



# Woven with meaning: Lawung and Sumping as expressions of faith in New Testament theology



#### Authors:

Telhalia Telhalia<sup>1</sup> 
Alfonso Munte<sup>2</sup> 
Rizki Indriana<sup>3</sup>

#### Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Department of Theology, Faculty of Christian Social and Religious Sciences, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Christian Education, Faculty of Teacher and Christian Education, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Theology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya, Indonesia

### Corresponding author: Telhalia Telhalia, telhalia@iaknpky.ac.id

### Dates:

Received: 08 Apr. 2025 Accepted: 30 June 2025 Published: 18 Aug. 2025

### How to cite this article:

Telhalia, T., Munte, A. & Indriana, R., 2025, 'Woven with meaning: *Lawung* and *Sumping* as expressions of faith in New Testament theology', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), a10722. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10722

### Copyright:

© 2025. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

### Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

This research definitively explores *Lawung* and *Sumping*, the traditional headgear of the Dayak people of Kalimantan Tengah, as cultural emblems that transcend mere aesthetic and conventional roles. *Lawung*, intended for men, and *Sumping*, intended for women, embody local identity and have evolved into symbols of regional and national significance. Crafted from *batik* cloth or painted bark, these headdresses feature distinctive motifs, including *hibiscus* flowers and *rehung* shoots. Red is a prominent hue that symbolises vitality and unity amid cultural diversity. *Lawung* and *Sumping* are used in governmental contexts to receive guests, exemplifying communal values. This investigation connects the symbolism inherent in *Lawung* and *Sumping* as instruments for social interaction that transcend biological imperatives and predate the dichotomy of sacred and profane, highlighting the spiritual dimension associated with these head coverings. In Christian theological discourse, *Lawung* and *Sumping* manifest as embodiments of spirituality in church liturgy, merging Dayak cultural identity with New Testament theological perspectives. Paul's letters metaphorically use clothing to represent divine glory, echoing the use of the *Lawung* and *Sumping* in Christian worship practices.

**Contribution:** The research contributes to Dayak cultural studies by examining the symbolism of traditional dress. It integrates New Testament theology, cultural anthropology and symbolic philosophy to explain how local identities become spiritual elements in a liturgical setting. Combining *Lawung* and *Sumping* shows how to encourage cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue for Kalimantan Tengah's diverse society.

**Keywords:** cultural symbolism; *Lawung*; *Sumping*; liturgical space; New Testament theology; traditional attire.

### Introduction

Cultural globalisation aims to lead to the adaptation and strengthening of local identities on a local, national and global scale. This strengthening cannot be separated from the participation of religions, including Christianity in Indonesia. For example, Islam, as the largest religion in Indonesia, is related to and intersects with Christianity. Religious diversity, through the work of harmony, that has been established so far in Indonesian culture, is an important element for understanding religion, including Christianity.

The traditional clothing of Kalimantan Tengah has clearly merged with the tribes that inhabit the region. The merging of the characteristics and philosophies of each tribe appear in patterns, motifs and colours through typical hats, beaded necklaces, bracelets, rings and belts. Lawung and sumping are local and national products that have developed into symbols for guests and hosts in government spaces. This transformation of local into regional and national is a clear example of cultural fusion and adaptation. Lawung and sumping are crafted by individuals and teams, including a mobilisation team from a village in Kalimantan Tengah, and are typically produced by women. The activities of sewing, rattan processing and bark embroidery require creativity, patience, perseverance, qualified marketing and a wide market (online platforms: Lazada, Shopee, Tokopedia) and social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and FbPro), as well as local government participation. Accessories as part of the cultural reflection of traditional clothing in Kalimantan Tengah enrich tradition and improve the community's economy, for example through micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Supriani 2024).

Lawung has the same use as *sumping*, namely as a headband. The headband comes from the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. *Lawung* is a headband for men while *sumping* is a headband for women. Both resemble a *peci* as a hat or *blankon*. While *lawung* and *sumping*, the traditional

Dayak headbands, were made from *batik* cloth in ancient times (similar to Indonesian *batik*), in present times they are made from bark that has been painted in ornamental motifs (e.g., *hibiscus*, *seduduk*, *tampok mangosteen*, *kembang sumping*, *rukem*, *pucuk rehung*, *kembang setangkai* and *kembang kenanga*). One of the prominent colours used in this headbands is red. Red is symbolised as a space for the spirit of life or as a guardian of cohesiveness among differences in ethnicity, religion, skin colour, culture and identity.

