



# The Encounter and Transformative Impact of Maximus the Confessor's Theological Thought on the Gomatere Culture of Halmahera: A Mission to the Togutil Tribe\*

Hendi Wijaya<sup>a</sup>

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Soteria Purwokerto, Indonesia  
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7495-4320>

Margareta Ruy

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Soteria Purwokerto, Indonesia  
<http://orcid.org/0009-0002-6266-2520>

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the encounter between the theological thought of Maximus the Confessor, a seminal figure in 7th-century Christian theology, and the Gomatere culture of the Togutil tribe in Halmahera, Indonesia. This study aims to explore the potential for interaction and dialogue between Maximus' theological ideas, particularly those concerning divine love, *Theosis*, *Logos*, and the role of community and ritual, with the spiritual beliefs and practices of the Togutil tribe. Employing a comparative and contextual methodology, this research identifies potential common ground and significant challenges between the two traditions. Findings indicate that despite profound conceptual and cosmological differences, both traditions possess points of resonance that can facilitate meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding. Such commonalities are observed in the recognition of a transcendent divine power, the importance ascribed to spiritual transformation, and the pivotal role of community in shared life. Maximus' concepts of divine love and *Theosis* have the potential to resonate deeply with the Togutil concept of "O Gomanga" and their spiritual practices, leading to a more profound understanding of union with the divine. Furthermore, the concept of *Logos* can significantly enrich their understanding of the universe, especially when compared with the Togutil concept of "Jou-Ma-Dutu" as the creator and owner entity. The inherent conceptual complexity of Maximus' thought and the distinct cosmological frameworks of both traditions pose challenges requiring careful adaptation and reinterpretation for a truly meaningful encounter. This research makes a significant contribution to the fields of mission

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<sup>a</sup> Corresponding author. Email: [hendi@sttsoteria.ac.id](mailto:hendi@sttsoteria.ac.id).

theology, anthropology of religion, and cross-cultural studies by enriching the understanding of the dynamics of encounter between diverse religious and cultural systems. Moreover, it provides valuable insights for missionaries and interfaith dialogue practitioners in developing more contextualized, respectful, and effective approaches when interacting with indigenous communities.

**KEYWORDS:** *Theosis*, *Logos*, divine love, Gomatere culture, Togutil tribe, ritual, Halmahera, interreligious dialogue, mission theology, inculturation, intercultural theology, double religious belonging, Jou-Ma-Dutu, O Gomanga

*El encuentro y el impacto transformador del pensamiento teológico de Máximo el Confesor en la cultura Gomatere de Halmahera: una misión entre la tribu Togutil*

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo examina el encuentro entre el pensamiento teológico de Máximo el Confesor, figura seminal de la teología cristiana del siglo VII, y la cultura Gomatere del pueblo Togutil en Halmahera, Indonesia. El estudio se propone explorar las posibilidades de interacción y diálogo entre las ideas teológicas de Máximo—en particular aquellas relativas al amor divino, la *Theosis*, el *Logos* y el papel de la comunidad y el ritual— y las creencias y prácticas espirituales del pueblo Togutil. Mediante una metodología comparativa y contextual, la investigación identifica posibles puntos de convergencia y desafíos significativos entre ambas tradiciones. Los hallazgos indican que, a pesar de profundas diferencias conceptuales y cosmológicas, ambas tradiciones presentan resonancias que pueden facilitar un diálogo significativo y una comprensión mutua. Dichas afinidades se evidencian en el reconocimiento de un poder divino trascendente, en la importancia atribuida a la transformación espiritual y en el papel central de la comunidad en la vida compartida. Los conceptos maximianos de amor divino y *Theosis* poseen el potencial de resonar profundamente con la noción togutil de “O Gomanga” y con sus prácticas espirituales, favoreciendo una comprensión más profunda de la unión con lo divino. Asimismo, el concepto de *Logos* puede enriquecer de manera significativa la comprensión del universo, especialmente en diálogo con la concepción togutil de “Jou-Ma-Dutu” como entidad creadora y propietaria. No obstante, la complejidad conceptual inherente al pensamiento de Máximo y los marcos cosmológicos diferenciados de ambas tradiciones plantean desafíos que exigen una cuidadosa adaptación y reinterpretación para que el encuentro sea verdaderamente significativo. Esta investigación realiza una contribución relevante a los campos de la teología de la misión, la antropología de la religión y los estudios interculturales, al enriquecer la comprensión de las dinámicas de encuentro entre sistemas religiosos y culturales diversos. Asimismo, ofrece aportes valiosos para misioneros y agentes del diálogo interreligioso en el desarrollo de enfoques más contextualizados, respetuosos y eficaces en su interacción con comunidades indígenas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Theosis*, *Logos*, amor divino, cultura Gomatere, pueblo Togutil, ritual, Halmahera, diálogo interreligioso, teología de la misión, inculturación, teología intercultural, doble pertenencia religiosa, Jou-Ma-Dutu, O Gomanga

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## Introduction

The study of the encounter between Christian theology and indigenous beliefs represents a vibrant and expanding area of inquiry within the interdisciplinary fields of religious studies and anthropology. Prior research has examined a range of facets of this interaction, including acculturation, syncretism, and conflict. Nevertheless, there remains a paucity of studies that specifically address the impact of early Christian theological thought on indigenous beliefs in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the Togutil tribe in Halmahera.

This research aims to make a distinctive contribution to the field by examining the potential influence of the ideas of Maximus the Confessor (580-662), a prominent Christian theologian and monk from the 7th century, on the Gomatere culture of Halmahera, with a particular focus on the Togutil tribe. Maximus' thought, situated within the context of the patristic tradition and shaped by the tenets of Neoplatonic philosophy, placed significant emphasis on the centrality of Christ's incarnation, divine love, and the process of human transformation towards union with the divine (*Theosis*) through the cultivation of virtue and engagement within the ecclesiastical community. This perspective offers profound insight into the intricate relationship between the human and the divine. The Togutil, meanwhile, with their beliefs deeply embedded in the spirituality of nature and connection with "O Gomanga" (ancestral spirits) and "Jou-Ma-Dutu" (creator/owner entity), represent a spiritual wisdom and experiences that have evolved over centuries. These beliefs are reflected in their cultural practices, such as rituals, ceremonies, and a profound respect for nature.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the dialogue between early Christian theological thought and indigenous beliefs, as well as its potential impact on cultural practices and spiritual understanding. The main objective of this research is to understand how Maximus' ideas can dialogue with the Gomatere culture, and how this encounter can enrich both traditions and pave the way for a more inclusive and holistic understanding of spiritual reality. This study will specifically explore avenues for inculturation, intercultural theology, and the potential for concepts like "double religious belonging" within this unique interfaith engagement.

It is anticipated that this research will make a substantial contribution to a number of academic disciplines, including mission theology, the anthropology of religion, and cross-cultural studies. In particular, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the encounter between Christian theology and indigenous beliefs. Furthermore, it can offer new insights into the manner in which early Christian theological thought engages with specific cultures in Indonesia.

Moreover, it identifies potential impacts and transformations that may result from such encounters and will contribute to the development of more contextualized and effective approaches to Christian mission and interreligious dialogue.

It is anticipated that this research will facilitate a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of spiritual realities, while also fostering enhanced communication and collaboration between Christian and indigenous communities.

## Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative methodology, integrating multiple research techniques to fulfill its objectives. The initial phase of the research entails a comprehensive examination of the extant literature about the thought of Maximus the Confessor, Gomatere culture, and the Togutil tribe. An analysis of key texts by Saint Maximus, including the *Ambigua* and *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, will be conducted in order to gain insight into his theological concepts pertaining to divine love, *Theosis*, *Logos*, incarnation, and the role of community. A review of secondary literature on the theology of Saint Maximus will be conducted, including an analysis of interpretations and scholarly analyses. A literature study on the Gomatere culture, with a particular focus on the Togutil tribe, will be conducted. This will include an examination of their beliefs, spiritual practices, cosmology, and social structure, drawing on a wider range of ethnographic studies to provide a robust cultural foundation.

