

## The Encounter of Christianity With The Old Religion of Minahasa

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

Encounter, Religion,  
Christianity, Tribe,  
Minahasa

The purpose of this article is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the encounter between Christianity and the old Minahasa religion. The problems related to the revival and re-existence of the old Minahasa beliefs affect the congregation's faith in Minahasa today. The method to solve this problem is qualitative research, which involves collecting scientifically tested literature, such as books and journals, without neglecting field data. Through this discussion, the author offers a new perspective that the old Minahasa religion needs to be studied critically and constructively to highlight its local wisdom to enrich theological efforts in the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa. A conclusion that confirms that the goal has been achieved and the problem has been answered. This study concludes that the manguni bird symbolizes the fusion of Christianity and Minahasa old traditions that illustrate the identity of salvation and the church's role as the guardian of truth. Progressivity in Minahasa is not only caused by GMIM or the influence of Protestantism but also by actual theological teachings that affect life attitudes based on the foundation of the Bible and GMIM confession of faith; the Manguni bird as a symbol of GMIM represents religious values, historical, sociological, and anthropological as well as the role of the church in building contextual theology, there is a hereditary call to preserve nature and build Minahasa culture based on biblical teachings with the duty to fellowship and serve amid the diversity of society.



### Introduction

Each region in Indonesia has different beliefs. Factors such as area of residence, ancestors, culture, and history related to the community's life (Rumbay, Hartono, & Siahaya, 2022). The local Minahasa faith rose and existed again after one hundred and ninety-three years of death (Rumbay & Siahaya, 2023). Since the gospel entered the land of Minahasa in 1831, Christianity has animated the life of the Minahasa people. Minahasa elders consciously decided to embrace a new religion (Christianity) that transformed

Minahasa culture. However, not all cultural elements disappeared, but some were preserved, such as the manguni bird, which became a symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (Pinontoan, 2013). The Mangini bird culturally wants to explain the reality of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa as a tribal church that exists and grows in the land of Minahasa but also as God's tool for the world to preach the gospel of Christ (Gerung, Kambey, & Ruindungan, 2021).

Tracing the course of Bert Adrian Supit's thoughts in his writings that focus on the study of Minahasa culture and beliefs, the author did not find views and discussions about the "manguni bird" specifically, even though the manguni bird has become a symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM). Jantje Hendrik Supit, also one of the Minahasa figures who took part in the field of education as a teacher, wrote about the face of Minahasa history in the eyes of the world with a study orientation that emphasizes the importance of historical value as cultural heritage.

Bert Adrian Supit is known as a religious culturalist, having served as vice chairman of the working body of the synod of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) in 1990-1995, in charge of domestic and foreign cooperation affairs, profoundly understands the cultural and theological meaning of the Mangini bird which is designated as a symbol of the church (Pinontoan, 2015). Similarly, Jantje Hendrik Supit, a religious historian, was heavily involved in church activities, deeply understanding the historical and theological significance and value of the manguni bird. Referring to the orientation of the study of the two figures above, the author sees how vital the manguni bird is as a point of encounter between Christianity and the old Minahasa religion to be analyzed in depth. The Manguni bird in Minahasa culture is interpreted symbolically as a messenger of God (Adhitama, 2021).

In the theory of the sacredness of symbols, Fredrik William Dillistone's work *"Of The Power Symbols"* says, "The behavior of human life that is carried out regularly is influenced by culture (Purnamasari, Hudiyono, & Rijal, 2017). Against Dillistone's view, according to the author all norms, habits, values and practices in culture will influence individual behavior and actions. Dillistone's weakness is that it greatly reduces the complexity of human behavior, and his approach does little to explain why culture influences behavior (Suprpto, Winnerko, Andrian, & Jessyka, 2023). That view is too deterministic to assume that culture entirely influences human behavior. It is very exclusive to other factors that may be influenced. Isak Lattu, in his work entitled "Contextual Theology" through the Study of Theology without Ink, also said, "Theology needs to be released from the ink prison because theology lives in collective memory and logos is in the reality of the collective memory of society.<sup>1</sup> In the author's view, culture becomes a theological context. In the context of this thought, the author holds that beliefs and beliefs are based not only on the text but also on the context that is from the cultural heritage and collective experience that a community and church have (Mashudi, 2018). Lattu's view that theology should be freed from texts can open subjective opportunities

and unclear understandings of theology. Clarity of theological foundations is imperative because theology is highly susceptible to distortion of interpretation. Texts cannot be ignored, let alone omitted because they will inevitably lose their valuable intellectual document heritage.

