

# Realities and challenges for mission transformation in Sabu people

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Christianity has existed for more than 167 years on the island of Sabu (East Nusa Tenggara). Even though the majority of Sabu people are Protestant Christians, in everyday life, the Sabu people still adhere to the Jingitui religion's local beliefs. The value of Christianity is still considered foreign in the appreciation of most people's faith even though they have become Christians. This research aims to develop the contextualisation of the missiological paradigm in the social culture of the Sabu people in a transformative mission challenge. Furthermore, the method used is a descriptive and qualitative research approach. The results showed the following: (1) the church needs to develop contextual studies (in the light of the Bible) on the cultural understandings of the Sabu people; (2) there is a need to bring together the gospel and culture through traditional activities and (3) the church needs to be proactive in transforming the Sabu people's traditions as a tool to deliver education, such as moral and ethical education.

**Contribution:** This article aims to assist churches in adopting strategies for inculcating gospel values in the religious traditions and practices of the Sabu people. This approach is proposed to further develop the appreciation of faith through transformation according to gospel values as a support system for proclaiming the message of the Great Commission in transmitting relevant and contextual Christian messages to transform the culture and society of Sabu.

**Keywords:** contextualisation; Sabu Raijua ethnicity; religion in culture; Jingitui; Deo Ama; Sabu Mission.

## Introduction

The locus of this research on Sabu Raijua Island is a district located in East Nusa Tenggara. Many know Sabu Island as Sawu or Savu. The inhabitants of this island themselves call their island *Rai Hawu*, which means the Land of Hawu. In general, some Sabu people who have embraced Christianity still practice Jingitui. The ideal normative identity is still in the process of reaching a final point of actual empirical identity. The reason is that the name *Jingi Tiu* has already been attached as the identity of their belief. People are used to the name *Jingi Tiu*, so the Sabu people and the Mone Ama or religious leaders still agree to bear *Jingi Tiu* as the name of their teachings until now. A positive understanding must be created, mainly when seen inside the system of inculturation as an integrator handle for communicating the gospel in a specific culture. As long as the essential scriptural meaning is not obscured, this can be a portion of the mission methodology. In other words, *Jingitui* also is contextualized by a local church to the total reach of Sabuans.

Many studies have been conducted on the Savu people and their way of life (Barnes 1995; Detaq 1973; Duggan 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Fox 1971, 1980, 1995, 1996, 1997; Kana 1978, 1980; Manguin 1983). Bole's (1992) unpublished thesis, and latest research on the Savu people entitled *The Genealogical Model of Savu, Eastern Indonesia* by Duggan (2008) and the recent book *Savu: History and Oral Tradition on the Island of Indonesia* (Waterson 2018) are some works on the Savu community. These results have been published regarding cultural life, a tradition apart from Christianity. The people of Savu have maintained their ancestral religion (*Jingi Tiu*) and traditional ways of life.

In most of the studies conducted on Savu, there is no theological writing that discusses the different conceptions of the Sabu tribe's religion with Christianity regarding God. The argument I offer here is that mission transformation is a holistic missionary endeavour that addresses spiritual conversion and the transformation of individuals, churches, communities and cultures. The mission task is ultimately about empowering the Christian community, leading to cultural change to become part of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

This research aims to develop the contextualisation of the missiological paradigm in the social culture of the Sabu people in a transformative mission challenge. The author is concerned about

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reaching those inhabiting the island with a local cultural approach. According to Neonbasu (2013), every research always yields new hidden treasures of science. Field research or ethnography research (Basso 1984, 1996) and library research provide a clear understanding for the author to make this a valuable study for mission work in the future.

This article aims to assist churches in adopting strategies for inculcating gospel values in the religious traditions and practices of the Sabu people. This approach is proposed to further develop the appreciation of faith through transformation according to gospel values as a support system for proclaiming the message of the Great Commission in transmitting relevant and contextual Christian messages to transform the culture and society of Sabu.

Based on the explanation above, this article is structured as follows: firstly, the author will briefly describe the origin of the Raijua Shabu (Savu) tribe. Secondly, he will discuss the belief of the Sabu people. Thirdly, he will analyse the realities and challenges of mission transformation in Sabu society.

