




Christ's redemption and giwu: Cultural contextualisation in Pamona, Indonesia




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This article examines the contextualisation of the concept of Christ's redemption in Pamona culture in Central Sulawesi, focussing on the practice of giwu as a restorative mechanism against social and ethical transgressions. Giwu serves to restore social balance and relationship with Pue Mpalaburu, the Creator, similar to Christ's redemption which restores human relationship with God. This research compares the similarities and differences between the two, identifying challenges and opportunities in integrating Christian teachings with giwu practices. With a faithful and global contextualisation approach, the article explores ways to translate and apply the gospel message in the local cultural context, without compromising theological integrity.

Contribution: The results of this study are expected to enrich theological understanding and support the Christian mission within the Pamona community.

Keywords: redemption of Christ; giwu; contextualisation; Pamona culture; Christian theology; social restoration; reconciliation.

Introduction

The atonement of Christ represents a pivotal tenet in Christian theology, signifying Christ's act of atoning for the sins of humanity through his death and resurrection. This concept has significant theological implications and practical relevance for Christian life. Conversely, within certain cultural traditions, such as the Pamona community in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, the customary practice of giwu serves as a form of fine or compensation for social and ethical offences (Hidayat 2021; Posumah 2013; Priyambodo 2021). Giwu represents the Pamona people's approach to maintaining social equilibrium and repairing relationships with Pue Mpalaburu, their Creator (Sigilipu & Sigilipu 2015).

Contextualising Christian theology in the context of local culture represents a significant challenge. The objective of this contextualisation is to translate and apply the gospel message in a manner that is pertinent to the specific cultural context. In this instance, the Pamona community (DeVries 2021) serves as a case in point. It is therefore important to explore how Christ's redemption can be understood and applied within the framework of giwu, which is an integral element of Pamona culture. However, this process of contextualisation also carries the risk of syncretism, particularly when elements of local culture are combined with Christian teachings without sufficient critical evaluation. Syncretism can occur if giwu is integrated into the practice of Christianity without due attention to the fundamental differences between Christian theological concepts and local cultural beliefs, which can obscure the meaning of Christ's redemption and alter the essence of the Christian faith.

This article examines the relationship between giwu, a customary fine in Pamona tradition, and the concept of Christ's atonement within Christian theology. The objective of this research is to identify the similarities and differences between giwu and Christ's atonement within the cultural context of the Pamona community.

This study aims to explore the contextualisation of the concept of Christ's redemption within the cultural framework of the Pamona community, with a particular focus on the practice of giwu. By examining this intersection, the research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on contextual theology and its implications for indigenous communities and Christian practices.

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The study also examines the challenges and opportunities of contextualising Christ's atonement within the Pamona community and assesses the potential implications for theological understanding and local Christian practice. In addition, the article analyses the role of giwu in maintaining social equilibrium and its significance in Pamona society's relationship with Pue Mpalaburu.

The study offers a novel perspective on the intersection of customary law and Christian theology by using giwu as a lens through which to explore restorative justice in theological practice. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on contextual theology and its practical implications for indigenous and Christian communities alike.

Theoretical framework

This study employs the framework of contextual theology as articulated by scholars such as Goheen (2014) and DeVries (2021). Contextual theology seeks to bridge the universal message of the gospel with the particularities of cultural traditions, ensuring relevance without compromising theological integrity. This is further supported by Hiebert's (2008) theory of critical contextualisation, which emphasises a balanced approach that respects both Scripture and local culture.

Methodology

Approaches to theological contextualisation are of significant importance in ensuring that the gospel message can be received and understood by various cultural communities without losing its theological essence. This study will employ two prominent contextualisation approaches: the faithful contextualisation approach, developed by Michael W. Goheen, and the global contextualisation approach, proposed by DeVries. Furthermore, this research will employ contextualisation criteria comprising biblical, ethical and missional aspects to assess the efficacy of the contextualisation process within the context of the Pamona cultural tradition.

