

Redeeming Ulos Batak through Christian Religious Education and its Implications

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Abstract

Ulos is a local cultural product of the Batak community worn during every traditional ceremony. However, since the preaching of the Christian Gospel in the late 18th century in Tapanuli, North Sumatra, Indonesia, the presence of Christianity has grown rapidly and influenced the social and cultural life of the Batak people, especially in the use of ulos. Initially, the use of ulos was not considered problematic, but later, with the arrival of various Christian denominations that had different beliefs from what was taught in the church before, conflicts arose. The purpose of this research is to examine how the use of ulos has caused conflicts with Christianity. This article uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis and synthesis of thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and culture. The instruments used for analysis and synthesis include literature studies, observations, and interviews with Batak cultural figures. The main findings are as follows: first, positioning ulos as a traditional weaving that can be used as a unique form of local wisdom; second, using ulos within the framework of building socio-cultural relations for the Batak people and other ethnic groups; third, creating and using ulos as an example of teaching material for the redemption of local culture in a contemporary context. The analysis and synthesis results recommended by the author regarding the use of ulos as one of the teaching materials in the Christian Religious Education curriculum for the cultivation of local wisdom values for church congregants and students in schools.

Keywords: Ulos, Batak, Local Culture, Christianity, Christian Religious Education.

A. INTRODUCTION

Ulos is a distinctive weaving of the Batak community used in various rituals and customs. The author adopts Nainggolan's viewpoint that the Batak community has been familiar with ulos since the early 14th century, coinciding with the arrival of weaving tools from India (Nainggolan, 2018). This indicates that before weaving tools arrived in the Batak region, the Batak people were not acquainted with ulos as part of their local culture. In other words, there was no tradition of exchanging ulos, which is a common practice among the Batak people, especially during traditional ceremonies (mangulosi: wearing ulos, diulosi: receiving ulos). To this day, both in the Tapanuli region and abroad, the Batak community wears ulos as a woven fabric with socio-cultural significance in various Batak traditional ceremonies.

Local wisdom in ulos is reflected in the principles of relationships and functions manifested through various Batak traditional ceremonies and customs. This local wisdom is passed down from Batak ancestors (Firmando, 2022) both orally and through traditional ceremonies.

These ceremonies are related to the life cycle, from birth to death. According to Barus et al., initially, ulos was worn as everyday clothing and as a blanket by the Batak people to keep warm. Today, the term "mangulosi" has been introduced to signify the act of presenting ulos to someone to warm their life (Barus et al., 2017). From the beginning, ulos has had ritual and social significance for the Batak community. For the Batak people, regardless of their religion and beliefs, they wear ulos as an individual and ethnic identity. Although ulos is not worn in daily activities, it is proudly worn during traditional ceremonies.

Ulos is given by parents to their children and from the giving family, from the hula-hula (the wife's family) and the tulang (the mother's family) to the receiving family. This socio-cultural construct, before the Batak people converted to Christianity, was a religious social construct. Ulos was directly related to the worship of the Batak people, known as debata mulajadi nabolon (the supreme deity). This worship blessed and protected the Batak individuals who received ulos from the hula-hula (the wife's family) and the tulang (the mother's family). Since the spread of Christianity among the Batak community, this religious social construct no longer exists within the dalihan natolu kinship system. However, some still worship or pay respect to their ancestors during traditional ceremonies by wearing ulos.

The use of ulos in Batak society is divided into three stages: the stage before the arrival of Christianity, when Christianity was introduced among the Batak people, and the current context of Batak Christians' lives. Before the advent of Christianity, ulos was created with magical power through Batak beliefs and rituals related to debata mulajadi nabolon (the supreme deity). When Batak Christians wear ulos in various ceremonies, ulos is a local weave with all its accessories made with magical power, craftsmanship, and machinery to create ulos that is meaningful for the Batak people.

