



From the 'naked Spirit' to a Nusantara contextual theology formula



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Many contextual theology models have been shared, but no formula applies to all contexts, because each culture has specific and unique features. Indonesia shares a complex context and requires a proper approach for precise landing. This study aimed to formulate a contextual theology model on the Spirit suitable for Indonesians. It moves from the 'naked Spirit', a term provided by Vincent Donovan, originally 'naked gospel', highlighting the essence of the scripture or Spirit itself, to the Nusantara contextual formula. The Nusantara model is a promising formula that could contribute inputs to the tension. The local contextual model is a bright sketch that could help Indonesians to engage with pneumatology in the church traditions. This study analysed and described articles, journals and other related sources with a sensitive approach. Additionally, it proposed argumentations and provided a prospective contextual theology model for the Spirit. The findings showed that the Nusantara formula is a significant model for the Spirit to engage in an Indonesian context.

Contribution: Through the examination of contextual theology model globally, and especially speaking of the 'naked Spirit' insight, the study provided an alternative contribution to the contextual theology model. The result showed that the Nusantara contextual theology formula offers an alternative contribution to an Indonesian context.

Keywords: contextual; culture; naked spirit; Nusantara; Indonesian.

Introduction

Doing theology contextually is imperative and decolonising. As the most Muslim-populated country, Indonesia's Christian community suffers from Western pneumatology and colonial theology. This knowledge does not touch the ground or reach the heart of the human experience. According to Bevans (2001:11), this phenomenon is known as a colonial mentality. It leads to cultural inferiority, where colonialism must be honoured by the local context as superior. This implies theological imperialism, where human beings are free to be involved in the church, but their thoughts are jailed by Western knowledge. Jose Rizal, in his novel El Filibusterismo, stated that 'there are no tyrants where there are no slaves' (Rizal 1962:54). The statement expresses the existence of tyrannical theological over local culture as slaves. In line with Bevans (2001:11) and Rizal (1962:54), Kraft (1979:291–297) insisted that theology has been developed in Western culture, making it essentially pluralistic and a contextual endeavour. It is a dynamic discovery process by human beings according to their perceptions. Theology is not simply the passive acceptance of a doctrinal product once and for all delivered. Furthermore, Charles Kraft stated that theology should be culturally and contextually aware of its relevance, without which it would be irrelevant to the local context. Theology needs to be developed to make sense of the context in which it is landed (Kraft 1979:291-297). Therefore, Indonesian culture should display its original identity and sketch the features that radiate the core of its theological characters. Colonial and tyrannical thoughts lead to pneumatological slavery, where the human experience of the Spirit lives under the shadow of Western thought.

Popular works on contextual pneumatology are absent among Indonesian theologians. Some studies explored the works of the Spirit in the shadow of Western thought. Attempting to delve into local knowledge or connect the heart of pneumatology to local features is far from the expectation. Gener (2018) shared a provoking case on how theological colonialism and tyranny exist. The works of Millard Erickson, known as the real theologian, are considered applicable to all contexts. The gaps started when Erickson (2013) did not translate his masterpiece Christian Theology, written in English, into other languages, including Bahasa Indonesia. In his 1300-page text, only two pages discuss economic inequality, three speak about social justice and six pages discuss healing and deliverance. Based on Erickson's context, North America does not consider

poverty, injustice and demonic possession a pressing issue (Gener 2018:50). Ancestral spiritual beliefs, the spiritual identity, wealth and Spirit's existence, as well as other related issues, are important to Indonesian Christians. However, the circumstances are alive among Indonesian theologians. Most scholars engaged in pneumatological exploration lack contextual interpretation. Rouw (2019) explored the Book of Acts, Simon (2020) proposed the relation to the ministerial field, while Diana and Silitonga (2021) examined the Holy Spirit and evangelism. Suwiwi (2018) also exposed the role of the Spirit for modern Christians. In contrast, this study aimed to explore pneumatology from a contextual perspective by portraying the Spirit's personality in the Minahasan context (Rumbay 2021a:114-130) and the context of ancestral spirits in Batak (Rumbay, Hutasoit & Yulianto 2021:50-58). Contextual theology in Indonesia requires a specific model that accommodates the state's diversity and complexity. Christianity grows in various ways, as the encounter between Western thought and each context generates colourful churches. Therefore, Indonesian pneumatology should break free from the colonial shadow.