## Methods

A descriptive qualitative approach was applied in this research. Data collection was carried out in two ways: firstly, an interview with the former Jingitui priest's son, formerly known as Amaloni, who later became the leader of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) of Nusa Tenggara Timur; secondly, through the literature study method, searching for various literature and other credible sources related to the research topic directly in Jingitui. The author used references from early scholars of the Sabu, which must admittedly have a more scientific basis.

By conducting interviews with local people and seeking information from former Jingitui practitioners, the author hoped to get precise information, therefore, the author went directly to Savu island. Jingitui places of worship on Sabu and Raijua were visited from 17 June 2021 to 22 June 2021. In this six-day ethnography journey, the author travelled all over Sabu and Raijua to visit every district and village where Jingitui traces include many stone graves, caves of worship, customary law and power in the community. Two people accompanied the author during the trip; a pastor of Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) Regional, a former Jingitui priest's son and a GBI pastor in charge of Sabu Raijua. They were interviewed, and several pastors and individuals met at the Jingitui villages and places of worship.

This research started with the research question of the Jingitui belief system. This research interpreted the theological vocation of the church in a pluralistic world. Widjaja sees the pluralistic society of Sabu Raijua as a gap for contextualising evangelistic tasks. The author tries to explore the relationship between the Jingitui ideology and the pluralistic conditions of the Sabu society, which allows for a missiological paradigm contextualisation in the social culture of their society.

## Results

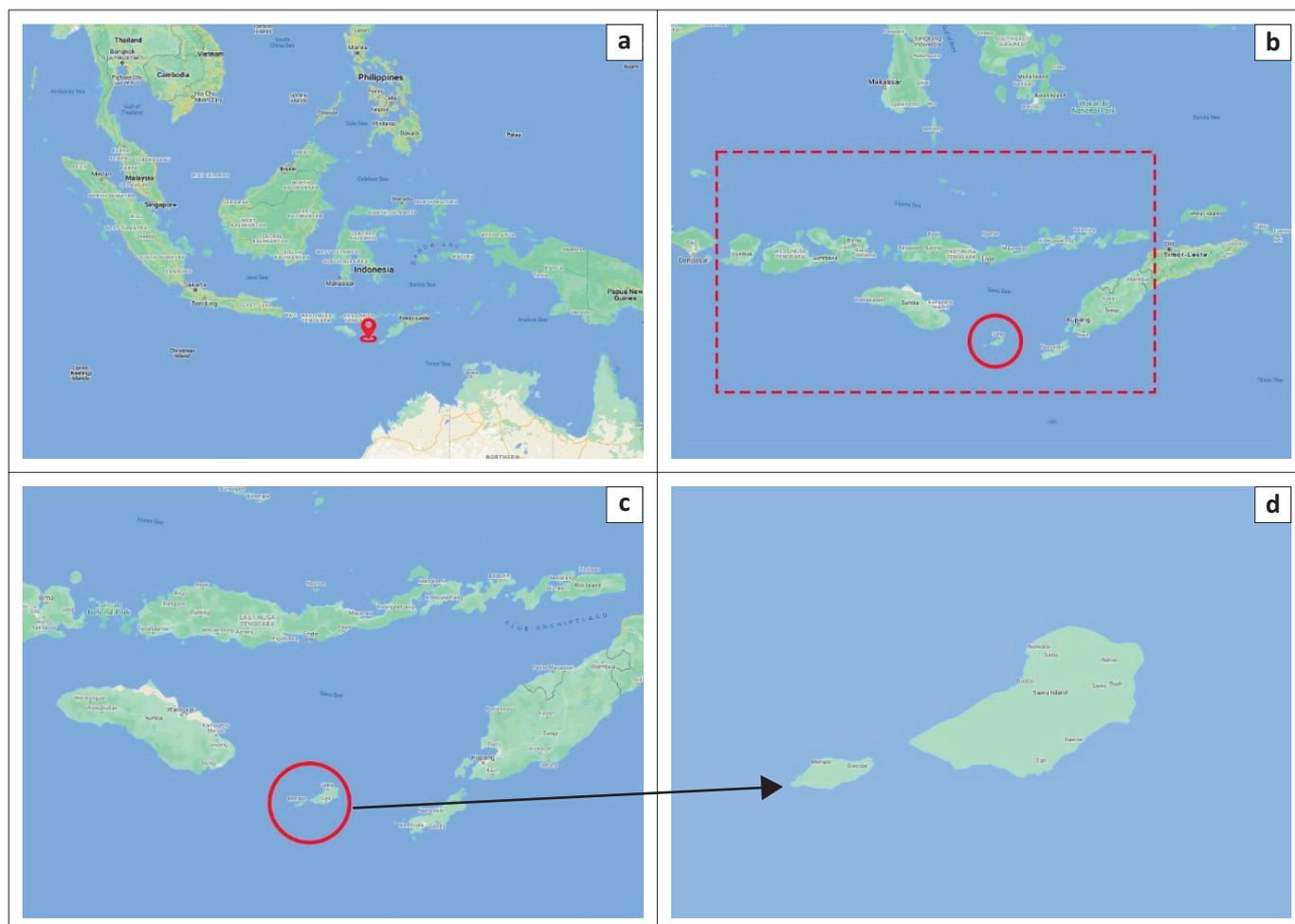
The Savu archipelago, known in Indonesia as Sabu, is also spelt as Sawoe or Sawu. The Sabu lies between Sumba and Timor (see Figure 1). Direct colonial intervention came late off the most islands that frame the lesser Sundas and are greatly dry, useless and inadequately populated by Indonesian benchmarks. Thus, the inhabitants of the island of Sabu call 'Rai Hawu', that is, the Land of Hawu (Kana 1983:17). Sabu gave its name also to the sea bordering Timor, Sumba, Flores and Solor. It is located between Sumba and Rote, west of Timor, in Indonesia's eastern province, East Nusa Tenggara. The island group includes Sabu (414 km<sup>2</sup>), Raijua (36 km<sup>2</sup>) and a few islets found almost 160 km west of Timor's southern tip. Sabu, 37 km long and 16 km wide, and Raijua, 13 km long and 5 km wide, are by and large low and nearly level; rise ranges from 1 m to 100 m. The climate is hot, and precipitation (limited to the wet season) uncovers new, ripe volcanic soil each year (Intan 2016).

