promotes interreligious peace. For an impression of the experience of this child soldier, see the short documentary made by the BBC on YouTube: "I Can't Remember How Many I Killed ... Aged 10' BBC News."

29 For more information about the religious conflict in the Moluccas, see Lensink, Jip. 2021. "Contextual Theology as Heritage Formation: Moluccan Culture, Christianity, and Identity." *Exchange* 50 (3-4): 238-69. In this article, I analyze two phases of alignment between the GPM

Muslim-Christian Relations

At present, everyone repeats the official discourse of brotherhood, with *kita semua saudara* and *basudara* being the words that can be heard most in relation to this topic.³⁰ The Moluccan Protestant church aligns with this political ideal of brotherhood. One of the strongest policy markers of the GPM is the promotion of peace based on the model of *pela*. The GPM is officially referred to as Gereja Orang Basudara.³¹ In practice, the principle of brotherhood can be noticed in various ways. For example, almost all ministers have regular contact with their Islamic partners. Ministers pay their respect on Islamic celebration days, and imams visit churches during Easter and Christmas. Furthermore, there have been interreligious services and sermons with musical collaborations. However, several years ago, a large public discussion originated about the boundaries of such collaborations. Many people criticized the effort, especially regarding the religious content of lyrics. As one of my informants carefully commented, it is the top of the hierarchy of the church that organizes these events. The religious leaders have a political responsibility to show stability, and although these religious and political elites agree within their own inner discourse, there is a gap that causes friction at the grassroots level. Thus, while it is important to recognize the positive effects of interreligious peace efforts, for many activists, artists, and theologians, who are involved in societal issues, much more can still be done. A deeper understanding is necessary to take the next step of changing ingrained mentalities.

The conflict caused and increased segregation between Islamic and Christian villages, which for a large part endures up to today. Especially in more interreligious areas, there is a continuous effort to rebuild peaceful relationships on the basis of shared cultural traditions. A Moluccan student, who lives in the multi-religious area of Poka, explained how she, as a child, had many Islamic friends: "I played with them, I ate with them, I slept in their house, I helped selling food with them for Muslim celebrations, [and] I went to the mosque with them."³² The *kerusuhan* could end by remembering this communal cultural awareness: all Moluccan people are siblings through the ancestors.

and the political project of Indonesia. It situates the conflict in a political period focused on regional autonomy.

30 The statement means that 'we are all siblings.' *Basudara* refers to *satu darah*, one blood, and represents the idea that as brothers or sisters, people shared the same womb.

31 Gereja Orang Basudara means 'the church of brotherhood.'

32 Interview with Verliany Riasty Vindy Manunay (Vally), a Master's student at UKIM (December 11, 2019, Ambon).

At the same time, minister Manuputty stated that stories about the peaceful relationship between Muslims and Christians through the system of *pela* do not conform to reality – neither in the past, nor in the present. In reality, *pela* is not a fully cultural inclusive ideal of brotherhood, as it is traditionally based on ideas of biological genealogy via the ancestors. Therefore, in Manuputty’s opinion, *pela* excludes others, such as migrants or people from other ethnicities. In that respect, some Moluccans have the opinion that local Moluccan culture should not be romanticized, as it has been changing during colonial times, the postcolonial New Order, the Reformation Order, and also through a contemporary radicalization of Islamic movements. In addition, other common grounds need to be sought, such as human needs or creative activities. Deeply layered mindsets about ‘the other’ need to be deconstructed on the basis of contemporary, dynamic local contexts.

Reconciliation initiatives also work from this perspective. Minister Jacky Manuputty and poet Rudi Fofid, self-declared ‘peace provocateurs,’ use physical theater, music, photography, literature, painting, and other arts to organize interpersonal meetings. Rudi Fofid, who lost his home, father, and brother in the conflict, aims to protect the peace of *Maluku*. Fofid made the comparison with a human being who needs to protect his/her health. In the same light, Fofid wants to prevent the Moluccas from being ‘sick’ again, by using art as medicine: “I never felt hatred, I never have been angry, I never wanted to split with Islam. The one that killed my father was in north *Maluku*, in the atmosphere of war there. I therefore work as usual, live with Muslims as usual.”³³

Moluccan music is used as an instrument for peace. The most well-known symbol of togetherness is the musical collaboration between Christian and Islamic music. The resilience and perseverance of many Moluccans is apparent. While the reconciliation project is a never-ending process, interrupted by many (political) difficulties, people sacrifice themselves to promote peace.

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2. Ministry, Music, and Meaning: The Religious Context

Abstract: The Moluccan Protestant church is historically based on Dutch Reformed Protestantism. The organizational structure of the church consists of hierarchical roles, such as the synod board, regional boards, and church councils. Ministers are educated at the theological university. The theological vision of generations of ministers represents the curriculum over the years, including the recent contextual approach. The liturgical structure is fixed, and the church buildings have a similar appearance. The author describes the history of hymnbooks and musical accompaniment in the church, as well as present-day vocal and musical practices. Black clothes, a solemn atmosphere, and choirs are important aspects of the church culture. Moluccan religiosity is taught within families and through the GPM (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church) curriculum.

Keywords: Moluccan Protestant church; Church music; Hymnbook; Choir; Church building; Liturgy.

We sit in an immense white building, characterized by neo-classical elements and decorated with yellow lanes by the door and windows. Columns rise up towards the sunny blue sky, carrying the red renovated roof. Imagined echoing sounds of the trumpet, played by a sculptured angel, roll over the green grass that stretches out in front of this church.

From the outer looks of the building, the age of the stones is not directly visible. We are in Noloth, a village in the far north-east on the island of Saparua. After following the only paved, straight road on the back of a motorcycle, along the homes in Tiouw, Tuhaha, Mahu, and Ihamahu, we arrive at this unexpected construction that is located at the brightest and bluest coast I have ever seen in my life. Here stands one of the oldest Protestant churches on the Moluccas, built by the Dutch in 1860. From then until the recent past, the roof was made of the large leaves of the widely available sago tree, now replaced by a facade that resists the ravages of time.

While apologizing for his simple work clothes and bare feet, a member of the church council in Noloth takes the time to tell me about his tasks as a servant of God. The devout man, who has already been working for the council for ten years, talks about his role in serving the community, about all facets of church services, and about music. Suddenly and quickly, two seemingly simple questions become memorable moments.

'Why did you want to become part of the church council?'

'Did you go to Sunday school yourself when you were young?'

Both answers are exactly the same: emotion.

His eyes filled with tears and his voice unsteady, the old man explains with full religious conviction that he serves the work of God in this world. Then, the tears start to stream and the voice breaks: '*Tiga puluh lima tahun, nona.*'

Thirty-five years he has been working as a Sunday school teacher.

Seng ada di luar Tuhan.

Hidup hanya untuk Tuhan.

He only lives for God, because there is nothing beyond God.

The man sighs deeply and the sentence ends in an almost silent whisper.

The simplicity is the all-encompassing complexity.

Blown away by his feelings of religiosity, I leave the church.

The victorious Jesus, nailed to the cross, watches me walking to the sea.

Literally walking on colonial ground, it was in this church, built by fellow Dutchmen in the past, that I felt the meaning of Christianity for Moluccan people. Never before during the research was I as touched by other people's devotion. I felt strange. How could something brought by the colonizers be so emotional? I realized that in a hybrid place like the Moluccas, contemporary Protestantism is built through historic layers of encounter. Dutch-Moluccan theologian Simon Ririhena (2014, 41) made a comparison with the Moluccan delicacy called *spekkoek*, which consists of countless colored layers that are cooked in a lengthy process. Every religious layer has its own taste and color, influencing each other and together forming a whole. The foundation of the *spekkoek* still consists of Moluccan religious and cultural identity from the time before missionization and colonization, while colonial Christianity is also an authentic layer of contemporary Moluccan Protestantism. Colonial church culture and traditional Moluccan culture have been shaping each other through a dialectical relationship. This chapter examines the layers of the dynamic religious *spekkoek*, to sketch the historical and present context of Moluccan Protestantism. The cultural pasts and presents, described in Chapter 1, are the context that forms the starting point for a description of the GPM (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church), its church services, its church culture, and its church music. These subjects, in turn, serve as parts of the context (which I call the 'grammar') that discursively and practically structures Moluccan contextual theology.

Gereja Protestan Maluku

With the *pesan tobat*, the GPM intended to eradicate perceived syncretism from the Moluccan Protestant theological practice and faith, believing that Moluccan cultural heritage is not part of Christianity.¹ However, in the 1980s, the GPM realized, as the general secretary stated, that "we can't live our faith without culture," and that "culture is related to our hearts."² Thus, whereas in 1960, Moluccan culture was banned from church, GPM's current policy revalues Moluccan cultural identity as part of Christian religion. This shift must be seen as the contextual approach that started to develop after 2000.

An important moment in the continuing contextual process was the synodal decision to introduce the so-called ethnic service (*ibadah etnis*) in

1 I will refer to the GPM with 'they,' to indicate the total body of persons behind this organization.

2 Interview with Elifas Maspaitela. Translation by the author.

2018. The ethnic service offers a place for and preserves Moluccan cultural traditions in the church service. The ethnic service functions by the grace of certain boundaries up to which culture can be accommodated in church. For instance, no other powers than God can be invoked, such as the spirits of the ancestors.

The introduction of the ethnic service is a challenging endeavor, since many people have grown up with the prohibition of mixing culture and religion. For these people, then, the ethnic service seems to suddenly allow *adat* in the church. Moreover, centuries of Calvinist colonization – and in addition, the *pesat tobat* – bear their traces up to the present, leaving a gap between the Word of God and culture.

Hierarchy, Liturgy, and Doctrine

The GPM has over 700 congregations dispersed across many islands. The GPM is led by the synod board, which is chosen for five years and located in the city of Ambon. The board works closely together with social initiatives, educational institutions, international organizations, and the local government. The link between church and politics is especially strong, which is a remnant from the colonial era, when all religious matters had to feed back to the government in former Batavia. The GPM is embedded in broader national, continental, and international religious associations, such as the ecumenical Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI), the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

There are thirty-four so-called *klasis* that form the organizational leadership over the congregations in a certain region.³ Every five years, the GPM formulates new plans that the *klasis* have to execute in dialectic relation with the specific needs of the congregations.⁴ The *klasis*' task is to implement the mission and vision of the GPM through coordinating and facilitating general service, pastoral work, education, catechism, etc. One congregation can have multiple churches and consists of several 'sectors.' A sector means a group of congregants living in a certain area. A sector consists of units,

3 For example, there is one *klasis* for the islands of Saparua, Haruku, and Nusa Laut.

4 In 2019, the periodic plan was to care for and equally divide life, which referred to both human beings and nature. The GPM's periodic plans can be read in the Indonesian book *Himpunan: Pengakuan Iman, Ajaran Gereja, Pemahaman Iman*, compiled by the synod in 2019. The book has many different categories and 584 topics in total. In addition to the general plans, each *klasis* has its own missions, connected to the GPM's overarching vision. For example, in Lease, the focus is on poverty, domestic and inter-village violence, resources for living, education, health, and nature.

which comprise fifteen to twenty-five households. Every congregation has a church council (*majelis*) that assists the chair minister (*ketua majelis jemaat*). The council is democratically chosen by the church members.⁵ The church council is made up of elders and deacons. The council serves the congregation by implementing the vision of the *klasis* and finding solutions for daily problems among its congregants. Becoming part of the *majelis* is seen as a great honor, as one takes on the responsibility to serve God.

Ministers are not necessarily connected to one specific church, but operate in teams and circulate between various churches. Many ministers graduated at UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku), which is why changes in the curriculum are represented in the theologies of generations of ministers, although some ministers also change their mindsets according to theological reconceptualizations. Elderly ministers sometimes hold on to an exclusivist, legalistic theology. This view is based on a theology that is generally more in line with the type of Dutch Calvinism brought to the Moluccas in colonial times. Progressive Moluccan theologians stated that these elderly ministers repeat the things they know and close their mind to cultural influences. UKIM teacher Margaretha Hendriks expressed her opinion:

Would you give yourself a chance to broaden your vision or not? Those who just stay minister in a traditional way, they finished the theological study in those days, and they keep onto that. Some people say, madam, I still have your notes. I say: throw it in the dustbin! Read a new book!⁶

After graduation, theology students become vicars for several years. Then, they can become ministers.

Generally, ministers see their choice for a theological study as a calling. Difficult life experiences, the wish to play a significant role in society, or family members who also work for the church influenced the choice to become a minister. The daily tasks of a minister consist of decision-making, coordination, serving, communication, administration, praying, and preaching. The minister serves the people inside and outside the congregation and provokes people's thinking about who they are and ought to be. A minister explained: "We have a responsibility for embracing, for accompanying, for approaching."⁷

5 A congregation also has a liturgy and music team.

6 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks, theologian at UKIM (October 21, 2019, Ambon). The UKIM offers a Master's program for elderly ministers, to teach them new theological ideas.

7 Interview with Anonymous (December 22, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

In Moluccan society, ministers enjoy high esteem and status. Ministers live in rectories close to their church, which, in general, are modern houses with comfortable furniture. Interestingly, Protestant religion comes with ideas about what villages and buildings should look like, and with people's economic and social status serving the GPM. The minister's words are strictly followed and sometimes regarded as the words of God Himself. Congregants might feel that they have sinned if they did not listen to their minister. The organizational hierarchy, thus, comes with power structures.

The theology, doctrines, and organizational structure of the GPM are historically based on Dutch Reformed Protestantism. Although reformed doctrine comprises many aspects, the core is the centrality of God. Salvation is only achieved by the grace of Christ and the Bible should be meticulously followed.⁸ Such are the central dogmas that the majority of Moluccan Protestants adheres to. Ministers strengthen the ideas in their sermons. Conservative sermons are characterized by ministers who raise their voice to the point of screaming, looking down on the people from the pulpit, shaking their finger, and sticking their fist in the air. The words that these conservative ministers use are words like 'right' and 'wrong.' In a paternalizing way, the congregation is told what one should and should not do in order to be saved. According to progressive ministers, the core of the church continues to be very Bible- and Jesus-oriented, at the expense of taking into full account the socio-cultural context. Although contextualization has been the prevalent theological approach of the past decades, progressives feel that the church remains stuck in rules and routines. Creativity and innovation remain suspect, especially when new ideas touch the core of dogma or go against political policies. A theologian summarized:

You know, here, people still think religion is everything. Religion is God. You should follow religion as best as you can because otherwise you are being sinful. You see? And don't let anyone try to say something bad about your religion. You fight to the end! [...] And that's why they also feel that other religions are lower than us. Because we are the ones who have all the truth. We claim that, you see? So other religions need to be converted to Christianity in order to come to God. They use this Bible quotation: I am

8 I do not present an elaborate, nuanced explanation about Reformed Protestant theology and doctrines. I merely list some central aspects that Moluccan theologians named when they drew the connection between the colonial church and the present-day GPM.

the way and the truth, nobody comes to God, to the Father, except through me. So they say, no other truth outside Christianity. Still! We have it.⁹

Many theologians at UKIM intend to complement or redirect this way of legalistic, exclusivist thinking through a focus on local identity and social-cultural contexts. Considering the plurality of Moluccan society, the contextual theologians prefer a more open theology based on harmony, instead of a transposed theology that suited a Dutch context in former times.

The liturgical structure of the GPM is rigid and is the standard in every congregation. Every five years, the structure is determined and printed in a small booklet.¹⁰ There are five formats for every Sunday service each month. The fifth (only occurring if there are five Sundays that month) is a creative service. In a creative service, liturgical teams have more freedom to design the structure. This service can be used, for instance, for an ethnic service or for a more Charismatic-styled service with corresponding popular music. The liturgical structure also includes the selection of songs or hymnbooks. During the week, there are many worship services, such as the Sunday school service (*tunas*), services for men, for women, for people who have the same profession, for youth, and for families. The *Firman Tuhan* – the text from the Bible that is chosen as the basis for a sermon – is included in the liturgical planning. It is obligatory to use that text in all congregations on the same day. Sermons are also already designed. Hence, ministers can directly adopt and use the sermon, although many adapt to and reflect on the pre-made sermon according to the congregational context. Some ministers also write their own sermons.

GPM Churches

The appearance of GPM churches is roughly the same. The buildings, generally, have neo-classical elements and are high and white, with some space around (sometimes grass-covered) that is closed off by a fence.¹¹ Colored – mostly purple, yellow, and white – square-shaped flags often hang around the fence. Next to the building stands a narrow, high, concrete construction with a bell on top. A few stained-glass windows and a rectangular setup that is focused on the pulpit characterize the interiors of churches.

9 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

10 The book is called *Himpunan Liturgi* (liturgy set).

11 The buildings described here are newly built, modern ones. There are also a few older churches. These buildings are smaller, straight, simple, and made of wood. Often, such churches are situated in relatively remote places: high in the mountains or close to the sea.

Creativity can be found at the pulpit. Some pulpits are traditional, resembling Western pulpits with elaborate woodwork, for instance. Some pulpits are modern. In Ambon City, there is a pulpit shaped like a high cylinder with a crown of thorns around the top and an abstract angel on the wall behind. Some pulpits are unique, such as in the village where a gigantic, white dove flies out of a wooden wall – the wide, horizontal wings forming a little roof. In another village, the pulpit consists of a large, intensely pink seashell.

Generally, Moluccan congregants enter the churches from behind or from two sides in front. Many church buildings also have a balcony in the back. Two doors flank the pulpit, leading to spaces that are intended for the church council and ministers. Curtains colored in the liturgical decoration color cover these doors. This color changes each week, and includes the scarves worn by the ministers, the cloth on the altar, which stands in front of the pulpit next to the lectern, and the flowers on the altar. On the walls, some posters with images and quotes from the Bible announce the liturgical themes of upcoming festive events, such as Easter or Christmas.

From the first of December, when the Advent weeks that lead up to Christmas begin, the churches are perked up by the presence of big, plastic Christmas trees. The tree height represents a power struggle between congregations. The more flashing lights, signs, and movements, the better.

The description below serves as an impression of what a regular Sunday service looks like.

On my way to church, I either travel amidst the sight, smell, and sound of countless cars and scooters, or I enjoy the deep blue and green colors of the mountainous terrain with sea view, passing through small villages and the jungle.

When I arrive at the church, the ministers and *majelis* – all wearing their typical long, black robes with the scarves in the liturgical color of that week around their neck – stand in a row to shake my hand and welcome me inside the building. Quietly, I take a seat, just like the many other attendants who generally arrive early, although the service almost never begins on time. When people sit down, they say a short prayer. People color the wooden, brown benches with their beautiful Sunday clothes, shoes, and hairclips. Some are alone, some come in families, and some bring their girl- or boyfriend. If people talk, they do so in a whispering voice.

Before the service officially starts, the choir arrives, traditionally wearing a long, wide dress with collar over the clothes. The choir begins with a song to focus our minds or uses the time to practice a hymn that is less well-known among the congregants, a process that somehow always

proceeds a bit awkwardly. If the songs are musically accompanied by a band, I feel as if I am at a concert, overwhelmed by the sounds. If the songs are accompanied by the typical and most-often used synthesizer, I feel a strange mix of habituation and minor irritation, and sometimes I have to suppress my laughter. When I hear brass, I feel powerful because of my love for wind instruments. And when I hear bamboo flutes, I feel utterly fascinated.¹²

As most churches have projectors, the lines of verses and hymns that we have to sing and say are projected on the walls in front of us, alternated with dramatic religious images. After having listened to the endless announcements, the church bell rings three times. We rise and sing, while the church council enters. The minister who leads the service addresses us with ‘saudara-saudara,’ brothers and sisters, and welcomes us with a ‘syalom.’

In the excruciating heat, which makes clothes stick to the body, the service proceeds according to a strict liturgical schedule: we sit and stand, we listen and respond, we sing and pray. Some congregants, who firmly agree with what is being said, nod their heads and mumble affirmations. Some have their eyes closed in utmost concentration. Some watch their phones and whisper to their neighbors. Some flutter their fan to cool down, and some have to catch their children who have run off.

When the Word of God is read, everyone takes his or her combined Kidung Jemaat hymnbook and Bible, zips the leather, brown case open and reads along with the verses, which can be easily found through the searching system of little circles on the outside of the pages. The sermon that follows can be long, strong, loud and scary, or funny, intimate, serene, and reflective, or everything at once.

Besides the congregational hymns that we sing from the songbook, various vocal groups, consisting of men, women, children, or combinations of these, perform during the service. The polyphonic voices, led by the energetic gestures of the conductor in front, fill the church, provoking feelings of awe and joy as the quality of the singing is generally incredibly high. On special occasions, groups of children play poetic roles, by reading a story, dancing, or acting.

When the moment of the offering arrives, two collection bags are passed round – using the horizontal wooden sticks attached to the velvet

12 Naturally, my reflection about the reaction that I felt to a variety of musical accompaniment says something about me and my own religious habitus, and is not in any way a judgment about the musical accompaniment itself.

textile – under the supervision of the *majelis*, who are united by a weekly selected color of clothing. Accompanied by the sounds of happy hymns, the attendants (including the members of the singing choir) drop the money, invisibly clenched inside their fists, into the bags. This is also the time for people to walk to the two wooden, square offering boxes in front – one ‘regular’ box and one for ten percent of people’s salary.

The service ends with a prayer and blessing, after which we stand up. The people around me give me their hand and wish me a happy Sunday. Some people use this time to pose and shoot pictures in front of the church. On the way out, we again pass the line of ministers and the *majelis*. Then, we disperse into various directions – dots of colorful dresses or black suits and robes, of grey or black hair buns, of young running figures or old shuffling feet.

GPM Relations and Structures

The GPM maintains many interreligious relationships. The GPM communicates with other Christian denominations in the Moluccas and Indonesia, with Moluccan Protestant denominations in the Netherlands, and with Moluccan Islamic partners. The GPM has an interesting interdenominational relation with the Pentecostal church in *Maluku*.¹³ Some sort of competition between the two seems to be going on.¹⁴ Many young Protestant Moluccans leave the GPM for the Pentecostal church, because these young adults prefer modern church songs accompanied by live band music. Various Protestant theologians interpret the Pentecostal move in the following way: these ‘moving’ people have trouble comprehending the contextual change of the GPM to incorporate *adat*, culture, and traditional music. The Pentecostal exclusivist, evangelizing doctrine of warding off anything from local culture fits the ‘old’ Calvinist dogmas that many Christian Moluccans grew up with. The fact that many young Protestants change denomination has made the GPM adopt Charismatic ways of music and preaching, to give the service more ‘color’ and ‘dynamics,’ as several ministers and theologians explained.

During the past twelve years, in the Maranatha church in Ambon City, many kinds of worldly music have been played by many different instruments (drum, guitars, saxophone, keyboard). The music is intended to

13 Pentecostalism is known for the making of “a complete break with the past” in order to receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals should be utterly disjoined from culture (Bakker 2013, 311, referring to Meyer 1998).

14 For example, a Pentecostal public Advent service was held exactly one day before the GPM had planned a similar service. Also, GPM theologians criticize Pentecostal ways of baptism and rebaptism.

reach the youth, so that the young people can enjoy these modern styles within the GPM, and do not need to change to Pentecostalism (or to be rebaptized – a practice that many people oppose). The way of preaching also resembles Pentecostal ministers, by building tension through a flow of upgoing and down-going sounds, winding like a bow, going on and on, culminating in a climax of screams and gestures. Because the Maranatha church is located next to the synod, new theological policies and innovations are implemented fast. The Maranatha church serves as an example for other churches. The church is very popular because of the band, the mix of hymnbooks that is used – including English ecumenical songs – and the large choir, but also because of the grand space that is fully airconditioned, the high-quality sound system, the four projectors, the soft, big chairs with personal folding table, and the diversity of nationally famous music artists who are invited each week.

I characterize the mainstream Protestant/Pentecostal relationship as follows: Moluccan Protestants might shift from the GPM to Pentecostal churches because of the modern songs and music and the anti-cultural approach. The GPM, therefore, incorporates Charismatic styles of preaching and music, while adhering to a contextual theology. Although I think that the Charismatic music styles might be interpreted in practical terms (related to preventing a loss of members), ministers and church officials often see this change of music as contextualization, with the GPM responding to current changes.¹⁵

Apart from religious relations and connected worship forms, the GPM also has certain recognizable theological and organizational structures. Generally, GPM structures are upheld, and the status quo continues to be enforced. Critics state that many ‘rusted’ people stay too long in the same positions, which comes at the expense of flow and development. People who work and advocate for change have to move within the GPM layers, rules, and structures, to keep open the possibilities of change.

Nevertheless, some shifts – in comparison with past structures – are noticeable. The GPM has started to make an effort to make policy based on contextual needs. This shift is largely due to a change in leadership of the synod board, which made way for progressive men and women who have been educated at UKIM and who – through the rules of the system – slowly implement reformations. For example, the vice-president and general secretary want to use the local context to further build the Moluccan Protestant

15 The views about worship styles and theology also relate to definitions and interpretations of the word ‘contextual,’ something which I will address in Chapter 4.

church. The board envisions the GPM taking on the role of teaching people that *adat* is not prohibited in Christian belief, and that “God is not only high and far, but on the ground, in the home and in school.”¹⁶ The goals start to become achieved through close, progressive relationships with specific theologians at UKIM and with specific, popular ministers. GPM officials adopt a contextual approach and promote cultural traditions like local music, language, clothes, and dance. In the words of the vice-secretary, the GPM wants that congregants move to God with their whole heart through the soul of Moluccan society.

Church Culture and Church Music

Church music, comprising instrumental and vocal music, is part of church culture and has been evolving over time. In the Moluccan church, musical accompaniment to congregational singing started with the bamboo flute, *suling*, which was introduced by the aforementioned missionary Josef Kam.¹⁷ Kam emphasized the value of church music for accompanying church services, but he also realized the impossibility of installing organs everywhere.¹⁸ Therefore, Kam made use of the widely available, natural material bamboo, to create a local diatonic instrument that could play Western Calvinist church songs. Diatonic refers to the complete scale of seven tones (do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti), with two half tones between the e and f, and b and c.¹⁹ Since the introduction of the *suling* at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the flute has by far been the most prominent instrument in the Moluccan church. The musical accompaniment only changed some decades ago, when the trumpet slowly took over the *suling*'s position from the 1970s onward. Brass ensembles, originally played for military purposes, started to accompany congregational singing around the same time as the introduction of the keyboard (preferably the Yamaha version). The adoption of other instruments than *suling* (also the guitar, for example) gradually evolved from the 1970s to the 1980s and was accompanied by tense discussions about the appropriateness of worldly music in church and the possibility that the

16 Interview with Nik Sedubun, vice-president of the GPM (October 18, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

17 I will describe the *suling* extensively in Chapter 6.

18 Although some old Moluccan churches had organs, these organs almost all disappeared during the religious conflict, when many churches were burned down.

19 The Dutch (among others) introduced the diatonic scale and Western musical notation (*notasi balok*) to the Moluccas.

instruments might disturb religious meditational states. The popularity of the keyboard steadily increased and, after 2000, the keyboard became the most prominent church instrument. The year 2000 is also the time when the choir and song leader (*kantoria* and *prokantor*), who guide the congregation in community singing, were instituted by a synodal decision. The reasons for the popularity of the keyboard mainly have to do with the fact that people can learn to play the instrument relatively quickly and with the variety of musical effects that can be deployed. Approximately twelve years ago, the full band was introduced. The Maranatha church is the only place where an elaborate band forms the standard musical accompaniment.

The history of Moluccan church music can be viewed as a change in style from solemn to energetic, from serene to busy, from soft to loud, and from simple to variation. Whereas in former times, a tranquil atmosphere was created by slow, emotional, inspirational music with dominant tones, nowadays, church music follows popular modern trends, is flexible and free, and uses different styles, chords, and ornaments.

Most congregations use a single keyboard for their musical accompaniment and a general sound system that can play recorded music. The keyboard is almost always located in the front of the church, next to the choir. Generally, keyboard players may choose the sound effect themselves and – although I experienced that professional musicians often opt for the traditional Western organ – the echoing synthesizer sound, backed up by standardized beats and drum rhythms, is definitely preferred. In remote places, where little financial means are available, some congregations use no instruments at all, other than people's singing voices. The *suling* is still used as the standard instrument in only a few congregations in villages. In many congregations, instruments are changed per week or per service, often alternating between keyboard and trumpet or brass.

A *suling* ensemble normally consists of a fairly large and diverse group of people that sits close together on the balcony of the church (or, when a church has no balcony, the players sit in the regular church benches).²⁰ When walking or driving to church, the *suling* players can be easily identified, since they carry the bamboo flute with them in their hands. Because bamboo is a widely available, strong, and cheap material, the players stick the instruments in all kinds of cracks if they do not need their flute during the service. When musicking, the players position the instrument at a slight angle, so that their *suling* aligns with the *suling* of their neighbor.

20 The players are very young and very old. I have seen more men than women playing the instrument. Often, a *suling* group has multiple people who are relatives of each other.

The musicians always play from memory. The older generation knows all the songs by heart and the groups practice each week. The sound of the *suling* ensemble is rather shrill and high – and sometimes slightly out of tune – because of the preponderance of the first and second voices, with some deep, warm, wood sounds underneath from the lower voices.

Brass ensembles consist of instruments like the trumpet, traverse flute, saxophone, and euphonium. The players are commonly positioned in a high place, such as the balcony. It seems that, whereas some people love brass in church for the powerful atmosphere brass creates, others absolutely do not like its loudness, which can drown out people's voices. Moreover, quality plays an important role. The pressing of a keyboard tone/key results in a steady pitch, but it takes skillful musicians to blow stable, fluent, and neat wind music together.²¹

Traditional music is not often played in church, except in the new format of the ethnic service. In fact, most people associate the term 'traditional church music' with the *suling*, and not with so-called cultural instruments, such as drums and gongs.

The type of accompanying instruments strongly influences churchly atmosphere and the character of the hymns. The same song from the same hymnbook sounds decidedly different when it is played by another ensemble of instruments in a slower or faster tempo.²²

The History of Songbooks

With regards to the history of hymns, the Moluccan church followed the Dutch Calvinist Order in liturgy and hymn singing.²³ The Genevan Psalter has been the most important source for the latter. These *Psalmen en Eenige Gezangen* were used in the congregations and translated around the mid-seventeenth century. To the Psalter, the *Evangelische Gezangen* (1807) and the *Vervolgbundel* (1866) were added, which resulted in a collection in the Malay language in the nineteenth century: *Mazmur dan Tahlil* (MT – Psalms and Hymns), made by C.C.J. Schröder.²⁴ The words of these hymnals were

21 One also needs a good education system for the regeneration of musical wind skills.

22 In this book, the words 'hymnbook' and 'songbook' are used interchangeably. Also, hymns and church songs or religious songs have the same meaning.

23 Among others: the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed (two versions) (Van Dop, personal document).

24 These psalms and hymns consisted of four-part harmony for congregational singing. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an Indonesian translation of the Bible was completed. Every missionary activity brought its own liturgical and hymnological tradition from the mother country. There are Dutch Reformed, German Evangelical-Lutheran, English Methodist,

sometimes hard to understand, because of the use of archaic language and Arab substitutions. Around 1920, a new songbook was compiled by Schröder and I.J. Tupamaha, called *Dua Sahabat Lama* (DSL – Two Old Friends). This book has become deeply rooted in the hearts of many generations of Moluccan Protestants. The songs of DSL have an introspective, sentimental, and moralistic character, without reference to social or political circumstances.

After independence, in 1950, I.S. Kijne composed a new hymnal, based on a hundred psalms from the old Genevan melodies and on 200 hymns.²⁵ The book is called *Mazmur dan Nyanyian Rohani* (NR – Psalms and Spiritual Songs). He used modern, comprehensible Indonesian language, which rapidly made the book popular. After 1950, most hymnbooks were printed in cipher notation instead of staff notes.²⁶ In 1967, the Indonesian Foundation for Church Music (Yamuger) was established, which was assigned the task of musical education and the preparation of new hymnbooks. In 1975, a team started to work on a standardization of existing hymn translations and on the composing of new, contextual Indonesian songs. Yamuger combined old classics, the heritage of early twentieth-century Indonesian church history, and new hymns from all over the world. The result was the *Kidung Jemaat* (KJ – Songs of the Congregation) that came out in 1984. The KJ contained 475 hymns with over a hundred songs of non-Western origin. In 1991, a supplement was published, the *Nyanyiankanlah Kidung Baru* (NKB – Sing the New Song). The NKB contains 225 hymns, many from local heritage and sources. In 1999, the *Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat* (PKJ – Supplement to Community Songs) was published, containing 300 hymns with a number of indigenous compositions (Van Dop, personal document).

Fairly recently, in 2010, the *Nyanyian GPM* (NJGPM – GPM Songs) was released. In collaboration with the GIM in the Netherlands (the Geredja Indjili Maluku (GIM) is the largest Moluccan Protestant church organization among the diaspora in the Netherlands), the objective was to make a contextual Moluccan hymnbook. To achieve this goal, composers based their

American Mennonite, Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and other collections to be found in Indonesian churches (Van Dop, personal document).

25 Kijne made choices from great classics in English and German traditions, from other European countries, and from medieval hymns.

26 1=do, 2=re, 3=mi, etc. The key note can be moved. There are additional signs for accidental sharps and flats, meter, rhythm, and modulation (Van Dop, personal document). For example, a horizontal line above the cipher means that the note is an eighth, and no line means the note is a quarter. The number 0 means rest. Additional ciphers or the sign ' are used to denote octaves. For example, when a high c is reached in a song, the number 2 or the sign " shows that this c is one octave higher than the former one. Also, the composer always states which tone is the 'do,' to mark tonal arrangement (for example, f=do).

songs on the daily life of Moluccan people in relation with the world, with nature, and with God. The book has 342 hymns, written in Indonesian, Malay, or even native language. The hymns are not only diatonic, but also have other scales (such as pentatonic). Furthermore, the songs can be musically accompanied by traditional Moluccan instruments. Some songs in the NJGPM are adaptations of folk songs and are based on typical Moluccan musicological aspects.

Various people were invited to compose several songs for the NJGPM, including artists, musicians, ministers, and theologians. The collective collaborated on lyrics, language, theological content, and music. Inspiration came from cultural, social, and musical contexts of Moluccan society. The hymns are connected to different parts of church services, because the hymns should fit the liturgical context. There are songs for 'Gathering before God,' 'Service of the Word,' 'Response to the Service of the Word,' etc. Also, the new hymnbook contains songs for specific services, such as Holy Communion or baptism, songs related to certain times and seasons, short response songs, songs to close the service, and songs for daily faith life.²⁷ Minister John Beay, who was part of the NJGPM team, explained his own composition process:

A song can become the means for preaching the Gospel. People can feel the Gospel within their own culture [and] reality. What they do, think and work on. That song can become a strength. I make a song when I go to the sea, I catch a fish, I see the waves. I reflect about the nature and the blessing God gave us. There is a dialectic between Gospel and context, context and Gospel.²⁸

Because the NJGPM is quite recent, not all songs of the book are already well-known and memorized by the congregations. A member of the choir in the Maranatha church commented that in his church, the hymnbook was not often used. When attending Sunday service, a clear difference in volume and attention can be noticed when, for example, congregants sing from the NJGPM or the DSL. Nevertheless, there are some popular NJGPM songs that are sung often.²⁹

27 GPM. 2010. *Nyanyian Gereja Protestan Maluku*. Ambon: GPM.

28 Interview with John F. Beay, GPM minister and musician (November 12, 2019, Ambon).

29 For example, number 55, *Tuhan Kasihani/Kyrie Eleison* by Chris Tamaela, or *Ku s'Lalu Ingin Memujimu* (14) by Barce Istia. The latter resembles the *keroncong* style, which is an Indonesian genre of music, known throughout the country and based on string sounds. Other examples are: *Mari Basudara* (20) by Branckly E. Picanussa, or *Tiop Tahuri, Pukul Tifa* (40) by Barce Istia. The

Musicological differences between the different hymnbooks are interpreted as follows. Older, originally foreign hymnbooks have chord sequences that are pleasant to listen to.³⁰ People are used to ‘dragging’ when singing these hymns, i.e. decreasing the tempo more and more. The base tones can vary and are a little bit more complicated, because the whole congregation must sing the same difficult tone. Newer songbooks have been strongly influenced by the development of pop music and Charismatic music. Now, the main requirement of good hymns is that the songs need to be ‘singable.’ In the liturgical structure, a rotation system of hymnbooks is applied. Each of the five Sundays per month, a different hymnbook is used. *Mazmur dan Tahlil* is rarely used, because most congregants do not understand the old, ‘high-Malay’ language.³¹

Music in the GPM

The *kantoria* leads congregational singing and practices new songs with the church members. Often, the *kantoria* is a group of two to four people, who stand next to the keyboard and sing with a microphone. The process of teaching new songs to the congregation can be a challenge, especially since the members of the *kantoria* sometimes have to learn these songs themselves at the same time. Difficulties with timing, tuning, and rhythm make it an easy-going messy matter. Nevertheless, after trying and mumbling several times, the congregation generally gets the hang of it and starts singing more enthusiastically. When a less-known hymn is used during the service, the *prokantor* occasionally recites the verses to assist the singing congregation. Music lovers, who critically look at the quality of church music, would

latter is one of my personal favorites, as it is energetic, rhythmic, and tight with staccato notes. The composer of the song included comments for when different groups of the congregation need to sing: first the choir, then the whole congregation, and then the coda – first by women, then by men, and then by all. A popular song for the offering is number 166, *Ayo Bawa Persembahanmu* by Chris Tamaela. For expressing gratitude, number 170, *Kami Bersyukur* by Barce Istia, is rather popular. Despite the latter being diatonic (which denotes Western music), Moluccan Christians love the song and think “ah, this is our song.” For a long time, ‘the Moluccan ear’ has been used to diatonic music (Interview with Branckly Egbert Picanussa, musician and teacher at the IAKN (a Christian school in Ambon) (November 20, 2019, Ambon)).

30 The chord sequences feel comfortable to ‘Western ears.’ Through centuries of cultural influence and, now, globalization, Moluccan Protestants have embraced and embodied these sequences as easy and comfortable to listen to.

31 Despite the recent contextual approach, the GPM made the conscious decision to also keep using the hymnbooks of Western origin. Chris Tamaela was one of the proponents who did not want to throw out these older songbooks, as they reflect a Christian heritage that is also part of the Moluccan church in the present day. These ‘Western’ hymnbooks remain appreciated, because the historical church forms the basis of the development of the GPM.

prefer a better preparation by the *kantoria* and players, as well as better circumstances for practicing, such as a timely provision of the selected hymns and the inclusion of cipher notation on the projector.

Apart from the *kantoria*, vocal groups (*paduan suara*) have their own moments to sing in church. The groups sing either a-Capella or are accompanied by recorded or live music. Generally, the vocal quality of these groups is exceptionally high. The singers of the *paduan suara* can be recognized by their stylishly coordinated colors of clothing. The groups sing polyphonically, in various styles, and with myriad musical accents. The beauty of musical expression comes in many forms: singers laugh, dance, move their eyebrows or stare to the ground, to their phone, or to the sheet that they are holding. The singers close their eyes, look up to the sky, or hold their hands in their pockets. Solo performances also take place during the church service.

The experience of music in church is also expressed on the faces of the congregants. When people listen to a performance, they sometimes fold their fingers in front of their bent head, to better enjoy and concentrate on the music. Some congregants close their eyes, softly sing along, or move their hands. When people passionately sing the congregational songs, they slightly look up with a glance of conviction in their eyes.

Little children also fervently try to sing along. Church music is taught at an early age. At home, children are brought up with church music. Hymns are used as lullabies, performed during village events, and sung while doing all kinds of daily activities. Families sing and listen to hymns together during family prayers. In Moluccan society, there is no day without music and a large part of it is church music. As a friend of mine said: "From the church, outside the church, to the bathroom, I always sing. I love to sing."³²

Church music is of great importance, both in Moluccan culture and in church culture.³³ The main role of music and singing in worship focuses on the relation with God. Church music is a way of praising and glorifying God. A musician said: "God has the power to do everything, except praising Himself. Humans should do that, with music."³⁴ Through singing,

32 Interview with Jean Solissa, a Master's student at UKIM (November 16, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

33 One woman whom I interviewed recounted a life experience that illustrates the centrality of church music in people's lives. During her second pregnancy, there were a lot of complications, and the doctor said that there was a high chance that the baby needed to be aborted. She and her husband were very worried. Then, she suddenly felt God right in her heart through a song. During the interview, the woman sang the song for me, with tears in her eyes and a trembling voice. The specific song is one of her favorite hymns. She safely gave birth to her second son.

34 Interview with Rence Alphons. Translation by the author.

people can express gratitude, pleas, and prayers to God. Singing generates a religious feeling that focuses people's minds on God alone, for example in preparation for prayer. Singing makes people feel close to God. My friend, an UKIM-student, explained: "We cannot see God, there is no image of God. But singing makes you feel He is with you."³⁵ For many congregants, music has a central role in the church service. Church music makes the atmosphere more pleasant, by bringing spirit, soul, and joy, and by supporting the course of worship. Music can be a source of happiness and consolation for people, and singing is an opportunity to express what is inside emotionally. For example, by singing, people can let go of heavy feelings. At the same time, church music is a form of entertainment. Congregants described the roles of music in their own words: "if there's no music, it feels like worship isn't fun. People not only need sermons. [...] When delivered [the message] with songs through music, it enters people's hearts."³⁶ Hence, without music, the church service does not feel complete: "it is impossible for the worship to occur without music."³⁷ Often, a comparison between music and food was made: when there is no church music, it is as if a dish lacks the sambal, or as if the fish is served without *colo-colo* sauce.

GPM Culture

Church music is embedded in overarching structures of church culture, which people regard as the ways things are done and as what characterizes them as Moluccan congregants. Church culture means a certain church experience that transmits and develops from parents to children.³⁸ Firstly, an important and rather visible aspect of Moluccan church culture is the black clothes, a remnant of Portuguese and Dutch influence. In former times, everyone wore black during the service; nowadays, the color black is only obligatory for ministers and *majelis* members. Nevertheless, the typical black costume can also still be seen among old women in traditional churches in villages. These women wear their black and gray hair in a vertical, elongated bun and put on a dark-gray or black, wide, long skirt and blouse. The skirt and blouse are made from a slightly shiny fabric. When I asked a woman why she wore black clothes, she said it was normal for her. She has been used

35 Informal conversation with Vally (October 27, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

36 Interview with Anonymous (October 27, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

37 Interview Anonymous (November 17, 2019, Hutumuri). Translation by the author.

38 The typical traditional Moluccan church culture that people referred to is most visible in certain villages. Despite that, it should not be forgotten that all Moluccan churches are situated within a global, highly mediated, modern world.

to wearing these clothes in church since before, and it would be strange for her to change this tradition. Interestingly, some women even referred to the church outfit as *pakaian adat*, *adat* clothes. Hereby, the women employed a specific term that is very much related to traditional, pre-colonial Moluccan culture, whereas, historically, these clothes are connected to colonialism. For these women, the black clothes are intrinsically linked to the Moluccan church.

Additionally, female *majelis* members wear a black ribbon, embroidered with shiny little stones, diagonally over the shoulder (*kain pikul* (Chris Tamaela 2015, 78)). The traditional costume of male *majelis* consists of black trousers, a long white blouse with an embroidered half-moon motive and small white balls as buttons, and a black, open jacket. Although black is still the church color for the *majelis*, the specific traditional costume is definitely worn more often in traditional villages (while in cities, variations in black clothes and also other colors can be seen). As a minister in the village Haria, Saparua, explained: "God does not look at color or clothes. But the black clothes have become our culture. It characterizes us, Moluccan Protestants. If we pray without these clothes, something is missing."³⁹ Ministers always wear a long, black robe with a colored scarf around the neck. The black collar with white brim on the front is internationally recognized as a minister's outfit.

Secondly, in traditional churches in villages, the silent, meditative, solemn atmosphere is also part of church culture. People arrive early and wait quietly until the service starts. People who are late are frowned upon through the stinging, dark eyes of older women, and people who talk loudly are shush-ed very quickly. This atmospheric aspect relates to the styles of musical accompaniment. In villages, the music is slow, solemn, and serene, referred to as more 'orthodox' or 'sacral.'

Thirdly, in two far-away village churches, in Hutumuri and Soya, I found a rare aspect of traditional church culture, which, in these places, has continued until today. Here, the choirs and vocal groups are positioned with their backs to the congregants, facing the altar and the minister. Therefore, the groups do not sing towards the congregation but towards the pulpit. This traditional position is connected to notions of hierarchy and musical purpose. One thinks it is not respectful to turn your back on the minister, and the singing should be aimed to God instead of the congregation. These ideas are also the reason that, in many churches, vocal groups end their performance almost in a hasty way and already start moving back to their

39 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua).

places while the song has hardly finished. In some congregations, people do not even clap, whereas this is a common practice in the city. Traditionally, one should not give much attention to the performers, as the focus is God alone.

Fourthly, position and seating are also aspects of church culture. The *majelis* always sit in front of the church, right or left from the altar, perpendicular to the direction of the other congregants. In older village churches, the seating system is classified according to different groups of people. In Soya, for example, there is a separate, elevated space for the *raja* and his family on the left side, for the *saneri* on the back left, for the elders on the back right and for the *majelis* on the right side.

Lastly, an interesting component of Moluccan church culture is the ancestors. In accordance with GPM doctrine and the centuries-long colonial prohibition on indigenous beliefs (out of fear of ‘syncretism’), Moluccan Protestants would never say they believe in the ancestors. God, namely, is the only powerful transcendental entity. This reality shows how religious discourse became colonized under Dutch rule. The Dutch state determined the concept of religion according to modern, Western ideas. Religion was introduced as a universal and ahistorical category in which local religious discourses rarely fit. Many native religious traditions were not considered as actual religions by European colonials, but as backward superstition (Kruithof 2014, 56–7). Nevertheless, practically, the ancestors play an important part in Moluccan culture, and as cultural heritage, the ancestors are respected, remembered, and appreciated, also in relation to Christian religion. An informant stated: “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, they are our ancestors. We became Christian because of the ancestors in our family. Our grandparents are Christian, our parents, we, and our children. Christianity already became Moluccan culture.”⁴⁰

An illustration of native Moluccan culture and Christian religion is the religious-cultural symbol of the *piring natzar*. The *piring natzar* is a white offering plate with a white cloth on top, under which lie coins. Before one goes to church, the family gathers around the plate and prays. The *piring natzar* is a sacred meeting place with God and the ancestors. The coins of the plate are donated in church, after which the religious service concludes at home around the *piring natzar* (Hendrik 1995, 9). Praying at the *piring natzar* is a practice that has been passed on from the ancestors until today, although nowadays, not all people possess or use a *piring natzar* any longer.

40 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua).

Moluccan Religiosity

Among Moluccan Protestants, religion has a meaningful and central place in people's lives. As a theologian commented, Moluccan identity means being religious: "The religiosity of Moluccans is very strong. Wherever they are, they are always expressing their belief."⁴¹ This religiosity is articulated both through certain educational structures and through personal experiences. As a baby, one is baptized in church. Baptisms usually take place several times per year, because groups of children are baptized collectively. Already at a very young age, the curriculum of the Sunday school begins. There are many 'stages' based on age groups, which range from one to seventeen years old. Each stage has its own program for one semester, which is four months. The curriculum is developed according to three pillars: church, Bible, and context. For a very long time, the Bible comprised more than fifty percent of the curriculum. A recent change gives more weight to context.

UKIM students confirmed the content and effect of the Bible-focused Sunday school curriculum. The students have often experienced a deep incongruence between their Christian education and their current theological education. Previously, these students thought the Bible was everything – a book that had to be venerated in itself because the Bible is literally written by God. Parents and teachers taught the students that they should not do something that is not in line with the will of God. Such an action would be sinful. Only people who know the Bible will be saved. My friend explained: "Back in the days, I was so smart with the Bible: the names, questions. I knew everything!"⁴² When the students began studying at UKIM, their learning experience was characterized initially by confusion because the teachers at UKIM taught them that the Bible is about human experiences with God. The students learned that there are multiple perspectives available when looking at a certain Bible text, and these future theologians acquired a critical attitude. Now, the students see the Bible as one source among many important sources, taking context into account.

Songs and singing comprise a large part of Sunday school, which is noticeable when walking past a school building. A cacophony of sounds – scooters from parents and brothers bringing the children, running feet, playing voices, and teachers' methods – is overarched by singing children. At seventeen, children start the catechism course. Over three

41 Interview with Agus Batlajery, professor at UKIM (November 8, 2019, Ambon).

42 Interview with Salomy Melatawun (Omy), a Master's student at UKIM (December 11, 2019, Ambon).

years, the students receive lessons from the minister. Catechism ends with an exam, in which the students are tested on their knowledge of Christian religion and the Bible. Subsequently, the youngsters receive a certificate and confirm their faith. The Confirmation ceremony is an important moment that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. A person becomes a full church member with all rights and privileges, such as partaking in the Holy Supper. After Confirmation, youngsters can become part of a youth club. This is a semi-independent church organization with its own structures and programs. Also, when young Protestants have confirmed their faith, they are offered the possibility to become a Sunday school teacher. Many accept, after which the youngsters (over eighteen) receive instructions.

The family is probably the most central space where religiosity is shaped. An informant stated: "Christianity is not only located in church, but in daily family life! When we as kids went to sleep, Christian songs were sung and Bible stories were told."⁴³ An example that illustrates religiosity within families is the family prayer. The GPM provides liturgical structures for family services at home, although many families pray together each evening. I experienced the family prayer as well, when I lived together with my friend Vally. It felt as a blessing to be treated as a family member and to receive the hopes and wishes of her father, in this assemblage of Moluccan cultural cordiality and religiosity. Although I almost never pray, I still feel protected by Vally's father's words.

The four of us sit down on the benches in the living room. We close our eyes and fold our hands to begin with a prayer. The voice of the father expresses his gratitude. Vally and I both may read several verses of a Bible text. I receive the family Bible from her, and with my heart beating fast, as I feel the weight of this moment, I try to say the Indonesian words in the clearest and steadiest way I can. At this moment, I stop observing. My whole being is concentrated on participating. I have an important role in this generous family, that took me in for one week. It feels so special. After our words, the father gives his personal reflection, emphasizing the unimaginable power of God. Then, we sing. Without music, it is only us. Only our voices together in this living room. I realize that this way is more intimate than anything else I have sung so far. We close our assemblance with a prayer. I hear the father ask for my personal success at university and for the health of my parents and brother. I feel overwhelmed by

43 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua). Translation by the author.

kindness in this personal setting that I am part of this evening. When we give each other a hand, I have tears in my eyes.

The family, as well as educational experiences, form Moluccan religiosity, which shapes ideas about and contact with God. People feel that without God, they are nothing. During the research, many people explained the meaning of religion in their lives to me. As a professor at UKIM said: “we cannot realize our life in the world, without connecting ourselves with God.”⁴⁴ A minister also explained that Jesus is a behavioral guide for relating to humans and nature in a good way: “Religion is a means for us to build life. Religion contains values, which can benefit us to do good things. For others, the environment, but also for God. When we say we believe in God, it must be visible, must be proven, must be real in our behavior and attitudes.”⁴⁵ Congregants told me that God always walks together with His people, in happy and sorrowful moments. Being close to God, thus, is necessary, like food and drink, to feel healthy and strong. A congregant said: “It is like breathing. When I don’t breathe, I don’t live.”⁴⁶

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44 Interview with Agus Batlajery.

45 Interview with Jeffrey Leatimia. Translation by the author.

46 Interview with Anonymous (November 10, 2019, Soya). Translation by the author.

3. The Context of Context: Moluccan Contextual Theology

Abstract: Moluccan contextual theology is developed and taught at the theological university of Ambon, the Moluccas: UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku). The theologians of UKIM teach students a contextual approach. The approach forms the starting point for the ambition to decolonize the GPM (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church). The author delineates the educational, organizational, historical, and political contexts of Moluccan contextual theology. UKIM has close relations with the GPM and the local government. Moluccan contextual theology is developed in national, global, modern, and political contexts. These contexts afford the operation of the contextual approach.

Keywords: Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku (UKIM); Moluccan; Contextual theology; Moluccan Protestant church; Postcolonial; Ministry.

I sit on a white, plastic chair in front of a desk in a rather dark office. Low, wooden screens divide the room into tiny cubicles. Although there are many booths, we are alone. Laughing sounds of students' voices move through the open spaces between the horizontal lanes of window glass, between the wall and the ceiling. Heat touches my skin. I feel nervous. I look up to the brown, warm eyes of the older woman who is sitting here with me. And I know all will be well.

The topic of our conversation is contextual theology. With a soft, dry articulation, she carefully and slowly constructs her gracious sentences. In a thoughtful, kind, serene way, she explains what theology means to her. Initially, she wanted to become a doctor. Reconsidering distance, financial burdens, and risks of shame, she eventually studied theology. She went to India, was the vice-moderator of the World Council of Churches, took part in an interfaith peace-and-reconciliation women's movement, and she became a lecturer.

In the heat of the real Moluccan fight, when blood was all over, we needed another perspective. I think that is how we confess Christ in a new way. Contextual theology starts from our real context and experience. But contextualization is not only about local experience. We don't just start theology. We learn from others, and then we start. Cause for me, religion is not God. Religion is the way we respond to God, and that's why we can differ in many places, in many ways, you know. How we see God, the way we worship God, the way we understand God. We could be different. To me God is so great, you cannot define God in only one way or the other. God is kind of a mystery, you see? So, we need to broaden our vision, broaden our understanding, broaden our experience of God. By also learning from each other. To me, it is like that.

The beauty of her worldview touches me. She is passionate, she is funny. I see her generous smile, the freckles on her cheeks, the white, neat, fluffy hair crowning her open face.

Listening to people's everyday experience, to people's questions about God, about life, about religion, about human beings – it helps us to reflect on and to define our theology. It's not an abstract kind of theory. It starts from the bottom, like a spiral. It comes down and goes up, and it transforms.

I still remember her voice, the intonation moving along with dedication, the pleasant accent. Only a handful of people in one's life will always be with you because of intelligence, elegance, and wisdom.

Reverend Doctor Margaretha Hendriks was one of them.

Theologian Margaretha Hendriks was the first person I interviewed during the fieldwork. On the UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku) campus, she gave me two hours of her time to tell me about her perspective on contextual theology. Her words were one of the most dense, informative, and inspiring perspectives I would hear. Our conversation was also the starting point of my learning process about Moluccan theology and its contents, implementation, and context. UKIM is the theological kitchen of the Moluccan Protestant church. At the theological university, theologians develop and teach new ideas. The focus of this book is contextual theology, but theological practice is situated in its own context as well. This context shapes both the theological discourse on Moluccan contexts and the grammar or structure behind the discourse. The chapter delineates the educational, organizational, historical, and political contexts of Moluccan contextual theology. Furthermore, the contemporary national, modern, and postcolonial dynamics form the grammar of the meaning, content, and practice of Moluccan theology.

The Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku

The UKIM campus is situated at the edge of Ambon City, close to the sea. Over the course of three months, almost every morning, I walked the same route from my home to my office. After waiting at least five minutes before being able to safely find my way, circumventing the cars, scooters, and buses (the open mini vans recognizable by the passengers packed together and the thumping beat coming out of the large speakers in the back), I would enter the narrow streets of a colorful neighborhood. Flanked by Jesus portraits on the walls, I would circle around dogs, chickens, and food stands, asking permission to pass the homes of the residents and receiving people's greetings. Stepping out of this cozy place, I would cross the street and arrive at the colored gate of the UKIM campus. A students' sports field is located in the middle of the terrain, surrounded by multiple two- or three-story buildings – all white. Open stairs and hallways and clean, tiled floors lead to offices and classrooms, which are filled with couches, desks, or wooden chairs with individual tables attached to them. A beautiful, sunny view over the water and harbor is visible from the balcony on one of the buildings. On this campus, contextual theology is developed and taught. Young Moluccans become ministers and theologians at UKIM.

UKIM's vision is to develop a Moluccan-islands' theology, focused on the well-being of life, pluralism, ecology, and ecumenism.¹ Many subjects are taught at UKIM, by many different teachers.² The theologians who teach at UKIM are both similar and different from each other regarding background, career, and specializations. The people whom I spoke with were all born in Christian families. Some were born on Ambon, some on surrounding islands, some on very remote Moluccan islands, and some in other places in Indonesia. Growing up or living in the Moluccas is part of who these teachers are and, therefore, of their theologies. Theologian John Titaley, who only spent his formative years in the Moluccas, described 'being Moluccan' as follows:

For me, *Maluku* is like harmony with nature. We went to school from seven to twelve [o'clock], then we took a short nap, and then our mothers said we had to go to the woods, we had to get wood for the fire. And then we played! Basketball, swimming in the sea. That's the life that I used to know in *Maluku*. Harmony! I really enjoyed that part of my life.³

Studying theology was a calling for many teachers. Chris Tamaela said that something from his heart pushed him to do theology. Other teachers chose theology out of interest (and explored many more fascinating aspects), like Steve Gaspersz, who said: "I was surprised when I studied theology. I discovered that theology actually is a very challenging discipline. Because of the 'in between.' You have to use your rationality, but on the other side, you have to keep your faith. I discovered many mysterious dimensions by studying theology."⁴ The academic careers of the most prominent contextual theologians whom I talked to show striking similarities. They began their education at UKIM or at a theological university on Java. Some continued their Master's or doctoral research in Indonesia or in other Asian countries, such as India, the Philippines, or Taiwan. Others had the opportunity to do a PhD in the West: the United States (Berkeley, California) or the Netherlands (Amsterdam). Although many theologians continued to be GPM ministers (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church) as well, they

1 In former times, UKIM was called STT: Sekolah Tinggi Teologi GPM.

2 For example, languages (English, Greek, Hebrew, Indonesian), Pancasila Education, Entrepreneurship, Philosophy and Religion, New Testament Hermeneutics, Dogmatic Systematic Theology, Feminist Theology, Religion and Peace, Psychology of the Island's Society, and much more (I counted more than fifty courses).

3 Interview with John Titaley, guest lecturer and theologian at UKIM (November 4, 2019, Ambon).

4 Interview with Steve Gaspersz, theologian at UKIM (December 4, 2019, Ambon).

focused on their academic progress and eventually became researchers and lecturers at UKIM.⁵

The paths of these theologians, thus, run through international contexts, which often formed the starting point for people's contextual specializations. These specializations, for example, are systematic theology and dogmatics, feminist theology, Biblical studies, Christian education, liturgy and church music, missiology, public theology, and Indonesian theology. Interestingly, many UKIM theologians work on the crossroads of theology, anthropology, and religious studies. Adopting methods and perspectives from other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, the theologians address a variety of subjects, such as indigenous religion, conflict and peace, Islam, Moluccan culture, and social methodology. Through their work and positions, the theologians operate within local and international religious and political contexts and organizations, fulfilling a social role as well. This social role is also reflected in UKIM's curriculum. It prepares students to consider the needs of church and society. Students are taught to open themselves to dialogue and to always respond to the question of what theology means for being religious today. Theologians and ministers, thus, have a broad role in society – both in empowering people and in representing real-life struggles by voicing theological criticism.

UKIM Teachings

The vision of UKIM, the theologians working there, and the different perspectives and specializations result in several core teachings that UKIM transmits to the students. At the basis stands the idea that theology is not about God, but about the human experience with a transcendental entity. Therefore, theology is more than abstract and philosophical. Steve Gaspersz said that theology must “touch the people around us.”⁶ Theology includes an attitude of faith towards reality. A connected viewpoint concerns the Bible as historical document. The Bible also has context. The book was written with reference to a people that confessed God in their own time and in their own way. This means that the Bible itself should not be worshipped. Margaretha Hendriks explained:

The Bible is not a timeless book where you can pick up a certain text and say: we have to do it this way cause the Bible says so. We have to reread

5 Some people who studied theology did not become ministers. Jance Rumahuru (who does not work at UKIM but at the IAKN, another Christian school) realized that being a lecturer was his passion. As a teacher, he could also use the tasks and roles of a minister. Rumahuru thinks that, apart from churches, there are more areas in society that need theologians.

6 Informal conversation with Steve Gaspersz (December 16, 2019, Ambon).

the Bible! So how do we as Moluccans read the Bible? [...] With that in mind, do not read the Bible literally. You cannot. Do not read the Bible with a chronological line.⁷

At UKIM, a contextual approach forms the starting point for the ambition to decolonize the Moluccan Protestant church.⁸ The contextual approach is reflected in specific course teachings. For instance, dogmatic problems are interpreted on the basis of the Bible, church tradition, and Moluccan context. The Christian mission is not only to Christianize, but it is also meant to empower. At UKIM, people think that pastoral work should coincide with continuous theological reflection. Furthermore, Bible interpretation is not constructed on the dichotomy between ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ and must not discriminate against others because the interpretation should be inclusive. Lastly, local culture, including music, has to be appreciated and dealt with in relation to worship and liturgy. To practically stimulate these educational ideas, UKIM has a central hall on campus, where each Wednesday morning, groups of students can experiment with different forms of service. UKIM students come from many places in the Moluccas – from Ambon, Buru, and even Tanimbar, for instance – and, therefore, can use and share the cultural contextualities amongst themselves.

The students’ reasons for studying theology are similar to those of the ministers and theologians whom I talked to. Theology can feel like a calling, as one of the students explained. After this student’s birth, the father performed the native practice of secretly burying the placenta.⁹ During this act, the father prayed to God and asked for her to become a minister. She said to me: “From a baby until I was grown up, I indeed always had the love to become a minister, and it never changed.”¹⁰ Furthermore, the competency, status, and role of ministers is attractive for students: they think that, by choosing theology, people become good and can change the lives of others. Severe childhood sickness and parents’ prayers and promises also led some students to the path of theology.

Although for many students the contextual approach proved to be an entirely new perspective, they became fully convinced by the approach and affirm the contextual discourses that are prevalent at UKIM.

7 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

8 Interview with John Titaley.

9 According to native beliefs, a mystical relationship exists between the child and placenta. Burying the placenta protects the child against evil powers (Bartels 1994, 401).

10 Interview with Anonymous. Translation by the author.

Religious and Political Embeddings

The UKIM, as an educational institute, belongs to the GPM. The GPM established UKIM in 1985. The GPM asks UKIM to analyze and overthink issues that they want to implement in church, and UKIM presents the theological reflections to the GPM. UKIM is seen as the 'kitchen' of the GPM, where theologians 'cook,' make, create, explore, and experiment with new theological ideas. New directions in the Moluccan church, thus, are also related to new directions in theological thinking at UKIM, although not necessarily in a unilinear direction. Almost all GPM ministers have been educated at UKIM, which means that they automatically disseminate updated knowledge. Several teachers also work for the GPM. For instance, Chris Tamaela helped to develop an ethnic liturgy with traditional music for the GPM, and Peter Salenussa (another theologian and teacher at UKIM) travels to many places in the Moluccas to study cultural traditions that are potential resources for ethnic services.

Despite the fact that, institutionally, theologians at UKIM have the duty to express the formal teachings of the church, there are some differences, discrepancies, and contestations between several UKIM theologians and the GPM, mostly regarding reformation and the future.¹¹ The GPM rejected certain changes that were proposed by a few UKIM theologians who are part of the team that works on formulating GPM teachings. These rejections mainly have to do with perspectives on disability, LGBTQ+, and politics.¹² Some years ago, the GPM asked the UKIM faculty, because of practical reasons, to reject students who are challenged by disabilities, as many congregations are situated in remote areas that are hard to access in such a condition. UKIM theologians responded that UKIM is an educational institution that is open to anyone. In UKIM's opinion, it is not fair to discriminate against people based on their existence. Furthermore, UKIM invited a transgender person to class. The aim was to teach students that they should not judge others, when not knowing anything about who these persons are. The GPM did not agree with this approach and stated that there is nothing outside creation except man and woman, whereas UKIM holds the view that people who identify as LGBTQ+ are God's creation and

11 The teachings of the church are formulated by the synod board of the GPM and discussed in plenary synod meetings. UKIM advises the GPM on such matters, but the GPM ultimately decides.

12 Other issues were, for example, whether elders are allowed to bless people and whether children are allowed to attend the Eucharist ceremony. The discrepancy between the age of retirement of ministers and faculty members was also discussed.

that all human beings should have the same rights.¹³ Lastly, UKIM would like to see a separation between church and politics. People working for the GPM can also become political representatives. The GPM can support political candidates, which results in a connection between church policy and politics. UKIM regards nepotism within GPM structures as a problem.

UKIM is also embedded in local, regional, and national political structures, both because the Moluccan church is situated in these contexts, and because theological thought develops in interaction with these contexts. The GPM and the local government operate as partners. UKIM is part of this network. Theologies at UKIM respond to multiple identity layers of Moluccan Protestants (referring to religious, ethnic, and national identity), which, in turn, correspond to local, regional, and national political frameworks.

The close relations between these three 'elite' institutions (UKIM, GPM, local government) are visible in exclusive, official educational, political, and religious events. For example, when an employee of UKIM got promoted and joined the board, a party was held. Typical white, decorated chairs, round tables, plastic tents, fancy glasses, an extensive buffet, and live music characterized this party enjoyed by UKIM staff, representatives of the local government, and GPM officials. Another example is that after the earthquake on September 26, 2019, the mayor called for a public, religious, interdenominational service and obliged civil servants to attend this event, who showed their support in yellow-brown uniforms. The same combination of people (UKIM, GPM, and government), thus, are present at a variety of religious and political events. At the annual meeting where the GPM synod, UKIM theologians, *klasis* boards, and ministers discussed church policy, representatives from the local and regional government showed their faces at the official opening service on the Sunday morning. At the end of the service, both the GPM march and the national anthem were played, and, consecutively, many speeches were given by the organizer, the councilor, ministers, and the mayoral vice-president. All speakers emphasized brotherhood, ecology, society, social justice, and Pancasila under the overarching theme of 'human and natural resources.' Generally, such speeches resemble a ritualistic routine. Political officials are always invited for significantly large public and religious events. Often, the officials arrive much too late in their long, escorted convoy of expensive cars. They are welcomed with music or announcements, take a seat in the comfortable, empty chairs at the front, and possibly delay the schedule with their multiple, long talks that express

13 The LGBTQ+ issue happened in the years before this research was conducted (in 2019). Opinions, attitudes, and policies of the GPM might have changed.

similar content. After such a ceremony, or even in the middle of the event, the officials quickly leave again. Despite the superficiality, absence is not accepted, due to colonial legacies of organizational structures and post-conflict discourses and peace ambitions (I refer to the close church-government relationship under Dutch colonial rule and the religious conflict in 1999). The GPM invites political officials to make sure that what the church wants for society is structurally transparent and developed in communication with the local government. The GPM feels responsible for presenting a peaceful, contextual post-conflict image, and politicians want to enforce this image through balanced attendance at both Islamic and Christian events. In this way, church and government confirm each other, which is also expressed in prevailing discursive themes. At the core is the concept of *basudara*, brotherhood, based on the cultural foundation of *pela*. In a mutual confirmative relationship, politicians are careful not to disturb interreligious connections, and the church is careful not to go against political policies.

Although UKIM is definitely implicated in this network, the theologians have more room to voice other perspectives and to critically assess reality. UKIM is an educational institute that is fairly independent, whereas local politicians and the GPM are involved in – and, therefore, benefit from – a positive confirmative discourse. Nevertheless, connections between UKIM, the GPM, and the local government – as well as conjoined aims, policies, and effects – are strong. The relation becomes especially clear through the focus on Moluccan traditional culture: UKIM theologizes on the basis of Moluccan cultural resources, the GPM tries to implement the contextual approach in church, and local, regional, and national governments stimulate and facilitate the cultural focus more generally, through money, education, and the organization of performances.

The History of Contextual Theology at UKIM

The international movement of contextual theology started in the 1960s. During the seventies, several Southeast Asian meetings took place where the point was brought forward that Western theology does not represent people in other contexts. Therefore, through pan-Asian relations, theologians at UKIM became inspired by other Asian contextual theologians, especially from the 1990s onward.¹⁴ While, for a long time, theology in the

14 Although contextual theology was introduced in the Moluccas in the 1970s, it was not well developed then.

Moluccas had been dominated by Western thinkers like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, or Herman Bavinck, now, Asian and Indonesian writers began to be incorporated in curricula.

In 1997, the seminar *Injil dan Kebudayaan* (Gospel and Culture) took place in the village of Amahusu on Ambon. Many Dutch and Dutch-Moluccan theologians and ministers attended the seminar in the context of normalizing bonds between Moluccan churches in *Maluku* and the Netherlands. The meeting started off with an explosion of conflicting opinions between Dutch and Moluccan perspectives. The Moluccan Theological Council (MTB) in the Netherlands was in the process of theologizing Christianity on the basis of Moluccan identity, through a reconsideration of the position of the ancestors and the practice of the aforementioned *piring natzar*. In Amahusu, the MTB was accused of reviving the paganism of the past in the Moluccas. With the *pesan tobat*, Moluccan Christians had buried *adat* and their ancestors. Now, Christians in the Moluccas professed a 'pure Christianity.'¹⁵ However, in one week, tension made way for mutual interest and understanding. The participants found each other in the same question of identity: to what extent can one be both fully Moluccan and fully Christian? Workshops and lectures showed the similarities despite the differences, and the GPM reconsidered the power and pride of Moluccan culture (Patty 2018, 152–58).

In retrospect, Moluccan theologians see the seminar as the starting point for a serious Moluccan contextual approach. Cultural sources began to play a role in Christian theology. The religious conflict of 1999 intensified this contextual shift. A colonial, Calvinist, exclusivist theology was not workable in a pluralist Moluccan society, where Christians and Muslims live alongside each other. Hence, context could no longer be ignored, as it fully presented itself in the form of innumerable violent cruelties. A contextual theology of harmony, based on shared culture, was needed more than ever. Therefore, after 2000, changes in education and church were gradually implemented. Courses were adjusted, contextual theology became a separate subject, special services (for youth, for Christmas, or for Easter) started to be based on cultural liturgical forms, and UKIM experimented with the application of new knowledge. The changes led to the synodal decision in 2018 to establish the ethnic service. Nowadays, the development of contextual theology at

15 Such views, of course, were held by people in the highest positions within the hierarchy of the GPM. Despite the statements about conquered paganism, many Moluccans still possessed and used the *piring natzar*, and the ancestors were still important in daily life. Hence, the GPM was not aware, or did not want to see, the lived religion of Moluccan Protestant communities 'on the ground.'

UKIM moves at a quick pace, with continuing possibilities for shaping Protestant Christianity from the wealth of Moluccan culture.¹⁶

The Meaning of Contextual Theology

Moluccan contextual theology was inspired by and developed in response to broader international – especially Asian – theological thinkers, who began advocating for a contextual approach.¹⁷ In the African context, Kwame Bediako is an important figure. In his book *Theology and Identity*, Bediako poses the thesis that theological concern is inevitably linked to a process of Christian self-definition. Theoretical conclusions are drawn from actual Christian existence, and this practice means that theology is called to always deal with culturally rooted questions (Bediako 1992, xv). Bediako's thoughts have acquired a broad applicability in many other Christian contexts that deal with a history of colonization and missionization, such as the Moluccas. Furthermore, the notion that theological questions and identity are closely linked, which means that theology is always situated in context, has proven to be the core premise for the development of Moluccan contextual theology.

Asian contextual theologies are generally characterized by a response to the immense cultural diversity of the continent and by a mixture of Asian

16 For more information, see Lensink, Jip. 2021. "Contextual Theology as Heritage Formation: Moluccan Culture, Christianity, and Identity." *Exchange* 50 (3–4): 238–69. In this article, I analyze Moluccan theology as a process of heritage formation on the basis of two phases of alignment between the GPM and the political project of Indonesia. The alignment forms the background of the contextual shift, and the conflict intensifies a need for a contextual theological approach.

17 In his *Essays in Contextual Theology* (2018), Bevans outlines a short history of the development of contextual theology. In the first half of the twentieth century, missiologists wrote about the need to adapt Christianity to African and Asian cultures. Paul Tillich sketched a method of correlation, in which questions about the human condition set the agenda of theology. In the early 1960s, 'missionary anthropology' was developed, and efforts for an indigenous theology were started. In the late 1960s, the term 'political theology' was coined, and in Latin America, theologians articulated a theology of liberation. In 1969, James Cone published *A Black Theology of Liberation*, rooted in the civil rights movement and the black power movement in the US. In 1973, Shoki Coe introduced the term contextualization (in relation to the term inculturation, which is often seen as a Catholic term) at a WCC meeting. Subsequently, black theologies, feminist theologies, queer theologies, and many other theologies appeared. Theologies that focus on cultural identity also emerged, in which Moluccan theology should be placed as well (Bevans 2018, 31–3). David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen also present a short historical overview about contextual theology in the book *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (1989, p. 28–30). For more general information about the history and development of contextual theology and how contextual theology is embedded in the writings of theologians dealing with mission and World Christianity, see *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity* (1995) by Norman E. Thomas.

religious concerns and Western influences (Hesselgrave & Rommen 1989, 85). Shoki Coe is an important author in the Asian context, who – both through his writings and his presence at Asian theological conferences – has left his mark on the movement of contextual theology. Shoki Coe is globally acknowledged as the craftsman who supported the liberation of theological articulation from Western doctrine, and who reinforced the subjectivity of the people in theological discourse (Joseph et al. 2018, 1). He encouraged former colonized people to engage seriously with the process of articulating encounters with the living reality of God. For a long time, these people had been the mere recipients of a theology of the colonizers, which, in most cases, was constructed to satisfy political and economic ambitions. To counter this alienating God-experience of local people, Coe wanted to guide the former colonized to become creators of their own theologies (Joseph et al. 2018, 3). Furthermore, Coe introduced the term ‘contextualization’ and distinguished it from indigenization.¹⁸ Shoki Coe stated that replanting the Gospel in the local soil is not the primary theological task. The plant, namely, can never become a local plant, and the local must stand at the center of contextualization (Joseph et al. 2018, 9).¹⁹

Apart from African and Asian theologians, Western theologians also contributed to the contextual approach on the Moluccas. At UKIM, the work of the Catholic, American theologian Stephan Bevans has an important place in the curriculum. His book *Models of Contextual Theology* is a foundational, accessible source for students who are learning about the contextual practice. Bevans argues that contextual theology is an imperative, because cultural differences are so intrinsic to human nature that any attempt at articulating a single ‘universal’ theology is doomed to become a mockery. Doing theology contextually, thus, is not a choice, nor should contextual theology only interest people from the ‘Global South.’ Contextual theology is part of the very nature of theology itself. Bevans defines contextual theology as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the Gospel, the tradition of the Christian people, the culture in which one is theologizing, and social change in that culture. Contextual theology is

18 Indigenization refers to the process of adapting to the conditions or practices of a particular land, environment, or people. Indigenization assumes that the Gospel and Christian theology are the same in all cultures. Deviations from orthodoxy are judged to be heretical (Thomas 1995, 169).

19 M.M. Thomas is another example regarding Asian contextual theology. His two monographs, in which he develops an Indian indigenous theology, aim at a more inclusive Christianity (Hesselgrave & Rommen 1989, 73–6). A third example is the Japanese Kosuke Koyama, who developed the Water buffalo theology. Koyama approaches theology as guarding, watering, and nurturing the living seed of faith, as it roots itself in the native soil (Hesselgrave & Rommen 1989, 79–80).

the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context (Bevans 1992, 1). He identifies scripture, tradition, and human experience as valid theological sources. Theology is no longer applied to contexts, but contexts become the sources of the theological enterprise (Bevans 1992, 11).

An important point Bevans makes is that contextual theology changes the idea of the religious expert doing theology. The real theologians are ordinary people who are the subjects of their cultures and, therefore, should have a prominent place in understanding the Christian faith in their own context. The professional theologians work in dialogue with this 'ordinary theology,' articulating, deepening, and broadening people's expressions of faith (Bevans 1992, 13). Bevans states: "Theology is an ongoing process. It is the habitus of praying Christians, of reflective ministers, and believing communities" (Bevans 2018, 35).

Bevans also articulates several dangers involved in doing contextual theology. Contextual theology can easily lead to cultural romanticism, not basing theology on contemporary culture but on an unchanging 'fossil culture.' Since cultures are always in flux, real contextualization is only achieved when theology does not deal with a culture that no longer exists. Moreover, too much emphasis on cultural identity can lead to conflicts with so-called popular religiosity. For instance, practices brought by the colonizers enter into the fabric of local life and, therefore, should be taken seriously – although a purification of damaging dimensions is often necessary, according to Bevans (Bevans 1992, 20–1). These dangers, identified by Bevans, are important when analyzing Moluccan theology.

Contextual Theology at UKIM

The ideas discussed above are clearly reflected in the contextual approach at UKIM and in the conceptualizations of contextualization among Moluccan theologians. In my view, a paradoxical dynamic characterizes the practice of contextual theology: overarching international organizations and theological movements support the focus on local identity that forms the core of contextualization. While specific contextual theologies are defined by specific local contexts, the idea of contextualization itself is anything but local. The beginning of the contextual process, therefore, is a global-local relation.

In line with Bediako, UKIM theologians state that every theology is essentially a contextual theology.²⁰ This means that theology is a response

20 That also includes classical theology, which, in fact, is Western theology. Classical Western theology, for a very long time, was regarded as the universal theology. In the case of the Moluccas,

to the dynamics and changes that happen in society. Contextual theology means expressing faith in relation with the social, cultural, economic, and political context. It is about theologizing from one's own culture and lived experience. Chris Tamaela explained: "Contextual theology opens our minds, our eyes, our hearts, to connect with our context, our culture, our daily life."²¹

However, contextual theology does not mean throwing away everything that came from the West through the forces of colonialism. As Chris Tamaela explained, Moluccan Christians also have to keep using Western liturgies, ways of worship, and music, because such Western forms are part of the heritage on which Moluccan theology is built. Contextual theology involves a process of double contextualization, through placing the message of the Gospel in the Moluccan context, as well as enriching the continuation of what one had before.

At UKIM, the value and importance of contextual theology lies in the aim for closeness between the experience of believing and the experience of Moluccanness. Cultural forms, local languages, and traditional music touch people's hearts, which is why it is effective to use these forms in worship, in order to connect with the congregants. Minister John Beay explained how, by clarifying culture in worship as part of the expression of Christian faith, one prevents people from becoming strangers inside their own religion. It is important to learn and encounter the Gospel by means of culture. Theologian John Titaley added that, for him, it is about one's own personal experience with Christ:

People in every part of the world have any kind of supernatural experience. [...] And because of that, my question is, can I, as an Indonesian, have my own experience with God? Why not? [...] What we have in the Bible, is that we are reading how people in that time are having their divine experience with God. To be contextual means, can we have our own divine and defined experienced with God?²²

In contextual theology, the Bible is no longer the sole reference. Contextual theology is about God working within people's experience, as the Moluccan theologians emphasized. Furthermore, contextual theology is not only

we are talking about the colonial theology of the Calvinist/Reformed Dutch church, which fit the Dutch context in the past.

21 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

22 Interview with John Titaley.

practiced by religious experts and does not only consist of texts. Theology is an attitude of faith towards reality, which means that teachers, ministers, and congregants – practically any Christian – can theologize according to their context. Contextual theology is a natural process of reflecting on one's own faith and life. This basic principle, the ability to see God in context, is present in all people. Ideally, in an academic environment, theologians merely formulate what people themselves have already done.

Nevertheless, UKIM theologians have the ambition to change specific mentalities and practices among Moluccan Protestants, following the spiral that Margaretha Hendriks described at the beginning of this chapter. Postcolonial theologies are transformed on the basis of lived realities and practices in the Moluccan context. At the same time, the ambition of the theologians who develop Moluccan contextual theology is to change the way Moluccan Protestants theologize God. A strict, legalistic, moralistic, and exclusivist religious worldview characterizes the 'old' way. Moluccan theologians want to move from the image of a punishing, vengeful God to a loving God. They want to move from an exclusivist to an inclusivist Christianity, and from a singular context to a plural intercontext. Pluralism, namely, is inherently present in contextual theology. As Bevans writes: "Contextual theology serves pluralism. It points to the fact that there is never one way to understand the Gospel or to practice Christianity. It points to the fact as well that Christian theology can learn from the best in any particular context – any experience, any culture, any social location, any movement in history, any religious system" (Bevans 2018, 35). UKIM theologians take as the starting point the differences of responding to God in different places and times. As Moluccan theologians, they do not start from point zero, but learn from others, in order to construct their own theologies. In this dialogue, ideas, terms, and practices are translated and adapted to the Moluccan Protestant context, a process that has the goal to empower people by doing theology.

Modernity and Nationalism

Theological thoughts and utterances – 'the lexicon' – are embedded in and shaped by international and political relations, organizational, doctrinal and liturgical GPM structures, Moluccan culture and church culture, a history of colonialism and a present of nationalism, as well as modernity and postcolonialism. Together, these contexts (the discursive structures and rules, see the introduction) produce 'the grammar' behind the discourse

on Moluccan contextual theology. The selection, production, construction, and transformation of Moluccan cultural forms are situated within this grammar of the process of contextual theology.

UKIM is the main context in the Moluccas for the development of contextual theology. This institution, where contextualization is practiced, is embedded in a national framework. The history and present of this framework brings in questions of modernity, postcolonialism, nationalism, and globalization. Such questions are extensively discussed in a vast body of literature on the relations between religion and nationalism, religion and (post)colonialism, and religion and modernity. For example, Van der Veer (2002, 2015) states that, especially when studying religious practices in South Asia, an understanding of the colonial histories, as well as the regimes of globalization that are formative for the postcolonial nation state, is required (Van der Veer 2002, 184). Also, nationalism shapes religion in important ways in modern times (Van der Veer 2015, 7). In post-independent Indonesia, the New Order regime combined nationalism with a development policy modeled after Western modernity. Concerning religion, in the Moluccan context, Calvinist colonial discourse conceptualized religion in Western terms, devaluing native beliefs and traditions to paganism and backwardness. After independence, these conceptions have continued to exert influence on religious discourse and reality. Furthermore, Chakrabarty (2005) writes how New Order nationalism was supported by a pedagogical style of politics that reenacted hierarchies between nations/classes/leaders and the masses, with those lower down having to learn from those higher up (Chakrabarty 2005, 46). Appadurai (1996, 1) characterizes today's world as 'modernity at large,' moving beyond traditional oppositions between culture and power, tradition and modernity, and global and local. In Indonesia, regimes of developmental modernization made place for a revival of diversity, "which allows modernity to be rewritten more as vernacular globalization and less as a concession to large-scale national and international policies" (Appadurai 1996, 10). Moluccan theologians mobilize their cultural material to construct a collective ethnic identity, in line with current political foci and in communication with international events, ideas, and practices. These theologians, then, formulate Moluccan traditions and modernities in their own way. Moluccan contextual theology is a postcolonial response to religious and political colonial legacies, which present-day presence cannot be ignored.

The contextual realities described above are intricately entangled, both infusing and unsettling possibilities and limitations in the contextual process. Situated in these contexts of pasts and presents, Moluccan contextual

theology is located at the ambiguous nexus of place-based contextuality and imaginative processes of the selection and construction of tradition and ethnic identity. Moluccan theology continues to work with terms that, for a long time, have been maligned and defined under the practices of governmentality of the colonial powers and the nationalist state. The key terms that Moluccan theologians use in their contextual approach (such as tradition, culture, religion, and ancestors), therefore, are not neutral terms, but political terms that are situated in specific historical and contemporary discourses. It is important to realize that these terms carry the colonial and national history on which theological futures are being built.

Contextual theology in the Moluccas – a modern, international phenomenon – responds to and interacts with the colonial Calvinist roots and the national ideology of ‘Unity in Diversity.’ Moluccan theology both aligns with and critiques governmental policies. Moluccan culture, Christian tradition, global developments, ideas and images, cultural differences, and ethnic symbols form the input for constructing a Moluccan ethnic identity that stands at the basis of Moluccan theology. The selection of various cultural items is cast as a localized – yet global – form of heritage. The items are set apart, adapted, and become incorporated in theological innovations. Situated in a postcolonial, globalized era, Moluccan contextual theology collects relevant cultural sources and transforms these into a perception of ‘authentic’ and ‘real’ collective ethnic identity – a focus and practice that align with the broader societal and political focus on the revival of the local.²³ During this process, a Moluccan ‘modern’ and a Moluccan ‘traditional’ are created.

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23 Despite the constructive nature of Moluccan theology, one should not forget that ethnicity and cultural identity are no less real in a modern world and that globalization does not result in an ultimate form of placelessness (Chakrabarty 2005, 62).

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4. Moluccan Contextualization: Material Theology

Abstract: Contextual theology enables the preservation of a sentiment of Moluccanness that affirms the ethnic community. The author analyzes the practice, process, and implementation of Moluccan contextual theology. Theologians select Moluccan cultural forms based on their accordance with Christian values, and liturgically adapt and theologically transform them. A top-down and bottom-up approach are combined: lived realities transform theologies and theologies transform religious attitudes and congregational practices. Ministers play an important role. They are located in between theology and lived religion. Contrasting opinions among theologians, ministers, and congregants in a variety of congregational settings influence the implementation of contextual theology.

Keywords: Moluccan; Contextual theology; Implementation; Ethnic; Lived religion; Calvinism.

The cold breeze blowing from the air conditioning cools down my body in an unnatural way. After months of living in a tropical climate, strangely, I have forgotten the sensation of chilliness. I feel the wind from the machine touching my nose, arms, and ankles, turning the spacious office into a parallel universe without sweat and humidity.

Across the long table, on either side of which we both occupy a seat, I look at the fierce face of Steve Gaspersz, a theologian at UKIM and GPM minister. He leans forward to carefully listen to my questions and leans backward in his chair while talking. He sits up when the weight of a matter that is dear to him needs emphasizing. In a serious tone and in complete openness, Steve Gaspersz gives his view on contextual theology.

We need to find the basic faith in our culture. We need to recognize and acknowledge that our faith is not a strange faith. Our faith is basically based on our cultural expressions and identity. Let people talk about themselves, their culture! Do not determine what we think is true for the people. Just listen to their stories, their narrative. By this, we can understand their living experience, their suffering, their history. So, in that way, I think that theology for me is the continuous task to find the meaning of life in relation with God, human beings and the living environment. That is my understanding. My belief is not a final belief. I think our theology or our faith is challenged by our changing context.

Not only his words, but also his attitude is provoking and stimulates reflection. A certain pride, a certain courage, a certain untouchability radiates from his being.

How as a Moluccan, Indonesian Christian to contextualize? How to face the new challenging context in postcolonial Indonesia, in modern society inside the paradigm of our government, and in post-conflict Maluku? I found that to understand contextual theology, I need interdisciplinary knowledge. I am the first minister that uses the word Mena-Muria. Did you know? This is a very dangerous word that is like a war yell. It means readiness. I use this idiom as the spirit of reform, to replace syalom. Because we belong to the Reformed Church, so that is the spirit of reformation! I want to revitalize Christian theology. And this is not merely about my intellectual exercise; this is my calling to give something, intellectually and theologically, to my church. I hope to introduce a new way to build the contextual theology of Maluku. I think that is my dream.

It is remarkable how other people's dreams are communicated via character, personal investment, and perseverance. After two hours, impressed by the academic environment I am part of, I stretch my stiff legs and walk into the warming sunshine.

The danger of the word *Mena-Muria*, which minister and UKIM theologian (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku) Steve Gaspersz uses in his sermons, is the word's association with the RMS (Republik Maluku Selatan) – the movement that fights for an independent South Moluccan republic. Although Gaspersz belongs to the generation that grew up with a nationalist discourse, the RMS continues to be a highly sensitive political topic, even more so since separatist desires still exist in the Moluccas (and especially among the Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands).¹ For him, the term has theological significance through which Moluccan Protestants can explore their cultural heritage to find their religious-cultural identity. In practice, Gaspersz uses *syalom* and *Mena-Muria* simultaneously, to explain the meaning of the substitution to congregants.² He is a theologian and religious studies scholar who teaches contextual theology. Not all Moluccan ministers, congregants, GPM officials (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church), and other UKIM theologians agree with his reformist approach and perspectives. Gaspersz' ideas, methods, and ambitions show the progressive attitude that thrives at UKIM. However, contestations and a multiplicity of opinions also show that the content, process, and implementation of Moluccan contextual theology is not a unilateral endeavor. In this chapter, I explain the multi-layered process of contextual theology as it is practiced at UKIM. I depict Moluccan cultural contexts, which form the theological sources, as well as the relation between ideas and practices. Traditional church music is one particular theme within Moluccan contextual theology as a whole. Traditional church music will be addressed in the next chapter.

The Process of Contextual Theology

The sources for Moluccan contextualization are culture, identity, and local wisdom. Contextualization is aimed at 'feeling the faith' through the Moluccan traditional. This process involves a critical attitude towards local, cultural traditions, and customs. Moluccan theologians select 'good' aspects

1 Each year, on April 25 (the commemoration of the declaration of the RMS), processions, gatherings, and demonstrations take place in the Netherlands. In many communities or villages, people raise the blue-white-green vertically striped flag with the large red block on the right. In the Moluccas, hoisting the flag is not allowed. People who do so face severe punishments (such as many years in prison). The presence of the army and police violence characterize April 25 on the Moluccas.

2 *Syalom* is the opening statement by which the minister addresses the congregants during the service.

and develop new meanings in a contemporary context. In the dialectic between religion and *adat*, something new originates.³

For example, *sopi* is a popular, traditional alcoholic drink that is prohibited by the Moluccan church and the government. It is believed that *sopi* causes drunkenness and problems. However, theologians explained how, seen from an *adat* perspective, *sopi* is an instrument of mediation and a symbol of union and peace. Through a transformation of this traditional drinking culture in reference to Christian religion, the positive idea and value behind *sopi* can be used in contextual theology. Another example that Moluccan theologians mentioned is the interaction between modernity and tradition. From a modern, feminist perspective, the *harga kawin* (the bride price that the family of the groom has to pay before a man can marry a woman (Bartels 1994, 96)) is seen as an instrument of oppression, because the payment might allow bad treatment. Moreover, the *harga kawin* can place a financial burden on the community, since the required expenses often result in debts. Nevertheless, understanding the rationale behind the practice of the *harga kawin* from its own context might be contextually fruitful, according to Moluccan theologians. In other words, understanding the context and meaning of a cultural practice is useful for developing a critical contextual theological position.

Contextualization cannot be based on cultures that no longer exist (see Chapter 3). This means that Moluccan contextual theologians draw inspiration from present-day traditional communities adhering to *adat* rules and practices. While the contextual theologies refer to living realities, these realities are increasingly rare and, therefore, also form the reason for the ambition of preservation and revival through theological contextualization.

The selection process of usable cultural forms is based on a specific direction of adaptation and transformation. *Adat* values have to be compatible with Christian values, so that the *adat* practice can be incorporated into Moluccan Protestantism. UKIM theologians adopt a critical attitude to judge the perceived good and destructive aspects within traditional culture: positive things can be used, and negative things have to be removed or transformed. Theologian Margaretha Hendriks stated: “we have traditional culture, and it is part of our make-up, but some of it is good, and some of it is bad.”⁴ Moluccan cultural values, such as helping each other, sharing, love, and brotherhood, are values that are also taught by the GPM. Therefore, these cultural values can support and strengthen the church’ teachings. In this way, a reciprocal relationship exists between Protestantism and

3 Theologians use *adat* as a synonym for Moluccan cultural traditions and customs.

4 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

Moluccan culture. In the opposite direction, cultural aspects that reject values of the church and the Bible are not accepted. Furthermore, some cultural aspects are deemed to be no longer relevant in current times and must be renewed. A minister commented: “There definitely needs to be a strong filter, in order that not all things from culture end up in the service.”⁵

In essence, the process of contextualization comes down to the following quote of a GPM official:

A lot of culture and local wisdom is in accordance with the values of the Gospel. We have to keep and preserve this so that our culture permanently lives. Sometimes, there are also things which do not go together with our religion. We have to remove these. Now, we have to [embed] Christianity in our soil, in our hearts, in order that Christian religion becomes our religion.⁶

In this quote, the most prevalent terms in the discourse on contextualizing Moluccan culture in theology are summarized: the interplay between Gospel and *adat*, cultural values being in accordance with Christian religion and the Bible, and preserving or removing certain cultural aspects during the contextual process. The quote shows how theological contextualization works according to a specific, rule-governed process, to control the selection of sources and the production of the results. Because the theologians fear contextualizations that they perceive as syncretism or heresy, they try to prevent unrestrained contextualization according to this critical process. However, especially ministers discursively ignored the issue of control. Generally, they repeated the standard phrase ‘in accordance with context,’ and stated that everything from culture is eligible for contextualization. Moluccan theologians, who are more directly involved at the outset of the contextual process, emphasized the controlled way in which cultural sources are theologically transformed. Nevertheless, among theologians as well, differences may arise, for instance about the question of the boundaries that determine the sources that qualify for transformation.

Positive and Negative Aspects

Several examples of the cultural aspects that are considered as negative or positive by Moluccan theologians will illustrate the thought process behind theological contextualization. The bottom line for aspects that cannot enter

5 Interview with Hery Siahay, GPM minister (November 21, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

6 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua). Translation by the author.

the church are traditional practices associated with other transcendental powers than God. For example, spells that invoke the ancestors, with the ritualistic purpose of harming an enemy, are banned from church.⁷ Although the ancestors have still an important position in the daily lives of Moluccans, Moluccan Protestants always state that they only believe in God. Cultural traditions associated with discrimination, inequality between men and women, drunkenness, violence, or murder are also regarded as negative. About these traditions, a research participant said: “These are no good. You have to throw it away, far!”⁸

Cultural customs that are ascribed a positive meaning are *masohi*, *makan patitia*, *sasi*, and *pela* – customs that symbolize values connected to helping each other, sharing happiness and pain, living together, and love. These values bridge differences between people. Interestingly, many Moluccan Protestants emphasized the idea that the ancestors taught such positive cultural values to them. A minister said: “the ancestors already did things like this. Thus, this is good for us to continue, because the basis is also present inside the Bible. We have to continue it in our lives and in the church service.”⁹ This ancestral lineage of cultural teachings was not stressed regarding the perceived negative aspects.

Lastly, discussions may arise as to whether particular cultural forms can or cannot be used in the Moluccan church. Contestation, for example, originates about ministers in office wearing the *ikat kepala*, the red headband. Some stated that a minister should not be allowed to wear any additional accessory apart from the black robe. Others see the *ikat kepala* as a positive Moluccan cultural symbol.

To summarize, the selection and transformation process of Moluccan cultural forms that are deemed appropriate to contextualize Moluccan theology is focused on how cultural forms can be theologized. During the process, the cultural forms become symbols. Theologians have to be able to explain the cultural form in a universal way, as part of people’s Christian faith. As the general secretary of the GPM said: “If you cannot explain the use of that symbol, don’t ever try to use it in worship.”¹⁰ For example, although the *parang*, the Moluccan machete, and the *cakalele* dance are

7 Interestingly, a minister whom I spoke to said that he uses these ancestral spells in the music that he makes as a musician. At the same time, the minister stated that it would be really bad if such words entered the church. The minister, thus, constructed a distinction between popular music, the public sphere, and the Christian context.

8 Interview with Anonymous (December 22, 2019, Ambon).

9 Interview with Jan Z. Matatula.

10 Interview with Elifas Maspaitela.

traditionally associated with war (a concept that does not align with church teachings), such cultural forms can be theologized anew as a welcoming and guarding symbol. Another example is traditional instruments (such as the drum, *tifa*, and conch shell, *tahuri*), which can be theologized as instruments to invite God's presence in church, instead of instruments to call the ancestors. Contextualization, thus, works according to a process of critically assessing values and theological customization. In other words, the relation or entanglement between religion and culture characterizes the process of Moluccan contextual theology.

The Moluccan Context

So far, I have been discussing the context where contextual theology is developed – UKIM – and the present and past contexts that form the grammatical structure behind the discourse on theological contextualization (Chapters 1 to 3). The third and last context is the Moluccan context that functions as the cultural source for the practice of contextual theology. The aim of contextual theology and its practical implementation in the Moluccan Protestant church is to build awareness among Moluccan Protestants: cultural context cannot be neglected or rejected in relation to Christianity. Moluccan theologians understand context in a broad way. It includes Moluccan (traditional) culture, Christian people's 'neighbors' (Moluccan Muslims (in other words, a plural context)), the advancement of technological communication, political and economic change, etc. Theologian Agus Batlajery summed up the range of contextual sources:

We realize our belief [...] in our real context in the Moluccas. In the Moluccas, we have many religions. We also have, what we call, *agama asli*, indigenous/native religion. And then, we have Moluccan culture, local wisdom. We are living in this context, so we have to relate our belief by considering this context, by considering our culture and by considering our other believers who are living with us. So, we have to use local wisdoms for strengthening our belief. Because God works in that culture, through our ancestors.¹¹

The Moluccan contexts that UKIM theologians referred to and identified as important contextual sources can roughly be grouped into seven categories.

11 Interview with Agus Batlajery.

These cultural forms are often named 'cultural symbols.' The term symbol that Moluccan theologians use points to the first theological step in the contextual process. The cultural source becomes part of a symbolic register and is transformed in order to be accommodated in liturgy.

The first general category is Moluccan culture, often called 'local wisdom.' Cultural customs or cosmologies, like *masohi* or *makan patita* (see Chapter 1), were mentioned most often. Such customs emphasize collectivity, togetherness, and cordiality, which are core values in Moluccan society. Another example is the so-called *tempat garam*, the place for the salt or salt container. A theologian explained to me that, generally, a *tempat garam* stands on every Moluccan kitchen table. The salt has a philosophical function related to *adat*. It is a medium that symbolically connects the family. For instance, when someone is not hungry while the other family members are eating, this person remains seated at the table and takes a little bit of salt to symbolically eat together.¹² As a symbol of collectivity, such cultural customs can be contextualized into liturgy.

Another contextual source is the ancestors and Moluccan native religion.¹³ In Moluccan theology, the ancestors are contextualized as the patriarch sons, who, in the Bible, can be regarded as the Christian ancestors. In relation to native religion, ancestral language is an important aspect. In the *agama suku* (tribal religion), similar to monotheistic traditions, a single supreme God is worshipped. Therefore, many contextual theologians stated that the name of this God, *Upu Lanite*, can be used to denote the Christian God. However, dealing with native religion in contextual theology is a precarious business, because of the dangerous associations with ancestral powers. Moluccan theologians try to find ways to employ such native terms in what they perceive as 'safe' contextualization. Among the theologians themselves, concepts from native religion are also contested. Some Moluccan theologians see no harm in using terms and practices from native religion, but for others, such words are too close to other powers than the power of the Christian God.¹⁴

The third and fourth sources are the contexts or issues that were most often referred to when people talked about Moluccan contextual theology.

12 Another situation in which the *tempat garam* can be used is when one person has to leave the table while the others are still eating. That person, then, moves the salt from its regular place. Subsequently, the family members put back the salt, which symbolizes that the person who has left remains part of the family in that moment.

13 In fact, it is believed that the ancestors are the basis of all cultural forms, because the ancestors passed down the *adat* rules that determine how to live as a Moluccan.

14 At the time of the fieldwork, the doctrinal and dogmatic basis of the GPM did not yet allow theological contextualization through ideas and practices of Moluccan native religion.

The first is pluralism. Moluccan society is religiously pluriform. On the national level, Christians comprise a minority among a large Islamic majority. In the Moluccas, Christians live alongside their Muslim neighbors. As theologian Steve Gaspersz said: “I think the main issue as a Christian in Indonesia is that I have experiences in daily life with Muslims. So how can I understand the Calvinism from a European perspective and how can I bridge the two different contexts – Indonesia with a majority Muslim population and a country like Holland?”¹⁵ *Pela* is a local system of brotherhood that Moluccan theologians use to build interreligious relationships between communities. *Pela* teaches Moluccan people how to live together, to help each other, and to appreciate other ways of being. *Pela* focuses on cultural sameness instead of religious difference.¹⁶

Despite the positive value of *basudara*, brotherhood, which is inherent to the *pela* system, Moluccan theologians also critically look at *pela* as a cultural source for contextualization. In the theologians’ opinion, the concept of *pela* should be broadened in order to become more inclusive. Culturally, *pela* connects only two or three villages by means of ancestral lineage. People from other villages or non-Moluccans can never become part of such a bond (and, in former times, were even regarded as the enemy). Therefore, theologians perceive this exclusivity as a negative cultural aspect that needs to be transformed in modern society. Especially after the religious conflict, Moluccan theologians made an effort to relate Christianity to other faiths. In the words of Margaretha Hendriks, Moluccan Christians have to see other believers “as our partners in moving forward and in finding the truth, finding God.”¹⁷ Education is very important in this respect. Young generations are taught to destigmatize and deprioritize religious groups. For example, some teachers at UKIM are experts in Islamic studies. Subjects as such are an important part of the curriculum, simply because Islam is part of the context in which Moluccan Christians live. In other words, UKIM students of Christian theology learn about Muslims and Islamic religion.

A second pressing issue is ecology. Global environmental problems, such as climate change and plastic waste, are affecting the Moluccas. During the colonial times, Christianity destroyed local ways of dealing with natural regeneration. To confront this issue, *sasi* (see Chapter 1) is theologically employed as a native symbol that has the power to restore people’s participation

15 Interview with Steve Gaspersz.

16 For instance, the white fabric – which is used in *pela* rituals and that symbolizes brotherhood – can be used in church to establish awareness about multi-religious communities.

17 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

in the protection of Moluccan nature. The example of *sasi* demonstrates how teachings of the Moluccan ancestors are cultural traditions that have been practiced a long time before the here and now, and become increasingly relevant regarding specific contemporary and theological issues, such as the climate crisis. On the Lease islands, for instance, a green theology has emerged. Theologians, politicians, and congregations collaborate to promote a sustainable society. Islamic communities are encouraged to participate as well. This initiative combines the ambitions for interreligious community building and sustainability.

The fifth and sixth contextual sources relate to national-political and modern contexts. Moluccan theology has to respond to multiple 'layers of identity,' because people are Moluccan, Protestant, and Indonesian. Differences, positions, and similarities between people are negotiated on this interface. Since the independence in 1945, *Maluku* has been part of Indonesia in a political, social, and economic way. This means that Moluccan contextual theology has to dialectically connect two identities – the national identity and the ethnic identity. For theologian John Titaley, the political context forms the basis of a Moluccan theology based on the Indonesian constitution:

Calvinist doctrine did not emerge out of diversity or plurality. But Indonesian history united Muslims and Christians. So we have to develop our doctrine that is not limited to Indonesian Christians. My fellow Muslims have also been saved by that God. The constitution allows that. This is the equality provided to Indonesians, regardless of the background as Moluccan or Christian. In front of the law, every Indonesian is equal. But in front of the Indonesian *Tuhan* [Lord/God], everybody is also equal. This is the new theology!¹⁸

Although Moluccan contextual theology draws on traditional Moluccan culture to connect Protestantism with Moluccan cultural identity, contemporary Moluccan Protestantism is also situated in a modern context. For example, Moluccans enjoy international music, food, and commercial products, which cross the world because of globalization and technological developments. Moluccan theologians, therefore, not only focus on Moluccan traditional culture, but also look at the inherent interaction with modernity. In short, Moluccan theology synchronizes layers of identity in a blended, modern society that is characterized by global forces, an absence

18 Interview with John Titaley.

of geographical or temporal borders, and endless inspiring possibilities from all over the world. In this world, Moluccan Protestants identify themselves as an ethnic group while relating to global Christianity as well.¹⁹

Lastly, in Moluccan contextual theology, the Moluccas are used as a specific geographical place, to change the Dutch-Calvinist image of a vengeful God who punishes people. An abundance of natural resources characterizes the Moluccan landscape. Theologian John Titaley illustrated: “If you need fish, you just go to the sea. God has been very generous! But the God from the Bible is a God from the desert: a warrior God – you have to fight for a living. The understanding of God, basically, is a reflection of our life within the flora and fauna that we have.”²⁰ Hence, Moluccan theology tries to bring this daily, natural experience of generosity in line with an understanding of a God that is generous.

A Community of Moluccanness

The contexts described above form the cultural sources of the contextual process. Based on these contexts, a notion of Moluccanness is symbolically constructed – a notion that Cohen (2013) would call ‘community.’ Cohen describes how, while a re-assertion of community is made necessary by contemporary circumstances, the symbolic expression of community refers to a putative past or tradition that is threatened by politics, modernity, or globalization. The symbols of the past that are selected have a strong mnemonic competence, which triggers emotional response. The symbols are timeless and especially effective during periods of intensive change (Cohen 2013, 102). The imprecision of references to the past makes community an apt device “for expressing symbolically the continuity of past and present, and for re-asserting the cultural integrity of the community” (Cohen 2013, 104). One of the reasons for the revival of ethnic communities is the feeling of groups that they have nothing more to lose than their sense of self (Cohen 2013, 104). According to Cohen (2013, 117–18), the renewed affirmation of community, whether local or ethnic, therefore, is not an exception, but part of modern society, as one of the modalities of available behavior. In this way, people construct community symbolically, by investing boundaries with meanings within the community’s social discourse, hereby providing a

19 Although contextual theology attempts to reconnect Moluccan Protestants with their local culture in interaction with modern society, modernity, on the other hand, is seen as the major cause for the erosion of traditional values. In that sense, Moluccan theology reacts to the fast-changing context in a millennial era, filtering new influences and trying to lift back up, affirm, and strengthen ‘old’ cultural values.

20 Interview with John Titaley.

referent for identity, which is expressed and reinforced in social life (Cohen 2013, 118).

In the Moluccan context, political pasts and presents (which comprise colonial oppression, national development programs, and a current focus on local particularity), modern influences from global society, the practice of Moluccan contextual theology, and the religious conflict of twenty years ago influence the rise of ethnic revivalism. Moluccans feel the need to affirm, preserve, and strengthen their Moluccanness, because they are the only ones who can protect an ethnic Moluccan identity. Moreover, this identity – in the Christian perception – already suffered great losses under the destroying forces of colonialism and development politics. Moluccan theologians hold on to and revive traditional cultural heritage, in order to build anew an interreligious ethnic community in light of the changes that are instigated by modernity and globalization. At the same time, Moluccan contextual theology is a modern theology, because the Moluccan context is a modern context. Contextual theologians select Moluccan contexts – traditional cultural forms – that are open and unspecific enough to function as transformed symbols, in order to trigger emotional memories among an inclusive group of Moluccans. Subsequently, through the content of the contextual discourse, a sense of Moluccanness is constructed, which is practically expressed through political and religious implementation.

The New Old

The selection of timeless cultural forms that undergo a symbolic transformation in producing an ethnic community under modern circumstances has been described as “the invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012). However, invention implies a contrived character, whereas people experience the cultural forms that are used as contextual sources as real. Thus, contextual theology and Moluccanness are based on existing and practiced notions of culture and custom. An assemblage of traditional symbols becomes modified and transformed in the process of contextual theology. After all, the ‘old’ ways are still available and, now, are being deliberately controlled (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012, 8). To prevent the unrestrained use of cultural forms within Protestantism, theologians select specific Moluccan traditions that are compatible with Christian theological values, and bring these in line with GPM liturgy. As symbols, these cultural traditions become institutionalized in the GPM and are ritualized in the ethnic service. Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012, 10) make a distinction between ‘old’ and ‘invented’ traditional practices. Whereas the former are specific and strongly binding, the latter are vague, so as to function in the

creation of a broad sense of group membership. In the Moluccas, a fairly open ethnic Moluccanness is constructed to accommodate all Moluccans who are embedded in various ‘sub-Moluccan’ contexts. Interestingly, in the process of contextual theology, ‘old’ or ‘traditional,’ on the one hand, refers to pre-modern, pre-colonial Moluccan culture and, on the other hand, to Western Calvinist theology brought by the colonizers. Countering the latter while, at the same time, building on colonial theology, Moluccan theologians use ‘old’ Moluccan traditions as one of the contextual sources. In the process of selection and transformation – situated in modern, national society – a ‘new old’ is constructed.

Heritage, Culture, and the Past

Lowenthal (2015, 21) describes the way people “celebrate, expunge, contest and domesticate the past to serve present needs” as a process in which an inherited legacy is manipulated to secure it as heritage. Some aspects of the past are concealed or disapproved, whereas other aspects are amplified and become sanctified as heritage (Lowenthal 2015, 21). In relation to religion, Bakker (2013) analyzes the heritagization of culture and the past.²¹ A careful discerning of which elements of the past can be brought in tune with Christian identity and which elements menace this project is cast along the lines of harmless, non-spiritual culture. The positive elements are encouraged as legitimate sources of ethnic pride and affective attachment. Conversely, any association with traditional, spiritual forces that are held to be potentially present is disapproved of (Bakker 2013, 307). Bakker (2013, 307) calls this a project of disenchantment of cultural form: “the stripping of certain materials made to feature as culture from their potentially sacred entanglements.” However, a constant danger, suspicion, hesitancy, and watchfulness underlies this process of heritage formation in its blurry edge with sacred matters, because of the ever-present ‘lying-under-the-surface’ possibility of evoking something else than intended. Rather than merely celebrating ethnic identity, cultural engagement can cross the line into the sacred register of ritual invocation of ancestral spirits (Bakker 2013, 317–8, 320, 322–4).