The faithful contextualisation approach, developed by Goheen, emphasises the importance of maintaining fidelity to the biblical text while integrating the gospel message into the specific cultural context. Goheen (2014) posits that faithful contextualisation is not merely a matter of translating the gospel into the vernacular; rather, it entails a nuanced understanding of and responsiveness to the nuances of a given cultural context, while upholding the integrity of biblical teachings. This method necessitates an exhaustive examination of the local social and cultural context, with the objective of ensuring that Christian teachings remain consistent with biblical principles while being pertinent to the needs and challenges faced by a specific society.

Similarly, B. A. DeVries puts forth a global contextualisation approach that places emphasis on the implementation of gospel principles on a global scale, while also acknowledging and accounting for the significant cultural variations that

exist across different contexts. DeVries emphasises the necessity of adapting Christian principles to meet the specific needs of diverse communities worldwide while upholding fidelity to the teachings of the Bible (DeVries 2021). This approach necessitates a critical examination of the methods through which local cultures interpret and implement the gospel message. Consequently, global contextualisation strives to align the gospel message with varying cultural contexts while maintaining its theological integrity.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the contextualisation process, three main criteria will be employed, namely, biblical, ethical and missional criteria. Biblical criteria guarantee that the interpretation and application of the gospel are in accordance with the teachings of the Bible and the fundamental principles of theology. The ethical criteria evaluate the extent to which the contextualisation process respects Christian moral norms (De Vries 2016; Kabongo 2021). Meanwhile, the missional criteria assess the extent to which contextualisation supports the goals of the Christian mission, namely the spread of the gospel and the formation of healthy Christian communities (Stott 1995). These criteria serve as a foundation to ensure that the contextualisation process is not only culturally relevant, but also faithful to Christian teachings and effective in achieving mission goals.

To illustrate the application of the aforementioned method, Philip S. Chia presents a concrete example in his study, entitled *A Dialogue of the Usage of Tapak Dara to Explain the Cross in Christianity*. This example demonstrates how the symbol of 'tapak dara', a traditional symbol in some Asian cultures, can be used to explain the concept of the cross in Christianity. Chia employs a faithful contextualisation approach, whereby the local symbol is adapted to elucidate Christian theological concepts without compromising the symbol's essence as a representation of Christ's redemption (Chia 2024). This approach also reflects the principles of global contextualisation as described by DeVries, ensuring that local symbols maintain the theological integrity of the gospel message (DeVries 2021).

Consequently, Chia's approach fulfils the criteria set out in the Bible, in terms of ethical conduct and missionary work, in the process of contextualisation. The essence of the cross as a symbol of Christ's redemption remains intact. The incorporation of the treadmill symbol respects Christian moral norms and, from a missiological perspective, enhances the communication of the gospel in ways that are culturally relatable and easily understood by the local community. This approach effectively supports the Christian mission by fostering the development of strong and unified communities in Christ (Stott 1995). This approach demonstrates how meticulous contextualisation can enhance the comprehension and acceptance of the gospel in diverse cultural settings.

Giwu in the Pamona tradition

Definition of giwu

Giwu represents a significant aspect of customary practice within the Pamona society in Central Sulawesi. It serves as a

mechanism for enforcing social and ethical norms within the community. As a form of a customary fine, giwu is applied to individuals or groups who commit offences against the rules and values upheld by the community. These offences can cover various aspects of life, ranging from ethical offences such as personal disputes and breaches of customs to more serious moral offences that can disrupt harmony within the community.

In essence, giwu represents a system of compensation, whereby offenders are required to provide financial redress to the aggrieved party or, in certain instances, to the wider community. The payment may be in material form, such as animals or valuables, or in cash, depending on the agreement reached through customary deliberation. The primary objective of this compensation payment is not merely to punish the offender, but also to restore social relations that have been disrupted as a result of the offence. By paying giwu, offenders are expected to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and remorse for their actions, while simultaneously attempting to repair relations with the aggrieved party (Sigilipu & Sigilipu 2015; Tiladuru 2018).

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to view giwu as a mere punitive mechanism. Rather, it serves a more encompassing function, namely, the assurance of the continued observance of the values and norms that underpin the social fabric of the Pamona community. Through the implementation of giwu, individuals collectively reaffirm the vital importance of preserving harmony, justice and equilibrium within the community (Sigilipu 2015). Consequently, giwu also serves as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and community solidarity.