Lawung and sumping are not just used for official government events in Kalimantan Tengah; they are also used for Dayak traditional ceremonies. In these ceremonies, these headbands serve a crucial role as a space for exploring the meaning of existence and identity symbols (Mitot, Kuan & Sanusi 2016). Researchers have argued, citing the thoughts of the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer, that the symbolic system itself does not stop at the level of animal rationality, based on the instinctive and the instinctual, but the symbolic system itself is capable of revealing art, science, myths and language (Cassirer & Cassirer 1946). The symbolic system reveals in itself that social interaction in society is not only based on biological interaction. The researchers compare the symbol of identity with the Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade, who sees symbolism in terms of 'sacred (something religious) and profane (secular/ordinary)', in contrast to Ernst Cassirer's opinion (Eliade 2018; Ellwood 2017). While Eliade's ideas are less directly aligned with the lawung and sumping concept of distinguishing between the sacred and the profane (hierophany), they nevertheless offer valuable insights. The researchers assert that, while similar, Eliade's thought is closely tied to the historicity of lawung and sumping.

### Research methods and design

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary, hermeneutic-symbolic research methodology. The qualitative approach is fundamental to interpreting the deeper meanings of *lawung* and *sumping*, traditional Dayak headgear, as dynamic theological symbols rather than merely physical or cultural artefacts. These cultural expressions are examined in relation to their function in Christian liturgy and New Testament theology. The qualitative nature of the research allows for a nuanced exploration of how spiritual meanings are encoded in traditional attire beyond empirical or quantitative frameworks.

This interdisciplinary approach integrates cultural anthropology, symbolic philosophy and Christian theology perspectives, enabling this research to seamlessly bridge academic domains. Cultural anthropology provides a symbolic philosophical lens through which to understand the social and symbolic functions of *lawung* and *sumping* in the Dayak tradition. In addition, Mircea Eliade's ideas shed light on the relationship between the profane and the sacred in symbolic interpretation and the negotiation of meaning in religiosity, including the perspective of the New Covenant.

The hermeneutic-symbolic methodology lies at the core of the analysis. Drawing from biblical hermeneutics and symbolic interpretation, this method reads *lawung* and *sumping* as 'texts' to be interpreted. In this sense, these headpieces are theological artefacts that evoke Pauline metaphors in the New Testament, particularly in texts such as Galatians 3:27 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–4. These scriptures employ clothing as a metaphor for spiritual transformation and eschatological identity, which this study parallels with the ritual and symbolic roles of *lawung* and *sumping* in both Dayak tradition and Christian worship.

### Mircea Eliade: Theologies, philosophies and symbolisations

Eliade discusses something mythical, although as far as the researchers are concerned, lawung and sumping are not mythical in origin. Nonetheless, Dayak culture contains legends relating to the spiritual world, the creation of the elements of nature and human beings themselves. Based on the legends (e.g., about Batang Garing), the legends themselves are able to manifest something related to spirituality (something that exists and is present for religions in Kalimantan Tengah, including Christianity). For example, in Kaharingan mythology - through and within the Luhing Pantung Tingang - as headgear to receive 'living water and life'. In addition, being able to become a Tingang or Enggang bird - through its tail feathers and colours (white and black) - as something sacred and spiritually meaningful for the believers of Kaharingan or the indigenous religion of the Dayak tribe on the island of Borneo, Indonesia.

Researchers confirm that Eliade's book, The Myth of the Eternal Return, relates New Testament theology to myth, even when it is correlated with lawung and sumping. This happens when dealing with something spiritual, timeless rites and experiences in traditions, in which there is something spiritually uplifting on a recurring basis (Eliade 2018). The presence of the Christ moment creates a space of reconciliation between the sacred and the profane (Chalamet 2021). The cyclical (repetitive) events in the myth would be in contrast to the events depicted in the New Testament world viewing time as linear in the coming and return of Christ (Kang & Yu 2022). The researchers compare New Testament theology to Eliade's idea of 'eternal return', in which the various significant events are repeated but lack depth. Whereas in New Testament theology, the pivotal event - the death and resurrection of Jesus - is a one-time event that produces profound changes (Angiola 2021). The expectation of the future, for illustration, is a unique and major event in the history of Christianity.