As explained in the introduction, the Moluccan theological, decolonial project of contextualization resembles the process of heritage formation. Selected positive aspects become sanctified as heritage – aspects that can be brought in tune with Protestant identity by theologizing the correspondence between cultural and religious values. In this process, the most

21 André Bakker researches the Pataxó Indians in Brazil.

fundamental point that is located at the heart of theological disagreements and contestations is the spirits of the ancestors. These spirits posit a danger to the necessary innocent and harmless substance of the cultural forms that are the sources for the construction of an ethnic Moluccan identity, because the core criterium of Christian orthodoxy consists of God as the only transcendental powerful entity. Therefore, the boundary for the possibility of theologizing cultural forms that are associated with the ancestors is debated among Moluccan Protestants.

The Implementation of Contextual Theology

Contextual theological ideas that are developed at UKIM are taught to a new generation of students who will later become ministers. In this way, UKIM students are seen as agents of change, who will influence the people in the congregations. Subsequently, UKIM theologians hope that the congregants will influence GPM policies from bottom-up. In another direction, the theological ideas are implemented in church through the GPM's policies. Sunday school teachers, church organizations, and ministers have to execute these policies. Such theological policies influence congregations in a more top-down manner.

Around 2000, the GPM started to base their policy on local wisdom within Moluccan culture. Increased plurality in Ambon City, in both religious and ethnic terms, contributed to this change.²² General secretary Elifas Maspaitela stated: "We want to say to our congregations, whoever you are, if we come together before God, we can worship based on our identities."²³ Regarding the future, the GPM has the ambition to teach the congregations how they themselves can theologize their Christian religion based on their own culture. For example, GPM officials feel that Moluccan Protestants themselves should want to protect the environment, or grow friendships with people regardless of their religious background, because these are God's words spoken via culture. In other words, while Moluccan culture is already appreciated as local wisdom in church, the future ambition of the GPM is the internalization of contextual theology by congregants. Generally, the congregational context is identified as the central object or

22 In line with this view, the GPM started a partnership with Wycliffe, an international organization that translates Bibles into local languages. The translated texts are used in Moluccan worship services to contextualize liturgy.

23 Interview with Elifas Maspaitela.

place for the implementation of contextual theology. Margaretha Hendriks illustrated: “Contextual theology should be implemented at the grassroots level. Everyone should theologize! Because theology is part of our Christian being. So it should not only be practiced in theological schools, but also by people in the church.”²⁴

Once, in December 2019, I went to one of the Advent services in the centrally located Maranatha church, where one of the UKIM ministers led the worship. Soon, I recognized the contextual techniques that he applied in his sermon. The minister started by addressing the congregants in a more personal way, including a variety of attendants (such as children). He alternated between the serious message that he wanted to communicate – expressed in a very loud voice and with heavy gestures – and daily examples. The examples were characterized by the minister leaning forward on the pulpit in a relaxed way, speaking the Ambonese dialect in an easy manner. He made many jokes, and the congregants laughed out loud several times. The stories made the message feel closer, which was about becoming a dynamic church that is liberated from fear and inequality – an active church that moves along with changing times.

Another time, I attended a service just before Christmas. A female minister began the service by stating that an Indonesian word to open the worship would be better than a Greek or Hebrew term. In her sermon, she delivered a message about modesty. First, she explained the context in which Jesus was born in a detailed way, aware of the fact that this environment is not familiar to many Moluccan people (the specific animals, the crib, etc.). She pointed out that Jesus had been born in modest circumstances, and transposed this image to the Moluccan preparation of Christmas celebrations, which is quite lavish generally. While not condemning the way of celebrating, the minister reminded people to give something to other people who have less. Both sermons showed me how theological contextualization is practiced, by relating – in a nuanced or even humorous way – messages of the Gospel to daily, relevant experiences in Moluccan society.

Apart from contextualization in the form of rhetoric styles and theology in daily life, the formats and materials are also important for the implementation of contextual theology. For instance, some ministers make videos about the subject they want to address during the service, to show a real-life example to the congregants. A minister whom I spoke with even comes down from the pulpit to have an interactive discussion with the congregants. Moreover, the forms in which the liturgical parts are communicated can

24 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

change, although the structure needs to be followed. For example, a minister told me that the Creed can be sung or listened to, by placing a bare hand on one's chest, hearing the rhythm of the heart.

Ministers and the Contextual Spiral

The examples above demonstrate how ministers play a significant role in communicating the contextualized messages to Moluccan Protestants, by teaching the congregants that *adat* is allowed in church. They create awareness about the fact that people are living their religious lives in a specific (changing) context, which they have to appreciate and constantly adjust to. Moluccan ministers make and express contextualized sermons, based on their education at UKIM or on GPM policy guidelines. The theology behind their sermons is rooted in the cultural and daily life of Moluccan Protestants, who are the 'receivers' of the implementation of contextual theology. In the contextual process that I explained in the previous paragraphs, cultural values and ways of life form the basis for theologizing. Thus, according to theologians, ministers, and church officials, by grounding theology in Moluccan worldviews, religious messages are better understood, appreciated, and received.

Because ministers visit various congregations, as part of the placement system of the GPM, they acquire a broad knowledge about specific Moluccan cultures – knowledge that these ministers can apply in their sermons. However, as the vice-president of the GPM emphasized, the contextual theological approach is not intended for ministers to impose formal ways of contextualization. Congregants have to be seen as subjects who live in their own contexts and are assisted by the church to theologize by themselves.

I argue that this dynamic is exactly the space in which contextual theology operates. *Adat* is allowed in church, but should not be imposed. Moluccan congregants need to become the subjects of their own theology. At the same time, the way in which Moluccan Protestants theologize themselves should also not deviate from the controlled process that is based on the accordance between *adat* traditions and Christian values.

Naturally, the implementation of contextual theology strongly depends on the theological views of the GPM ministers. Many ministers move along with and are effected by the contextual shift (mainly through relations with colleagues and teacher-student lineages). Nevertheless, from UKIM's perspective, a small group of ministers from the 'older generation' continues to adhere to a Calvinist doctrine that focuses on the Bible rather than on context. Moluccan contextual theologians aim at changing specific Calvinist mentalities and discourses that have to do with particular theological

aspects, which do not sit comfortably with the Moluccan context. Such aspects, for example, include an ahistorical, legalistic, total focus on the Bible – the Bible that is literally seen as the Word of God – a rejection of culture in church, an image of a vengeful God, and, most importantly, an exclusive form of Christianity, which means that Christians only know the absolute truth and, therefore, will be saved. The exclusivist idea of Christianity is practically unattainable in a pluralistic society such as in the Moluccas (and in a country such as Indonesia).

Nonetheless, I want to stress that contextualization is not a completely new phenomenon that stands in opposition to ‘traditional’ ways of thinking among older ministers. Since missionization, contextualization has been happening automatically. In a practical way, congregants have adopted Protestantism into their daily lives. Christianity moved from one place to another and, thus, has been transforming from below ever since. What is new is a contextual theology that is consciously formulated by UKIM and the GPM, and that is being implemented in the congregations – mainly in the period after the religious conflict. This contextual theology does not disregard Western theology or all aspects of Dutch Calvinism. Rather, Moluccan contextual theology builds on the theological (colonial) history and looks anew at certain issues through a contextual lens. Moluccan contextual theologians counter specific aspects of Dutch Calvinism – aspects that continue to exert influence on the Moluccan present via colonial legacies.²⁵

The efforts of UKIM should be placed in this light. As I explained before, UKIM offers an educational program to ministers, which is aimed at transforming ‘old’ or traditional ways of theologizing and at upgrading or refreshing theological knowledge. In this program, ministers learn how theology is not a black or white and right or wrong question. Different theological interpretations can exist in parallel, based on people’s life experiences. In a reciprocal way, the program also incorporates the practical views of the ministers. The ministers bring real experiences from congregations to their classes, which, in turn, form sources of contextual knowledge and add to the educational dialogue.

The reciprocity and dialectics between idea and practice, education and experience, and theology and lived religion were strongly emphasized by UKIM theologians and GPM church officials. In a spiral-like construction, theological knowledge is based on research about contextual sources that are drawn from people’s real lives. The implementation of contextual theological knowledge aims to influence and transform practices of theologizing

25 These aspects largely belong to the past in the Dutch context as well.

in congregations and among Moluccan Protestants. At the same time, religious communities already live contextual religious lives – unconsciously, automatically, and naturally. Chris Tamaela stated: “Local people, who grow up as Christians and who are not yet influenced by Christian theology, are already dealing with contextualization before knowing it, because they have real experiences as Christians.”²⁶ In other words, local practices are the source for understanding and developing contextual theology, for Moluccan theologians, ministers, and congregants. In this way, contextual theology alters the perspective on who religious experts are. Moluccan Protestants, implicitly and explicitly, reflect on their lives within and beyond a theological frame. Religious practitioners’ actions are informed by their religious, intellectual, and embodied understandings of the world. Moluccan theology is defined by such realities and theologians underline the mutual relation, whereby a top-down and bottom-up approach are constantly combined.

In short, Moluccan theology is characterized by a dialectical spiral and by grassroots communication. Moluccan people view the direction of the contextual process in different ways, influenced by their opinions, positions, perspectives, and critiques on religious and theological practices. Their descriptions reflect the multiple actors and factors that are at work at the same time.

The theological spiral of implementation moves along local practices, theological education, GPM policy, *klasis* execution, preaching ministers, organizing groups of *majelis*, and believing congregants. Still, I think that UKIM stirs the motion and determines the direction of the spiral. As Chris Tamaela explained: “To know our faith today in context, we need the science of theology.”²⁷ With educational tools, UKIM aims to communicate and connect theological perspectives to the congregations, and UKIM alumni are seen as the agents who disseminate new productions of theological thinking to others in a centrifugal way. Through practice, meetings, and workshops, a paradigm shift among Moluccan Protestants is intended, so that they start to trust the contextual process and become involved in this process themselves. It is important to stress that Moluccan theologians, generally, interpret disagreements, contestations, and incomprehension on the part of congregants as misunderstandings that can be solved through extensive informing. Having another opinion is like ignorance, for if the process and reasons behind contextualization are well explained, UKIM and the GPM expect that everyone will understand and support the contextual approach.

26 Real in the sense of lived experiences (Interview with Chris Tamaela).

27 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

Ministers who are seen as progressive play a central role in the implementation process. Due to their experience and relations, these ministers are close to UKIM, understand the intentions and goals, and have the ability and techniques to apply contextualization in the congregations. Some of the ministers expressed their thoughts on how the GPM and other GPM ministers can further improve the implementation of contextual theology. They stated that, although contextualization as a discursive term has been around for a long time, its practice is somewhat behind. The implementation of new theological ideas must fight against long-standing doctrines and rules on how things are done in church. Although the GPM has started to pay more attention to the needs of congregations on the basis of a contextual, bottom-up approach, this shift can be intensified – according to these ministers. They feel that, in many cases, contextual theology is not yet based on an equal relation. New ideas are often planted in a certain context from the outside. Minister Jacky Manuputty explained:

Sometimes, we borrow something without spirit to use it in contextual theology – adopt and adapt. No! You just took it and put it in the church. Did you ask the people to participate? No? They will feel it! [...] It is triumphalist Christianity in a very soft way, defeating people from their own mind. Let people accept it in their own way! Contextual theology, for me, is a mutual encounter, an equal encounter. Christianity can contribute to enrich the local set of beliefs, but also should open itself to be enriched. So we can develop it in togetherness.²⁸

The perspectives described above show how Moluccan theology, ideally, is a bottom-up process, which – nevertheless – moves from a certain core in a certain direction. In practice, top-down relations often characterize implementation. Different opinions or critiques concerning the theological and implementation process of contextualization mainly result from setting the boundaries: which contextual sources are allowed, and how much authority and control should be given to the congregants?

Practice, Religious Attitude, and Place

The implementation and internalization of contextual theology are influenced by theological, organizational, and practical constellations among congregations, ministers, and *majelis*. The level or way of implementation and internalization is reflected in a variety of congregational practices,

28 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

religious attitudes, and places. In the previous paragraph, I stated that the backgrounds and theological convictions of ministers affect the content and style of the sermons that communicate messages to the congregants. Furthermore, relations among teams of ministers and *majelis* result in specific theological and practical directions on how to organize religious activities and contextual content. Contextualization is part of the policy of the GPM. The word is well-known and frequently used in religious discourse. However, the interpretation of context and the application of the idea differ among ministers. Some ministers mention the word *konteks* (context) in their sermon, but stick to an 'older' theological worldview and 'lay-out' of the service. Others design the entire worship on the basis of a thorough theologization of the Moluccan context.

I attended a Sunday service, for example, which was characterized by a 'traditional,' moralizing sermon and standard liturgical set-up. However, the hymnbook of that week was the *Nyanyian GPM*, the book that is generally known as the contextual hymnbook. The minister was focused on practicing two songs that clearly were not yet familiar among the congregants, as they softly mumbled and made mistakes while trying to sing the right rhythm. The minister repeated the practicing of the hymns multiple times, so that the congregants memorized the songs. However, she did not do this because of a contextual approach, but because she feared a loss of her reputation. She said that it would be shameful if her congregation was not able to sing the songs, while other congregations already could. The example shows how, in this case, a mentality of competition regarding the application of the contextual policy of the GPM stimulated its implementation.²⁹

As 'implementers' of contextual theology, ministers have an ambiguous 'in-between' position. On the one hand, (especially) younger ministers have been educated at UKIM according to a contextual curriculum, and they have to follow the contextual policy of the GPM. On the other hand, these progressive ministers have to deal with diverse congregations, religious opinions, and attitudes. This gap somewhat hinders the implementation of contextual theology. In other words, UKIM is a relatively progressive institution, which is reflected in the educational background of the young ministers. At the same time, these ministers are afraid to employ contextual theological knowledge in their congregation, because they know that their

29 Combinations between contextual and (what I interpreted as) non-contextual elements often occur in services. On multiple occasions, I listened to a sermon that, content-wise, evidently was contextual, but was illustrated with images on the projector that, for example, showed a young, blonde, Western girl with blue eyes.

acquired attitudes will not be accepted by a large part of the congregants. Many Moluccan Christians – who have not studied theology – continue to be raised according to ‘traditional’ Calvinist beliefs. For example, Moluccan Protestants generally view the Bible as a holy, ahistorical document, written by God. Young ministers, who must become integrated in their congregational community in order to do their job, often do not dare to go against religious stances as such.

UKIM students also told me that what they learn on campus is very different from what they hear in the churches that they attend on Sunday. This perceived discrepancy between education and congregation demonstrates the difficulty of bridging diverging theologies. The implementation and incorporation of the Moluccan traditional in Protestant theology and liturgy are complicated by generational and educational differences regarding theological thinking. Paradoxically, an ‘older,’ traditional Calvinist theology – internalized by many congregants – is pitted against a theological contextual innovation based on traditional Moluccan culture and identity. ‘Traditional,’ thus, almost has opposite meanings in relation to conservatism and innovation (theology vs. culture).

The gap between theological education and congregational practice relates to religious attitudes and the internalization of contextual theology at the grassroots. Many people – theologians, GPM officials, and ministers – stated that almost all congregants positively receive the contextual approach.³⁰ On a language level, I indeed recognized this positive reception among congregants. The word ‘context’ buzzes around and people are taught that context means something good. In this sense, it is safe to say that the contextual approach has become accepted among Moluccan Protestants. Through educational and GPM structures, Moluccan culture has been accepted as part of Protestant religion, whereas some time ago, this idea would have been impossible to communicate. However, while *klasis* leaders and ministers univocally expressed the positive responses to and reception of contextual theology by all congregants (even to the point of congregants who are able to contextually theologize themselves on a personal level), UKIM theologians and GPM leaders were more critical. Margaretha Hendriks

30 The fact that many ministers and *klasis* leaders only emphasized the success of contextual implementation has to do with people’s hierarchical position. Ministers, *majelis*, and *klasis* have a responsibility to execute GPM policy, which is why they will not admit experiencing certain difficulties. Difficulties or problems, namely, come with associations of failure that possibly affect people’s image and status. As a relatively independent educational institution that develops the theological ideas, and as the top-layer of the church that designs the policies, UKIM theologians and GPM leaders have more freedom to judge the state of affairs regarding contextualization.

stated: “Changing your view on God is difficult. It is very difficult. [...] Thinking deeply about faith is a different thing.”³¹ Although many Moluccan Protestants enjoy contextual elements in church services, theologizing on the basis of one’s cultural context is much harder, because it may disrupt people’s core beliefs, which are rooted in their religious upbringing. In that sense, people may have the feeling that their religious identity becomes unsettled.

The majority of congregants does not yet see a deep connection between Christian religion and Moluccan culture. It is important to emphasize that Dutch Calvinist doctrines became ingrained in Moluccan Protestantism. These doctrines and attitudes form part of the religious history and identity of Moluccans. At the time of the fieldwork, proponents of contextual theology found it hard to reach people ‘on the ground,’ and to encourage these congregants to independently theologize based on their culture. The reason for this difficulty is, mainly, that contextual theology is a relatively recent approach. Furthermore, only a handful of people are able to explain, teach, and illustrate the approach thoroughly. UKIM theologians and GPM leaders acknowledged the infancy of contextual implementation and its related shortcomings. They continue working towards their ambition for the future, which is aimed at building congregants’ capacity to contextually theologize.

Apart from contextual practices of ministers and religious attitudes of congregants, the location of a specific congregation also influences the implementation process of contextual theology. I want to highlight relations between center-periphery, city-village, and modern-traditional places. It seems that the discourse regarding contextual theology and its practical implementation are strong in areas that are located close to Ambon City, where UKIM and the GPM synod are located as well. These congregations are simply reached faster. Moreover, in urban contexts, congregants, generally, no longer live in a traditional-cultural way. They live in a globalized, modern world. Therefore, congregations in and close to the city are interested in re-valuing Moluccan culture and traditions as part of their Protestant religion, because the Moluccan traditional identity is less familiar to these urban congregants.³²

31 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

32 Age is another important factor. As Bakker (2013, 317) also points out, it is less difficult to root new ideas (in this case, the important place of culture in Christianity) among younger generations, and it is more complicated to do the same among older generations. Older generations have done things in a certain way all their lives (in this case, separating *adat* and Christian religion).

Congregations that are located further away from the city (and especially congregations in traditional villages) still draw on the traditional context that UKIM theologians and the GPM use in their contextual approach. In a natural, practical way, Moluccan culture and traditional identity relate to people's religion, based on a long history of pragmatic, automatic contextualization. At the same time, this 'natural' contextualization has been part of a colonial church culture and 'old' or traditional Calvinist worldviews. Furthermore, Moluccan people who live in villages that are located far away from the city would like to increase their access to modern society, as opposed to people who live in or near the city, and who can easily get access to modern society. The latter, therefore, are more open to revaluing Moluccan traditions, because of their position. The wish of people who continue to live according to traditional Moluccan ways to 'become more modern' instigates the need for ethnic revivalism and preservation, as Moluccan local identity is perceived to risk disappearance.³³

I argue that two seemingly oppositional meanings of 'traditional' are connected.³⁴ Interestingly, contextual theology is less easily implemented in places that are closer to the cultural sources of contextualization – traditional Moluccan society. City-like places that are located further away from these sources adopt the contextual approach more easily. Thus, the traditional is theologically progressive and innovative, whereas it is practically part of local, long-lived cultural traditions.

Opinions about Contextual Theology

The relation between theological idea and lived religious practice is influenced by perspectives on Moluccan contextual theology. Although almost all people who are involved in the process (theologians, GPM officials, UKIM students, ministers, musicians, and congregants) agree on a contextual approach, the ways to contextualize and people's understanding of the core terms in the contextual discourse vary.

Theologians

Moluccan theologians have different opinions about the theological content and contextual boundaries. These differences can lead to tensions. A clear

33 In her book *Sensational Movies* (2015), Meyer talks about the privilege of being traditional in the context of Ghana. When one is seen as modern, one is in the position to value the traditional.

34 Chapters 6 and 7 provide more detailed information about the term 'traditional.'

cause of tension, for instance, is the importance of the Bible. Several theologians see the Bible as an unchanging, holy document within their contextual thinking, whereas others conceptualize the Bible as a historically, politically, and culturally bound text. The latter group thinks that attitudes toward the Bible should be open to transformation on the basis of cultural values. The most radical side of the theological-contextual spectrum consists of theologians who use the Bible less and less, because they feel that all theology is located in Moluccan culture. On the other, radical side, theologians stay completely Bible-oriented, using a Western theological approach.

Moluccan theologians also think differently about the meaning and topics of contextual theology. For example, theologian John Titaley views the preamble of the Indonesian constitution as a contextual Bible. In his opinion, an Indonesian theology should be developed, and the GPM should become more than an ethnic church, as a response to the national independence in 1945. The idea that *Maluku* must be approached within the Indonesian context has not yet been thoroughly contextualized, according to Titaley. Obviously, theologians who centralize the Bible disregard such a perspective and do not even see it as theology. However, in the words of Titaley, the starting point of theology is stating that God has been working through history. That means that attention, affection, and cognition have to be focused on specific experiences, instead of merely transferring theories. Only in this way can the church be fully decolonized. According to Titaley, the decolonization of the GPM means a liberation from the structures that have been installed since the colonial times. Titaley explained how the Moluccan Protestant church had been an isolated institution, as the colonial government did not want the church to criticize things that were happening beyond the religious realm: "Contextualization means knowing what is going on outside the church, reaching political, economic and social issues."³⁵

Apart from the position of the Bible, central Calvinist doctrines and political relations also cause tensions. Not everyone approves of the progressive approach of theologian Steve Gaspersz. This includes his use of the word *Mena-Muria* and his ambition to turn the GPM into a church of reformation (see the beginning of this chapter), for which he draws on local culture yet rejects traditionalism by situating tradition in the modern Moluccan context. Most of Gaspersz' colleagues stated that he is able to express his radical position because he is an academic and, thus, has no experience in serving an actual congregation. In response to these critiques,

35 Interview with John Titaley.

Gaspersz answered: “I don’t know. Maybe that’s true. But this is not about my intellectual exercise merely, but this is my calling [...]”³⁶ Although they academically agree with Gaspersz, his fellow UKIM colleagues often remind him about the fact that, apart from being a lecturer, Gaspersz is also a minister who needs to represent the GPM teachings. Therefore, the colleagues ask Gaspersz to be careful with expressing his perspective. Interestingly, academic and congregational contexts, thus, represent different expectations. Furthermore, people in general disapprove of the disruption of doctrinal base points. For instance, many ministers agree with Gaspersz’ approach when he explains some liturgical concepts in a contextual way. However, when he states that the idea of the Trinity does not actually match the Moluccan context, then he loses support, because he is touching the doctrinal core. Steve Gaspersz thinks that the GPM is sometimes reluctant to fully implement the contextualization of Moluccan traditions, and continues to authoritatively adhere to previous church teachings that the synod board still deems relevant.

A final cause of tension is the boundary that determines which and how traditional cultural forms may be used for theological contextualization. The boundary revolves around the ancestors. In the Moluccas, it is widely known that Chris Tamaela could make anything possible regarding the contextual application of Moluccan traditions. Tamaela was always going further than people expected, wanted, or even agreed on. Although Chris Tamaela worked from the Christian monotheistic principle, he drew on the Moluccan ancestors for the equipment of services, local language, liturgies, and music. In Tamaela’s eyes, his inspiration for developing contextual theology was sometimes mistaken as an invocation of ancestral powers. Chris Tamaela used native languages to reach out to God, and based his theology on the traditional Moluccan cosmology, whereby the ancestors are the mediators between living people and God. In this way, Tamaela formed a Moluccan Christology, of which the core is inspired by pre-Christian religion. This core, thus, stayed the same when Moluccan people converted to Protestantism. According to Tamaela, the continuation means that Christ is a Moluccan ancestor. Understanding and worshipping God in Moluccan culture, therefore, is possible with the use of local languages, traditional music, native buildings, etc.

In short, differences among theologians about contextualization are not so much played out on the level or direction of contextual theology per se, but on the gradation or degree from which contextual theology is approached.

36 Interview with Steve Gaspersz.

Ministers

Not only do GPM ministers have different approaches to contextualization, but they also conceptualize 'context' differently in comparison to UKIM theologians. Furthermore, ministers disagree among each other about the techniques and relevance of the contextual approach.

As has already been touched upon, many GPM ministers have been educated at UKIM, which means that most of them are open to contextual theology. Most importantly, GPM ministers officially need to deal with contextualization according to GPM policies. Therefore, ministers do not express themselves negatively about contextual theology. All the ministers whom I spoke to emphasized that context forms the basis and medium of the Gospel and their sermons. Nevertheless, the way in which ministers implement contextual theology in their work varies. Similar to UKIM theologians, ministers are also situated along a continuum of contextualization. Some are closer positioned to cultural context and some are closer to the Bible. Theologian and minister Verry Patty explained that there will always be a small group of older, 'rusted' people who do not adapt to new theologies. This group continues to see Moluccan people as Christians first, and only then as Moluccans. The conservative group is afraid of breaking habits and answering to 'pagan' calls.

The ministers are a product of their education and time.³⁷ Ministers who were raised and educated according to a different theological curriculum cannot always easily shift to contextualization in the way that contextual theology is practiced in the academic community – especially when ministers serve congregations that consist of a variety of people and views. Apart from the fact that they, as ministers, often think according to a traditional, Calvinist theological view, these ministers also need to respond to the congregations, which, for a large part, live their religious lives according to this (theological) traditional mentality as well. I think that these congregational attitudes should be seen as contextual input in and of themselves. Furthermore, the structure of the GPM plays an important role. The GPM is the institution that, in the end, sets the boundaries for contextual practices in church. Whereas several UKIM theologians would like to see a reformation, whereby contextual theology is incorporated in the central doctrines of the Moluccan Protestant church, so far, this doctrinal core has stayed the

37 Older ministers who are also academics experienced a profound, contextual change. Roughly speaking, ministers who have been educated before the 1990s do not agree with the contextual approach and continue to work in the way that they have always done.

same. Ministers need to work within these structures according to the hierarchy of the organization.

Nonetheless, all ministers who participated in the research mentioned the importance of contextual theology. Some ministers, for example, talked about central values and symbols in Moluccan culture and identity, such as *masohi* or *pela*, which can be taken to deliver a religious message as part of the sermon. However, a slightly different concept of 'context' was presented by many ministers. *Sesuai dengan konteks* (in accordance with context) was the sentence that ministers used the most when they talked about the topic of contextual theology.³⁸ The phrase refers to issues, problems, and situations in the specific congregations that these ministers serve. Rather than profoundly re-theologizing Moluccan Protestantism on the basis of cultural identity (as UKIM theologians aim to do), many ministers stated that they have to apply the preselected Gospel text to answer to the needs in their congregations. The ministers' task is to reflect on the Word of God, by taking real issues that the community is facing into consideration and by offering solutions. 'Context,' thus, equals 'situations' or 'issues' in the specific congregation. It also means that for these ministers, the Moluccan traditional is often less important. In short, for ministers, contextualization means responding to congregational problems, such as unexpected pregnancies, ecological waste, excessive use of electronic gadgets, alcohol consumption, or family attendance in church. Along these lines, all GPM ministers pay attention to context, whether social, economic, political, or cultural. As ministers, they reflect on issues that play a role in the congregations, to relate to and communicate with the community. The congregational community also expects the ministers to be responsive. A preaching minister, therefore, always needs to be aware of the background, condition of, and developments within his or her particular congregation.

Ministers, generally, do not really think about or practice a 'more profound' theological connection between culture and religion, except on the level of the 'buzz words' of the contextual discourse. Referring to the *Injil dan Adat* (Gospel and Culture) conference and the GPM's subsequent contextual approach, ministers mentioned relations between God and humans, humans and the environment, and humans with each other in

38 Terms like *Injil dan Adat*, *sesuai dengan konteks*, *basudara*, and *sosialisasi* are fervently used by ministers. The term 'brotherhood' is related to *pela* and is the main example of contextualization. *Basudara* refers to building interreligious relations on the basis of *pela* as a cultural institution. *Sosialisasi* means socialization and is used in relation to the implementation process. Congregants need to be socialized in order to understand and receive contextual theology.

response to my question about how they theologically link culture and religion. Although many GPM ministers are aware of the official terminology concerning contextual theology, their contextual practices take place on another level than is the case for Moluccan theology at UKIM. Context and culture play a significant role for GPM ministers, but the terms do so in relation to congregational background, rather than as part of a profound re-theologizing of Moluccan Protestantism on the basis of cultural context. A gap between the cultural/social and religion/God continues to dominate religious mentalities, whereas UKIM, instead, intends a decolonial theologizing from the intricate relation between culture and religion.

I think that the difference between the conceptualizations of ‘context’ among UKIM theologians and GPM ministers is caused by the novelty (at the time of the fieldwork – 2019) of the implementation process and the building of capacity. No GPM model exists for contextual congregational practices, and it cannot be expected that every minister has the same intellectual and creative ability to develop contextual worship services in such a short period of time. In a continuous process, over a longer period of time, the implementation of contextual theology is aimed at preparing ministers to use contextual communication. Thus, ministers have to be taught to develop contextual skills.

At the same time, I want to stress that the congregation-based conceptualization of context is also part of contextual theology. Furthermore, many ministers do have the capability and creativity to theologize from culture. For instance, I met a young minister who uses a ventriloquist doll to bring religion closer to people’s experience. The talent of this minister has been recognized by the GPM synod board, which has been inviting him to participate in many religious activities. Another example is the minister Jacky Manuputty, who brings Christian religion and Moluccan cosmology into interaction with each other. Manuputty said: “It is really interconnected. I [...] criticize the way Christianity sometimes is expressed in Moluccan culture. [...] Don’t just adopt some *adat* symbol to put in the Christian ritual. It is about the set of values. It is the expression of a way of life, closely related to cosmology, philosophy.”³⁹

Congregants

Moluccan congregants are both the source and receivers of the contextual theological process. During the research, it became clear that an in-depth interview with congregants after the church service was not a fruitful

39 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

strategy. Due to hierarchical structures and the status of ministers, many congregants did not express their opinion on how things are done in their church. Therefore, I decided to ask short questions to congregants about the relation between culture and religion. Chapter 7 deals more extensively with the congregants' answers, as the results of these 'vox pops' represent the voices of congregants themselves, whereas many others (such as theologians, ministers, and GPM officials) also talked about the opinions of congregants. A difference between self-expressed opinions and 'second-hand' opinions, thus, is important to bear in mind.

Generally, ministers and people working at the *klasis* (who are responsible for executing the GPM policy) stated that all congregants are very positive about contextual theology. In their view, congregants feel comfortable, because they have grown up with *adat*, which means that there is a fit between what people experience in life and the contextual service. According to the opinions of ministers and the *klasis*, the contextual service makes people better understand and receive the religious message.

However, theologians – who have the possibility to be more critical and realistic because of their privileged and independent position – did not give such a univocal representation of congregants' opinions. Some theologians stated that many congregants respond positively, simply because of the fact that the contextual cultural sources are ingrained in the congregants' identity. At the same time, these theologians acknowledged that contextualization is enjoyed by congregants on, what they call, a 'superficial' level. While congregants like to hear a contextual sermon or experience a contextual service, their religious mentalities have not yet changed. Many theologians see differences between generations and places, based on people's level of education or their embeddedness in modern life. In the theologians' view, young people who live in cities are more open to the shift of contextual theology than older people who are situated in villages and who, for a long time, have lived according to traditional Calvinist theologies. Moluccan theologians who have used *adat* customs in church services (in their capacity as a minister) have been accused of blasphemy by people of older generations.

Other theologians simply stated that most people at the grassroots do not like contextual theology. The dislike is sometimes even seen as a contributing factor for people moving to the Pentecostal church. These theologians think that it will require more hard work to change people's view on God. Although creative ministers and musicians can encourage congregants to sing and participate in the liturgy in a contextual way, it is a completely different endeavor to teach congregants to theologically

think in a new way. Theologian Margaretha Hendriks said: “It is still the old God.”⁴⁰

Quite unexpectedly, I had the opportunity to interview someone who was not afraid to express his criticism of contextual theology. Whereas he understood the concept of contextual theology (which is rare among congregants, because it is an academic concept and approach), the man disagreed with the idea of context that is being used. For him, context meant the way in which people have been believing for centuries. The introduction of *adat* in the religious realm confused him, because he thought that Christianity is only about God. Although the man approved of additional aspects in the church service, in order to give the service more color, he said that these additions should not dominate. Otherwise, the additions become an allurements that is no longer directed at God. Interestingly, this particular congregant felt that contextual theology did not relate to his Christian experience, while the aim and idea of the contextual approach mean that it is actually based on grassroots Christian experience.

Despite these critical opinions, some congregants profoundly understand and positively respond to contextual theology. Several congregations invited contextual theologians who shared their theological perspective during the church service. Such an activity is deemed to increase awareness about lived religion. As a result, these congregations are willing to change their style of liturgy and perspective on God.⁴¹ Another example that I experienced was a musician in church, who deliberately announced that the topic of his song was about Jesus, ‘the Moluccan ancestor.’ A third example was a young choir leader, who explained the concept of contextual theology very clearly, and stated that every individual has his or her own paradigm. Therefore, people have to theologize according to their own context. Obviously, a positive opinion about the contextual approach is also connected to positive experiences with high-quality contextual services developed by capable ministers. Nonetheless, I conclude that the majority of Moluccan congregants does not yet have an open attitude towards contextual theology or does not yet know what contextualization or contextual theology means.

The opinions about contextual theology among various ‘figures’ or actors (e.g. theologians, ministers, congregants) demonstrate that the culture-religion relation, which underlies the discourse on contextual theology at UKIM, is not the central theological starting point among all actors who

40 Interview with Margaretha Hendriks.

41 These churches are mainly located in the city and consist of relatively high-educated congregants, who, for instance, work at the Pattimura university.

are involved in the contextual process. Also, the culture-religion relation is not automatically transferred to these actors in the same way as UKIM theologians intend.

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5. Music of Maluku: Chris Tamaela

Abstract: Theologian and musician Christian Izaac Tamaela was the protagonist of the GPM's (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church) contextual shift. His ideas and teachings on the contextualization of church music form the basis of this book. Tamaela saw music as the heart of theology and conceptualized music as being human. Tamaela composed contextualized hymns and created Moluccan traditional instruments. In his classes about traditional church music, Tamaela taught his students to become 'contextualizers.' The author describes Moluccan people's opinions about Tamaela's theological views and explains the concept of the 'ethnic modern.'

Keywords: Tamaela; Contextualization; Moluccan; Church music; Traditional music; Contextual theology.

We bend our heads, fold our hands, and close our eyes.
A serene yet expectant silence descends on us.
Then, we hear a bright voice.
Rather than breaking the tranquility, this voice flows from it.
Words in a native language that I do not know form a melody.
It is a prayer sung by Chris Tamaela.

Sentences begin with elongated high-pitched sounds, shaping the gratitude expressed to God, bridging the distance I have traveled for this study, and wishing for success and well-being. Alternating between only a few tones, the music glides up and down like a timeless wave. The lengthy, loving lines end in a slowly accelerating pace of increasing lowering phrases.

The beauty of this praying song,
the beauty of this singing prayer.
The beauty of this sung speech,
the beauty of this spoken song.
It puts me in a placeless, weightless trance.
I want it to go on forever.

The sound of his singing voice will go on, but, unfortunately, not forever and only in my own memory. On a Sunday, April 19, 2020, around 11.50 am, quite abruptly and unexpectedly, minister, musician, and theologian Christian Izaak Tamaela left this world at the age of sixty-two. During the fieldwork, I spent my first few weeks chasing the shadow of this remarkable man. His talent and publicity required him to be in many places at the same time. No one ever knew exactly where he was or what he was doing. The best way of 'catching' Tamaela was to wait for a lucky moment and then to cling on. Several friends at UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku) helped me in this project. As a result, I was in the very fortunate position of having had the opportunity to meet and befriend 'Pak Chris.'

Soon, we developed a routine. Together with many other students, I would come to his class to attend his lessons about contextual theology. Before or after class, Chris Tamaela would take the time to talk with me about his background, thoughts, visions, and ambitions. When it was time to go home, he would walk with me until the fence of my house to make sure that I safely crossed the street. Despite his chaotic, busy schedule, Chris Tamaela took the time to help me.

My research project started with Chris Tamaela. His writings and ideas inspired me to study Moluccan theology and music. The relation between idea and practice was based on his continuing innovations of traditional church music. Due to the sudden death of Chris Tamaela, this relation has changed. Nevertheless, his ideas are kept alive through his musical and academic legacy, and the inspiration that he provoked in many hearts. This chapter serves as a symbolic testimony to Tamaela's vivid spirit. I still hear his voice, see his movements, and smell his energy. The world lost a musical genius and a great human being. Maybe, as a friend of mine commented, with his music, Tamaela will shake things up a bit in the transcendent unknown.

I feel immensely honored to have known *pendeta* Chris Tamaela. In this chapter, I will respectfully try to depict Tamaela and his vision, his way of teaching, and his music. First, the impetus for a musical exploration shall be given. Subsequently, the content of Chris Tamaela's dissertation, his ideas, classes, and dreams are described, as well as opinions about and experiences with him. I cherish the humble hope that this book will in some way contribute to keeping his musical memory alive.

Music as the Heart of Theology

The topic of this book is church music, as one aspect within the broader frame of Moluccan contextual theology. I study the phenomenon of religious

contextualization through the material medium of music, by which religious practice, experience, and identity are addressed. As one of the more concrete materializations of contextual theology, music mediates memories, emotions, and feelings of Moluccan-Protestant identification. These mediations form part of the process of selecting and transforming Moluccan traditional music and incorporating the sounds and texts into church music.

The theological ideas of Chris Tamaela point to the important place of music within theology – music as theology. For many theologians, music is a subsidiary element in the church service. Music is a tool that helps congregants to reach a certain state of mind, and to experience some feeling of unity with the divine. Moreover, lyrics are often seen as the dominant part. A theologian commented: “The crucial part is the words. Because theology is in the wordings.”¹ An important contribution of Chris Tamaela’s work is his demonstration of how music is not merely a second-rate tool, but an equal, substantive part of worship.

Tamaela’s ideas about the intricate relation between theology and music reached other Christian musicians, as well as progressive theologians and ministers. Jance Rumahuru, who is a teacher at another Christian school, stated that music is not only sound, but also meaning. Rumahuru held the opinion that, through music, people know the greatness of the almighty God. Musician Semy Toisuta warned against the lack of awareness about the power of music in liturgy: “Music is the spirit and soul of liturgy. [...] It touches the heart. Without people knowing it, music can influence and change them. [...] You don’t need a sermon for this. Just singing and music to make the connection with God.”² Minister Jacky Manuputty agreed and noted that music is not attached to liturgy, but a main part of it. For Manuputty, music plays a similar role as the sermon and prayer: “Sometimes, we speak too much in our sermon. The power of the message will come through the music. I will just speak three or four sentences, and then I will drive all the energy of the people to the center and pull it out from the music. And without telling every single word, the meaning is heard.”³ In the same light, theologian Agus Batlajery said that doctrine and convictions can be expressed by music. In other words, music becomes theology and strengthens and implements belief. Theologian Steve Gaspersz summarized: “music is the heart of theology. There is no theology without music for me. Especially

1 Interview with John Titaley.

2 Interview with Semy Toisuta, director of the *Taman Budaya* (Cultural Garden) (December 12, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

3 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

for us as Moluccan people. We learn our faith through music. So I think I cannot imagine that we can be Christians without music."⁴

Contextualization of Music and Liturgy in the Moluccan Church

On September 17, 1957, Christian Izaak Tamaela was born in the village of Soahuku, on the island of Seram.⁵ He grew up in a musical and artistic environment. His father was a musician, composer, artist, and choir conductor. Nevertheless, Tamaela decided to study theology. He graduated from the Theological Seminary of Ambon (which would later become UKIM). Then, he went to Manilla, the Philippines, to study at The Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music. In Manilla (1986–1991), Tamaela also studied composition. In 2000, he graduated with a Master's degree from the Tainan Theological College and Seminary in Taiwan, after which Tamaela went to the Netherlands (2006) to do a PhD at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. In the Netherlands, he took the path of contextual theology with a focus on liturgy and church music. Tamaela told me:

While I played native instruments, I also sang Christian music. So it means that I grew up already through Christian music by using our instruments. That is dealing with contextualization. So I just know that God wants to use me in His hands, to be one of the Moluccans to help the people to see that our own culture is important. To give [present] our cultural music and to use it in our Christian life.⁶

On June 9, 2015, Chris Tamaela defended his dissertation. In between his studies and research in international contexts, he always returned to Ambon. Until his sudden death, he was teaching liturgy, music, and contextual theology at UKIM. He also composed hymns and created native instruments.⁷

Both in the Netherlands and in the Moluccas, Chris Tamaela is seen as a talented musician, theologian, artist, and liturgist. He established several music groups at the theological university and in church, and he

4 Interview with Steve Gaspersz.

5 The title of the paragraph is the title of the dissertation that Chris Tamaela wrote as a result of his PhD in the Netherlands.

6 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

7 Some of Tamaela's contextual church songs have been incorporated in Asian hymnbooks, such as the *Hymnal Companion to Sound the Bamboo: Asian Hymns in Their Cultural and Liturgical Contexts*.

taught these groups how to play traditional Moluccan instruments. With his musical creativity, he assisted assemblies of the WCC (World Council of Churches) and CCA (Christian Conference of Asia), he provided workshops at ecumenical seminars, and he played a role at international religious and political gatherings.⁸ Chris Tamaela is the instigator who encouraged and inspired the GPM (Gereja Protestant Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church) to implement a contextual policy. Tamaela himself formed part of the team working on an ethnic liturgical model.

In 1991, Chris Tamaela published his *Kapata-Kapata Rohani*, 'Spiritual Songs from the Central Moluccas.' This book is the result of the fieldwork that he conducted in the Central Moluccas in 1988. Tamaela documented the 'musics' that he found in these areas, to transport the oral cultural richness to written forms, both in cipher and staff notation, in order that people from different parts of the world could read the native music. On the basis of the indigenous melodies and rhythms that he studied, Chris Tamaela composed contextual songs for the Moluccan church, by writing religious lyrics to the traditional music. With this collection of spiritual songs, Tamaela contextualized music in the cultural setting of Moluccan society. He wrote: "to contextualize music is to enable the people to respond to God through their local musical expressions and allowing His love and grace through their indigenous songs and musical instruments" (Tamaela 1991, 45).

A well-known composition by Chris Tamaela is called *Tuhan Kasihani* (Kyrie Eleison): 'Lord have Mercy.' The motive of this song is based on a traditional Moluccan melody. According to Tamaela, this original melody was sung or recited in front of a large rock that symbolized the presence of the ancestor spirit. The Moluccan myth, *Batu Badaong* (that is narrated in many different ways), tells of how a woman was so poor and suffered so much that she and her children came to the rock and begged it to swallow them, in order to be relieved of their miseries. Chris Tamaela contextualized this story, reinterpreting it as a symbol of one's sinfulness or helplessness when approaching the rock of salvation, Jesus Christ. In an allegorical way, Jesus is the rock of life, who, instead of opening his mouth to swallow the woman, opens His arms to save her. The sorrowful tone of the original song fits the mood for a prayer for mercy. The gliding of the tones (characteristic of Moluccan traditional music), marked with downward strokes, are important

8 Chris Tamaela worked together with Wycliffe, an organization that translates the Bible into local languages. Wycliffe also works with music, and Chris Tamaela, for instance, participated in their 'hymn translation workshop' to stimulate people to create songs.

for creating this mood. The notation that Tamaela wrote also includes drum accompaniment. The notes with downward stems indicate a stronger, deeper, more open sound, produced by the right hand striking the center of the drum. The notes with upward stems denote a high-pitched sound, produced by striking the rim of the drumhead with the fingertips, while the left palm presses the drumhead.

Chris Tamaela's Dissertation

Chris Tamaela's dissertation most clearly expresses Tamaela's ideas on the contextualization of church music. Therefore, I present an overview of its content.

Tamaela situates his work within the field of contextual theology, because church music and liturgy are essential components in the expression of Christian faith. For Tamaela, this means that the contextualization of music and liturgy is fruitful for establishing a connection between the Christian message and the cultural context. As a theologian and church musician, Tamaela saw it as his task to develop contextual music and liturgies that open up new ways of understanding: "By contextualization, we can communicate the meaning of the Gospel through our music, symbolic acts, and dances. We see it as our participation in God's continuous creation" (Tamaela 2015, 13). According to Tamaela, through this participation, God transforms culture and arts into dynamic media that will effectively communicate the meanings of the Gospel for people in the here and now.

The focus of Tamaela's study is the GPM. Although he believed that the GPM's use of Western music and liturgies should be taken into account as well, he said that the GPM should use Moluccan musical and liturgical forms based on context. Tamaela wrote: "the Moluccan cultural context includes both Western and indigenous influences" (Tamaela 2015, 14). Thus, contextualization is about the cultural past and the changing cultures of the present. The main question of Tamaela's research is the following: 'How can the contextualization of Moluccan church music and liturgy strengthen the relation between religion and culture in the Moluccas?'

Tamaela's dissertation begins with a general description of *Maluku*, after which an elaborate explanation of indigenous music is presented. It is stated that music has always been an important part of social life and religious ceremonies in *Maluku*. Moluccan music has been influenced by traders from other places, as well as by the colonial West. Nevertheless, indigenous music is still in use. Each ethnic group possesses its own unique musical instruments, scales, manners of playing, singing styles, composition repertoires, and dances (Tamaela 2015, 37).

Chapter 4 of the dissertation is about worship in the Protestant church of *Maluku*. Tamaela explains that, at the end of the twentieth century, significant conceptual developments resulted in new orders of liturgy, to increase the richness of liturgical elements and their use in a variety of settings. Tamaela states that, today, the order of worship has been adapted from the order that was used in the Dutch Reformed Church (Tamaela 2015, 73). In worship, music is one liturgical element that is divided between vocal/choral music and instrumental music. Liturgically, congregational singing – considered as more authentic or appropriate – takes precedence over other kinds of music. Through singing, GPM members “not only lift their beautiful voices to God, but also communicate faith, hope and love to God with their hearts and minds” (Tamaela 2015, 92). According to Tamaela, people feel and understand the meaning of the spiritual message via music. Nowadays, the GPM makes an effort to contextualize liturgy.⁹ Western liturgies can also contribute to contextualization: “not only specific contextualized liturgies, but also Western liturgies can be relevant to Moluccans expressing their faith in a contextual way” (Tamaela 2015, 98).¹⁰

The GPM officially approved the use of contextual liturgical forms during Sunday worship. Contextualized elements include traditional instruments and songs, offerings in other forms (such as cloves, nutmeg, fish, etc.), the bringing of offerings to a central place in a traditional basket (*kamboti*), other languages than Indonesian, the use of traditional instruments (such as the conch shell (*tahuri*) or *toleng-toleng*) to mark the beginning of the worship, the use of natural elements (bamboo, wood, flowers, etc.) to make liturgical symbols (cross, pulpit, offering box, etc.), and traditional dance (Tamaela 2015, 100–1).¹¹

9 Two reasons for the contextual shift of the GPM are named: “To enable local people to express their faith in God, using their rich cultural heritage, and to let them experience God’s presence and enjoy His love and grace through indigenous songs, musical instruments, dances and symbols.” And: “To enrich GPM worship services with the contextual liturgies, and to infuse GPM congregations with a new understanding of worship through their own precious cultural art forms, in addition to expressing their faith through the Western liturgical tradition with its religious authenticity” (Tamaela 2015, 99).

10 The reasons for continuing the use of Western liturgies is the fact that these formed the basis for ministry in the GPM for more than 300 years. Therefore, these liturgies are felt to be relevant. Also, Western liturgical expressions are an integral part of how GPM members learn about and connect with God. Moreover, the contents and formulas of Western liturgy are ingrained in the spiritual life of the GPM and have been successful in the spiritual formation of Moluccan Christians. Lastly, there are values in Western liturgical forms that fit well, culturally, with the Moluccan expression of faith (Tamaela 2015, 98).

11 In the next chapter, I provide more detailed information about the traditional instruments.

Chapter 5 is about the contextualization of church music. The chapter begins with some theological implications of church music. Tamaela explains that church music is an integral part of Christian worship, as the music is expressed in both liturgy and daily life. Through hymns, psalms, choral music, musical instruments, and other spiritual music, congregants express their faith in God and share their Christian faith with others. Moreover, church music is an art form: an aesthetic expression of ecclesiastical character (Tamaela 2015, 104). Church music is biblical and God-centered, and has a communal goal. Theology is about relationships, “and musical performance evokes and enacts these relationships, engages persons in intuitions of God’s presence and action within the church-at-worship, situates a community within its own political, social and cultural history, and shapes their actions in the world, as it is an integral part of the theology embodied in worship” (Tamaela 2015, 108). Tamaela continues with a brief history of church music in Indonesia, after which he addresses the efforts of contextualization. In this light, Yamuger, founded in 1967, is an important organization, which envisioned the development of church music in Indonesia. Yamuger published the hymnbooks *Kidung Jemaat* and *Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat*.¹² The compositions of contextual songs in these hymnbooks involved the cooperation between composers, theologians, and linguists (who discussed historical backgrounds, church denominations, musical experiences, ethnic and cultural aspects, origins of songs, etc.), the support toward ecumenism, and elements of ethnic music (other scales, motives, phrases, forms, and ornaments) (Tamaela 2015, 124–6).

Tamaela (2015, 139–40) sees Christian theological values as the content of church music. Although there is nothing wrong with the fact that people internalized Western theological values in Christian music, a transformation of the theological meaning of these biblical words is needed, so that Moluccan Christians can understand the terms as part of their own cultural context.¹³

In the final chapter, Tamaela (2015, 148) explains the process of contextualization in the field of church music and liturgy by introducing the

12 Information about the history of church music and hymnbooks has already been given in Chapter 2.

13 Western church songs that continue to be used contain Western theological values, based on the biblical context and Western cultural context in the past. This is not a problem, because this history is also part of the contemporary Moluccan church. Nevertheless, Tamaela would like to transform the theological meaning on the basis of contextualization in order that Moluccans can receive and respond to these songs from their Moluccan identity. Hence, Tamaela wants to add the contemporary Moluccan context to the theological meaning.

term ‘supuization.’ The local term *supu* means ‘obtain,’ ‘accept,’ or ‘respond positively.’ *Supuization*, thus, refers to the process of welcoming, mediating, and giving between two parties. *Supuization* is a form of positive, creative, constructive, and transformative interaction in contextual theology: “The purpose of supuization is the interaction and working together between two parties in order to create something good.” The model can be applied to relations between humans and ancestors, between humans and the Christian God, or between humans themselves. With the term, Tamaela shows the interaction between the Gospel and local culture or between Christ and Moluccans (Tamaela 2015, 148, 151). Moluccans respond to the receiving of the Gospel through hymns and liturgical elements in accordance with the culture and spirituality of Christianity in one’s own context (Tamaela 2015, 152).

The dissertation ends with some future hopes for the GPM. For Tamaela, these consist of trainings on church music and liturgy, the use of both Western and indigenously inspired hymns that will change the perspective of congregants, education for church musicians and artists, and the development of interfaith meetings. Such meetings should, according to Tamaela, be modeled after the cultural identity and values of *Maluku’s* existing art forms, which might result in an interreligious Confession of Faith based on local culture expressed through songs, dances, symbols, and language (Tamaela 2015, 170–2).

Chris Tamaela’s Vision and Ambition

Chris Tamaela theologized Moluccan local culture by using dance, language, clothes, and – mainly – music. Interestingly, although Tamaela was one of the most progressive theologians who worked with ancestral sources of communication, he also recommended to the GPM not to do away with the older Western hymnbooks. Tamaela viewed these Western hymnbooks as Christian heritage and contextual sources. In his studies, Tamaela researched and documented many native musical traditions, so that subsequent generations will know and play this music. Already in the 1980s, Tamaela started to develop ethnic services and set up ethnic music groups. He explained his motivation as follows: “We have to go back to our own cultures, we have to dig, we have to uncover it.”¹⁴ Tamaela addressed God in his native language, *Upu Lanite Kai Tapele*, and worshipped Him with traditional music. About this, he said: “I think God loves it.”¹⁵

14 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

15 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

Tamaela based his theology on Moluccan cosmology. Although many people are hesitant to praise God by using their own culture in worship – being afraid of the punishments of the ancestral spirits – Tamaela clarified that traditional music in church is not directed to the human ancestors, but to the divine ancestors (the highest ancestor is God). The human Moluccan ancestors also believed in one supreme creator. This idea has stayed the same and also forms the monotheistic core of Christianity. Historical change resulted in different names for the divine, but Moluccans always believed that “someone created the tree, the water, the air, even themselves,” in the words of Tamaela.¹⁶ This ancestral continuity is why Moluccans are able to see Christ in context. Therefore, according to Tamaela, pre-Christian religion has an important place in contextual theology, because the native theology is already present in Moluccan culture. Only a small transformation enables people to meet Christ via culture. This process is a contextualization in context, which Tamaela conceptualized in multi-layered ways. The biblical context, in which people in the Old Testament praise God by singing and playing different local instruments, allows for contextualization and forms the prime inspiration: “It is like the gate that opens our mind, our thinking, in dealing with contextualization today as people now, in this millennium.”¹⁷ However, according to Chris Tamaela, the Christian context is not confined to the Bible alone, but also includes a human, cultural, and environmental context. For instance, God gave everybody a voice to talk to Him, which means that one is already doing theology “in one’s context, in one’s life, inside oneself.”¹⁸

In short, Chris Tamaela thought it is important to use local music in worship, because as a Christian, he was allowed to use native music. The justification for this is in the Bible, in God – who gave Moluccans specific musics – and in Moluccan ways of feeling and thinking: “So I can [...] come to worship the Lord as Moluccan. With my face, with my hair, with my heart, with my mind, with my smile, with my voice, with my singing, with my dance.”¹⁹

The Creation of Traditional Music

Tamaela’s self-made traditional instruments and compositions demonstrate the interesting relationship between tradition and novelty in Moluccan

16 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

17 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

18 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

19 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

contextual theology. According to Chris Tamaela, music needs practical things. It is not enough to simply be happy with singing the music, but new songs need to be composed: “We have to give something new to our next generation, to enrich our church with music.”²⁰ When Tamaela was thinking about Moluccan music – about the drums, the gongs, the flute, and more – he did not feel satisfied. He did not only want to preserve the traditions as musical heritage, because his heart had told him something else: “Chris, it is better to create something to add more and more and more for the next generation. In fifty years, what I do now will already have become tradition again! In the future, people will say: this is our tradition! That’s why I create.”²¹

Regarding the composition of traditional songs, the process of creation could be very spontaneous. For example, Tamaela would suddenly hear a melody in his head, while walking or working. He then completed this basis by adding notes, motives, and text, in order to turn the melody into a whole composition. When making spiritual songs, Tamaela always thought about the message that he wanted to deliver through the music. In his opinion, the words had to connect to the theme of the song, as well as to the melody: “the soul of the melody says something about my soul. Music is human, music as human.”²² Thus, the text and melody had to behave together in order to touch people, because “music is the heart of humans.”²³ Tamaela’s process of contextualizing music happened in two ways. First, the traditional music had to be collected (such as war songs, children’s songs, labor songs, or healing songs). Then, according to a method called ‘contrafact,’ Tamaela took the melody and combined it with a new spiritual text. Alternatively, the melody served as an inspiration for creating new music, based on the traditional identity and characteristics of the original song. Tamaela sometimes used native languages for his lyrics.²⁴

Chris Tamaela innovated Moluccan music through inventing traditional instruments that no one had yet thought of as instruments before. For inspiration, he usually meditated. Tamaela went to the fields, the forest, the beach, or crowded places. Sounds from nature, from stones, from leaves, and from the street inspired him. Tamaela collected tones and rhythms to get

20 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

21 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

22 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

23 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

24 For example, Chris Tamaela created a pentatonic song in native language about God as a woman and a feminine Jesus, in accordance with the Moluccan cultural way of referring to God as a mother. Chris Tamaela spoke many native languages.

ideas for composing a song or making an instrument. Sometimes, his ideas originated from native people, who told him stories about instruments in the past. For example, *Pak* Chris used bamboo as a natural, ethnic material, from which he created aerophone, idiophone, and chordophone instruments.²⁵ Other materials included, for instance, wood from trees or coconuts. Chris Tamaela even created instruments made of stones or from elements of the sea. Although no one had taught Tamaela how to build the instruments, he believed that, historically, the ancestors had already developed all ethnic music. As Tamaela explained, his instruments came “naturally from my musical feelings and ideas. I believe this is a universal way, everybody can do that. But I cannot say I am the first one who created this.”²⁶ Often, Tamaela decorated his instruments with red cloth.²⁷ Below, I list several of Tamaela’s creations.