Jingitui is the original Sabu Raijua people's local system of belief. As a practice of worship, it is an ethno-religion. This religion is deeply rooted in a people's ethnic identity, and conversion essentially equates to the Sabu (Savu) people's cultural assimilation. This belief involves many aspects, such as the physical world, human life and the unseen world, and explicitly concerns faith in Deo (God). Jingitui views everything as a gift from God Almighty called 'Deo Mone Ae'. Therefore, in all aspects of life, every activity must always be preceded by religious rituals to ask for guidance, blessings and protection from God (Bole 1992).

The number of Sabu Raijua people who adhere to the Jingitui sect has decreased because of the high cost of worship. However, traditional ceremonies cannot be ignored, because the Jingitui tradition is full of traditional rituals and processions. In fact, from month to month, the Jingitui believers must carry out practices.

Even though these traditional beliefs still exist and are still maintained by their followers, the problems of poverty and limitations experienced by Jingitui adherents impact the disappearance of the magical power of a ritual. For example, every Savu ceremony must use a sizeable sacrificial animal, but because of poverty, it is only done with a chicken or coconut husk that is burned as a substitute for the sacrificial animal; thus the magical power of the sacrifice will be lost (Widjaja 2021).

It is an opportunity for the church to reach Jingitui believers through Jingitui culture and worldview. Departing from the statement of Lesslie Newbigin quoted by Daniel Lucas, 'there can never be a culture-free gospel ... yet the gospel ... is from the beginning to the end embodied in culturally conditioned forms' (Lukito 1999:230). In most of the studies conducted in the Savu land, there is no theological writing that discusses the different conceptions of the Sabu tribal religion with



**FIGURE 1:** (a) The Republic of Indonesia, (b) East Nusa Tenggara Province, (c) Sabu Raijua Regency and (d) the Island of Sabu (big) and Raijua (small).