The application of giwu frequently entails customary deliberations, wherein elders or community leaders convene to examine the transgression and determine the requisite form and amount of giwu to be paid. These deliberations are not only legal and formal but also have a spiritual and moral dimension, where considerations of harmony and fairness are paramount. Once an agreement is reached, the implementation of giwu is usually accompanied by a ritual ceremony that marks the restoration of relations between the offender and the community. These ceremonies may involve prayers, offerings to ancestors or local deities, and various other forms of ritual that aim to reaffirm the community's commitment to the norms that have been violated (Hidayat 2021; Priyambodo 2021).

As in some regions in Indonesia, the concept of giwu in the Pamona community serves not only as a means of enforcing customary law but also as a way to strengthen and renew social ties within the community (Darman 2021). Sigilipu (2015) explains that giwu involves spiritual and ritual elements that in many ways illustrate the depth of social and cultural meaning of this practice. Thus, giwu can be seen as a form of collective response to offences that aims not only to punish offenders, but also to restore and strengthen the social and moral order in Pamona society.

In a broader context, giwu reflects the way the Pamona people maintain their cultural integrity in the midst of changing times. Although today some aspects of giwu may have undergone adjustments or modifications, the essence of this practice as a mechanism for social restoration and norm enforcement remains intact. Giwu remains an integral part of Pamona society's cultural identity, demonstrating how this society combines elements of tradition and modernity in the face of contemporary social challenges.

Function and meaning of giwu in Pamona society

The giwu is a customary fine system that plays a pivotal role in the social structure of the Pamona community in Central Sulawesi. The primary function of the giwu system is to facilitate the enforcement of social and ethical norms. In the Pamona community, the giwu system functions as a mechanism for ensuring compliance with existing rules. The imposition of fines as a consequence of offences serves two purposes: (1) it enforces the rules, and (2) it ensures that collective values are maintained. The implementation of giwu espouses the tenet of social justice, which seeks to deter future transgressions and preserve communal harmony (Rahman 2019). Consequently, giwu is not merely a punitive measure, but rather a comprehensive initiative to enlighten community members on the significance of adhering to established social norms (Fahmi et al. 2023).

In addition to its function as a tool for enforcing norms, giwu also plays an important role as a form of restoration. This process entails the payment of fines, which are frequently accompanied by intricate traditional ceremonies. The ceremonies have the objective of restoring the relationship between the offender and the aggrieved party, as well as between the offender and the community as a whole. This restorative process includes customary deliberations held to agree on the amount of the fine as well as the manner in which it will be implemented, which usually ends with a ritual ceremony. The ceremony is held as a symbolisation of conflict resolution and the restoration of social balance, which in turn contributes to the maintenance of community integrity.

In addition to its social and restorative functions, giwu also has a profound spiritual dimension within the cultural context of the Pamona people. Giwu is regarded as a means of repairing the relationship with the Creator, Pue Mpalaburu. In this tradition, the performance of giwu is not only about addressing social problems but also restoring the spiritual connection between humans and the transcendental force. The giwu ceremony often involves offerings to Pue Mpalaburu as a form of honour and a plea for spiritual restoration. These offerings reflect the understanding that giwu is a bridge between customary law enforcement and spiritual practices, enabling communities to maintain balance in their relationship with higher powers (Zulfa 2011).

In traditional practice, the slaughter of animals is a central element of giwu ceremonies, serving as a form of sacrifice.

The slaughter of animals, such as chickens, pigs, cows or buffaloes, is a common practice in giwu ceremonies. These animals are chosen as symbols of fines and offerings to Pue Mpalaburu. The slaughter of these animals symbolises the seriousness of the offender in fulfilling the fine and shows a sincere intention to repair broken social relations. However, with the passage of time and the advent of modernisation, animal slaughter fines are increasingly being replaced by monetary payments. Nonetheless, the essence of giwu, both in terms of ceremony and spiritual meaning, is still maintained in Pamona society today.

Consequently, giwu functions as a conduit between customary legal enforcement and spiritual practices, thereby facilitating the preservation of social justice and the maintenance of a harmonious relationship with higher powers.

