



A Theological Study of *Paabingkon Pahompu* in the Tradition of the Simulangun Society

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Abstract

This research examines *Paabingkon Pahompu's* tradition in Batak Simalungun Theologically. Some people assume that Theology is contradictive with culture. The assumption arises because of the limitation of knowledge of both theology and culture. This limitation causes narrow-mindedness and raises the seed of sectarianism. Sectarianism essentially relates to people who think their faith is correct, while cultures are wrong because it contradicts the Holy Bible. This kinds of thinking is counter-productive and can diminish their original cultural approach. The method used in this study was qualitative with a literature review, and the theological approach assumed was anthropological. The data procedure adopted was by collecting, reducing, and displaying findings. In the beginning, the authors created a relevant bibliography. After that, they analyzes findings and critically built the conceptual framework to answer the problem posed in the research. The second approach taken to collect data was through in-depth interviews. The interviews investigated the balance between the theories and practical *paabingkon pahompu*. The reduction was to select the relevant and valid data in this research. Through this research, the tradition of *paabingkon pahompu* has been shown to have theological values such as applying the fifth commandment, uttering the word of blessing, and picturing love as giving and praying for each



other. The short conclusion is that the tradition of *paabingkon pahompū* does not contradict the Holy Bible.

Keywords: *paabingkon pahompū*, theological value, prayer, the word of blessing.

Introduction

Theology can jeopardize culture because there are times when theology clashes with culture. Theology is spiritual and Biblical, while culture is only ancestral relics and is even considered contrary to the Bible by many (Gulo, 2021). Sometimes, people use theology to reject or disregard culture, treating theology and culture as two separate things. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that theology and culture both relate to human beings, who are both theological and cultured (Sudarmanto, 2019). The study of theology and culture focuses on the intersection of these two aspects of human life and how they influence each other. It recognizes that culture shapes our understanding of theology and vice versa. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of human experience and can lead to more meaningful engagement with theology and culture.

Culture is the people's thoughts and behaviour that shape the norms, values, customs, and activities in that culture to achieve the group's shared goals. People built the culture because of common goals and ideals, and every community tries to preserve it as a standard of living (S. T. Saragih, 2022). In order to preserve their culture, the ancestors made teachings in various forms, such as advice, songs, folklore, and sayings, including rhymes, works, and other cultural forms passed down from generation to generation. These teachings serve as a guide for the community to maintain their way of life, and they also provide a sense of identity and belonging for the individuals within it. However, as societies evolve and change, it is essential to adapt these teachings to ensure their relevance and continued preservation for future generations.

The times have shifted in various aspects of life, including shifts in people's attitudes toward culture (Setiawan, 2020). The development of mass science and technology can trigger people to start leaving and forgetting the teachings of their ancestors on cultural issues and drives them to enter the contemporary, digital, and Metaverse cultures which invariably give birth to new life values, which can often lead to assumptions that the values contained in the culture are outdated and irrelevant.

The next challenge is found in urbanites, especially those who move from villages to cities. They are already busy with a new city life, so their original culture is slowly fading. The fading of the original culture of the urbanites could be due to a new lifestyle in the city, which encourages them to be more adaptable to survive and they thus slowly set aside their original culture. In addition, exposure to different cultures in the city may also influence the urbanites to adopt new customs and traditions, further contributing to the fading of their original culture.

The next shift can occur when the Holy Bible enters one culture. The Bible provides the values of Christian life in the local culture (Agoestina, 2020). Local culture began to shift with the gospel values, which fueled the tension between a culture and the Bible. Such tension produces anti-gospel groups that defend culture, and anti-Culture groups that defend the Bible, and a third group that is moderate towards culture and the Bible. This tension highlights the importance of contextualization in the Christian mission, as it requires a deep understanding of the local culture and how to communicate the gospel message within that context effectively. It also emphasizes the need for Christians to be grounded in biblical truths while being respectful and sensitive to cultural differences and diversity in general (Marisi et al., 2021).



In order to moderate culture and the Bible, it is necessary to understand local culture and a qualified theological approach. Sometimes, a person's limited theological knowledge grows the seeds of sectarianism. Sectarianism means an attitude is brewing in which one assumes one's understanding is correct, while understandings different from one's own are all wrong. In other words, sectarianists can reject culture because of the Bible without discriminating against it, so they dare to conclude that a culture may conflict with the Bible.