Since a significant portion of the Batak people have embraced Christianity, ulos is still worn during traditional ceremonies related to birth, marriage, and death. This phenomenon occurs in the socio-cultural life of the Batak community, whether they reside in their homeland or in other regions. The author explores the conceptual framework of ulos usage within the Batak Christian community. Furthermore, the author analyzes the significance of wearing ulos in various traditional ceremonies in relation to the origins of ulos production. The response of the Batak Christian community to ulos usage and its implementation as part of the teaching process in Christian Religious Education regarding the local wisdom redeemed by Christ is examined.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Richard Niebuhr in his book "Christ and Culture" categorizes five relationships between Jesus and culture, namely: Jesus against culture, Jesus of culture, Jesus above culture, Jesus paradox with culture, and Jesus transforming culture (Niebuhr, 1956). Each of these five categories of the relationship between Christ and culture has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Firstly, Jesus against culture places Jesus in a position that opposes and contradicts Jewish traditions. The Jews emphasized their religious rituals and often paid little or no attention to their own families or others. In fact, Jesus lived in the household of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth for 30 years. Moreover, during His ministry, Jesus cared for His family, helped, and healed many sick individuals. However, because Jesus often performed these acts of service on the Sabbath, the Torah scholars considered Him to be in opposition to the Law of the Torah and against God (Matthew 12:1-12). Throughout His three and a half years, Jesus revealed His identity, taught about the Kingdom of God to His disciples. Jesus' discipleship model differed from the Torah scholars' model of that time, particularly concerning eternal life. The meaning that can be applied to the "Jesus against culture" construct is that Batak Christians reject and oppose any teachings that differ from the teachings of Christ and the Bible, even if these teachings come from Batak oral or written traditions. One significant example is the creation and use of ulos that still involve magical and dark forces or are offered to ancestors. Batak Christians reject the way ulos is made and worn according to their ancestors' beliefs.

Secondly, Jesus of culture, where Jesus grew up and lived within the Jewish culture of that time. In Palestine at that time, the Jews held their religious traditions in high regard, based on the Torah as interpreted by Torah scholars. Jesus did not follow their interpretations but instead re-taught the Torah with profound and comprehensive meanings to correct and renew the understanding of the Torah's teachings, as he taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The meaning that can be applied to the "Jesus of culture" construct is that Batak Christians can wear ulos in their traditional ceremonies with a new and deeper meaning, namely ulos as a means to build a harmonious social and kinship life between hula-hula, boru, and dongan sabutuha within the local cultural construct of the dalihan natolu kinship system.

Thirdly, Jesus above culture, where Jesus did not originate from this world; He is the Son of God sent by God the Father to fulfill His will by redeeming His people through His death and resurrection. Jesus lived a holy life in this world, without sin, and freely used whatever was available in this world to explain and provide illustrations, examples, and parables in His teachings. The meaning that can be applied to the "Jesus above culture" construct is that Batak Christians have been adopted as children of God and sent into this world to teach and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Batak Christians are free to use their cultural products, including ulos, as a means to learn about the Kingdom of God. When Batak Christians wear and give ulos, they convey words that depict the love and truth of God effectively.

Fourthly, Jesus is a paradox with culture, where Jesus lived alongside the Jewish people who were actively engaged in their traditions, clothing, language, and culture. Jesus did not reject Jewish culture but coexisted with the Jewish people. However, Jesus was not entirely like the Jews who solely emphasized religious ceremonies. He lived a life different from what the Torah scholars of that time practiced, with attitudes and actions aligned with the will of His Father in Heaven.

The meaning that can be applied to the "Jesus paradox with culture" construct is that Batak Christians uphold their customs and wear ulos without any moral qualms or inner conflicts. Batak Christians wear ulos with a sense of appreciation for local wisdom and God's goodness through this local cultural product.

Fifthly, Jesus transforms culture, where Jesus transformed Jewish traditions and corrected misinterpretations of the Torah. Jesus sought, accepted, and taught fishermen and tax collectors to become His disciples and apostles. Jesus changed the teaching and learning strategy about the Kingdom of God from being solely within the Temple and Synagogues to public places like hillsides, the shores of Galilee, homes, and even gravesites. Jesus also transformed the patterns and approaches in the process of teaching about the Kingdom of God through examples, questions, arguments, parables, and sermons. The meaning that can be applied to the "Jesus transforms culture" construct is that Batak Christians are responsible for transforming customs and cultural social structures that are not in the right direction, transforming the production of ulos by using machinery and digital technology, and wearing ulos with the purpose of glorifying the Triune God.