Comparison of the redemption of Christ and giwu

Similarities between giwu and Christ's redemption

The concepts of Christ's atonement and gift, though originating from disparate cultural and religious backgrounds, exhibit certain fundamental similarities with regard to their functions and purposes. Both concepts serve an instrumental role in overcoming offences and restoring fractured relationships, both in a social and spiritual context.

The doctrine of Christ's atonement constitutes a central tenet of Christian theology. According to this doctrine, Christ atones for human sin through his death and resurrection. This act is not only intended to atone for human sins but also to repair the relationship between humans and God that has been damaged by sin (Horton 2011). This atonement encompasses an element of reconciliation, whereby humanity is not merely restored in its relationship with God but is also called to repair relationships with fellow humans (2 Cor 5:18–19). In this context, Christ's atonement not only addresses individual guilt, but also serves as the foundation for broader reconciliation within the human community.

In contrast, giwu represents a form of customary fine within the Pamona community of Central Sulawesi. It serves to restore social and spiritual equilibrium that has been disrupted by ethical or social transgressions. The giwu serves not only as a form of punishment or fine for offenders, but also as a mechanism for repairing the relationship between the offender and their community, as well as with Pue Mpalaburu, the Creator (Sigilipu 2015). In the implementation of giwu, the Pamona community places significant emphasis on the importance of restoring relationships, both in social and spiritual aspects. This is analogous to Christ's redemptive purpose in restoring the broken relationship between humans and God.

Giwu often incorporates customary rituals and ceremonies to uphold justice and preserve community values. These

ceremonies serve as both customary law enforcement and a spiritual act to repair relationships with Pue Mpalaburu. Traditionally, animal sacrifices – such as chickens, pigs, cows, or buffaloes – symbolised the offender's sincerity in restoring harmony. Over time, monetary payments have frequently replaced animal sacrifices, but the essence and spiritual significance of giwu remain intact (Zainuddin 2023).

The ethical implications of animal sacrifice in giwu rituals warrant careful consideration. As Remele (2018) notes, such practices frequently elicit critiques of cruelty while also reflecting the cultural significance of rituals in maintaining social harmony. This underscores the need for a nuanced theological response that acknowledges cultural practices while advocating for humane alternatives.

Both Christ's atonement and giwu share the goal of reconciliation. Christ's atonement focusses on restoring the relationship between humans and God and emphasises reconciliation between people as a key aspect of Christian life. Similarly, giwu seeks to restore broken social relationships and maintain balance and harmony within the community. Both concepts prioritise the restoration of relationships, serving as mechanisms to address transgressions while aiming to repair and restore relationships in both social and spiritual contexts.

As a side note, the criticism of cannibalism in early Christian Eucharistic practices (Pan 2022) provides a historical parallel to how rituals like giwu might be misunderstood or misrepresented in interfaith or cross-cultural dialogues.

The differences between giwu and Christ's redemption

Although there are similarities between the goal of restoration as espoused by giwu and the doctrine of Christ's redemption, there are also significant differences in the mechanism and scope of these two concepts. The key distinctions between Christ's redemption and giwu are summarised in Table 1, which highlights their differences in definition, purpose, scope, mechanisms, and theological implications.

In the Christian tradition, Christ's atonement is understood as a universal and transcendental act that applies to all humanity. It addresses sin in its totality, rather than merely specific sins, and has implications that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries (Moltmann 1993). Christ's atonement is a definitive and all-encompassing divine act that bestows forgiveness for sin and safeguards humanity from its eternal consequences. Furthermore, this atonement not only reinstates humanity's relationship with God but also provides the foundation for broader reconciliation within the human community through grace and faith (Horton 2011).

Conversely, giwu is a customary practice that is localised and specific to the Pamona cultural context in Central Sulawesi. The practice of giwu is employed as a customary penalty for specific social and ethical transgressions that

occur within the community, and its application is confined to a particular social context. The giwu practice is oriented towards the restoration of social equilibrium within the local community, as well as the maintenance of social order through the upholding of customary norms (Zulfa 2011). The implementation of giwu involves the payment of compensation by the offender to the aggrieved party or to the community as a whole, often accompanied by traditional ceremonies aimed at restoring harmony within the community. Unlike the universal scope of Christ's atonement, giwu is limited to specific social and cultural contexts relevant to Pamona society.