## Research Methods

This paper is done using qualitative research methods, without neglecting the phenomenology approach. The author explores data literarily and factually through observation, experience, and interview so that the data obtained both literally and in the field are really valid and reliable.

Research is the careful study and investigation of discovering and explaining knowledge. While the research method is a scientific activity that is carried out gradually starting with determining the topic, collecting data and analyzing data so that an understanding and understanding of certain topics, symptoms or issues is obtained.<sup>2</sup> Based on this definition, it is very clear that qualitative research, focuses on meaning in context and data collection and is sensitive to the underlying meaning when collecting and interpreting data. With this qualitative method, all the data needed both books, and field data can be collected, then analyzed descriptively.

## Results and Discussion

### Minahasa Religion

Minahasa is located in the northern part of the island of Sulawesi. Geographically it consists of hilly areas and valleys and life is very integrated with nature. Linguistically, the indigenous Minahasa population can be divided into eight language groups. Five Minahasa tribe children with similar languages are Tontemboan, Tombulu, Tolour, Tonsea and Tonsawang. Three of the Bantik, Bentenan (which has the color of Sangihe language), Ponosakan which borders the eastern Bolaang Mongondow so that it has similarities with the Bolaang Mongondow and Pasan languages (Wijaya, 2022).

The religion and beliefs of the Minahasans in ancient times were called "malesung" and were monotheistic, namely believing in the most powerful 'Wailan Wangko'. Malesung means to praise (ma) and ask with all your heart or earnestly (husuk) to God (ung)."Ung" is then referred to as empung and then called *opo empung*. The ancient Minahasans at the beginning of the prayer, delivered praises. Praise means to glorify *open Lampung (the highest)*, and man humbles himself after praise, followed by asking Opo Empung for wisdom and endless understanding of life. Therefore, *Opo Empung* is also called *Opo Kasuruan*, which means the source of truth and life, and it is called God. Rituals and myths become essential and interrelated elements. In Minahasa's religion and culture, the Manguni bird is a symbol full of meaning.

Alon Mandimpu Nainggolan, in his work entitled "The Sacredness of the Manguni Bird in the Contextual Theology of Minahasa People," said: The Manguni bird is very attached to Minahasa culture as a marker of identity, a sacred symbol of unity and

guardian of the sustainability of nature including forests. The Manguni bird in Latin, called "*Otus Manadensis*," is one of the protected species. Minahasa believed the Manguni bird was a messenger of news. Historically, the Manguni bird comes from the word "*mauni*," which means to observe. It is thought to and believed that the Manguni bird was assigned by the Lord God the Most Great (*Opo Empung Walian Wangko*) always to give instructions to the Minahasa people.<sup>3</sup> Tabita Sondakh, in her work entitled: "Review of the Sociology of Religion on the Meaning of the Church about the Manguni Bird as a Symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), affirms that the manguni bird is a symbol of Minahasan identity and a representation of the voice of God.<sup>4</sup> Alon Mandimpu Nainggolan conducted research as an effort at contextual theology but did not look deeply at which types of manguni birds are understood as symbols of cultural identity. Similarly, Tabita Sondakh, who conducted research on the meaning of the Manguni bird as a symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa, asserted that the manguni bird as a representation of God's voice did not provide clarity about the type of manguni bird that was accepted and used as a GMIM symbol. The two researchers only generalized the manguni bird. Manguni birds (Latin = *Otus Manadensis*) are categorized into two types / variants, namely large and small breeds. Large types of manguni birds are easy to catch, quickly tame and the voice is less loud, small types of manguni birds, not easy to catch, the sound is loud and the nest is in the hollow of the tree trunk.

Christianity entered and grew in the culture, customs and old beliefs of Minahasa. In this process of growth what we can see today is a new plant resulting from a cross between Christianity and Minahasa-an values, although maybe between these two elements there are still those who still maintain color because metanarratively they are different. Meta narrative cannot be denied or eliminated, because it exists in every culture and religion. In Christianity the central point is evident in the Lord God in Jesus Christ.