The brief description above is actually a categorical thesis regarding the relationship between Jesus and culture. The antithesis to the five thoughts above is the tendency to choose only one of these five categories. They place their culture, customs, and cultural products in only one position and reject the others. The author offers a synthesis of the relationship between Jesus and culture by dividing it into three positions: rejecting ulos, customs, and Batak culture used for worship and reverence of ancestors and humans; eliminating magical and mystical elements in the production and use of ulos; and finally, redeeming the thoughts and attitudes of Batak Christians in creating and wearing ulos with a Christ-centered interpretation and the purpose of glorifying the Triune God.

These five categories can serve as an initial approach to understanding the relationship between Christianity and culture, especially for the Batak Christian community in wearing ulos during traditional ceremonies and other socio-cultural activities. Although these five categories have limited and still incomplete, complex, and comprehensive relationship patterns, their conditions can provide a Christian perspective on local wisdom within an ethnic group. Christianity centers on Christ, who has renewed His people and their lives through His perfect redemption through His death and resurrection. This redemption holds eternal value and continues from life on this earth to life in the new earth and new heavens.

C. METHOD

This article employs a qualitative approach with a methodology involving literature review and descriptive analysis. The author also conducted observations and interviews with several sources who are practitioners of Batak Christian customs and wear ulos. In the analysis methodology, the author utilizes the Reformed Theology perspective on the cultural redemption framework in addressing the use of ulos. Various references related to ulos and Christianity in historical, biblical, and

theological contexts were used by the author.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Firstly, churches whose congregants are Batak people need to teach and learn about the redemption of Christ, who wore ulos during traditional ceremonies. The church can incorporate teaching materials for congregants into catechism programs for adolescents or youth. As an institution, the church has the authority to reconstruct the cultural meaning of ulos as part of Christ's redemption in the lives of Christian believers within their respective ethnic groups and communities. In catechism classes at church, pastors can not only convey Christian dogmas based on Biblical teachings but can also impart local content, especially concerning Batak customs involving ulos as a means to spread love within the Batak family and community.

Secondly, the reconstruction of cultural meaning and ulos can also be taught in schools in the Tapanuli region, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The author recommends including teaching materials about Christ's redemption through the use of ulos as local content in Christian Religious Education subjects. This is beneficial for students to be equipped with Bible teachings contextualized with the local wisdom of ulos. Learners are provided with a comprehensive Christian worldview in line with the Batak cultural context and the use of ulos. Students can also be given the opportunity to visit ulos production sites, learn about the different types of ulos, and how to wear them during traditional ceremonies. Likewise, they can be invited to witness traditional ceremonies while wearing ulos. Subsequently, students can reflect on how this relates to the Christian life amidst the uniqueness of Batak culture in wearing ulos.

Thirdly, the social position of ulos can be woven as a means to build brotherhood with people who do not belong to the Batak tribe. Ulos is not just a souvenir or a symbol of acceptance in Batak society. Ulos is used as a tool for social education among Batak Christians in respecting fellow human beings. Church congregants and students will learn the meaning of ulos in the context of Christian teachings. Christian Religious Education also encourages the formation of attitudes and social actions based on the truth of God's word through cultural strategies. This depends on the situation needed in relation to non-Christian and non-Batak individuals. Although ulos can be given as a souvenir or a sign of love, the values of kinship it contains need to be emphasized. Ulos carries values of brotherhood and togetherness in building a human community that respects each other.

Bataks in the Framework of Reformed Theological Thought

Reformed theological thought is based on comprehensive, objective, and systematic Biblical teachings that center on God in and through Christ. Comprehensive Biblical teachings encompass knowledge about the Triune God, humanity as the image of God, and the universe with its life systems. The grand narrative of the Bible serves as the framework for the Christian worldview. Within this grand narrative, every Christian knows and recognizes the stories of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, all of which form a unified, continuous, and inseparable whole. Batak

Christians also position themselves within theologically formulated Biblical narratives. Every Batak individual is a creation of God, hallowed, and among them, the redemption of Christ is present, promising eternal life in the new heaven and new earth.

