

Transformative Christian Education Based on Local Wisdom Mesesakaeng at Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church

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Abstrak

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This research is related to the local wisdom of mesesakaeng as the foundational bedrock for the paradigm of Transformative Christian Education. Mesesakaeng or boating is one of the local wisdoms of the people of the Sangihe, Siau, Tagulandang, and Biaro islands (hereinafter referred to as Nusa Utara). The purpose of this study was to examine and analyze the concepts and values in local wisdom of mesesakaeng, the implementation of mesesakaeng in GMIST services, the obstacles and handling of mesesakaeng implementation, and the implementation of mesesakaeng-based transformative Christian education for good governance/management in the Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church (GMIST). The research method used is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The data was collected data by employing techniques of observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Based on research data and analysis, it was found that mesesakaeng comprises the concept of Life Education, Boat Theology, and Good Governance Based on Mesesakaeng. The values of perseverance, divine values, and managerial values were also found as the main values with various explanations. The Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church, the largest congregation is in Nusa Utara, uses a boat as the official institutional logo. However, despite the iconic representation of a boat within the institutional insignia of the Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church, the comprehensive integration of mesesakaeng's essence remains an aspiration rather than an established norm. The resonance between theoretical foundations and practical embodiment appears fragmented, with a discernible gap existing between conceptual ideals and pragmatic implementations across diverse dimensions of services. This research also contributes to an awareness campaign for GMIST congregations to make the sea as a living space and boats as means of earning a living, as well as contributing to a better pattern of stewardship of the GMIST organization (good church governance).

Keywords: *Christian Education, Local Wisdom, Mesesakaeng, Transformation*

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INTRODUCTION

The island community has a unique habitat, and makes the sea a living space. Boats are a means of transportation and a means of sustaining life. Boats also unify the islands. *Mesesakaeng* (Boating) for the people of the Nusa Utara island, has a concept and a series of positive values that can be transformed as a form of Christian education. *Mesesakaeng* also shows the human relationship with nature (environment), and the relationship between humans. The stages and values in it

have a uniqueness that does not exist in other areas, so this is called local wisdom. Local wisdom is a view of life, knowledge, and various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by the local community to answer various problems in fulfilling needs.

The affirmation of *mesesakaeng* as local wisdom, is expressed through the logos of the Sangihe regencies and Siau Tagulandang Biaro regencies, which prominently places a boat in the center of the logo. The Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church (GMIST) is a religious institution whose members are mostly in the two archipelagic districts. In other words, GMIST has church members with maritime characteristics. GMIST also emphasized the marine characteristics through the main picture of the boat, which was approved at the 2015 Synod Annual Session, at GMIST Liun Kendage Bitung. It is hoped that GMIST will be able to implement the concept and values of boats into GMIST's stewardship at all levels and be able to improve the welfare of the congregation members through the marine sector. In fact, GMIST does not give meaning about *mesesakaeng* in various service activities. GMIST residents' interest in pursuing fishing work has decreased, reduced informal teaching from parent to child to become fishermen, and a pattern of church leadership that is not based on local wisdom, is a concern and an obstacle that needs to be addressed. Transformative Christian Education is an entry point for change, faith growth, and better stewardship.

The Transformative Christian Education discussed is the encounter between Christian Education and culture. From the local wisdom of *mesesakaeng*, patterned concepts and values. The interculturalization of the local wisdom of *mesesakaeng* and Christian Religious Education forms the concept and values of the Christian Education of Life where *mesesakaeng* is a means and method of heading to the sea as a living space. This interculturalization also produces the concept of Boat Theology as a basis for learning and understanding for faith communities with a maritime context, it also produces the concept of a management circle based on local wisdom, a managerial pattern to make family life and the service organization of the Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church even better. Transformation occurs from two sides: First, the concepts and values in the local wisdom of *mesesakaeng* become part of Christian education that can change the shape of social life, both individuals, faith communities and society. Second, the pattern of Christian education which is only focused on faith growth, becomes broader in mutually reinforcing interculturalization, better social interaction, and the ability to survive and continue (sustainable) life.