Furthermore, Christ's atonement provides the opportunity for unconditional forgiveness and salvation through divine grace, which is received through faith by each individual believer. This is in contrast to giwu, which is a restorative act that often involves the payment of fines or the performance of rituals as a condition for restoring disrupted social relationships (Goheen 2014). In this sense, giwu is more transactional, whereby the restoration of social relations is contingent on the fulfilment of certain conditions by the offender, whether that be material compensation or the performance of traditional rituals. In contrast, Christ's atonement offers a restoration that is not dependent on human action, but rather on divine grace freely given to those who believe (Moltmann 1993).

Moreover, Christ's redemption also has an eschatological dimension that is absent from the concept of giwu. In Christian theology, Christ's redemption not only overcomes the sins of the present but also promises full restoration in the life to come, when the entire creation will be renewed and united in Christ (Moltmann 1993). In contrast, giwu focusses on temporary restoration in the present life, with no transcendental or eschatological dimension beyond the confines of this world.

Therefore, although giwu and Christ's redemption both aim to restore broken relationships, the two concepts differ significantly in terms of their mechanisms, scope and theological consequences. As illustrated in Table 1, Christ's redemption offers a universal and eschatological solution to humanity's brokenness, while giwu remains a culturally specific practice aimed at social and spiritual restoration.

Reflection

Having explored the theological implications of comparing giwu and Christ's atonement, it is important to address the practical challenges of contextualising these concepts within the cultural context of Pamona.

Challenges in contextualisation

Theological contextualisation in an effort to integrate the concept of Christ's salvation with the practice of giwu in the community of Pamona faces several complex and diverse key challenges. One of the greatest challenges is to maintain a balance between faithfulness to biblical teaching and sensitivity to local culture. Faithful contextualisation requires Christian theology to be applied with due regard for the integrity of true theological teachings, without compromising the essence of core concepts such as redemption, forgiveness and salvation (Goheen 2014). On the other hand, it is important for churches and missionaries to ensure that the gospel message can be understood and accepted by local communities in a relevant and meaningful way, without imposing alien norms that may not fit the local cultural context.

One of the major obstacles in this process of contextualisation is the possibility of theological compromise. In attempting to bridge Christian doctrine with indigenous practices such as giwu, there is a risk that the original meaning of Christ's salvation may be diminished or misinterpreted. This can happen when elements of local culture, which may not be fully consistent with biblical teaching, are incorporated without deep theological reflection (Hiebert 2008). Contextualisation must be done carefully to ensure that cultural adaptations do not obscure or corrupt the pure gospel message.

Resistance to change within the Pamona community reflects the deep-rooted cultural significance of giwu and highlights the challenges of contextualising Christian theology without undermining indigenous practices. This underscores the need for a dialogical approach that respects both traditions. When attempts at theological contextualisation are introduced, there is often concern that new Christian teachings will disrupt or even erase long-established cultural

TABLE 1: Comparison of the redemption of Christ and giwu.

Aspects	Redemption of Christ	Giwu
Definition	The act of atonement for humanity's transgressions, accomplished by Jesus Christ through his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection	The customary penalties for social and ethical transgressions in the Pamona society
Purpose	The objective is to reinstate the connection between humanity and the divine, as well as between individuals	The objective is to reinstate the relationship between the offender and the community, as well as to re-establish the spiritual connection with Pue Mpalaburu
Scope	Universal and transcendental, applicable to all humanity	The approach is grounded in the local context and is specifically applicable within the cultural context of the Pamona region
Mechanism	Unconditional forgiveness and salvation through faith and grace	Payment of fines and performance of rituals as a condition of reinstatement
Process	This constitutes the ultimate and most comprehensive divine act	The imposition of fines is a matter of customary deliberation and ritual ceremony
Approach	The foundation of this perspective is rooted in Christian theology and biblical doctrine	The concept is founded upon the social norms and ethical principles that underpin the traditions of the Pamona culture
Implications	It provides an opportunity for a transformative relationship with God and the promise of eternal forgiveness, while simultaneously restoring relationships between people	To restore the spiritual connection with Pue Mpalaburu and the social balance

identities (Van Rheenen 2006). This resistance can come from both traditional leaders and community members who feel that their traditions are threatened by the changes brought about by Christianity.