#### **The entry of Christianity in Minahasa**

Western Christian evangelism in the Eastern world, including Minahasa, went hand in hand with western colonialism and imperialism. The theological conviction of the church that Christianity is the only tool and means of salvation in the world seems to legitimize western nations to colonize and exploit eastern nations until about the middle of the 20th century. During colonization, eastern nations have become objects for exploitation of human labor and natural resources including objects of science and objects to be reconstructed and represented morally. During this time, Christian missions continued to be the zeal for the conquest effort. David Bosch said: with the coming of the peak of imperialism after 1880, there can be no doubt about the conspiracy of colonial mission and business institutions. The parallels between the developments at the peak of imperialism and the peak of mission are becoming increasingly apparent.<sup>5</sup> Bosch also cites what Niels-Peter Moritzen says to show the close connection between mission and colonialism, namely what Moritzen calls the three "C's", *christianity* , *commerce* and

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*civilization* . According to the author, this term can be compared to what is commonly known, namely: 3G, *Gospel* , *Gold* and *Glory* . The colonial expansion of western nations, at first was secular. In the 19th century colonial expansion was already together with religious fervor in this case protestantism. For the colonial government, it was the missionaries who had an important role to soften the hearts of the natives to submit and submit to the colonial power.<sup>6</sup>

Zendelings work in the community. For successful evangelism and conversion, they must learn the local culture and reconstruct and reproduce new morals.<sup>7</sup> Commenting on the political-economic gap between colonial countries and their former colonies, Tissa Balasurya pointed out the causes of the gap which among others had begun during colonialism and Western Christian evangelism<sup>8</sup>. To the author, it seems that this situation is due to the existence of major groups based on race, class, gender, or religion driven by their belief in a theology that prevailed in Christian churches for the last five hundred years, from about 1450 to 1950. Such theological perspectives are still valid today with some adjustment to modern times – in many mainstream church thought.

The colonialism of western nations in the span of time as mentioned by Balasurya above has succeeded in changing the civilization of colonized nations, including Minahasa. The way to change local culture is by cultural dominance, which includes a number of new myths including Christian morals which then serve to help reinforce the notion of western superiority.

From the description above, according to the author, the relationship between evangelism and colonialism specifically in the Dutch East Indies is not very appropriate when viewed as something identical and fixed. Colonialism was more about political and economic expansion and domination, while evangelism was based on the spirit of Christian faith to spread the gospel (which coincided with the establishment of congregations). However, both colonialism and evangelism (at that time), both departed from the same culture, namely western culture. Thus, the 'relationship' between the two must be seen more as ideological one.<sup>9</sup>

The entry of the gospel in the land of Minahasa cannot be separated from the interests of the Portuguese, Spanish and Ternate Kingdom, regarding political and economic matters. Regarding the economy, in 1512 the Portuguese were already in Minahasa. But this is in the framework of trade and business to find spices that are potential in this area.<sup>10</sup> Regarding politics, related to the expansion of territory to be carried out by the kingdom of Ternate which was then smelled by the Portuguese. The Portuguese did not want Ternate to control the Minahasa region. In 1563, there were 2 Portuguese kora boats that came to Manado with the intention of establishing economic cooperation but also there was a father named Magellan who then baptized 1500 people, including the king of Siau (Sangihe islands). Previously, the Minahasa and Sangihe

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people adhered to polytheistic beliefs. They worshipped large trees, stones and sacred objects, including believing in the spirits of the dead. This belief is beginning to re-emerge today, and many involved are intellectuals, theologians, culturalists and young people. They call themselves followers of *the Malesung* (Minahasa) religion. Before the arrival of Father Magellan, it was strongly suspected that there were already Christians in Manado. There is a record that around 1547 Spaniards existed and subsequently planned the strengthening of evangelism that Francis Xavier wanted to do.

In the course or process of a very long history of evangelism that began from Catholic evangelism from the early 1500s until June 12, 1831 where J.G. Riedel and J.G Schwarz arrived in the land of Minahasa by the Zending Agency called NZG founded by Rev. Johannes Jeanicke in Berlin, then since then the gospel penetrated the cultural context, religion / belief and Minahasa civilization so that there is a reform and transformation of life in it is Christianity.

Christianity became an accepted religion in Minahasa not because it accommodated the wishes of Minahasan *wa'ilan* but, it happened because of full awareness. Zendingings introduced Jesus Christ to the natives through a process of teaching (known as catechism). Conditions that are not light given to change life behavior are accepted by the Minahasa community, and this becomes a decision for change in a forward direction. The teaching carried out and given presents a new culture, namely the culture of Christianity.