On the topic of Local Wisdom, Margaretha Apituley, a Pastor in Maluku Protestant Church and also a Lecturer at Ambon Christian University, in 2019 produced a dissertation entitled *Theology of the Sea: Dialogue on the meaning of the Sea in Exodus 14-15 based on Titawaai cosmology on Nusalaut Island – Maluku with Cosmology Ancient Israel*. Apituley elaborates on the sea as a means to renew human life for the better, but on the other hand it is a scary place (Apituley, 2019). Meanwhile, in this study, researchers will elaborate on and provide *mesesakaeng* (boating) concepts and values for transformative Christian education at GMIST. Even though the sea and boats are seen as one unit, there are differences in focus and research objectives.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is a qualitative method, with an ethnographic approach. Place of research: GMIST service areas in Sangihe Islands and Siau Tagulandang Biaro Islands. Researchers act as instruments as well as data collectors. Supporting instruments: bibliography, questionnaire, and recording device. Data collection procedures were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The concept of local wisdom *mesesakaeng*

From the presentation of research data, it was found there are three main themes that become concepts in local wisdom *mesesakaeng*: *mesesakaeng* as a livelihood, *mesesakaeng* as a means to know God, *mesesakaeng* forms a circle of management.

***Mesesakaeng* as a livelihood**

Mesesakaeng was not obtained from formal education. Teaching is passed down from generation to generation, learning from nature, even knowledge exchange between people who work as carpenters, boatmen, and fishermen. That's what keeps this job afloat, and even contributes to a better family and community life. *Mesesakaeng* has given birth to the concept of Life Education. Carpenter's work, boatman's work, and fisherman's work, are not jobs that are occupied suddenly. There is an educational process in it, both informally in the family, and also a process of learning from experience and learning from nature. Informal education is carried out by parents as teachers to children as participants, voluntarily and from generation to generation. The content of the teaching is in the form of techniques for carrying out the work, as well as *PELLI* (which is abstained) and *TELLING* (which is sanctified). The aim of education is to become an expert, have a profession, and make the sea a living space.

From this life education, Christianity is taken and colored through the transformation of Christian Education based on local *mesesakaeng* wisdom, with the theme Christian Education of Life. This concept departs from the theory of Jack L. Seymour who wants to develop non-formal and informal Christian religious education, on the basis of his anxiety about the world as an increasingly discriminatory educational context (Seymour, 2016: 12). For Seymour, the church must enter into that context and carry out a transformation, the congregation will grow through a community of faith, and on the other hand, hope for a better social life in the present and in the future. Daniel Scipani formulates Transformative Christian Education as a form of social change, where Christian education brings people to understand the existence of God's presence through Jesus Christ: peace, compassion, friendship, and mutual empowerment in community (Schipani, 1997:22) (Seymour, 2016:15). Meanwhile, Paulo Freire also put forward a theory about Transformative Christian Education which brings people to be free from oppression. For Freire, education is a very relevant tool to liberate society from colonialism and reshape economic, political, socio-cultural and religious principles (Freire, 2001:17-18).

Christian Education Life is a new construction of Christian education, where non-formal and informal education is put forward. The church is not just a place of worship, it can also be a place to learn and develop various skills. Pastors are not just spiritual teachers, but as operators who administer potential expertise resources within the congregation, transfer knowledge to congregation members, especially young people, to get stimulated knowledge, hone skills, pursue them, and become a good livelihood. Freeing church members from poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. Likewise in the concept of informal education, family and environment become learning. Teaching from generation to generation from parent to child, even everything that can be learned from nature (discovery learning), can build awareness to develop capacity to get a better life. In the context of archipelago areas, with the great potential of the oceans, of course the elements of educational material that are taught, are more related to the marine sector, by instilling understanding and making the sea a living space.

Mesesakaeng as a means to know God

According to Niebuhr's theory (Niebuhr, 1956), there has been an encounter between culture and religion, and the local wisdom has been transformed into Christian teachings. In terms of the encounter of local wisdom and religion, Welman Boba (Boba, 2021:23) states that culture and religion have the same place, binding rituals and rules are passed down from generation to generation. Value systems, culture, and religion are included, shaping the behavior of individuals and society collectively. Andy Crouch (Crouch, 2008:134-141) in *Culture Making: Recovery Our Creative Healing*, calls Jesus the Maker of history. He enters history and transforms history into and is centered on Him. This can be seen from the encounter between *mesesakaeng* and Christianity, where *mesesakaeng* ritual practices have changed shape and are colored with Christian values. This encounter is called interculturalization. Emanuel Martasudjita in *Inculturation Theology* (Martasudjita, 2021:18), states that interculturalization is an encounter between local wisdom and Christianity which influence each other. In *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Shorter, 1988:13-14), Shorter describes two elements in interculturalization, namely: partnership and mutuality (complementary, there is an encounter from two directions). According to Shorter, in the encounter between the gospel and culture, it is not only the gospel that changes the form of culture, but culture can also change the form of the gospel. Not in the sense of correcting the content or essence of the gospel, but how the Christian message is reconstructed according to the cultural context.