Following the completion of the literature study, this research will proceed with a comparative analysis between the key concepts of Maximus' thought and the spiritual beliefs and practices of the Togutil tribe. This analysis will identify potential common ground and challenges in the dialogue between the two traditions, explicitly exploring the nuanced relationships between concepts such as Maximus' *Logos* and the Togutil's "Jou-Ma-Dutu" or the Holy Spirit and "O Gomanga." The data collected from the literature review and comparative analysis will be analyzed contextually, considering the historical, social, and cultural background of the Togutil. This analysis will facilitate a deeper understanding of how Maximus' thought can engage with their spiritual beliefs and practices, as well as identify the potential impact of such an encounter within frameworks of inculturation, intercultural theology, and the possibility of double religious belonging. It is anticipated that the combination of these diverse research techniques will facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the intersection between Maximus the Confessor's thought and Gomatere culture in Halmahera, and its potential ramifications for the Togutil.

## Results and Discussion

### The Theological Thought of Maximus the Confessor

Maximus the Confessor (580-662) was a prominent theologian whose work was dedicated to understanding the complexities of Christian theology. With the guidance of Sophronius, Maximus undertook an in-depth study of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus and Pseudo-Dionysius of Areopagus. His approach involved a synthesis of concepts from the early Church Fathers with philosophical ideas drawn from figures such as Aristotle and Plato. His writings in Carthage demonstrate a high level of intellectual maturity in addressing complex theological issues, particularly those to the nature of Christ. Maximus espoused the view that salvation entails both divine grace and human endeavor. He further held the position that ascetic practices and spiritual disciplines can facilitate a state of union with the divine. Furthermore, love was regarded as a unifying force that transcends boundaries.

Maximus' theological contributions are notable for their integrated approach to theological discourse. He developed a comprehensive theology that was shaped by his monastic background and drew upon the diverse traditions and schools of philosophy within Christianity. A primary tenet of his theology was the Chalcedonian definition of the two natures of Christ, which he regarded as a foundational truth with far-reaching implications.<sup>1</sup> Maximus held the conviction that the confluence of the divine and human in Christ mirrored a broader cosmic order, wherein the physical and metaphysical realms were inextricably linked.

Maximus' spiritual theology places significant emphasis on the interconnectedness of all creation and the salvific relationship between humans and creation through the Word of God. The attainment of *Theosis*, or union with the divine, is possible for humans through the practice of asceticism, prayer, and contemplation.<sup>2</sup> *Theosis* is not only a personal objective but also contributes to the cosmic progression towards harmony with the divine, in which humans play an important role.<sup>3</sup>

Maximus' integrative theology places significant emphasis on a comprehensive understanding of the will, positing that Christ has two distinct yet harmonious wills. This teaching was in contradiction with Monothelism and had significant implications for the theological discussions of the time. Maximus' theology was not merely an

<sup>1</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, "St. Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>2</sup> G. E.H. Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth. Volume 2* (Faber & Faber, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, "St. Maximus the Confessor." See also: Jesse Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor."

eclectic combination of disparate perspectives; rather, it was an exhaustive exploration of the nature of God, humanity, and the universe, emphasizing the interconnectivity, incarnation, and function of humanity within this cosmic framework. Notwithstanding the challenges he encountered, Maximus' unwavering commitment to the pursuit of truth and his keen spiritual discernment guaranteed the lasting impact of his teachings on subsequent Christian theological discourse.

For Maximus, God's mission was to unite the entire created order with Him in love through the incarnation of the *Logos*. This mission extends beyond mere salvation from sin; it is God's eternal plan for humanity.<sup>4</sup> Despite human sin, the incarnation of the Son of God aims to call humanity and, through His priesthood, to unite the entire created order in the life of the Trinity.

### Maximus the Confessor on Divine Love and the Path to Theosis

Maximus the Confessor viewed God's love as the fundamental principle of His mission and the basis of all existence. This divine presence is perceived throughout creation, accessible to humans through love and appreciation for the world.<sup>5</sup> Love is the essential means for union with God and creation, with *Theosis* as its ultimate goal—a call to perceive the world through love and recognize interconnectivity.

Attaining *Theosis* depends on experiencing divine love, granted by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. This love elevates the soul, prioritizing the knowledge of God above all else, free from worldly attachments.<sup>6</sup> Maximus asserts that genuine love requires purifying the soul from lust, cultivated through virtues like hope, patience, self-control, and reverence from faith. Love is the essence of virtue; practicing virtue is, in essence, practicing love, an active participation in divine life that facilitates divine participation through virtuous actions.

Maximus reiterated that true love is achieved through purifying lust, rooted in faith and reverence. Love is the core of virtue, and its practice enables participation in

<sup>4</sup> Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>5</sup> Oskari Juurikkala, "The Ontology of Theosis: Insights from Maximus the Confessor," *Theological Research* 8 (2020): 7-21; Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection," in *Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor*, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*; Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love: St. Maximus on Virtue", in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection. Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor (Belgrade, October 18-21, 2012)*, ed. Maxim Vasiljevic (Sebastian Press, 2012).

God's love and nature.<sup>7</sup> The ultimate human objective is unity with the divine through virtuous love. God's love is transformative and unifying, guiding the soul towards *Theosis*. Love is both the ultimate goal and the means to attain it.

A fundamental tenet is love's transformative capacity. It's a state of being, aligning the soul with God's will, reflecting His nature.<sup>8</sup> Love is the unifying force animating creation<sup>9</sup>, enabling transcendence and union with the divine. An unencumbered soul, free from desire, experiences a divine love beyond human limits. Outcomes include virtuous actions, patience, humility, and wisdom.

The second key aspect is the knowledge of God. Maximus held love as the primary path to genuine knowledge of God, a transcendent, relational understanding beyond intellect, attained through ineffable direct experience.<sup>10</sup> This knowledge is a consequence of active, infinite divine activity.<sup>11</sup>

Third is dispassion (*apatheia*), freedom from worldly passions, a prerequisite for divine love and union. Maximus saw natural activity as intermediate between potential and actualization.<sup>12</sup> Spiritual life aims for dispassion through ascetic striving, meditation, and contemplation<sup>13</sup>, purifying the soul to focus on God without worldly distraction.<sup>14</sup>

Fourth is virtue. Virtue is an expression of love, drawing individuals closer to God. Love is the encompassing virtue<sup>15</sup>, harmonizing human will with divine will, restoring harmony between God and humanity.<sup>16</sup> Only through love does humanity

<sup>7</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>8</sup> Juurikkala, "The Ontology of Theosis: Insights from Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>9</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>10</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*. See also: Eirini Artemi and Christos Terezis, "The Mystical Theology as a Path of Man for the Divine Knowledge in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius Areopagite, and Maximus the Confessor," *De Medio Aevo* 13, n. 1 (2019): 153-176.

<sup>11</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>13</sup> Bronwen Neil, "The Blessed Passion of Holy Love," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 2 (2004): 1-8.

<sup>14</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*; D. Prassas, "Deification in Two Early Writings of St. Maximus the Confessor: Attaining Likeness to God," *Sophia* 60 (2021): 797-817.

<sup>15</sup> Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love: St. Maximus on Virtue."

<sup>16</sup> Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus The Confessor."

truly reflect God's image. Christ's incarnation initiates a reciprocal relationship, superseding self-love and culminating in deification.

Fifth is unity with creation. Divine love entails a harmonious relationship with all creation.<sup>17</sup> Humans are central microcosms linking physical and spiritual<sup>18</sup>, mediating cosmic divisions (created/uncreated, intelligible/sensory, heaven/earth, heaven/universe, male/female) through holiness, virtue, angelic *gnosis*, and love, enabling God's presence.<sup>19</sup>

Sixth is the Church and Divine Liturgy. Maximus saw the Church as the setting for experiencing love and divinity, especially through liturgy. The Church is the Body of the Mystery, representing the divine-human mystery. The Eucharist is the focal point uniting all in divine service. The Church provides context for human purpose, made possible because God is love and offers Himself in incarnation.