The era of development of modern times cannot be contained so that technology becomes the door to freedom of information. The emergence of socio-cultural groups is driven by the desire to build a presence on social media, or at the very least, become content to channel cultural insights and ideas. The re-presence of old beliefs in Minahasa society is a symptom that also appears in some regions of the archipelago or more broadly, the eastern world. Principle and fundamental questions arise; Is this an original product of the culture itself? Or is it the result of reconstruction that has been assimilated to what is below by the West. This is the gospel that is under the zendeling and preserved in the life of the Minahasa people. In the description of the power and beliefs of Minahasa we first see the existence of pantheistic polytheistic beliefs that develop, where what is worshipped by Minahasans is *empung wa'ilan wangko* which is not only one but plural. This is then applied in the lives of societies that are vertical but also slightly egalitarian. Vertical in terms of achieving top notch. But what is done is that it can be by legalizing violence in this case *headhunting*, and this affects the ritual system in society.

It is said to be egalitarian because anyone can achieve this position, but does it have a good impact on society? Strictly speaking is not necessarily. Indeed not, because it is easy to trigger conflicts between relatives or families. Based on the results of the study, very valid and justifiable data was found that, the trust raised today is the result of reconstruction of what already exists, but provides new values. But this new value seems to be taken from what is below the zendelings, namely Christian teaching. Some of the teachings stated here are: Do not mention God's name carelessly, Do not act arbitrarily

and demean fellow humans, Do not damage the environment, Do not despair and give in to circumstances, Do not berate curse and speak casually.

This trust is addressed to *opo si nimema in tana'* But the form of worship is done by giving something, motivated by the principle: not asking before giving. Ceremonies such as going to the named stone *Tumotoua* Still done but given a more humanist value. The presence of this belief has an impact on followers of other beliefs, because it seems as an original belief whose value has been reduced by the presence of Christianity. The principle of tolerance as part of the life of the nation and state must still be carried out, but criticism must also be carried out so that reconstruction becomes open to a culture whether it comes from outside or from within. History has proven that Minahasa culture has been successfully reconstructed with the presence of Christianity. That role goes on while conducting self-evaluation.

### **The Encounter of Christianity, with the religion of the Minahasa tribe**

The history of the Minahasan people's encounter with western Christianity has begun since the 16th century, namely at the time of the arrival of the Spanish / Portuguese (Roman Catholics). Followed by Protestant Christianity from the Netherlands. In 1831 came two zendelings from Germany who worked for the *Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* (NZG), Johan Friedrich Riedel who served in Tondano and Johannes Gotlieb Schwarz who served in Langowan (Riedel was born in Erfurt, Germany in 1798 and died December 21, 1853 in Tondano and was buried there. Schwarz was born in Keningsberg on 21 April 1800, died on 1 February 1859 in Langowan and is buried there. These two zendelings are said to be the most successful in Christianizing the Minahasa people.<sup>11</sup> After them, other European zendelings followed and continued to arrive who continued the Christianization work of the Minahasans and their culture, which was stigmatized as *alifuru* which means infidel. Today, the majority of Minahasans are Christians with various church denominations. Two church denominations that inherited the European zendeling theology are the Minahasa Protestant Church Density (KGPM) which was established in 1933 and the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) which was established in 1934. GMIM, because it inherited the churches that had been built by the zendeling of the NZG and then the *Indische Kerk*, then in terms of the number of membership was very majority in the land of Minahasa. In addition, there continues to grow Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic church denominations coming from America.

Regarding the Minahasan people's perspective on their own culture, the dominant is shaped by the religious teachings of western Christianity (Europe: Holland / Germany, and Christianity from America that followed later) through the presence of existing churches. In some symptoms that appear until now in Minahasa society, there is a kind of distrust, even hostility towards one's own culture or more lenient, on the one hand claiming to love and respect its culture but on the other hand, in certain parts doing a kind