To overcome this challenge, it is important to engage in open and honest dialogue with community leaders and members. A participatory and collaborative approach, in which the views and concerns of all parties are heard and respected, can help to reduce tensions and find solutions that are acceptable to all. It also allows for a more organic and authentic process of contextualisation, where elements of both traditions – Christianity and local culture – can be combined in ways that mutually enrich and deepen spiritual and social meaning.

One unanticipated consequence of the study was the realisation that the Pamona community's adherence to giwu rituals has furnished a robust foundation for integrating Christian teachings. This implies a latent compatibility that, if approached with sensitivity, could enhance local acceptance of theological concepts like atonement.

While this study examines the potential for Pamona cultural practices to be incorporated into Christian theology, it is equally important to consider how Christian theology can be adapted to accommodate elements of local culture. The process of mutual adaptation necessitates a two-way dialogue where both traditions contribute to a mutually beneficial exchange, thereby fostering a more inclusive and holistic approach to contextualisation.

Opportunities in contextualisation

While theological contextualisation presents a number of challenges, it also offers a number of significant opportunities in the effort to introduce and integrate Christian teachings into the life of the Pamona community. One of the most important opportunities is the potential to enrich local cultural practices with profound Christian principles. When Christian principles are applied in a way that is consistent with local cultural values, such as giwu, this not only makes Christianity more relevant but also more easily accepted by the local community (Kraft 2005).

The contextualisation approach allows Christian teachings to become more relevant to the daily lives of the Pamona people. For example, by understanding the meaning of giwu as a practice that serves to restore social and spiritual relationships, teaching about Christ's atonement can be delivered using analogies and symbols that are familiar and valued by the community. This can help explain complex theological concepts in a simpler and more understandable way, while showing how Christian faith can enrich and deepen the values already present in the local culture.

Contextualisation also opens up opportunities to build strong bridges between indigenous traditions and Christian teachings. This can create a form of mutually enriching

cultural dialogue in which elements of both traditions can interact constructively. This process not only improves intercultural relations but also helps to create greater understanding and mutual respect between religions and local cultures (Hesselgrave 2005a, 2005b). Through sensitive and thoughtful contextualisation, missionaries and church leaders can develop more inclusive and holistic models of ministry, capable of embracing all members of the community without sacrificing the essence of Christianity.

This opportunity involves the development of an authentic local theology in which Christian doctrine is understood and applied in a way that is relevant to the community of Pamona. Rather than simply applying existing theologies, it is about creating a new theological understanding that emerges from the interaction between the gospel and local culture. This contextualised theology can inspire new forms of church ministry that respond to the needs and aspirations of the local community while strengthening their Christian identity. In addition, contextualisation can support future mission efforts by demonstrating how Christian teachings can harmonise with and enrich local cultures, making the faith more attractive and opening the door to deeper dialogue and sustainable church growth in the Pamona context.

Theological implications of the comparison of giwu and Christ's redemption

The comparison between giwu in Pamonan society and Christ's redemption in Christian theology opens up opportunities for deep theological reflection, especially in the context of contextualising Christian teachings in a society rich in cultural traditions. Christ's redemption is understood as a universal divine act that embraces all humanity and overcomes sin globally. In contrast, giwu is a localised cultural practice aimed at restoring broken relationships within the context of a particular community. Although the two differ in scope and mechanism, they share a common goal of restoring relationships and restorative justice.

The theological implications of this comparison are significant, especially in developing a more inclusive and adaptive approach to Christianity in communities with strong indigenous traditions. Both giwu and Christ's atonement emphasise the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, which are central to both concepts. In Christian theology, Christ's atonement offers unconditional forgiveness and reconciliation between people and God, and among fellow humans. This is consistent with the purpose of giwu, which seeks to repair broken relationships through traditional punishments and ceremonies, thereby creating balance and harmony within the community.

In the contextualisation process, an in-depth understanding of the similarities and differences between giwu and salvation in Christ can help church leaders and missionaries develop more effective approaches to communicating Christian teachings that are relevant and acceptable to the Pamona people. Moreover, this comparison also offers insights into

how Christian teachings can be translated into different cultural contexts without losing their theological essence. It is important to consider both theological and cultural aspects in a balanced way. For example, while Christ's atonement emphasises the universal aspect of divine forgiveness, giwu emphasises concrete and contextual restorative actions. Successful contextualisation will be able to reconcile these two concepts in a way that respects both traditions while enriching local understandings of salvation and reconciliation.