Christianity regarding God. The author is concerned about reaching those who inhabit the island with a local cultural approach. According to Neonbasu (2013), every research always gives new hidden treasures of science. Field site and library research provide a clear understanding for the author to make this valuable study for the mission work in the future.

The author makes a comparative study of the similarity of another tribe in Indonesia. The Merapu of Sumba, the neighbouring island next to Sabu, believe in Merapu. The core teachings of the beliefs of the ancestral heritage of the people of Sumba are to worship the spirits of ancestors. They have faith that humans can relate to the creator through ancestral spirits. The Sumba community believes that ancestors who have died and are in the eternal realm can communicate with God (Keane 1995). This original belief is preserved on Sumba Island until now. Marapu followers generally live together in traditional villages, in the lowlands and hills far from the crowded urban centres (Keane 1995).

All interpretations of Marapu shown above bring us to the so-called approach by Thomas Kuhn that no truth can be absolute and eternal because everything depends on the

perspective used (Morgan 2009). Nevertheless, the general perception of missionaries regarding Merapu was negative. Kuyper identified other religions as false religions (pseudoreligions), which are the opposite of Christianity as the true religion (Kuster 2010). Consequently, Merapu was seen as paganism and devotion to devils and needed to be demolished (Kuster 2010). When another missionary tried to introduce Merapu as a contextual name for God, this suggestion was rejected.

A close encounter was portrayed by Rusmanto (2018:165–177) that happened with the ethnic religion of Kaharingan in central Kalimantan. The Kaharingan ethnoreligious is considered a framework of environmental beliefs that they must obey and be controlled by new beliefs from outsiders. The convictions brought by missionaries were, for the most part, restricted because they dissolved the ancient religion's impact, which had long, deep roots in an orthodox community.

Zaluchu (2021) in his research on the tribe of the Nias island in the Indian Ocean, west of Northern Sumatra, explained how the name of the Niasan god Lowalangi is rooted in tradition and used by missionaries, giving it a new meaning in Christianity as the highest name of God for Niasan Christians. Adaptation and absorption took

place so that the local community could easily understand and accept the missionaries' concept of God. The author noted that the meaning of Lowalangi was changed to God as the maker of paradise and soil. Indeed, even though it does not portray it clearly, the alternative appears to be a trial and attempt at digestion, so the title Lowalangi gets a new meaning.

According to Yung (2014), the mutually integrated religion and the cultural system became resistant to the missionary's effort to convert the community to Christianity.

Based on this comparison research, the author tries to find the root of Jingitiu and Christianity in Sabu. Statistics show that 89.86% of the people of Sabu live a Christian life whilst 7.24% follow Jingitiu (Pemprov NTT 2019), but their thinking is still heavily influenced by Jingitiu's beliefs. For example, their beliefs still apply to the daily calendar, determining when to plant and other ceremonies. The research conducted by Duggan and Hägerdal (2018) in their book, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition on the Island of Indonesia*, illustrates the daily lives of the Savu people.

The conversion of the Savu ethnic group to Christianity has not transformed the people but only changed one section of their worldviews regarding God. The church or missionaries did not provide a good picture of the transition of the definition of God from the animist worldview to God in the Christian worldview; God incarnates in Jesus Christ. Christianity came to Sabu in 1854 and increased its impetus after 1861, when Esser, a Dutch resident of Kupang, called for schools and a Christian teacher from Ambon in Savu (Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008). Now, after more than 167 years, the fact that Christianity exists does not change the condition and the spiritual life of the Sabu people.

## Discussion

'Because while I was walking around your town and seeing your worshipped items, I also met an altar with the writing "To God the Unknown." What you worship without knowing it is what I inform you' (Ac 17:23).

Paul's experience in Athens, which was highly cultured and sheltered, and how Paul shared the good news, inspired the author to write this article. It is a reality of life in the mission world today. The church is still struggling to reach unreached groups globally; on the other hand, the people reached, such as the Sabu (Savu) churches, cannot share the good news with the ethnoreligious community.