Departing from Neibuhr's theory of Jesus transforming culture, Boba's opinion regarding the equality of local wisdom and religion, as well as the definition of interculturalization from Martasudjita and Shorter, the researcher concludes that there has been an encounter between *mesesakaeng* local wisdom and Christianity, where both influence each other, forming a new concept. and the values contained therein. Researchers call this new concept Boat Theology.

Boat Theology is a concept whereby through the local wisdom of boating, everyone can learn everything related to God. Some of the indicators in it:

- a) Naming. I Ghenggona Langi Duatan Saruluang. Lord God in the sky Lord of the Seas.

- b) Alignment of functions. For Christians in Nusa Utara, in prayers and songs, mention *Yesus kai Atohema* (Jesus is the helmsman), *Yesus Nangkoda pebawiahe* (Jesus the Captain of life). *Yesus kai Tonaseng, I sie lai samehe* (Jesus is the Leader of the Boat, in Him there is charisma, knowledge and tenacity).
- c) Personification & Metaphor. The church as a collection of believers is described as boat. Serving or doing activities is described by crossing the ocean. Challenges are likened to *selihe and belade* (waves). Raising a prayer is called *pundaleng kaliomaneng* (praying swing). Completing service tasks, finding happiness is described by *apeng pamunakeng enene intang* (a beautiful beach where there are diamonds).
- d) Symbols. *Kalulu/palun kalulu*, front and back ends, are symbols of God's inclusion at the beginning and end (*alfa omega*), *pundale* (dipper) are symbols of hard work and determination through storms.
- e) Rituals. There is a *hundugu* (management) ritual in the form of prayer, praise, and teaching.

Mesesakaeng forms a circle of management

The most famous management theory is William Edwards Deming's management theory, as described by Mary Walton in *The Deming Management Method* (Walton, 1986). The famous formulation of the Deming Philosophy is that the use of proper and good management will lead organizations to improve their quality. By increasing quality, it will simultaneously reduce the costs of the organization. According to Deming, the key is continuous improvement and quality improvement will lead the organization to a better direction in the future. The Deming Cycle which will become a management perspective in *mesesakaeng*, namely Plan, Do, Check, Act.

Mesesakaeng is divided into three managerial processes: First, cutting wood and making boats; Second, take off the boat and catch fish; Third, pulling the boat and repairing the boat. The four basic management functions of Deming and George R. Terry are also described in the research data and are in every mesesakaeng process. There is planning and organization at the beginning of the activity, where the boat owner agrees with the carpenter and the boatman to make one type of boat. Materials, sizes, types of boats, completion time, even wages are planned and agreed upon from the start of the work. The wood cutting and boat building were also carried out by the two craftsmen, according to their respective management. During the implementation of activities, boat owners can carry out supervision with the aim that their work results are in accordance with the plan.

In the second stage, the boat owner will plan fishing activities. This planning is of course taking into account the season or weather, the availability of tools and materials, the fishermen who will operate the boats, and the amount of wages for workers. Organizing at the beginning to determine the role of each fisherman. In a small boat, which is only carried by two people, one becomes the skipper who steers the boat, and the other becomes the atohema who becomes the helmsman. While on a medium or large boat, one person is chosen to be a tonaseng, while the other workers are called masanaeng. Tonaseng will lead fishing activities, determine where to fish, and all orders are absolutely obeyed by Masanaeng. Tonaseng has

the ability samehe and bembanaho (meaning: tenacity and the ability to determine when and where fish gather).

Tonaseng's leadership continues, he carries out the role of supervising (monitoring) fishing activities. There are several regulations, in which there are pelli and telling:

- 1) While catching fish, masanaeng should not be noisy or shouting.
- 2) While catching masanaeng fish, you may not take off your clothes.
- 3) The wood where the rope is tied – usually in the bow of the boat – cannot be sat on.
- 4) If you see strange things, or unusual noises, all those on the boat must keep quiet.
- 5) When you see fish, tonaseng and masanaeng may not point with fingers or hands, but use other gestures as signals.
- 6) Release the parrot fish if it is accidentally caught
- 7) Not lifting the turtle onto the boat, releasing it as soon as possible if it accidentally hits the net.

Tonaseng will closely monitor this process, because all fishermen know that if someone violates it, there will be bad consequences. Based on observations and interviews, the bad consequences that are usually experienced are that offenders will get sick and even die, fishermen will not get fish (the fish will move away from the boat).