The final, overarching aspect is *Theosis*, the ultimate objective of divine love—humanity becoming like God by grace and participation in divine nature.<sup>20</sup> Maximus emphasized this transformative journey through virtue, knowledge, and selfless love. *Theosis* is attained through divine love, operated by the Trinity from creation to eschaton.<sup>21</sup> Maximus synthesized predecessors, offering a perspective where God's grandeur is reflected in creation, and humanity unites creation with the divine.

### Maximus the Confessor on Cosmology: *Logos* and *Logoi*

In Maximus' thought, the *Logos* represents the central divine principle that encompasses all things. The concept of *logoi* represents the divine act of will that serves as the foundation for the processes of creation and conversion, as well as the underlying metaphysical structure that governs the dynamics of expansion and contraction.<sup>22</sup> In this context, *logoi* represents the essence of created things as an icon, describing their potential and purpose. The essence of a thing is not a static entity; rather, it indicates

<sup>17</sup> Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus The Confessor."

<sup>18</sup> Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, "The Logos, the *Logoi*, and Created Beings," in *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 64-137.

<sup>19</sup> Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus The Confessor." See also: St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Imprimerie Catholique, 1857-1866), PG 91, n.d.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Korb, "Whole God and Whole Man: Deification as Incarnation in Maximus the Confessor," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75, no. 4 (2022): 308-318; Prassas, "Deification in Two Early Writings of St. Maximus the Confessor: Attaining Likeness to God," 797-817.

<sup>21</sup> Dominick, "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus The Confessor."

<sup>22</sup> Tollefsen, "The Logos, the *Logoi*, and Created Beings," 55.

what a thing should be.<sup>23</sup> The concept of *Logoi* serves to connect the divine plan, creation, and the essence of created beings.

The ontological status of virtue in Maximus' cosmology indicates a correlation between love and virtue, analogous to the relationship between *Logos* and *logoi*. The practice of virtue allows for participation in love and partaking of the divine.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the practice of virtue and love represents the ultimate human goal of uniting all creation with God.

Maximus' cosmology is founded upon his theory of *logoi*, which is regarded as the fundamental and ultimate objective of existence. All characteristics of creatures originate from the *logoi*, which govern relationships and ensure the order of the universe. The ultimate unity of the *logoi* is realized in the *Logos*, which may be understood as the Word of God. All creatures existed in potential within the divine entity before their creation. Following their creation, the divine entity provides nurturance and direction towards the creatures' intended purpose. The *Logos* is not to be identified with God; rather, it represents the divine intention in creation.<sup>25</sup>

In his work, Maximus employs the parable of the mustard seed to elucidate the tenets of cosmology. He posits that creation is the free and loving will of God, which is symbolized by the *Logos* and the *logoi*.<sup>26</sup> The *logoi*, analogous to the spokes of a circle, are centered on the *Logos*, which serves as the unifying center of creation. Through contemplation, believers perceive the *Logos* within the *logoi* of creation.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the *logoi* are dependent on the *Logos*, analogous to the birds that depend on the branches of the *Logos* tree. Those who are in a state of spiritual union with Christ can perceive the *logos* in relation to the *Logos*.

In his work, Maximus posits that the world was created as a diverse yet unified entity through its relationship to the *Logos*. He further asserts that this dynamism is a result of the world's connection to the Creator. The *Logos* is an ever-present entity within the created order, analogous to the sun, which radiates light. The *Logos* is the central principle unifying all *logoi*, including humans. To achieve salvation, humans must therefore be unified with the *Logos*. This explains Jesus' assertion regarding the unity between himself and humanity, as illustrated in the parable of the Vine.

<sup>23</sup> Tollefsen, "The Logos, the *Logoi*, and Created Beings," 56.

<sup>24</sup> Emma Dewhurst, "The Ontology of Virtue as Participation in Divine Love in the Works of St. Maximus the Confessor," *Forum Philosophicum* 20 (2015): 157-169.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Claude Larchet, *Saint Maxime Le Confesseur* (Cerf, 2003), 50.

<sup>26</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>27</sup> Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif, *The Philokalia* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Maximus's doctrine asserts that every entity in the universe possesses a distinct *logos*, yet these *logos* are unified by their participation in the *Logos* of God, which is incarnate in Jesus Christ. A single *Logos* gives rise to multiple *logoi*, and multiple *logoi* are unified by the same *Logos*. The meaning of the universe is found in Christ, which gives rise to the concept of the cosmic Christ in the cosmic liturgy. Every being finds its meaning in its nature and purpose, as defined by the *logos* of its being, which is inviolable.<sup>28</sup> This *logos* of being participates in the *Logos* of God, thereby affirming that the meaning of all beings is created in the unity of the *Logos*.

### Maximus the Confessor on the Incarnation, Cosmos, and Human Divinization

In Maximus the Confessor's intricate theological framework, the universe was conceived in a state of inherent perfection, permeated by the divine *Logos*, and ultimately oriented towards reunion with the divine source. Humanity was created as a unified being, encompassing both body and soul, made in God's image and likeness, and serving as a microcosm reflecting the entirety of the visible and invisible cosmos.<sup>29</sup> This dynamic relationship positioned humanity as a mediator, tasked with recapitulating the elements of the world within itself.<sup>30</sup> The creation of man represented the culmination of the *Logos*' creative activity, with humanity serving as the crucial conduit through which the *Logos* would ultimately manifest fully in the world.

However, the Fall disrupted this intended harmony, resulting in the fragmentation of both the individual human being and the wider cosmos. In response to this fractured state, Christ occupies a central position in Maximus's vision, serving as the *axis mundi* and the pinnacle of human history. The Incarnation of Christ is presented not merely as a salvific act to address sin, but as the fundamental means of human divinization (*Theosis*). Through the Incarnation, human nature is fundamentally recreated, enabling the practice of virtue and liberation from the grip of lust.<sup>31</sup>

Maximus understood the Incarnation of the *Logos* as the very foundation and objective of God's revelation, intended to sanctify and transform all creation

<sup>28</sup> Bingaman and Nassif, *The Philokalia*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, "The Church Mystagogy," in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, ed. George C. Berthold (Paulist Press, 2003), 75.

<sup>30</sup> Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); Dragos Bahrim, "The Anthropic Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor," *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science* 3 (2008): 11-37.

<sup>31</sup> John McGuckin, "Byzantium and the East," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

through the profound union of the divine and human natures.<sup>32</sup> This event facilitates the sanctification and *Theosis* of the entire created order through its union with the God-Man. From Maximus's perspective, the Incarnation is not solely a method for achieving salvation; it represents the actualization of existence in its fullest sense.<sup>33</sup> Salvation is thus contingent upon the convergence of the divine and human natures in Christ. The universal scope of the *Logos'* Incarnation results in the divinization of humanity, which becomes a single entity united with the incarnate *Logos*. Individuals attain a state of complete divinity while preserving their inherent humanity. By grace, all things are united with Christ, actualizing the *Logos* within them.<sup>34</sup> The Incarnation bestows upon human beings the status of agents of salvation for the world, regarding humanity as the "second cosmos," and offering both the possibility of deification and exemplifying divine grace, thereby sanctifying the universe.<sup>35</sup>

The Son of God, born of a virgin, assumed a perfect human nature, akin to that of Adam before the Fall, yet was free from sin. To achieve salvation, God willingly accepted suffering and death, entering into mortality. This act of atonement rendered Him entirely free from sin and its consequences.<sup>36</sup> In accordance with the divine will, Christ's assumption of human nature discharged humanity's debt, restoring them to their original state of grace. His ultimate sacrifice offered suffering with the power to heal and save. Christ entered the realm of suffering while remaining free from passion<sup>37</sup>, overcoming temptation through asceticism, patience, and love, demonstrating perfect virtue and wisdom.