Akapeti

This instrument, made of bamboo or wood, is similar to a xylophone. With two wooden hammers, one hits the slats, which optionally resonate into calabash boxes that hang under the construction. The length of the slats determines the pitch.

Toleng-Toleng

This is a hollow bamboo tube with, on top, a projection that serves to hold the instrument. The front has a vertical hole for resonance. The *toleng-toleng* is a bamboo slit drum, struck with a wooden mallet to produce sound (Tamaela 2015, 45). One can hit the top and bottom, or the middle part, which gives two different effects. The size and hole determine the thickness and pitch of the sound. The *toleng-toleng* is an ethnic instrument that was/is used to summon and communicate signals to people. For instance, the instrument can be used to let people know that someone has entered his/her garden.

Pong-Pong

The *pong-pong* is a long, slender, hollow stomping tube, made of bamboo. In traditional life, these tubes are used to carry water to drink from. The bottom end is closed by a node and the top end is open. The instrument

25 Aerophone refers to the vibrating element that is a column of air, idiophone refers to the body of the instrument itself, and chordophone refers to string.

26 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

27 Red symbolically refers to blood. Red means strength and encourages people to remember their ancestors. Moreover, the *Alifuru* people wear the red cloth on their heads.

is played by hitting the base of the tube on the ground (Tamaela 2015, 43), not straight but slantwise. Originally, the *pong-pong* produces a random musical sound. Nowadays, the instrument is tuned according to a variety of scales (often, diatonic). Each tube has one tone or pitch, depending on its size. In this way, one can make different factions. An additional tone sounds when the tube is half-closed with the hand.

Klong

The *klong* is a bamboo tube zither with one string. The tube measures between sixty to eighty centimeters. The fingerboard is at the upper end of the body, while the resonance hole is near the lower end of the body. A pin at the upper end is used to tune the string. Originally, the instrument is from the *Nuau* tribe in Seram, where they use(d) the *klong* when starting a war. In former times, the string was made from the bladder of an animal. Nowadays, nylon is used.²⁸

Takatak Bulu

The bamboo clapper is made of two pieces of bamboo, which are played by putting the skin sides back to back. One piece is placed between the thumb and index finger, and the other piece is placed between the middle and little finger. Different pitches are produced, depending on different sizes of bamboo (Tamaela 2015, 45). The first piece is held tightly, whereas the second is held loose, ticking against the tight one. By turning the wrist in a circular movement, the pieces hit each other on top and at the bottom. The movement goes so fast, that it almost seems as if there are three pieces of bamboo.²⁹

Bambu Gesek

This instrument is similar in shape to the *toleng-toleng*, though the *bambu gesek* is horizontal instead of vertical. The body has notches that are scraped over with a stick.

Keku Hatu

This instrument, literally 'beat the stone,' is made by collecting different sizes of coral or river stones. Two stones are used to beat the stones that make up

28 In the music workshop at the IAKN, traditional instruments are created or innovated upon as well. Here, students are trying to make a *klong* with more strings, for example.

29 Fascinated by this technique, movement, and rhythm, I once approached a musician to ask him about his instrument. After explaining the technique to me, he gave me his instrument as a present. He told me to practice at home, in order that I was able to play the instrument when I returned to *Maluku*.

the *keku hatu*, which hang in a row on a wooden construction. The stones can be arranged according to a certain scale or at random (Tamaela 2015, 43).

Bambu Goyang

Chris Tamaela invented a harmonic instrument made of two pieces of bamboo.³⁰ The pieces hang down vertically, with their convex sides turned to each other. They are connected by a horizontal slat, where one can hold the instrument. A thin stick has to be moved horizontally between the two pieces, ticking them consecutively and fast. The *bambu goyang* is a flexible instrument of which many combinations can be made. Only accidentally, Western harmony is achieved.

Apart from instruments and songs, Chris Tamaela created dances, made art works and statues, and even invented a new way of clapping hands, in response to the Calvinist taboo on clapping in church.³¹ Tamaela said: this is the “contextualization of human bodies to praise the Lord. With your body, you can create sound.”³²

Dreams for the Future

Regarding the future of the contextualization of church music, Chris Tamaela had several ambitions. Through personal encounter, and as a teacher, he wanted to encourage local people to not leave traditional music behind. In 2017, he established a laboratory of music and liturgy at UKIM, where people (also locals who are not affiliated with this institute) learn how to collect, analyze, and compose traditional music, as well as to use native musics in worship services. Tamaela was also planning to inform *majelis* members about the importance of traditional music in church. Through education (also in the form of seminars, lectures, and workshops), fieldwork, and publication, he worked toward his goals. Tamaela hoped that, in the future, GPM congregations would be able to organize ethnic services with traditional music themselves, with the inclusion of Moluccan forms of identity, Moluccan formulas of liturgy, and native languages. Through theological education,

30 Chris Tamaela deliberately used two pieces instead of three. Three would lead to Western harmony, whereas two is in line with the native way, in Tamaela's view.

31 An example is the ‘coconut dance,’ in which people hit parts of the coconut against each other. Tamaela designed three new clapping styles. The first is called *plok* style, folding the hands diagonally into each other. The second is called *plak* and is similar to the straight way of clapping. The third is called *prik*, wiping the hands off against each other. The terms refer to the sounds that are made.

32 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

preaching ministers, and institutional change, Tamaela aspired for the GPM to become an ethnic church, whereby atmosphere, context, and the order, execution, and result of worship would all be based on Moluccan daily life. In Tamaela's view, appreciation of culture had to be stimulated, ministers needed to be active regarding cultural practice, and the development of ethnic services and traditional church music had to be taught at school. In relation to himself, Tamaela felt that he not only had to talk and think about 'Jesus as a Moluccan,' but also had to write about and implement contextual terms in the Moluccan context, to convince people of their cultural beauty. In a humble way, Chris Tamaela always said that it was not him, but God who used his musicality to develop Moluccan music. His humility was accompanied by the ambitious dream he revealed to me: "I have to enrich our own musical culture. My dream is that if someone asks you where you can find the most musical instruments, that you have to go to [the] Moluccas."³³

Tamaela's Classes at UKIM

The introduction of this book began with a description of a musical examination for UKIM students who followed the course 'Contextual Theology Two,' taught by Chris Tamaela. I joined two different groups in order to attend these classes, because I wanted to see how and what Tamaela taught. Generally, before Tamaela's class started, he asked students to carry all the practical materials that he needed – from musical instruments to the marker for the whiteboard. Then, Tamaela encouraged everyone to sit as close to him as possible, which resulted in students shuffling to the front rows and the shoving sounds of the wooden, brown chairs on the ground. The class always began with a prayer – sometimes in Tamaela's characteristic native style – and often with the singing of a spiritual song. Tamaela's classes were characterized by a combination of theory and practice, a method that his students appreciated. Tamaela presented the theory via a document that he displayed with the projector. This part was always both chaotic and inspiring. The students would recite the text from the document and *Pak* Chris explained the words in his unique, passionate, and energetic manner. Frantically, he wrote on the board, tapping the marker to emphasize important terms and illustrating what he said in gesture and performance. Somehow, it seemed as if the knowledge inside Tamaela's head was too

33 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

elaborate and too creative to be expressed in a straightforward way, which actually added to the feeling that something special was happening in his classes. In between moments of chaos, I was often struck by truly beautiful sentences that were creative and philosophical at once and allowed us, as students, to catch a glimpse of what was going on in Tamaela's mind. Words alternated with dance, singing, and music.³⁴ When Tamaela explained different musical scales, from monodic to heptatonic (the equivalent of diatonic), swiftly, he sang numerous examples.³⁵ The class almost never finished earlier than planned. Generally, it was closed with a prayer, led by a chosen student, and with assigning homework.

I learned a lot about the contextualization of music from Chris Tamaela's perspective during the 'Contextual Theology' classes. The lessons always began with a question: how to theologize from our own musical tradition? How to deal with our own context?³⁶ First, he divided the term 'context' into two parts: 'con' means challenge and 'text' means condition or situation. The challenge is to decide what to use from culture and how to give new meanings on the basis of Christian values. Tamaela said that all kinds of sources can be used for contextualization (such as buildings and food). One only needs to know, "who is your God, and who are you?"³⁷ Positive things from culture are transformed to enter the worship service.³⁸

The theologizing that accompanies this process requires an attitude of positive thinking, feeling, and acting. Tamaela named two abstract contextual reservoirs. The first are cultural ideas and ways of thinking and feeling. Theologians need to transform these ideas through creativity, innovation, and inspiration, before the cultural ideas can be used in the church service. The second is material or physical culture, including human beings, buildings, symbols, icons, altars, or pulpits. Tamaela employed two approaches for the contextualization of music: the spiritual approach and the practical approach. Regarding the first approach, a composer has to

34 For example, when Tamaela said something about the *cakalele*, he invited one student to dance with him and, timidly, the young man did amidst the laughter and joyfulness of the clapping class.

35 Monodic refers to one tone, and in ascending order there are ditonic, tritonic, tetratonic, pentatonic, and hexatonic scales.

36 Although the terms ethnic, traditional, local, or indigenous have different meanings, Tamaela used them interchangeably when referring to the process of contextualization. Ethnic refers to tribes, traditional to the ancestors that pass on traditions from generation to generation, local to place, indigenous to native people, and *daerah* to regions.

37 Participant Observation, October 30, 2019, Ambon.

38 Tamaela's explanation makes clear how his teachings about contextual church music relate to contextual theology in general, as has been explained in Chapter 4.

pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in creating music, to relate him- or herself to God. Composers create songs and instruments that are original and that aim to be sung or played by Christians to praise God in worship. Furthermore, composers are bound by the ethics of spirituality of church music, which are referred to in Bible verses.³⁹ These points form the basis of the practical approach, whereby one goes into the field – the context – to collect local music (which includes drawing and taking photos and videos). Questions about the function of songs, how instruments are played, and the time of singing or playing need to be asked. Then, the music and context are analyzed and used as an inspiration for spiritual songs. Tamaela said: “We baptize it to become Christian.”⁴⁰ Originality is achieved through the technique of contrafact (as said, the melody from the original song is taken, while the original text is replaced by a new spiritual text). In this way, the song preserves its feeling of sacrality that resides in the “magical ancestral spirits” within the melody.⁴¹ Tamaela emphasized that it is important that the students know about the background of Moluccan music, because they are the ones who will later become ministers and will lead the congregational singing. As ministers, the students need to become a *kontekstualisator* (‘contextualizer’).

In his classes, Chris Tamaela stated that the question ‘what is music?’ is a very open question, which means that everyone can give an answer and that all answers are right. For Tamaela himself, music meant playing with sounds. He illustrated his definition with an experiment. As students, we had to make music with our bodies. We clapped and stamped, we scratched our nails, we patted our cheeks and arms, and we waved our hair. We also had to experiment with melodies, by saying ‘la la la,’ to create our own tunes that polyphonically crossed each other in the classroom. To demonstrate his definition, *Pak* Chris began making rhythms and melodies with his own body and voice too, while instantly starting to dance. The class began to cheer and clap, because we felt his energy. At these moments, it became clear that, essentially, Chris Tamaela was a wholehearted musician, who also happened to be our teacher.⁴² Another time, we hummed in canon, loudly and softly, as accompaniment to his singing. With his eyes closed, in full concentration and surrender, Tamaela

39 For example: Romans 12:12 – you have to be happy, 1 Corinthians 14:15 – you have to be patient, 1 Corinthians 14:40 – you have to pray and work.

40 Participant Observation, October 31, 2019, Ambon.

41 Participant Observation, October 31, 2019, Ambon.

42 Tamaela communicated through music, more than through language.

sang in both Indonesian and English, while conducting our sounds that slowly faded away. Listening intently, he waited to open his eyes until the last tone was gone. During one particular class, we started singing while standing in a circle. Subsequently, we had to walk counter-clockwise, stepping from right to left and clapping on the rhythm.⁴³ Then, with our hands opened and arms spread, we followed Tamaela's movements from bottom to top, placed our hands on our hearts and shoveled our arms as if we were moving a boat. We ended up holding each other and swinging back and forth on the rhythm. After that, we made a quarter turn and, one by one, we placed our right hand on the back of the person standing in front of us and we blessed each other: "*dalam nama Yesus Tuhan memberkati engkau.*" The anecdotes above demonstrate how illustrations and examples characterized Chris Tamaela's classes. Even in stricter moments, when the students had to be called to order because they were not fully participating, Tamaela used song and laughter to wake up the students and to draw their attention to his class.

The best part of Tamaela's classes was that they culminated in practice, whereby we could try the instruments that he had made, performing what he had just told us. We sang several native and spiritual songs, and instruments were distributed to us. Subsequently, Chris Tamaela explained the different playing techniques and rhythms. For instance, the *tifa* drum has two ways of making sound: open and closed (*bunyi tabuka dan bunyi tatutup*). The first, Tamaela called 'bam,' whereby one does not put the other hand on the membrane of the drum. The second, Tamaella called 'tak,' whereby one places the hand on the membrane. The terms originate from the sounds that are produced, which he referred to as 'onomatopaea.' Then, *Pak* Chris divided the class into three voices or groups, each of whom had to play on specific moments in the song – moments that, for many, were difficult to discern. Tamaela reminded us to play with our heart, since music also has a heart and since music is human: "Without humans no music!"

These are instruments from nature. Be one with the nature! If you want to get the inner feeling of the instrument, you have to enter it. We are learning in a room, but there is a whole world outside. Imagine that we are in nature. The air, the wind is touching us. Music has to touch us too! Music is like people speaking together. Touch and feel the instrument, that is very important. You can even kiss it! Music is human.⁴⁴

43 Tamaela explained that the counter-clockwise direction is related to Moluccan cosmology.

44 Participant Observation, November 7, 2019, Ambon.

With tremendous velocity, energy, and focus, Chris Tamaela taught us how to accompany our own singing with native instruments. Counting out loud and gesturing the timing, he made sure we understood quickly. Tamaela even created a choreography, moving back- and forward, from front to back, waving and clapping and turning in the end, while yelling 'olé!' He encouraged all students-musicians to move and not to "stand still like a closet."⁴⁵ With the utmost pleasure and endless repetitions, the practicing resulted in the performance as described in the introduction.

In his classes, Chris Tamaela taught us to use the beauty of Moluccan music in the church service – not for artistic purposes, but to worship the Lord. Theologizing from the cultural context also meant getting to know oneself. As 'contextualizers,' the students learnt to connect local culture and Christian theology, entangling their Moluccan and Christian identity.

Stories about Chris Tamaela

Many UKIM students, theologians, musicians, ministers, and congregants met and/or knew Chris Tamaela. Some of them told me about their experiences of the encounter with Tamaela as a person, as well as with his ideas and work. They also reflected on their own attitude and opinions regarding the things Tamaela said and did. Although the opinions were not always univocally positive, they represent honest reflections and stories that Moluccan people shared while expressing the greatest respect for and recognition of Tamaela's musical brilliance.

Students saw Tamaela as a unique teacher, who aspired to develop Moluccan traditions and looked at religion from the perspective of the everyday lives of Moluccan people. Despite the fact that Tamaela sometimes continued teaching until the evening, the students enjoyed learning many new things, especially because they could immediately sing and play in class. A student recounted that she had once met friends who had said that Tamaela was a crazy person. Her friends thought that Tamaela evoked ancestral spirits in church with music, symbols, and native languages. However, contrary to the opinions of her friends, this particular student was fascinated by Tamaela's approach, which started with the profound basis of Moluccan cultural identity and, subsequently, adopted different sounds, words, and forms from other traditions, influences, places, and times. Chris Tamaela taught her and other UKIM students to appreciate *Maluku's* cultural origins in church.

45 Participant Observation, November 13, 2019, Ambon.

In addition to acknowledging their appreciation of Tamaela's approach and classes, as well as his musical creativity, students also emphasized that Tamaela had a good heart and, thus, was a respectable human being.

As I have already explicated, theologians who were more theory-, Bible-, and Western-Calvinist-focused were inclined to disagree with the contextual approach of Chris Tamaela. Generally, progressive theologians who were not afraid to express their contested opinion very much admired Chris Tamaela. For John Titaley, for instance, Tamaela was the only one who had truly been able to create theological contextualization. Steve Gaspersz emphasized the importance of Tamaela's attempt to introduce music as a medium, not only to understand God, but to experience God. Gaspersz said:

I learned a lot from Christian Tamaela. How stone, wood, trees, sand and even water can be a medium of music. And we can sing with these materials! We don't need the electric guitar or electric drum, but we can just use everything around us as a medium for praising God. I think that is the lesson that I learned from him.⁴⁶

These theologians thought it of the utmost importance that, apart from theologians, ministers develop and improve their knowledge about traditional Moluccan music. The fellow theologians recognized Tamaela's unique ability as a musician to lift people to another level. They expressed the hope that Tamaela had been capable of transferring his knowledge to his students, so that the students, as future ministers, could also contextualize in the ways that Tamaela had taught them. Paradoxically, a feeling of fear was also related to this hope, because these theologians were afraid that Tamaela's knowledge had not been fully shared, which would possibly prevent the further development and propagation of traditional church music.

Their fear relates to opinions of musicians who are critical of the GPM policy on music. Since Chris Tamaela worked closely together with the GPM, the critical opinions sometimes extended to Tamaela himself.⁴⁷ A musician said that Tamaela's chaotic character prevented him from participating in local

46 Interview with Steve Gaspersz.

47 Specific positions and relations often coincided with certain perspectives. Chris Tamaela was a successful musician and academic, which could also arouse feelings of jealousy among others. Often, when specific persons are chosen for specific projects, others are excluded, which is one of the main reasons for tense relationships. An example of such a project was the making of the contextual songbook NJGPM (*Nyanyian GPM*). It became clear that musicians who did not participate in this project were more critical of the GPM and their policies, as well as of people who were involved in the making of this book.

events, in order to transfer his knowledge in a structured, comprehensible way to a broader public. According to this person, Chris Tamaela was not so much directed outwards. Tamaela, for instance, did not have a music group that played his own music. The musician said: “Only two people know what Chris Tamaela knows: [Tamaela] himself and God.”⁴⁸ This musician also thought that young, local, ‘normal’ people from Moluccan society do not know who Chris Tamaela was, because Chris Tamaela only made programs for national or international purposes, which reduced the impact on a local scale. To a certain extent, the views of this musician may be true. However, it should be noted that Chris Tamaela actually had music groups and transferred his knowledge to young people, but mostly in the Christian, theological context of UKIM (the musician did not belong to this circle). Since Tamaela’s ambition was focused on music in the GPM, the space in which he operated seems logical. In general, Moluccan musicians praised Tamaela’s ability to create, his musicality, and his knowledge. They agreed with Tamaela’s musical-theological idea. Some musicians, however, thought that the GPM does not yet listen carefully enough to Chris Tamaela’s ideas. Many musicians who supported his ideas and music-making regarded him as their great inspiration. For example, Barce Istia gratefully explained that he got to know traditional music via Chris Tamaela. Istia told me about himself and Tamaela singing together in the Moluccan *kapata* style. Istia said that without practicing beforehand, the soul of Moluccan music arose.⁴⁹ Apart from Chris Tamaela, other musicians also develop Moluccan traditional instruments, hereby following his example. At the Christian university IAKN, music teacher Branckly Egbert Picanussa is widely known for his new plastic *suling* flute, which has a better, more stable pitch and a wider range of tones. The IAKN also has a so-called *bengkel* (workshop), where music students create all kinds of traditional instruments.

Many ministers who were familiar with Chris Tamaela’s work supported his focus on traditional church music and the ethnic service. Probably, the fact that Tamaela was positioned as the protagonist of the contextual shift of the GPM, which needs to be executed by ministers, also played a role in this support. Some well-known progressive and creative ministers even worked together with Tamaela. Minister Jacky Manuputty said about Chris Tamaela that he was a very kind, humble man and a master in music: “I really adore him in music. [...] But he tends to go in trance. So, if you give him a chance, when he is in trance, then you don’t know how to stop him.”⁵⁰

48 Anonymous, informal conversation (December 14, 2019, Tuni). Translation by the author.

49 *Kapata* will be explained in the next chapter.

50 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

Chris Tamaela himself said that, in comparison with the past, nowadays, most congregants agree with his approach. Tamaela realized that, recently, he had been invited more often to give a lecture to congregations or to lead a traditional liturgy, during which he would dress in a native costume and play his own instruments. The change of reception that Tamaela experienced is also related to GPM policy. Musician Barce Istia, who knew Chris Tamaela well, recounted that when Tamaela had started using traditional music and other ethnic elements in church (already in the 1970s), his approach had not yet been accepted by the local people (who viewed Tamaela as a crazy man). Moreover, the GPM synod board did not approve of Tamaela's approach at the time. Another musician remembered an international church assembly in 1984, where Chris Tamaela performed an ethnic program. Some ministers responded enthusiastically, whereas others were offended. The disapproval had to do with the suggestion that Tamaela called the ancestors into church. The ministers did not understand Tamaela's intentions, which caused rejection. Although the Moluccan congregants that are from an older generation still think along these lines (fearing that Tamaela's ethnic liturgical elements are related to the human ancestors), nowadays, the GPM is slowly adopting a contextual approach. Because the GPM recognized Tamaela's knowledge about ethnic music and culture, they initiated a collaboration. In the end, having previously been rejected from many sides, and, therefore, having to remain patient, Chris Tamaela helped the GPM to take small steps towards the contextualization of church music. Because of this new, contextualized GPM policy, more and more people allow culture in church and are open to receiving traditional music, as they realize (through information about this new policy) that this music is directed to the spirit of the Lord who created the ancestors.⁵¹

However, some congregants were not convinced and held the opinion that Chris Tamaela worked in a direction that is too ethnic (*'etnik'*). Used to certain liturgical orders, songs, and ways of worship, while being embedded in a modern context too, some congregants were afraid that the music in the church service would become a superficial attraction that is focused on Tamaela himself. For them, Western music and worship styles feel more

51 I am not saying that the cultural context did not exist or play a role in the Moluccan church before theologians started a project of conscious contextualization. I mean that, nowadays, Moluccan people are taught that cultural forms can be revalued on the basis of Christian religion. Hence, these cultural forms are allowed in church and this GPM policy diverts from what generations of Moluccans have been hearing during their religious education. The former prohibition of culture in church was based on what the Dutch allowed and did not allow, as well as on former GPM policy.

Christian than native songs and styles. Interestingly, for this group, Tamaela's ethnic approach went too far and no longer meant contextualization, since these people did not recognize their Christian lives in such musical forms. Furthermore, a lack of clarity added a feeling of confusion to the discomfort. For them, the concept behind an ethnic music performance was not always transparent or straightforward. A congregant stated that he did not know why and how Chris Tamaela used specific elements. For this person, the ambiguity resulted in a loss of spiritual feeling, while he, at the same time, greatly respected Chris Tamaela as a person and a musician. Such opinions demonstrate how, in a way, 'too much context' (ethnic Moluccan culture that, for most Moluccan people, belongs to the past and, therefore, feels contrary to the modern lives that most Moluccans live) can lead to the negation of contextualization. These views also show how the question of what music is not, is relevant. In other words, not all Moluccan people saw the music of Chris Tamaela as (church) music.

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6. Traditional as Modern: Moluccan Music Reconstructed

Abstract: Traditional Moluccan music is characterized by ancestral transmission and the soul of Moluccanness. A music analysis presents traditional instruments (*tifa*, *totobuang*, *tahuri*, *suling*), songs (*kapata*), and music styles (*kroncong*, Hawaiian). Five children's music groups illustrate the broader societal and political aim for ethnic revival and the preservation of traditional Moluccan music. The Moluccan Protestant church is seen as a partner in the political project of preservation. Moluccan traditional music unhinges the opposition between tradition and modernity. The author coins the concept 'the Moluccan traditional': rather than a concrete practice from the past that is called tradition, the traditional refers to the historical process of mixing that makes something traditional.

Keywords: Moluccan; Traditional music; Tifa; Tahuri; Suling; Preservation; Ethnic.

Torches with orange fire light the path that leads to the stunning view over Ambon. From the mountains of Tuni, we see the sea, the harbor, and the illuminated city. In the darkness, we descend into the amphitheater of sand and climb to a place on the bamboo benches amidst children and elderly, Moluccans and Dutch, Christians and Muslims. We are waiting for the Moluccan Bamboo Orchestra, conducted by Rence Alphons.

In groups dressed in white and red, the musicians are introduced. They sit down on the blue plastic chairs that form a semicircle in this arena covered by nature. Microphone stands, large boxes and amplifiers, lamps, and black cables surround the flute players and decorate the green trees. The factions are positioned from the highest left to the lowest right, with the exception of the fifth, deep *suling* voice located in the middle. Several violinists and percussionists, as well as one guitarist and cellist complete the orchestra.

The sounds of the jungle, the insects, and the birds turn into the background of bamboo music. A woman, sitting on a blanket encircled with stones, enlightened by a high, wooden torch, tells about a father returning to his family with his *perahu*, the traditional Moluccan boat.

Nafas dan ombak, naik dan turun – waves are like breaths. Blue, white light floods the landscape. All musicians start breathing into their *suling* flutes, guided by the rising and retreating tide of Rence's arms. When I close my eyes, I hear the Sea.

But the sea is full of waste. The players start walking, and a cacophony of bamboo sounds fills the air. The storyteller is standing on Dryland. Her voice is accompanied by one low, virtuoso horizontal flute and by human-made animal tones, soft and high. The *suling* is made from nature! The orchestra begins playing, low and soft. Slowly, with Rence's position changing from weighed down to outstretched swaying, his movements from tiny to persuasive, the instruments, density, and volume increase. Suddenly, a poet runs barefoot through the crowd of musicians. With a lilting, sometimes shouting voice, he talks about the City. The world, the nature is changing, but we are focused on digital gadgets – on our phones and on making selfies. The sung words 'extinction,' 'extermination,' and 'creation' shape the soundscape of the poem. What are we going to do?

The performance culminates in a message of musical Joy. Everyone is free, everyone is laughing, everyone is ecstatic. We dance, we clap, and we sing on the ever-swelling sounds. The musicians get up and, repeatedly, we respond to the singer together, pointing and screaming. It is a party, there is euphoria, an explosion of happiness. I cannot stop smiling.

Before this third and final concert of the bamboo wind orchestra, I had the opportunity to attend one of the last rehearsals.¹ In the village of Tuni, I sat on the porch of the brick house belonging to Rence Alphons. I sat close to the musicians – mostly young boys (from primary school to students), a couple of girls, and three older men in faction three. The boys, heads covered by hats and hoods, looked at their papers with staff notation (complemented with cipher notes) and snapped or counted their fingers to follow the timing and beat. Gently, they moved back and forth to the rhythm. Concentration and discipline were combined with fun. The cellist balanced his instrument on his fingertip. *'Hati-hati nanti jatuh!'*, the youngsters yelled.² The rehearsals resulted in three astounding, free concerts, attended by a highly diverse public. Small children could predict what was coming next because they had been present every evening. Everyone tremendously enjoyed this world-class performance in this remarkable place. The movements of the orchestra factions became an entity of itself. The evening had a magical atmosphere: *luar biasa*, as one person commented.³ This assemblage of professional musicians and amateur *suling* players (from all layers of society), of native instruments and Western ones, and of traditional music and a highly modern composition resulted in the musical dream of Rence Alphons. This assemblage at a unique place in a beautiful corner of the world resulted in artistic and Moluccan pride. Built on nothing but persistence, it was a success of musicality that I had never heard or seen before.

The Moluccan Bamboo Orchestra (MBO) taught me how traditional music can be modern, and vice versa. Both conceptions are shaped in relation to each other and embedded in local and global musical realities, just like the concert and composition of the MBO. Because the theological idea of traditional church music deals with Moluccan traditional music that originated in *adat* contexts, Moluccan music is the focus of this chapter.⁴ I zoom out to conceptually, empirically, and musicologically analyze Moluccan traditional music. This is a necessary step in order to understand the transposition of this music to the GPM context (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan

1 Victor Joseph and Pierre Ajawaila were the producers, Anis de Jong the director, Nel Lekatompessy the theatermaker and storyteller, Rudi Fofid aka *Opa* Rudi the poet, Niels Brouwer the guitarist and composer of the whole piece, Ernst Reijseger the cellist, Monica Akihary the famous jazz singer, Rence Alphons the conductor, and the MBO the musicians.

2 'Be careful, or it will fall!' Participant Observation, November 6, 2019, Tuni. Translation by the author.

3 Extraordinary.

4 With Moluccan music, I refer here to Moluccan traditional music in its original *adat* context, to be distinguished from Moluccan church music or traditional church music.

Protestant Church), which is the subject of Chapter 7. Although the GPM works with traditional church music from a theological motivation, that motivation is embedded in a broader societal and political revival and preservation of traditional Moluccan music. The MBO is an example of this societal effort to encourage young people to play a traditional instrument – in this case, the *suling* (originally a religious instrument but now played in popular contexts as well). These broader processes of revival are authorized through a heritage regime. This chapter particularly demonstrates how the focus on music gains insights in the construction of ‘traditional’ regarding the process of contextual theology. First, I embed traditional Moluccan music in a historical, popular context. Then, the conceptualization of – what I will call – the Moluccan traditional will be explained, followed by an ethnomusicological account of traditional Moluccan music. I also discuss various instruments, songs, and styles. Then, on the basis of five musicians and their music groups, various questions about music education and social roles are addressed. Subsequently, I explain the popular music scene, in which traditional music is situated. The chapter ends with the return to church music in the GPM, through the expression of criticism by Moluccan musicians.

The Historical Context of Moluccan Music

Traditional church music in Moluccan Protestantism – as theologically proposed by Chris Tamaela – is situated in a broader, historical context of popular music. In the nineteenth century, popular dances, and accompanying music from the West, influenced musical styles in the colonized lands, such as the Moluccas. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hawaiian music was introduced in the Moluccas and it developed into one of the most popular genres in the archipelago. The novel sounds and instruments, such as the steel guitar and ukulele, became incorporated in many Moluccan musical repertoires (Barendregt et al. 2017, 30–1). The Moluccan-Hawaiian genre is a product of Austrian waltzes, military marches, Christian hymns, and native Hawaiian music. Furthermore, globalization made Rock ‘n’ Roll and Western pop music dominant in the Moluccas. Western music has been associated with modernity and development, and, for that reason, was propagated by the Suharto government. Suharto invested in Western-style music, which resulted in the formation of what today is called ‘pop Indonesia.’ This genre refers to Anglo-American-inspired popular music that is sung in English or, more often, in the national language Bahasa

Indonesia. This type of music stands for modern, amplified music that is mostly played with Western instruments at indoor venues (and, therefore, the music is marked as progressive, as many traditional performances take place outdoors) (Barendregt et al. 2017, 59–60). In this way, music contributed to a Western-oriented lifestyle that helped people to distinguish themselves from the working class as well as from indigenous Moluccans (Barendregt et al. 2017, 12). Apart from Hawaiian music and pop Indonesia, pop *Melayu* and *Kroncong* also fall into the category of ‘national music’ that emerged in the aftermath of the newly gained independence (Barendregt et al. 2017, 46, 67; 2014, 28).⁵ Pop *Melayu* mixes Western instruments (such as percussion, guitar, piano, or violin) with native instruments, rhythms, and verse structures that signal a link to ‘*Melayu* identity.’⁶ As many places in Southeast Asia – for centuries – have been the crossroads where cultural practices from everywhere have merged in a multitude of new social forms and artistic genres, it is these places “that often acted as entrepôt between the larger world and its hinterlands and as a main interface through which modernity was communicated among the new national communities of postcolonial Southeast Asia” (Barendregt 2014, 26). Popular music in the Moluccas, thus, is mainly a tale of modernity and technological progress, shaped by nationalist interests (Barendregt 2017, 60).

However, modernity is not an unambiguous, universal phenomenon, but relationally and situationally framed. National musics can be considered as hybrid forms, which articulate local musical elements with Western elements that index modernity. This ‘strategic hybridization’ not only mediates between the local and global, but also between cosmopolitanism and the preservation of cultural distinctiveness: “The ongoing dialectic of local, regional and the global, then, importantly feeds into what is popularized as being modern in a certain place and at a certain time” (Barendregt 2014, 28).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a different meaning of modernity developed in Indonesia, when music was used to mark identities in response to the coming together of a multiplicity of ethnicities through rapid urbanization. Whereas national policymakers tried to subjugate ethnic sentiments to nationalist tactics, music particularly responded to these changing realities through the articulation of what Barendregt (2014, 32)

5 *Kroncong* is explained further on in Chapter 6.

6 *Melayu* means ‘Malay.’ This identity stood (and stands) for tradition, for a connection with fellow people in the Malay region, and for something more expansive than propagated by the Indonesian nation and its neighbor Malaysia (Barendregt 2014, 28–9). Nevertheless, compared to pop Indonesia, pop *Melayu* has always been regarded as ‘less modern’ (Barendregt et al. 2017, 60).

calls ‘the ethnic modern’: traditional music was connected to urban trends and technologies (*lagu-lagu daerah*). Localized forms of identity were re-engaged through music, which was targeted at people from a specific region or ethnic group (resulting in, for example, pop Ambon). For instance, lyrics could be articulated in local languages or dialects, such as the Ambonese Malay (Barendregt 2014, 33).⁷ Localized songs and music, thus, are presented in a modern setting, by which this music removes people’s associations of backwardness and, at the same time, does not lose the pride of people’s own cultural tradition. The old is combined with the new, and local traditions are combined with foreign cultural forms. The combination makes the music novel and modern, yet, at the same time, traditional (Barendregt et al. 2017, 10).⁸ The history of Moluccan popular music, as displayed above, demonstrates how ‘ethnic’ and ‘modern’ are social constructs that showcase various interpretations over time and space (Barendregt et al. 2017, 66). Hence, the label ethnic is quite flexible in the context of modern music.

As part of a movement of ethnic revival, which is also embedded in a political, nationalist framework, a Moluccan ‘ethnic modern’ is currently being constructed. Although this music is heavily influenced by Western music, which continues to be associated with modernity, ethnic elements are selected, adapted, and transformed. The elements form an innovative mix that people perceive as modern and ethnically authentic at the same time.⁹ In the Moluccan context today, there is a visible increase of groups that play traditional music. Also, at school, Moluccan children learn how to play traditional instruments. In church as well, these instruments are combined with keyboard or trumpet.

The historical context of traditional-popular music in the Moluccas, in other words, shows a continuing dynamic of hybridity and creativity. At the same time, traditional music evokes a sense of Moluccan identification, because, despite the constructivist nature, people perceive traditional music as immutable. As Coplan (1991, 35–6) states, the music is timeless

7 It is important to stress that the use of electronic instruments does not disqualify such music as ethnic or local. The use of ethnic elements, such as language, instruments, tunings, rhythms, melodies, and traditions, make audiences recognize a regional style, through which people can identify with a traditional community (Barendregt 2014, 34).

8 However, the ethnic modern also shows ambiguity, as the musical category mostly remains a prerequisite of urban residents, who are detached from traditional ritual contexts (Barendregt 2014, 35).

9 Although Western harmony and electronic instruments are used everywhere, the ethnic part of the music aims at selecting elements that trigger people’s identification as Moluccans. It is this part that gives the music an ‘aura of authenticity’ (Barendregt et al. 2017, 69).

in time. Tradition provides authority to representations of the present through a seamless connection with the remote past (Coplan 1991, 40). Music is particularly apt for this paradoxical dynamic, as music is crucial to the reapplication of memory and the recreation of emotional qualities of experience in the maintenance of a living tradition (Coplan 1991, 45).

Western musical influence, nationalist styles, associations with modernity, and the ethnic modern all form the setting for my description of Moluccan traditional music and its theological transposition to a Protestant church context. Dances and music that were introduced during colonialism, the Hawaiian style, and many more musical influences and hybrid constellations form part of the present-day repertoire of the Moluccan traditional. Within contextual theology, traditional music is transposed to the Moluccan Protestant church, as one of the efforts to bring Christianity in line with Moluccan ethnic identity. The terms 'ethnic' and 'traditional' in relation to 'modern' are used in a rather flexible, vague way, which affirms the constructive nature of the ethnic modern. Musical elements – that evoke memory and emotion, and trigger large-scale Moluccan identification in a unified, harmless way – are selected and used to achieve a sensation of an authentic, immemorial connection between past and present.

The Moluccan Traditional

The term 'traditional' is one of the key terms in the discourse on contextual theology. Moluccan traditional culture is the main source of contextualization and traditional music is one aspect herein – central to the theology of Chris Tamaela. Therefore, it is necessary to delineate the meanings behind the term, especially since the word is used in a rather open, broad, and elusive manner.

Generally, Moluccan people who academically deal with traditional music in a theological way discern four different terms: traditional; ethnic; local; and *daerah*. Although discursively, these terms often overlap, Moluccan academics attach diverse meanings to them. 'Traditional' draws on local and ethnic culture, but is broader than that. Traditions can enter from outside and become incorporated in and change local culture. Over the course of a very long time, these traditions evolve into something that is then seen as traditionally Moluccan. For instance, the originally Western diatonic scale is nowadays seen as part of Moluccan traditional music. Introduced by Europeans, this scale has become common to the Moluccan ear through many generations. The same holds true for music styles that are

from different places and came to be viewed as Moluccan music, such as the Hawaiian style and the Portuguese *kroncong* style. In other words, tradition is the concrete container or holder that can be explicated by all four adjectives. I see tradition as a synonym for custom, which can be ethnic and local, but also traditional.¹⁰ Whereas traditional mixes and merges, 'ethnic' refers to what are considered original, native, and pure cultural forms connected to a specific group of people. The forms include the full range of ways of life that shape ethnic identity, which, in this case, relates to the Moluccan people as a whole, as well as to separate ethnicities within this group. Ethnic identity comprises aspects like native language, clothing, dance, and music. Regarding the latter, separate ethnic groups can have their own styles of playing and singing, which still share typical characteristics that define Moluccan native music. The terms 'local' and '*daerah*' are connected to geography. Local points to a designated place or environment, and *daerah* (to be translated as 'region' or 'area,' encompassing a wider space than local) has a political connotation. People in a certain region share particular traditions that are impossible to trace historically, because of the length of time that these traditions have been present in this place.¹¹ This means that *daerah* is a territorial concept, which denotes traditions that outsiders uncritically characterize as part of the large Moluccan area.

An important distinction, made by Moluccan musicians, is between traditions that are from *Maluku* and that are in *Maluku*. For instance, some instruments come from outside the Moluccas (for example Java or the Middle East) but are seen as traditional Moluccan instruments because they have been in the Moluccas for a long time. Such music, then, means traditional music *in* the Moluccas, not *from* the Moluccas. When looking at the categorizations above, I argue that the first (from) refers to 'ethnic,' as the tradition is held to belong to a native Moluccan place, while the latter (in) became a Moluccan tradition because of its long-standing presence in the Moluccas. This tradition in the Moluccas is a mix – a collaboration with outside influence. The music in *Maluku* is the result of transformation and refers, in my analysis, to a 'traditional tradition.'

Traditional is connected to time and relevance. A tradition or custom that is regarded as traditional by Moluccans is a habit or a normality that

10 Tradition does not necessarily need to be related to Moluccan *adat* in some way. Tradition can also be used to refer to certain manners in which Moluccan people are doing things in contemporary contexts. For instance, the elaborate preparations for Christmas, whereby people buy enormous amounts of food and presents, is called a tradition.

11 An example is Hawaiian music, which is shared by many people in the Pacific region.

people, for a long time, have been practicing in their daily life up to today, because the ancestors before them did the same. Such a tradition comes to be seen as part of the soul of Moluccan culture and as protecting cultural values, which is why people feel that they have to hold on to these traditions: “It is something that people practice because they still gain the meaning of that. Even though we cannot say that it is static, but dynamic. [...] Because it comes from their parents, it is part of their communal identity.”¹² In my view, the mixed character is the reason that Moluccans often use the term traditional as a synonym for ethnic, local, or regional. The openness of the traditional can encompass these other three terms.¹³

Exactly for this openness, I use traditional as a noun in the context of ‘the Moluccan traditional’ – the Moluccan traditional that is constructed in the process of Moluccan theology.¹⁴ Thus, I use the traditional (as a noun) as an analytical concept instead of the term tradition, mainly because the term tradition, with its many confusing and diffuse connotations, stands in the way of an adequate conceptualization of what is going on in the relation between theology and lived religion (concerning church music). In public discourse and in terms of people’s associations, tradition is often defined in a rather static way against modernity. The traditional, on the other hand, enables me to capture the empirical reality of traditional Moluccan music becoming church music. The concept catches the openness of the adjective traditional and has a processual character that is conducive to grasping the possibility of mixing. Pasts and presents, ethnic and modern, and local and global can come together in the construction of the traditional. The concept of the traditional allows me to bring into the picture the historical construction of Moluccan cultural forms and traditional music, authenticated through the Moluccan ancestral lineage, which is developed by Moluccans in contemporary contexts. Rather than a concrete practice from the past that is called tradition, the traditional

12 Interview with Nancy Souisa, theologian at UKIM (October 28, 2019, Ambon).

13 For example, ethnic, local, or regional music can all be called traditional music.

14 Although much academic literature exists about the term ‘tradition,’ less is true for ‘traditional.’ This research complements writings about the concept ‘traditional.’ An example of a scholar who wrote about the traditional is Rosalind Shaw (1990). Dealing with the idea of African traditional religion, she suggests to do away with the term. The term originated from a Judeo-Christian bias, to fill in the hole of evolutionist religious classification systems (Shaw 1990, 240–1). According to her, traditional is an ahistorical, essentializing, and homogenizing term, which, therefore, is not useful. On these points, whereby traditional is used as an adjective, I agree with Shaw. However, in this research, the traditional is conceptualized as a noun on empirical grounds, whereby the term is recognized as dynamic yet authentic. From this empirical notion follows a reconceptualization of the word traditional.

refers to the historical process that makes something traditional – a process that is to be recognized in Moluccan contextual theology. Hence, concrete traditions or customs travel to different places and, through time and relevance, become regarded as traditionally Moluccan. The adjective ‘traditional’ is defined by openness and mixing, whereas traditional as a noun refers to the process by which something becomes seen as traditional. Influences of the past and present, ethnic and modern, and local and global inform this construction of the traditional. The traditional demonstrates how Moluccan traditions are not necessarily ethnic – mostly not, as the Moluccas are characterized by a centuries-long history of cultural mixing – or necessarily opposed to modernity. By unhinging the opposition between tradition and modernity, the traditional is especially able to grasp how musical traditions from now and then and from here and there become regarded as Moluccan traditional music. Thus, to emphasize the constructivist, hybrid quality of Moluccan music and of the cultural forms that are the sources of Moluccan contextual theology, I work with the noun ‘the Moluccan traditional.’

Innovations of the Traditional

In Moluccan public discourse, the term traditional is used in reference to many different contexts, both contemporary and historic, cultural and ecclesiastical. The aspects of Moluccan culture that are seen as traditional in the form of *adat*, passed on by the ancestors (such as language, clothes, dances, and music as described in Chapter 1), are developed in relation to modernity. For instance, nowadays, modern *baju cele* are made with the addition of little figures, such as the machete, shield, cloves, and nutmeg that are considered to represent Moluccan culture, hereby ‘updating’ traditional clothing.¹⁵ Concerning music, the same combinations become apparent. For example, the ukulele is seen as both a traditional and a modern instrument, as well as a Moluccan and a universal instrument. Also, all kinds of music can be played with Moluccan native instruments: traditional; modern; Moluccan; national; international; Western; indigenous; and religious music. Often, these instruments are created to be able to play a Western diatonic scale, which makes the Moluccan instruments applicable for all music.

15 These blouses are literally referred to as ‘modern *baju cele*.’ Another example is dance. In church, I once experienced a dance performance by five girls. Although their movements – the positioning of the feet, from heel to toe, and the elegance of the hands – were definitely taken from Moluccan traditional dance, the music that they danced to was from Mariah Carey.

Apart from the Moluccan cultural context, the traditional is also used with reference to the Moluccan Christian context.¹⁶ In theological terms, traditional denotes a particular Calvinist mindset that forms the legacy of Dutch colonialism. From the perspective of UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku), the Moluccan traditional that theologians construct as a source of contextual theology is a modern and progressive kind of traditional that is employed to correct a conservative, colonial traditional, which comprises a Bible-centered, exclusive, and anti-cultural way of believing. In that sense, Moluccan church history is divided into groups of traditionalists and modernists. The so-called modernists, for instance, introduced a broader range of elements to praise God from the 1970s onward (such as electronic music or traditional music, instead of silent worship). However, I argue that such a dualistic framing of the traditional as opposite to the modern could lead to a problematic denial of the entanglements between the two, as well as of the natural contextualization that has been happening since the colonial times.

Many Moluccans emphasized the relational nature of the traditional, deliberately connecting traditional forms, both theoretically and practically, to modernity and innovation, especially regarding traditional music. For example, musician Jonas Silooy often organizes collaborations between his traditional music group and groups that use modern, electronic instruments. According to Silooy, these contemporary collaborations have the potential to beautify, improve, and enrich traditional music. Another informant told me about his hip-hop group that studies local wisdom (written in native languages) as a traditional source for its lyrics. Incorporating the local within the composition of modern music, the group envisions enlivening and reviving the traditional.¹⁷ These examples show that, whether in a popular or a religious context, Moluccan people innovate traditional Moluccan music to make it interesting for present-day publics, matching the music with the modern context. Poet Rudi Fofid even defined traditional as innovative: "In that time, traditional was innovation. What is contemporary now will later be called traditional."¹⁸ The traditional, thus, can be a modern creation. Such a process characterizes

16 The Western, Christian names given to Moluccan children or the black clothes for church are examples of Moluccan church traditions.

17 The local and global or traditional and modern can also be mixed in the opposite way. Poet Rudi Fofid told me about an example from the Kei islands, where the people viewed one particular song in their native language as their own ethnic song. However, the song appeared to be a very popular international song that has been translated into innumerable contexts.

18 Interview with Rudi Fofid.

contextual theology too, whereby an ‘ethnic modern’ or a ‘new old’ is being developed.

Modern Meanings

Since the traditional is defined in relation to (and not opposed to) the modern, it is important to know what the modern comprises in the eyes of Moluccans.¹⁹ Broadly speaking, Moluccan theology – and the ethnic revival that is aimed for – are situated in a modern context that is defined as global and millennial, and characterized by a digital spirit of the times. Theology, as well as traditional music, needs to be developed in relation to this global, changing context. An example is the conceptualization of contextualization. As the Christian musician and teacher Egbert Picanussa stated: “I think we have to make a new meaning of contextualization. Because sometimes people will think about contextualization and think about the old one. But for me, it is how we use the good from the old, and how we can develop it now, so that people will know that God is present here.”²⁰ Another example is traditional music groups that collaborate with players of other instruments and that play modern music in order to revive Moluccan traditional music. They make a connection with modern, popular youth culture. Whereas modern life and globalization are seen as forces that threaten the traditional, preservation – partly and paradoxically – relies on the building on these modern forces. As minister Jan Matatula explained: “We don’t want that our *adat*, our culture, is slammed down by the millennial world. We want to combine it in order that society will live happily with their preserved culture which however is not closed off against contemporary developments and changes.”²¹ In other words, people think a balance is needed. Modern culture turns into Moluccan culture, but, at the same time, modern culture should not erase traditional culture. For example, minister John F. Beay stated that traditional culture can be revived again, because – despite the fact that present-day generations start to forget their culture through modern life – young people will always be moved by the core of their Moluccan identity. In the same light, one of the UKIM students stated that although they, as young Moluccans, develop

19 When Moluccans state that a specific group of native people is largely closed off from modernity (*tertutup modernitas*), they mean little communication and connection with the outside world. However, this is a reality that largely belongs to the past. Nowadays, even very remote villages have access to internet, television, electricity, and global communication.

20 Interview with Branckly Egbert Picanussa.

21 Interview with Jan Z. Matatula. Translation by the author.

their identity as people living today, they also remember their Moluccan culture and identity.²²

A similar dynamic characterizes Moluccan music. Modern developments shape the importance of the continuation of traditional music, which does not mean that one cannot be modern – on the contrary. Modern music commonly means electronic instruments, such as the keyboard, guitar, and drums, or Western instruments, such as the violin and trumpet. Songs are sung in English or Indonesian, and popular styles are hip-hop, pop, R&B, and rock. Modern music is often associated with the West, characterized by technological development, and regarded as music with a high status.²³ In church, theologians and ministers who execute GPM policy expressed the need to integrate traditional music – that is experienced as a strong part of Moluccan culture – with modernity, in order to follow the change of times, so that all congregants can enjoy the service. People mainly referred to keyboard and brass when talking about modern music. Nowadays, Moluccan children often want to learn to play such ‘modern instruments,’ rather than traditional instruments.

Moluccan Traditional Music

Now that the Moluccan traditional has been conceptualized in relation to the terms ‘ethnic,’ ‘local,’ ‘regional,’ and ‘modern,’ the meaning of Moluccan traditional music can be addressed. In line with the aforementioned concepts, musician Rence Alphons stated that, strictly speaking, from an ethnic point of view, the Moluccas have almost had no local musical tradition since the arrival of the missionaries. While spreading Christianity, missionaries tried to extinguish Moluccan culture that had a connection with native religion – including ethnic music, because this music was used in *adat* rituals and for communication with the ancestors. According to Rence, native Moluccan music is mostly characterized by rhythm. The music must have been different from Western conceptions of music. Every village or ethnic group has or had its own rhythm. Whereas musicians, nowadays, use a tuner to make sure that a certain tone is exactly that tone, in former

22 Whereas in a Christian theological and musical context, it is largely agreed upon that the traditional should be preserved in relation to the modern, other people in society regard the Moluccan traditional as primitive and uninteresting, because, in these people’s opinion, traditional culture blocks their way to a modern life.

23 Much in line with what Barendregt et al. (2017) state.

times, people just made an approximate tone based on hearing. Also, lyrics were sung in native languages, which are almost completely extinct today.

Moluccan music that is seen as traditional in the present day originally comes (for the most part) from Europe or the Middle East (even the instruments that people named first, when I asked about Moluccan music, have their origin in Christian, Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist culture). Over time, these instruments and musics became incorporated in Moluccan culture, a process that minister and musician John Beay described as ‘naturalization.’ The instruments came to be used as an expression of Moluccanness, transforming into something characteristic of the Moluccas, in interaction with typical Moluccan styles and feelings. Chris Tamaela confirmed this process of naturalization. Since time immemorial, Moluccans have been in contact with other people from other places, who brought their musical traditions. These traditions led to musical development.²⁴ According to Tamaela, foreign music, in other words, becomes a Moluccan tradition, mainly through the key aspect of the traditional: the ancestors. The Moluccan ancestors had native music, and, through acculturations and developments, a dynamic musical history has been created. The ancestors sang, played instruments, made instruments, and expressed the music (for example, to entertain themselves or to worship). The Moluccan ancestors have practiced the music from generation to generation by oral or mnemonic communication.

Ancestral transmission is signified by the term *turun temurun*, which means ‘hereditary.’ For many Moluccans, this, in combination with the long-standing musical use (*digunakan sejak dulu*), signifies the core of what traditional music is. Another important aspect is soul or *jiwa*. People believe that traditional music contains a certain core that is connected with Moluccan lives and culture, with how they have grown up, and with how they have been formed, which brings this music close to personal feelings.²⁵ As an informant said: “There is identity inside traditional music.”²⁶ This soul is expressed in an assemblage of music, singing, instruments, dance, clothing, and ritual, among people in their relations with each other, with their environment, and with God.²⁷ In turn, the relational assemblage engenders societal values and norms. Thus, traditional music is part of an entire network of interconnecting appearances that evoke a deep feeling

24 Examples are Chinese, Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, etc.

25 Traditional music, namely, is also connected to place. Certain villages have a certain musical culture, such as rhythms, melodies, and instruments.