Traces of theological colonialism exist among the people. They are evidenced by the education centres in Batak, church constructions in Minahasa, Deutschland missionaries' statues in Langowan and the Indonesian worldview. Moreover, Suh Sung Min recorded the suffering of Indonesian pneumatology. In Batak, the Spirit experiences ambivalence as the people are perplexed by the identity of the Spirit. Some Batak Christians are indirectly connected to ancestral spirits practices, while the church strongly forbids any beliefs related to the dead. The church has tried to adjust its teachings but has not achieved reconciliation. In Minahasa, the practices of ancestral spirits exist among the local ministers. Minahasans believe in Opo Empung as the highest god or the original and first spirit from which they came. A quantitative survey led by Min (2001:91-93, 137) found that 30.5% of Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa (GMIM), the majority of the Christian population in Minahasa, believe in ancestral spirits. Native Minahasans struggle to distinguish between spirit and soul. According to Taroreh (2021), they do not know the Spirit and believe that animals, plants and humans have souls that should be respected and honoured. Western Christianity came with its worldview and shared confusion with Christians in Minahasa (R. Taroreh, personal interview in Tondano, 21 June 2021). Consequently, Indonesian pneumatology lives under colonial thought and has no confidence in presenting itself as a divinelocal product of theology.

Indonesian pneumatology suffers from the colonialised formula that penetrates Spirit's existence in the Trinity, struggling with its biblical approach and gender. The local people struggle to define the Spirit's identity and experience its works. The Spirit's existence is prominent and central to Indonesians' religiosity and significant for Christian identity. It is inseparable from the Trinity, making it a significant distinguishing factor between the church and Islam. Therefore, Donovan (1981:24–31) proposed the 'naked gospel' as his thesis to respond to evangelism in Africa.

Missionary activities in East Africa had begun with the ransoming and Christianising of slaves in Christian mission compounds. This continued with a network of schools and medical centres that newly-independent governments had effectively taken over in the sixties. Unfortunately, the church was not involved in direct evangelism but only in development works (Donovan 1978). Because of such frustration, Donovan proposed 'naked gospel' as his response to the church. His idea was influenced by Donald McGavran's book titled The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions. McGavran's approach was based on the 'homogeneous unit principle', implying evangelism founded on a homogeneous group rather than an individual approach. However, Donovan's idea of the 'naked gospel' was explained deeply by Stephen Bevans, namely that the gospel should discard its wrappings and be covered with a local context (Bevans 2001:11). This would make the 'naked Spirit' offer possibilities to construct a contextual model based on Indonesian features. I borrow Donovan's term of 'naked' and apply it to the Spirit. The main idea is that the gospel or the Spirit should be naked to grasp its message's core.

Islam succeeded in stripping its teachings and covering them with Indonesian culture, making the country the most Muslim populated worldwide. The Islam movement was promoted by Islam Nusantara, a popular model that combines Islamic teaching and Indonesian culture. This encounter produced Islam with specific features different from 'other' Islam. Therefore, it is promising to explore pneumatology with the naked and Nusantara approach that could help Indonesian Christians construct their religiocultural identity on the Spirit.

Method

This qualitative study constructed the main idea based on local and international articles, books and other academic references. Ideas and knowledge were shared descriptively, followed by rigorous analysis, argumentations, critiques and new perspectives on the tension. The concept of the naked Spirit (Donovan 1981:24–31) received special attention, defined using rich sources. Furthermore, this study discussed the Nusantara model from Islam Nusantara, while the knowledge of the naked gospel and Islam Nusantara shared a similar concern. These models offered new contextual theology over the Spirit in the Indonesian Christian context. Additionally, several ideas and insights were given based on personal experience and collective memory.