Central to Maximus's Christology is the assertion that Jesus Christ possessed two distinct wills: a divine will and a human will, as will is an inherent aspect of human nature. By becoming fully human in Christ, God the Son enabled all humanity to live in accordance with the divine will. The resurrection further intensified this "descent" of the will, transforming nature towards eternity. Christ unified all things within Himself, dissolving existential distinctions. The Fall was an act of the will, resulting in its wounding and fragmentation.<sup>38</sup> The healing objective is to restore the human will to its fullness—self-discipline, integrity, and alignment with God's will.

<sup>32</sup> George Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>33</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>34</sup> Korb, "Whole God and Whole Man: Deification as Incarnation in Maximus the Confessor," 308-318.

<sup>35</sup> Jean-Paul Juge, "Maximus the Confessor's Summation of Early Patristic Thought."

<sup>36</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>37</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>38</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

The doctrine of two wills and two energies in Christ provides a comprehensive understanding of the God-Man. Maximus emphasized will and energy as fundamental spiritual aspects, distinguishing between natural and selective will.<sup>39</sup> The Fall resulted in a loss of integrity and spontaneity of the will. Salvation depends on accepting and healing the will. In Christ, human nature is sinless, and His will aligns perfectly with the divine. The hypostatic union grants humanity a new mode of being, divinized and transformed. Divinization is not a dissolution but a process of becoming oneself in God's likeness (*Theosis*), denoting indivisibility and unity.<sup>40</sup> Christ, as God-Man, acts according to both divine and human natures without alteration, achieving ideal equilibrium.

Maximus distinguished two types of "taking": natural taking, accepting human nature in its primordial innocence, and oikonomic taking, accepting human sin and guilt.<sup>41</sup> Christ's human nature possessed active, potent, and free agency, particularly in redemptive suffering. His virtuous life restored God's image in humanity through the exercise of free will. Christ's redemptive work is a restoration and gathering of all creation. Love, especially Christ's sacrifice, is the driving force of salvation.

In the *Philokalia*, Maximus posits that the Incarnation is the key to understanding God's purpose and plan of salvation.<sup>42</sup> It reveals the unspoken divine plan, enabling human participation. Christ mediates between God and humanity by revealing the Father and facilitating the Spirit's presence. The Incarnation elucidates divine purpose and benevolence, uniting human nature with the divine.<sup>43</sup> The law of grace makes human divinization possible, correlating with God becoming human through mercy. This concept of love is central to Maximus's perspective. For Maximus, the Incarnation was integral to God's eternal plan for renewing humanity and creation. Reflection on divinization, particularly Christ's self-emptying, illuminates the depth of humanity's fall and the elevation achieved through divine mercy, fostering devotion.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>40</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor"; Korb, "Whole God and Whole Man: Deification as Incarnation in Maximus the Confessor," 308-318.

<sup>41</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>42</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>43</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>44</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

## Maximus the Confessor on Human Nature, the Fall, and the Path to *Theosis*

Maximus the Confessor understood human nature as fundamentally endowed with the capacity for free choice and action. However, the Fall introduced sin and evil. Sin is defined as a deceptive decision contrary to the divine will, while evil is a weakness of the will. Maximus emphasized the will's crucial role in the Fall, viewing asceticism as a necessary process for its transformation.<sup>45</sup> Sin leads to spiritual blindness and ignorance of God, filling human consciousness with sensual images. The Fall resulted in a loss of integrity, corruption of mind and body, and the inheritance of sin and death.

Crucially, Maximus argued that the Fall did not diminish human freedom but paradoxically strengthened it by giving rise to “unnatural” desires. Christ’s mission was to liberate humanity, but this liberation is an individual process requiring each person to exercise their freedom and creativity. It is a journey from slavery and passivity to freedom and creativity, moving from a state dominated by lust and temptation to one of self-control and freedom.

Maximus distinguished between nature and will. Christ’s healing of human nature is a singular, universal event, while the process of liberation through “temptation” is an individualized healing of the will. The relationship between Christ and humanity is characterized by mutual love and respect, avoiding assimilation or separation. Human freedom is integral to this exchange.<sup>46</sup> Through this exchange of love, humanity is deified, and God is, in a sense, “humanized.”<sup>47</sup>

The Christian life begins with baptismal rebirth, granting the Holy Spirit and the grace of innocence. The sacraments bestow grace, liberate, unite with Christ, and elevate humanity beyond natural limitations, facilitating *Theosis*. “Temptation” is defined as the internal conflict against lust, a perverse expression of the will.<sup>48</sup> The presence of evil and lust creates disharmony, which the divine law seeks to rectify. The “ordeal” of spiritual life involves the organization and cleansing of the soul, leading to freedom from lust through the development of dispassion (*apatheia*). Asceticism is key to this, involving the subjugation of powerful emotions and the moderation

<sup>45</sup> Florovsky, “Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor.”

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Marco, “Maximus the Confessor’s Answer to the Crisis of Meaning.”

<sup>47</sup> Korb, “Whole God and Whole Man: Deification as Incarnation in Maximus the Confessor”; Marco, “Maximus the Confessor’s Answer to the Crisis of Meaning.”

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas Constas, “Introduction,” in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, eds. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003).

of passions towards a sacred goal, guided by an intellect imbued with divine grace.<sup>49</sup> Maximus recommended prioritizing the intellect's focus on God through asceticism, meditation, and contemplation.

Maximus highlighted the conflict between pleasure and pain. Lust offers temporary pleasure but leads to pain and death. Asceticism, although painful, leads to spiritual pleasure and eternal life. Christians are called to follow Christ's example of choosing suffering in obedience, thereby developing key virtues: love, self-control, and prayer. Love is the most significant virtue, exemplified by Christ's resistance to temptation. Through baptism, the Eucharist, and asceticism, humans participate in Christ's love and move towards deification, the pinnacle of Maximus's "virtue ethics".<sup>50</sup>

Asceticism involves two aspects: "free lust" (temptation by pain) and "involuntary lust." *Praktike* (active spiritual practice) is not merely negative but positively curbs lust and fosters virtue. *Apatheia* is not just passion repression but a positive state of the soul.<sup>51</sup> The effectiveness of religious observance ultimately depends on the fear of God. Faith is the foundation for love, which is attained through a process beginning with the fear of God and progressing through self-control, perseverance, patience, hope, and the purification of passions.

Upon reaching maturity in contemplation, the intellect (*nous*) can achieve a higher state where *apatheia* and spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) converge, culminating in divine love. This journey involves trials, virtue development, and the pursuit of perfection, aiming to overcome pride and attain love. Divine love yields profound comprehension, *gnosis* or contemplation, which perceives the divine aspects of reality.<sup>52</sup> Contemplation is the spiritual perception of understanding the universe through the *Logos*, the divine energy permeating all creation. It is achieved through prayer, connecting with this energy. A Christian life aligns with Christ's teachings, fulfilling commandments and embodying His energy. Contemplation reveals Christ, the incarnate *Logos*, as the universe's focal point.

The Church serves as an image and likeness of God, uniting believers and Christ in a reconciling bond with creation. It is a microcosm of the universe, symbolizing divine unity. Maximus emphasized the restoration of original harmony (*apokatastasis*)

<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Conostas, "Introduction."

<sup>50</sup> Demetrios Bathrellos, "Passions, Ascesis, and the Virtues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford University Press, 2015), 287-306.

<sup>51</sup> Palmer et al. (eds.), *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*.

<sup>52</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

more than freedom.<sup>53</sup> The Church unites believers, reunites Christ with creation, and functions as a microcosm of humanity, growing until the eschaton when the visible world undergoes death and resurrection. Humanity ascends as part of the whole, and the divine becomes immanent in all things.