26 Interview with Jance Rumahuru.

27 Rituals such as the heating of *pela gandong*, the inauguration of a village chief, the signaling of an announcement, working together on a building, or a marriage ceremony.

that is associated with Moluccan character and identity.²⁸ A musician stated: “It’s not something that you can just hear and understand, but you have to feel it. Music nowadays, you just listen to it and you understand. It is gonna be different with traditional music.”²⁹ Musician Semmy Toisuta combined the aforementioned elements in his definition of traditional music: “It is a musical power that has an identity, a soul and procedures for following the owners’ tradition.”³⁰

Apart from these central aspects, I spoke to some people who had their own interpretation of what traditional music means to them. Minister Jacky Manuputty said that, for him, Moluccan traditional music is not an instrument, but a way of composing, which expresses Moluccan uniqueness. Manuputty draws inspiration from movements of daily life that have a rhythm. Compositions can be based on these movements that are related to value and custom, such as people returning with their boat, the morning sounds of starting up daily life, and the production of *sopi*, as well as rhythms connected to nature (for example waves) or even modern adjustments: “It will be unique. And it will be in rhythm.”³¹ Poet Rudi Fofid viewed traditional music as part of traditional culture and religion, which is always connected to other people, because traditional music means ‘bringing together.’ According to Fofid, traditional lyrics have a strong social-emotional relation, expressing love for and memories of other people, family, one’s village, and more: “From music you can get harmony.”³²

The fact that many Moluccans see traditional music as part of their cultural identity forms the main reason for the wish and importance of preservation.³³ In this respect, the words *mempertahankan*, *melestarikan*, and *kembangkan* (maintain, preserve, and develop) were often used to denote what needs to be done in Moluccan people’s perception. Especially in what is called the ‘global era,’ people find it important to hold on to their original roots of which traditional music forms part. So, despite my technical interpretation of the adjective traditional, referring to a historic

28 Moreover, traditional music is not only connected to daily culture and character, but also to questions of environmental conservation. For instance, some instruments depend on the availability of natural materials, such as bamboo. The knowledge about the techniques to make instruments and to preserve the natural environment is part of the local wisdom that is connected to traditional music.

29 Interview with Mark Ufie, employee at AMO (October 23, 2019, Ambon).

30 Interview with Semy Toisuta. Translation by the author.

31 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

32 Interview with Rudi Fofid.

33 The information and opinions on which this part of the book is based mainly come from creative people, e.g. musicians or theologians working with music.

reality of mixing, traditional music is regarded as native culture, shaping the feeling of Moluccanness (which does not mean that this is a static, ahistorical construction). In the view of Moluccan people, traditional music should be further developed, created, and improved, in order that future generations will know and learn about the music, which would prevent its obliteration. Moluccans have received traditional music from their ancestors, the *tete-nene-moyang*, and need to pass down the same music to both their own children and other people in the world, so that the musical tradition becomes more widely known and appreciated, as well as allowing others to enjoy and play the music. Musician Mark Ufie stated: “if it is not us, then who? That is the problem. Traditional things [go from] generation to generation, and if we count [one] missing chain, we are going to break the whole chain for the ancestors. [...] [It is about] preservation so we don’t lose our identity.”³⁴

The original context of Moluccan traditional music – meaning the places or situations in which traditional music has been practiced for the longest time – are *adat* rituals and daily life. Songs and music in ceremonies (for instance, the inauguration of a village chief, the making of a new village house, the restoration of the *baileo*, the welcoming of guests, *makan patita*, the celebration of the harvest, marriage, or the establishment of *pela* systems) are regarded as the traditional culture of the ancestors. Also, traditional music has been used as a medium of communication. The *marinyo* delivers messages to the whole village by using traditional instruments – for example, to let people know that someone has died or to announce a ritual or project in which people need to work together.³⁵ Such is the proclaiming of news, denoted by the term *tabaos*. In this sense, traditional music (especially the drum and conch shell) is a symbol of calling, of summoning, and of signaling.³⁶ Traditional music is also played to accompany dance. Village events and rituals often involve a collection of traditional dance, songs, music, and clothing. Regarding religion, traditional music is related to the invocation of ancestral spirits.³⁷

Nowadays, a decrease in interest for traditional music is apparent, especially among the urban youth. This, accompanied by the influences

34 Interview with Mark Ufie.

35 There is a specific rhythm that is used to announce death. The strokes start loudly, with a long pause between them that becomes shorter and shorter until the strokes follow each other rapidly. The rhythm can be slightly different for different villages.

36 Music is even used to indicate belonging to the ethnic groups *Patasiwa* or *Patalima*, by beating the drum nine or five times.

37 This original relation between music and the ancestors is the reason of theological contestation.

of globalization, forms the main cause for people's feeling that traditional music is endangered, and, therefore, should be reproduced and transposed to other contexts to prompt preservation.³⁸ This reproduction, according to an informant, is possible through the memory of traditional music that still lies within each Moluccan person because of the ancestral chain, on which the reconstruction can be based.

Because of contextual theology and a politics of diversity and ethnic revival, traditional music moves out of its original context. Not only theologians, but also musicians and other people study Moluccan music and use the music for purposes other than *acara adat* (*adat* ceremonies). Today, Moluccan traditional music is deployed to welcome foreign political guests, is part of the attractive tourist image of the Moluccas, is incorporated in popular culture, and is starting to be played in church. The GPM is seen as one of the institutions that can assist in the continuation of traditional music.³⁹ The continuation is viewed as important, because the music holds cultural values that shape Moluccan identity. Musician Istia explained: "*Inilah kita*" – this is us. Since the GPM is literally called 'the church of the Moluccas,' they take on the task to preserve Moluccanness inside the church.

Musicological Analysis of Moluccan Music

Traditional Moluccan music has specific features that characterize this music as Moluccan. Originally, the music is sung or played by feeling and heart, without notation, since the music has been transmitted orally.⁴⁰ In terms of scales, the pentatonic scale is the most characteristic of Moluccan music, although scales with more or less than five tones are also possible (montonic, ditonic, tritonic, tetratonic, and hexatonic).⁴¹ Nowadays, most Moluccan traditional music is diatonic, which is typical of Western music. Because diatonic music has been present in the Moluccas for such a long

38 The feeling for the need of preservation is mainly present among musicians, theologians, and politicians.

39 Interview with Barce Istia. Translation by the author.

40 *Modus* or mode is connected to scale and refers to scale coupled with a set of characteristic melodic behaviors, such as the beginning tone and tonal arrangement. Different modes are Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian.

41 Scale refers to a series of notes arranged in a plan of half steps and whole steps (Tamaela 2015, 60). The pentatonic scale can be hemitonic or anhemitonic, which means including or excluding halftones. Moreover, the Moluccan pentatonic scale is different from, for example, the Japanese pentatonic scale. This is determined by the selection of tones that form the scale.

time, local composers incorporated this scale in their own music. Through this process, the 'Western scale' became part of the Moluccan traditional.⁴² Furthermore, traditional instruments that are currently used or made most often are diatonically scaled, and traditional music is often played in collaboration with electronic or Western diatonic instruments, or in highly modern diatonic compositions (of which the concert by the MBO was an example).

In addition to scale, the elements of melody, rhythm, and harmony are important. Important aspects of the so-called melodic contour are tonal hierarchy and musical forms. Tonal hierarchy deals with the tonal center of a song, which can be determined by frequency, duration, appearance at the end of the composition, appearance at the low end of the scale or center, interval relationship with other tones, or a rhythmically stressed position (Tamaela 2015, 60). Musical form has to do with phrase construction, of which motive is part. A motive is a short harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic fragment or figure from which a theme, melody, or entire composition is developed (Tamaela 2015, 65). Together, notes form motives, and motives form phrases. In Chris Tamaela's view, Moluccan music is, generally, relatively modest or plain, with many repetitions. The motive can be very short, consisting of one sentence or the reiteration of only two or three notes.

It is important to note, as Chris Tamaela stressed, that these are Western concepts. Although such concepts can be used to explain Moluccan music, this music does not always follow Western rules of composition, which can possibly cause a mismatch. For instance, whereas, nowadays, Moluccan music works with Western harmonic systems, originally, harmony was never a musical element of Moluccan traditional music. This has to do with different distances between tones, whereby notes only 'coincidentally' form a harmonic interval, which is called an 'accidental chord.'⁴³

Apart from the pentatonic scale, typical features of Moluccan music are gliding up and down (two notes that are smoothly ascending and descending), reiteration or repetition, the use of drones (a continuous and persistent background tone throughout the song, or two tones that can be heard at the same time), a contour of undulation (the composition moves smoothly up and down), and decorative or ornamental notes. The latter are short, 'extra' notes that connect with and precede the regular note.

42 Among present-day Moluccans, the diatonic scale is by far the most popular.

43 So, a harmonic chord comes about spontaneously. Moreover, most traditional songs are sung in unison. Nevertheless, harmony can be created by feeling, when multiple people add voices, which together form a harmonic polyphony without notation or composition.

Furthermore, the tonal range of the melody, the *ambitus*, is narrow, and songs are often responsorial.⁴⁴ Rhythmic patterns of Moluccan traditional music are usually simple and connected to specific villages, messages that need to be communicated, and rituals. Although there are many rhythms, one can identify the specific Moluccan style.⁴⁵

Moluccan Instruments

Traditional Moluccan instruments, songs, and styles confirm the conceptualization of the traditional. Some Moluccan traditional musics are ethnic; others are influenced by foreign cultures, improved upon in modern times, or even created anew. Most of the musics use a diatonic scale and can be simultaneously local and global or ethnic and modern. Traditional music is an umbrella category for music that, in the eyes of the Moluccan people, is felt to be part of Moluccan culture and identity. As Rasmussen (2010, 170–1) makes clear, ‘real’ traditional music does not need to be based on native historical reality, but becomes real in the modern project of constructing an ‘authentic’ cultural soul. In the Moluccan case, hybridization is part of the traditional in the construction of the ethnic modern.

Apart from definitions of traditional music and music features, one of the most central characteristics of Moluccan traditional music that Moluccans themselves talked about are the instruments.⁴⁶ The instruments that were always mentioned by Moluccans are the *tifa* drum and *totobuang* gongs. In addition to these two, the *tahuri* (conch shell) and the *suling* (bamboo flute) were categorized as traditional. Furthermore, the ukulele was often suggested, and especially musicians brought up instruments that are made of Moluccan natural materials, such as bamboo, wood, and stone.⁴⁷ Which people identified which instruments as traditional music largely depended on their knowledge of music, as well as on their ideas about what the concept of traditional entails. Despite the fact that many instruments did not originate from the Moluccas, the instruments are regarded as Moluccan. The openness, on the one hand, and the real sense of Moluccan identity

44 In most cases, the *ambitus* is a major and minor second, major and minor third, sometimes a fourth and fifth, or a perfect prime interval (Tamaela 2015, 65).

45 Most of the information in this section is based on the work and ideas of Chris Tamaela. I have made the conscious decision to use his own musicological terms, i.e. not to ‘paste’ Western music analysis on Moluccans’ conceptions of traditional music.

46 For an elaborate overview of Moluccan music in the Moluccas and among the Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands, see Joseph & Spoorman (2023).

47 In former times, the membrane of a drum was even made of wood, before people started to make the membrane from animal skin.

that the music generates, on the other hand, are central to the concept of the traditional. *Tradisional* is the word that Moluccan people used to categorize this hybrid music. Below, I discuss an elaborate list of Moluccan instruments, styles, and songs.

Tifa

The *tifa* drum is generally viewed as an ethnic Moluccan instrument and is the most common across the entire geographical space of the Moluccas.⁴⁸ This wooden drum is made from a tree trunk, which is hollowed out to make the frame. Various types of wood can be used, although there is a preference for a type that is durable and not too hard. A drum with a hole on top, not yet covered by the membrane, is called *loang*. The membrane – the surface on which one hits the hand – is made of the skin of a deer or goat. First, the membrane is cut. Then, it is put in water, after which the membrane is scraped (*dikikis*) to make it smooth. Subsequently, the skin is sewn onto the *loang*, which turns the *loang* into a *tifa*. The skin then needs to dry in the sun before the instrument can be tuned. The tuning is done with the *baji*, the wedges. The wedges are little wooden blocks that are thicker and broader on top and become thinner and smaller as the block turns into a point. Two parallel, horizontal lines, vertically connected with each other and made of two types of rattan (*anyaman* and *lakare*), hold both the membrane and *baji* in place. The rattan is braided using various, complicated techniques. Especially the lower band is difficult, because this band needs to be flexible enough to adjust the *baji*, while also being tight. As musicians tend to say: the band needs to be exact (*pas*). By pushing the *baji* behind the rattan, the membrane is pulled tense until the right tuning is achieved.

The *tifa* has many sizes, with corresponding rhythms, playing techniques, and roles in a music group. The largest *tifa* is a long, independently standing drum (*badiri*). The musician stands behind this drum and plays it with either the hands or the *gaba-gaba*, two drumming sticks made of sago. This standing drum is quite rare in the Central Moluccas. The drum is only used at large opening ceremonies. The *tifa jikr* can be seen as the equivalent of the bass drum. This *tifa* is, except when a standing drum is present, the largest *tifa* in a drum group. When one is left-handed, the *tifa* is held under the right arm and positioned on the upper right leg, with the hand resting on top. The *jikr* needs to be played with the hands, because *gaba-gaba* are

48 One musician recounted that, originally, the *tifa* comes from Indo-China. However, I did not research these lines of origin, and most Moluccans see the *tifa* as ethnic Moluccan.

not allowed. In a single music group, there is a minimum of two *jikr*, since two rhythms – the basic rhythm and the cut or short rhythm (*dasar* and *potong*) – have to be combined. The next in line is the *tifa dasar*, which also has two rhythms and, therefore, requires two drums in one group as well. The *dasar* does not form the melody, but gives the basic rhythm. Musician Jonas Silooy compared the *tifa dasar* to the sound of the keyboard or bass guitar in the background. The same holds true for the *tifa jalan*. Then, there are the *tifa potong* and *tifa tasa*. These have one rhythm each. The *tasa* indicates the beat and tempo. The *potong* plays the melody and has the most virtuoso function. Except for the *jikr*, the other four *tifa* types are played with the *gaba-gaba*.

Apart from sitting and playing (especially with a bigger type of *tifa*), a group of musicians generally stands, with the *tifa* hanging on a rope around the shoulder. The hand-playing technique consists of drumming with flat hand or palm, in an open or closed way. When the ‘non-playing’ hand does not touch the membrane (the thumb is positioned perpendicular to the hand, locking the *tifa*, while the hand is horizontally placed in the air on the same level as the edge of the *tifa*), a more open, echoing sound is produced than when the hand touches the membrane (the hand is folded down), which produces a flatter, closed sound. The *gaba-gaba* technique requires one to hold the stick in a loose, flexible way. Motion comes from both the arm and wrist, resulting in an almost circular movement.

In former times, every ethnic group or clan had its own *tifa* rhythms (*irama tifa*). Nowadays, differences in rhythms are associated with villages.⁴⁹ For example, musician Jonas Silooy, who leads a *tifa totobuang* music group, teaches the particular rhythm of the village of Amahusu, “so that the rhythm that we have from the ancestors, from our grandparents, from my father, will certainly be maintained, from then until now.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, specific traditional songs and dances are accompanied by specific *tifa* rhythms. Although a player needs to play according to particular techniques and

49 This explanation of the *tifa* is based on the village of Amahusu on Ambon island. Other villages have other names for the different types of *tifa*, or call the drums by number. Different techniques can also have different meanings. Musician and minister John F. Beay told me about the island of Buru, where a specific technique can mean an apology. Minister Salenusu told me that another researcher had identified nine ways of playing that have nine different meanings or philosophies. There is also a *tifa* rhythm for both the *Patasiwa* and *Patalima* groups. The first comprise villages near the beach, characterized by a relatively slow rhythm, whereas the second relate to mountain villages, characterized by a fast rhythm that is associated with climbing.

50 Interview with Jonas Silooy, musician and leader of a children music group in the village of Amahusu (December 1, 2019, Amahusu). Translation by the author.

basic rhythms, he/she has the freedom to add elements as long as the tempo is strictly followed.⁵¹

Totobuang

Moluccan people almost always mentioned the *totobuang* in combination with the *tifa*, because in so-called *tifa totobuang* groups, these instruments are played together. The *totobuang* is a melodic instrument made of bronze gongs.⁵² The standard amount is twelve, although variations and modifications with more gongs exist. The gongs are hollow from the inside and open at the bottom. They are round, with a knob in the middle. The gongs lie loose on a wooden table, consisting of two rows of square boxes that each have two very thin triangular-shaped threads against each other, which assure perfect resonance. Originally, the *totobuang* comes from Java. Javanese Muslims probably brought the instrument to the Moluccas in the fifteenth century.⁵³ The Javanese version, the *bonang*, is part of the famous and widely researched gamelan ensemble, and has two scales – a pentatonic scale and a heptatonic scale.⁵⁴ The Moluccan *totobuang* is diatonic and has more gongs, influenced by the missionaries who adapted the instrument so that it could play Christian songs.⁵⁵

The *totobuang* is played with two wooden sticks. The sticks, as well as the gongs, are ordered from a factory in Yogyakarta.⁵⁶ The top of the sticks is covered in rubber to protect the gongs. The sticks are held in a flexible way, approximately in the middle, so that they can move easily and so that the player feels less tired. One has to hit the knob on the gong to produce the fullest sound. The musician can start to play a song from different positions – for example, from below, from the side, or from the top of the table. The order of placement of the gongs can slightly differ between villages, which

51 In former times, when a church had no church bell, the *tifa* was also the sound that marked the beginning of Christian worship (this explanation about the *tifa* is based on the interview with musician Jonas Silooy).

52 Apparently, the first gongs were made of wood instead of bronze.

53 For instance, a gong was given as a gift to the new village king.

54 The Javanese pentatonic scale, called *slendro* when referring to gamelan, has a different tonal arrangement. *Pelog* refers to the tuning system of the gamelan instruments, and has a heptatonic scale, although many ensembles only have keys for five of the pitches.

55 Despite this historic reality, there is a folk myth about the ethnic origin of the *totobuang*, which tells that the *Alifuru* ancestors already played the instrument and had knowledge on how to make bronze.

56 This is also the reason that there are so few *totobuang*. The materials are not available in the Moluccas, which makes the instrument expensive.

also influences playing positions.⁵⁷ In Amahusu, the gongs correspond to the following notes:

La	So	Fa	Mi	Re	Do
Ti	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	La

*The position of the tones of the *totobuang* in the village of Amahusu

The *totobuang* is often used to accompany dances, such as the *tari lenso*, or to welcome guests. One particular traditional song, called *lagu totobuang*, is the most famous *totobuang* song and is played by all Moluccan *tifa totobuang* groups.⁵⁸

Tahuri

The *tahuri* is an ethnic Moluccan instrument, made from conch shells. *Tahuri* expert Carolis Elias Horhoruw went to the island of Seram in 1964, to trace the native name of the instrument that, on Ambon, is called *kulibia*. Carolis discovered that the *kulibia* was a *tahuri*. The first part of the word means ‘sound from the earth’ and the second part means ‘calling’ or ‘gathering.’ The shells can be found all over the Moluccas.

To make a *tahuri*, the shell is hung (after which the contents from the sea are removed) and cleaned with water. As Chris Tamaela explained, the *tahuri* needs water to be tuned: “the instrument has a soul. [...] His or her life [has always been] in the water. If you want to play me, please give me some water.”⁵⁹ When the shell is dry, a single hole is made to create a tone. This is a careful, precise practice, which requires a great deal of expertise to determine the right position. The shells have different shapes and sizes, but on all shells, an axis can be detected from which multiple round levels turn downwards. The position of the hole can differ from the top in the middle to the side several levels lower, and this position corresponds to the tone. When Carolis sees a shell, he knows by heart where the hole needs to be. However, to reach a perfect tuning, the hole needs to be adjusted by

57 For example, the notes do and mi are often played together. In the village of Amuhusu, these corresponding gongs are located on the upper left and on one place to the right on the lower row. The right stick hits the first, the left the second. However, in other villages, the second gong is located on the lower left and the first on one place to the right on the upper row, which affects the position of the arms.

58 The explanation about the *totobuang* is based on the interview with musician Jonas Siloo.

59 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

making it slightly bigger or smaller.⁶⁰ A small *tuhuri* has a higher tone than a large *tahuri*. Carolis managed to create two full diatonic octaves. Since each shell only produces one tone, he collected many shells (from tiny to very large) and made holes inside them so that the range would increase. Carolis also introduced an innovation, that consists of two holes inside one *tahuri*. When one hole is closed, a half-tone is produced.

The playing technique of the *tahuri* is similar to the trumpet. One has to press pursed lips together, blowing in a 'puhpuhpuh' manner. A bigger *tahuri* needs more air and, therefore, more stamina and abdominal power. The largest type of *tahuri* functions like a tuba: one has to blow from the stomach, with full round cheeks. The sound of the *tahuri* is deep, far-reaching, and echoing.⁶¹

Suling

The *suling* bamboo flute occupies a special position within the field of Moluccan traditional instruments, because the flute never belonged to an *adat* context, but rather originated in a church context. The missionary Josef Kam introduced the *suling bambu* as a local instrument to accompany congregational singing.⁶² Whereas in former times, an ethnic vertical bamboo flute existed, the *suling* is played horizontally and has a diatonic Western scale.⁶³ In this way, the *suling* bears resemblance to the traverse flute. However, the fingering is slightly different, although the technique of blowing is the same. The *suling* is played with the index, middle, and ring finger of both hands and has a relatively small range.⁶⁴ There are five *suling* voices or factions: the smaller and thinner, the higher; the bigger and thicker, the lower. During the research, I was invited to stay over in the home of Rence Alphons (leader and conductor of the Moluccan Bamboo Orchestra and *suling* expert) for one weekend, to learn about how the *suling* is made.

One early Saturday morning, on a day in December, I travelled to Tuni again. Together with two friends of Rence and his son, I walked straight into the green jungle. In a row, we climbed and descended the mountainous and slippery path. It took some effort to keep up with the speed of

60 A bamboo flute is used to check the tuning.

61 The explanation about the *tahuri* is based on the interview with Carolis Elias Horhoruw, leader of a *tahuri* children music group (December 19, 2019, Hutumuri).

62 The Moluccas do not have a metal tradition (*logam*).

63 The vertical flute had only five tones.

64 In comparison, for the traverse flute, one uses more fingers, including the thumb on the bottom side of the flute and the palm below the index finger.

these skilled men, who were used to the terrain. With a stick in my hand, I followed their steps and their machetes glinting in the sun. It was a powerful feeling. In the vibrating heat, surrounded by the sounds of nature, I enjoyed the intense green view. When we heard distant sounds from a solitary house amidst the leaves, one of the members of our group yodeled in the Moluccan communication style to greet across large distances. On our way, we came across a hut where the local alcoholic drink *sopi* is made. Two men carried bins that hung on a wooden trunk over their shoulders. After some time, when the vegetation grew denser, we found a good spot to cut the bamboo. The size and thickness of the bamboo trees needed to correspond to the required *suling* factions. In the blink of an eye, the men disappeared in the green mass. When I glanced into the trees, it appeared that they were cutting long bamboo sticks, many meters lower than from the place where I was standing. There are multiple types of bamboo. *Suling* factions one to four need a thick (*tebal*) kind of bamboo, called *tui*, whereas faction five needs a thinner kind, called *sero*.⁶⁵ The sticks were brought to the path, where they were cut into equal pieces – the length approximately correlating with the faction. With one hand holding the stick upward, turning it towards him, the man chopped small notches into the bamboo until a perfect round was made and the stick broke into similar-sized flutes-in-the-making. I felt the richness and closeness of Moluccan nature. Within a short time, we collected an astonishing amount of bamboo. The sticks were bound together in two bundles, firmly held together by a stripped plant stem. Then, we headed home. With small drops of sweat dripping from my face and back, I happily saved this unique anthropological moment in my memory.

When we arrived at Rence's house, we brought the bamboo to his workshop. Rence's workshop is an open, wooden space with countless nails on the wall from which *suling* flutes are hanging. First, the bamboo sticks need to be dried in a former bread oven – 200 degrees – for two hours. The necessity of this was made clear to me during our trip, when a jet of water flowed from the cut bamboo. After the drying process, a template or mold of a perfectly tuned *suling* is used.⁶⁶ On the basis of this mold, a

65 There is a third type, called *tapir*. However, this type does not grow on Ambon, only on Seram. It has a very high quality: higher tones remain good, stable, and soft.

66 To make the mold, an enormous amount of bamboo is needed. Rence had to drill the holes and test the tuning. If the tone was not right, he needed a new piece of bamboo. This process continued until the tuning was good. Rence had to repeat this tuning process for all *suling* factions.

pencil line is drawn, and the blowhole is indicated. With a professional, fixed drill on the workbench, a hole (*lubang*) is made through one side of the cylinder.⁶⁷ After sanding the hole from the inside with sandpaper connected to a hand drill, the tuning can begin. Factions one, two, three, and five have the basic tone 'G' (which means that when all holes are closed or when there are no holes, the tone G sounds), and faction four is based on the 'D'.⁶⁸

G	A	B	C	D	E	F sharp	G
D	E	F sharp	G	A	B	C	D

*The tones of the *suling*: left means all holes open, and right means all holes closed.

With the use of an electronic tuner on a phone, placed in a holder on the workbench, the stick is cut shorter until this basic tone is reached. Subsequently, a piece of sago is cut, formed into a circle, and hammered inside the *suling* – one centimeter from the top, which prevents the air from coming out of this side and which creates a resonance space.⁶⁹ Then, the mold can again be applied to determine the position of the six finger holes, which, subsequently, are drilled in one go. Only the size of the drill needs to be changed several times, as a larger hole produces a lower sound and a smaller hole a higher sound.⁷⁰ In this process, one needs to measure from the bottom. Moreover, the sticks do not need to be as long as the mold, but they have to be put alongside the mold from the bottom. Also, the length is less important than thickness. Faction two can be even shorter, though lower, than faction one. *Suling* faction one can play one octave and five tones, factions two and three can play one octave and two tones, and factions four

67 In former times, the traditional way of making *suling* started with drying the bamboo tube in the sun (the effect of which is never perfect) and by making a hole with hot iron. However, the heat prevented a stable tone, because the tone would change after the bamboo had cooled down. Moreover, the human ear is not as precise and does not have such an elaborate range as a tuner. This is why, in 2005, Rence Alphons started to use a tuner, oven, and drill. The drill comes from Austria, because these drills are of better quality than Indonesian drills.

68 Between the first three and last three holes, an extra tiny hole can be added to faction four, which produces the tone 'F sharp' – a discovery Rence made in 2016. Interestingly, although the basic tone of faction five is G, one needs to tune tone E when making this *suling*.

69 Different types of sago exist: the '*tuni*' kind is quite soft, and the '*ihur*' is stronger and, thus, better.

70 The drill sizes for *suling* faction one were 997886.

and five reach exactly one octave.⁷¹ When the *suling* is finished, the flute is cleaned and sanded.

In comparison with factions one to four, the playing technique of the fifth faction is very distinct. Instead of horizontally, the fifth is played vertically. This *suling* has no finger holes, is cut diagonally at the end, and is placed in a hollow, second bamboo tube that is closed at the bottom. Similar to the trombone, tones are produced through positioning and moving the tube over the *suling* by feel: the more inside, the lower – the more out (even to the point of a slanting position), the higher. In my experience, the fifth faction makes a deep, full sound. The movements that the musicians make are powerful and dance-like. Their arms and bodies move in opposite directions, away from each other or towards each other, which creates a large, unique, shaking motion.⁷²

Nowadays, the *suling* is rarely played in church, especially as the popularity of the trumpet increased. The trumpet is generally viewed as a modern instrument. Nevertheless, I visited a traditional music group where, in addition to traditional Moluccan instruments, children also learned how to play the trumpet. In practice, the boundaries are not as clear as they might seem.

Ukulele

Originally, the ukulele comes from Portugal and was brought to the Moluccas by the Portuguese.⁷³ The ukulele became immensely popular because of its instrumental role in two styles of music: Hawaiian and *kroncong*. The ukulele is a diatonic, melodic, and harmonic instrument. The instrument has four strings and comprises three factions: the bigger the ukulele, the lower. Despite the universality of the instrument, the traditional character of the ukulele is formed by the Moluccan name that people use for the instrument, *juk*, and by the specific Moluccan way of playing called *rofol*, which is quite loud and energetic. Interestingly, *Maluku* is regarded as the

71 When lifting one finger, beginning from the bottom, the tone becomes higher with one step. To reach the second G, one octave higher, one has to close all holes except the one on top. Faction one can make four tones more. When counting the holes from the top, the fingering is as follows: 1256: A; 12346: B; 1236: C; 12356: D. Actually, the *suling* can reach more octaves, because, when blowing softer or harder, one can go up or down one octave. However, when, for example, faction one blows softly, it reaches the same octave as the lower faction two, which is not useful in an orchestra arrangement.

72 The explanation about the *suling bambu* is based on participant observation in the weekend of December 14–5, 2019, and on informal conversations with Rence Alphons.

73 Some people say that, before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Moluccans had their own type of ukulele, which was made of coconut.

ukulele province of Indonesia, which was partly the result of the adoption of the ukulele in schools, and the fact that both Christian and Islamic children learn to play the instrument.⁷⁴

Rebana

The *rebana* is a frame drum and has a strong Middle-Eastern influence.⁷⁵ In the Moluccas, the *rebana* is associated with Islam and is mainly played by Muslims, because the instrument accompanies religious ceremonies. Often, the frame drum is played to accompany the *sawat* and *hadrat* dance (Tamaela 2015, 50). The type of dance correlates with the size of the *rebana*: a larger *rebana* is used for *sawat* than for *hadrat*. The *rebana* is made from the same materials as the *tifa*. However, the *rebana* has a completely different resonance, because the instrument is much wider and flatter. Sometimes, metal disks are incorporated in the rim, much like a tambourine. The *rebana* is played by hitting the edge or middle of the membrane. The *rebana* is hit quite hard and the power of this movement is reflected on people's tense faces. The *rebana* is drummed in groups. All musicians play different rhythms (i.e. polyrhythmically) and stand close to each other in a circle, facing each other, to be able to hear the rhythms well, in order that the musicians maintain the tempo.

Singing and Songs

Apart from traditional Moluccan instruments, I also address traditional songs and a typical way of singing.

Kapata

Kapata is a native Moluccan singing style that sounds like a melodic recitation, somewhere in between speaking and singing. Across the Moluccas, people practice *kapata*. According to Chris Tamaela (2015, 46), *kapata* means 'to lift our voices in communication.' Originally, *kapata* is a way to converse with the ancestors, to pass on messages during *adat* rituals, and to tell stories of the past. Moreover, *kapata* is used to accompany certain dances, such as the

74 The explanation about the ukulele is based on an interview with Nico Tulalessy, musician and leader of a children music group in Amahusu (November 25, 2019, Ambon).

75 Nevertheless, Rasmussen (2010, 158) states that despite "*rebana* rhythms, characterized by tight, interlocking patterns performed by anywhere from three to twenty players, have been mistaken by observers as derivative of Arabic practice, perhaps due to the similarity of the *rebana* in shape (but not in materials) to frame drums found throughout the Middle East [...] and to the pairing of *rebana* drumming with Arabic language songs," the instruments and the various ways in which they are played are completely indigenous to Indonesia.

cakalele. *Kapata* are sung in native languages and, thus, can be found wherever these languages are still spoken. Often, the words are so ancient or sacred that most people no longer know what they mean. Most *kapata* have the same basic set of notes on a pentatonic scale or on a scale with less than five notes. In addition, *kapata* are enlivened by decorative or grace notes, called *not bunga* (a floral note in Indonesian). *Kapata* songs communicate different messages, such as teachings, advice, warnings, taboos, praises, thanksgiving, and more. All *kapata* are related to rituals and cultural events (Tamaela 2015, 46). Essentially, *kapata* is an oral form of recording history. For instance, there are *kapata* about the ancestors' life, about Moluccan culture and civilization, and also about the Dutch colonial period or the Japanese occupation. Through *kapata*, historical narratives are stored, preserved, and transmitted.

Songs

Songs that are seen as traditional fall under a broader category than *kapata* alone. Whereas *kapata* is a unique, ethnic, and sacred type of singing, traditional songs (*lagu-lagu*) are generally diatonic. The central characteristic through which traditional songs can be distinguished (for instance, from pop songs, which are usually about love and are perceived as part of modern life) is the topics of these songs. Common themes are related to Moluccan culture, such as life in the past, 'the good days,' the birthplace of people, nostalgia, the love for one's mother, the environment, peace, or hardships. For instance, the song '*Beta berlayar jauh*' is about traveling far from home and not coming back for a long time. '*Io io*' is about the preparation for war, '*Mama bakar sagu*' is about the love for a mother or the love of a mother for her children, and '*Nusa niwe*' is a song-story about Ambon. The most popular theme of traditional Moluccan songs is brotherhood, called *gandong*.

Language is another characteristic of traditional Moluccan songs. Frequently, the songs are sung in the Ambonese dialect (sometimes in native languages). The songs have already existed for a long time, but are constantly innovated by different people. Nevertheless, according to an informant, the basic traditional ingredients have stayed the same.

Traditional Music Styles

In addition to traditional instruments and songs, I discuss two traditional music styles.

Kroncong

Kroncong music is produced by a group of string instruments. A *kroncong* ensemble usually consists of the ukulele, flute, double bass, guitar, violin,

cello, and a vocalist. Although many people believe that *kroncong* is a music style that originally came from Java, all the Moluccans whom I spoke to contested this official story. In their eyes, the Portuguese, who influenced the *kroncong* style, arrived in Ambon first. For the Moluccan people, this history proves that *kroncong* moved from the Moluccas to Java.⁷⁶

Hawaiian Style

Hawaiian music is a very popular music style on the Moluccas. A Hawaiian group consists of several instruments, the most important of which is the steel guitar.⁷⁷ In the Moluccas, there is an ongoing discussion about where Hawaiian music originally came from. Although the name implies Hawaii, some Moluccans stated that Hawaii merely had the media to make the type of music well-known.

Hawaiian music should be seen as a Pacific, regional style. In addition, each place has its own Hawaiian musical characteristics. The style in Hawaii is relaxed, with loose tones that glide in a slow, happy, and free manner. In the Moluccas, the style is louder and more energetic. From the 1930s onward, Moluccan artists made Hawaiian music popular in *Maluku*. Nowadays, many Hawaiian music events, festivals, and even national competitions are organized.⁷⁸

Traditional Music Groups

The preservation of Moluccan traditional music and the ethnic revival is not only taking place within the GPM, but also among musicians in a broader societal context. An example of this revival is music groups, where Moluccan children learn how to play traditional instruments for purposes of regeneration. I discuss five different musicians and their music groups to show how this process of regeneration works, and to explain which educational and social roles these groups serve.

76 Much more academic literature about *kroncong* music has been published. I merely mention the music styles, and present Moluccan people's ideas about this style in relation to their notion of Moluccan traditional music. In other words, this is not an objective musicological account, but rather a presentation of Moluccan people's perspectives of specific music styles.

77 In former times, when the steel guitar did not yet exist, people used an acoustic guitar. The ukulele is also used, but not as the main instrument.

78 For more information about Moluccan music styles, see the parts about Indonesia in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (1998) or the online *Grove Dictionary of Music*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42890> (Libin 2014; Sadie, Grove, and Tyrrell 2001).

Tahuri Group

Carolis Elias Horhoruw is the leader of a *tahuri* group in Hutumuri. Carolis may be an older man but he is one of the most active figures among local Moluccan musicians. Carolis is an autodidact. He was educated in music, not by attending a school but through his family, which passed on musical knowledge. Carolis himself sees his musical talent as a gift and power of God – a talent that he, therefore, needs to use. Carolis' music group was established in the 1950s by his father.⁷⁹ The group started with twelve people. Carolis took over in 1978. Now, the group consists of more than sixty children. Generally, children can start playing from the age of eleven. The children motivate each other to learn, hereby preserving the music of this ethnic tradition.

Carolis explained his teaching methods to me. The first time the children attend the group, Carolis asks them to run up the hill next to his house, up to ten times. Standing halfway up, Carolis listens to the children breathing. On this basis, Carolis decides which tone and, thus, which *tahuri*, a child can play. For a large *tahuri*, a child needs stamina and muscles. Carolis also employs other methods to determine which *tahuri* a child can play, e.g. getting them to lie on their back with legs in the air or to stand bent over.

Carolis' music group plays a variety of traditional (but diatonic) songs – local, national, or spiritual. The children perform during village events, ceremonies, or other activities.⁸⁰ The group also plays in church.⁸¹

Tifa Totobuang Group

Jonas Silooy is the leader of a *tifa totobuang* group in Amahusu. As a small child, Jonas learned how to play traditional instruments from his father, who also learned to play the music from his father, and so on. Jonas said: "I also wanted to learn, so that the traditional music that we have will not disappear. From my grandfather, it passes down to my father, to me, and also to my children, and to other children too."⁸² For thirteen generations,

79 Carolis told me the origin story of the music group. The third governor of Ambon came to Hutumuri and he met the village king. The *tahuri* was used to communicate across the Moluccan mountains. Different levels of height corresponded to the different sounds of the *tahuri*. However, at that moment, when the governor was present, apparently no people were present at the place where the response sounds came from. This experience was interpreted as a sign from the ancestors. The governor then decided to develop the ethnic Moluccan *tahuri* music by establishing a music group, of which Carolis' father became the leader.

80 For example, on Indonesian National Day. Moreover, this music group also performed in an international collaboration with Spanish children who played the violin.

81 This explanation is based on the interview with Carolis Elias Horhoruw.

82 Interview with Jonas Silooy. Translation by the author.

this music has been regenerated in Jonas' family. In 2005, Jonas took over the music group from his father.⁸³

Jonas has a workshop next to his house, which is located in a beautiful place by the sea. Jonas has different groups (with the age of the children ranging from primary school to young adults). All children are from Amahusu. In total, 200 children are being taught how to play the *tifa* and *totobuang*, as well as how to dance many traditional dances. Jonas said that the children want to learn how to play music in order to distract them from technological gadgets. Children see their learning as a way to strengthen traditional music through their knowledge about the instruments. They can play the different rhythms of the instruments as well.

Jonas teaches by showing. First, he plays himself and the students watch, then they imitate and memorize. This method resembles those of Jonas' father. The group often performs together with Islamic children who play the *rebana*. The collaboration functions as a tool of peace and reconciliation (in relation to the religious conflict in the past). The Christian and Islamic children also learn how to play each other's instruments.⁸⁴ Jonas' group makes music during many events in the village, city, province, country, or even in other countries. The group has travelled a lot and is internationally known. The type of event determines the music that will be played, which can be traditional, modern, local, national, popular, or religious. Jonas' music group also plays in church often.⁸⁵

Ukulele Group

Nico Tulalessy is the leader of a ukulele group in Amahusu. Nico did not have an easy childhood, and, in this context, he learned to play the ukulele. Nico knows Jonas Silooy well, because Nico played in the music group of Jonas' father, thus illustrating how, in a specific place, a music community is built through generations and family connections.

Nico established his music group, because he wanted to teach many children how to play the ukulele. Nico hopes that when the children play music, they will make less use of electronic gadgets, which, according to Nico, are dangerous devices. Furthermore, Nico wants to preserve the instrument and, accordingly, Moluccan culture.⁸⁶ Nico's group consists

83 Chris Tamaela worked closely with Jonas' father.

84 This idea is a governmental program to promote peace.

85 This explanation is based on the interview with Jonas Silooy.

86 Initially, the group only had cheap, poor-quality ukuleles. Then, Nico applied for funding and better instruments were donated.

of children from various villages and from a variety of religious and social backgrounds.⁸⁷ Although most children are Protestant, some children are Catholic or Muslim. By playing the same instrument together, the children learn about religious tolerance and social values. Nico's group practices outside, in an open building that stands on poles above the sea. The almost one hundred children of various ages sit or stand in rows and play their colored ukuleles.⁸⁸ Behind them, the setting sun and the boats lying on the beach create a beautiful view.

Nico's teaching method starts with playing various chords. Subsequently, the children learn the rhythm. Only in the end are they allowed to sing while playing. Naturally, some children have a better musical feel than others, and the very little ones only play one note according to the rhythm. The older, more skilled children can already play many different chords. The rehearsal always begins (after Nico is done tuning the ukuleles) with an individual prayer. With their eyes closed, the children stand next to each other, embracing their ukulele in front of their chest. Generally, the children start to play one note, repeatedly and rapidly, after which the song begins. Then, a sequence of chords sounds, all in the same rhythm throughout the song, while the children sing along. The music is interspersed with chaos, running, screaming, noisiness, and little arguments between the children. Nevertheless, Nico has great didactic skills and is able to capture and hold the children's attention.⁸⁹

Apart from music, Nico teaches the children equality, friendliness discipline, performance skills, and self-confidence. His 'Amboina ukulele kids' community plays a diversity of music, from songs that Nico composed himself to traditional songs, jazz, blues, reggae, Spanish songs, slow rock, and more.⁹⁰ The group performs at many music events, but also during events that are commissioned by the government. However, apart from official performances, the group also plays out of social initiative. For example,

87 Both the children of government officials and those from very poor families play in Nico's music group.

88 Nico's ukulele group started with eight children.

89 Sometimes, the group of students is allowed to scream answers in response to something being asked of them, so that they can release their energy. After the outburst, they know they have to listen to Nico. Also, when a new child joins the group, he/she has to stand at the front and say his/her name, after which the group repeats the name. With this ritual, they welcome the student to the group.

90 An example of one of Nico's own songs is '*Laut kaya Maluku*,' which is about the sea in the Moluccas, which is very rich with fish, and about *Maluku* being a beautiful place. Other songs that the group played (when I visited) were: '*Bulan pake (pakai) paying*'; '*E Tanase*'; and 'Can't help falling in love.'

after the earthquake in September 2019, the children group played in order to strengthen victims by means of musical trauma healing. The group also played during Ramadan, in order to support its 'Islamic brothers.' About these initiatives, Nico said: "With little money, you can create and do something big! [...] You have to have a good idea, work hard, be creative and love what you do."⁹¹ Sometimes, the group plays in churches, as part of a more creative or ethnic service. The ukulele, thus, can be used to praise God, and Nico also writes songs for this purpose. In Nico's experience, the children are always very proud to play in church.

For Nico, the ukulele is a real Moluccan instrument. His group is internationally known and has been set up without government plans or money. Nico's group is popular and was established from within the local community.⁹²

Suling Group

Rence Alphons is the leader of the *suling* orchestra (MBO) in Tuni. Rence sees the *suling* as one aspect of cultural identity. He said: "I am from the Moluccas, and what do the Moluccas have? I answer we have music. I have the *suling bambu*. [...] That's why I am interested in the *suling* and why I develop the *suling*."⁹³ For Rence, *suling* music is in his heart.

Rence established his group in 2005. The adventure started with the mayor, who asked Rence to perform traditional music at a celebration of Ambon City's anniversary. Together with a group of thirty players, Rence presented the *suling bambu*. For many people, it had been a long time since they had heard the sound of the instrument. Because of the positive response that the players got, Rence decided to re-develop the instrument.

Rence's students are from Tuni and some surrounding villages. At first, children were less interested in the *suling*, because the instrument was only played in church. Also, the tones were never completely neat, and there was no harmony arrangement at that time. Rence started experimenting and learned how to make *suling* instruments that sounded better. He also arranged the flutes in different factions, based on Western harmony. Consequently, children became fascinated and wanted to play the *suling* outside the church. Since then, Rence's music group has been reviving the instrument.

91 Interview with Nico Tulalessy. Translation by the author.

92 This explanation is based on the interview with Nico Tulalessy and on participant observation, November 25, 2019, Amahusu.

93 Interview with Rence Alphons. Translation by the author.

Today, Rence's orchestra consists of more than sixty young people. Usually, Rence starts by teaching the children how to sit in the right position. They need to sit straight with the left leg forward in order to blow fully. Then, the students learn the blowing technique, after which they learn to read notes. This first process happens in one-to-one sessions. After that, a student can enter the orchestra. The students cannot choose their faction, because the size of the *suling* correlates with the size of the hands. The MBO plays pop music, local music, modern or international music, and classical music.⁹⁴

Traditional Music Group

Rolly Matahelumual is the leader of a traditional music group in the village of Tiouw on the island of Saparua. He established the group in 2016 and has his own workshop next to his house. Here, the children learn to play many Moluccan traditional instruments (for example, the ukulele, *tifa*, *tahuri*, etc.), except those made from bamboo or stones, as well as the *totobuang*, which is an expensive instrument to obtain.

Rolly is an autodidact, whose parents did not even play music. With his group, Rolly intends to help children and to change their way of thinking and doing, by giving them something creative to do. Furthermore, Rolly wants to preserve the traditional music culture that would otherwise disappear. The group consists of approximately twenty young children. Rolly brings in children from primary school, because after high school, generally, young people leave Saparua to go to Ambon. It is crucial, therefore, that children learn how to play Moluccan traditional instruments at a young age, as Rolly explained.

Rolly teaches techniques of playing, rhythm, and tempo by doing and imitating. Whereas some students enter the group with a natural talent and an existing musical hobby, others develop their talent in Rolly's workshop. The group only plays traditional songs. The students perform during ceremonies in Tiouw or when guests or tourists arrive. They do not yet play in church. Apart from music, the children also learn English in the workshop, and Rolly's wife teaches the children traditional dances.⁹⁵

Comparative Conclusions

Based on these stories about five musicians and their music groups, several comparisons can be made. Often, these leader-musicians are from musical families, in which knowledge and music-making is passed down from

94 This explanation is based on the interview with Rence Alphons.

95 This explanation is based on the interview with Rolly Matahelumual, musician and leader of a children music group in Tiouw, Saparua (December 6, 2019).

generation to generation. The musicians are usually autodidact, come from a humble background, and did not receive a higher musical education. Interestingly, the musicians that completed a music education have slightly different teaching methods and repertoires. Rence Alphons, for instance, teaches his students to read music in the Western notation, arranges compositions, and plays highly modern and Western music with his orchestra. In general, it seems that musicians who studied music and, for example, are teachers at music schools, are significantly influenced by Western music and especially enjoy these genres. In comparison, musicians from relatively lower strata of society, often further away from the city, teach traditional music based on oral transmission without addressing music theory. Nevertheless, all musicians play many traditional instruments, which have important meaning in their lives because this music is regarded as part of their identity. The music leaders organize their groups in local places, although children from outside their village sometimes also join.

The groups perform diverse songs during various events. Also, they often collaborate with musicians who play other instruments, both modern and traditional.⁹⁶ Strikingly, the reasons for establishing the groups are also similar. Although the musicians emphasized the idea that children cannot be forced to play traditional music, the musicians use their groups to promote, develop, and preserve traditional Moluccan instruments. The goal is to prevent the annihilation of Moluccan traditional music. Most importantly, these musicians have a significant impact on Moluccan society, through popularizing Moluccan music in the public sphere among a diverse range of young people.⁹⁷ The leader-musicians are part of the local communities and, thus, maintain a bottom-up approach. As such, they build traditional music from the grassroots – from their own initiative, ambition, perseverance, and drive. For this reason, the groups are successful and make a positive difference. Apart from stimulating traditional music, the musicians' groups also have social roles. Psychologically, for example, the musical activities make children happy and active, and decrease the influence of electronic gadgets. Children are taught social values, which, in turn, contributes to interreligious peace and reconciliation. During and after the conflict, music was, and continues to be, used as a support and bridging tool. Instruments that are mainly played by Christians, such as the *tifa*, *totobuang*, and ukulele (or trumpet), are combined with instruments that are mainly played by

96 For example, I once attended a performance with a *tifa totobuang* group who played together with a brass orchestra.

97 For instance, in contemporary times, more girls play traditional music.

Muslims, like the *rebana*.⁹⁸ Moreover, Christians and Muslims have started to learn each other's instruments, both at school and in music groups.⁹⁹

Popular Music, Church, and Politics

The stimulation of Moluccan traditional music is embedded in larger political structures, as well as in the broader category of popular music in Ambon. A prominent example is the Ambon Music Office (AMO), an organization established in 2016 to work towards the goal of making Ambon a 'City of Music' on the UNESCO list of the 'Creative Cities Network'.¹⁰⁰ The idea to start this process originated in 2011, as an initiative of the mayor and the local government. Consequently, AMO was founded and tasked with developing a strategy for turning Ambon into a *kota music dunia*, a music city of the world. Working together with the local government, AMO organized events and conferences, met with other representatives of music cities, and applied for UNESCO recognition in June 2019.

The ambition to become a city of music is based on the idea that Moluccans have high musical intuition. In AMO's vision, Moluccans live with music from before they are born until after they have died. Music pervades almost all aspects and places of daily Moluccan life. Ambon accommodates many types of music, has a thriving popular music scene, and several famous Indonesian singers originate from Ambon.¹⁰¹ A popular saying

98 There are historical reasons why some instruments are played by Christians and others by Muslims. The ukulele became associated with Christianity because, originally, the ukulele is a European instrument. Although the *totobuang* is similar to the instrument in the Javanese gamelan ensemble, the Christians adapted the Javanese version, so that the *totobuang* could play Christian hymns. The *suling*, by definition, is a Christian instrument, since the bamboo flute was developed to accompany Christian congregational singing. The *rebana* is an Islamic instrument, because the frame drum has been influenced by the music traditions of the Middle East. The *rebana* is also used in Islamic religious ceremonies. Both Christian and Muslim communities have the *tifa*, but only Muslims use the *tifa* in *adat* ceremonies. Moluccan Muslims do not have *tifa totobuang* groups, but they have *hadrat* and *sawat* groups, which are also related to specific dances. In general, music that has been influenced by the West and is characterized by the diatonic scale is prohibited in Islam. Thus, in Islamic environments, music that is a product of Western Christianity is not allowed.

99 The collaboration goes one step further in Nico's group, because the different instruments are not combined; rather, children from various religious backgrounds play the same instrument together.

100 Other fields include crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, and media arts.

101 One of the people who works for AMO sketched the Ambonese popular music scene. In his opinion, Ambon has long been dominated by the so-called pop *lagu daerah*: cheesy, but very popular songs about love that have been around since the 1970s. However, since approximately

among Ambonese citizens is that although one is poor, one certainly is happy because he or she makes music. AMO highlighted music as a tool of peace and conflict reconciliation, a 'unique point of branding,' related to the specific Moluccan history of the religious conflict. Moreover, AMO brought Ambonese music in line with the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), of which number eleven is the most important in this respect: music, as part of the creative economy, has the potential to contribute to city and community development. AMO's vision is to move from music as a hobby to music as a creative industry, and to incorporate Ambon in a global music network. AMO facilitates the community from below, so that Moluccan people themselves can develop their music.

The current effects of AMO's vision are the music events that take place in the city, the building of a professional music studio, and the existence of cafés that offer space for live music.¹⁰² Traditional or ethnic Moluccan music is one genre forming the focus of stimulation, especially because this is the unique 'selling point' of music in Ambon that cannot be found elsewhere. In this light, within the UNESCO framework, Moluccan traditional music is encapsulated as heritage that needs to be preserved because it is part of Moluccan identity. In October 2019, Ambon officially became a UNESCO music city of the world.¹⁰³

To achieve this goal, AMO has been working with local partners and organizations, musicians, the local government, and the church. In this way, the UNESCO 'heritage regime' regarding traditional music traveled across many contexts and people.¹⁰⁴ In other words, 'heritage' has become a central discursive term in relation to Moluccan traditional music culture. The preservation of traditional music and the related local wisdom is mainly aimed at children. On the one hand, children are seen as the ones who are most influenced by outside forces, as they grow up in a globalized world. On the other hand, children are also the hope of the future regarding the

2006, young musicians have started to play different types of music, like hip-hop, jazz, rock, alternative music, and folk. AMO wants to provide more space for these musicians to make their music, which will help to develop a more diverse music industry.

102 Examples are workshops, conferences, concerts, and festivals (such as the 'Amboina international bamboo music festival'). Moreover, Ambon has a Vocational High School with a music department, as well as a specialized music education on the campus of the Christian Religion Institute (IAKN) and the Islamic Music Study Program on the campus of the State Islamic Institute (IAIN).

103 The explanation about AMO is based on the interview with Ronny Loppies, director of AMO (November 20, 2019). Mark Ufie and Pierre Ajawaila are also involved in the organization of AMO.

104 Cultural collectives are increasingly versed in heritage vocabularies – in the literature often referred to as 'heritage regime.' See, for example, Meyer & Van de Port (2018).

preservation of musical traditions. Through the Ministry of Education in Jakarta and the regulations that were introduced by the local government, traditional music became part of the curriculum of Moluccan primary and middle schools.¹⁰⁵ For example, Moluccan children learn how to play the *suling* and ukulele in class (instruments that, according to many Moluccans, form part of Moluccan identity) and also participate in workshops that are taught by professionals.¹⁰⁶ As such, Moluccan children get acquainted with different types of Moluccan music.¹⁰⁷

Politicians are visibly involved in the promotion of traditional music. The local and even national governments commission performances of traditional Moluccan music, which allows traditional music groups to travel to and play their music in a variety of local, regional, national, and international settings. In turn, when a music event is organized somewhere in Ambon City, a delegation of local politicians is always present to demonstrate their support and involvement. For example, I attended an art show, performed by many different school classes in the ecumenic *baileo*, next to the Maranatha church. Representatives from the local government, including the mayor who opened the event, and representatives from AMO were part of the audience. All school children wore a beautiful diversity of native costumes, and the groups performed on stage. Most of the instruments that the children used consisted of *suling*, although the *tifa*, *tahuri*, *totobuang*, and some other instruments were also played. There was one group with violins, which were called ‘modern instruments.’ A couple of classes performed a dance, such as the *tari tifa* and the *tari tifar mayang* (the children danced with a stick with calabash fruit). Moreover, several groups sang local traditional songs, and others sang national traditional songs.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, a local/national distinction of layers of the so-called *lagu-lagu*, the popular traditional songs, became apparent. As Barendregt (2014, 31) states: “Popular music, then, frequently acts as a tool to sanction new modern and nationalist culture, but at the same time its values are challenged through the very same popular songs that serve as a vehicle for

105 Other, related programs are all aimed at the stimulation of Moluccan traditional music among young Moluccan people.

106 In former times, children also learned to play *suling* at school. Hence, the *suling* class is being revived.

107 Young, creative artists who are part of Ambon’s music scene visit schools to teach music to children. This program is called ‘GSMS’: *gerakkan seniman masuk sekolah* (the movement of artists entering schools).

108 For instance, the popular national song *Tanah airku or Indonesia pusaka, Pancasila rumah kita*. Participant Observation, December 16, 2019, Ambon.

yet other, alternative forms of belonging.” I recognized this “hybridization of the local unique and the cosmopolitan modern” (Barendregt 2014, 31) during the Ambonese music event, where local Moluccan expressions of music, clothing, and dance were combined with modern and national expressions of the same kind.