Theology is never out of context, and context often determines the outcome of the theology; for example, we find *inter alia* feminism, liberation, black theology, and other theologies. In moderating culture and the Bible, culture should be the context of theology, and theology of this sort is known as contextual theology. In contextual theology, scholars study culture deeply, draw important values from that culture, and then study it further (Pambudi, 2011). This approach recognizes that theology is not a static discipline but evolves and adapts to society's changing needs and perspectives. Contextual theology seeks to create a more inclusive and relevant understanding of God and the Christian faith by engaging with diverse cultural contexts.

There are several approaches to contextual theology, one of which is the anthropological model (Tara, 2017). An anthropological model is an approach that sees God's presence in every culture. Because God is present in every culture, every culture has theological values, and theological values become a reference for how someone does theology in the context of local culture. This approach recognizes the diversity of cultures and acknowledges that each culture has its unique way of understanding and expressing theological concepts (Tara, 2017). Additionally, the anthropological model emphasizes the importance of engaging with local communities and learning from their perspectives so as to develop a more holistic understanding of theology. The local culture which is the context of this research is the Simalungun culture. The Simalungun people live in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra province. Simalungun is one of the sub-tribes of Batak. The Batak consists of the Toba Batak, Karo Batak, Pakpak Batak, Mandailing Batak and Simalungun Batak. Even though these sub-tribes are one family, each has unique and distinctive characteristics that distinguish them from traditional houses, *ulos* (traditional cloth), music, dance, traditional rituals, carvings, and other traditional forms (Liddle, 1967)

The Gospel entered the Simalungun land on September 2, 1903 (Siregar, 2020). The Bible has to a large extent influenced Simalungun culture. The Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS) has celebrated 110 years since the Godspel entered Simalungun's lands. The Gospel does not necessarily eliminate Simalungun culture, and GKPS makes Simalungun's culture its identity. GKPS aims to preserve Simalungun culture because there are Simalungun stages of *ahap* (feelings), namely belonging and togetherness (Purba & Munthe, 2021).

Simalungun residents highly uphold Simalungun customs, and these costumes reflect the efforts of the Simalungun people to preserve their culture. Seven Simalungun traditional rituals have been maintained to this day, namely *paabingkon pahompu* (presenting the first grandchild to the grandfather and grandmother), *manombah* (worshipping), *mangiliki* (respect), *mamongkot ruma bayu* (entering a new house), *managgir* (a ceremony where there is the cleansing of the mind and spirit), *marhajabuan* (married), and *rondang bintang* (harvest day). The seven Simalungun customs rituals are essential for the Simalungun people, especially those still in the Simalungun area. In this study, the authors focus on studying the *paabingkon pahompu* traditional (Napitupulu, 2021). In general, Simalungun residents still maintain the *paabingkon pahompu* traditional. The tradition of *paabingkon pahompu* needs to be included, especially for Simalungun urbanites. This tradition becomes a challenge for Simalungun Urbanites because of their business, obstacles to returning to their hometowns, and urban culture, including because of the perception that *paabingkon pahompu* culture is outdated and irrelevant to today's life, or forms of wasting time



and money. There is also an assumption that following cultures is the sinful because custom is based only often very old ancestral heritage (A. Saragih, personal communication, March 1, 2023).

The theological studies that discuss the previous Simalungun culture are as follows: *The Theology of Dayok Nabinatur* (theology of 'arranged chicken') which discusses the theological meaning of *Dayon Na Binatur* and its implication with Simalungun daily life (E. Saragih, n.d.). Subsequent research, entitled *Dogmatic Review of Mangalop Tonduy* (to call back the human spirit) in *Simalungun and its Implications for the GKPS Mardosnuir congregation*, focuses on calling the spirits back into the body. Simalungun believes that the spirit can leave the body for a particular reason. Hence, the Simalungun has to carry out ritual *mangalop tondyu* to bring the spirit back into the body (Sinaga & Munthe, 2022). The following research, entitled, *Contextualization of the Tortor Sombah* (worship dance) in the *Liturgy of the Pesta Olob-Olob* (the feast of remembrance of the Gospel reached Simalungun Land) at *GKPS Tamba Saribu*, focuses on the tradition of worship dancing in the liturgy (Sihombing, 2020). From the author's search results, there has yet to be any previous research theologically examining the *paabingkon pahompu ritual* in Simalungun culture. This study explores theological values in the *paabingkon pahompu ritual* and the implication for local missions as a reference point in the Simalungun cultural context.

Research Method

The research method used was a qualitative one with a literature review model (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data produced comprised three stages: collected, reduced, and displayed items (Miles & Huberman, 2014). As for the first stage, the authors collected literature related to the title. After collecting data, the authors selected the literature that was most relevant to the title, especially prioritizing the novelty of the literature. After selecting data, the authors analyzed the literature to build a conceptual framework for achieving research objectives. The analytic method adopted was a content analysis. To strengthen the results of this study, the authors also conducted some interviews. In interviews, the reserachers prioritized the quality of the interviews rather than the quantity. The interviews aimed to balance the recent theories and the practices of *paabingkon pahompu*.