Another theological implication is the recognition that each culture has a unique way of understanding and implementing the principles of justice and restoration. In this respect, giwu can be seen as a local expression of larger theological concepts of justice and restoration that are also found in Christian teachings. As such, giwu should not be seen as something that contradicts Christianity, but as a practice that can be reinterpreted and enriched through the lens of Christian theology.

Finally, this comparison underlines the importance of dialogue between theology and culture. As Guder (2000) argues, an effective theology of mission is one that is able to interact with local cultures in a mutually enriching way. Bosch (1991) also stresses the importance of faithful contextualisation, where Christian teaching is communicated in a way that respects and strengthens local values without neglecting the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. The process of contextualisation is thus not only a means of spreading Christian teaching but also a way of enriching overall theological understanding.

Conclusion

Summary of key findings

This article has discussed a comparison between Christ's atonement and giwu in the cultural context of Pamona. Christ's atonement, which is a divine act to restore relationship of humans with God through his death and resurrection, has a universal and transcendental meaning. Meanwhile, giwu is a customary practice related to social and spiritual punishment in Pamona society, aimed at restoring the relationship between individuals and communities, as well as with Pue Mpalaburu, the Lord of heaven and earth, and all humanity.

This comparison shows that while there are similarities in the aim of restoring relationships – both human relationships with God and fellow human beings in the Christian context and social and spiritual relationships in giwu – there are also fundamental differences in the mechanism and scope of each. Christ's atonement operates within a broader, universal Christian theological framework, whereas giwu operates within a local cultural framework with specific, customary mechanisms (Hiebert 2008).

Theological contextualisation demonstrates the importance of adapting Christian teachings to local cultures while maintaining the core tenets of the Christian faith. With a

careful approach, Christian principles can be integrated into local cultural values without undermining fundamental theological truths (Goheen 2014).

This study has illuminated the interplay between Christ's redemption and giwu, elucidating the theological parallels and distinctions between the Pamona cultural practice of giwu and the Christian concept of Christ's atonement. The study's key findings include the shared emphasis on relational restoration and the necessity of dialogical engagement in contextualisation efforts. While both aim to restore relationships, giwu operates within a localised cultural framework, whereas Christ's atonement provides universal reconciliation. The study illuminates both the opportunities and challenges of contextualising Christian theology in local cultural settings without compromising its doctrinal purity.

Recommendations for contextualisation in the Pamona community

Several strategic steps can be taken to promote the contextualisation of Christ's salvation within the Pamona community. Firstly, an open dialogue with the local community is essential, involving the leaders and members of the Pamona community on an ongoing basis in order to understand their cultural values in depth. In this way, the concept of Christ's salvation can be integrated into their cultural context in a sensitive and acceptable way, as suggested by Hesselgrave (2005a) in his research on intercultural communication. Future research should explore broader applications of contextual theology in other cultural settings. Practical recommendations include engaging local leaders in collaborative theological education and developing resources that integrate local symbols with Christian teachings.

Secondly, training for Christian preachers and teachers is essential. This training will provide an in-depth understanding of giwu and effective ways of teaching Christian principles in the Pamona cultural context, in line with Kraft's (2005) guidelines on anthropology for Christian witnesses. Follow-up research is also essential to understand the impact of contextualisation on Pamona society, involving the active participation of local community members, as suggested by Bosch (1991).

Finally, the development of an inclusive ministry model that respects and uses local cultural practices such as giwu in Christian ministry and mission, in line with Van Rheenen's (2006) concept, is expected to strengthen the relationship between Christianity and local culture.

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Authors' contributions

P.G.O.S. contributed to conceptualisation, methodology, writing (original draft) and supervision. D.D. assisted with data collection, analysis and writing (review and editing). J.J. provided support in methodology, writing (review and editing) and validation. Y.T. was involved in formal analysis and writing (review and editing). S.P. contributed to data collection, resources and writing (review and editing).

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