In the third stage, when the boat is moored or towed to shore, the boat owner evaluates the catch and divides the wages. For small boats, the catch is divided in two: one share for the boat owner, one share for the fishermen. For medium and large boats, the catch is generally divided into three parts: one share for the boat owner, one share for the tonaseng, one share for all masanaeng. The division was made after first calculating and spending the operational costs of fishing. In this last stage, the boat owner, assisted by Tonaseng and Masanaeng, will repair the damaged boat and equipment, as well as re-plan the next fishing activity. This becomes a continuous management circle.

Based on this presentation is Implementation of a management circle based on Mesesakaeng local wisdom has an impact on better organizational stewardship, with the theme: Mesesakaeng-based Good Governance.

The construction of this concept is described as follows:

First, the management circle transformation. Success is not only measured when the four basic managerial functions have been carried out and are sustainable, but in a dynamic mesesakaeng-based management circle. Transformation makes the management circle not only rotate in the same orbit, but it gets bigger and bigger, meaning that Good Governance has an impact on increasing results that are getting better day by day.

A very defining aspect of dynamic circle management is staff capacity building. If the management circle only applies as a routine, then most likely the results will be the same. But if there is capacity building, the results will increase. Hery (Hery, 2018:48-49) in strategic management calls this capacity building learning and growth. The factor that must be considered is the ability of workers. Leaders must encourage their workers to feel satisfaction in work, get support, and fair share. Leaders also pay attention to employee retention, where the best workers must remain in the organization, and worker productivity which continues to increase as capacity increases. The same thing was also written by Ken Blanchard

and Mark Miller (Blanchard & Miler, 2015:15-16) in *Great Leaders Grow*, the success of workers lies in their ability to serve and grow.

Second, the transfer of knowledge within the management circle. A *tonaseng*, must have once been a *masanaeng*. Maritime gifts and experience make a man elected, but not in office until the end of his life. *Tonaseng* prepares *Masanaeng* to be able to occupy his position in the future. Informal education is also carried out, knowledge transfer is voluntary, it can also be measured as a form of capacity building for workers. John Baldoni (Baldoni, 2005:5) argues that a leader needs to give his subordinates the opportunity to believe in their own abilities, and do something in the present that has an impact on career advancement in the future. Herzberg's theory presented by Robbins (Robbins, 2016: 212) is the importance of motivation from leaders to their subordinates who are temporarily promoted. Opportunities to progress, recognition, appreciation, giving responsibility, will be a motivation and affect morale.

Third, transformation of leadership style. A *tonaseng* does not order in a loud voice, get angry, or berate the *masanaeng*. It was a pelli and telling offense at sea. Therefore, the transformation of leadership style is in the form of good, polite and measurable communication. *Tonaseng* will act as a leader, not as a boss. This is in line with the opinion of George Shinn (Shinn, 2003:196), a superior will say: "Sail!", but a leader will say: "let's sail". This difference in diction shows that a transformative leadership style that invites, sets an example, and works together.

Fourth, transformation was also carried out by Jesus: selection of disciples, transfer of knowledge, leadership style. Jesus designed a continuous ministry by choosing disciples. Group of 12 disciples (Mark 6:6-13), and group of 70 disciples (Luke 10:1-12). The student's mentality was transformed, "Whoever is greatest among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). And from the entire Gospel, it can be seen that Jesus' teaching continued to provide for the disciples. Not only in the form of knowledge, but they are also given power (Mark 6:6b). The church calls this transformation in the management circle as Good Church Governance.

2. The value of local wisdom *mesesakaeng*

Three main values were found in local wisdom *mesesakaeng*: the value of perseverance, the value of divinity, and the value of leadership.

The value of perseverance

Perseverance is the main value in *mesesakaeng*. Every job, carpenter, boatman and fisherman, was carried out with diligence. Perseverance is synonymous with being diligent or doing work seriously. Hard work and honesty become part of perseverance. The value of hard work is not the same as working beyond capacity. But work based on regular time and don't neglect to run it. This value is important because the working time of the fishing profession is not the same as that of other workers in general. The time of work is in the late afternoon, until dawn, even until sunrise. The value of honesty is also part of perseverance. Together with other fishermen who participate, share the results according to the agreement.