of selection that is accepting or rejecting certain dominant cultural elements referring to the teachings of western Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Western Christian evangelism in the eastern world, including Minahasa, went hand in hand with western colonialism and imperialism. The theological belief of the church that Christianity is the only vessel or way of salvation in the world seems to legitimize western nations to colonize and exploit eastern nations until about the middle of the 20th century. During colonization, eastern nations have become objects for exploitation of human labor and natural resources including objects of science and objects to be reconstructed and represented morally. During this time, Christian missions continued to be the spirit of the conquest effort. David Bosch said: with the coming of the height of the era of imperialism, after 1880, there can no longer be any doubt about the conspiracy of colonial mission and business institutions. The parallels between the development of the peak of imperialism and the pinnacle of mission are becoming increasingly apparent. Bosch also cites what Niels-Peter Moritzen says to show the close connection between mission and colonialism, namely what Moritzen calls the three "C's", christianity, commerce and civilization. Perhaps this term can be compared to what is commonly known, "3 G's", Gospel, Gold and Glory. According to Bosch, the colonial expansion of Western Protestant nations was initially entirely secular. However, in the 19th century colonial expansion was already together with religious fervor in this case Protestantism. For the colonial government, it was the missionaries who had an important role to soften the hearts of the natives to submit and submit to the colonial power.

Zendelings work in the community. In order to succeed in evangelism and conversion, they must learn the local culture and undertake reconstruction and new moral representations. Commenting on the political-economic gap between colonial countries and their former colonies, Tissa Balasurya pointed out the causes of the gap which among others had begun during colonialism and Western Christian evangelism. To me, it seems that this situation is due to the existence of major groups based on race, class, gender, or religion driven by their belief in a theology that prevailed in Christian churches for the last five hundred years from about 1450 to 1950. Such theological perspectives are still valid today with some adjustment to modern times – in many mainstream church thought.

The colonialism of Western nations in the span of time as mentioned by Balasurya above has succeeded in changing the civilization of colonized nations, including Minahasa. The way to change local culture is by cultural dominance, which includes a number of new myths including Christian morals that then serve to help reinforce the notion of Western superiority.

From the description above, in my opinion, the relationship between evangelism and colonialism specifically in the Dutch East Indies is not very appropriate when viewed as something identical and fixed. Colonialism was more about political and economic expansion and domination, while evangelism was based on the spirit of Christian faith to spread the gospel (which coincided with the establishment of congregations). However,

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"both colonialism and evangelism (at that time) both departed from the same culture, namely the West. Thus, the 'relationship' between the two must be seen more as ideological one.

The gospel has entered, Christianity was born and accepted by the Minahasans. The mission of Christianity in the land of Minahasa is to bring the good news of introducing Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior of the world. The Bible was introduced and became a source of teaching, a measure of faith and a communal and organizational code of church ethics.

In the previous discussion of the Soul (*Mu'kur*), revealed an important element in the identity of the Minahasans, namely the understanding of a holistic communion: between man and man, between man and nature, between the present generation and the pathfinders, namely the ancestors, all of which are lived as religious communion with *Opo Kasuruan Wangko* that is, the Lord who started everything. However, the encounter of Minahasans in the past (in the era of colonialism and evangelism) with western Christianity, is a fact that does not occur equally but in an unequal relationship. This unequal relationship has resulted in a division of identities, while the current dynamic Minahasan context is increasingly plural with the complexity of political and economic problems requiring a theological response. The fact that, the majority of Minahasans are now Christians, the church with its developed theology has the potential to take a role in liberation work in Minahasa. At the same time, expressions of trust and respect for the soul, as I described in the previous section, are still very strong despite the suppression efforts in the evangelism period by western Christian zendeling. In 1993, GMIM, especially through a number of theologians, had conducted an in-depth discussion about efforts to formulate theological independence departing from important elements of Minahasa culture. The discussion resulted in a book entitled "*Opoism*", the theology of the Minahasans.<sup>13</sup>

The effort is really hard and therefore can be said to be brave. The first challenge faced by these theologians was precisely the use of the term '*opoism*' itself. They should be careful to use this term considering the negative stigma by the Minahasans themselves regarding *opo'* as an ancestor who has deviated far from its original understanding of *opo-opo* as a magical power. In the author's view, the negative stigma is the fruit of efforts to reconstruct and moral representation carried out since the zending era, namely the negative meaning of the practice of *foso pakampetan*, which is equated with possession of spirits - spirits of parents or ancestors in a negative sense. The use of the term *opoism*, by the initiators of the discussion was intended as an academic term to describe the religious symbol system of the Minahasans so that for them, this term was *value free* and as an alternative to terms coined in the west (*such as spiritism, animism, theism, and so on*).<sup>14</sup> The author agrees with this effort by GMIM theologians, but there is an important thing that seems to be skipped which according to the author is very important, namely, *manguni* as a symbol of the church.