The church fails to share the good news because the way of life of the Sabu people is influenced by the Jingitiu cultural way of thinking instead of the gospel that impacts the Jingitiu practitioners. When talking about the encounter between the gospel and culture, Niebuhr (Kliever 1970) coined five typologies of biblical relations and culture:

1. Christ against culture – Radical typology where the world is seen as evil and therefore must be rejected. There is no

element of culture in the sinful world that can be used as a vehicle to share the Gospel.

2. Christ of culture (Christ of or belonging to culture) – This typology accommodates no contradiction between the Bible and the Bible culture. The gospel is even adapted into the culture. Through this typology, cultural actors interpret culture through Christ, then conclude that all elements of culture are in perfect harmony with the Bible. On the other hand, cultural actors also understand Christ through culture. Through this typology, Christ is harmonised with culture.
3. Christ above culture – This typology is synthetic. In this typology, the Bible is seen as culturally relevant, but on the other hand, the gospel is also seen as transcending culture. This typology places Christ as Lord of culture.
4. Christ and culture in paradox – This typology is dualistic. In this typology, humans recognise and live in two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of society, but they are not related to or even contradict one another.
5. Christ transforms culture – This typology sees Christ as redeeming society and culture. Culture is seen as something that has fallen into sin; however, Christians do not need to separate themselves from the world, because the gospel can change society.

It is recognised that Niebuhr's five typologies discussed above have been applied in all fields of the Sabu people's life. But it seems that Christ failed to transform the cultural way of the Jingitiu Sabu people. On the other hand, Magga (1997:156–159) argues that culture is influential for evangelism and the growth of faith.

Looking at the various typologies above, it seems that the mission of Christ and culture will never finish. On the one hand, theories will always be open to scientific research to produce new approaches. Still, for the writer the resulting new technique can invalidate or destroy an old view, but on the other hand, can further enrich the ideas that preceded it.

New theories show that Christ and the gospel have never been ancient (Yewangoe 2002:82) in the history of the world. Before the gospel touches the community, God has worked in and through the culture of a society. God is Lord of the nations; therefore, the inspiration of God cannot be restricted to one particular area only. God's inspiration is also found in every nation's culture, traditions and religion, including in the culture and religion of every tribe in Indonesia.

The author observes that these encounter points have often happened in the church's history when there was an encounter between the Bible and local culture.

## The origin of the Sabu (Savu) Raijua people

Savu is the archipelago's main island of the same name. The small island is Raijua and includes the island Dana and several islets. During the dry season, the season of hunger from March to December, individuals survive primarily by drinking the juice of the *lontar* palm tree, which can be kept in

the form of syrup, and the economic gain from this palm tree can be analysed (Fox 1979). The author himself drank the *lontar* syrup during the 5-day visit to Sabu-Raijua regency. But nowadays, seaweed cultivation has been created along the coastal region, bringing a new source of income to those living close to the shorelines. The Sabu people are inclined towards clarifying their roots through mythology. Thus, although there are a few adaptations, nearly all portray the same fairytale (Bole 1992). But the adherents of the Sabu tribal religion believe that the land of Sabu was created in this way.

Based on the belief passed down from one generation to another in the Sabu tribal community, it is said that the land of Sabu did not previously exist. Instead, the land of Sabu came into existence after Deo Rai grasped the ground. He took it around the houses of 'Mone Weo Lado Moto' (man of glory) and 'Bani Bako' (beautiful princess) on the hill of Ketita Tanah Raijua. Deo Rai flew to the east, and then threw the land in his hand into the sea. The land then became an island with mountains and valleys, and the land was named Rai Hawu (Land of Sabu).

Sabuans use mythology as the reference for an origin. Mythology is persuasive within the social framework and arrangement. Hence, the modern Sabu individuals are unequivocally impacted by convention in their behaviour and life in the community, including their devout life. In his research, anthropologist Duggan (National University of Singapore) (Duggan & Hägerdal 2018) stated that the origin of the Sabu people could be traced from the genealogical model that he researched and proved. Through memories and oral tradition, moral and ethical delivered (cf. Bloch 1998; Casey 2004; Connerton 1998; Cubitt 2007; Misztal 2003; Rubin 1995).