Discussion

The kernel and the husk of the spirit

Naked Spirit implies stripping off the husk to grasp the kernel. Bevans categorised the idea into the translation model, his first model of contextual theology. However, the model differs from the idea of naked gospel or Spirit. A translation model works to translate the meaning of doctrines into another cultural context. This could make the doctrines look

and sound quite different from their original sketch. Bevans emphasised the urgency to transform or translate the gospel's meaning. The Spirit should experience radical meaning and value transformation to be grounded in the local context (Bevans 2001:11). He compounded missiologist ideas into a bucket where their nature is distinct. Moreover, Bevans added Charles Kraft, Donald McGavran and other contributors to the translation model. Naked gospel means disposing of the husk and replacing it with local context features while defending the kernel. Therefore, Kraft (1979:291-297) stated that theological truth must be recreated, such as a dynamic equivalence translation into the language of local hearers and readers. This refers to replacing the husk and preserving the kernel. According to Haleblian (1983:101-102), the kernel is an important message, considered supra-cultural or supracontextual. It is eternal, unchangeable, and superior to the context or husk. The kernel of the Spirit must be defended but clothed in a pattern that the local people understand as the judge of all context.

The Spirit's kernel refers to its personality. According to Hilgard (1962), personality is the configuration of characteristics and behaviour that determines people's unique identity. The Encyclopaedia of Psychology defines personality as individual differences in characteristic thinking, feeling and behavior patterns (Kazdin 2000). It is significant to explore the term 'personality' from an Indonesian perspective to make a precise definition relevant to contextual theology. Alwisol (2009:39) stated that personality distinguishes individuals based on their thoughts, characters, feelings and consciousness. It could also be defined as a dynamic organisation belonging to an individual (Sobur 2006:8) and united into a person (Asterina 2012:313). This means that personality refers to characteristics, behaviour, feelings and thinking patterns displayed to the public. In this context, the Spirit's personality should be defended as its core, because it could be traced back to the Scripture. Fuchsia Pickett and Charles Spurgeon shared foundations to engage with the Spirit's personality. The study explored the Spirit as a divine personality but was limited to the Spirit's works (Pickett 2004; Spurgeon 2018). Reformed authors such as John Owen, Karl Barth, Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper shared masterpieces in pneumatology. Their contributions may contain knowledge and insights concerning the Spirit's personality. Therefore, these essences should be placed as the unchanging core, the kernel under the unessential husk.

This study offered a new perspective on how the Spirit shares emotions such as grief, love and shyness as a being rather than a power (Rumbay 2022). The Spirit also testifies to wisdom, knowledge and counsel in fatherhood, jurisprudence, intelligence in political activity and governance (Rumbay 2021b). Furthermore, it expresses competence in governmental works related to cosmology, leadership and administrative duties and war strategy (Rumbay 2021c). As the unshakable and unchanging, the

Spirit's kernel could land and engage all hearers and readers. This means it should be proposed as the primary message to all contexts. Doing this would ensure that the essential message would not be degraded but could be present as a Christian identity. The husk relates to tradition, as Bevans (1985) suggested that theology comprises two loci theologica, scripture and tradition, which cannot be changed. Theology is a revelation and human expression, as the words came from divine intervention and are transformed into human language. Therefore, the revelation is unchanged, but the human tradition should be adjusted to fit the local context. Bevans proposed three loci theologica, including scripture and tradition as the essence of the gospel and human experience or context. In contrast, this study proposed the scripture or revelation as the core, while the tradition is flexible and could be replaced or transformed to reach local hearers. Hebrew and Jewish traditions in the Bible are not primary because they expressed the revelation that suits their context. Therefore, local Indonesians could modify the traditions in the Bible to make the kernel precise.