The manguni bird was agreed upon and accepted as the symbol of the church. This explains an identity of the Minahasans who underwent transformation because of the gospel of Christ. In a church document, the meaning of the symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) was found with the following description: 1. The Manguni bird, symbolizing the Evangelical Church in Minahasa, 2. The dark brown color in the image of the manguni bird, symbolizing adulthood and independence, which characterizes the life of the congregation in GMIM, 3. The rose placed in the heart of the manguni bird, symbolizes reform. This symbol symbolizes Jesus Christ as the reformer of the church, and has been used in the reformed church since the 16th, 4th centuries. The blue circle on the breast of the manguni bird, symbolizes that as a church, GMIM is sent into the world while the black color on the cross in the middle of the heart (heart) is red symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ who animates the fellowship, witness and service of GMIM, 5. The blue color symbolizes the existence that GMIM will still face complex struggles large or small. While the white color symbolizes the holiness and absolute truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, 5. The nine outer wings symbolize the month of September in which GMIM stands alone as an independent church. The inauguration date is September 30, depicted on five petals and a tapered tip that circles the heart of the manguni bird. While 1934 was the total number of manguni bird wings, 6. On the tail of the manguni bird, there are ten branches each that describe the condition of the ten GMIM service areas when it stands as an independent church, consisting of ten classics and will still develop. The classics described are: Manado, Ma'umbi, Tomohon, Tondano, Langowan, Sonder, Ratahan, Amurang, Motoling and Airmadidi, 7. The six spearheads that point down, symbolize the six districts in Minahasa at the time GMIM stood alone as an independent church. The six districts included are Tonsea, Manado, Toulour, Kawangkoan, Amurang, and Ratahan, where GMIM services are carried out, 8. The writings of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa state that, GMIM is in the land of Minahasa, in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and throughout the world. The black writing on the circle expresses solidarity to the end.

The author found the general ignorance of the residents of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa about the type of manguni bird that was agreed upon as a symbol of the church. Fifteen respondents expressed their general understanding of manguni birds, even though there are many species. However, the author later found two elderly church residents, namely Paulus Watupongoh aged 70 years and Roby Rumambi aged 68 years. They said, "The manguni bird agreed upon as the symbol of the church is the small kind, not the big kind. The small type of manguni bird is difficult to catch, the voice is sharp and loud, but there are certain times, the voice is soft and playful, and there are certain times the sound is loud with a high and fast rhythm three times in a row. Paul and Roby explain that if you hear the soft sound of manguni birds playing at night, it is a sign of good news. If the manguni bird is heard "shouting" loudly, the rhythm is high and fast three times in a row, it means that there is bad news, while it sounds slowly as if playing,

it means good news.<sup>15</sup> Paul and Roby's testimony prompted the author to think hard and research the species of manguni bird, which the public widely knows as the owl. Owls belong to the group of *strigiformes*. Fourteen species out of the two hundred and twenty-four known species in the world, exist in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> The term owl, indeed generally accepted but in Minahasa, is known and called the manguni bird. In western countries such as Europe and America, the owl / manguni is considered a symbol of wisdom, and for the Minahasans the manguni bird is interpreted as a messenger of God asserted Tabita Sondakh.<sup>17</sup> As a researcher, Tabita Sondakh did not provide findings of a type of manguni bird used as a symbol of the church, but the author assures based on the data obtained that the type of manguni bird used as a symbol of the church is a species of *buffy fish owl* (species that has a small body and size).

The Evangelical Church in Minahasa as the fruit of western (European) evangelism, accepted manguni as a symbol of the church, motivated by the symbolic understanding of missionaries that the manguni bird symbolizes wisdom and wisdom in Christianity. Another meaning of the manguni bird is as a faithful night watchman in accordance with the image of the church as God's instrument to bring the message of salvation, guardian of righteousness and faith. The manguni bird was accepted and agreed upon since the Evangelical Church in Minahasa was established on September 30, 1934. The values of local wisdom integrated with Christian teachings are very clear. The initiator of the use of the manguni bird as a symbol of the church was Ds.Emst Anton de Vredeede as the first chairman of the GMIM synod in 1934 – 1935.<sup>18</sup> Paul and Roby mentioned that there were other Minahasan figures and elders but could no longer remember their names. Penulus agrees very much.