Maximus regarded the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, as a crucial instrument in human divinization. It represents the transfigured Christ and is a conduit for deification. In the liturgy, the Church manifests God's transformative presence and divine light. Liturgy is not just ritual but a domain of sacred relationships where divine activity and deification are experienced, making God visible to believers.<sup>54</sup> For Maximus, liturgy is the concrete expression of the incarnation and a means of human participation in divine life.

Ultimately, the *Logos* will permeate all existence. The virtuous will experience the divine fire as illumination, while the immoral will experience it as consuming fire. The universe will be restored, and God's love will pervade all creation. Maximus distinguished between deification by grace and union without grace.<sup>55</sup> All existence is united with the divine as it derives and is sustained by it. God restores creation to eternal existence, although not necessarily to a state of goodness for all. Sinners are restored, but only the righteous enjoy fellowship with God, while the wicked are separated.

*Theosis* represents creation's ultimate goal; all things were created with this intention. Ultimately, all will be divinized, with God preeminent. This process is not imposed but accepted in freedom and love. Maximus described *Theosis* as a state where only God is manifest, yet without negating humanity's inherent capacity for self-determination.<sup>56</sup> Human freedom and obedience to Christ can coexist without sacrificing individual identity.

## Gomaterre Culture of Halmahera

### *Geographical and Historical Context*

Indonesia has a long history of cultural and traditional practices. Indonesia is home to over 1,300 distinct tribes and a multitude of local traditions, collectively contributing to the country's reputation for its profound local wisdom. In particular, Eastern Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, encompassing a multitude of ceremonies

<sup>53</sup> Juge, "Maximus the Confessor's Summation of Early Patristic Thought."

<sup>54</sup> Adam Cooper, "Deification through the Liturgy: The Mystagogia of Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>55</sup> Florovsky, "Life, Writings and Theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor."

<sup>56</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*.

and a profound reverence for ancestors. This includes the Tobelo Dalam tribe, which is more commonly referred to as the Togutil tribe and is located on Halmahera Island.

The Togutil tribe is one of several inland tribes that inhabit the Wasile region, East Halmahera, North Maluku. The Togutil tribe is an indigenous people who adhere to animistic and dynamistic beliefs.<sup>57</sup> They reside in proximity to the natural environment and are significantly reliant on forest resources to meet their basic needs. Patji cites Masinambouw's classification of the Tobelo tribe as Tobelo Tai, a group of people inhabiting coastal areas and with a history of maritime life. They are also known as pirates (*canga*). In contrast, the Tobelo Tia are a group that inhabits inland areas in proximity to forest ecosystems.<sup>58</sup> These Tobelo Tia are known as the Togutil. The Togutil tribe's nomadic lifestyle and dependence on the forest for daily sustenance exemplify their identity as *O hongana ma nyawa*, or forest people, while distinguishing them from the *O berera ma nyawa*, or village people.<sup>59</sup> Their migratory patterns are contingent upon the accessibility of natural resources, including fruits, wild vegetables, and game. The dwellings of these people are typically rudimentary structures crafted from natural materials such as leaves and tree trunks.

As is the case with numerous other inland tribes in Indonesia, the Togutil are confronted with a range of challenges to their way of life, largely due to environmental change, deforestation, and the expansion of mining operations. These threats not only endanger the tribe's continued existence but also jeopardize the biodiversity and forest ecosystems that they have safeguarded for millennia. For this reason, one of the current locations of the Togutil tribe is Wangongira Village, West Tobelo Subdistrict, North Halmahera Regency.<sup>60</sup> The tribe selected Wangongira village as a place of residence and subsequently established a settlement there.

To protect the Togutil tribe and their natural environment, conservation initiatives must be undertaken in collaboration with the government, local communities, and non-governmental organizations. This will ensure that the rights of indigenous

<sup>57</sup> Abdul Rachman Patji, M. Hisyam, and Sihol Farida Tambunan, *Agama & Pandangan Hidup: Studi Tentang Religi Lokal Di Indonesia [Wilayah Maluku Utara]* (LIPI Press, 2007), 70.

<sup>58</sup> Patji, Hisyam, and Tambunan, *Agama & Pandangan Hidup: Studi Tentang Religi Lokal Di Indonesia [Wilayah Maluku Utara]*, 75.

<sup>59</sup> Radios Simanjuntak, Ervival Zuhud, and Agus Hikmat, "The Ethnobotany of O Hongana Ma Nyawa Community in Wangongira Village, North Halmahera Regency," *Media Konservasi* 20, n. 3 (2016): 252-260.

<sup>60</sup> Patji, Hisyam, and Tambunan, *Agama & Pandangan Hidup: Studi Tentang Religi Lokal Di Indonesia [Wilayah Maluku Utara]*, 70.

peoples are upheld and that they are able to continue their sustainable coexistence with nature.

### *Key Cultural Practices and Beliefs*

The local wisdom of each region provides a distinctive and genuine representation of the region's culture and traditions. Similarly, the Togutil tribe, like many other tribes in Indonesia, adheres to a tribal religion that incorporates belief in supernatural spirits. The indigenous belief system of the Togutil people demonstrates a worldview characterized by a profound spiritual orientation and a deep reverence for the surrounding natural environment.

In his seminal work, Clifford Geertz defines religion as a system of symbols that establishes and reinforces deep and enduring moods and motivations in human beings by formulating concepts about the general order of existence and wrapping those concepts in a sense of factuality, thereby making those moods and motivations appear uniquely realistic.<sup>61</sup> Geertz's interpretive approach to culture emphasizes that a "worldview" is not merely a set of beliefs, but a comprehensive framework through which a people understand reality, including their place in the cosmos, their relationship with the divine, and their moral order.<sup>62</sup> This framework is crucial for understanding how external theological concepts might be assimilated or reinterpreted within the Gomatere context. In the Indonesian context, local belief systems such as "Gikiri Moi" preceded the establishment of the five major religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism).

These local beliefs are imbued with potent symbols that inform people's comprehension of the universe, their relationship with their ancestors, and their perspectives on life and death. Despite the absence of an organized theological system akin to those of major religions, these local beliefs continue to exert a significant influence on the cultural and personal lives of those who adhere to them. Geertz posits that religion encompasses a vast array of beliefs and practices, including local and traditional religions, and is concerned with the search for meaning in life and the world around us.<sup>63</sup> In this instance, the Togutil's reliance on the forest is also reflected in their cultural and traditional practices. They possess profound knowledge regarding medicinal plants, the sustainable utilization of forest resources, and the myths associated with the

<sup>61</sup> Patji, Hisyam, and Tambunan, *Agama & Pandangan Hidup: Studi Tentang Religi Lokal Di Indonesia [Wilayah Maluku Utara]*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (Basics Books, 1973).

<sup>63</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*.

surrounding natural environment. Nevertheless, they are inextricably linked to rituals and beliefs that they consider to be effective in safeguarding and sustaining them.

The Togutil tribe's profound dependence on nature has led to the development of a unique belief system, which ultimately gave rise to the concept of Gikiri Moi, or the God of the universe. This belief system places significant emphasis on the role of ancestral spirits, known as *O Gomanga*, in the lives of the Togutil people. In a more detailed definition, Radios Simanjuntak *et al.* describe *O Gikiri Moi* as follows: "Gikiri means 'spirit' and moi means 'the only' or 'the main'." The community espouses the belief that all living entities, including the land and rivers, possess *gikiri*. *Gikiri Moi* is understood to be a higher entity, above the other *gikiri* or the "Almighty," the creator and ruler of the universe. These ancestral spirits are regarded as persisting in the material world and interacting with their descendants, often believed to provide protection, counsel, and wisdom. This has resulted in the implementation of restrictions on forest exploitation, as the community holds the view that the forest serves not only utilitarian purposes, such as hunting and gathering natural resources, but also functions as a habitat for the *O Gomanga*.<sup>64</sup>

Beyond the concept of *Gikiri Moi* and *O Gomanga*, the Togutil worldview incorporates "Jou-Ma-Dutu," which translates to "mind, teacher, and owner." This concept represents a benevolent and powerful entity responsible for creation and the order of the cosmos. "Jou-Ma-Dutu" acts as a guiding force, providing wisdom and maintaining balance within the natural world. This entity is distinct from *Gikiri Moi* in its specific role as a cosmic architect and sustainer, yet both are integral to the Togutil's holistic understanding of the divine and their relationship with the environment. The interplay between these concepts—*Gikiri Moi* as the pervasive spiritual essence, *O Gomanga* as ancestral spirits, and "Jou-Ma-Dutu" as the cosmic orderer—forms a complex and rich indigenous theology.