In ancient times, human experience with the Spirit shared a significant gap with the current and local context. Symbols, experiences and relations of the Spirit had a place for the Jews but are irrelevant to Indonesians. For instance, theologians have been involved in unending debates concerning the Spirit and the dove in the gospel. Some studies suggested that the dove does not exist in Jewish tradition, even in the original text. However, other studies stated that there was a translational or scribal error. Readers interpreted the text literally and considered the Spirit the real dove, while others are against such interpretation (Gero 1976; Keck 1970; Telfer 1928). It is more precise to discern the sincerity of the Spirit during Jesus' baptism instead of debating the dove, defined differently by tradition. Minahasans have no specific experience with doves, locally known as pombo. In some places, pombo is part of culinary identity, whose meat is consumed as food on cultural festivals and is not a representation or symbol of a divine being. Instead of pombo, Minahasans consider the *manguni* to be a sacred bird with a divine spirit. Papuans regard pigs highly, linking them to social status and dignity. Such symbols, experiences and relations of the Spirit in the Scripture are not essential. In contrast, his works, characters, feelings and sincerity are more worthy and valuable for further discussion. The kernel is always substantial and over the context, but the husk is replaceable and portable.

The naked Spirit relates to the kernel as the unchangeable and the husk as the changeable. Pneumatology must experience decolonisation by stripping off the Hebrew and Jewish traditions or deconstructing and reconstructing the husk with local features. The Spirit's personality is the unchanging kernel and over the culture. His works, passion, authority, responsibilities and divine status are essential and substantial and should be put into a new husk. The Spirit's symbols, experience, relations such as the dove and wind, the practical works to comfort, and related to specific issues are nonessential.

From contextual theology to Islam Nusantara

In Indonesia, Muslims are either radical or moderate. Mustofa stated that Islamic radicals are responsible for negative Klise amongst Indonesians as they practise terrorism but are hidden behind religion (Mustofa 2012). They consider the Qur'an an unchanging revelation and superior to any traditions. This makes them disrespect and dishonour the diversity of Indonesian cultures. According to Rokhmad (2012), fundamentalist Islam exists and could endanger cultural heritage by replacing local features. Liberal Islam proposes a flexible interpretation of the Qur'an by considering its kernel (Mubarok & Rustam 2018:155). It supports freedom of thought and considers rationality the pilot of knowledge. In response, moderate Islam presented a formula that could accommodate tensions and controversies among debates. A model of moderate Islam is known as Islam Nusantara, a formula against two approaches that offer peace and harmony (Mubarok & Rustam 2018:156). In a previous study, Islam Nusantara was explained as follows:

It is presented to signify Islamic moderation in Indonesia, which expresses peace, hospitality, harmony, and courteousness. Islam Nusantara represents an Islam that respects local tradition and culture but still firmly holds on to sharia teachings. It embodies Islam *rahmatan lil alamin* [*mercy to all creation*], which carries peace and happiness to human beings and the cosmological system. Moreover, it does not eliminate local culture or prohibit the support of other religions, but the practices adhere to sharia and provide tolerance and independence. (Hutagalung, Rumbay & Ferinia 2022:3)

Muzakki stated that Islam Nusantara is a model centred on Arabia and preaches 'rahmatan lil alamin' (Muzakki 2019). It is not against local culture but shares space for integration, displaying hospitality toward local traditions. This model proposes tolerance, respect and preservation of local wisdom and avoids restricting its adherents. For instance, Wali Songo faced difficulties spreading naked Islam teachings and its theology. There were also difficulties to cover with local cultures, such as wayang, tumpeng and other traditional practices, producing a new face of Islam. They took Islam's core and unchangeable essence and threw away Middle Eastern cultures. It was a particular example of how Islam began the Nusantara model. Islam Nusantara is the implementation of contextual theology, portraying the unification of local culture and theology. Local hearers and readers welcome Islam as a new worldview related to their cultural heritage, a perfect model of theology compounded with local culture. Mubarok and Rustam (2018:156-157) stated that Islam Nusantara consists of five kernel principles. Firstly, it is contextual, which adapts and modifies according to age. Secondly, Islam Nusantara accommodates and performs tolerance to all Islamic branches without discrimination. Thirdly, it honours and shares respect for the culture and does not contradict or degrade local contexts but integrates them into religious doctrines. Fourthly, Islam Nusantara is progressive, dynamic and transformable. Fifthly, it is liberal, considering

human beings equal to God's creatures. These five principles offer a persuasive approach to the local context. Culture is an opportunity that could be integrated into contributive dialogues. Through Islam Nusantara, Islam became the leading religion that performs satisfactory contextual theology as the merit of theology and culture in Indonesia.