The Role of the Church

The Moluccan Protestant church is a partner in the promotion of Moluccan traditional music.¹⁰⁹ Although the church’s motivation derives from a theological perspective, the GPM policy aligns with political and musical motivations.¹¹⁰ The establishment of the ethnic service (of which music forms part) is seen as a positive contribution – from the perspective of AMO – to help and strengthen the ambition to preserve traditional music. The church can play an important role, since religious activities constitute a central part of Moluccan Christians’ lives and, therefore, can influence musical experiences, mindsets, and practices. In this respect, many musicians themselves also regard the role of the church as something positive.

Occasionally, traditional music groups are invited to accompany the church service. The children and musicians who form part of these groups enjoy the religious role that they can play, and stated that they receive satisfying responses from the congregants. Most of the musicians whom I spoke to, therefore, are of the opinion that the GPM and the ethnic service can help to further develop traditional music. The official, convincing, and powerful position that the GPM occupies among Moluccan Christians makes the church a promising partner from which traditional music can spread to a diversity of contexts. Thus, according to many creative Moluccans, the GPM’s ethnic service can help to increase the feeling of Moluccanness, since music is a question of identity.

Other Moluccan musicians think that the church will not play a decisive role in the further development of traditional music in Ambon. These people believe that such a development will happen either way. Nevertheless, the church is still seen as one of the places where this music can flourish. However, some musicians do not view the GPM as a partner in the project of promoting Moluccan music, and even expressed criticism on the GPM’s music policy. This criticism mainly takes place on the level of GPM music

109 For example, one of UKIM’s teachers, who is an expert on traditional music and works for the GPM to develop the ethnic service, works together with AMO.

110 In Chapter 7, I present more detailed information about the practice of traditional church music.

in general and is about quality, rules, money, the NJGPM (*Nyanyian GPM*) songbook, and terminology. I discuss the points of criticism of this group below.

Reasons for Musical Criticism

Firstly, according to certain musicians, the GPM does not yet have a serious attitude or structural approach towards church music. Although contextualization is a popular idea within the GPM, these musicians think that the idea is not yet well translated into practice.¹¹¹ Furthermore, church music is severely influenced by popular, modern trends, which results in unilateral, simple, echoing keyboard music. In many GPM churches, no 'real' traditional music (from these musicians' critical perspective) is played. Some people also stated that church music is not fully incorporated in the church service. A musician said that the current liturgical structure only has a horizontal function of music, whereas the purpose and power of church music is to connect with and deliver a religious message in a vertical communication with God. In short, this group thinks that the GPM underestimates the central role of music in worship as part of their project of contextualization.

Secondly, quality is an important issue. In the eyes of these musicians, the problematic socialization and implementation of traditional church songs and music are caused by poor preparation. For instance, seen from these critical positions, choirs practice too little and too late, the music notation is not presented during the rehearsal of a new song in the congregation, and the musical liturgy is determined rather close to the actual Sunday service. Moreover, the team that is responsible for organizing the church music often does not have the capability or creativity to set up this traditional church music in the 'right, full' contextual way, because such teams often lack musical knowledge.¹¹²

Although these statements reflect the opinions of individual musicians, in church, I had several empirical experiences that corresponded with what these musicians had said.¹¹³ The majority of church services is indeed ac-

111 A musician whom I spoke to even said that, in practice, the GPM functions along the lines of a colonial theology, thus referencing the rules and dogmas that he believes have stayed in place since colonial times.

112 Therefore, minister Jacky Manuputty said that, ideally, a permanent group would support the musical liturgy. This group would have experience of and knowledge about these musical contextual matters, by approaching church music in a holistic way.

113 However, this does not mean that these musicians' critical statements are necessarily true, because other experiences may contradict what the musicians said. For example, the quality of the church music was often exceptionally high (although this church music was not traditional).

accompanied by a single keyboard. Furthermore, the tuning between different musical parts is not always in balance. For example, one section sometimes drowns out the other, and microphones can be too loud or too soft. In this sense, quality depends on place, capability, and organization.

Thirdly, the ethnic service is the most obvious framework for traditional church music, but the word 'ethnic' causes confusion in relation to the mix of music that is often used. For this critical group of professional musicians, ethnic means truly indigenous or native, which, in their eyes, does not correlate with the reality in church. Modern, electronic instruments and the Indonesian language are mixed with other elements, which, together, are called 'ethnic' – a combination that these musicians do not understand. From the perspective of one specific musician, the church had not yet developed a feeling of love for traditional music and for instruments that are made of Moluccan materials. The GPM should coordinate the facilitation of such a feeling. Thus, according to some critical musicians, with respect to church music, the 'ethnic' part of the ethnic service is not a clear concept.

Also, some musicians feel that particular ethnic elements are deliberately not used in church, such as *kapata*. To these people, the absence of such forms is not understandable because *kapata*, eminently, is a typical native cultural form that could function as a form of prayer or as a medium to praise God. However, seen from a critical perspective, the GPM does not invest in information, collaboration, and preparation to work with *kapata* as a religious source of Moluccanness. Hence, these musicians contest the boundaries and control that the GPM exercises over the process of Moluccan contextualization.

Fourthly, criticism was directed to political support and financial gain. The church has money available to implement the ethnic service in the fifth week of the month. Reading between the lines, it seemed that some musicians suspect religious-political alliances. A financial motivation to implement the ethnic service with traditional music arises from these alliances, rather than an intrinsic and sincere motivation.

Fifthly, the NJGPM, the hymnbook that is characterized as contextual and used in ethnic services, is actually regarded as non-contextual by some people. The book has been produced in a very short period of time, according to a tight schedule, and with a set hierarchy. Rather than a creative process, several musicians, therefore, see the NJGPM as the product of a blueprint. According to the critics, a local song was picked, after which the text was removed, and a new Christian text was added. In their eyes, the context of the original song stays the same and is not fully worked with in the contextual

song, despite the fact that the music is being played in other places, such as the church. Also, this critical group thinks that only a small percentage of the songs in the NJGPM hymnbook is truly ethnic, whereas the rest is not.¹¹⁴

Some composers whom I spoke to stated that they created diatonic songs because this Western influence is more popular and, therefore, a better commercial choice. Some musicians even characterized the pentatonic scale (which is seen as ethnically Moluccan) as ‘weird.’ Also, in the NJGPM, Bible texts have literally been taken as lyrics, and one specific composer was not aware of the musicological meaning of ‘diatonic.’ She also did not identify a difference between the NJGPM and other songbooks in terms of contextuality.¹¹⁵

Lastly, criticism is focused on church rules, traditions, and dogmas. The prestigious role of the minister is an issue of contestation. For instance, some congregations do not allow music groups or choirs to perform with their face towards the congregation, as this is seen as disrespectful to the minister. However, in this way, the direction of sound is contrary to the quality of listening. Musician Nico Tulalessy firmly disagreed with this rule. He stated that the music is part of the congregational experience and directed at God, and God is not only present in front of the church.

Thus, traditional church music has to fight against long-standing rules, theologies, structures, and hierarchies. For some musicians, this means that the GPM is busy maintaining their doctrinal status quo, instead of developing traditional music in church.¹¹⁶

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114 For instance, many songs are diatonic, which, for some musicians, is the reason that they cannot call such a song ‘ethnic.’

115 Nevertheless, it should be noted that criticism of the NJGPM hymnbook is generally expressed by people who were not involved (and, thus, invited) as a composer of the hymnbook.

116 For example, the instrument *suling* is part of the identity of the Moluccan church, but the *suling* is not being re-developed by the GPM. Another point of criticism concerns the GPM’s wealth (e.g. the large church buildings). The system morally obliges people to give money to the church, according to the idea that God will give back to people. Through such a system, even very poor people donate their money to the church, which some people see as an unjust practice.

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7. The Ancestors, The Ethnic, The Ordinary: Traditional Church Music

Abstract: The ethnic service is the most important context for the implementation of traditional church music in the Moluccan Protestant church. Language use and heritage preservation play central roles regarding the development process, contestations, experiences, and the implementation of the ethnic service. Practical limitations and a historical semiotic ideology account for the current state of traditional church music. Capability, creativity, and resonances among the actors involved are key to the idea-to-practice process. Most congregants do not yet theologize a relation between the Protestant religion and Moluccan cultural identity. The spaces of culture and religion remain theologically separated while being practically related. The ancestors have been the mediators between Moluccan Protestantism, Moluccan culture, and traditional music. The ethnic service has the potential to bridge the theological idea and religious practice of traditional church music.

Keywords: Ethnic service; Congregational Music; Moluccan; Heritage; Language; Contextualization.

Wood.

This is the first word that comes to my mind when I think of the small church in Soya village. The rectangular nave forms the entire body of this narrow house of God. The inconspicuous building is located on the left of the road when driving from Ambon City into the green mountains. I visited the place twice. The first time to hear the *suling bambu* flutes that accompany worship here every week. The second time to complete my fieldwork by attending the Sunday service in one of the most beautiful churches I had ever been.

A pure and happy feeling of awe arises the moment I cross the threshold. The round shapes of the roof and the windows, the light entering the space, the resigned silence descending upon me – I feel peaceful. I sit down in one of the simple, tiny brown-wooden benches, my knees pressed against the next row. On both sides of the nave, thin, elegant columns carry the atmosphere.

The brilliant woodwork that characterizes this church is yellow-white combined with dark green. In front of me, I see the flowered altar, solemn lectern, and modest pulpit behind each other, crowned with a stained-glass Last Supper and surrounded by the higher, decorated compartments where the *raja*, village leaders, and *majelis* take their seats. Above me, I sense the majesty of the semi-circled roof made of white, long, wooden slats. Around me, I see the black and colored clothes of the men and women who, packed together in this cozy place, silently and patiently wait for the worship to begin. Behind me, I hear the high, sharp sounds of the many *suling* flutes, played by younger and older musicians who are positioned on the open balcony in the back of the church, demarcated by a wooden balustrade, framed with an organ. A short, almost straight staircase leads to this loft close under the ceiling, where innumerable *suling* players perfectly fit their instruments next to each other, blowing the tones over the heads of the congregants. I see a butterfly floating on subtle waves of air.

I smell the old wood.

We read the Bible text out loud. The taste of the mint candy that is given to me flavors the Word of God. The minister talks about the status of an abundance of faith, transforming us in the totality of our existence. We close our eyes, bend our heads, fold our hands, and pray. From all sides of the church, a gigantic choir assembles, standing in between the benches and facing the pulpit. Their polyphonic voices and musical range express a sacred, noble ambience. Together with a keyboard, the musicians play without notation. We sing from *Dua Sahabat Lama* without a projector. A moment of wonder flows through my being. The acoustics, the quality, the place. The power and volume of our chanting. The solemnity, the tranquility, the beauty. Everything is right, everything is in balance. I am immersed.

This was it. Like the ‘wow’ (Meyer 2016) or ‘the rest of what is’ (Van de Port 2010), I cannot describe what happened precisely or how I felt exactly. I just knew. The experience touched the core of what I was trying to understand. An assemblage of words, music, and atmosphere resulted in a spiritual feeling inside me, not in a religious sense per se, but definitely in a sense of love and beauty. Originally, the church in Soya is one of the oldest churches on Ambon island, although, unfortunately, the church once burnt down and was rebuilt in the same style. Soya is one of the few places on the Moluccas where, every week, a *suling* ensemble accompanies the congregational singing. This church is also the only place that I visited where people did not use electronic tools, such as a projector.

The first time that I came here, I sat in between the *suling* players on the balcony. Overwhelmed by the number of musicians, the small and low space, the techniques, and the sounds, I enjoyed the uniqueness of the service. The centrality of music was astonishing. The choirs consisted of almost half of the congregants that were present, including a large part of the *suling* ensemble. Moreover, the congregants themselves sang as if they were an immense choir – loud, with full conviction, and unparalleled quality. The music and singing was slow, serene, peaceful, majestic, and pretty. After attending countless worship services, I wished to finish my fieldwork in the church of Soya, together with my friends. The second time that I entered this special, beautiful place, I felt it again. The edges of the windows and doors were decorated for Christmas in a rare, sophisticated way. The keyboard sounded like an organ or piano, instead of an echoing synthesizer, and did not disturb the tranquility. I liked the accompaniment of the *suling*, which did not dominate but perfectly conformed with our singing voices. I also enjoyed the older songs of the DSL hymnbook (*Dua Sahabat Lama*). I noted that the acoustics, building, quality, and regeneration make a profound difference for the religious experience that one has. I could go along with the service and music, and I could feel.

At that moment, I began to reflect on why this happened to me in this particular situation. I realized that perhaps the atmosphere, the serenity, the music, and the songs came the closest to what my mind and body had remembered from attending (albeit seldomly) church in the Netherlands. In Soya, I no longer merely observed and appreciated the worship. I participated in the worship from my own being. I also realized that this personal context determines the core of religiosity. Religious knowledge acquisition (including theology), religious memories, and religious upbringing are stored deep inside a person, and connected to emotions and experiences. All this could well be the reason for the complicated process of contextual theology, as context is neither a unidirectional nor unambiguous idea, and

– certainly – not easy to change. Although it is possible to learn and speak about contextual theology in the same way as is being envisioned by UKIM (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku) and the GPM (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church), and to even enjoy contextualization in the church service, the question remains whether the practice of contextual theology will touch and transform ways of religious thinking and feeling – and whether this should be the goal.

This chapter addresses the last part of the journey from theology to lived religion. I discuss the practices, opinions, and attitudes concerning traditional church music, mainly through the process and implementation of the ethnic service. Central points that have formed the structure and argument of the book come together, such as heritage, language, music, and the ancestors. The chapter ends with the interconnectedness between Christianity, Moluccan culture, and church culture.

The Bamboo Bridge

The *suling*, as a Moluccan traditional instrument, occupies a special position in relation to the concept of ‘the traditional,’ the ethnic service, and church music. In Chapter 6, I addressed the original *adat* context of traditional instruments. However, the original context of the *suling* is the Moluccan Protestant church. For the longest time, the *suling* has been the prime instrument for the accompaniment of congregational singing. The *suling* was even created for this purpose. After the introduction of other instruments in church, such as the trumpet and keyboard, the popularity of the *suling* severely decreased. Nowadays, it is only played in a few congregations in Moluccan villages.

As I recounted at the beginning of this chapter, Soya is one of these villages. On the beautiful, tiny balcony, a large ensemble of young and old men, as well as a few young girls, play in the different *suling* factions – mostly the highest faction, although one lowest *suling* was played as well when I attended the service. Haria, on the island of Saparua, was another village where I encountered the *suling*. Haria has three churches that work with an interchanging schedule for musical accompaniment. In addition to the keyboard and trumpet, the churches also share a *suling* group. In the modest, old, small, rectangular church of Imanuel, beautifully located right next to the gray sea, I again experienced this Moluccan sound of worship in a melancholic atmosphere on a rainy day. This time, the group – mostly consisting of men of various ages – was smaller and sat together in the benches at the right in front. The musicians played rather slowly, with clear,

demarcated notes that sometimes did not fully reach the tone that was being sung by the congregants, as the range of the *suling* does not always correlate perfectly with the hymns.

The tradition of playing *suling* in church is confined to specific places, where a strong regeneration effort happens through the transmittance of instrument skills via family ties. In this way, people try to preserve this traditional instrument in church. The older, male musicians whom I talked to had begun to play the *suling* when they were a teenager. This meant that these musicians have been part of the *suling* ensemble for over fifty years. The musicians were taught to play the instrument at school and learned to play from their parents, who often played the *suling* in church themselves. As children, they sat next to their parents, thinking about the moment when they would also form part of the *suling* group. In continuation, the musicians' own children, and even the grandchildren, play together with them. For many musicians, the *suling* means Moluccan culture and identity. The meaning causes the feeling that it is important to preserve the instrument in the congregation. The *suling* has a unique sound that has been heard in church for generations, which is why it is seen as the Moluccan traditional instrument par excellence. The instrument was created by the Christian ancestors and is regarded as essential in guiding the worship. An informant said: "Because this is a traditional music instrument inherited from our ancestors or passed down from our ancestors, so we do not want to lose it."

Most Moluccans instantly associated traditional church music with the *suling*, because this instrument was developed for the Moluccan church and has been used within the church for the longest time. As part of the current political project of preservation, the *suling* moves from the church context to other contexts (of which the MBO (Moluccan Bamboo Orchestra) is an example). The broadening of the context of the *suling* results in different repertoires and interesting mixtures. Not only spiritual songs, but any kind of music can be played by the *suling*, which is one of the factors that contributes to the recent popularization of the *suling* among the Moluccan youth. For the other traditional instruments that I discussed, the direction is opposite. These traditional instruments, such as the *tifa* and *totobuang*, are not yet associated with church music, because they originated in an *adat* context. In stimulating traditional music, the church is one of the new contexts in which traditional instruments are popularized. In this light, traditional church music is part of a theological progressive innovation that aims to align Moluccan Protestantism with Moluccan (musical) culture and identity. The traditional instruments are conceptualized as cultural heritage and theologically transformed to be incorporated in liturgy. The

suling, on the other hand, is seen as religious heritage, which does not need transformation because the instrument has always belonged to the church.

Interestingly, the *suling* is often connected to other meanings of ‘traditional.’ As said, in a few places, the instrument is still present. Generally, the places where the *suling* is still being played are described – according to the theological terms of UKIM – as religiously conservative, comprising a solemn, tranquil style of singing and music, a Bible-centered, exclusivist, and anti-cultural notion of God, etc. Thus, the *suling* is associated with traditional Christian culture, and, currently, is moving to public, popular contexts. In turn, other traditional instruments are associated with Moluccan *adat* culture, and these instruments are moving to a church context. From a contextual theological view, the latter have to become part of church culture, whereas, conversely, the *suling* is already regarded as Moluccan cultural identity. An informant explained: “The *suling bambu* culture lives from Moluccan culture. We are Moluccans. When service is supported by *suling*, it feels as our service. It is our Christianity, not someone else’s. [...] We are Moluccan Christians. Our religion is our origin.”¹

I argue that the *suling* forms the bridge between two different meanings of ‘traditional.’ On the one hand, the *suling* is part of a theological contextualization and musical preservation, because the instrument shapes Moluccan cultural identity. On the other hand, the *suling* is also related to ‘conservative’ traditional church culture. However, the theological contextualization is not new in and of itself. In fact, the *suling* is the perfect example of a centuries-long contextualization that has been happening automatically. The instrument clearly shows Western influence, but became a symbol of both Moluccan Protestantism and Moluccan culture. Hence, the *suling* is an example of the traditional.

The Ethnic Church Service

The *ibadah etnis*, or ethnic service, is a recent policy decision of the GPM that is being executed and implemented in cooperation with UKIM.² The decision was strongly influenced by the ideas of Chris Tamaela.³ The ethnic

1 Interview with Anonymous (December 6, 2019, Saparua). Translation by the author.

2 In many other contexts, in Indonesia and beyond, similar liturgical frameworks as the ethnic service can be found, also in Catholic churches (*misa inkulturasi*), for example.

3 The fact that the GPM made this synodal decision for the *ibadah etnis* in 2018 does not mean that the GPM was the first to design an ethnic service. For a long time already, UKIM had been working according to a contextual approach, and saw the ethnic service as an appropriate

service originated from the contextual approach and from the idea that worship would feel closer and would be more comprehensible through the connection between theology and daily Moluccan life. The *ibadah etnis* is also aimed at showing appreciation for all Moluccan cultures within the GPM. A minister explained:

The ethnic worship [...] aims to build a sense of pride in the culture of each tribe, so that they do not feel alienated. [...] The church must create an atmosphere of 'at home' for each culture/ethnicity. The church must not ignore the reality of ethnic and cultural diversity. The church must not carry out cultural hegemony or the imposition of a dominant culture.⁴

The ethnic service is also designed to prevent the submergence of Moluccan culture and customs in the fast-changing millennial world.

To many Moluccans, the ethnic shift came as a positive surprise, because, for a long time, anything that could be associated with culture (such as local language, music, etc.) had been banned from the Moluccan Protestant church. Currently, the GPM is grappling with the decision regarding the ethnic service and thinking about what the theological idea means in practice. The GPM needs to design ways to develop contextualization in church in the modern era. A musician formulated the following question: 'how to innovate upon traditions, in order that people feel as if God is present in the own Moluccan, contemporary context?' At the moment, the fifth week of the month is reserved for a creative form of worship, which can also be used to implement the ethnic service.⁵ Congregational and *majelis* teams have to execute this policy, but a model that outlines specific rules for how the ethnic service should be conducted does not yet exist.⁶ This means that ministers, *majelis*, and liturgy teams have to find their own way in setting up this kind of service, which, nevertheless, is bound to a liturgical structure that is pre-set every five years. Also, the term 'ethnic' in the *ibadah etnis* is not defined in a determined way. The ethnic service is a creative service in the form of an

framework for contextual theology in practice. Furthermore, several progressive and creative ministers, who worked in congregations that are situated in remote places (where congregants have many different ethnic backgrounds), set up ethnic worship services in the early 2000s. These practices were also based on the idea of bringing Christian religion closer to people's cultural experience. In other words, multiple persons claim the original idea of the ethnic service.

4 Interview (written) with Rudi Rahabeat, GPM minister (November 27, 2019, Ambon).

5 Before the idea of the fifth week, the new format of the ethnic service was tried in special services only, such as Easter or Christmas services.

6 Together with the GPM, Chris Tamaela was working on a more specific ethnic liturgy.

ethnic worship, which is to be interpreted by people themselves. The reason for this vagueness is practical reality. The Moluccas have innumerable ethnic and sub-ethnic groups that are situated in many different places, which is why openness, instead of a general structure or definition, is preferred.

The Process of the Ethnic Service

The building process of an ethnic service is extensive. Despite the fact that no model exists yet, the GPM assists congregations in developing the capacity for conducting an *ibadah etnis*.⁷ Peter Salenussa, who works for UKIM and the GPM, travels to many places in the Moluccas to collect data about the variety of cultural sources and music, which can be contextualized in the ethnic service. He also teaches congregations about how to use their cultural richness. Together, Peter and the specific congregational team design a liturgy, after which the liturgy is rehearsed, so that the congregation is able to conduct an ethnic service on its own in the future. Chris Tamaela was seen as an expert at designing an ethnic service. He also assisted congregations in the process of contextualization. Tamaela explained how he began this process by studying the congregational context. He would check whether the people still spoke a native language, and he always talked to the people themselves. Then, he would write the liturgical scheme, making use of specific elements that the people in that place used in daily life. For instance, Tamaela once asked the congregants to enter the church on the *Patasiwa* and *Patalima* beats of the *tifa*, congregants danced when they gathered before God, and Tamaela referred to Jesus as the *tete manis*, the sweet ancestral grandfather. In Tamaela's ethnic services, congregants sang contextual hymns, wore traditional costumes, and employed local symbols – based on particular Moluccan philosophies of life that were transferred through theological values. For example, movements went counter-clockwise, the offering box was made of sago, coconut, or bamboo (decorated with the color red, a reference to Christ's blood and ancestral strength), and typical leaves that the ancestors had used to protect their families became instruments of blessing.

As I described in Chapter 4, in the contextual process, cultural forms from Moluccan life – that are appropriate in relation to Christian values – are

7 Although the GPM is working on a model, this kind of standardization also poses some dangers. It is hard to grasp the diversity of Moluccan ethnicities in a good way, and a model can undermine the goal of ethnic particularity, because a model might afford easy appropriations. As Rutherford (1996, 597) states, standardization allows the possibility of the learning of ethnic ways by a broad, non-, or other-ethnic public.

selected and turned into symbols that receive a new spiritual meaning through theological transformation. In the ethnic service, these cultural forms can be songs, music, folklore, cosmology/philosophy, languages, local wisdom, dance, food, natural materials, clothing, and more. For example, dances (such as the *cakalele*, the *pata cengkeh*, the *tari lenso*, or other dances) can be performed at the start of the service, during the offering, or to welcome the congregants and the presence of God into the church. The *tahuri*, *toleng-toleng*, or *tifa* can sound three times as a substitution for the church bell. The *tahuri* can also be blown to call the Holy Spirit. Other traditional instruments can be played to accompany the congregational singing. Frequently, the hymns that congregants sing in an ethnic service are from the new NJGPM (*Nyanyian GPM*) hymnbook. Furthermore, the altar, pulpit, and offering box are sometimes decorated with Moluccan natural materials, such as the leaves of the coconut tree, nutmeg, or cloves. The congregants (and, sometimes, also the minister and *majelis*) wear the *baju cele*, the *kebaya*, or even the *ikat kepala*. The hymns, prayers, and sermons are translated into local, native languages (such as *Wemale* or *Alune*) or into Ambonese Malay. In sermons, ministers make use of cultural symbols too, such as the *kain gandong* or the *tempat garam*.⁸ Native ways of communication can also be used in church (for instance, in the shape of a call and response). Moreover, as the Moluccan theologians stressed, the ethnic elements can form a synthesis with contemporary cultural styles. As such, an ethnic nuance in popular models attracts a broad range of congregants. In this way, young people can also receive and appreciate their cultural origin, which is transformed to meet the present, in church. The chosen forms that are used for the *ibadah etnis*, as well as the ways in which these forms are used, completely rely on context and content. Hence, it is important to bear in mind that the ethnic service is not based on trial and error; rather, it is founded on knowledge of communal traditions that can be developed in church. In Ambon, many congregations are multi-ethnic, which means that for one ethnic service, one ethnic group is chosen, such as Kei or Tanimbar. The next ethnic service, another group or the general *Melayu* Ambon culture can be the inspiration for the cultural forms. Sometimes, the ethnic service can be multi-ethnic, with combinations of clothing, languages, and other cultural forms from a variety of Moluccan ethnicities and places.

Peter Salenussa and Chris Tamaela – experts in the process of liturgical contextualization – explained the theological transformation in detail. The traditional cultural forms, found and studied in various Moluccan places,

8 *Kain gandong* refers to a white cloth that connects *pela* brothers and sisters.

are selected if they contain a relevant theological message. As already explained, the core of this selection process is the point on which the original cultural value fits with the Christian value and the liturgical context. The transposition to the church, subsequently, requires the observation and consideration of both the cultural and the church context, to implement the cultural form in a manner that theologians and ministers perceive as appropriate. For instance, the *kain gandong* can be used in service as a symbol of brotherhood. This meaning is easily recognizable for a broad scope of people in many places. *Sopi*, as a symbol of communication, however, has a smaller receptive scope and, therefore, can only be implemented in congregational contexts in which this cultural practice makes sense. In places where *sopi* is less well-known, additional theological explanation for the intended audience is needed. Moreover, the cultural form should respond to the theme of the worship service and should also be functionally embedded in this service. In this way, people are brought into contact with Moluccan traditional culture that is situated in a relevant religious, theological, and contemporary context.⁹

Hence, powerful cultural forms that express a peaceful life together with God, other people, and the natural environment ‘enter’ the church service. The positive reception of the theological transposition of cultural forms works through a clear explanation of how the form is used theologically. According to theologians, the explanation will create awareness and understanding about the Christian faith from the perspective of Moluccan culture. Theological meaning is central to the process. Minister Jacky Manuputty said: “Don’t ever try the new thing before you explain it! You assume that [it’s] oke, that it is a custom, it’s common in our culture. You should be careful. You should connect it with the Christian worship. [...] Why [do] you use it in the worship? It should be clear.”¹⁰ In other words,

9 Peter Salenussa illustrated his words with various examples. *Siri pinang* is something that people eat to symbolically show that they are *saudara*, brothers or sisters. This value can be transformed to show the relationship that one has with God. Also, the Moluccan traditional boat, the *perahu*, can be used in the worship service during the introitus. Missionaries brought Christianity by boat, but the *perahu* is a typical Moluccan boat that symbolically represents social relationships in a village. Another example that Salenussa mentioned is that coconut leaves can be waved as a Moluccan reference to the palm leaves that were used when Jesus entered Jerusalem (for example, when the Moluccan congregants enter the church). Lastly, the *ba meti* dance can be performed as a thanksgiving to God. The dance relates to the condition when the sea retreats, after which people can find a lot of fish in the little pools. This moment is considered a blessing from God.

10 An example that Jacky Manuputty talked about was the native word ‘*kulei*,’ which he used in his sermon. Before using the word in his liturgy, Manuputty needed to explain the term, also to

understanding, explanation, and meaning are required in order to turn the power of custom into a message of Christianity. Moreover, Moluccan cultural forms are not the only contextual sources that should be used. Chris Tamaela explained how the first step of liturgical contextualization is the appreciation of what the Moluccan church already has (as I explained in Chapter 5). In this light, Western influence is very important, because certain structures and ways of worship have been practiced for centuries, and Moluccan Protestants feel comfortable with these religious manners. One has to build upon these forms, because a sense of ordinary, pleasant worship as part of the experience of the congregants is needed to achieve successful contextualization. On this basis, the creation of something new is possible, which grows from both culture and religion.

Selection and Contestation

The committees in the congregations that are responsible for developing an ethnic service choose the cultural aspects that will be used on the fifth Sunday of the month. Most people said that this process occurs without contestation.¹¹ The fact that the absence of contestation was often mentioned by people who need to execute the GPM policies probably has to do with the controlled procedure of contextualization. Despite the openness of the concept *etnis*, only 'pure' cultural forms that are in line with Christian values can be displayed. The minister, together with his/her *majelis* and liturgy team, discusses and prepares the idea behind that specific ethnic service, recruits people for support, and rehearses several days before the worship. According to several ministers, there is only discussion about the best way to accommodate culture in the service, so that congregants will feel comfortable.

Naturally, the way that an ethnic service is built is influenced by the congregation and the pastoral team. Once, theologian Peter Salenussa

the people of Haruku themselves, who are familiar with the word *kulei*. These people use the word to communicate across large distances in the dense forest. Because the word was transposed to a church context, an explanation of meaning was required. Manuputty explained to the congregants: "It signifies the meaning [that] I am not alone. So it's closely related to the conviction that we are part of one another. [...] It is a very deep meaning [in] Christianity. So if I stand inside this pulpit, and I can see you all, but I cannot define that your mind and your heart are with me. [...] So by response to my *kulei*, I want to know that all your minds and hearts are with me. I am not alone" (Interview with Jacky Manuputty and Participant Observation, December 20, 2019, Haruku).

11 That is despite the fact that some questions can arise on the appropriateness of specific aspects. An example is the use of traditional clothes or the *ikat kepala* by the minister. Some people said that this practice is forbidden, because a minister is not allowed to wear other accessories, whereas other people see the practice as a characteristic cultural symbol.

used the *kapata* singing style in church, whereby men dressed in red, and ferociously and wildly pretended to cut themselves with the machetes as they entered communal trance. After the performance, Peter communicated a theological reflection on the presence of God within cultural language (the *kapata*). However, it is not likely that many other congregations would go this far in their ethnic service. The use and theological transformation of such elements have to be explained well in order to be accepted by congregants, as people's first associations with the cultural forms are *adat*, native religion, and the ancestors. Only a few ministers and *majelis* are willing to take this risk – considering the context of their own congregation – or have the theological and creative capacity for an elaborate theological transformation and explanation of such an ‘extreme’ cultural form. The risks of negative reception and the theological and creative requirements are the reasons why local languages and clothing are the cultural elements that are used the most in the *ibadah etnis*. Language and clothing, namely, are the ‘easiest’ to prepare and implement. Furthermore, economic and organizational capacities are additional factors for the manner in which ethnic services are developed. An ethnic service costs more energy and money to set up than other services. For example, congregations need help from organizations like Wycliffe to translate Bible texts and songs; ministers need to rehearse the reading or singing in the Ambonese dialect or local language to prevent mistakes and laughter; when a specific native language is used, congregants or others who are native speakers have to be involved in the preparation and execution process; and when traditional dance or music is included, professional groups must often be hired. These time-, energy-, and money-consuming factors, in combination with the novel status of the ethnic service, are the reasons why an *ibadah etnis* differs in execution and is not yet organized very often. Moreover, for now, many congregations only focus on an Ambonese ethnic service, before the pastoral and *majelis* teams learn how to address other ethnic forms.

Experiences of the Ethnic Service

Because the *ibadah etnis* is only implemented in the fifth week of the month, I experienced such a service just three times. At the beginning of my research, I visited the congregation in Poka. The ethnic theme was Tanimbar, a place in the far south of the Moluccas.¹² Many people wore normal, neat clothes; some wore colored traditional blouses or skirts, and

12 A friend of mine, who is originally from Tanimbar, attended this service to experience worship based on her ethnic culture (although Poka is not her regular congregation).

some had a traditional scarf with the colors of Tanimbar around their neck (including me, because a friend, beforehand, ritually handed this scarf to me). The minister wore an orange detail around the waist. The songs that people sang were from the hymnbook NJGPM, and several of the hymns were translated into the native language of Tanimbar. Most other songs were sung in the Ambonese Malay or in Indonesian, and one choir also sang a hymn in English. The musical accompaniment consisted of one keyboard with synthesizer and brass sounds, sometimes complemented by one small *tifa*. A young man initiated the service, who, very loudly, hit a large standing *tifa*. Then, another man entered, and screamed a text in the native tongue after which the other man did the same in Ambonese. A hymn began to play and from the back, a group of female dancers, dressed in the Tanimbar costume, entered. In two rows, the women danced to the altar. The first woman hit a small *tifa* on the rhythm of the hymn, and, bent down, the women repeatedly walked three steps together, moving their arms aside their bodies, after which they slightly turned. When the women reached the front of the church, the *majelis* team appeared. The minister spoke about the appreciation of local culture and preached in the Ambonese dialect. Several high-quality choirs performed as well, and, at these moments, the projector displayed images of typical traditions and landscapes of Tanimbar. The central points in both song and sermon were togetherness and unity on the basis of *gandong*. The minister concluded by mentioning the ancestors as a bridge between God and the people: God gave *adat* to the people via the ancestors. In short, this ethnic service in Poka showed a combination of clothes, music, and language, included traditional dance, and incorporated contextualized texts within the liturgical structure.

Another time, I had the chance to experience the process and execution of an ethnic service in the Christian village of Rohua Baru on Seram. The congregation developed an ethnic service for the first time.¹³ The service was built on the basis of the ethnic traditions of the *Nuauulu* tribe – as most congregants in Rohua Baru are part of this ethnic group. Interestingly, all congregants still speak the *Nuauulu* language, although this capacity is decreasing among the children. The pre-set liturgical structure was translated into the native language, as well as the hymns. The translations were done by a *Nuauulu* language expert from Wycliffe.¹⁴ The preparation required extensive organization, including technology, linguistics, and rehearsals.

13 The village is called Rohua Baru, New Rohua, because, after the conflict, the Christians from Rohua fled to this new place and built their community again.

14 For many years, she has lived among these people, and she owns a house in this village.

Ro, the translator, rehearsed several times with the keyboard player, with the choir of young girls, and with the conductor. In a perfectionist way, the singers sang the words over and over to say the right things on the right tone, tempo, and rhythm. The rehearsal demonstrated that the expectations for this worship were high. The minister had invited many guests to participate in the first ethnic service of Rohua Baru.¹⁵ On Sunday, almost all congregants wore a variety of traditional clothes: the *baju cele*; red blouses; the *kebaya*; as well as the *ikat kepala*. Even the minister and *majelis* team wore traditional clothes, which is rare. The preparation of the girls choir proved its value. Sometimes, the congregants experienced some difficulties with following the words on the right rhythm, after which the choir brought everyone back on track (although, sometimes, the choir also had some difficulties, and a short silence followed). I experienced the singing in the native language as very beautiful. The language gave the service a special atmosphere through the sounds of the words. Moreover, the minister read many lines in the native language, including the Word of God (which, additionally, was also communicated in Indonesian).¹⁶ The sermon was done in the Ambonese dialect and the Apostles Creed in Indonesian.¹⁷ Interestingly, several guest choirs performed as well, but they sang in Indonesian or even in English. Hence, the ethnic service in Rohua Baru showed a combination of elements, with – again – a large focus on clothing and language.¹⁸ After the service, many photos were taken, with the aim of demonstrating to the outside world that this congregation had conducted an *ibadah etnis*. This practice revealed the competitive character of the implementation of a synodal decision. Apart from the Apostles Creed and the skipping of one song, translator Ro was satisfied with this first result. Although, in my eyes, the participation

15 This also led to a contestation concerning the hymns, because the minister was afraid of embarrassment and the loss of her status, since many guests would sing the songs slightly differently from the required translations. For the translation of a hymn, the meaning, words, and accentuation need to be in line, which slightly alters the specific, known hymn to a different version.

16 When the Word of God was read in the native language, some people started whispering, as they did not understand the Word of God in this language and, therefore, did not pay attention.

17 The content of the sermon, in my eyes, was not very contextual. Although the sermon had been especially designed for this service, the content felt somewhat exclusivist. The minister said that all people have their cultures and that, from these cultures, people have the human reaction to take revenge or commit violence. However, Christianity will save people from doing these violent things. As the point of a contextualized worship service is to embed Christianity within people's culture, the sermon felt out of tune with the contextual approach.

18 It appeared that the minister had ordered everyone to wear traditional clothes, which resulted in the decision of some congregants not to attend the service, because they did not own such clothing. Out of fear of shame, these congregants stayed away, which seems to go against the idea of the ethnic service and the contextual approach that aims at inclusivity.

of the guests seemed better when they spoke Indonesian or Ambonese, the people of Rohua Baru gave a positive response and described the ethnic service as ‘interesting’ and ‘really good.’¹⁹

Lastly, on every Wednesday morning, UKIM students get the chance to design and execute worship on campus. I attended an ethnic service here as well. A combination of ethnicities was used: Lease; Babar; and Aru. Many people wore the *baju cele*. Interestingly, the theme of the service was stated in English: ‘This is true love.’ Before the service started, a hymn in the Aru language was rehearsed with the attendants. The musical accompaniment consisted of keyboard, saxophone, ukulele, and electric guitar. The call for worship was done by a young man who hit the *tifa* three times and shouted something in the Aru language. The hymns that we, as congregants, sang were from the NJGPM hymnbook, and the projectors displayed the musical notation. Furthermore, the service contained a beautiful animation video about the love of God for everyone. The Word of God was read in three different languages, after which one student presented the textual material for the service. She spoke about the Song of Songs from a feminist perspective. The student interweaved the biblical text, feminism, Moluccan culture, nature, and God’s love in an ingenious way.²⁰ This ethnic worship demonstrated how UKIM functions as a ‘kitchen’ to test and practice contextual worship services. I was impressed by the clarity of the set-up and concept. A combination of ethnicities and languages was used, mixed with modern media, such as the video.

The Heritagization of Culture

The term heritage is often used as part of the discourse about theological contextualization and the preservation of Moluccan traditional culture.

19 In a neighboring village, a colleague of Ro prepared and executed a first ethnic service as well. Here, the ministers and *majelis* did not use traditional clothing, but they decorated the altar with natural materials. Out of poverty, only one *tifa* was played for musical accompaniment, which actually matched the concept of the ethnic service a bit better than the keyboard that was used in Rohua Baru (seen from the Moluccan theological perspective). The minister and choir spoke the *Nuauulu* language during the whole service, and the congregants gave a very positive response.

20 Interestingly, one of the teachers gave a reflection as well, which was very conservative – both in my own and others’ opinion. This male person talked about eroticism as the first association with the Song of Songs and stated that eroticism is only allowed within the construct of marriage. He condemned all sexual activities of any other kind. Thus, the service also demonstrated how, at UKIM too, different people have different positions toward the contextual approach.

Contextualization, tradition, and preservation are closely linked words. From a theological perspective, the contextual approach aims to place theology within the Moluccan Christian experience. At the same time, Moluccan contextual theology is embedded in political policies of ethnic revival. Before the 2000s, developmental politics and the historical anti-cultural stance regarding religion from both the colonial church and the GPM threatened Moluccan culture. Currently, processes of globalization and modernization are felt to continue this process of cultural loss. Therefore, a feeling for the need to preserve Moluccan cultural identity has arisen among politicians, theologians, church officials, musicians, and others. These people's view is that Moluccan cultural traditions need to be revived and innovated in the here and now, to bring people in contact with the roots of their identity. The church is one context where Moluccan culture and identity are worked with from a contextual approach. The ethnic service is the most practical expression of Moluccan contextual theology.

Recalling the introduction of this book, the process of contextualization resembles the process of heritage formation. Not coincidentally, the word 'heritage' pops up in relation to contextualization, preservation, and tradition. Graburn (2000, 6–7) states that the concept of tradition is almost equivalent to inheritance. Cultural traditions are naturally close to heritage, as such traditions are inherited from generation to generation. In the Moluccan case, the cultural forms that people value to be positive inherited traditions from the ancestors – perceived as part of Moluccan identity and selected to be theologically transformed or publicly stimulated – are, generally, called heritage, both in a religious and in a popular context.

An acceleration of heritage production has been noted in the contemporary world. This is to be seen in organizations like UNESCO that safeguard 'world heritage,' in the arena of identity claims, and in the religious field, where certain forms and practices in decline have been recast as heritage (Meyer & Van de Port 2018, 8). Although different collectives may not agree on what heritage precisely is, many cultural traditions are increasingly versed in heritage vocabularies. Thus, heritage has become a conceptual framework and a discursive realm to assess, evaluate, and act upon material and immaterial remnants of the past (Meyer & Van de Port 2018, 11–2). These heritage regimes organize "the cultural production of the real," evoking a sense of authenticity through shared sensations and experiences. Heritage is real because it is felt to be real (Meyer & Van de Port 2018, 15–6, 19). In this light, heritage is a sensational form, conveying a real essence of the direct presence of the past that can be appropriated in diverse contexts (Meyer & Van de Port 2018, 22–3). As Meyer and Van de Port (2018, 24)

state, to understand why and how people identify with such forms as an essential part of their being in the world, aesthetics of persuasion need to be taken into account that vest authorized forms of cultural heritage with authenticity. Persuasiveness, thus, is a quality of aesthetic strategy, realized in the heritage design and practices that assert one's legitimate belonging to a particular cultural form.

The preservation and stimulation of Moluccan cultural forms are certainly situated in the discursive realm of heritage. Heritage vocabularies have entered the discursive realm of contextual theology as well.²¹ A sense of Moluccanness, realized in practices such as music, dance, language, and other *adat*-related customs or activities, is authenticated by the ancestral chain that links the past to the present and evokes a feeling of Moluccan belonging. A heritage regime that is focused on selected shared, broad-ranged cultural forms is appropriated in public, religious, and political contexts and authorized by theologians, politicians, and others. The ethnic service is one of the central places in which these elements coincide. The aim is to trigger a sense of identification, embedding Protestant religion in Moluccan culture and, hereby, preserving the traditional forms that have been sacralized as cultural heritage.

Bakker (2018, 46) calls the construction and reassertion of ethnic belonging 'ethnogenesis' and sees this construction as an expression of modern identity politics.²² Before one can select something as cultural heritage, research needs to be conducted – much like how Chris Tamaela and Peter Salenussa have been doing for the GPM, by finding appropriate cultural sources which can be theologized in church. The authority and authenticity of such a process relies on accepted canonized knowledge about what the cultural forms mean, from which creativity can extend and deepen this meaning in present times and contexts (Bakker 2018, 53–4). The capacity of cultural and theological creativity is required to prevent the ethnic service from degrading into something that is cut off from content and merely focused on appearance. Thus, as Bakker (2018, 55) also makes clear, ethnic construction is not sheer invention, but a resignification built upon convention. In the Moluccan case, cultural forms turn into symbols of heritage through a theological resignification that embeds the forms in Christian liturgy, building on both recognizable cultural and religious

21 The link between theory and empirical data is based on the ideal idea behind Moluccan contextual theology, not on the actual implementation process or the current state of practice.

22 I use the work of Bakker, who researched the Pataxó Indians in Brazil, to theoretically make a connection with the Moluccan case.

meanings. The theological ideal is that this process assures a continuity between the cultural traditions and the identity of Moluccan Protestants. The follow-up question about creativity based on convention, as Bakker (2018, 67) notes, is whether one can let creativity flourish or whether it is better to bind such creativity to a standard. The Moluccan contextual process is clearly bound by a controlled standard. Only positively valued cultural forms that are viewed as being in line with Christianity can be selected. The cultural forms have to express a spiritual message, and the boundary of selection is drawn at the ancestors. The decision on this standard is where contestation and discussion emerge.

In short, the authentication of a heritage regime is mediated by a grammar of sensing. The authentication needs the power of aesthetics to render the cultural forms present in the body. The cultural forms, namely, play a central role in the 'representational economy' (Keane 2018, 68) of authentic – in this case – Moluccanness, in which people find themselves implicated (Bakker 2018, 68). Moluccans who feel threatened by the loss of their culture become involved in heritage politics, through which traditional culture can be preserved and revived. As Bakker states: "The relationship between the conventionally inherited and the creatively invented" (Bakker 2018, 69), grounded on ancestral reference, creates an image which both evokes the past and future simultaneously – a dynamic that almost perfectly describes processes of Moluccan popular preservation and theological contextualization.

Many different people who construct the Moluccan discourse on contextual theology and traditional (church) music referred to the importance of working with traditional cultural forms and reviving Moluccan music to contribute to the preservation of Moluccan heritage. They deem this preservation necessary because of forces of globalization that cause rapid change and, almost unconsciously, make people lose their cultural heritage. In Moluccan people's opinions, traditional instruments and styles of singing should not be left behind or disappear. The musical traditions come from the ancestors and, therefore, form part of Moluccan identity, which is why these traditions have to be reproduced. Even when, for example, a young Moluccan rarely thinks about or deals with traditional music, this music is perceived as still being located deep inside his or her memory through the ancestral chain. Therefore, in popular music scenes, in political regulations, and in the *ibadah etnis*, traditional music is revived (*'menghidupkan'*), so that younger generations get acquainted with these musics and start to re-develop the traditional music. Theologians, musicians, church officials, ministers, and congregants spoke in this same manner about the preservation of musical

and cultural heritage. A congregant in the Maranatha church said about the ethnic service: “I think it is very good, so that children who are still small and growing up can know and recognize traditional music, which is an inheritance from their ancestors, so that our culture does not disappear but still exists and survives or can become even better.”²³ As part of the preservation of Moluccan heritage, memory is an important element as well. Often, congregants stressed the idea that the ethnic service will contribute to the remembrance and knowledge of traditions by future generations. In this sense, the GPM is seen to have awakened Moluccan cultural life in worship, which – in the words of two theology students – teaches people “to get to know their identity again” and “to remember their language, culture and local wisdom.”²⁴

Hence, the stimulation of Moluccan music in general and the *ibadah etnis* with traditional church music in particular is situated in a discursive network that is connected to heritage. Current changes instill the need for preservation, maintenance, regeneration, and development of traditional culture, including music. These cultural and musical forms should not disappear (*tidak boleh hilang*, as Moluccan people say), because they are perceived as heritage that has been passed down from the Moluccan ancestors. The musical forms contain something unique, by possessing cultural values that shape Moluccan identity. This is why Moluccan traditional culture should not be lost, but has to be lifted or brought back (*angkat lagi*), so that Moluccans are able to explore and find their own identity for many future generations to come.²⁵ Interestingly, heritage, the ancestors, and preservation are also closely linked in a linguistic sense. *Warisan* means ‘legacy’ or ‘heritage’ and the verb *mewariskan* means ‘to pass down’ or ‘transmit.’

Apart from the preservation of heritage, creativity is another important component, as Bakker (2018) also notes. Cultural forms are not only maintained, but they are innovated upon or even created. Chris Tamaela was the perfect example of someone who not only wanted to keep and safeguard Moluccan musical heritage, but who created new traditional instruments. Here, the relation between invention and convention is apparent. Tamaela’s creations were inspired by Moluccan music and instruments in the past, as well as by stories, memories, nature, daily life, and more. Also, in addition to

23 Interview with Anonymous (December 1, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

24 Interview with Omy & Jean.

25 These conclusions, and the words used, are based on many interviews with many different people who were involved in this research (theologians, students, ministers, musicians, church officials, church members) and who used the same words.

Moluccan traditional culture and music, another form of heritage on the side of religion is the Dutch Calvinist influence in the GPM. Inherited from the colonial church, Dutch Calvinist religious forms are part of a Christian heritage that shapes the identity of present-day Moluccan Protestants. Tamaela said: “we have a Christian heritage, [a] Christian faith, a way of worshipping. Today, we still maintain it as part of Christian Protestant spiritual heritage.”²⁶ For instance, relatively old, Western-influenced hymnbooks, such as *Dua Sahabat Lama*, are being preserved in the GPM. This is important, because, on the one hand, many Moluccans have grown up with these songs that, therefore, touch the core of who they are and how they feel as Christians. On the other hand, the books are conserved, protected, and transmitted to a new generation who will not lose this dimension of the history of the GPM. At the same time, these types of Christian heritage are innovated upon as well, for instance through contextualization.

To summarize, many different people in Moluccan society make use of heritage vocabularies when referring to the preservation of Moluccan culture. The realm of heritage, among other factors, shapes the discourse on contextual theology as well. Traditional forms and music are recast as heritage, transformed and developed as symbols, and contextualized in liturgy. Both Christian and cultural heritage are the sources for contextual theology and traditional church music.

The Aesthetics of Language

Language is one of the most prominent components of the ethnic service and a central factor in traditional music as well, considering the lyrics of religious songs. Before the installment of the ethnic service, language had already been an important element as part of the growing effort of contextualization. In 2008, the GPM established a partnership with the organization Wycliffe. Wycliffe translates the Bible and other religious material into different local languages. Wycliffe also translates religious songs, which is one of the most difficult and delicate tasks. The translation must do justice to textual meaning and to rhythm and melody. Notes and syllables need to be counted, the meaning has to be summarized, and the stress on certain syllables must be natural.²⁷ Because of this difficulty,

26 Interview with Chris Tamaela.

27 A song cannot be translated word by word, because of the rhythm and melody. For example, ‘God’ in English, is ‘Allah’ in Indonesian, but ‘A na ha ta na’ in *Nuaulu*. However, the impossibility

Wycliffe also promotes the composition of new songs with translated Bible texts as lyrics. After Wycliffe's long-term translation work, the GPM receives the results and uses the translated material in their congregations.²⁸ As such, the ethnic service became the main setting for the implementation of translated materials. Through this official structure, endorsed by the synod, the use of local languages in the worship service is becoming normalized and accepted. Contextualization and the ethnic service have started a paradigm shift, by which congregants learn that God speaks in Moluccan languages too.²⁹

However, some Moluccan people do not agree with the use of local languages in a church context, mainly because, for a long time, local languages were prohibited in church and because people have been taught that Indonesian is the official religious language. As Keane (1997, 43) makes clear, Indonesian is the language of political power, modernity, and literacy. The most authoritative genres – the speech, the sermon, and the official notice – are written in Indonesian. Indonesian is deemed to encompass all local languages from a nationalist point of view (Keane 1997, 46). Furthermore, Moluccan Christians who live in the city often prefer to learn the English language, and, sometimes, see the revival of local languages (in church) as a step backwards in their process of modernization. In addition, some people see the Ambonese Malay as a dialect instead of a 'full' language, or as a 'broken' kind of Indonesian.³⁰

of literal translation is not a problem, as an employee said, because the text does not concern scripture. Stories are another example of translations which do not need a literal approach, according to Wycliffe. I received many little books with stories that had been translated in Ambonese Malay: *Orang Samaria Satu Yang Bae* (The Good Samaritan); *Hoe Sakaes Turung Lakas-Lakas Kamari!* (Come Down, Zacchaeus!); *Lukas Pung Kabar Bea Soal Yesus* (Luke has Good News about Jesus); *Paulus Pung Surat-Surat Par Timotius, Titus, Pilemon, Deng Jamaat Tesalonika* (Paul has the Epistles of Timothy, Titus, Philemon, with the Thessalonians); *Esther: Kitab Ester Dalam Bahasa Ambon* (Esther: The Story of Esther in Ambonese Language); *Danyel: Kitab Daniel Dalam Bahasa Ambon* (Daniel: The story of Daniel in Ambonese language); *Yunus: Kitab Yunus Dalam Bahasa Ambon* (Jonah: The story of Jonah in Ambonese Language); *Rut: Kitab Rut Dalam Bahasa Ambon* (Ruth: The Story of Ruth in Ambonese Language); *Yesus Pung Utusang-Utusang Pung Carita: Kitab Kisah Para Rasul Dalam Bahasa Ambon* (Jesus has the Messengers: The Story of the Book of Acts in Ambonese Language).

28 Interestingly, when a translated Bible is finished, the local government also receives a copy, as the GPM and the local government are close partners.

29 This explanation about Wycliffe is based on interviews at Wycliffe (November 11, 2019, Ambon).

30 However, the linguists from Wycliffe stated that the Ambonese Malay is a language of itself, which has grammatical, lexical, and phonological differences. The Malay language already existed before the official Indonesian language originated.

Another critical group that should not be forgotten are Moluccan people who adhere to native religions and who often still speak certain native languages. Occasionally, they make clear that it is not allowed to read the Bible in their native language – both because their native language is unwritten and because they fear punishment from the ancestors because of the mixing of the ancestors' tongue with Christian texts. It is important to take this – what I would call – perspective of appropriation and this reception of contextualization into account as well.

Usually, preaching in a local language or in the Ambonese Malay is quite hard for ministers. The general policy of the GPM is to 'spread' ministers across different places, so that they come into contact with various local cultures and cannot be influenced by people through personal relationships. However, this also means that the ministers almost never speak the native language of a particular place (that is, if the congregants still speak a native language). Most importantly, the Ambonese Malay is used in an informal, daily manner and does not form part of the official theological education, despite the fact that all Moluccans speak Malay. For many ministers, therefore, preaching or praying in Malay is difficult, all the more because reading the dialect feels different and strange in comparison with daily speech. All central theological terms and ways of speaking have been taught in 'high' Indonesian to ministers, which is why an alternation between Indonesian and Malay can be noted during the worship service. When daily examples are used, ministers shift to Malay, whereas official parts, such as the sermon or prayer, are often done in Indonesian. To change the latter liturgical parts into Malay requires thorough preparation, even more so for the risk of being laughed at when mistakes are made. A minister explained: "You need full concentration. If not, people will certainly laugh."³¹

The opinions and experiences concerning language use in the worship service greatly differ among congregants. Employees at Wycliffe, theologians, and ministers (who deal with local languages) commonly said that when congregants are presented with the possibility of the use of Malay or a native language in the worship service, the congregants will definitely love this: the local language makes people feel closer to who they are. To a certain extent, this is true. Many congregants stated they prefer their daily language in church, because this language increases their understanding and feels comfortable. As a person in the congregation of Hutumuri noted: "it is great to use the Ambonese language so that it is easy to understand. We pray with our daily existence; it touches our lives. [It is] not too formal

31 Interview with Jeffrey Leatimia. Translation by the author.

or in accordance with routine.”³² Another person in Soya commented that the use of the local language in church feels as if she is in her own house, because it is the language that they speak at home. In the same light, an UKIM student said that when she attends an ethnic service in which her language is spoken, she is transported to her place of origin.