In addition to the belief in ancestral spirits, the Togutil people also adhere to the tenet that certain objects possess magical powers. These objects may take the form of uniquely shaped stones, specific trees, or other natural phenomena that are perceived to possess magical or religious properties. The Togutil people typically treat and respect certain objects because they perceive them to be creations with a soul and feelings analogous to those of humans. This results in the Togutil people engaging in rituals or ceremonies to honor these ancestral spirits and magical forces. Such requests may

<sup>64</sup> Edom Bayau, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Suku Togutil Dalam Upayah Konservasi Hutan Di Desa Labi-Labi Kecamatan Wasilei Utara Kabupaten Halmahera Timur," *AGRIKAN - Jurnal Agribisnis Perikanan* 16, n. 1 (2023): 68-74.

be made through prayers, offerings, or traditional ceremonies that have been passed down through generations.

Such belief systems are not merely rituals; rather, they are fundamental to the Togutil people's understanding and engagement with their surrounding environment. This illustrates the interconnectivity of humans, culture, and nature in the indigenous worldview. In Togutil belief, *Gikiri Moi* is regarded as the Supreme Soul, pervading all things. In this context, "O Gikiri" signifies "soul," while "Moi" denotes "one." In essence, *O Gikiri Moi* serves as a forum for individuals to voice their disquiet when they receive unanticipated outcomes that they are unable to reconcile with their expectations.<sup>65</sup>

### *O Gomatere as a Practice of Shamanism*

As a tribe whose existence is inextricably linked to the forest, the Togutil tribe engages in a multitude of activities that shape their way of life. The Togutil tribe has a system of customary rituals and beliefs related to their health and medical practices, which include healing techniques for various diseases. One of the healing rituals that has been preserved to the present day is the Gomatere Ritual.

In the context of the *O Gomatere* ritual, it can be seen as a spiritual or religious practice that involves the summoning of ancestral spirits for the purpose of requesting assistance or power. In his research into the Gomatere Ritual, Safrudin Abdulrahman employed an ethnographic approach. His findings revealed that the ritual involves a shaman entering a trance state for the purpose of diagnosing and treating illness. Shamans are believed to possess the ability to communicate with ancestral spirits and other spiritual entities.<sup>66</sup> The Togutil people adhere to the conviction that ancestral spirits and other spiritual entities play a pivotal role in matters to health and safety. Gomatere rituals are regarded as an efficacious treatment for ailments that are deemed intractable by contemporary medical standards.

The practice of shamanism<sup>67</sup> is predicated on the role of a shaman or *ogomatere* in Togutil as an intermediary between the human world and ancestral spirits. It is believed that they can identify the underlying cause of illness and provide appropriate treatment. Gomatere rituals are not solely utilized for the treatment of illnesses; they

<sup>65</sup> Patji, Hisyam, and Tambunan, *Agama & Pandangan Hidup: Studi Tentang Religi Lokal Di Indonesia [Wilayah Maluku Utara]*; Sri Yanuarti, *Konflik Maluku Utara* (LIPI Press, 2004), 77.

<sup>66</sup> Safrudin Abdulrahman, "Ritual Gomatere: Praktik Shamanisme Pada Orang Togutil," *Jurnal ETNOHISTORI* 1, n. 2 (2014).

<sup>67</sup> Sunarto, "Shamanism: A Religious Phenomenon in Indonesian Performing Arts," *Harmonia. Journal of Arts Research and Education* 13, n. 2 (2013): 168-175.

are also employed for the prevention of disease. This offers additional benefits that are considered significant by the Tugutil people. Consequently, the Gomatere ritual constitutes a pivotal element of the Tugutil traditional medical system, which is sustained due to the conviction in its advantages and significance within the social and cultural fabric of the community. The Gomatere ritual is not merely a medical practice; it is also an integral component of the Tugutil social and cultural network. The ritual serves to reinforce the community's connection with ancestral and other significant spiritual entities, which are perceived as playing a pivotal role in their daily lives.

*O Gomatere as a Ritual of Union with the Spirits  
of the Ancestors (O Gomanga)*

Foucault, a prominent French philosopher renowned for his insights into the nature of power and knowledge, challenged the notion that power is exclusively concentrated within specific individuals or groups, such as rulers or kings.<sup>68</sup> Foucault's conceptualization of power is not limited to a unidirectional, top-down phenomenon. Instead, he posits that power operates in a multitude of directions and emanates from a plethora of sources. Foucault's analysis of power suggests that it is not solely concentrated in the hands of rulers, but rather dispersed throughout society, manifesting in everyday social interactions.

The Gomatere ritual illustrates a non-centralized understanding of reciprocal power between humans and ancestral spirits. Those who perform the ritual adhere to the belief that the ancestral spirits possess the capacity to assist them in overcoming adversity. Conversely, humans also possess the capacity to invoke and petition the ancestral spirits for assistance. This illustrates a reciprocal and interdependent relationship between the power attributed to the ancestral spirits and the power attributed to the humans performing the ritual. In conclusion, the Gomatere ritual is not merely a spiritual ceremony; it is also a manifestation of a broader and more complex understanding of power. This understanding aligns with Foucault's theory of power, which posits that power is not centralized and ubiquitous.

The tradition preserved by the Togutil Tribe provides a heritage of national traditions that ultimately offers insight into the significance of *O Gomatere* as not merely a tradition, but also as an integral aspect of the lives of other creatures. The *O Gomatere* ritual represents a spiritual expression that signifies not only respect for

<sup>68</sup> Broery Doro Pater Tjaja, "Relasi Manusia Dengan Leluhur Dalam Ritual O Gomatere," in *Agama & Kepercayaan Nusantara*, ed. Sumanto Al Qutuby and Tedi Kholiludin, 1st ed. (Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama (eLSA) Press, 2019), 30.

humanity but also respect for the relationships established by ancestors during their lifetimes.<sup>69</sup> These relationships were formed through the use of *roese*, which is a Togutil term for the deceased human body. This illustrates the equilibrium between the living and the deceased.

The relationship between humans and *O Gomanga* can be understood as follows: The *O Gomatere* ritual is a request made by an individual to another individual who is believed to possess particular abilities. During the ritual, the individual bearing the *roese* engages in communication with the *O Gomanga* spirit, which lacks the capacity for human speech. Gomatere serves as an intermediary between the human realm and the spirit of *O Gomanga*, who is regarded as benevolent in the *Gikiri Moi* tradition and is believed to possess the capacity to address human concerns.<sup>70</sup> Gomatere bears resemblance to a priest who acts as an intermediary, making requests on behalf of humans and conveying messages believed to originate from *O Gomanga*.

The concept of *O Gomatere* represents a form of local wisdom that is imbued with profound socio-theological significance. Tjaja further asserts that *O Gomatere* serves as a symbol of the social life of humanity.<sup>71</sup> The motivation to behave well is a fundamental aspect of human nature, regardless of whether an individual is currently alive or has passed away. Tjaja further elucidated that notions of virtue are invariably associated with the transcendent divine or the sovereign entity of the universe, namely *Gikiri Moi*. This implies that the benevolence of the Supreme Being, or *Gikiri Moi*, has been reflected in the actions of humans who engage in *gomanga*. In other words, the ancestral spirits (*o gomanga*) present in the *O Gomatere* ritual are projections or manifestations of *Gikiri Moi*.