The method of interpretation used was narrative (Osborne, 1991). The narrative text applied is in the Book of Genesis 48:1-22. The authors chose this passage because it is a narrative text, and the *paabingkon pahompu* has similarities with this passage. In sharpening this research, the authors I only focussed on characterization, storyline, and interpretation. The author re-narrated the Bible text to ascertain the Bible writer's intention and connect with the *paabingkon pahompu ritual*.

The contextual approach used was anthropological in orientation (Tara, 2017). This approach involved the community, the experiences of the community, and the presence of God in the local culture, even though God is not part of the culture per se. Since God is present in each culture, there must be theological values for human kindness and justice. The anthropological approach recognizes the diversity of cultures and their unique expressions of faith while also seeking to understand universal theological principles that can guide ethical behaviour and social transformation initiatives.

Result and Discussion

The Simalungun Customry Tradition

The Simalungun customary tradition consists of *horja adat na etek* (small tradional party) and *horja adat na gok* (complete traditional party) (H. Saragih et al., 2020). *Horja adat na etek* is a small traditional party including, *mangalop parhoranson* (grabbing blessings), *paabingkon pahompu*, *patohuhon pahompu* (presenting the grandchildren to grandfather), *padas hon sulang-sulang*



pahompu (giving bribes to grandchildren), *padashon tungkot dohot duda-duda* (handing over the stick and the results of the mash rice). While *horja adat na gok* is a complete traditional party involving *tolu sanhundulan* (three sitting together), namely *tondong* (the mother's brother), *sanina* (relatives), and *boru* (the woman's side from the man). *Tolu Sahundulan* is the kindship in Simalungun tradition and the culture that represents the unity and harmony of the family. During the *horja adat na gok*, various rituals and ceremonies are held to honour family and seek blessings for the future.

Adat na nagok is usually in *marhajabuan* (wedding party). *Marhajabuan* comprises two parties: *palahoh boru* (marry of the bride) and *mangalop boru* (pick-up the bride). The difference between these two weddings is that the *palahohon boru* wedding party is held at the man's place, while the *mangalop boru* wedding party is at the women's place (Situngkir & Herlina, 2022).

From the perspective of the occurrence of a party, the party consists of two parties, *horja malas ni uhur* (happiness traditional party) and *horja pusok di uhur* (grief traditional party) (H. Saragih et al., 2020). *Horja malas ni uhur* is a party because there is joy in the family. The size of parties does not matter because the primary consideration is the joy of the family. *Horja pusok ni uhur* is a party held because of grief. In *horja pusok ni uhur*, there are categories, especially the age of the person who died, including whether they already have children and grandchildren. In this case *paabingkon pahompu* falls into the category of *adat na entek* and *horja malas ni uhur*.

Tradition Paabingkon Pahompu (presenting the first grandchild to the grandfather and grand mother)

Paabingkon Pahompu and Patohuhona Pahompu traditions

The primary meaning of *the paabingkon pahompu* and *patohuhon pahompu* is handing over a grandson to their grandfather, grandmother, or both. The *paabingkon pahompu* and *patohuhon pahompu* traditions have similarities and differences. The equation is handing over *pahompu* (grandson) to *Ompung* (grandfather or grandmother). The difference is that *paabingkon pahompu* can take place at home, and the family that attends is the close relatives.

Patohuhon pahompu usually takes place in *Los* (a special place for the traditional party), and the *Sitolu sahundulan* family must attend. In this case, *Tondong* will also invite his extended family to join the *patohuhon pahompu* party. In terms of implementation costs, *paabingkon pahommpu* is cheaper than *patohuhon pahompu*. *Patohuhon pahompu*, the cost of the party is almost equivalent to the *adat no gok marhajabuan*. Comparison of the costs of organizing *paabingkon pahompu* and *patohuhon pahompu* is often a consideration for Simalungun residents to prefer holding *paabingkon pahompu* (J. A. Marbun, personal communication, March 14, 2023).

One of the reasons the Simalungun carries out the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition is because of the first child who had not had a sibling for a long time. The parent will give the first child to his grandfather or grandmother, hoping the first child will soon have a younger sibling. Over time, the parent carries out traditional *paabingkon pahompu* for giving the name to the first *pohompu* by *ompung*. The following reason is that both of the child's parents want to carry out the Simalungun custom of respecting parents.