According to Joshua Project, the Sabu of Indonesia are no longer unreached, and they are part of the Flores-Sumba-Alor people cluster within the Malay people affinity bloc (Scribner & Liam 1995). The primary religion practised by the Sabu is ethnoreligious Jingituu.

## Belief in the existence of Deo

Belief in the existence of Deo is a significant factor in the culture of the Sabu people. Deo is believed to be a real person. However, the existence of Deo cannot be proved rationally because the belief in the presence of Deo is only an acknowledgement of the belief of the Sabu tribal community in what they believe to be 'divine' and far away in the unseen realm.

The Sabu people's belief in the existence of Deo is a legacy from their ancestors, who were born and raised in a tribal religion that has been adapted from one generation to another. Therefore, belief in the existence of Deo, whether it contains the truth that can be accounted for or not, is not a problem for the Sabu tribal community. On the contrary, the most important thing is to carry on what their ancestors believed. Without understanding what or who the Deo was

for which they lived. Adherents of the Sabu tribal religion believe in the existence of Deo because they believe that it is Deo who first establishes, regulates, makes and maintains everything that has been stipulated in the customs and traditions of the Sabu tribal community.

The Sabu tribal religion's influence is still tremendous in society, even though the number of adherents is relatively tiny. The mindset and behaviour of most people are still influenced by their original beliefs, even though they have become adherents of other religions (Yunus 1985:21).

## Jingituu, the lord of the universe

Jingituu may be a legendary concept of the ethnic religion, but it existed in the Sabu civilisation long before Christianity. This concept was born from the convictions of the old Sabu individuals. The Jingituu religious system is limited in its practical spiritual scope and integrated with the sociocultural space of Sabu.

Carrying out customary provisions or laws determines salvation in the real world and the unseen world that Deo's descendants will occupy after death. Therefore, adherents of the Sabu tribal religion believe that salvation is determined as long as life follows all applicable customary provisions.

For example, various ceremonial activities are held for a dead person, such as the *haga* ceremony which marks the completion of the deceased's relationship with the living world. The *hemanga* [spirit] of the dead goes to the unseen world without being hindered by *wango* [negative power] (Widjaja 2021). According to the law, customary provisions apply to a death ceremony. People die before Deo Ama, depending on how many animals are slaughtered.

The customary provisions handed down by Deo Ama apply to all ceremonies, both for the dead and the living, and all the standard conditions were passed on from generation to generation to all descendants of Ada Deo, namely the Sabu tribe community, to be carried out for the welfare and safety of their lives on *Rai Balla* and in *Hebakka Rai* (the other side of the unseen world). It can be said that the people of the Sabu tribe believe in one great God, who exists without being created and who is the creator of nature and the Sabu people (Kana 1983:105).

These ethnoreligious lessons have been coordinated with the supporters' fundamental life values and worldview. Durkheim in Kotzé (2021) clarified this matter by expressing that primitive religions can describe the living reality of real people. Ethnoreligious lessons occur because those primitive religions, more precisely called 'indigenous religions', have developed together with the community that gave birth to them. In this way, it is not shocking that more indigenous religions developed, considering that it struggles to provide answers to complex questions.

## Challenges of mission transformation in the Sabu society

A missiological perspective on Jingitui opens a broad view of the universal value of human beings. Jingitui valued Ama Deo as the master of the universe and controlled their destinies and the right to have them developed. Still, the deviation is that the realm's ruler is in the big trees and big stones and must be given offerings.

This author also wants to point out that the purpose of the mission is to convey that all tribal peoples need salvation. In every cultural gap in worshipping God, contextualisation is necessary. In the present context, the church cannot perform its mission because Jingitui's concept and philosophy penetrate the worldview of the Sabu people. However, the task cannot be understood in the narrow sense of preaching the gospel to the Sabu people only. Understanding the culture and the gap is significant to reaching the people.