God created humans as personal creations in His image and likeness with two elements: the body and the spirit (Genesis 1:26-28). These two elements are united but not mixed and cannot be separated. The body consists of various members that are united and controlled by the brain. The human spirit also consists of the mind, will, and emotions that are united and inseparable. The body and spirit are the elements that make humans living creatures (Genesis 2:7). This theological thought is interpreted by Batak Christians as a strong foundation for each individual to unify soul and body. With the principle of unity in different elements within a person, every individual will strive together for the unity of the individual, family, and community within the framework of *dalihan natolu*. The principle of *dalihan natolu* reflects an attitude of mutual respect, honor, and love for individuals, families, and communities.

Humans are endowed by God with the ability to think, will, and influence in order to control the body to follow the regulations inherent in each individual. Furthermore, human individuals also have the ability to relate to God, themselves, fellow humans, and other creations. In their relationship with other creations, humans have the capacity to manage, govern, and preserve other creations with goodness, justice, and sanctity. All of these constitute the human life system created by God. The ability to think, relate, and function within Batak individuals is useful for worshiping God, fellowshiping within their community, and managing the earth and its inhabitants. In this regard, education becomes a mediator for these three abilities within a person in a practical, actual, and relevant manner with the development of time. These three aspects can also be bridged through the giving of *ulos* in every Batak traditional ceremony.

When humans respond to other creations, which include all of God's works, including themselves, humans have two responses: external and internal. External responses in humans can occur because God provides general revelation and blessings, humans have the ability to think, and all of God's creations are orderly, good, and beautiful. The result of this response is the emergence of ideas, behaviors, and the creation of various objects and works. These three elements of response become habits, customs, and culture as a unified and comprehensive whole. These external responses evolve into the culture of an ethnic group, consisting of knowledge systems, belief systems, social and familial systems, artistic systems, language systems, and livelihood systems.

The result of the human responses mentioned above is manifested through cultural products. One of these cultural products is weaving, which serves as a marker of the identity and uniqueness of an ethnic group and community. Batak communities produce *ulos* as a woven fabric that depicts their ability to connect through various traditional ceremonies. The formulation of relationships through *ulos* consists of relationships with the worshipped (*debata*), the respected (*hula-hula* and *tulang*), and

the loved ones (dongan sabutuha and boru).

Ulos in the Framework of Thought of Batak Christians

The Batak people have received the Gospel of Jesus Christ from missionaries, especially the contextual efforts of Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen from Germany (1834-1918). Nommensen was dedicated to introducing Christianity to the Batak people. The presence of the Gospel did not immediately alter the cultural framework of Batak society. Cultural clashes often occurred among three parties: the Batak people and their culture, the Gospel and the message of Salvation, and the missionaries and their culture. These three parties can mutually accept and adapt to each other, meaning that their original existence does not change or shift. The redemption of ulos can be carried out gradually, considering that the Christian Batak generation born before the 1990s is still influenced by dual perspectives, where ulos is understood as a sacred weaving that can be used by Christian Batak people and also as a socio-cultural fabric.

Meanwhile, the internal response of the Batak people to the Gospel of Christ is experienced on a personal basis, based on God's special grace. The Holy Spirit regenerates the chosen Batak individuals to become believers through the person and work of Jesus Christ. This moment changes the direction of life and the structure of the Batak people's lives from within their hearts, as it occurs due to the presence of a special declaration and gift in their hearts. Humans possess a sense of divinity that leads them to worship and serve the Almighty God. Christian values provide a new direction and structure for Christian Batak people when wearing ulos in their traditional ceremonies. The values of brotherhood, solidarity, respect, and consideration that are already present in the traditional ceremonies through the wearing of ulos are sanctified in the redemption of Christ.