The depiction of humans in the circle of symbols (homo symbolicus), according to the thought of philosopher Mircea Eliade, is based on the fact that human beings themselves are capable of creating, imagining and interpreting life experiences through the presence of a multitude of symbols

as a space for meaning or framing meaning (Ellwood 2017). According to the researchers, this experience is close to Christian theology, such as the sacrament of the Eucharist (bread and wine), the diversity of pulpit styles, chairs in the church and church design. Symbols of God's presence and omnipresence are incarnated in these symbols (Gullbekk, Walsh & Moen 2024; Wirawan 2023). In addition to symbols, New Testament theology displays something metaphorical (such as the bread of life, the light of the world and the vine), parables (the prodigal son and the sower of seeds, etc.) and something eschatological. This means that the presence of the symbols themselves is not far from the symbols served by lawung and sumping. This metaphorical nature is the result of what is called *Phatos* or the consequence of the allegorical presence of the multitude of symbols and something rhetorical in nature (Duarte 2023).

Researchers relate the concept of 'sumping' in the ritual of welcoming something that comes to the church in New Testament theology. This welcoming of guests is evident in various settings, including government, civil society and worship ceremonies. It is similar to the church's reception of guests – welcoming guests (congregation) as part of God's full acceptance to enter the house of fellowship and liturgical celebrations (Hogan 2025; Munte 2024; Pahan 2021). This acceptance includes welcoming vulnerable groups, 'thirsty and hungry people', that is, people in poverty and impoverishment or in other languages called 'the poor'. Through welcoming God's people as guests, hosts or in interchangeable roles, the researcher sees the welcoming itself in the space of forgiveness, a logical consequence of the acceptance of the subject (Lee & Sykora 2025; Stine 2025).

## The relationship between the functionalisation of Christian worship and symbol diversity

Symbols are important and deeply significant signifiers in Christianity, particularly within worship in the church today. Their use as communication (concrete realisation of something in transcendent space) is seen through the senses of hearing, smell, sight and taste (Firth 2025; Ligan 2022; Tillich 1959). Prominent German Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, highlighted symbols in the framework of theology, emphasising that God, while ultimately unreachable, is accessible when humanity is able to understand and relate to God through symbolic representation (as concrete representations as well as spaces of divine presence) (Wong, 1986). The researchers compared the thoughts of theologian and feminist Sallie McFague featuring worship and symbols within the framework of metaphorical theology, symbolic language as an expression to explore divine works as a reality in the 'body of God and the world' (McFague 2003). In addition, Sallie McFague has presented the seemingly unreachable God as being close at hand when confronted with issues of an ecological nature that need to be accounted for although there are still criticisms of her reasoning, but the researchers are not going that far (Handoko & Intan 2022).

Worship in Eastern Christianity-Orthodox and Eastern Catholic-as far as the researchers are concerned, features a mystery or mystical dimension, icon theology in iconography, the incarnation of Christ, anamnesis, eyewitnesses and prototypes (Ruiz 2019). Eastern worship is not just about ritual but also about the mysterious experience of the divine. Theologies of the icon, on the other hand, not only boil down to art but also lead to visual revelations that carry and manifest the divine (Yazykova 2021). The theology of the icon itself, Eastern Christianity, through the lens of presence and transfiguration, are two main ideas to understand the various functions given by the Eastern tradition to images in Christian worship. These reflect the teachings and demands of the theological tradition of the Church Fathers, which emphasises the logic of deification, as well as the ontological foundation of sacred images venerated in worship. In other words, icons are not merely visual representations but contain anamnesis (vivid memories) as well as presence of divine prototypes that lead to the experience of a deeper spiritual reality through the image (Vos 2005).

Furthermore, how is it when symbols as performative functions that are raised in culture become relevant? Researchers found through the thoughts of George Ossom-Batsa and Felicity Apaah in the Ghanaian context (*Adinkra* symbol) that performative becomes complete with decorative presence despite the visible presence of non-Christian symbols in a church building. Even non-Christians according to Batsa are able to read theology through the imagination of the presence of liturgy, photographs or images of saints and important events, as well through architectural design in symbols in the church and the diversity of art that appears in the liturgy as a visual communication tool (Ossom-Batsa & Apaah 2018).