There is no denying that the church's presence must manifest in a culture. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful in distinguishing the display of culture and values for the church to live by in the New Testament church at the time of Jesus and the Apostles. At that time, the church was in the context and touch with the conditions and situations of Judaism. What is interesting to note is how the church at the same time displayed a unique novelty in its dialogue. This example is vital for the church to adapt in the way that the early church played a role in society at that time. Likewise, for the church to position itself and carry out its role in pluralism, it must first understand the public character of its presence. After all, community life affects the life of the church.

The Sabuans believe that the root of all things is Deo Ama (God the Father). Therefore, Deo Ama has the title Deo Mone Ae (big god), called Deo only in ceremonies (Bole 1992). So it can be said that the Sabu people believe in one great Deo, who exists without being created and who is the creator of nature and the Sabu people.

Deo Ei or Deo Mangarru means 'god of water or god of prosperity'. He is the son of Deo Ama with Deo Ina, who was born in the supernatural. Deo Mangarru is very well-liked and wanted by the Sabu people in all forms of life.

Water for the Sabu people is vital for the life of plants, animals and humans. The Sabu people believe that there is one being, Deo, who controls the water. They call this being Deo Ei or Deo Mangarru because he gives prosperity to plants, animals and humans.

Deo Ei or Deo Mangarru provides rainwater and underground water for the needs of living things. The plants turn green and bring great results because of Deo Ei, who gives it prosperity. Domestic animals get fat and breed. Humans live healthily and reproduce well because Deo Ei provides worth.

In gratitude to Deo Ei or Deo Mangarru, the Sabu people bring offerings to him in order to please and delight him so that he may give continuous prosperity to the survival of all living things, including creatures of flight, humans, plants, and every animal on earth, as well as every fish beneath the water.

Of the two things that are believed by the Sabu tribal community, God's church should be able to contextualise God the Father as the source of life and creation (cf. Gn 1). It can also use the Samaritan woman in John 4, as Jesus told her about living water that would quench thirst and give life, and therefore the people of Sabu are no strangers to something new.

In cultural life, the tradition of Hapo, the example of the gospel and culture can come together through traditional activities. Hapo is a thanksgiving and protection ritual from when the baby is conceived in the mother's womb until it is delivered. In the ritual speech, 'hapo' is held for newborns three days after their birth. This ceremony is carried out in the morning at sunrise. The purpose of the offering is to ask for blessings and protection from God and the ancestral spirits to keep the baby safe and healthy. The churches of Sabu may conduct the thanksgiving worship to show the people that the church that represents Christ understands how important it is to bless a child (cf. Mt 19:13).

Furthermore, the church must revive and equip to play its role in proclaiming and bringing a general transformation in delivering moral and ethical education. The church is the backbone which helps people understand without causing offense.

The concepts of ethnic religiosity contain a framework of beliefs about the power of past people presented by Kruyt (2008). His encounter in delivering the good news within the social framework and purity of the ancient Poso people in the central Sulawesi region. Rather than anger, the ethnic conviction framework keeps on emerging and is highlighted within the scriptures. As a result, modern concepts have been born to execute the relationship between neighbourhood culture and God through translation.

Souisa (2019) explained how Sundermann, a minister who brought the Scriptures to Nias, connected the term Lowalangi from the Niasan ethnic concept to apply to God rather than using a foreign word. In this way, Sundermann utilised a neighbourhood title that, as it now existed, had profound roots and was understandable. Nowadays, we must adopt the capacity of the early church to adjust to changing settings, indeed relinquishing a few of its Jewish personalities. The journey to bring the gospel to a large gathering of people serves as a clue to creating perspectives of a missional ecclesiology important to changing contexts (Niemandt 2010). The church in East Nusa Tenggara has been deeply influenced by the Dutch since its early occupation in Indonesia. The church must contextualise the Bible with its

imminent adjustments so that persistent rejection of relevant religious philosophies and philosophical reflections as they appear in their extraordinary form in western religious discourse is not refuted (Van den Toren & Hoare 2015).