Initially, the results of the internal response of the Batak people formed beliefs that directed them towards debata mulajadi nabolon (the almighty god). The impact was that the direction and structure of beliefs in every traditional ceremony and the wearing of ulos were in error. Because these beliefs centered on human efforts, relied on the abilities of creation, and indirectly rejected worshiping the true God. This situation also gave rise to various other pluralistic beliefs. This fallen state was redeemed by Christ according to God's grace, applied by the Holy Spirit to the chosen Batak people from eternity. Now, in the North Tapanuli region, the Batak people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, Savior, and Redeemer. God sent missionaries to the land of the Batak and established His Church. The Church that was born and present in the land of the Batak, with a large and growing congregation to this day, is the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) and other churches. Although there are many villages following the Parmalim religion and many non-Christian religions in the cities of North Sumatra. The Batak people believe in an almighty God. Since then, Christianity has impacted the culture, traditions, and customs of the Batak people in wearing ulos during ceremonies and daily life.

When God revealed Himself through the spoken and final word through His only Son so that His people could personally know Him, the renewal and

transformation of culture, traditions, and the correct and proper wearing of ulos began for the Batak people. This introduction is based on God's decree and his special grace. This can be known from the Bible, God's written revelation. The Batak people can believe that God's word is the truth of God, and the person receives special grace. Thus, the work of Christ's redemption is not only related to eternal life salvation in the new heaven and earth but also related to the redemption of the way of life existing on earth, such as the customs of an ethnic group. Christ's redemption is not only related to individual salvation but also the redemption of culture as a whole.

This is where the application of Christ's redemption work correlates with the culture of an ethnic group, including the use of cultural objects, such as ulos. In principle, this cultural redemption was already carried out by God when God spoke to humanity, even though humans were still sinful and lived in a culture tainted by sin or worship of gods. This redemption should serve as the foundation for Christians to make efforts to redeem customs and cultural artifacts such as ulos in their every use. This principle can also be applied in educating students about cultural redemption or the wisdom of their ethnic group.

Christian Religious Education through Local Wisdom

The Bible as the source and foundation of Christian Religious Education is based on Reformed Theology. Since its writing to the present day, the 66 books in the Bible have been copied thousands of times and translated into thousands of languages. The purpose of this copying and translation is to enable people of various ethnicities, groups, and classes to read the Bible within their own contexts. The process of copying and translating the Bible is an important learning process in Christian education. Current Bible readers will find it easier to understand and discover the meaning of each teaching for application in their lives today. The process of teaching and translation is beneficial for Christians in various places to get closer to the Bible.

The translation of the Bible into the Batak language marked the beginning of the process of teaching and learning in Christian religion. The German missionary, Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen, translated the Bible into the Batak Toba language between 1878 and 1885. This translation marked the commencement of Christian religious education using the local language by teaching the Bible in the Batak Toba language. For example, in the Batak Toba translation of the Bible, the word "kain" or "tenunan" is translated as "ulos" (257 times). This is interesting and significant in Christian Religious Education within the framework of optimizing the values of local wisdom through the use of ulos in every Batak customary ceremony. Thus, ulos is not a cultural product rejected or eliminated from the life of Batak Christians. For instance, the word "mangulosi" signifies the warmth of brotherhood in the love of Christ.

When Christians read and study the Bible as the source, direction, and structure of their new life in Christ, the Bible holds authority in the entire life of a Christian. Christians will not disregard it, regardless of the authority of family, church, school, and state. Because the Bible stands above the authority of all these institutions and also above the authority of Bible experts, Christianity, and theology. Thus, every Batak

Christian receives Christian Religious Education based on the complete and comprehensive teachings of the Bible within the family, church, and even in schools. The power of the word of God transforms the anthropocentric meaning of local wisdom values into a Christocentric one.

On the other hand, the teachings of the Bible need to be adapted in their application to the context of the lives of Christians without losing their essence and original meaning. This contextualization is an effort to communicate the teachings of the Bible to individuals, families, communities, and ethnic groups so that they can be understood correctly and implemented effectively. Stephen B. Bevans wrote that interpreting doctrines into different cultural environments can result in very different appearances and expressions from the original formulations of the doctrine (Bevans, 2002). For example, the phrase "somba marhula-hula, manat mardongan tubu, elek marboru" (respect for elders, honoring relatives of the same clan, and being gentle with daughters or families who marry into different clans) embodies the principle of God's love in respecting, honoring, and being gentle with fellow human beings, which is spiritually significant for Batak Christians. Additionally, Louis Berkhof argued that the entire content of the Bible was written under divine inspiration and serves as a good example of faith and behavior for everyone (Berkhof, 1993). Batak Christians are indirectly made aware by God that He speaks to them through the language and culture of humanity dedicated to His will.