## The Encounter of Maximus' Theological Thought with Gomatere Culture

The encounter between Maximus' theological ideas and the Gomatere culture, particularly in the Togutil context, holds significant potential for a rich and transformative dialogue. While there are fundamental differences between Maximus' complex concepts of theology and mission and the Togutil belief system, which is more deeply embedded in animistic spirituality and a profound connection with nature, several potential common grounds exist that can facilitate meaningful exchange and mutual enrichment.

<sup>69</sup> Tjaja, "Relasi Manusia Dengan Leluhur Dalam Ritual O Gomatere," 64.

<sup>70</sup> Tjaja, "Relasi Manusia Dengan Leluhur Dalam Ritual O Gomatere," 65.

<sup>71</sup> Tjaja, "Relasi Manusia Dengan Leluhur Dalam Ritual O Gomatere," 65.

### *Potential Encounter Points*

There are several significant potential points of encounter between these two traditions, including:

- Concept of the Divine: Maximus emphasizes God’s love as the foundation of the divine mission, while the Togutil people venerate “O Gomanga” as ancestral spirits and “Jou-Ma-Dutu” as the creator and owner. Both traditions acknowledge the existence of transcendent divine forces that shape existence, albeit with differing conceptualizations and modes of engagement.<sup>72</sup> A crucial point of dialogue lies in exploring how Maximus’s concept of the *Logos*, as the divine principle of order and creation, can resonate with or enrich the Togutil understanding of “Jou-Ma-Dutu” as the cosmic architect and sustainer. This can foster a deeper appreciation for the underlying order and purpose in the universe from both perspectives.
- Concept of Divine Love and Spiritual Transformation: Maximus’ concept of love as a transformative force culminating in union with the divine (*Theosis*) finds a potential resonance with the Togutil, who highly value spiritual communion and guidance from the sacred. The concept of *Theosis*, or union with God, can be understood as a more profound expression of the spiritual aspiration embodied in their connection with “O Gomanga,” where humans seek to attain a higher spiritual level and a closer relationship with the divine realm.<sup>73</sup> This shared emphasis on spiritual growth and transformation provides a fertile ground for dialogue, exploring how the pursuit of virtue and divine love in Maximus’s thought can align with and deepen the Togutil’s existing spiritual practices aimed at enhancing their connection with nature and the divine.
- Cosmology and the Incarnation of the *Logos*: Maximus’s concept of the *Logos* as the divine principle of creation and order can be linked to the Gomatere’s understanding of the universe and the role of “Gikiri Moi” in guiding human life. The Incarnation of the *Logos*, or the enfleshment of God in human form, can be understood as a unique exemplification of the divine manifesting in the physical world, which could be explored in relation to the Togutil’s belief in the pervasive spiritual presence of “O Gomanga” within their environment.<sup>74</sup> While distinct, the idea of a divine principle actively shaping and entering creation offers a conceptual bridge.

<sup>72</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*; St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2003), 150.

<sup>73</sup> Conostas, “Introduction.”

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Carol Harrison (London: Routledge, 2003), 70.

– Role of Community and Ritual: Maximus underscores the significance of the Church and the Divine Liturgy in the process of attaining divinization, viewing them as communal spaces for experiencing divine love and unity. Similarly, the Togutil engage in communal rituals and practices, such as *O Gomatere*, that serve to reinforce their social and spiritual connections, often involving the invocation of ancestral spirits (*O Gomanga*) for healing and guidance. Both traditions acknowledge the vital significance of community in fostering and advancing spiritual growth and maintaining harmony.<sup>75</sup> This shared emphasis on communal practices as avenues for spiritual experience and social cohesion presents a strong foundation for mutual understanding and respect.

### *Challenges and Adaptations*

Although there are areas of potential overlap, the encounter between Maximus' thought and the culture of the Gomatere, particularly the Togutil, will also be confronted with several challenges that require careful adaptation and reinterpretation.

The following potential challenges have been identified:

– Conceptual Complexity: Maximus' theological concepts, such as *Theosis*, *Logos*, and *Logoi*, are replete with philosophical and theological nuances that may prove challenging for the Gomatere people to grasp directly. Their belief systems are often more deeply embedded in everyday practices, oral traditions, and tangible symbolism.<sup>76</sup> Bridging this conceptual gap requires careful translation and contextualization, moving beyond literal interpretations to find functional equivalents or resonant themes within the Togutil worldview.

– Theological Differences in Cosmology: Maximus' cosmology, which centers on the *Logos* as the singular divine principle of creation and order, would likely diverge from the Gomatere understanding of the universe and the role of multiple spirits and entities (like *O Gomanga* and *Jou-Ma-Dutu*) therein. The resolution of these discrepancies would necessitate a comprehensive dialogue and an endeavor to identify shared tenets, such as the idea of a divine ordering principle or a pervasive spiritual presence, while respecting the distinctiveness of each cosmology.<sup>77</sup>

– Emphasis on the Incarnation: Maximus' emphasis on the Incarnation of the *Logos* as the absolute center of salvation and the means of human divinization will

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis Books, 2002), 80.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis Books, 2002), 80.

<sup>77</sup> D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, 1991), 817.

likely necessitate a nuanced dialogue with Gomatere's belief in the relationship between the human and the divine, which typically does not involve a singular divine embodiment in human form. This concept would require a comprehensive explanation and adaptation to be comprehensible and acceptable within the context of their beliefs, potentially by drawing parallels to their understanding of divine manifestations or spiritual immanence.<sup>78</sup>

### *Adaptation and Reinterpretation*

In order to surmount these obstacles, it is imperative to adopt an adaptive and inclusive methodology. It is essential to elucidate Maximus' theological concepts with language and symbols that are pertinent to the Gomatere culture. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify shared elements between the two traditions, such as the concepts of divine love and spiritual transformation, which can serve as a foundation for a more profound dialogue. This process will also entail reinterpretation and adaptation from both parties. The Gomatere may require an expansion of their understanding of divinity and cosmology, while theologians and missionaries must demonstrate an appreciation for the wisdom and spiritual experiences of the Togutil.

### *Transformative Potential*

Notwithstanding the obstacles, the convergence between Maximus' philosophy and Gomatere culture holds considerable promise for transformation. Such a dialogue has the potential to enrich both traditions, encourage a more profound reflection on spiritual beliefs and practices, and facilitate the development of a more inclusive and holistic understanding of spiritual reality.

### *Opportunities for Dialogue*

The encounter between Maximus' theology and Gomatere culture presents several valuable opportunities for dialogue, including:

- Love as a Common Ground: The concept of love in Maximus' theology, which emphasizes transformation and union with God, has the potential to resonate with Gomatere spiritual values that prioritize harmonious relationships with nature and others. This shared ethical and spiritual emphasis on relationality can serve as a powerful starting point for mutual understanding.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (SPCK, 2013), 100.

– The Appreciation of the Divine Presence: Maximus’ concept of the divine presence in all creation, through the Logoi, can be seen to resonate with Gomatere’s belief in “O Gomanga” as the embodiment of the divine in all aspects of life and “Gikiri Moi” as the pervasive Supreme Soul. This common recognition of a sacred immanence within the natural world can foster a deeper appreciation for the spiritual dimensions of their shared environment.

– The Transformative Power of Ritual: Maximus’ emphasis on the Divine Liturgy as a means of experiencing God’s love and participating in *Theosis* can be connected to the importance of rituals and spiritual practices in Gomatere culture, such as *O Gomatere*. Both traditions recognize ritual as a powerful avenue for spiritual encounter and transformation, offering a basis for exploring the meaning and efficacy of sacred acts.

Despite differences, this common ground can facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding. Through openness and respect, both traditions can learn from each other and enrich their understanding of divinity, spiritual transformation, and the role of community.