Kruyt stated that modern religion (Christian) seems not to demonstrate the error or lies of the ethnic conviction or indeed go against or taunt it. Simanjuntak (2016) said a comparative cut within the devout values as standard complements each other with unused conviction or Christianity. Widjaja (2020) cited in his book chapter and said that an ethnographic study is needed to penetrate new areas, and contextualisation (Widjaja 2018) will occur after clearly understanding the local culture. McWilliam (2002:123) and Reuters (2002a:36) stated that theoretical, geographical and ethnological background is needed for field research.

The concept of a comparative cut from Simanjuntak (2016), the procedure of 'taking the core' from Kruyt (2008) and ethnography and contextualisation from Widjaja (2018) was utilised by Paul the Witness when he was in Athens, a devout town with firm adherents.

The city was full of statues of icons, and Paul came to present Christianity (a modern religion) not by battling the neighbourhood culture or taunting it. Paul translated the Greek conviction framework by utilising the adored statues as a social bridge. The sculptures within the city were a portion of the devout life of Hellenistic conviction; in this manner, the Greeks gave space to honour the obscure god. Paul adjusted his presentation of God. The Athenians had much regard for divine beings, needing their endowments and excellencies. They believed that divine beings who lacked acknowledgement were still remembered by raising holy places to unknown gods. Paul utilised the nearby Greek agnostic religion's concept to distinguish the genuine God from their divine beings.

As Bole (1992) once clarified, a powerful component (the supernatural) in Jingitui, an ethnic religion, is accepted and part of the animist confidence framework. Jingitui adherents can embrace the concept of Paul's story in Athens. Other than opening the entryway to acknowledgement, the thought is



Source: Photograph taken by Kirenus Bole on 17 June 2021, used with permission from Kirenus Bole

**FIGURE 2:** Jingitui's altar in Labohede village, Sabu Raijua regency.

effectively caught on, acknowledged and does not alter the social framework. The altar of Jingitui is easily found in the villages, as shown in Figure 2.

Paul's victory can be the show and methodology for every effort to present the scriptures to the ethnic religion in other areas known to be safe for alter. Now and then, Christianity has acquired the past religion's obvious highlights, such as Sabu Christians' syncretism that cannot be dodged. They are challenging to supplant; even though they are utilised to adore divine beings, those angelic beings have been replaced since the preparation of the reinterpretation (Menziés 2014).

A positive understanding must be developed as long as the essential scriptural meaning is not darkened, usually a portion of the mission methodology. In other words, Jingitui is also contextualised by the local church to the total reach of Sabuans.

## Conclusion

A solid belief in myths, enchantment and sacred things in a primitive community will become a resistance figure when a new religion is presented (Kruyt 2008), which was experienced by the ministers coming to Sabu to spread the gospel. Responding to the reality, the church must take advantage of Jingitui. Sabuans believe that the root of all things is Deo Ama (God the Father), the creator of nature and the Sabu people. Deo Ei (god of water or god of prosperity), also known as Deo Mengarru, is very well-liked and wanted by the Sabu people in all forms of life. Water is vital to sustain the life of plants, animals and humans. The Sabu people believe that there is one Deo who controls the water and who gives prosperity to plants, animals and humans.

Of the two things that are believed by the Sabu tribal community, God's church should be able to contextualise. Firstly, God the Father is the source of life and creation (cf. Gn 1) and secondly, the water is the living water (cf. Jn 4:10–14) that will quench people's thirst and give life so that the people of Sabu are not strangers to something new.

The church must contextualise the meaning of presenting God to neighbourhood individuals who are religious according to old convictions, so that people may no longer look at their local god as the ruling deity.

In each target range of evangelism, Christianity continuously crosses with a nearby culture that has been profoundly established over time. Its exertion is exemplified as a procedure for communicating the tremendous and satisfactory gospel to the world without end. Perspectives of nearby societies, such as concepts, images, customs and other social intelligence apparatuses, can be ingested and acknowledged as a portion of Christianity as long as the scriptures' truth is not compromised. It can be proceeded with a broader scope to see to what extent the impact of the inborn culture of the Jingitui's Sabu tribe in Christianity has

adjusted there. The same can be connected to other social circles around the world.

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## Author's contributions

F.I.W. the sole author of this research article.

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## Data availability

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

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