Furthermore, every human culture changes over time in accordance with the needs, interests, and processes of adaptation, acculturation, assimilation, and innovation carried out by each ethnic group. Cultures that are constantly changing are confronted with the finality of the Bible. Cultural clashes can occur at any time and in any place, especially those related to religion or belief systems. These clashes are related to the worldview that guides human behavior. In such situations, some Batak Christian communities face tension, conflict, and neglect regarding their culture and the practice of their traditional ceremonies. The uniqueness possessed by each ethnic group is a cultural advantage resulting from their thoughts, behaviors, and cultural productivity. That's why ulos serves as evidence of the wisdom and nobility of the Batak ancestors to prove their existence.

The conflicting situation has actually been resolved by Batak Christians by translating cloth, weaving, and clothing into the word "ulos." However, in practice, some do not accept ulos as it is translated in the Bible. They consider ulos to be related to mysticism and beliefs in ancestors and ancestral spirits. This is where the importance of teaching and learning through Christian religious education with a contextual translation approach comes in.

The redemption of ulos is a construct of Christian thought stemming from Reformed theology, which is not only related to the customs and traditions of wearing ulos but also a perspective based on the Bible. This is where the relationship between Christianity and Culture lies in the case of ulos for Batak Christians. The principle emphasizing that Christ also redeems culture from humans serves as the foundation and direction for the teaching model in Christian Religious Education. In this context,

Christianity doesn't only speak about future life but also about present life. In Christian Religious Education, the value and meaning of redemption are manifested in socio-cultural life, such as the correct usage of ulos in traditional ceremonies.

Ulos is not placed as a product of evil and does not represent Christianity, but it can be used and accepted by Batak Christians. The redemption in question will follow the pattern of the Bible's grand narrative, where ulos is made for human needs, initially in the context of the fallen Batak people who have now been redeemed in Christ's life. Therefore, Batak Christians have no hesitation in using ulos in traditional ceremonies. Furthermore, the author positions ulos as a cultural artifact whose meaning and purpose have been redefined. Ulos is understood in a socio-cultural context with the principle of Christ's love. Everyone who gives and receives ulos in the context of traditional ceremonies does so with the love of God.

Every Christian, directly or indirectly, receives teaching and undergoes the learning process of Christian Religious Education at home and in the church to gradually and deeply understand the redemption of Christ from parents and church officials. At the same time, Christians also receive and follow the customs, lifestyles, and traditions of their parents, families, communities, and ethnic groups. This is how the daily life of Batak Christians is. The redemption of Christ must encompass both aspects as a whole and not be separated. Likewise, children at home, in the church, and at school need to be given a proper understanding of the relationship between Christianity and traditions, especially those related to ulos.

In this digital era, the challenge of Christian Religious Education lies not only in the content of the teaching and learning process that requires appropriate and effective strategies and approaches but also in the effort to integrate Christianity and teaching materials by utilizing local wisdom. On the other hand, digital technology can indirectly encourage students to disregard the local wisdom of their ethnicity. Therefore, it is important for every school in the region to preserve their local wisdom and educate students with strategies and approaches relevant to their needs (Pompimon et al, 2014: 628). Therefore, students need to be introduced, taught, and trained in the values of local wisdom through traditional ceremonies by wearing ulos.

Implications of the Redemption of Christ on Local Wisdom

Ulos is now produced as clothing with social, economic, and cultural significance. However, there are still Christian Batak communities that view ulos as a fabric imbued with magical powers and continue to use it for Batak local belief rituals. Generally, Christian Batak communities regard ulos as a fabric that signifies unity between hula-hula (the wife's family), boru (the husband's family), and dongan sabutuha (the same clan or family). Hula-hula (the wife's family) and tulang (the mother's family) have roles in providing ulos as a gesture of kinship towards female relatives, while boru (the husband's family) represents the position of those who receive ulos as male relatives. Dongan sabutuha refers to kinship within the same family or clan, which may provide ulos.