Nevertheless, it seems, generally, that people who prefer the Ambonese Malay are above twenty years old, have a lower education level, and almost never speak Indonesian in their daily lives. Often, these people also live in places further away from the city. At Moluccan schools, the influence of the national language is strong, which is why the youth in the city, nowadays, no longer understands the Malay and local languages very well. Perhaps, these younger people, therefore, prefer the Indonesian language. Above all, the majority of the people who have been to school are used to Indonesian in their work life and in church. A congregant from the city explained that she found Malay difficult to comprehend during worship, because she had to fully concentrate on translating and, therefore, was less able to concentrate on the actual message and reflection. Her words demonstrated how Malay distracted her from the actual purpose of being in church. Another congregant from the city said that she preferred Indonesian, mainly out of habit.

Thus, opinions about language use in church seem diffuse and ambiguous. The Indonesian language is part of people’s Christian heritage, of what people are used to, and of common church practices. Preaching in Malay or a local language is a theological innovation that is mostly applied in the city, whereas the people who actually live in the city speak these languages less fluently. In rural areas, where people more often speak the local language, Indonesian is usually the main language in church. This paradoxical reality results in the fact that when one starts to work with the Ambonese Malay in relatively remote villages, a fairly positive response is expressed by people who feel they understand the worship better. However, other people do not agree with such a change of church tradition, because they are used to the Indonesian language in the religious context. In turn, in cities, negative responses are expressed by people who do not understand other languages than Indonesian, whereas others are interested in learning more about various Moluccan local cultures through contextualized worship. Again, it is demonstrated how the different meanings of the traditional – contextual theology and church tradition – are practically related in places that are located further away from the city, while the reverse is true for places that

32 Interview with Anonymous (November 17, 2019, Hutumuri). Translation by the author.

are located close to the city. In the first instance, traditional sources of contextual theology, in this case language, remain present alongside traditional church practices. In the latter instance, the traditional sources are less present in daily life but sooner implemented in church, since traditional church practices are also less present and countered with a contextual approach. In other words, the source of contextual theology is located close to the church tradition that is countered by contextual theology, whereas the implementation of contextual theology is located close to the absence of traditional sources, which leads to a contextual change in the church tradition.

Traditional Church Music

In this research, I deal with the relation between the contextual idea of traditional church music and musical practices and attitudes in church. I discussed the idea and the main practical framework of traditional church music (the ethnic service). Now, I turn to traditional church music in practice. Traditional church music forms part of the contextualization of Moluccan Protestantism, by embedding religion in Moluccan culture. Context, here, means reviving traditional music in relation to the changing times. In practice, this often results in a mix of musics that may include 'modern' electronic or Western instruments and styles. Ideally, traditional church music appeals to all Moluccan congregants because the music touches the cultural identity of Moluccans and is situated in a contemporary context. It is theologically intended that traditional church music brings about a different atmosphere because of its quality to 'win people's hearts,' as several musicians said.

In practice, traditional church music is one of the elements of the ethnic service that is developed the least – a practical reality that the GPM also recognizes. Traditional clothing and local languages are used more often than traditional music in the ethnic service. In most congregations, the instruments that accompany congregational singing do not change when an ethnic service is held. Only rarely, when special events are organized, traditional music is arranged. Sometimes, the *tifa*, *tahuri*, or *toleng-toleng* sound as an ethnic substitution of the church bell that announces the beginning of worship. When traditional instruments are used to accompany congregational singing, it most often concerns one *tifa* combined with non-traditional instruments. Usually, this *tifa* is only played for secondary musical accompaniment, which means that vocal groups use the instrument when

the composer of the song specifically indicated that the hymn should be accompanied by the *tifa* rhythm. The playing of traditional music in church, thus, is limited and bound to the musical rules of religious songs that are interpreted by the congregational teams. In other words, congregations almost never use traditional instruments for primary musical accompaniment. Only when a composer of a specific hymn from the NJGPM stated that the song can be accompanied by the *tifa* rhythm, a *tifa* is used. Hence, primary musical accompaniment of congregational singing generally stays the same. An exception is the *suling*. Because the *suling* is seen as a traditional church instrument (and, therefore, belonging to both Christian heritage and cultural heritage which together form the sources of contextualization), the *suling* is one of the few instruments that accompanies congregational singing in an ethnic service.³³

In short, traditional church music, if used, mainly takes place on the level of secondary musical accompaniment. In this light, vocal groups that perform with the ukulele or in the Hawaiian style are also regarded as playing traditional church music. Traditional church music, thus, commonly requires the hiring of a music group, as many congregations do not have their own traditional group or the musical creativity or capability to arrange music as such. To my knowledge, only one ethnic music group exists (at the time of the fieldwork in 2019) in Ambon that is hired by many different congregations to accompany congregational singing. Chris Tamaela established this group. I once attended a service that was supported by this ethnic music group. They played according to the style in which Tamaela had envisioned traditional church music. In collaboration with guitars, a ukulele, and a keyboard, the male group played the *tifa*, the *toleng-toleng*, the *marakas*, the bamboo clapper, and a gong that was hanging on a wooden box.³⁴ Several men hit two bamboo sticks and two stones against each other.

The spiritual songs that the congregants sing in an *ibadah etnis* are always from the NJGPM hymnbook. Selected songs are often hymns that are written in the Ambonese dialect and easy to follow. Interestingly, the rhythm and melody of these traditional spiritual songs may be exactly the same as the original versions. However, it is absolutely not allowed to directly transpose the original lyrics to a church context. Theologically, the songs have to be transformed with a spiritual text. Thus, although the original language and music of songs from an *adat* context can be used, the text needs adaptation,

33 However, this is the case for congregations that already have a *suling* ensemble. This means that in these congregations, the music for the ethnic services changes neither.

34 *Marakas* are a type of samba balls made of bamboo.

as the context from which the original content derives is seen as cultural or even secular. Such content, then, is perceived as inappropriate in a Christian context. This dynamic demonstrates the paradox of how in contextual theology, *adat* sources are stripped of religious relations, which requires a Christian transformation. At the same time, the *adat* sources still contain a possible dangerous relation to native religion, which requires the securing of these sources within an innocent, controlled cultural realm. In a circular reasoning, these forms require a Christian transformation because they are cultural, while the possibility of theological contextualization relies on the forms being cultural.

To summarize, currently, traditional church music in the Moluccan Protestant church means the following options: a collaboration between one *tifa* and 'modern' instruments as accompaniment to a specific NJGPM song; a vocal group that uses traditional instruments or styles; a *suling* ensemble; or a single ethnic music group that accompanies congregational singing. This reality shows that GPM congregations, in general, do not yet have the sources and capabilities to create traditional church music in the full way that Moluccan theologians intend.

I argue that there are two reasons for this practical reality of traditional church music. The first is pragmatic and the second is conceptual. First, only a few people can play traditional music. Since the ethnic service is a recent development, not many congregations have their own traditional music group. Often, this type of musical accompaniment needs to be hired, which places an additional financial burden on congregations. In comparison, traditional clothing is much easier to organize, as all Moluccan people, generally, have some sort of traditional costume which they can wear to church. Moreover, the existing music groups that congregations may hire are not fully focused on the church context. Examples are the groups of Jonas Silooy, Nico Tulalessy, or Carolis Elias Horhoruw. Thus, traditional music that is aimed at the broader society is transposed to the church, by hiring traditional music groups that play religious-traditional songs as one aspect of their repertoire. In short, the practical difficulties make the implementation of traditional church music a challenge, as the music enters the church from the outside and is not yet developed from within.³⁵ Furthermore, the hymns that congregants sing in church – selected from the five standard hymnbooks – are strongly influenced by the Western tradition. Therefore,

35 However, the current situation does not mean that traditional church music will never develop further in the future. At UKIM, students learn about traditional church music and a new generation of congregants might also develop this type of musical accompaniment.

the arrangement of traditional music as the accompaniment to these songs can be difficult. This task requires musical creativity, which is not always an available capability among the music and liturgy teams or ministers. Moreover, Moluccan people have been used to Western music for centuries, and the majority of people finds these musical characteristics easier to receive and sing than traditional music. Moluccan theologians and the GPM, thus, also have to acknowledge that Western-style music forms part of the cultural and religious context of *Maluku*, which contextual theology needs to practically deal with.

Second, the relative 'underdevelopment' of traditional church music has to do with the semiotic ideologies of language and music (or sounds) in the Moluccas. Generally, greater value is ascribed to words than to sounds. On a structural level, this focus can be recognized in the preparation of worship services in the GPM. Sermons are well prepared and great honor is assigned to the reading of the Bible. Whereas local language is the most prominent feature of the ethnic service, the music is prepared rather late and, sometimes, in an unconcise manner. Most people see music as an instrument and words as the content. In his book *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, Keane (2007) traces semiotic ideologies through the religious-colonial relation between the Sumbanese and the Dutch.³⁶ When transferring Keane's insights to the Moluccan case, both Moluccans and Dutch Calvinists have attached great value to language and words. However, in the eyes of the Calvinists, submitting to fixed discursive forms undermines the agency proper to humans (Keane 2007, 2). The fixed words also undermine the idea that words are the external expression of inner thoughts, constrained by the norm of sincerity (Keane 2007, 15). Thus: "Words should be subject to the agency of a speaker who stands apart from the words he or she masters" (Keane 2007, 15). For Moluccan people, on the other hand, words themselves have power, regardless of intention.³⁷ This might well be the reason that religious practices in church are rule-governed and formalistic.³⁸ As Keane (2007, 4–5) makes clear, relations among, and boundaries between, words, things, and subjects are often driven by the question 'what beings or entities have agency?' The colonial encounter between the Dutch and the Moluccans and the postcolonial consequences

36 Although the Sumbanese case is not the same as the Moluccan case, some parallels can be drawn.

37 Ancestral speech also works in this way. Most people do not know the meaning of the highly sacred words, which – nevertheless and perhaps even because of that ignorance – contain the strongest power.

38 Bartels (1994, 397, 398) also emphasizes this formalistic character of Moluccan Christianity.

of this encounter have to do with “Protestant efforts to escape some of the apparent implications of the ways human subjects are embedded in social and material worlds” (Keane 2007, 5). This effort often focuses on semiotic forms, which can include “things as the sounds of words, the constraints of speech genres, the perishability of books, the replicable shapes of money, the meatiness of animals, the feel of cloth, the shape of houses, musical tones, the fleshiness of human bodies, and the habits of physical gestures” (Keane 2007, 5). The Calvinists linked moral progress to practices of detachment from materiality, trying to change the role of semiotic forms in relation to, for example, objects, ancestors, or sounds (Keane 2007, 6–7). These latter entities were deemed to possess agency by ‘the others.’ The missionaries, thus, made distinctions about the “proper place of objects in the lives of subjects or with the possibilities and limits of human agency” (Keane 2007, 24–5). In this way, the missionaries embarked on a project of purification through dematerialization. They drew a line between agency and natural determinism, freedom and fetishism, modernity and backwardness, and words and things (Keane 2007, 6–7). Not only language, but also music formed part of the representational economy of the missionaries (Keane 2007, 21–2).³⁹

Centuries of influence from the perspective of the semiotic ideology of the Dutch missionaries left their trace in the Moluccan Protestant church. At the same time, as Keane (2007, 23) also notes, purification is never entirely successful. The result is a mix of religious attitudes and practices that operate in a hybrid representational economy. Dutch colonial Calvinism, Moluccan Protestantism, and Moluccan culture have become entangled with each other through the encounter of semiotic ideologies that have changed and mixed. Keane (2007, 20–1) mentions the example of changing theological views that have consequences for other domains in the same representational economy. The current Moluccan shift to contextual theology – that has its basis in culture and its most recent expression in the ethnic service – forms an exemplary stage where these dynamics become visible and from which these entangled semiotic realities can be explained. The implementation of contextual theology shows how local languages have become allowed and are being spoken in the GPM services. I believe that, although the material properties of language have been different for the Dutch Calvinists and the Moluccan people, the importance of words and texts in both semiotic

39 The idea of the representational economy is meant to situate words, things, and persons dynamically within the same world with one another. Semiotic ideology plays a crucial mediating role (Keane 2007, 19).

ideologies reinforced the value of language in the GPM. Music, on the other hand, continues to be valued less. Paradoxically, when traditional church music is implemented in the ethnic service, congregants, generally, either do not see and feel the difference in atmosphere and meaning compared to other types of church music, or are wary of the fact that traditional sounds enter the church, because such sounds are perceived to contain *adat* powers. The wariness has to do with the former prohibition on anything from culture entering the church (including traditional music) and with the material powers that Moluccans ascribe to music. Dematerialization and materialization became enmeshed in the semiotic encounter, which makes it hard to trace the responses towards traditional church music in the complex representational economy of Moluccan Protestantism.

Implementation of the Ethnic Service

From the perspective of Moluccan theologians, the implementation of the ethnic service is largely based on the transmission of the contextual idea to ministers and *majelis* teams, and on building capacity to independently organize and execute ethnic services. The novelty of the ethnic service requires many ministers and congregational teams to make a shift in thinking and doing. At the same time, a new generation of ministers – theology students at UKIM – is being educated on the basis of a contextual approach. These students acquire skills for developing an ethnic service, making contextual music, and preaching in the Moluccan Malay. As an institution that ‘produces’ ministers, UKIM teaches students how to study Moluccan culture in relation to liturgical elements, so that they, as future ministers, can build an ethnic service from a theological point of view rather than from a performance perspective.

In addition to capacity building, a clear explanation of the concept of contextualization has to teach the purpose of the ethnic service and the meaning of a contextual service to the congregants. The GPM and *klasis* facilitate and coordinate the establishment and socialization of the ethnic service in many different places, by helping to improve its quality and by practicing or rehearsing the different elements. Experts give conferences, workshops, and seminars, which demonstrates the strong commitment of the GPM to stimulate congregations to use Moluccan culture in worship. The theological ideal is an *ibadah etnis* that is thought through and practiced in a full way. The ethnic service, then, enables congregants to experience worship from their own culture because of their reception of

the transmitted symbolic meaning and their own theological thinking on the basis of Moluccan identity. However, the achievement of this ideal level of implementation requires a long process.

In Ambon City, almost all congregations have already implemented the *ibadah etnis*. Despite the fact that not many original cultural sources are directly available to use in an ethnic service, the close relations between these city congregations and the synod board (where the new policies originate) result in a relative fast implementation of the ethnic service in these places.⁴⁰

Ministers and *majelis* teams have to put the idea of the ethnic service into practice, because of the hierarchical church structure. This hierarchical implementation can even cause competition between congregations, for the execution of the ethnic service is regarded as a proof of ability, which can increase one's status. In this light, the implementation of the ethnic service is done according to repetition and imitation, although the term 'ethnic' seems to point to something unique. In part, the reception of the ethnic service by congregants is also determined by this hierarchical structure. Many Moluccan people just agree with what higher-ranked persons in their church say.⁴¹

The ethnic service is not yet implemented in all Protestant congregations in places that are located further away from the GPM synod board. Often (and paradoxically), the contextual sources – such as native language, dance, music, and more – are still being practiced in these areas in *adat* contexts, but not in the church.⁴² A minister whom I spoke to indicated that he had never experienced an ethnic service himself, and did not yet understand the concept behind the ethnic service. This minister said that he had no knowledge about the mechanisms or techniques for how to set up an ethnic service, because in his *klasis*, a system of execution did not yet exist. The implementation of the ethnic service, thus, relies on the understanding of the concept and methods by ministers, as well as on the willingness, ability, and creativity of ministers and *majelis* teams.⁴³ Apart from these factors, money and resources form practical limitations.

40 The situations in which the ethnic service is most often applied are official GPM gatherings and politically oriented events. The first context makes sense, as the GPM is the source of the ethnic policy, and the second context points to the close relation between the church and local politics regarding the effort of ethnic revival.

41 This is also the reason why congregants are rarely critical of the ethnic service.

42 An example is the village of Yalahatan in Seram. Although the people from Yalahatan practice all kinds of native elements in daily life and ritual, an ethnic service has not yet been implemented (at the time of the research).

43 Moreover, theologian Steve Gaspersz noted how some ministers might feel inferior or jealous, as no one will ever be capable of designing an ethnic service like Chris Tamaela did.

Together with congregational attitudes, these realities shape the context to which an ethnic service has to be adjusted. In the end, a match between congregational practices and the attitudes of congregants needs to be made. Some congregants might see certain ethnic forms as secular or syncretistic. Others might prefer a mix with elements that they regard as modern. Ministers and *majelis* teams have to take congregational opinions as such into account when putting the ethnic service into practice.

In short, the implementation of the *ibadah etnis* involves a sequence of actions. The GPM develops contextual policies and studies cultural forms from various areas that can serve as contextual sources. Ministers need to be educated about how to develop an ethnic service and how to deliver a theological message on the basis of cultural symbols. If ministers do not understand the contextual idea and process, they pose a danger to the entire project, as ministers can influence the congregation in unintended ways that are deemed wrong by Moluccan theologians. Again, this hierarchical structure demonstrates the control that is being exercised over the practice of contextual theology. Lastly, a thorough explanation during the sermon and contextual practices in the worship service aim at the socialization of the theological idea of the ethnic service among congregants.

The implementation of traditional church music is one component within the implementation of the ethnic service. Ideally, traditional rhythms and instruments are used to accompany spiritual songs that have been inspired by Moluccan cultural life. Experts on music travel to congregations to encourage people to use traditional music in church. These experts prepare congregations by practicing music together. The experts also give workshops about how to realize traditional church music. In addition to practically assisting congregations to implement traditional church music, theological education and writings on the contextualization of church music are also instruments of implementation.

The quality of the implementation of traditional church music is an important factor that influences the reception of congregants. Apart from the *suling*, the Moluccan Protestant church has no religious traditional instruments, which means that traditional music from outside the church enters the worship. To design and arrange this transition, musical knowledge and a sense of familiarity with both religious and cultural contexts are needed. The person who possesses this type of knowledge may be a minister, a *majelis* member, or someone else in the congregation. In any case, he or she must

Gaspersz said: "You have to spend half of your life to learn [to be] like Christian Tamaela." This feeling might diminish people's motivation (Interview with Steve Gaspersz).

have the capability and creativity for developing traditional church music in such a way that the congregants learn about the meaning and purpose of this music in church, because a feeling of both spirituality and Moluccan identity is aroused. Furthermore, context and congregational attitudes are important. An example are collaborations between traditional and modern instruments to address contemporary life, global influences, and preferences of the youth, while also enhancing interest in traditional music.

In congregations that are located further away from Ambon City, where people use traditional music in daily and ritual life, it is possible to fully build traditional church music from these musical *adat* sources. Ideally, this possibility results in feelings of increased understanding, closeness, strength, and identity. However, it is rare to find places in the Central Moluccas where this result has already been achieved.⁴⁴ In almost all Central Moluccan villages in which people practice and have knowledge about traditional music, a strict separation between culture and religion is being maintained. Chris Tamaela explained that in areas where *adat* practices are very strong, people are afraid to use their traditional music in church, because they fear that this ‘mixing’ is not allowed – both from a Christian and an ancestral position. Conversely, Christian people in the city are generally more open to the use of traditional church music, because they no longer have such a strong connection to *adat* and the ancestors.

In conclusion, the implementation of traditional church music is based on knowledge, capability, creativity, quality, and context. To put the theological idea of traditional church music into practice (according to the theological ideal and intention), a close connection between all layers of the ‘idea-to-practice’ process must be accomplished. This means that specific UKIM theologians, GPM officials, ministers, and musicians agree on the content and purpose of the idea of traditional church music, on the interpretation of central discursive terms in the contextual process of transformation, and on the direction and execution of traditional church music.

Opinions about the Ethnic Service

The resonances or dissonances between the people who are involved in the idea-to-practice process are reflected in opinions about the ethnic service

44 Often, such an implementation of traditional church music is only possible in areas that were less influenced or less controlled by the Dutch missionaries during colonial times. Generally, this does not apply to the Central Moluccas.

and traditional church music. Generally, all Moluccan theologians support the idea, since the *ibadah etnis* is the most practical expression of contextual theology and was established through the cooperation between UKIM and the GPM. Different opinions among theologians mainly concern gradations regarding the boundaries that determine what is possible to use and do in contextual theology. Also, Moluccan theologians sometimes disagree on what 'context' means in the ethnic service, which relates to the balance between the traditional cultural context and the contemporary context. For example, for some theologians, a too-tight focus on traditional culture negates the purpose of contextualization: the Christian religion needs to match people's lifeworlds to increase their understanding and identification. For instance, theologian Steve Gaspersz supports the decision of the GPM to establish an ethnic service, but thinks that the concept or perspective of basing worship on Moluccan culture is not yet fully accepted. In Gaspersz' opinion, the church is somewhat reluctant to reinterpret and use aspects of Moluccan traditional culture, which results in an ethnic service that is not profoundly different from a regular Sunday service. According to Gaspersz, serious attention has to be paid to several cultural features – such as the ancestors – and their connection to Christianity in *Maluku*.

Students who attend classes of contextual theologians have a positive stance towards the *ibadah etnis*. The students are familiar with the contextual discourse, and know the meaning, purpose, and process of the ethnic service, as they are closely positioned to the theological sources.

Since the ethnic service is part of the official GPM policy and, therefore, needs to be executed, ministers did not openly express their opinion about the contextual idea. Many ministers just want to organize the *ibadah etnis* because of the church hierarchy, in order to show that they are capable of implementing GPM policy. However, the manner in which they organize an ethnic service reflects the attitudes of ministers and their *majelis* teams. Often, more conservative mindsets (mindsets that – from UKIM's perspective – are less contextual in the sense of Bible-centered, anti-cultural, and exclusivist attitudes) result in a thin ethnic coating over the usual worship content. For many ministers, the ethnic shift is hard to digest, as these ministers were raised and educated with the idea that cultural customs are contrary to the Christian faith. Other ministers (mainly in places that are located further away from Ambon City) want to execute the new ethnic policy, but do not have the resources, knowledge, or capability to develop an ethnic service. A minister commented that he needed to prepare a strategy of socialization, because his congregation would not accept the ethnic

service at this moment.⁴⁵ Conversely, a small group of progressive, creative ministers greatly appreciates the initiative of the ethnic service, as these ministers have already developed services that match the cultural context of their congregations. These progressive ministers are able to build an *ibadah etnis* from bottom-up, based on a contextual-theological perspective that permeates the whole worship. They criticize the ethnic service when the traditional elements are merely a superficial appreciation of culture. Minister Jacky Manuputty called this practice a 'temptation,' instead of a blessing. When Manuputty organizes an ethnic service, every detail needs to be interconnected with all other details: "The interconnection between the elements is really important. The practicing is really important. The sound system is really important. I have to check all the cables!"⁴⁶ In line with UKIM theologians, these ministers strive to realize a complete ethnic service. Often, the progressive ministers experience limitations because of certain unchanged dogmas within the GPM. A related, progressive group of specific UKIM theologians and ministers would like to see the GPM moving in a full contextual direction, which would include the revision of certain doctrines. Theologian Peter Salenusca discerned five different groups of ministers regarding their opinions about the ethnic service: (1) some ministers execute the ethnic service because they have to according to GPM policies; (2) some ministers execute the ethnic service because other ministers do this too; (3) some ministers do not organize ethnic services because they do not know how to do it (in other words, these ministers do not have the capability and knowledge to develop an ethnic service); (4) some ministers organize the ethnic service because they feel comfortable with the idea and practice; (5) and some (mainly older) ministers do not organize an ethnic service, because they have a traditional Calvinist mindset.

The majority of Moluccan congregants did not express an opinion about the ethnic service. They feel it is not their place to comment on how things are done in church. Most congregants said that they simply go to church to participate in the worship. Therefore, I had to ask alternative questions about the relation between culture and religion to study congregational attitudes towards the *ibadah etnis* and the underlying idea, which I address in the next paragraph. Only one couple anonymously expressed their discontent with the ethnic service to me. For them, the ethnic service

45 This example, again, demonstrates how 'context' can mean something different from what contextual theologians at UKIM intend, namely, congregational context as anti-contextual in the theological sense.

46 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

creates a confusing combination between *adat* and God. The man felt as if the worship is not only about God any longer and as if God is put in second place, which contradicted his belief. Moreover, the man said that certain indigenous terms should not be used in church, because an association with the ancestors has to be prevented. For the woman, the ethnic service results in a vague mix of incomprehensible elements. To her, the *ibadah etnis* is an exploration that does not fit in the church: “*kurang pas*,” she said.⁴⁷ According to the woman, the space for religion should differ from the space for culture. Since her childhood, she has been used to a certain church ritual, which is ordinary to her and which she enjoys. This is a service that is neat and tranquil. When the woman experienced an ethnic service, she wondered: what is this? She felt forced to experience an *ibadah etnis*. The service felt impure and unnatural, also because she, in her eyes, is living a modern life. According to these two congregants, not everything can be implemented to praise God: “We don’t live an ethnic life!”⁴⁸

Critical perspectives as such were not represented at all when I asked ministers and others about congregational responses to the ethnic service. In similar ways, ministers, theologians, and GPM officials said that the ethnic service is a way to preserve Moluccan culture and identity. According to this group, the church is full when an *ibadah etnis* is organized. They said that Moluccan people experience the worship in an excited and happy manner (*sukacita*), because the congregants “live the faith in their world, in everyday life, in history [and] culture.”⁴⁹ In the ethnic service, congregants learn that religion is not separated from traditional culture. The church members can connect with God and their own identity, by realizing that they have their own culture in this religious space (*kita pun budaya*). According to many ministers, theologians, and GPM officials, congregants enjoy the ethnic service, feel proud, and understand the message better. To a great extent, these second-hand/indirect opinions of congregants are true.⁵⁰ It seems that many Moluccan people appreciate the *ibadah etnis*, and mainly refer to the importance of the ethnic service in relation to the regeneration and preservation of Moluccan culture. This general feeling reflects how the contextual shift is implemented and received in a rather fast and successful way. The fact that a revival of Moluccan culture

47 *Kurang pas* means ‘less suitable.’

48 Interview with Anonymous (November 19, 2019, and December 19, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

49 Interview with Anonymous (December 9, 2019, Saparua). Translation by the author.

50 In Chapter 4, I already presented the indirect opinions of congregants about contextual theology in general. This part is about the practical implementation of the ethnic service specifically.

is also effectuated via political regulations and education helps furthering the habituation of the focus on one's own cultural identity. However, the enjoyment and appreciation of culture is exactly the level up to which the ethnic service is accepted by Moluccan congregants. The 'deeper' aspect of theologizing on the basis of culture – which is the perspective of UKIM and the future aim of the GPM – is not yet being received and understood by the majority of the congregants. Many Moluccan people do not see a profound relation between culture and religion. Most Moluccan Protestants regard the ethnic service as just another form to praise God. A congregant stated: "I agree, because the aim is to praise God. It is fine if ethnic worship is enforced in worship."⁵¹ Some people, mostly in villages located further away from Ambon City, did not even recognize a service as ethnic, let alone that these congregants experience an *ibadah etnis* in a fundamentally different way. This practical reality became clear when I asked people if their church had already organized an ethnic service. Once, a congregant said yes, and when I continued asking about how that specific service had looked like, she referred to the service that we had just attended, which was a regular Sunday service. Another time, a man told me that his church had not yet organized an ethnic service. Then, the minister of that congregation (who was also present during the conversation) immediately interrupted him, correcting the statement and explaining to the man that the ethnic service was the time when the congregants wore different clothes. The episode demonstrated how the meaning of the ethnic service had not reached this person, how the concept had not been communicated in a profound way, and how the minister attached great value to showing me that his congregants actually knew something about the ethnic service (although this was not the case). The feeling of enjoyment or indifference among Moluccan congregants does not take away the fact that some – mostly older, traditional-conservative – congregants reject the ethnic service, because they think the ethnic service leads to syncretism or secular influence.⁵² Interestingly, secular influence and syncretism are closely related. Traditional forms are regarded as both ancestral powers and as non-Christian, secular culture.

People who clearly expressed their opinion about the ethnic service were, generally, religious people who are less involved in the institution

51 Interview with Anonymous (December, 1, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

52 I did not speak with people who had this negative opinion, except for the couple's opinion that I presented already. Other people, such as theologians, stated that there always is a group of people who does not agree with the current contextual direction of the GPM. Apart from traditional-conservative congregants, younger church members sometimes also do not like the ethnic direction of the GPM. They prefer modern music and might transfer to Pentecostal churches.

of the church. Their position allowed them to critique certain aspects of the ethnic service. Often, the criticism was about the quality. To these Moluccan Protestants, the 'aesthetics of persuasion' are not strong enough to generate authenticity. In other words, the way in which an ethnic service is often organized does not generate an authentic sense of Moluccanness for them. Although they view the initiative of the ethnic service as valuable, the practice of the ethnic service lacks meaning. A journalist whom I spoke to stated that, for her, the ethnic service in Ambon feels like 'seasoning' or 'clothing.' Several unrelated elements are assembled as a coating or layer, preventing her from experiencing the worship service in a profound way, based on who she is as a Moluccan Christian. She said that she would love to feel the connection with her ancestral cultural identity in church, but so far, this feeling has not yet happened.⁵³ Another person expressed the same opinion, calling the ethnic service an experiment and an attraction. For him, there is no balance or deeper meaning in the current ethnic service, which diminishes the spiritual purpose and feeling. In general, issues of quality deal with content and 'lay-out.' Content-wise, the ethnic service is seen as superficial and incomplete.⁵⁴ These critical people think that efforts need to be made to turn the ethnic service into a profound, holistic worship service, by using more ethnic elements and interconnecting these elements through contextual theology. Practically, acoustics and sound systems need to be improved, and congregations need to prepare and rehearse in order to execute the ethnic service in a thorough way. Because the *ibadah etnis* is a recent development, people recognize and understand that the ethnic service is not yet executed in the fullest and ideal theological way.

Among musicians, the opinions about the ethnic service differed greatly. Some musicians criticized the concept and quality of the ethnic service, precisely because they have musical knowledge. A musician stated that he did not understand the word *etnis*. To him, *etnis* means pure cultural forms that are untouched by outside forces. However, all kinds of different cultural elements are mixed in the ethnic service. It should be noted that the idea of the ethnic service, as intended by theologians and the GPM, is not based on the literal meaning of the term 'ethnic.' *Etnis* merely denotes the contextual approach, which allows mixing and merging as the service should connect with the congregants' cultural identity in a contemporary context. Conversely, other musicians saw the ethnic service as a symbol of

53 The lack of identification is one of the reasons that she stopped going to church.

54 Not only by religious people who no longer attend church, but also by some ministers, musicians, and theologians when they evaluated the current practical state of the ethnic service.

cultural appreciation. To these people, the atmosphere in church changes, as people can feel the cultural richness based on their identity as a Moluccan.⁵⁵

The last category of opinions about the ethnic service concerns a group that is often forgotten in the theological discourse: Moluccans who adhere to native religion. Some of the ethnic religious groups do not approve of Christians using native cultural elements and symbols in church. For these people, the elements are not merely cultural, but also religious. Here, the issue of appropriation and ownership becomes clear. Whereas Moluccan Protestants filter and transform the cultural forms to be able to use the forms in Christian liturgy (safely securing and controlling these forms as part of the cultural realm), native people see contextualization and the ethnic service as a dangerous practice of mixing, which is not allowed by the ancestors. Mixing is prohibited, precisely because the cultural forms are part of a religious realm too. For these ethnic religious groups, the cultural forms that serve as sources for the ethnic service are not cultural heritage, but their contemporary religious lives. Examples are the use of native languages for reading the Bible (see the paragraph 'The Aesthetics of Language') or the wearing of the *ikat kepala* by young men in church.⁵⁶ Native people's disapproval of the ethnic service is also an issue of protection and preservation. These people consciously choose to adhere to their native religion, and feel that they are being threatened by contextual Christian practices. Concerning this issue, Chris Tamaela stated that the GPM should enter into a dialogue with native groups, in order to establish intercommunication and exchange. According to Tamaela, the GPM should explain the contextual process and transformation of the cultural forms, demonstrating how the contextual efforts are not aimed at Christianizing, but at worshipping as Moluccan Christians through the Moluccan culture that also belongs to Moluccan Christians. In fact, both Moluccan theologians and native people do not want a mixing of native religious forms and Christianity. The question is whether Moluccan theologians sufficiently address the religious meaning of the cultural forms that they use for contextual theology and the ethnic service. The separation of religion and culture is not only a colonial legacy among religious attitudes of Moluccan congregants and ministers that needs to be countered with

55 Often, the term to describe this atmosphere is *enak*. *Enak* has a very broad meaning. It means something like delicious, nice, good, comfortable, or pleasant.

56 Especially children form a point of contestation. Often, among ethnic religious groups, the *ikat kepala* can only be worn after initiation or marriage, which is why they see the wearing of the red headband by children in church as an impossibility and insult.

contextualization, but also a theological requirement of control, to prevent associations with native, ancestral religion.

Opinions about Traditional Church Music

People's opinions about traditional church music are strongly related to the opinions about the ethnic service, as traditional church music is one element within this framework. Concerning music specifically, opinions are connected to preferences of instruments and hymnbooks. In spite of the fact that many congregants felt that the desired answer to my question about which music or songbook they liked the most was 'I like them all equally,' some people expressed their favorites or talked about favorites of others in general.⁵⁷

These favorites are closely entangled with generation, place, and memory. If the *suling* was no longer played in a specific congregation, mostly older congregants stated that they love this accompaniment of the flute the most, because they grew up with the *suling*. Therefore, the instrument evokes nostalgic sentiments. As a congregant described: "the sound of the *suling* instrument calms the heart and mind when we listen to it, like it gives us peace in life."⁵⁸ Younger people generally do not enjoy the *suling* that much, mainly because the younger generation is not used to the peculiar sound and unstable pitch of the *suling*, although some appreciate the atmosphere of former times and village life that the instrument evokes. In places where the *suling* ensemble has been preserved and regenerated, such as in Soya, most congregants – young and old – see this instrument as the best fitting and perfect instrument to accompany worship. A young woman explained: "When you come in church and you hear the *suling*, your heart is so blessed. It is closer, calmer."⁵⁹ An older man from Soya clarified that the congregants in Soya prefer to attend worship in a quiet, serene (*syahdu*) form, not wanting any interference that affects their hearing. This is why the congregants in Soya prefer bamboo flutes, because the sound is soothing and feels comfortable and calm "when praising God. The people from Soya perceive worship that is accompanied by the *suling* as more direct and sincere.

57 The fact that most people did not want to disclose their opinion to me is, again, related to the issue of hierarchy. Even the indication of preferences is felt to be an opinion or critique on how things are done in church, which is why most congregants said that they liked all instruments and all hymnbooks.

58 Interview with Anonymous (November 17, 2019, Hutumuri). Translation by the author.

59 Interview with Bella Soplanit. Translation by the author.

In general, the majority of congregants enjoys the keyboard with synthesizer effect.⁶⁰ The keyboard is a trend, can be found in almost every congregation of the GPM, and is capable of innumerable instrumental sounds. The keyboard is a symbol of modernity. By extension, the Maranatha church has a permanent band to accompany the church service. Although the age range of the congregants of the Maranatha church is broad, elderly people usually do not really enjoy a full band in church, because for them, a religious service should be tranquil, solemn, and meditative. A band, in their eyes, produces a happy, energetic atmosphere that is contrary to how a church service should feel like.⁶¹ Lastly, the loudness of brass music disturbs the spiritual atmosphere for some congregants. Other congregants intrinsically connect brass to the identity of the Moluccan Protestant church. For this latter group, for example, the trumpet can give people goosebumps and establishes a sense of contact with God.

The names of the various hymnbooks were sometimes used to denote generations of congregants, demonstrating how people's favorites are related to age. This generally means that elderly Moluccan Protestants love the DSL or NR (*Mazmur dan Nyanyian Rohani*), middle-aged people prefer the KJ (*Kidung Jemaat*) or PKJ (*Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat*), and younger people like the NJGPM or more charismatic, ecumenical songs, although they enjoy the PKJ/KJ as well.⁶² People who prefer the KJ and PKJ generally stated that the translations of these hymnbooks are good, whereas the language of the DSL or NR is harder to understand, because these older hymnbooks were written in archaic terms. Moreover, the KJ is the hymnbook that is used most often, which results in the fact that most Moluccan congregants are familiar with these songs (indeed, most people have the standard package of the Bible and the KJ compiled into one book). Consequently, during the church service, the volume of singing KJ songs is high, which increases the joyful experience of worship according to many congregants. Although the NJGPM is the newest hymnbook, the book is appreciated by a broad range of

60 Interestingly, I met several Moluccan musicians who had studied musicology, and they often preferred the organ sound of the keyboard, which resembles the sound of organs in Dutch Protestant churches. For these musicians, this organ sound felt very sacred. Several theologians whom I met also preferred the organ sound. To me, the preference of the organ sound seemed the opposite of a contextual approach. The musical preferences demonstrated the entangled reality of Christian colonial legacies, contextual theology, and church music.

61 Younger people prefer modern musical accompaniment and a full band, precisely because of this happy and energetic atmosphere that the band can generate in the church service.

62 I explained the abbreviations of the hymnbooks in Chapter 2. See also the glossary at the end of the book.

people, because many Moluccans value the fact that the hymns have been composed by locals, are written in the Moluccan dialect, and make use of Moluccan cultural terms.

The classification of favorite hymnbooks is not only drawn along generational lines, but also – and, perhaps, more strongly – along memory and upbringing. The way in which people grow up, acquire religious knowledge, and experience religious spirituality is formed by specific music and songs. I spoke to several young women who chose the DSL as their favorite hymnbook, because their religious formation had been shaped by these hymns and the poetry, words, style, and atmosphere that are attached to the songs of the DSL. For these women, the book is connected to their villages of origin, where they attended worship in a tranquil, solemn, and serene manner. Although the women, nowadays, live in the city, where the church service can be loud, crowded, and festive, they still prefer the form of worship from their pasts. The religious forms of their childhood feel true and right, and allow the young women to focus on God and to remember the religious message in daily life.⁶³ Moreover, for these women, the words of the DSL hymns match their feelings, since these hymns are known for a textual focus on living one's life together with God. One woman stated about singing these hymns: "I seem to be talking directly to God."⁶⁴

In other words, elderly generations (people who are approximately sixty years of age and older) prefer older songbooks and instruments that match a tranquil, slow, and serene church service, whereas younger generations prefer newer songbooks and modern instruments that match an energetic, happy church service. In the end, preferences are shaped by what feels ordinary and comfortable to people – instruments, songs, atmospheres, and styles that have built one's inner feeling of religiosity and, therefore, touch the heart. This musical network has partly shaped the core of people's religious identity, which is the reason why it is hard to put religious-musical feelings into words. The formation of religious identities through church music might also explain why it is hard to change or introduce new congregational music.

The preferences for songs and music also form part of the context of contextual theology, in which the ethnic service and traditional church music are implemented. Furthermore, the preferences form the context of people's opinions about traditional church music. Strikingly, Moluccan traditional music was never named first when I asked people about their favorite instruments in church. This demonstrates that not many Moluccan

63 Instead of merely sitting, listening, and going home.

64 Interview with Vally.

people are familiar with the possibility of this type of music as church music. Congregants are not yet used to traditional music in church, because they have almost never experienced it, which points to the previously discussed practical reality. The first association with a Moluccan traditional instrument in church that came to people's mind was the *suling*. The *suling*, by definition, is a religious instrument and forms part of Christian-Moluccan heritage. When I, subsequently, referred to other Moluccan traditional instruments, such as the *tifa*, many congregants stated that it was indeed important to use these traditional instruments in church as well to preserve Moluccan culture. Thus, Moluccan congregants more easily linked traditional church music to preservation than to theological thinking based on the relation between culture and religion.

Most Moluccan people have a rather indifferent attitude towards traditional church music, as long as the music has the purpose to praise God (*puji Tuhan*). However, some young people simply stated that they preferred modern instruments over traditional ones. An informant said: "I am more used to the use of modern music, because it excites us in singing. With traditional music [...] I feel less excited. When we sing we must adjust to the sound. [...] It is not full singing."⁶⁵ Another congregant explained why he felt that traditional music was less fitting in church. This person told me that he is used to harmonic music, whereas traditional music is more rhythmic. To him, traditional music seems randomly assembled, as if the music is made from vague sounds of nature, which are not right for church. The man has lived his whole life in Ambon City and grew up with Western music. The Western music, to him, is his culture and, in his opinion, one cannot be forced to suddenly like 'original' Moluccan culture and music. Considering his own life context, the man thought that traditional church music does not mean contextualization. Among other reasons for disliking or disapproving of traditional church music (mostly among elderly congregants) is the perceived connection of this music with ancestral spirits and *adat*.

In short, the majority of Moluccan congregants enjoys traditional church music as one of the ways to accompany worship. This majority does not theologize traditional church music on the basis of a contextual perspective that links culture and religion, but sees the music as an effort of preservation. A small group of congregants disapproves of traditional church music on the basis of an anti-cultural (traditional-conservative) religious mindset. A slightly bigger group disapproves of the music on the basis of a regarded mismatch with modern lifestyles. Nevertheless, another small group of

65 Interview with Anonymous (December 1, 2019, Ambon). Translation by the author.

congregants is very happy with traditional church music and feels that, in this way, the church service expresses what they have and are as Moluccan Protestants. Through music, these people experience their belief from their cultural identity, on the basis of a more profound theological connection between culture and religion. These latter opinions are generated through the network of idea-to-practice implementation, when quality, context, explanation, capability, and creativity are assured through a mutual understanding of core terms among all actors involved.

Christian and Cultural Ancestors

The ancestors form part of native religion, Moluccan culture, and traditional music, and they constitute the chain of preservation. At the same time, the Moluccan ancestors have an important and special position in relation to Moluccan Protestantism. This paragraph delineates the ways in which the ancestors are conceptualized, which entangles Moluccan culture and Christianity through the idea of the traditional.

Contestations regarding the boundaries of contextual theology, the ethnic service, and traditional church music point to the ancestors. During colonial times, Christian missionaries pushed the Moluccan ancestors to the realm of culture and prohibited the belief in the powers of human ancestral spirits. As said, the Dutch missionaries constructed a separation between religion and culture. Because, in Moluccan cosmology, the ancestors have formed the central entity in life as a whole, anything culturally related was banished from church. Keane (2007) explains how the underlying semiotic ideology (imposed by the Dutch) connected to ideas of agency and modernity that were fraught with moral implications. As Keane (2007, 4–5) states, these ideas involved intuitions about historical progress – intuitions that “center on the idea that modernity is, or ought to be, a story of human liberation from a host of false beliefs and fetishisms that undermine freedom.” Keane goes on to describe how the Dutch-Indonesian colonial encounter was situated within a Protestant strand that runs parallel to certain ways of understanding modernity. Progress is not only a matter of improvements in technology, economic well-being, or health, but is also about human emancipation and self-mastery. As people become modern, they realize the true character of human agency, whereas antimoderns persist in displacing their own agency onto traditions or fetishes (Keane 2007, 6–7). Here, I use Keane’s terminology, on which basis the Dutch Calvinists made their distinctions. The Moluccan ancestors were put into the category of ‘unmodern fetishism,’ as – in the

eyes of the Dutch – ancestor worship reflected false beliefs, whereby agency and power were assigned to deceased human spirits.

The effects of this semiotic regime have been strong. Moluccan Protestants make a distinction between appreciating or respecting the ancestors (which is allowed) and worshipping the ancestors (which is not allowed). Moluccan Protestants would never say that the ancestors have a place in church, because the prohibition of ancestor worship has been taught to generations of Moluccan Protestants over the course of more than three centuries. This prohibition and separation are also the reason why contextual theology is such a large shift. Moluccan Christianity is being re-theologized on the basis of cultural identity, which means that culture enters church. This process is precarious and dangerous, because for many Moluccan Protestants, their culture remains connected to the ancestral spirits. For Moluccan people, the ancestors are present and have powers in reality, in daily life, but not in church. In fact, the semiotic ideology underlying the ancestors did not change. Moluccan people, generally, do not see the ancestors as fetishes, and they assign agency to ancestral beings. In that sense, the Dutch semiotic ideology was not ‘copied’ into Moluccan cosmology. However, the ancestors became confined to the cultural realm because of the influence of the Dutch semiotic ideology. The perceived existence of the Moluccan ancestors, therefore, causes an even bigger contestation when culture mingles with religion. Moluccan Christianity has been built on the separation between culture and religion through the missionaries’ semiotic ideology. The latter, however, did not change the semiotic ideology underlying conceptions about the ancestors themselves. The Moluccan Protestants took over a discernment of spaces. In a way, both semiotic ideologies strengthened each other in guarding the religious realm.

This is why the ideas of Chris Tamaela have been controversial. Many Moluccans perceived Tamaela’s music as instruments to summon the ancestors’ spirits, whereas Tamaela himself clearly distinguished between human and divine ancestors. The work of minister Jacky Manuputty is another controversial example. Manuputty actually goes much further in practicing contextual theology. For instance, minister Manuputty uses the concept of the Catholic saint to bring all religions together. For Manuputty, the saints are like ancestors, mediating between human beings and God. The medium is part of different religious systems, but all people direct themselves to a shared sacred One. Manuputty said: “I join the line in the mosque. I go and pray there. I go to the synagogue. I pray everywhere!

[...] I pray to the other Gods.”⁶⁶ In this way, Manuputty also includes the Moluccan ancestors. Minister Manuputty severely critiqued people who, in the contextual processes, take *adat* as an instrument only and cut off the spirit that lies behind. This practice affects the people who adhere to native religion. Manuputty said: “Common, you really hurt them! [...] You have to reconcile what you say about God with the ancestors or what they say about holiness. On their terms! You cannot say: we don’t believe it, it is like paganism, but the cultural instrument is very great, [and] we can use it.”⁶⁷ For Manuputty, such practices are examples of empty contextualization. He holds the opinion that the ancestors need to be reconciled with God. Interestingly, Manuputty’s approach pushes the boundaries of many contextual theologians at UKIM, who often work on the level of symbolism. He certainly pushes the boundaries of the doctrinal stances of the GPM.⁶⁸ Jacky Manuputty is a rare example of a creative actor who has always been working from his own contextual theology. By paying attention to the full meaning of context, he is able to touch the congregants.⁶⁹

Few Moluccan Protestants would agree with Jacky Manuputty’s approach (at least on a discursive level). In their use of words, most Moluccan people maintain a strict separation between the ancestors and the church – between culture and religion. Since many congregants did not express their opinion about the ethnic service and traditional church music, I asked whether they thought that a relation between culture and religion exists. Some people said yes and, subsequently, either referred to church culture or to Moluccan culture, but not to the entanglement between the two.⁷⁰ Some (older) people said no. In line with traditional-conservative theology, Christianity and culture each have their own space in these people’s eyes. However, the majority did not understand my question. The dissonance meant that, for many people, the relation that I asked about was not an issue that Moluccan

66 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

67 Interview with Jacky Manuputty.

68 General secretary Elifas Maspaitea stated: “In our church doctrine, we respect the ancestors as our parents. [...] But we don’t believe that they have the power to control the world. Just respect. Because they are the first generation whom God sent, and through them we are here now” (Interview with Elifas Maspaitea). The position and way of working of minister Jacky Manuputty also relate to the opinions about the ethnic service of Moluccan native people, that I discussed in the former paragraph.

69 The example of minister Jacky Manuputty also illustrates the mediating, in-between position of the ministers that I discussed in Chapter 4.

70 A few people did, although incidentally. Most people (not only congregants but also ministers) started referring to how things are done in church or to cultural customs, such as *pela*, *masohi*, dances, *sasi*, music, etc.

congregants thought or spoke of. In contextual theology, culture and religion are central terms, whereas for most of the congregants, they are not. The theological idea-level and discourse, thus, did not correlate with religious attitudes in practice. This does not mean that congregants do not accept cultural forms in church, such as traditional music, as part of the ethnic service. Most people related to this development in another way, by embedding cultural contextualization in the broader societal discourse of preservation and heritage, instead of contextual theology. In that sense, people viewed the culture-religion relation through the recognition of Moluccan traditions and identity in church, but referred to the religious context as a place of preservation. For Moluccan congregants, the ancestors give authority to the necessity of preservation, because traditional culture and music were given to the Moluccans through the ancestral chain. For most Moluccan Protestants, the discourse of preservation is much safer, because, theologically, the two spaces of culture and religion stay separate. People do not start to believe in a different way through their cultural identity, but appreciate their cultural identity in church.

Because of its special position, the *suling* forms the exception (as I already referred to at the beginning of the chapter). The *suling* is seen as a traditional church instrument that has been passed down by the ancestors. Therefore, the *suling* should be preserved in church according to many Moluccan congregants. The *suling* is the perfect example of the intricate entanglement between Moluccan culture and Moluccan Christianity, in which the ancestors function as mediators. Nevertheless, for Moluccan people themselves, the position of the *suling* is not a conscious analytical stance, but a taken-for-granted reality. In short, people do not discursively conceptualize a theological relation between culture and religion on which the contextual approach of the ethnic service and traditional church music are based.

However, discourse differs from what people feel and from who people are. This is also the reason why minister Jacky Manuputty is actually rather successful in reaching his congregants via the contextual approach. Manuputty is able to design and explain worship on the basis of a practical reality, in which the ancestors play an important role. In cultural, daily life, Moluccan people ascribe power to the ancestors in the here and now. Moluccan people always maintain a close relationship with their ancestors and also with their ancestral home (*rumah tua*). Several people whom I met described that when they are away from home, they remember their ancestors in every situation that they face. I heard many stories that when Moluccan people experienced something unexplainable and powerful, they did not see such

an event as coincidence, but interpreted the event as ancestral power.⁷¹ A friend of mine explained that she respects her ancestors, because they created her life as a whole through many generations. She told me how her grandfather had prayed for her in the ancestral home, to always be protected overseas: "Therefore, I never ever feel alone. I have God, but I also have my ancestors who always protect me wherever I am."⁷² Although the ancestors are not visible, people can feel their presence. Although my friend explicitly stressed that she respects and does not worship the ancestors, her story illustrates the importance of the ancestors in people's lives. People pray to the ancestors and view them as powerful and protective.⁷³ Because of this lived reality, the long-standing relation between Moluccan Protestantism and Moluccan culture cannot be denied. Theologian Steve Gaspersz explained that most Moluccans keep their faith in the ancestors. Gaspersz gave an example of how people in a Christian village ask permission from the ancestors when they pass a certain tree. Gaspersz said: "this kind of belief, consciously or unconsciously, inserts in Christianity in *Maluku*."⁷⁴ Some ministers even pray in people's ancestral home, to solve certain personal problems by asking the ancestors for forgiveness (in addition to praying to God). In Gaspersz' experience, ministers who do such things are greatly respected among Moluccan Protestants, because these ministers are able to practically reconcile the ancestors with the Christian God. Hence, in practice, there has been a long process of contextualization of Moluccan culture in Protestant religion. For instance, I heard stories about a minister who blessed a coconut to strengthen the *sasi*; a Christian man feared that he had contracted tuberculosis as a punishment from the ancestors, because he had used his native language in church; and adherents of native religion prayed to all the ancestors in which they included Jesus and Mary. Moreover, in various traditional village churches, there is a separate place for the *raja* (who is the prime protector of *adat* and ancestral matters), such as in Soya or Booi (Saparua). Apart from this practical reality and the stories, Moluccan people also conceptually employ the terms 'ancestors' and '*adat*' in reference

71 For example, a person told me that he had once promised to visit his aunt and to stay the night in the ancestral home. However, he was very tired and decided to go back home that evening. When he entered the boat, it appeared that the motor was broken, and he had to stay the night. The man realized that this was the power of the ancestors, who pulled the boat back, because the ancestral home is holy.

72 Interview with Omy.

73 In turn, the power of the ancestors may also be harmful. It is believed that ancestral names can be used to do harm to others.

74 Interview with Steve Gaspersz.

to Moluccan Protestantism. Moluccans, for example, mentioned that they converted to Christianity through their ancestors. Christian culture, which, originally, is not Moluccan but derives from colonial, Dutch traditions, has become Moluccan Christianity. Such religious traditions, then, are referred to as *adat*. This Christian culture, thus, is not seen as colonial but as Moluccan, authorized by the ancestors. In other words, from various angles, culture and religion are practically entangled through the mediation of the ancestors. A practical example that brings together all these elements and arguments is the ritual of *cuci negeri*. *Cuci negeri* means 'cleaning the village.' The ritual continues to be practiced in several Moluccan villages. Originally, *cuci negeri* is an ancestral tradition. Nowadays, the ritual is linked to Christmas and New Year, for which Moluccan people physically and mentally prepare themselves by cleaning. A description of the ritual in Soya will follow below.⁷⁵

The Ritual of Cuci Negeri

Each year, the ritual of *cuci negeri* takes place in the second week of December. Originally, this time correlates with the natural arrival of strong winds, which make the village dirtier. Nowadays, *cuci negeri* is viewed as a preparation for Christmas. The whole process starts with the announcement of the *marinyo*, who invites everyone to partake in the ritual. When the *marinyo* screams in the evening, the ancestors arrive. All activities need to be stopped, and all children need to stay home and remain silent. If someone breaks this rule, he or she will be punished. The day after the announcement, a large meeting is held among a group of village men – including the *raja*, a representative of the school, and the minister – to discuss the preparation of the cleaning. In the meantime, the women prepare the food. The women start the cleaning on Wednesday. They clean the public space, the environment of the church, the school, and more. These women are called *mata ina*. The important criterium for a woman to become a *mata ina* is to be married.⁷⁶ In their *kabaya*, the women clean the village with a traditional broom while drinking *sopi*. The next day, the women continue to finish their tasks. On Thursday, a group of young and old men climbs the mountain Serimau.⁷⁷ Dressed in black and wearing the *ikat kepala*, the men sit, drink, and wait the

75 This description is based on the interview with Bella Soplanit.

76 Moreover, a woman has to have the right to become a *mata ina*, which is related to family names and ancestral lineage.