## The Impact and Transformation

### Positive Changes in Cultural Practices

The encounter between Maximus’ concept of mission and the culture of the Gomatere, particularly the Togutil, has the potential to engender significant positive changes in their cultural practices. Maximus’ concept of divine love, which emphasizes self-transformation and harmonious relationships with all creation, has the potential to enrich the Togutil’s understanding of their own spirituality. The concept of *Theosis*, or deification, may serve as a source of inspiration for the development of new practices aimed at deepening the relationship with nature and divine forces, as well as promoting more holistic spiritual growth.<sup>79</sup>

Such a dialogue may result in an enhanced appreciation of the concept of love within Togutil culture. The introduction of Maximus’ concept of divine love, which transcends mere sentiment and encompasses self-transformation and concern for others, has the potential to enhance their understanding of the relationship with “O Gomanga” and their fellow humans. Such an outcome might encourage the adoption of cultural practices that emphasize compassion, forgiveness, and care for others.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 100.

<sup>80</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993), 150.

Furthermore, this encounter has the potential to reinforce the existing spiritual practices within Togutil culture. A dialogue with Maximus' theology may prompt the Togutil people to engage in more profound reflection on the significance and objectives of their spiritual practices. This could potentially lead to the adaptation or development of new practices aimed at deepening their relationship with nature and divine forces.<sup>81</sup> In conclusion, an encounter with the thought of Saint Maximus can enhance the Togutil's appreciation of their own spirituality. Such a dialogue can facilitate a more profound examination of the cultural practices in question, thereby reinforcing their spiritual significance. Furthermore, it can also inspire the development of new rituals and traditions that incorporate elements from both traditions, thereby enriching their cultural life and strengthening community identity.<sup>82</sup>

Maximus' emphasis on the role of community may also prove beneficial for the Togutil. His teachings on the Church and the Divine Liturgy could serve to inspire them to reinforce community ties and develop innovative methods to facilitate shared spiritual growth.<sup>83</sup>

Ultimately, Maximus' theological perspective, which underscores the significance of love and virtue in fostering robust communities, could serve to reinforce analogous values within the Togutil cultural context. Such practices could encourage the promotion of cooperation, solidarity, and care for others, thus creating a more harmonious and empowered community.

## Improved Understanding of Theology and Philosophy

The dialogue between Maximus' thought and the beliefs of the Togutil has the potential to facilitate an enhanced comprehension of theological and philosophical concepts for both the Togutil and those engaged in the study of Maximus' thought. The Togutil may gain new insights into complex theological concepts, such as *Logos* and *Logoi*, which could enrich their understanding of the universe and their relationship with divine forces. Meanwhile, theologians and philosophers may gain insight from the Togutil's profound spiritual wisdom and experiences, which are rooted in their intimate relationship with nature and their distinctive spiritual practices.<sup>84</sup>

Such an encounter might prompt the Togutil to delve into more intricate theological notions, such as the concepts of *Logos*, *Logoi*, and Incarnation. Such an

<sup>81</sup> Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 90.

<sup>82</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 70.

<sup>83</sup> Constas, "Introduction."

<sup>84</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*.

encounter could facilitate a broader understanding of the universe, human origins, and the relationship between the human and the divine. Furthermore, this dialogue has the potential to prompt the Togutil to engage in their own philosophical reflection, prompting a deeper examination of existential concerns, moral values, and the purpose of life.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, endeavors to comprehend and incorporate Maximus' philosophical tenets may motivate the Togutil to enhance their literacy and educational attainments. This could facilitate broader access to knowledge and opportunities to engage in cross-cultural discourse.<sup>86</sup> An introduction to Maximus' thought may stimulate interest among the Togutil in exploring more complex theological and philosophical concepts. Such an outcome could facilitate the evolution of a more nuanced cosmology and belief system, as well as a more profound theological reflection that enables the articulation of beliefs and practices with greater clarity.<sup>87</sup>

In conclusion, the interchange of ideas between Christian theology and Togutil beliefs has the potential to facilitate a broader intercultural dialogue. Such an exchange can facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, thereby enabling the development of theologies and philosophies that are more inclusive and relevant to diverse cultural contexts.

## Mission to the Togutil Tribe

The encounter between Maximus' mission thinking and Gomatere culture, particularly the experience of dialogue with the Togutil, can provide a strong foundation for a broader mission to the tribes of Halmahera and other indigenous communities in Indonesia. By understanding and respecting their cultural beliefs and practices, missionaries can build bridges for more effective and meaningful dialogue. Such missions aim not only to spread religion but also to promote mutual understanding, peace, and cooperation between cultures.<sup>88</sup>

## A Mission Strategy Rooted in Dialogue

The experience of dialogue with the Togutil tribe can provide valuable insights for missions to the Halmahera tribe. By understanding the intersections and differences

<sup>85</sup> Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*; Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 105.

<sup>86</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

<sup>87</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 817.

<sup>88</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

between the two traditions, missionaries can develop a more contextually relevant approach. They can build bridges between Christian concepts and local cultural values, allowing for meaningful dialogue and authentic spiritual transformation.<sup>89</sup>

### *Adaptation and Inculturation*

Mission to the Tugutil will require adaptation of the gospel message that is sensitive to their cultural context. This involves using language and symbols that the local people can understand and appreciate, as well as building bridges between Christian theology and their belief systems.<sup>90</sup> An inculturation approach, which respects and values the local culture while introducing the Christian message, can be key to the success of this mission. By understanding the culture and beliefs of the Tugutil, missionaries can help form Christian communities that are well integrated within the local context and reflect their cultural values and practices.<sup>91</sup>

### *Principles of Effective Missions*

- Message Adaptation: Mission to the Halmahera tribe must consider their cultural context and beliefs. The Christian message needs to be adapted to be relevant and meaningful to them.
- Emphasis on Common Ground: Missions can focus on the intersections between Christian theology and Halmahera beliefs, such as the concept of divinity, spiritual transformation, and the role of community.
- Dialogical Approach: Missions can adopt a dialogical approach that encourages the exchange of ideas and mutual learning. This will help build relationships of trust and respect.
- Local Empowerment: Missions can empower local community leaders and members to take an active role in the evangelization process. This will ensure that the Christian message is internalized and expressed in a way that is authentic to their culture.

By applying these principles, the mission to the Halmahera Tribe can be a transformative journey, both for the local people and for the missionaries. The mission will not only aim to spread religion but also to build bridges of understanding, promote peace, and celebrate cultural diversity.

<sup>89</sup> R. J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between The Global and The Local* (Orbis Books, 1998), 55.

<sup>90</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 817.

<sup>91</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

## Conclusion

This research examined the potential encounter between Maximus the Confessor's theological thought and the Gomatere culture of the Togutil tribe in Halmahera. Using comparative and contextual analysis, the study identified both common ground and significant challenges.

Principal findings indicate that despite theological and practical divergences, shared elements exist, facilitating dialogue and understanding. These include the recognition of a transcendent power, the value of spiritual transformation, and the central role of community, albeit expressed through different language and symbolism. The specific integration of Togutil concepts like "Jou-Ma-Dutu" and "O Gomanga" with Maximus's *Logos* and *Theosis* has highlighted deeper points of resonance.

However, the encounter faces hurdles, particularly the conceptual complexity of Maximus's ideas, differences in cosmology, and the emphasis on Christ's incarnation. Addressing these requires careful adaptation and reinterpretation to make Maximus's thought comprehensible and acceptable within the Togutil belief system, potentially through inculturation and intercultural theological frameworks.

Recommendations for future engagement include conducting more in-depth research on Gomatere culture to better understand their beliefs and identify precise areas for dialogue. A contextualized approach to introducing Christian concepts is crucial, prioritizing dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for local wisdom. Empowering indigenous peoples through education in literacy, theology, and intercultural dialogue skills is essential for active participation and ownership of spiritual transformation. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration across theology, anthropology, and cultural studies is vital for a deeper understanding of these complex interactions. Finally, documenting and preserving Gomatere culture is important for maintaining cultural identity and facilitating meaningful cross-cultural discourse. Pursuing these steps can strengthen connections and promote collaboration between Christian and indigenous communities.

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