The naked Spirit as Nusantara formula

The Nusantara formula requires stripping off Western thought, colonial features and the Middle Eastern culture and dressing it with local colours. This enables the Spirit's personality to exist and share its essence with the hearers and readers. The core of pneumatology is the Spirit's personality, which should be the centre of attention. It shows how the Spirit shared love, emotion, comfort, power in creation and his mighty is prominent compared to symbols or relation to the Trinity. However, naked Spirit does not mean decreasing the message, but it confirms the Spirit's essence. Performing Nusantara pneumatology means that the naked Spirit or the husk does not intend to contradict the kernel or degrade the core. It invites missiologists, ministers and theologians to uncover the Spirit's husk and present his personality in the local context. This confirms that the unchangeable Spirit's personality is compatible with a local dress.

The Spirit's personality judges all contexts, but at the same time, it should be engaged with the local culture. This means that the culture has no opportunity to distort the Spirit. Nusantara's model of the Spirit does not consider the culture inferior but humbly welcomes the context to cover its essence. However, the Spirit's personality and Indonesian cultures are compatible, mutual, and reciprocal. The husk of pneumatology is portable, meaning local culture is not absolute but a dynamic existence that always transforms. Furthermore, the Nusantara formula prepares local dress according to the Spirit's personality and a new culture to the local context, offering a new civilisation with Christian features. It conserves the culture by proposing a Nusantara pneumatology in which the Spirit's personality could land adequately. According to Felming (1980:66), putting the gospel into context is important, which is consistent with the Nusantara model of putting the kernel into a certain culture. Benno Toren and Liz Hoare stated that naked theology or pneumatology should be free from Western tradition and thought (Van den Toren & Hoare 2015). All models are abstract and complex for each context, meaning no specific formula is equally valid for all cultures but contributes only to a certain context (Moynag 2012:165). The pneumatology should uncover its husk, present its kernel and dress it with local culture. It is a work of deconstruction and reconstruction in which the Spirit's personality is constructed with cultural features and performs its authority in all contexts. This means that Indonesian cultures should provoke pneumatology to ask about itself.

In implementing the naked Spirit with the Nusantara formula, it should be noted that the word 'spirit' does not exist in the Minahasan language. They have no experience and knowledge on how to define spirit. Freddy Wowor stated that recent Minahasan thought is strongly influenced by Christianity. Some words became part of Minahasan vocabulary as a result of the inculturation of Christianity (F. Wowor, personal interview in Sonder Minahasa, 21 June 2021). However, the words 'soul' and 'spirit' are closely connected in Minahasan terms. They believe that each creature has a soul that should be respected, and the oldest or highest ancestral soul is known as opo or apo. Moreover, Minahasans believe in the existence of supra-power and supra-natural intervention. Another metaphysical dimension is involved in the cosmological system, which makes them respect supernatural powers (Rumbay, Hartono & Siahaya 2022:4). Minahasans do not speak of the Spirit in the Old Testament as Ruach Elohim or parakletos in the New Testament. Instead, they label the Spirit as the opo, another kind of opo with divine power to connect and relate with the people. Since a language shares different experiences, it is not crucial when it turns to intercultural discussion because the Spirit's love, authority, intelligence and work are profound compared to his label or name. Therefore, language or terms for the Spirit are only a husk and cannot threaten the essence of pneumatology.

Conclusion

It is imperative to strip down pneumatology by removing all of the husk covering the core of the Spirit and reconstructing it with local features. In Indonesia, the Nusantara formula would help people have suitable experiences with the Spirit. The model offers a prospective contribution to pneumatology and the local context. Both are compatible and share promising inculturation. This would present a new face of the Spirit and new Indonesian Christian civilisations.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

C.A.R. conceptualised, researched and, constructed its methodology, M.K. and V.H.S. contributed to the validation, supervision and resources. M.P. and F.S. engaged with software, validation and funding acquisition.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

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