In the "naming ritual" through *paabingkon pahompu*, the *Ompung* will provide a name. Every name of the Simalungun people has meaning and significance (Manik, 2019). In general, the name given contains the prayers and hopes of parents and extended family for the child when he grows up and throughout his age. For instance, "*Hamonangon*" means victory. The parents and grandfather's hope **that** when giving the name *Hamonangon*, the family will experience victory in various aspects of life, including that *Hamonangon* will also experience victory in achieving his goals.



Paabingkon Pahompu procession

There are stages in the *Paabingkon Pahompu* ritual, sometimes in a different order, but the Simalungun must apply during the rituals. The difference in the implementation of this stage could be because of the influence of other cultures, such as Batak Toba or Batak Karo cultures, which are close to the Simalungun cultures. The *paabingkon pahompu* ritual is flexible when compared to other traditional rituals.

First, *Ompung* – from the mother's side – will give his daughter and grandson *Dayok nabinatur*. *Dayok Nabinatur* is a typical Simalungun dish arranged according to Simalungun traditions. In ancient times, the Simalungun people did not know about pigs or lamb, and it was easier for them to find chickens. Simalungun's philosophy is relevant to chickens. *Dayok Nabinatur* means that all parts of the chicken have their respective functions and are regular. The message conveyed through *dayok na binatur* is that humans know, understand, and carry out messages from God so that human life is orderly and harmonious, just like the chicken's body. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of balance and harmony in all aspects of life, and it teaches us to respect and appreciate the interconnectedness of all living beings including chickens (E. Saragih, n.d.).

The words spoken are generally, "*Jalo ma nang, dayok na binaturon, sai malas ma uhurmu, sai saut ma sura-suram, janah taratur ma hagoluham han jon hu atas.*" (Receive my daughter, this orderly chicken, rejoice, may your wish be fulfilled, and live in order from today to the future). An orderly life that parents expect is for one to live according to God's commands so that life is joyful and God ultimately enables their daughter to achieve her goals and dreams. It is a prayer for guidance and protection as she embarks on this new journey and a reminder that living a life of order and obedience to God brings blessings and fulfillment. May she always find joy in following God's path.

Second, the *Ompung* gave the grandson a *parombah* (a long cloth to hold the baby). When the *Ompung* hands over the *parombah*, *Opung* will pray his prayer and hope, "*Omma parombahmu, kain panjang, janah murah, sai ganjangma umur mu jahah murah mandapothon rejeki*" (This is a long cloth and is cheap, hopefully you will have long life and easy to get good fortune). The "long cloth" in the *pabingkon* tradition is not just a cloth because it depicts the prayers of parents and uncles for their grandchildren so that their grandchildren will live long and easily obtain fortune wherever they go and work (J. A. Marbun, personal communication, March 14, 2023).

Third, after the *ompung* has given *dayok na binatur* and *parombah*, both parents hand over their son to *ompung*. As for the words that are commonly spoken, "*om inang, pahoppu ni ham, malas ma uhur ham, ganjang ma homa umur ni ham, sehat-sehat ma ham han jon hu atas ni ham ase adong pangguruan ni pahompu ni ham on.*" (Mommy, this is your grandson, bless your heart, may you live long, always be healthy from now until the future so that there are people who become role models for your grandson). When the parents hand over the son, this confirms the blood relationship between *pahompu* and *ompung* according to custom. It is a beautiful tradition that strengthens family ties and ensures the younger generation learns to respect and honour their elders.

Fourth, *Ompung* carries his *pahompu*; when giving a name, the *ompung's* prayer for the *pahompu* is according to the name given. Suppose the name given to his grandson is *Hamonangon*. In that case, *Ompung* will say a prayer like this, "*Ungga hu jalo be ho ucok mulai sadari on, goranmu Hamonangon, sai monang ma ho torus I hagoluhanmu jalan monang mandapoton sura-ase boi pamalashon uhur ni orang tua dohot Tuhanta Naibata.*" (I have received you *ucok* (Nike name for the baby boy), starting today, your name is *Hamonangon*, may you always victory in your life and victory to achieve your goals so that you can please your parents and the Lord our God).



If *paabingkon pahompu* because the first child does not have a sibling, then the *Ompung* prayer will be different. In general, "*ungga hu jalo be ho pahopku, sai hatopma ho tubuan adek, asea dong hasomanmu haduan marguro-guro, marsikolah, marhorja dohot mararih-arih.*" (I have accepted you as my grandson, I hope you will soon have a younger sibling so that one day you will have friends playing, going to school, working and discussing). The essential thing in this *ompung* prayer is to have a younger sibling soon, followed by words of hope. These words of hope can vary according to the grandmother's wishes for her granddaughter.