The researchers compare this with the function of icons in Eastern Orthodox customs, which function as teaching tools and concentration aids in Christian education. Christian education becomes rich in meaning because of the presence of icons as a counterbalance to the monopolisation of spirituality in the church hierarchy (which consists of men and women) that appears in Eastern Orthodoxy (Weaver 2011). In addition to comparisons with teaching tools and learner concentration in Christian education, researchers compare the function of the icon itself in Christian worship through music presented without text (something that stands alone) as one of the symbols in Christianity through the research of Jennifer Wakeling. Wakeling found the presence of non-text music symbols in experiential, transformative and reflective spaces (Wakeling 2021).

Researchers as part of the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan Tengah confirm that *lawung* and *sumping*, while functioning as a symbol of guests or hosts (simultaneously or successively) in government events or customs, is also expressed and accepted in Kalimantan Tengah's Christian religions. Both in liturgical processions as the primacy of symbols that symbolise the presence of God through the subject of *lawung* 

or sumping users. Researchers have noted that the belief in symbolisation in religion does not stop at self-subjectivity; it merges and becomes communal. The community here is among the diversity of religions and cultures in Kalimantan Tengah. It can also be interpreted in the diversity of meanings that are intertwined in the midst of the saturation of the intertwined spaces in which there are icons. This symbolism is evident in various educational, theological and philosophical contexts, particularly in the context of Christian education and the empowerment of marginalised communities (Munte 2025; Sanasintani & Munte 2024). The purpose is to formulate state policy, in a state or regional event room, that features lawung and sumping, appear to complement the liturgical icons in Christianity's rituals that bless *lawung* and *sumping* in the liturgical space of the church. Thus, something that is considered pseudo, abstract, absurd or obscure becomes brilliant in the midst of sensory capture of the icons produced by lawung and sumping in the multidisciplinarity of space, subject and history.

Liturgy in the church becomes a form of action to display and express identity through the typical clothing of Kalimantan Tengah, such as *lawung* and *sumping*. As an expression of identity, the researchers reflected that physicality and spirituality are a complementary unity as a sign of intersubjective reciprocal presence (body, inter-community and soul) (Gschwandtner 2017; Vlčková 2019). Traditional clothing through the expansion of meaning not only manifests aesthetics and social status but also displays emotive resonance because of the symbolic presence of house guests (through and within *lawung* or *sumping* as it is worn) (Leslie 2020). As an example, the use of *lawung* and *sumping* in church practice manifests itself in the practice of spirituality, space and symbolic reminders in cultural heritage that contain essential values.

### Metaphors of traditional dress in New Testament theology

The letters of Paul (Deutero-Paul) are significant as clothing is used as a metaphor through 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 and Galatians 3:27, for example. The garment of the Romans, then, is a metaphor for the glorious image of God that had previously disappeared during Adam's presence in the world. These verses indicate that something glorious will be made perfect in the presence of the parousia (Kim 2004). As far as the analysis of researchers is concerned, the researchers contend that 'clothes' (including lawung and sumping as part of the decoration of Dayak traditional clothing of Kalimantan Tengah), as written in Ephesians 4: 22-24 and in the context of church (spirituality, liturgy and aesthetics), could mean a sign, as well as hope, and will be used to be 'complete and perfect', for the future of the glory of God. Therefore, the consequence of this thought according to the researchers is that the clothes as part of the glory of the body will become blurred if it encounters the purpose of Christianity, if Christianity is more oriented towards future conditions (the resurrection body from mortality to immortality).

In fact, theology according to the researchers is supposed to be oriented for the here and now. However, despite this, the researchers are of the view that even though we are looking forward to something perfect in the future, the clothes today are becoming necessary as a symbol of welcoming guests (guests who could be vulnerable groups, families and even unknown subjects) in which then the wearer of the clothes (in this case including lawung and sumping) becomes a subject as a full citizen of God's kingdom when participating in the fellowship of others and even of the whole of his creation. The textual passages delineated in Galatians 3:27 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 employ the metaphorical construct of clothing as a vehicle for elucidating intricate theological constructs rather than engaging in a literal scrutiny of conventional apparel. These metaphors hold substantial significance within Pauline theology, symbolising transformation and identity through the figure of Christ. The clothing metaphors articulated in these texts transcend the confines of physical garments, instead embodying spiritual and moral transformation, in conjunction with eschatological anticipations.