Siagian mentioned that ulos weaving is one of the oldest Batak civilizations and plays a crucial role in the daily activities of Batak society (Siagian, 2016). As an identity of Batak people, ulos holds deep meaning as it relates closely to the construction of relationships with objects of worship, those who are respected, and the environment. Siagian further explains the meaning of ulos in Batak language with the proverb; "ijuk pangihot ni holong, ulos pangihot ni holong," which translates to "threads binding love, ulos binding it with love or its fibers are the binder of leaves to its stalks." Ulos signifies the bond of love among individuals. How Christian Batak individuals perceive ulos can lead to different attitudes and actions regarding its usage. First, there are Christian Batak individuals who see ulos as the product of ancestors who worshiped gods, and thus, ulos should not be worn on the body and should only be given to a boru during ceremonies, particularly to a daughter-in-law when she is around seven months pregnant. According to Naburju et al., the giving of ulos tondi is a customary ritual with magical properties or "sumangot ni ompu" ancestral spirits and other spirits (Naburju et al., 2021). Therefore, ulos is considered as a product of deity worship, and Christian Batak people are prohibited from wearing it during any religious events. Nainggolan documented this situation in his book, "Resistensi Aliran Kharismatik terhadap Pemakaian Ulos" dalam Budaya Batak Toba, where he stated that the use of ulos was disrupted when the charismatic movement, with a very different view of ulos as a dirty object that needed purification in religious life, entered Balige Toba, Samosir, Indonesia, around 2010, and initiated the gathering and burning of ulos from their church members' homes (Nainggolan, 2018).

Second, there are Christian Batak individuals who synthesize the use of ulos with Christianity, allowing them to wear ulos freely, although its usage leans more towards traditional ceremonies than Christian nuances. Ulos remains a sacred weaving for Christian Batak individuals, despite living in plural and multicultural cities. The synergy between Christianity and ulos is considered syncretic by the first group. This group interprets ulos as a means or medium to receive blessings and bless their relatives, strengthen faith in God, and build brotherhood (Naburju, 2021). In practice, Christian Batak people still incorporate words related to the magical properties of ulos when presenting it to relatives.

Third, there are Christian Batak individuals who wear ulos alongside Christianity as one unit. This group no longer considers ulos as a work bound by the magical powers of their ancestors. They use ulos as a socio-cultural fabric that can serve as an identity for Batak people. Siagian states that this group's perspective has shifted both in terms of religiosity and philosophical values (Siagian, 2016). The use of ulos can be interpreted with Christian values, and even ulos giving may be accompanied by Christian songs or hymns. The correlation between Christ and Culture through wearing ulos for Christian Batak people occurs in the context of customary ceremonies held during weddings and funerals.

E. CONCLUSION

The teachings of the Bible conveyed in the process of Christian Religious Education in families, churches, and schools that relate to the redeemed local wisdom by Christ guide every Christian Batak individual not to reject the use of ulos fabric in customary ceremonies, Christian events, and other social occasions. This is because ulos fabric is not a magical or sacred object used as an intermediary with the spirits of ancestors or the spirits of the wearer's parents. Ulos, as one of the means, can be utilized to strengthen kinship bonds, family ties, and community cohesion. Through this medium, Christian Batak people also learn to apply the love of Christ by showing mutual respect and appreciation for fellow humanbeings in the truth of God. Ulos possesses its own values of beauty and harmony as a handcrafted product and a unique aspect of Batak society. Moreover, when ulos is interpreted within the framework of Reformed theology with the principle of redeeming culture.

The relationship between Christianity and ulos is the relationship between eternal values and daily life on Earth. Christian Batak individuals must view ulos as a valuable object under the control and authority of all truths of God when wearing it. This type of learning is essential for every educator, parent, pastor, and Christian teacher to discern what is primary and central and what is merely a socio-cultural tool. In other words, Christ should be the absolute center and authority over the use of ulos in every Batak customary ceremony.

Teachers and students collaborate to enhance the utilization of their ethnic local wisdom as an effective and contextual tool in Christian Religious Education. The values of local wisdom that have undergone redemption and transformation in Christ will have everlasting value. This principle can also be applied to any ethnicity that is open to receiving the teachings of the Bible and the principles of God's truth. For all truth is God's truth.

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