The value of divinity

Divine values are rooted in every fisherman in Nusa Utata. This value arises with the awareness that the Almighty is the owner of the universe, both on land and

at sea. Asking for permission when cutting wood is a form of respect for the Almighty, also saying a prayer when going to catch fish, a belief that only the Almighty is capable of helping every fisherman who goes to sea. Confession of faith in the existence of *I Ghenggona Langi Duatan Saruluang* (God Who Is in the Sky Ruler of the Ocean) makes fishermen feel that they are being guarded while fishing. Nowadays, this confession of faith is growing with the expressions *maning selihe maiha*, *maning belade gaguwa*, *ia mang su koko u Ruata* (despite strong winds and big waves, I am still in God's arms).

The divine value is also seen through the construction of small boats whose front and rear are the same, pointing upwards. It is believed that the blessings in the sea come from above, from the Almighty, and will also return to the top in the form of thanksgiving. The value of obedience and the value of holiness are part of the belief in God's inclusion. All forms of taboos on boats and at sea are adhered to and kept sacred. Pelli and telling are an integral part of fishermen's lives. Marine *sasahara* literature, being a special form of language used at sea, is different from that used on land, as a form of respect for the sacredness of the sea and its contents. The people of Nusa Utara believe that, just as living on land is full of various rules, they also live in the sea, even though their biggest relationship is not with fellow human beings, but with nature.

The value of leadership

The value of leadership concerns fishermen's resources and their style in building relationships with others. For those who work as carpenters and boatmen, trust will appear in them, when they are able to manage their time properly. Moreover, the process of cutting wood must follow the tides and the shape of the moon in the sky. This time management is very important, so that planning and achieving boat owner goals can be fulfilled. Likewise a boatman, has a target completion time. A good relationship between the boat owner and the boatman must be maintained. This is all to avoid the expression *sakaeng nahene su hangke* (boat rots where it was made). Influencing factors: the boat owner runs out of money, or there is a misunderstanding between the owner and the boatman. This misunderstanding will have bad consequences, because if one boatman stops working, it will be very difficult for another boatman to finish the boat. Mutual respect and good communication are managerial parts that must be maintained in this process.

3) Barriers and Handling

Obstacles to the implementation of mesesakaeng-based transformative Christian education in the Sangihe Talaud Evangelical Christian Church, namely: First, the philosophy and implementation of mesesakaeng has not been significantly regulated in Church Orders, annual Themes and Sub-Themes, annual Programs and activities, and sermon guides; Second, there is Christian education which still follows the old pattern, as the pattern brought by the zendeling. Education is oriented towards students who are able to understand the Bible, which is the only source of theology, and the church is a means of learning; Third, the lack of understanding of the concept of Christian education, and the form of transformation of Christian education itself; Fourth, local wisdom is still considered to carry

mystical elements and it is the enemy of the church, which the church has left/freed from such practices; and fourth, the lack of interest in becoming a fisherman. Parents no longer have hopes for their children to become fishermen, but other jobs or professions.

Handling the challenges faced, namely: First, through theological consultations, where pastors meet to discuss themes around transformative Christian education and local wisdom, especially *mesesakaeng*. The results of the theological consultations can become recommendations for the preparation of Church Orders, Themes, Programs, and sermon guides; Second, informal education through the family, as well as direct learning in nature, will increase understanding of the concepts and values of transformative Christian education based on local wisdom *mesesakaeng*. The concepts and values are documented and passed down from generation to generation; Third, the creativity of the pastor to be able to collaborate or adapt local wisdom into architecture, infrastructure, ornaments, liturgy, singing, sermons and other forms of service for the growth of the congregation's faith; Fourth, motivating the congregation, especially young people, that the sea has been prepared by God as a potential life space to strive for and get a better life.

CONCLUSION

From the research on transformative Christian education based on local wisdom *mesesakaeng* at the Sangihe Talud Evangelical Christian Church, elements of conclusion were found, as follows:

First, transformative Christian education based on *mesesakaeng* local wisdom fulfills the elements of education, namely: educators, students, materials, goals, and educational environment.

Second, there is a philosophy or concept of the Christian Education of Life, Boat Theology, and Management Circle. The existence of an understanding of the sea as a living space, boats (*sakaeng*) as a means of obtaining life, boating (*mesesakaeng*) as a method of obtaining life, are indicators of Christian Education of Life. The existence of naming, alignment of functions, personification and metaphor, symbols, and rituals are indicators of Boat Theology. The existence of sustainable management patterns, transfer of knowledge, and transformation of leadership styles, are indicators of a Management Circle based on local *mesesakaeng* wisdom.

Third, values in *mesesakaeng*: perseverance, divinity, and leadership, and other related values, are patterned into Christian Religious Education material.

Fourth, there is self-criticism towards GMIST as a community and institution that has not significantly understood the philosophy and implementation of the boat value in the GMIST's logo.

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