#### **Theology of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) in its ministry.**

The theology of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa in its ministry, is based on five points, namely God, Bible, Man, Church and Eschatology. This is very clear and clear on a very strong and biblical study of theology. The Lord God, Father in Jesus Christ the Savior (2 Peter 2:20), whom His holy Spirit has called, chosen, sent, blessed and joined His Church (Genesis 12:1–3; Ephesians 1:3–14; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). It is He who has enabled the people in the land of Minahasa to know and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ so that congregations are formed. The Lord God has brought GMIM through the *Indische Kerk*, through *the Zendeling* (later also called "*hulpprediker*" or Auxiliary Pastors) from Europe, the native Helpers or "*hulpzendeling*" (later called "*inlandsche leraar*" or native teachers/pastors) and many native Congregational Teachers. Some of these indigenous workers have even preached the gospel outside the land of Minahasa.

Based on understanding and living God's Word in the Old and New Testament Bibles, taught continuously by believers who give themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit,

GMIM is part of the one, holy, general and apostolic Church that professes that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11) and Head of the Church (Ephesians 4:15). The Evangelical Church in Minahasa is called to fellowship, witness and serve in the land of Minahasa, in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, even throughout the world, as an expression of faith, hope and love for God, with all heart, soul, reason, and strength. GMIM as an Independent Church of the Protestant Church in Indonesia since September 30, 1934, based on: Dutch East Indies Staatsblad number 563/1934, dated September 17, 1934 and Decree of the Director General of Protestant Christian Community Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, number 91/1992, dated October 5, 1992. The Evangelical Church in Minahasa as the fruit of the Gospel Message that has been started since centuries before, continuously carrying out the unchanging commission of Jesus Christ to renew, build and unite the Church; preaching the gospel to all creatures, and ministering to the justice, peace and integrity of the Lord God's creation. GMIM as the Body of Christ participates in realizing the One Christian Church.

In the context of Minahasa, GMIM was born and grew as a fruit of evangelism, awakening to its existence as a tribal church. GMIM in its consensus firmly took and made the manguni bird as a symbol of the church, reaping a lot of criticism and satire both from outside the church, namely from unprincipled church streams and from within GMIM itself. The insinuation in question is "the symbol of GMIM is unbiblical, has no theological value, there is no Holy Spirit which is why GMIM is called misguided (= heretical)." The criticism and insinuations directed at are very unfounded and debilitating.

The GMIM symbol is very strong in its theological values and messages, because its foundation is the written Word of God (Bible) and its orientation is missiology, ecclesiology and contextual theology. From here, GMIM organizes institutions in a synodal presbyterial system, able to be in a cultural context to preach the Word, bring good news, reach out to souls and participate in building a holistic living system. The expansion of ministry is the implementation of the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20, carried out in confidence and obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## **Conclusion**

From the description, study and analysis above, conclusions can be drawn as an affirmation as follows:

First, that the manguni bird is the meeting point of Christianity with the old religion of Minahasa. The manguni bird is interpreted as a sign of salvation identity and a herald, a faithful guardian in accordance with the image of the church as a guardian of righteousness and faith. Second, the progressiveness that occurred in Minahasa is not just speculation to say because of GMIM or because of the influence of Protestantism in Minahasa, but an argument based on the study of biblical missiology as an attempt is made to explain it through this study. Third, that true theology or actual teaching has implications for life attitudes. In this respect, the teachings of God, the Bible, Man, the Church, and Eschatology are the main foundations of all GMIM teachings. This teaching

is a convention formulation (GMIM confession of faith). Fourth, the Manguni Bird, the symbol of GMIM, is an identity. It fundamentally exposes religious, historical, sociological, and anthropological values but practically exposes the church's role in building a contextual theology. Fifth, the call to make an everyday life is hereditary; manage and maintain the universe responsibly by working hard and honestly. What is based on the Bible needs to continue to be lived in building Minahasa culture today. It is, therefore, the duty to fellowship, witness, and serve amid the diversity of cultures, traditions, ethnicities, races, creeds, and religions to bring salvation and signs to the peaceful Kingdom of God to believers. All must not cease and must continue amid this postmodern society. Sixth, the acceptance and determination of the Mangini bird as a symbol of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa is evidence of the process of metal porous inculturation.

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