Frank J. Matera interprets 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 to mean that the 'clothed and/or unclothed' image is more than figurative language; it could be an existential metaphor expressing eschatological hope rooted in participatory suffering (Matera 2020; Mesick 2024). He interprets 'unclothed' not as shame, but as the nakedness of death transitioning into being 'clothed' with a resurrection body secured by the Spirit. Based on Matera's premise, researchers have argued that in the literary-theological method - which Matera also continues to use – the rhetoric in 2 Corinthians is neither a theoretical separation to be resisted nor a patchwork of clothed and/or unclothed theories. Kim (2004) and Grooms (2013) parallel Estrada's argument of clothing as a representation of spiritual transformation. In Galatians 3:27, the phrase 'clothed with Christ' denotes a profound transformation that transpires at the juncture of baptism, signifying a renewed identity in Christ while concurrently indicating a relinquishment of previous identities or divisions, encompassing racial or social distinctions (Estrada III 2023; Grooms 2013; Kim 2004).

Jeal and Estrada III emphasise that the word 'ἐνδύω' implies ethical and moral renewal - believers should embody virtues in harmony with Christ (Estrada III 2023; Jeal 2016). However, unlike Hays and Matera, both of whom use the word 'ἐνδύω', the two scholars interpret it as a shift in soteriological identity. According to Hays and Matera, the incorporation of believers into the body of Christ results in the shedding of sociological differences (Matera 2020). Colossians 3:9-10 conveys the notion of shedding the old self and adopting the new self, which is revitalised in knowledge and reflects the image of the Creator. Richard B. Hays in Mohr Siebeck perceives 'clothing in Christ' (Gal 3:27) as an expression of the incorporation of baptism into a new eschatological identity, beyond ethnic and social differences (Works 2014). Kim and Jeal added that this metaphor emphasises moral rejuvenation and the adoption of virtues characteristic of the new life in Christ (Jeal 2016; Kim 2004).

In 2 Corinthians 5:1–4, the use of clothing imagery serves to clarify the transition from the physical body to the resurrected body. Paul employs the metaphor of donning a new garment to express the hope of eternal life and the transformation that believers will undergo at the resurrection (Kim 2004; Mickiewicz n.d.). Jeal added that the clothing metaphor within these texts also encompasses broader cultural and social implications. Within the context of the ancient Mediterranean environment, attire functioned as a crucial indicator of identity and social standing. Through this imagery, Paul effectively conveys the radical transformation in identity and social roles that accompanies the experience of being in Christ (Jeal 2016). This metaphorical application of clothing underscores the profound changes in identity and existence that are central to Pauline theology.

Acceptance in a congregation according to the researchers is based on the experience while serving the congregation that they have been baptised as a symbol of wearing the 'clothes' of Christ as well as the spirit of wearing a new identity that has been sanctified. Thus, the subjects in the Christian community consist of subjects who have 'put on' new clothes. However, according to the researchers, before wearing the new clothes, the user subject must get a space of nakedness (as a linguistic transition language) for the use of 'old clothes' before the salvation event. The researchers found that the changes in the weaving patterns of lawung and sumping, as well as shifts in their value and governance-such as marketing strategies, material innovations, and managementreflect a historical transformation. These changes are driven by evolving needs, contextual relevance, and the cultural assumption that something 'old' must undergo transformation (often labelled as 'new') to remain meaningful. This adaptation aligns with the specific contexts of place, user, and occasion, all of which demand that lawung and sumping-as traditional clothing elements distinctive to Central Kalimantan-remain relevant and functional. The shift of lawung and sumping itself seems to show the imagination of the 'baptism' of history in clothing to be crucial as well as signifying the dynamisation of needs often associated with the divine work of Christ.

On the other hand, the researchers traced the lawung and sumping ornaments (which were previously without the need for additional accessories) to be expanded with the addition of accessories in the form of embroidery, management of one of the forest barks (Nyamu), sequins, bird feathers, sponges and beads. According to the researchers, the addition of these accessories is essential to complement the desired motifs, such as the motifs of Bajakah wood and Tingang birds. The accessories brought us to the literature in Matthew 5:28. This text confidently addresses authority, control and the respect because of clothing worn by women (currently, clothes, including accessories, have become a standard of existence as well as a space for humiliation of male and female identities). Matthew 5:28 according to the researchers upon encountering women's clothing speaks to the appreciation of the diversity of models, accessories, beads or something attached to clothing as there is also respect for culture, God as the creator and sustainer (Brower 2004). The researchers compare this with 1 Corinthians 11 in which the praise for the wearer of clothing is a metaphor involving the relationship between God and his people.