77 The men who are allowed to go are men who take the place of their father, their grandfather, etc. Hence, the climbing of the mountain is also based on ancestral lineage.

whole night. What happens during this time is a well-kept secret, although it is said that the men communicate with the ancestors, who talk to the young men via the old men. The next day, the men descend and are awaited by an ensemble of people, including the *mata ina*. A special group sits down and eats, such as the *raja* and his wife, the minister, the teacher, the *kepala soa*, and the *kepala adat*. Hereafter, the people enter the *baileo* (children are not allowed). Then, the *tifa* rhythm of Soya is played and the *mata ina* dance with specific leaves that are called *gadihu*. Responsorial songs are sung in the native language.⁷⁸ The *tahuri* is blown to mark the beginning of the ceremony. Afterwards, each family – excited and singing – goes to a natural pond (that belongs to that specific family), where the family members drink the water and are blessed by a *mata ina*. This part of the ritual is called *mata air*. Completely wet, everyone returns to a central place in the village to eat. This time is characterized by a lot of freedom. People dance and drink alcohol. After the eating, the ritual of *kain gandong* begins. The *kain gandong* is a large, white cloth. The people hold the cloth and make a huge circle, in which the villagers enter to symbolize togetherness. This ritual is accompanied by dancing, music, and singing. The procession with the cloth ends at the church, after which a traditional cake is served. The next day, on Saturday, the ritual of *makan patita* is held. The people go to the pond again to wash themselves, after which they eat, dance, and drink. On December 31, all the people from Soya attend church (dressed in black) to express their gratitude for the past year and to inaugurate a new year. At the end of January, another party is held to celebrate the start of the year. This is the last event within the ritual of *cuci negeri*.

The Traditional

The ritual of *cuci negeri* shows how, in Soya, as the people from Soya themselves say, “religion and culture walk together.” A person commented that if an outsider saw the villagers performing the ritual, he or she could think that “we worship the stones. But no, actually it is only an act of gratitude to God through His creation.”⁷⁹ The minister participates in the ritual of *cuci negeri* and the *adat* leaders attend church. The people from Soya call this constellation the *tiga batu tungku*, which means a triangle of the minister, teacher, and king, who are nothing without each other.⁸⁰ For the people in Soya, there is a strong relation between the ancestors and Christian religion,

78 Only a few people still know this language and the meaning of the words.

79 Interview with Anonymous (December 22, 2019, Soya).

80 The symbol *tiga batu tungku* refers to the construction that is built to make a fire.

because the ancestors have supported the people when Christianity was introduced. Everyone in Soya believes in this relation, including the minister. As a *negeri adat*, the people from Soya protect the rituals of the ancestors, which have formed the context in which Protestantism developed.

The traditional in Soya can be used to analyze the relation between theology and lived religion regarding the idea of traditional church music in the ethnic service. In Soya, Moluccan traditional culture in the form of *adat* is protected and preserved. At the same time, traditional-conservative theology (Bible- and God-centered) is maintained as well. On a theological, discursive level, the people do not conceptualize a profound relation between culture and religion. I argue that the reason for this separation is the practical, contextual relation between the two. In Soya, the cultural sources that form the inspiration for Moluccan contextual theology are still present. Moreover, *adat* and Christianity have a close relationship through the mediation of the ancestors. Because of the closeness between the two forms of traditional (theological-conservative and cultural), it is of vital importance not to cross the boundaries. Such a crossing would lead to perceived feelings of damage to people's religion and *adat* system. In the village of Yalahatan, the same dynamic can be recognized. Although *adat* and Christianity mutually influence each other, an ethnic service is not yet held, and traditional instruments are not used in church. Moluccan traditional instruments are associated with the adherents of native religion, who live next to the Christians in the same village, and from whom the Christians need to distinguish themselves to construct and experience a form of Christianity that they deem authentic.

Hence, because the two spaces of Moluccan traditional culture and Protestant religion are related, these spaces are protected through guarding the cultural and theological-traditional realm. A minister in Soya even said that because his village is a *negeri adat*, the inhabitants have to continue their traditional culture which, for him, included both *adat* and Christian culture, as these are one and the same thing.⁸¹ However, theologically, the belief in God would never mingle with *adat* or the ancestors, because in practice, this is actually the case. Ironically, the shift in theological mentality that is intended by Moluccan contextual theologians is more effective in places where the centuries-long automatic and practical contextualization has become less visible and influential.⁸² This also demonstrates how the

81 The accompaniment of the *suling* in the church in Soya is a perfect illustration.

82 The effectiveness of the relation between theology and lived religion, thus, has to do with the distance between the *adat* context that forms the source for the contextual approach and

ethnic revival is a modern movement. In places where traditional *adat* culture no longer plays a central role in daily life, people can easier grasp the theological idea and contextual discourse of the ethnic service and traditional church music. The lives of these people are practically further away from the traditional culture on which the ethnic service and traditional church music are based.

In sum, I say that the Moluccan ancestors are the core mediators of the traditional. In Chapter 6, I explained the analytical concept of the traditional (as a noun), which refers to the process through which something becomes regarded as traditionally Moluccan. Traditional as an adjective is defined by mixing and openness. I applied the concept of the traditional to music. Traditional Moluccan music is a construction of merging, by forces of time and relevance. Nevertheless, the music is deemed authentic through a conceptualized ancestral link, to the point that even innovative can mean traditional. This perspective on music is useful when looking at the interrelation between theology and lived religion concerning traditional church music within the frame of the ethnic service.

Currently, theological idea and religious practice are not often directly connected, because the actors who are involved in the idea-to-practice process define the key terms on which the contextual approach is based in diverse and contested ways. For instance, the term 'traditional' has at least three different meanings, the word 'ethnic' is confused with purity, the context of traditional theology is often neglected in Moluccan contextual theology, culture refers to the realms of Christian heritage, the Moluccan Protestant church and Moluccan traditions, and the ancestors are the focal point of debate in the process of contextualization. Nevertheless, I argue that the ethnic service has the potential to bridge the theological-contextual idea and practice of traditional church music. First, Moluccan modernity and traditional theology have to be accepted as contexts for Moluccan contextual theology. In other words, Moluccan theology should take into account the colonial heritage on which the Moluccan Protestant church has been built (and that feels comfortable to Moluccan congregants), and needs to be inspired by and embedded in contemporary life. Second, the automatic, centuries-long contextualization has to be acknowledged, through which Moluccan culture and Christian religion have already become entangled in a practical (not theological) way. Third, the practical importance of the

the implementation of contextual theology. I made this point for the ethnic service in general, but also for the use of local languages and traditional church music in the Moluccan Protestant church.

ancestors in Moluccan life has to be used in Moluccan contextual theology. With these three additional contextual efforts, as became clear during the research, capacity can be built to turn the theological idea into a holistic, practical reality.

In rare instances, this result has already been achieved. In that case, the practice of an ethnic service and traditional church music are both inspired by and inspire religious life and theological mentalities in a contextual way at the grassroots. In other words, Protestant theology and religious practice are based on cultural identity. This happens when close links between the actors involved are established through shared creativity, progressiveness, and contact with people from all layers of society. The project of Moluccan contextual theology is both based on and directed at these people. Hence, Moluccan theologians need to attend to context in the broadest sense of the word: theological; cultural; religious; traditional; modern; political; societal; local; ethnic; national; and international. The connected actors who are able to practice Moluccan contextual theology conceptualize context as being hybrid, not as being original or authentic.

I coined the concept of the traditional to grasp this hybrid dynamic. Moluccan church culture has been influenced by colonialism, which is reflected in certain mindsets and worship styles that are ordinary and, therefore, comfortable to Moluccan congregants, as these forms have defined and shaped people's religious identity. At the same time, Moluccan church culture has been influenced by Moluccan traditional culture. Despite missionary efforts, the semiotic ideologies concerning the ancestors and Moluccan cosmology have not changed (at least, not radically, in the sense that the view of the Dutch missionaries was not copied). These long processes of contextualization have blurred the realm of culture in mutual ways. Moluccan culture has become church culture, and Moluccan Protestantism has become Moluccan culture. Moluccan Protestantism has been developing over centuries of automatic, practical contextualization and is now being further contextualized on a theological level. Hence, I distinguish between the ways in which culture and religion have naturally and automatically become entangled through centuries of mutual influence, and the ways in which, nowadays, this entanglement is being consciously theologized by people themselves in a discursive sense.

For many Moluccan Protestants, Moluccan identity and Christian identity are one through the lineage of the ancestors. The ethnic service is a theological innovation that forms part of the processual chain of constructing the Moluccan traditional. At this point in time, changes in doctrinal rules and dogmas need to be made, which would break open the possibilities

(also, paradoxically, to address the valid context of traditional-conservative theological mindsets and the role of the ancestors) in order for the ethnic service to acquire its full potential.⁸³ The ethnic service is able to bridge theological idea and musical-religious practice, because the frame captures the openness and flexibility of the traditional. Namely, the Moluccan cultural context, in all its diversity and complexity, forms the source of the ethnic service. What this cultural context exactly entails (the entanglements described above) is changing, open, and mixed, but also perceived and felt as real and authentic. The theological transformation and practical implementation of the cultural forms can generate an expression and evocation of Moluccanness – with the ancestors as authoritative entity. Traditional church music, when developed and implemented based on these ideas of context and the traditional, grasps – as an informant said – the “sacred rhythm of the feeling with God.”⁸⁴ The music, then, fully arouses the sense of Moluccanness, by working from the open dynamics of Moluccan traditional music, Moluccan culture, and Moluccan Protestantism. As a central experiential and theological medium in worship, traditional church music makes people feel the work of God in Moluccan culture (and vice versa) through the Moluccan and Christian ancestors.

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83 To be clear, this, as well as the earlier three points that I formulated on the potential of the ethnic service, is not my personal opinion. It is based on statements made by Moluccan theologians.

84 Interview with Elifas Maspaitela.

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Conclusion

Abstract: The book *Traditional Tunes and Lived Religion in the Protestant Church on the Central Moluccas, Indonesia* is about how traditional music as framed within Moluccan contextual theology is interrelated with lived religion. The author uses Moluccan (church) music as a lens to gain insight in Moluccan cultural identity and religious practices. The introduction of two concepts, Moluccanness and the traditional, captures the openness and processes of authentication in the construction, implementation, and reception of Moluccan theology and Moluccan church music. The conclusion presents a summary of the chapters and formulates the central argument of the book, as well as the academic contributions. The book is an anthropology of theology about the relation between Christianity and Moluccan culture.

Keywords: Moluccan Protestant church; Traditional; Church music; Contextual theology; Moluccas; Anthropology of Christianity.

The sounds of the busy traffic in Ambon City rage around us
Cars honking, music blasting, motorcycles roaring
Everything is warm, humid, loud, and intense
Yet, in this dome of noise, we experience a secluded moment of silent
emotion
I am sitting across Vally
In the corner, on the terrace of café Sarinda, we talk about religion, music,
and life
Our words are flavored by the sweetness of the Indonesian delicacy that we
eat
Vally is a student at the theological university
At the age of seventeen, she lost her mother
I look into her beautiful, tearful, brown eyes
The feeling of loss is very strong
The first year was hard for me, continuing life without mama
But I am a person who never wants to fall apart – up to today, I am strong
I see her strength
Every day, from the early morning until the late evening, she studied
She took over her mother's role in Sunday school
Although she was tired, she continued, full of joy for what she was doing
When I remember my mother, I can finish everything I want
She was always singing
Before we prayed and when my mother was sick, we sang together
Vally sings
It is a hymn from the PKJ, the songbook that her mother loved
Her breakable voice breaks the cacophony of life around us
The sad smile on her face creates an emotional connection between us
I think inside myself, I have a place to become a minister
I can no longer see my mother being proud of me
I have a dream, and I must make my mother's dream come true
This is power, this is beauty, this is vulnerability, this is pride, this is love

The hymn that Vally sang said everything and more, and brought me the closest to an unreachable experience. The singing showed Vally's character, her life, her religiosity. The hymn showed music and singing as the heart of (religious) experience. The singing showed Vally's identity as a Moluccan Christian. The moment showed how a religious song, defined by its own context and history, continues to acquire and express new meanings in the personal and cultural contexts of people's lives, each time that the hymn is sung and played again.

In this book, I used Moluccan (church) music as a lens to gain insight in Moluccan cultural identity and religious practices. The starting point was the contextual theological idea of Christian Izaak Tamaela about the transposition of Moluccan traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. The aim of this book was to understand the relationship between contextual Moluccan theology and lived religious attitudes and practices. As one of the materializations of this theology, music evokes questions of religious experience that are central in grasping the overarching phenomenon of religious contextualization. Therefore, I asked how traditional music as framed within contextual Moluccan theology is interrelated with lived religion. To examine the theological interpretation and legitimization of Moluccan traditional music, I analyzed the meaning of the term 'traditional,' interpreted Moluccan music, and mapped the contextual discourse in relation to religious attitudes and practices among congregations. I traced the transformation of the discourse on the 'idea-to-practice' process among UKIM theologians and students (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku), GPM ministers (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church), church officials, *majelis* teams, congregants, and musicians.

Moluccanness and the Traditional

In researching and disclosing the resonances and dissonances between Moluccan theology and lived religion, I employed several concepts that were theoretically apt to analyze the empirical interrelation under study: heritage; tradition; discourse; context; and semiotic ideology. The goal was to grasp the theological idea of Moluccan traditional church music in relation to this idea's apprehension in church life, the transformation of the discourse on this idea, the practical process, and the concepts involved. For this analysis, I introduced the terms 'Moluccanness' and 'the traditional.' These two concepts capture the openness and processes of authentication in the construction, implementation, and reception of Moluccan theology and Moluccan church music.

Firstly, in the contextual process, (musical) traditions from the *adat* context are selected, transformed, and produced for their transposition

to the Moluccan Protestant church. In relation to changing and modern contexts in a globalized world, these traditions are constructed as authentic, immemorial tokens of Moluccan identity through the ancestral chain. Moluccan contextual theology, thus, involves the construction of a neutralized, broadly applicable sense of Moluccanness that is increasingly figured as a disappearing past, to be protected and preserved as Moluccan heritage. Secondly, the political, religious, musical, and theological revival of an ethnic Moluccanness, on the one hand, reflects the possibility of openness and merging. On the other hand, this revival is constrained by rule-governed practices. In analyzing the contextual approach and traditional church music, and in emphasizing the constructivist, hybrid quality of both, I coined the notion of the Moluccan traditional. Rather than a concrete practice from the past that is called tradition, the traditional refers to the historical process that makes something traditionally Moluccan. Traditional as an adjective is defined by mixing, and the traditional as a noun refers to the process by which a cultural form becomes seen as traditional.

Argument

In the first chapter of this book, I sketched the cultural and historical context of the research site. In Chapter 2, I described important characteristics of the GPM, and I discussed church culture, church music, and Moluccan religious life. Chapter 3 dealt with the context of contextual theology. UKIM and its organizational, temporal, and political embeddedness were explained, as well as the history of the development and the content of contextual theology. The fourth chapter focused on the process and implementation of contextual theology. I illustrated opinions among various actors. In Chapter 5, I wrote about Chris Tamaela, his work, and his classes. The sixth chapter analyzed the Moluccan traditional and Moluccan music. Musical aspects, instruments, songs, and original contexts were addressed. Chapter 7 discussed traditional church music, mainly through the recent establishment of the *ibadah etnis* (ethnic service). I also conveyed the implementation of and opinions about the ethnic church service and traditional church music. Finally, I explained the ambiguous, contested, and complicated connection between church culture and traditional culture through the position of the ancestors.

The colonial encounter between Dutch-Calvinist and Moluccan semiotic ideologies resulted in a hybrid representational economy that underlies current religious and cultural attitudes towards the ancestors. Moluccan Protestants, generally, do not theologize a 'deep' relation between culture and religion on the basis of contextual theology, but acknowledge the idea

through a discursive regime of preservation and heritage. Nevertheless, the reality of the cultural importance of the ancestors in the lives of Moluccan people indicates the centuries-long, practical, automatic contextualization of culture in Moluccan Protestantism. I used the ritual of *cuci negeri* as an analytical illustration to show how the spaces of religion and culture are theologically separated because they are practically related. I demonstrated how the implementation of traditional church music, as part of Moluccan contextual theology, relies on a distance between theological innovation and ritual context. In places where the seemingly oppositional meanings of 'traditional' – in the sense of conservative, Calvinist theology contrary to contextual theology, and in the sense of the Moluccan traditional as the source of contextualization – are naturally and intrinsically linked to each other, a dissonance between contextual idea and practice is apparent. The ethnic service has the potential to put the contextual idea of traditional church music into practice when the frame captures the flexibility of the traditional. Attending to context in the broadest sense, the ethnic service can arouse a sense of Moluccanness by working from the entanglements of traditional music, Moluccan culture, and Moluccan Protestantism, in which the ancestors function as mediators.

Academic Contributions

This book contributes to the academic field of the anthropology of World Christianity, as the topic is about musical-religious practices and attitudes in the Moluccan Protestant church. On the basis of the theological idea of traditional church music, the book can be seen as an 'anthropology of theology' about the relation between Christianity and Moluccan culture. I studied theology as a socio-cultural phenomenon which informs Moluccan Christian culture. Embedded in the overarching field of Contextual Theology, I analyzed the meaning, process, and implementation of Moluccan contextual theology to understand a specific musical-theological idea in interrelation with religious practices in the Moluccan Protestant church. Music constituted the lens through which I looked at religion, and formed the central topic within the broader development of Moluccan theology. To prompt interdisciplinary academic dialogue and to emphasize the conceptual similarities between contextual theology and material religion, I coined the term 'material theology.' This book also provided detailed information about Moluccan traditional music, to grasp the theological transposition of traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. Attending to a history of hybridization, I introduced 'the traditional' to characterize the process by which past, present, local, global, ethnic, and modern musical

traditions become regarded as traditional Moluccan music. The traditional unhinges the opposition between 'tradition' and 'modern,' encapsulating the entanglements in the construction of a sensation of a perceived authentic self – Moluccanness.

With this book, I aim to provoke new questions which could stir and inspire directions for future research. Since Moluccan music and Moluccan theology continue to develop, the interrelation between theological ideas and congregational practices regarding traditional church music would need revisiting in a few years, especially because the ethnic service has only been recently established. Furthermore, this book demonstrates the central position of musical preferences that shape the Moluccan context in which traditional church music is theologically implemented. Therefore, it would be fruitful to analyze the role of hymns and their accompanying music in the formation of Moluccan religious identity. Lastly, since this book focuses on Moluccan Protestants in the Central Moluccas only, the unique relation with the Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands makes a comparative study alluring.

The transformation and reconstruction of traditional music in its transposition to the Moluccan Protestant church is a development of contextual theology. As part of the ethnic service, traditional church music is able to express a Moluccan experience of Protestant faith, by evoking the sensation of Moluccanness. The theological idea of traditional church music is fully put into practice through resonances between the conceptualizations of the key terms in the contextual discourse. Also, linkages among the people who are involved in the idea-to-practice process are central, especially because these actors have close connections to a diversity of societal contexts. I state that the crux of the contextualization of Moluccan church music is the traditional, that operates within the tension between openness and closedness, and within the dynamics of the controlled (but not imposed) admission of culture in church. The Moluccan traditional presupposes continuous openness and transformation, and, at the same time, authenticates a sensation of real Moluccanness through the authorization of ancestral transmission. In the same light, contextual theology is the conscious theological acknowledgement and anticipation of continuous, practical, and automatic contextualization, which expresses and evokes a Moluccan experience of Protestant faith. In the entanglements between Moluccan culture and Protestantism, mediated by the Christian-Moluccan ancestors, traditional Moluccan tunes and church music continue contextualizing and transforming.

Summary

In this book, I used Moluccan (church) music as a lens to gain insight in Moluccan cultural identity and religious practices. The starting point was the contextual theological idea of Christian Izaak Tamaela about the transposition of Moluccan traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. The aim of this book was to understand the relationship between contextual Moluccan theology and lived religious attitudes and practices. As one of the materializations of this theology, music evokes questions of religious experience that are central in grasping the overarching phenomenon of religious contextualization. Therefore, I asked how traditional music as framed within contextual Moluccan theology is interrelated with lived religion. To examine the theological interpretation and legitimization of Moluccan traditional music, I analyzed the meaning of the term 'traditional,' interpreted Moluccan music, and mapped the contextual discourse in relation to religious attitudes and practices among congregations. I traced the transformation of the discourse on the 'idea-to-practice' process among UKIM theologians and students (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku), GPM ministers (Gereja Protestan Maluku – Moluccan Protestant Church), church officials, *majelis* teams, congregants, and musicians.

In researching and disclosing the resonances and dissonances between Moluccan theology and lived religion, I employed several concepts that were theoretically apt to analyze the empirical interrelation under study: heritage; tradition; discourse, context; and semiotic ideology. The goal was to grasp the theological idea of Moluccan traditional church music in relation to this idea's apprehension in church life, the transformation of the discourse on this idea, the practical process, and the concepts involved. For this analysis, I introduced the terms 'Moluccanness' and 'the traditional.' These two concepts capture the openness and processes of authentication in the construction, implementation, and reception of Moluccan theology and Moluccan church music.

Firstly, in the contextual process, (musical) traditions from the *adat* context are selected, transformed, and produced for their transposition to the Moluccan Protestant church. In relation to changing and modern contexts in a globalized world, these traditions are constructed as authentic, immemorial tokens of Moluccan identity through the ancestral chain. Moluccan contextual theology, thus, involves the construction of a neutralized, broadly applicable sense of Moluccanness that is increasingly figured as a disappearing past, to be protected and preserved as Moluccan heritage.

Secondly, the political, religious, musical, and theological revival of an ethnic Moluccanness, on the one hand, reflects the possibility of openness and merging. On the other hand, this revival is constrained by rule-governed practices. In analyzing the contextual approach and traditional church music, and in emphasizing the constructivist, hybrid quality of both, I coined the notion of the Moluccan traditional. Rather than a concrete practice from the past that is called tradition, the traditional refers to the historical process that makes something traditionally Moluccan. Traditional as an adjective is defined by mixing, and the traditional as a noun refers to the process by which a cultural form becomes seen as traditional.

Chapters 1 to 3 dissected the grammar in which the Moluccan contextual discourse is afforded to operate. First, I delineated the cultural and historical context. As a continuous tradition passed down from the ancestors, *adat* forms the core of Moluccan culture. The *adat* ceremonies, comprised by an ensemble of clothes, dance, language, and music, form the original context from which Moluccan contextual theologians draw their inspiration. The history of colonization and missionization, the post-independent nationalist and developmentalist governments, the establishment and evolvement of the GPM, and the religious conflict of twenty years ago have shaped the past and present realities of contemporary Moluccan culture and identity. Chapter 2 was devoted to the religious context. The congregations, liturgy, worship services, culture, and music of the Gereja Protestant Maluku are part of the background against which the theological innovation of traditional church music is set. I employed the image of the layers of the *spekkoek* to demonstrate how Moluccan Protestantism is and continues to be built. Chapter 3 depicted UKIM as the actual context in which contextual theology on the Moluccas is being developed. UKIM is embedded in the organizational structures and doctrinal basis of the GPM. The history of UKIM, its educational goals, the theologians (and their specific academic focus), and the political relations all forge the setting in which UKIM exists. From the grammar, I turned to the lexicon of the contextual discourse, which consists of the contested terms 'traditional,' 'context,' 'ancestors,' 'culture,' and 'ethnic.' Situated in a modern, national, globalized, and postcolonial reality, the content and meaning of the contextual practice introduces 'lived context' as a fundamental theological source, in addition to tradition and scripture.

Chapter 4 concluded the section about the overarching framework of contextual theology. The process of Moluccan theology is based on a theological transformation of cultural forms – Moluccan contexts – that are selected on the basis of their accordance with Christian values. I argued that contextual

theology enables the preservation of a Moluccan sense of self through the construction of a 'new old.' The 'new old' is a sentiment of Moluccanness that affirms the ethnic community in modern society. I articulated the implementation of contextual theology through the image of the spiral. A top-down and bottom-up approach are constantly combined, although UKIM stirs the motion and determines the direction. I stated that a gap between theology and lived religion originates when the congregational context of traditional-conservative Calvinist worldviews and the historical process of practical, automatic contextualization are ignored or disapproved of.

Chapter 5 zoomed in on the central theme of this book – the theological idea of traditional church music. Chris Tamaela's background, musical products, dissertation, vision, and classes led to his central academic contribution: music is the heart of theology. Chapter 6 described Moluccan traditional music. I analyzed the characteristics of this music and presented the stories of five traditional music groups. I identified the process of naturalization, ancestral transmission, and musical use over a long period of time as forces that authenticate traditional music as part of Moluccan identity. This musical feeling of Moluccanness is the reason for the wish of maintaining, preserving, and developing traditional music. As part of the project of preservation, traditional music moves from its original *adat* context to other public, political, and religious contexts.

Chapter 7 focused on the theological transposition of traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. Firstly, I conceptualized the *suling* as a culture-theology bridge, forming part of both practical (or natural) and theological contextualization. I described the practice of the ethnic service, in which traditional clothes and language are the elements that are used most often. Subsequently, I theoretically constructed the contextual process of ethnic worship as heritage formation. The terms tradition, contextualization, and preservation are implicated in the discursive network of the heritagization of culture and Christianity. I discussed language and music in more detail. I argued that practical limitations as well as the historical encounter between semiotic ideologies account for the current reality in which music is one of the least-developed ethnic elements. The implementation of the ethnic service and traditional church music is effectuated by an ensemble of understanding, knowledge, capability, creativity, quality, and context concerning the idea-to-practice process that ministers and their *majelis* teams execute. The majority of the congregants appreciates the ethnic service on a 'superficial' level (seen from the perspective of theological intention). Criticism is related to perceptions about bad quality, *adat* relations, confusion over the term *etnis*, and disrespectful appropriation. Opinions on

traditional church music are strongly linked to preferences of accompanying instruments and hymnbooks. I asserted that most Moluccan congregants enjoy traditional church music because they feel preservation is important, and not because of a personal effort of theological contextualization.

The colonial encounter between Dutch-Calvinist and Moluccan semiotic ideologies resulted in a hybrid representational economy that underlies current religious and cultural attitudes towards the ancestors. Moluccan Protestants, generally, do not theologize a 'deep' relation between culture and religion on the basis of contextual theology, but acknowledge the idea through a discursive regime of preservation and heritage. Nevertheless, the reality of the cultural importance of the ancestors in the lives of Moluccan people indicates the centuries-long, practical, automatic contextualization of culture in Moluccan Protestantism. I used the ritual of *cuci negeri* as an analytical illustration to show how the spaces of religion and culture are theologically separated because they are practically related. I demonstrated how the implementation of traditional church music, as part of Moluccan contextual theology, relies on a distance between theological innovation and ritual context. In places where the seemingly oppositional meanings of 'traditional' – in the sense of conservative, Calvinist theology contrary to contextual theology, and in the sense of the Moluccan traditional as the source of contextualization – are naturally and intrinsically linked to each other, a dissonance between contextual idea and practice is apparent. The ethnic service has the potential to put the contextual idea of traditional church music into practice when the frame captures the flexibility of the traditional. Attending to context in the broadest sense, the ethnic service can arouse a sense of Moluccanness by working from the entanglements of traditional music, Moluccan culture, and Moluccan Protestantism, in which the ancestors function as mediators.

This book contributes to the academic field of the anthropology of World Christianity, as the topic is about musical-religious practices and attitudes in the Moluccan Protestant church. On the basis of the theological idea of traditional church music, the book can be seen as an 'anthropology of theology' about the relation between Christianity and Moluccan culture. I studied theology as a socio-cultural phenomenon that informs Moluccan Christian culture. Embedded in the overarching field of Contextual Theology, I analyzed the meaning, process, and implementation of Moluccan contextual theology to understand a specific musical-theological idea in interrelation with religious practices in the Moluccan Protestant church. Music constituted the lens through which I looked at religion, and formed the central topic within the broader development of Moluccan theology. To

prompt interdisciplinary academic dialogue and to emphasize the conceptual similarities between contextual theology and material religion, I coined the term 'material theology.' This book also provided detailed information about Moluccan traditional music, to grasp the theological transposition of traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. Attending to a history of hybridization, I introduced 'the traditional' to characterize the process by which past, present, local, global, ethnic, and modern musical traditions become regarded as traditional Moluccan music. The traditional unhinges the opposition between 'tradition' and 'modern,' encapsulating the entanglements in the construction of a sensation of a perceived authentic self – Moluccanness.

The transformation and reconstruction of traditional music in its transposition to the Moluccan Protestant church is a development of contextual theology. As part of the ethnic service, traditional church music is able to express a Moluccan experience of Protestant faith, by evoking the sensation of Moluccanness. The theological idea of traditional church music is fully put into practice through resonances between the conceptualizations of the key terms in the contextual discourse. Also, linkages among the people who are involved in the idea-to-practice process are central, especially because these actors have close connections to a diversity of societal contexts. I state that the crux of the contextualization of Moluccan church music is the traditional, which operates within the tension between openness and closedness, and within the dynamics of the controlled (but not imposed) admission of culture in church. The Moluccan traditional presupposes continuous openness and transformation, and, at the same time, authenticates a sensation of real Moluccanness through the authorization of ancestral transmission. In the same light, contextual theology is the conscious theological acknowledgement and anticipation of continuous, practical, and automatic contextualization, which expresses and evokes a Moluccan experience of Protestant faith. In the entanglements between Moluccan culture and Protestantism, mediated by the Christian-Moluccan ancestors, traditional Moluccan tunes and church music continue contextualizing and transforming.

Ringkasan (Summary in Indonesian)

Penelitian ini mempelajari tentang kontekstualisasi musik gereja. Musik (gereja) Maluku digunakan sebagai suatu perspektif atau lensa untuk memperoleh gambaran yang mendalam mengenai identitas budaya dan praktek keagamaan. Titik berangkatnya adalah dari gagasan Christian Izaac Tamaela mengenai transposisi musik tradisional Maluku menjadi musik Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM). Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami hubungan antara teologi kontekstual dengan sikap dan praktek beragama di Maluku. Sebagai salah satu bahan berteologi, musik dapat memunculkan pertanyaan berkaitan dengan pengalaman-pengalaman beragama yang merupakan fenomena penting dalam proses kontekstualisasi. Oleh karena itu, pertanyaan penelitian yang diajukan adalah bagaimana musik tradisional sebagaimana yang digunakan dalam kontekstualisasi teologi dapat dihubungkan dengan kehidupan beragama. Untuk menguji interpretasi dan legitimasi teologis terhadap musik tradisional Maluku, maka sangatlah penting untuk menganalisis makna ungkapan 'tradisional,' menafsirkan musik Maluku, dan mengkarakterisasikan wacana kontekstualisasi teologi dalam hubungan dengan sikap dan praktek beragama. Penelitian ini menjajaki proses transformasi wacana dari 'gagasan ke praktek' di antara para teolog, dosen dan mahasiswa di Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku (UKIM), para pendeta GPM, Anggota Majelis Pekerja Harian Sinode GPM, para majelis dan anggota jemaat GPM, serta para praktisi musik di Maluku.

Dalam meneliti dan menyingkap kesesuaian dan ketidaksesuaian antara teologi dan kehidupan beragama di Maluku maka ada beberapa konsep penting yang dipelajari, yaitu: warisan, tradisi, wacana, dan semiotika idiologi. Bagaimana pun untuk memahami gagasan teologis dari musik tradisional gereja Maluku dalam hubungan dengan pengertiannya pada kehidupan bergereja, dan transformasi dari gagasan kepada praktek secara konseptual, saya memperkenalkan ungkapan 'Molucanness' (ke-Maluku-an) dan 'the tradisional.' Pertama, proses kontekstualisasi dilakukan melalui seleksi tradisi (musikal) adat, kemudian ditransformasi, dan diproduksi untuk ditransposisikan ke gereja Maluku. Sehubungan dengan suatu kebaruan, perubahan dari konteks modern di dalam dunia globalisasi, mereka mengkonstruksikan tradisi-tradisi secara autentik agar selalu diingat untuk menandai identitas Maluku melalui ikatan dengan leluhur. Dengan demikian, teologi Maluku melibatkan konstruksi rasa ke-Maluku-an yang dinetralkan dan bisa diaplikasikan secara luas karena dianggap sebagai masa lalu yang hilang, untuk dilindungi dan dilestarikan oleh masyarakatnya

sebagai warisan Maluku. Kedua, politik, agama, musik, dan teologi yang dihidupkan kembali dengan berfokus pada etnis ke-Maluku-an, di satu sisi, merefleksikan kemungkinan adanya keterbukaan dan penggabungan sementara semua unsur tersebut, namun pada sisi yang lain, semuanya dibatasi oleh praktik yang diatur oleh aturan. Saya mengerjakan semuanya di dalam tradisi Maluku untuk menganalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan kontekstual dan musik gereja tradisional yang juga menekankan pada apa yang telah mereka konstruksikan dari persilangan semua unsur secara berkualitas. Konsep *the* traditional Maluku dalam kajian ini, bukan sekedar pada suatu tindakan konkret di masa lalu, lebih daripada itu, menunjuk pada proses historis yang membuat sesuatu tetap hidup secara tradisional di Maluku. Tradisional merupakan sebuah kata sifat yang dapat didefinisikan dengan menyatukan proses di mana sebuah bentukan budaya menjadi terlihat sebagai yang selalu traditional.

Bab satu sampai tiga dari kajian ini membahas mengenai tata bahasa di mana wacana konstektual Maluku ada. Pertama, konteks budaya dan sejarah digambarkan. Sebagaimana sebuah tradisi yang diturunkan melalui para leluhur, maka adat membentuk inti dari budaya Maluku dan menjadi nilai sentra dalam masyarakat Maluku secara kolektif. Ritual adat yang menggunakan pakaian khusus, ansambel musik, tarian, dan bahasa tradisional membentuk konteks asli yang menjadi inspirasi bagi para teolog menggarap teologi kontekstual di Maluku. Sementara itu, identitas masyarakat Maluku kontemporer turut diwarnai dengan pengalaman-pengalaman historis di dalam sejarah misi di era kolonial, kemudian sejarah politik kebangsaan di era pasca kemerdekaan Indonesia, evolusi menjadi Gereja Protestan Maluku dalam sejarah Indonesia, dan konflik agama di Maluku yang terjadi dua puluh tahun lalu. Bab Dua menjelaskan konteks agama. Analisis dilakukan pada GPM mencakup konteks jemaat-jemaat, pelayanan, liturgi, budaya, dan praktek musik gereja sebagai bagian dari inovasi teologi musik gereja tradisional. Melalui gambaran lapisan agama dari Gereja Protestan Maluku diilustrasikan dibangun dan terus berlanjut. Bab Tiga menggambarkan Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku (UKIM) sebagai tempat mengembangkan proses berteologi kontekstual di Maluku secara aktual. Analisis dilakukan terhadap struktur organisasi UKIM, sejarah UKIM, peran UKIM sebagai 'dapur' atau basis dari ajaran GPM, para teolog yang fokus pada kajian teologi kontekstual, musik gereja, sejarah dan misi gereja, serta para pemimpin UKIM. Di samping itu, analisis terhadap tata bahasa yang menjadi leksikon wacana kontekstual, seperti ungkapan 'tradisional,' 'konteks,' 'leluhur,' 'budaya,' dan 'etnis.' Dalam konteks modern, perlu juga menjelaskan mengenai ungkapan nasional, global, postkolonial,

pengalaman dan konteks kehidupan masyarakat sebagai sumber berteologi selain tradisi dan kitab suci. Bab Empat adalah kajian yang menutup pembahasan kerangka kerja menyeluruh dari teologi kontekstual. Proses teologi kontekstual di Maluku didasarkan pada transformasi teologis dari bentuk-bentuk budaya – konteks Maluku – yang dipilih sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Kristen. Teologi kontekstual dapat memungkinkan terjadinya pelestarian rasa ke-Maluku-an melalui konstruksis dari sesuatu yang 'baru lama,' suatu sentimen ke-Maluku-an untuk mempertahankan etnisnya di dalam realitas masyarakat modern. Implementasi teologi kontekstual dapat diartikulasikan melalui sebuah lingkaran spiral: pendekatan dari atas ke bawah, dan dari bawah ke atas yang terus digabungkan, di mana arah dan gerakan itu ditentukan oleh UKIM. Ada pula kesenjangan antara teologi dan agama yang dihidupi karena konteks jemaat dan sudut pandang Calvinis secara tradisional dengan sejarah kontekstualisasi secara alami dan simultan yang diabaikan atau tidak disetujui.

Bab Lima merupakan perluasan dari tema utama penelitian ini – mengenai gagasan teologi musik gereja tradisional. Dalam bab ini dibahas latar belakang seorang teolog musik gereja, Christian Izaak Tamaela, karya-karya musiknya, disertasi doctoral, visi, dan berbagai pengalaman dan pelajaran musik yang memberikan kontribusi utamanya pada musik sebagai jantung teologi. Bab Enam membahas mengenai musik tradisional Maluku. Dalam bab ini disajikan berbagai kisah musikologis dan cerita dari lima kelompok musik tradisional di Maluku. Dijelaskan pula mengenai proses naturalisasi, transmisi leluhur, dan proses mengotentifikasi musik tradisional sebagai bagian dari identitas Maluku yang memerlukan waktu yang panjang. Rasa musikalitas ke-Maluku-an merupakan alasan untuk mempertahankan, melestarikan, dan mengembangkan musik tradisional. Dalam proses pelestarian itu, musik tradisional bergerak dari konteks adat yang asli ke konteks publik, politik, agama, dan lainnya. Bab Tujuh berfokus pada transposisi teologi dari musik tradisional ke gereja Maluku. Pertama, instrument musik suling yang dikonseptualisasi sebagai jembatan antara budaya dan teologi, sebagai bagian dari kontekstualisasi praktis (atau alami) dan teologis. Elemen yang banyak digunakan dalam proses kontekstualisasi berasal dari ritual etnik seperti pakaian dan bahasa daerah. Proses kontekstual dari ibadah etnis secara teoritis dibangun sebagai pembentukan warisan. Istilah tradisi, kontekstualisasi dan pelestarian membentuk jaringan diskursus dalam pewarisan budaya dan agama Kristen. Pembahasan lebih detail mengenai bahasa dan musik, karena keterbatasan serta perjumpaan historis antara idiologi semiotik dengan musik menjadi salah satu unsur yang kurang berkembang. Implementasi pelayanan musik gereja tradisional dan etnis

dipengaruhi oleh penyatuan pemahaman, pengetahuan, kemampuan, kreativitas, kualitas, dan konteks dari gagasan ke praktek yang dilakukan oleh para pendeta dan majelis jemaat. Mayoritas jemaat mengapresiasi pelayanan etnik pada level yang dangkal. Sebaliknya, kritik berkaitan dengan persepsi dari kualitas yang buruk terhadap adat, istilah etnis yang membingungkan, dan tidak dihargai secara layak. Pendapat mengenai musik gereja tradisional berkaitan erat dengan preferensi instrumen dan buku nyanyian jemaat yang dimiliki oleh gereja. Sebagaimana besar anggota GPM menikmati musik gereja tradisional dan meraksakan pentingnya pelestarian budaya tidak sebatas pada kontekstualisasi teologi.

Leluhur merupakan unsur penting dari semua aspek yang terjawab dalam pertanyaan penelitian. Perjumpaan dalam semiotic idiologi antara Belanda-Calvinis dan Maluku menghasilkan sebuah hibridasi ekonomis representatif yang mendasari sikap keagamaan dan budaya terhadap leluhur di masa kini. Pada umumnya, orang-orang Kristen Maluku tidak berteologi tentang hubungan yang dalam antara agama dan budaya pada basis teologi kontekstual, tetapi mengetahuinya melalui proses pewarisan dan pelestarian yang terwacana. Walau demikian, dari kenyataan pentingnya leluhur dalam kehidupan orang-orang Maluku menunjukkan bahwa kontekstualisasi budaya terus berlangsung secara praktik dan simultan selama berabad-abad dalam Kekristenan di Maluku. Dalam analisis, ritual cuci negeri digunakan sebagai sebuah contoh bagaimana ruang-ruang agama dan budaya dipisahkan secara teologis kendati dalam prakteknya saling terkait. Menjadi jelas pula bagaimana musik gereja tradisional digunakan sebagai bagian dari keseluruhan proses berteologi kontekstual sangat bergantung pada jarak antara inovasi teologis dengan konteks ritual. Di tempat-tempat di mana makna 'tradisional' tampak berlawanan – dalam arti teologi Calvinis lama dengan teologi kontekstual, dan *the* tradisional Maluku sebagai sumber kontekstualisasi – yang sesungguhnya secara alami dan intrinsik saling terkait satu dengan yang lain, disonansi antara ide dan praktik jelas terlihat. Ibadah etnis berpotensi untuk mewujudkan ide kontekstualisasi musik gereja tradisional ketika menangkap fleksibilitas dari *the* tradisional. Pemaknaan konteks secara luas dapat membangkitkan rasa ke-Maluku-an yang dimulai dari keterikatan pada musik tradisional Maluku, budaya Maluku, Kristen Maluku, dengan leluhur sebagai mediator.

Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi akademik pada bidang antropologi dari Dunia Kekristenan dengan mempelajari berbagai praktek dan tindakan dalam musik agama dari Gereja Protestan Maluku. Fokus utamanya adalah hubungan antara agama Kristen dan budaya Maluku berdasarkan ide teologi dari musik gereja tradisional, sehingga penelitian ini membentuk

suatu daya pendorong antropologi teologis. Teologis dipelajari sebagai suatu fenomena sosial-budaya yang mengkomunikasikan budaya Kristen Maluku. Dalam bidang Teologi Dunia Ketiga secara menyeluruh, analisis terhadap proses, makna, dan implementasi teologi kontekstual di Maluku bertujuan untuk memahami gagasan teologis-musikal dalam kaitannya dengan praktek keagamaan di Gereja Protestan Maluku. Musik menjadi sebuah lensa yang digunakan untuk mempelajari mengenai agama dan membentuk sebuah topik utama mengenai proses teologi Maluku yang lebih luas. Dalam kajian ini, saya menciptakan sebuah istilah 'material teologi' untuk mendorong dialog akademis interdisipliner dan menegaskan persamaan konseptual antara teologi kontekstual dan agama material. Selain itu, penelitian ini memberikan informasi terperinci mengenai musik Maluku secara musikologis untuk memahami transposisi teologis dari musik tradisional kepada musik gereja. Dengan menggunakan konsep sejarah hibridasi, saya memperkenalkan mengenai '*the tradisional*' untuk menandai proses di mana masa lalu dan sekarang, musik tradisi etnik dan modern dianggap sebagai musik tradisional Maluku. Ungkapan *the tradisional* merangkum keterkaitan sekaligus melemahkan pertentangan antara tradisi dan modern dalam membangun sebuah rasa diri – ke-Maluku-an.

Transposisi dari musik tradisional ke Gereja Protestan Maluku dengan transformasinya adalah suatu perkembangan di dalam teologi kontekstual. Di dalam ibadah etnis, musik gereja tradisional mengungkapkan pengalaman sebagai orang Maluku, kepercayaan diri, dan rasa ke-Maluku-an. Secara praktis, gagasan teologis dari musik gereja tradisional dipengaruhi oleh resonansi konseptualisasi istilah-istilah utama di dalam wacana kontekstual dari orang-orang yang terlibat dalam proses mewujudkan gagasan menjadi praktek yang saling terkait dengan keberagaman konteks masyarakat yang paling dasar. Menurut saya, *the tradisional* adalah inti dari kontekstualisasi musik gereja Maluku di tengah ketegangan antara keterbukaan dan tertutupan atau pada konteks pengontrolan budaya di dalam gereja. *The tradisional* Maluku mengendalikan keterbukaan dan transformasi secara berkelanjutan sambil tetap mengotentifikasi ke-Maluku-an secara riil melalui jaringan leluhur yang dihormati. Dalam hal yang sama, teologi kontekstual merupakan suatu pengakuan teologis yang sadar dan antisipatif terhadap proses kontekstualisasi secara berkelanjutan untuk mengungkapkan dan menghidupkan pengalaman iman orang-orang Maluku. Lagu-lagu tradisional dan musik gereja terus mengkontesktualisasi dan mentransformasi keteritikan antara budaya Maluku dan Kekristenan melalui leluhur dari orang Kristen Maluku.

Glossary

Acara adat	Adat ceremonies
Adat	The customary usage that has been handed down by the ancestors and which is passed on from generation to generation
Adat-istiadat	The way of life of the ancestors
Agama	Religion
Agama Ambon	Ambonese form of Christianity
Agama asli	Indigenous/native religion
Agama Nunusaku	Pre-Christian Moluccan native religion
Agama suku	Ethnic religion
Akapeti	Bamboo xylophone (traditional instrument)
Ale rasa beta rasa	What you feel, I feel (Moluccan saying)
Alifuru	First humans, tribes of the Seram inlands
Alune	Indigenous/native language on Seram
Ambitus	Tonal range
Angkat lagi	Lift, raise
Anyaman	Type of rattan
Aru	Ethnic island group in the Moluccas
Ba meti	Condition when the sea retreats and people can find many fish in the little pools
Bahasa daerah	Language of the region
Bahasa tanah	Indigenous/native language
Baileo	Fundamental place of adat where village leaders assemble and rituals take place
Baji	Wedges used to tune the tifa drum
Baju cele	Typical blouse with blocked motive, mostly red and white
Bambu goyang	Instrument made of two pieces of bamboo (traditional instrument)
Bambu gesek	Similar to the tolong-toleng, but horizontal instead of vertical. The body has notches that

	are scraped over with a stick (traditional instrument)
Basudara	Brothers and sisters, brotherhood
Batu pamali/batu meja	Altar or offering stone
Bengkel	Garage, workshop
Bunyi tabuka dan bunyi tatutup	Open and closed sound, two techniques of hitting the tifa drum
Cakalele	War dance, originally performed in preparation of war or headhunting
Colo-colo	Sauce that goes with a fish dish
Contrafact	Composition method whereby the melody of an original song is adopted and a new text is composed
Cuci negeri	Ritual of cleaning the village
Daerah	Region
Dasar	Basic rhythm when playing the tifa
Digunakan sejak dulu	Used since a long time ago
Dikikis	Scraped off
Dua Sahabat Lama (DSL)	Two Old Friends, GPM hymnbook
Enak	Delicious, nice, good, comfort- able, or pleasant
Etnik	Ethnic
Firman Tuhan	Word of God
Gaba-gaba	Drumming sticks made of sago
Gaba-gaba dance	Dance with four bamboo posts
Gamelan	Traditional Javanese ensemble of instruments
Gandong	Brotherhood
Gereja Orang Basudara	The church of brotherhood, the GPM
Gereja Protestan Maluku	GPM church
Harga kawin	Bride price/dowry
Ibadah etnis	Ethnic church service
Ikat kepala	Red headband or red cloth, symbol of Alifuru people
Injil dan Adat	Gospel and Culture
Injil dan Kebudayaan	Conference 'Gospel and Culture'
Irama tifa	Tifa rhythm
Jiwa	Soul
Juk	Moluccan name of the ukulele

Kain gandong	Ritualistic traditional white cloth that symbolizes brotherhood
Kain pikul	Black ribbon that female majelis wear diagonally over the shoulder
Kamboti	Traditional offering basket in church
Kantoria	Church choir leading the congregation
Kapata	Traditional singing/speaking style
Kapitan	Captain of warfare
Katreji	Originally a farmers' dance, which is from Portugal and is danced in male-female pairs
Kebaya	Traditional costume
Keku hatu	Beat the stone (traditional instrument)
Kembangkan	Develop
Kepala adat	Authoritative figure in all adat matters
Kepala soa	Assistant of the raja
Kerja sama	People combine their skills, energy, and resources to achieve certain goals that exceed the capacities of individuals (adat value)
Kerusuhan	'Unrest,' 'riot,' the social-religious conflict from 1999–2001
Ketua majelis jemaat	Chair-minister in a congregation
Kewang	Village police
Kidung Jemaat (KJ)	Songs of the Congregation, GPM hymnbook
Kita pun budaya	We have culture
Kita semua saudara	We are all brothers and sisters
Klasis	Organizational leadership over the congregations in a certain region
Klong	Bamboo tube zither with one string (traditional instrument)
Konteks	Context
Kontekstualisator	Contextualizer
Kota music dunia	Music city of the world
Kroncong	Traditional music style that refers to the string sound that the instruments make
Kulibia	Moluccan name for the tahuri (tahuri is the ethnic name from Seram)

Kurang cocok	Not or less fitting
Kurang pas	Not or less fitting
Lagu	Song
Lagu-lagu	Popular-traditional songs
Lagu-lagu daerah	Traditional music connected to urban trends and technologies
Lakare	Type of rattan
Lease	Term that signifies the island group of Saparua, Haruku, and Nusa Laut
Loang	Tifa drum not yet covered by the membrane
Luar biasa	Extraordinary
Lubang	Hole
Majelis	Church council
Makan patita	Communal dinner whereby everyone shares homemade food (acara adat)
Maku maku	Circle dance
Melayu	Malay language, Ambonese dialect
Maluku	The Moluccas
Mazmur dan Tahlil (MT)	Psalms and Hymns, GPM hymnbook
Marakes	Samba balls made of bamboo (traditional instrument)
Marinyo	Village messenger
Masohi	People combine their skills, energy, and resources to achieve certain goals that exceed the capacities of individuals (adat value)
Masuk minta/kawin minta	A boy asks a girl to marry him (acara adat)
Mata air	Part of the ritual of cuci negeri
Mata ina	Married women who play an important role in the ritual cuci negeri
Mazmur dan Nyanyian Rohani (NR)	Psalms and Spiritual Songs, GPM hymnbook
Melestarikan	Preserve
Mempertahankan	Maintain
Mena-Muria	Battle cry
Menghidupkan	Revive

Meninggal dunia	Leave this world, to pass away
Mewariskan	Pass down, transmit
Negeri adat	Villages that continue to protect the traditional adat system
Not bunga	Floral/ornamental/grace/decorative note
Nusa Ina	Mother island of Seram
Nyanyian GPM (NJGPM)	GPM Songs, GPM hymnbook
Nyanyiankanlah Kidung Baru (NKB)	Sing the New Song, GPM hymnbook
Orang tua tua	Ancestors
Paduan suara	Vocal groups performing in church
Pak	Sir
Pakaian adat	Traditional adat clothing
Panas pela	Heating of the pela between villages (acara adat)
Papeda	Porridge, traditional food made from sago
Parang	Machete
Pas	Exact
Pata cengkeh	Dance with cloves and nutmeg
Patalima	Ethnic group, 'five'
Patasiwa	Ethnic group, 'nine'
Pela	Indigenous/native cultural symbol that refers to a social-metaphysical alliance between two or three villages
Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat (PKJ)	Supplement to Community Songs, GPM hymnbook
Pelog & Slendro	Tuning system of the gamelan instruments with a heptatonic scale and the Javanese pentatonic scale
Pendeta	Minister
Perahu	Traditional Moluccan boat
Pesan tobat	'Message to repentance,' the reformation of the GPM in 1960
Piring natzar	White offering plate with a white cloth on top under which lie coins
Pong-pong	Hollow stomping tube made of bamboo (traditional instrument)
Potong	Cut rhythm when playing the tifa

Potong di kuku rasa di daging	Cut in the nail, feel in the flesh (Moluccan saying)
Prokantor	Song leader in the church service
Puji Tuhan	Praise the Lord/God
Raja	Village king
Rame rame	Situation of happiness and exuberance
Rebana	Frame drum (traditional instrument)
Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS)	Republic of the South Moluccas
Rofol	Moluccan style of playing the ukulele, energetic and loud
Rumah tua	Ancestral/parental home
Sago	Product from the sago palm tree
Saling berbagi	Sharing with and giving to each other (adat value)
Saneri negeri	Village council
Sanggar	Creative workshop
Sasi	Adat measures to protect natural ecological regeneration through a temporary prohibition
Saudara	Siblings, brothers and sisters
Sawat & Hadrat dance	Traditional dance accompanied by the rebana
Sesuai dengan konteks	In accordance with context
Siri pinang	Traditional type of food that people eat to symbolically show they are saudara
Sopi	Traditional alcoholic drink
Sosialisasi	Socialization
Spekkoek	Moluccan sweet delicacy with many layers
Sukacita	Happy
Suling	Horizontal bamboo flute (traditional church instrument)
Syahdu	Serene, solemn
Syalom	Church greeting at the beginning of worship
Tabaos	The proclaiming of news
Tahuri	Conch shell (traditional instrument)
Takatak bulu	Bamboo clapper (traditional instrument)

Taman budaya	Culture gardens, places for the preservation, development, and education of the traditional cultures of Indonesia
Tari lenso	Handkerchief dance
Tari obor	Torch dance
Tari tifa	Tifa dance
Tari tifar mayang	Dance with a stick of calabash fruit
Tempat garam	Cultural practice associated with the salt container
Tete manis	Sweet grandfather, Moluccan name for Jesus
Tete-nene-moyang	Ancestors
Tidak boleh hilang	must not disappear
Tifa	Most-common, widespread drum (traditional instrument)
Tifa badiri	Standing drum
Tifa dasar	Tifa that plays the basic rhythm
Tifa jalan	Tifa that plays the basic rhythm
Tifa jikr	Bass drum
Tifa potong	Tifa that plays the melody, beautifying the whole
Tifa tasa	Tifa that indicates the beat
Toleng-toleng	Bamboo slit drum (traditional instrument)
Tolong menolong	Mutual help (adat value)
Totobuang	Melodic instrument made of bronze gongs (traditional instrument)
Tuhan	Lord/God
Tunas	Sunday school church service
Turun temurun	Hereditary, passed on from the ancestors
Upu Lanite	The name of the highest God in the agama Nunusaku
Upu Lanite Kai Tapele	The calling of God in native language
Usi	Madam
Warisan	Legacy, heritage
Wemale	Indigenous/native language on Seram

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In the southeast of Indonesia, on the Moluccas, theologians are developing contextual theologies for the Moluccan Protestant church. The Moluccas were colonized by the Dutch for more than three centuries. As an effort of religious decolonization, Moluccan theologians aim to better connect Christianity with the cultural realities of congregants.

This book is about the contextualization of church music. Christian Izaac Tamaela proposed and instigated the transposition of Moluccan traditional music to the Moluccan Protestant church. In the book, the author asks how traditional music, as framed within contextual Moluccan theology, is interrelated with lived religion.

Vivid descriptions of liturgical practices, music traditions, and personal encounters map the entanglements between Moluccan culture, Moluccan Protestantism, and Moluccan music. Jip Lensink traces the theological idea of traditional church music to lived religious practices and attitudes among ministers, musicians, and congregants. The resonances and dissonances of this process show the continuous transformation of Moluccan traditional music.

For a selection of the audio-visual material, visit the website www.jiplensink.nl/tt.

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