In the text of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, the latter passage discusses the symbolism of κεφαλή (kephalē), a term that Paul uses to refer to 'head' but that also has various symbolic meanings, such as 'authority', 'source' or 'origin'. This text is significant because it contains a debate about wearing head coverings during worship services, particularly for men and women. This debate is closely related to social and theological constructions of gender, the body and hierarchy. According to Hurley et al. in Ellicott, the word *kephalē* (κεφαλη) can mean 'source or origin' in vague contexts, such as in 1 Corinthians 11:3, where it refers to a source of dynamic value rather than 'authority'. Therefore, something that comes from an egalitarian source is the source of life itself (Ellicott 1887). Furthermore, Giles and Coetsee reflect on the term 'κεφαλη' as a symbol of honour and care. Christ first demonstrated this participation by giving Himself (Coetsee et al. 2023; Giles, Tong & Botts 2018).

The researchers argue that the Dayak context and the symbolic meaning of lawung and sumping, the use of head symbols (head coverings, ornaments, colours), act as a spiritual and structural marker in the community but do not always mean domination or something that is coercive but rather interdependence. As a Dayak church member, the use of head symbols by men (lawung) and women (sumping) in the liturgy can be understood not in terms of gender subordination, but as an affirmation of roles in the theological community, as kephalē can be read as a 'relation of origin' and not domination. The researchers add that, in the Dayak context, the symbolic use of head coverings, ornaments and colours acts as a spiritual and structural marker in the community. However, it does not necessarily signify domination; rather, it signifies interdependence. In the Dayak church, for example, the use of head symbols by men (lawung) and women (sumping) during liturgy can be understood as an affirmation of roles in the theological community rather than as gender subordination, just as kephalē can be read as a 'relation of origin' rather than subjugation. Both 'ἐνδύω' and 'κεφαλή' affirm that, in Pauline texts, the body, dress and identity are symbolic media for understanding spiritual transformation and communal life. When applied to local contexts, such as Dayak culture, this paves the way for an incarnational and contextual theology. In this theology, traditional ornaments are not mere ethnography but living liturgy. The lawung and sumping are theological icons of acceptance, participation and transformation in the crosscultural body of Christ, not just garments.

### Conclusion

Researchers have ascertained that the prominence of *lawung* and *sumping* as cultural emblems of the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan Tengah serves not merely as aesthetic components but also embodies profound spiritual significance and social identity. As traditional headgear,

lawung for males and sumping for females encapsulate the essence of life, unity and diversity through their unique motifs and the prevalent use of the colour red. Their application spans from indigenous rituals to governmental occasions, thereby establishing them as symbols that embody the evolution of local identity in both regional and national contexts. Within the theological framework of Christianity, lawung and sumping are assimilated into church liturgy as representations of spirituality, denoting the welcoming of guests as integral members of the divine community, while concurrently intertwining cultural values with the precepts of the New Testament. Philosophically, the research correlates the symbolism inherent in lawung and sumping to Ernst Cassirer's conceptualisations regarding symbolic systems that surpass mere biological instincts, as well as Mircea Eliade's discourse on the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. In the realm of Christian theology, this customary attire is interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the body's glory in relation to the divine, as elucidated in the epistles authored by Paul. Consequently, lawung and sumping evolved not solely into cultural embodiments but also as instruments of spiritual conveyance that enriched the practice of ecclesiasticism. This inquiry elucidates that local symbols such as lawung and sumping possess the capacity to foster dialogue across diverse cultures and religions, while concurrently fortifying communal identity amid the pluralism characteristic of Kalimantan Tengah society.

### **Acknowledgements**

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

T.T., the first and corresponding author, contributed to conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing of the original draft, project administration, review and editing, supervision and funding acquisition. A.M., the second author, contributed towards resources, data curation and validation. R.I., the third author, contributed as a visualisation maker during the research process.

### **Ethical considerations**

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

### **Funding information**

This research is funded by Daftar Isian Pelaksanaan Anggaran (DIPA) Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia.

### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder or agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

### References

- Angiola, E., 2021, 'Eucharist and meal: Christian sacraments as the fulfillment of human experience', Ex-Position 45, 65.
- Brower, K.E., 2004, 'Jesus and the lustful eye: Glancing at Matthew 5: 28', Evangelical Quarterly: An International Review of Bible and Theology 76(4), 291–309. https://doi.org/10.1163/27725472-07604001
- Cassirer, E. & Cassirer, E.A., 1946, Language and myth, vol. 51, Courier Corporation, New York, NY.
- Chalamet, C., 2021, 'Reconciliation: Divine and human: 2 Corinthians 5 from a theological perspective', Ecumenical Review 73(3), 375–387. https://doi.org/10. 1111/erev.12612
- Coetsee, A., Viljoen, F.P., Cornelius, E., Du Toit, P.L.G., Kok, J., Denton, R. et al., 2023, Theological perspectives on re-imagining leadership in post-COVID-19 Africa, AOSIS, Cape Town, SA.
- Duarte, R.M., 2023, 'White garments to cover nakedness clothes changing as a metaphor for christian life in the New Testament and in C. S. Lewis [Trajes brancos para esconder a nudez Mudança de roupa como metáfora da vida cristă, no Novo Testamento e em C. S. Lewis]', CADMO: Journal for Ancient History 32, 543–560.
- Eliade, M., 2018, The myth of the eternal return: Cosmos and history, vol. 46, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Ellicott, C.J., 1887, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: With a critical and grammatical commentary, Longmans, Green, and Company, Princeton, NJ.
- Ellwood, R., 2017, 'Eliade: Essentialist or postmodern? The sacred and an unseen order', in N. Babuts (ed.), *Mircea Eliade*, pp. 1–22, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Estrada III, R.G., 2023, 'The racial significance of Paul's clothing metaphor (Romans 13: 14; Galatians 3: 27; Ephesians 4: 24; Colossians 3: 10)', Religions 14(6), 684. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060684
- Firth, W., 2025, 'Spiritual space: Hearing and experiencing the voice of God', Verbum et Ecclesia 46(1), 3342. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i1.3342
- Giles, K., Tong, R. & Botts, T.F., 2018, 'The academic journal of', *Priscilla PaPers* 32(3), 1–31.
- Grooms, P., 2013, *Disposable/reuseable Baptismal garment*, Google Patents, Mountain View, CA.
- Gschwandtner, C.M., 2017, 'Mimesis or metamorphosis? Eastern Orthodox liturgical practice and its philosophical background', *Religions* 8(5), 92. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8050092
- Gullbekk, S.H., Walsh, M.J. & Moen, M., 2024, 'Standardization of ritual offerings: The eucharist, human sacrifice, and monetization', in L.C. Engh, S.H. Gullbekk & H.J. Orning (eds.), Standardization in the middle ages, pp. 135–150, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston.
- Handoko, R. & Intan, B.F., 2022, 'Relasi Manusia Dengan Alam: Kritik Terhadap Pandangan Sallie Mcfague Mengenai Tubuh Allah', *Verbum Christi: Jurnal Teologi Reformed Injili* 9(1), 49–66. https://doi.org/10.51688/VC9.1.2022.art3
- Hogan, S.S., 2025, 'Toward a liturgical understanding of New Testament pneumatology', Journal of Pentecostal Theology 1(aop), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251bja10070
- Jeal, R.R., 2016, 'Clothes make the (Wo) Man', in V.K. Robbins, R.H. von Thaden Jr. & B.B. Bruehler (eds.), Foundations for sociorhetorical exploration: A rhetoric of religious antiquity reader, pp. 393–414, SBL Press, Atlanta.
- Kang, C. & Yu, H., 2022, 'A Lotmanian semiotic interpretation of cultural memory in ritual', Semiotica 2022(245), 157–173. https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2019-0085
- Kim, J.H., 2004, The significance of clothing imagery in the Pauline corpus, T&T Clark and Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London.
- Lee, J.J.R. & Sykora, W.T., 2025, Going deeper with New Testament Greek workbook: With exercises from Mark 8: 22–10: 52, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville.
- Leslie, T.M., 2020, 'Do liturgical vestments have gender?', *Journal of Anglican Studies* 18(2), 144–161. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740355320000340
- Ligan, L., 2022, 'Peran Orang Tua Dalam Mendidik Anak Berdasarkan Kitab Ulangan 6: 4–9', Harati: Jurnal Pendidikan Kristen 2(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.54170/harati.v2i1.89
- Matera, F.J., 2020, *A concise theology of the New Testament*, Paulist Press, New York, NY.
- McFague, S., 2003, 'The scope of the body: The cosmic Christ', in R.S. Gottlieb (ed.), This sacred earth, pp. 262–272, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Mesick, C., 2024, Paul and his rivals: Apostleship and antagonism in the Corinthian correspondence, vol. 271, Walter De Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, Berlin.
- Mickiewicz, F., n.d., *Dwelling and clothing as metaphors for the human body in 2 Cor* 5: 1–4, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin.
- Mitot, K., Kuan, V. & Sanusi, K., 2016, 'Sarawak culture: A study on the cosmic influence on the Bidayuh traditional woodcarving ("Rasang")', Advanced Science Letters 22(5–6), 1156–1159. https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2016.6629

- Munte, A., 2024, 'Philosophical and religious dialogues in post-World War II Japan: Implications for comparative studies with Nusantara's religious literature: KEKRISTENAN DI JEPANG PASCA PERANG DUNIA II', Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan 22(2), 561–592. https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v22i2.1114
- Munte, A., 2025, 'The intersection of Christian education and philosopher-feminist thought: Addressing child marriage in Indonesia', HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies 81(1), a10393. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10393
- Ossom-Batsa, G. & Apaah, F., 2018, 'Rethinking the great commission: Incorporation of Akan indigenous symbols into Christian worship', *International Review of Mission* 107(1), 261–278. https://doi.org/10.1111/irom.12221
- Pahan, B.P., 2021, 'Perkembangan Musik Gereja dan Interpretasi Pemusik Gereja Terhadap Nyanyian Jemaat Di Gereja Sinta Kuala Kapuas' ['Development of Church Music and Church Musicians' Interpretation of Congregational Singing at Sinta Church Kuala Kapuas'], Danum Pambelum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja 1(1), 118–131. https://doi.org/10.54170/dp.v1i1.40
- Ruiz, A.M., 2019, 'Presencia y transfiguración en la imagen de culto oriental' ['Presence and transfiguration in the image of Eastern worship'], Estudios Eclesiásticos. Revista de Investigación e Información Teológica y Canónica 94(369), 339–362. https://doi.org/10.14422/ee.v94.i369.y2019.005
- Sanasintani, S. & Munte, A., 2024, 'Philosophical analysis of Mortimer J. Adler's Christian education and global education management', *Journal of Education and Learning* (EduLearn) 18(4), 1385–1393. https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v18i4.21149.
- Stine, S., 2025, Christ and Theology: Toward typological realism, a synthetic approach to Biblical Theology, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene.

- Tillich, P., 1959, Theology of culture, vol. 124, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Vlčková, M., 2019, 'The nature of certainty in ritual', Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica 9(2), 35–43. https://doi.org/10.14712/23363398.2020.4
- Vos, C.J.A., 2005, 'Die krag van simbole en rites in die liturgie' ['The power of symbols and rites in the liturgy'], *Acta Theologica* 25(1), 171–187. https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v25i1.49006
- Wakeling, J., 2021, 'A general theological symbolic structure of textless music in Christian worship', *Studia Liturgica* 51(1), 46–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0039320720979053
- Weaver, D.C., 2011, 'Shifting agency: Male clergy, female believers, and the role of icons', *Material Religion* 7(3), 394–419. https://doi.org/10.2752/17518341 1X13172844496019
- Wirawan, A., 2023, 'Peran Nyanyian Jemaat Dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama di GKE Imanuel Kuala Pembuang' ['The Role of Congregational Singing in Strengthening Religious Moderation in GKE Immanuel Kuala Pembuang'], *Danum Pambelum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja* 3(2), 154–167. https://doi. org/10.54170/dp.v3i2.273
- Wong, J.H.P., 1986, 'Karl Rahner's christology of symbol and three models of christology', *Heythrop Journal* 27(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265. 1986.tb00074.x
- Works, C.S., 2014, The Church in the wilderness: Paul's use of Exodus traditions in 1 Corinthians, vol. 379, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen.
- Yazykova, I., 2021, 'The theology of the icon', Evgenii Trubetskoi: Icon and Philosophy 4, 127.