Fifth, after *ompung* says his prayers and hopes, the *ompung* gave *boras pear* to the *pahompu* head. *Boras pear* is a symbolic meal to strengthen the soul and spirit. The general prayer is "*om ma boras pir, sai pir ma tondim, pir homama hagoluhanmu*" (This is solid rice; I hope your spirit and life are strong). *Boras pir* in Simalungun custom has the same meaning as *boras si pir ni tondi* in Toba Batak culture, symbolizing the strength of the soul and spirit in life (Hutasoit et al., 2020).

Sixth, *Ompung* returned *pahompu* to his mother. When returning, *ompung* will first give *ulos*. *Ulos* in the Simalungun culture has the same meaning as the Toba Batak culture, and *Ulos* means giving warmth to life as a sign of love and as a binder of people. After *Ompung* gives *ulos*, he continues with *mambarangi*. *Mambarangi* gave a gold ring to her grandson. The ring signifies love and binds the relationship between *pahompu* and *ompung*.

The last aspect is when the parents give a jacket or *kebaya* to the *Ompung*. Giving jackets and *kebaya* is not always at the end of the process however. In the past, jackets and *kebaya* were given to *ompung* to wear during the *pahompu paabingkon*. Along with the development of the times, some gave jackets and wore *ompung* after handing over the *pahompu*. The provision of jackets and *kebaya* at this time is optional. Situational in this context is following the abilities of both parents of *pahompu*. The essence of this gift is as a sign of love for the parents who have received their grandchildren, prayed for them, and said blessings on them.

After the *paabingkon pahompu* ritual, eating together will usually be followed. The purpose of eating together is to foster togetherness in the extended family, especially in the concept of *tolu sahundulan*. After eating together, there will usually be advice or words of motivation to strengthen and motivate each other and also the elders and the younger generations. This moment is a way to pass down cultural values and traditions and to encourage unity and cooperation within the tightly knit family unit.

Pahompu Paabingkon tradition encounters with the Holy Bible.

The *paabingkon pahompu* tradition's encounter with the Bible is not an attempt to incorporate the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition into the Bible teachings. Because this study takes an anthropological approach, the authors compare the values of *paabingkon pahompu* culture with some biblical values. The goal is not to find complete similarities but at least some similarities, even if they differ in some aspects. By doing so, the authors aim to promote cultural understanding and respect and encourage critical thinking about the intersections between religion and culture. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse cultural practices and beliefs.

The authors applied the narrative interpretation to find the similarity with Biblical values. The *pahompu paabingkon* tradition has similar encounters with the Bible in Genesis 48:1-22. The authors applied a narrative interpretation to Genesis 48:1-22 intending to explore theological values related to the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition. The author focussed on characterization, storyline, and interpretation.



Characters and characteristics as background to the issues

Observing the actors and their characters is the first step in interpreting the narrative (Panjaitan & Sinabariba, 2022). We thus consider the following biblical characters below to show similarity between biblical practices and current and past traditional practices of the Simulangun society. This story is thus important for our study.

Jacob

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Esau from Rebekah. Rebekah was previously barren. Then Isaac prayed, and the Lord answered Isaac's prayer. However, the twins in Rebekah's womb were the opposite. Isaac was confused and asked the LORD for guidance. God said: "...Two nations were in your womb, and two peoples would be separated from within your womb; one nation will be stronger than the other, and the older ones will serve the younger ones." (Genesis 25:23). Just as the Lord had said, Rebekah gave birth to twins. The first baby was red and furry, so he was Esau. After that came his brother; his hands touched Esau's heels, hence the name Jacob (Genesis 25:24-26).

When Isaac was old, Isaac asked Esau to hunt and cook a nice meal from Esau hunting. After preparing the meal, Isaac planned to bless Esau. Rebekah overheard Isaac's plan. Rebekah realized that Esau was becoming a servant to Jacob. Rebekah plotted so that Jacob would be blessed. At first, Jacob was hesitant, but because Rebekah dared to guarantee, Jacob obeyed, and finally, Isaac blessed Jacob as the firstborn (Genesis 27). Rebekah knew that Esau would take revenge. Rebekah asked Jacob to flee to Mesopotamia. Rebekah asked Jacob to take a wife from Padan-Aram, the daughter of Laban, Rebekah's brother (Genesis 28). Jacob spent fourteen years working for Laban to get Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29). Jacob left Laban without permission after he had children and acquired much livestock. He noticed that Laban had changed and decided to return to meet his brother Esau. Jacob feared that Esau would seek revenge, so Jacob devised a plan. He was left alone when he separated his family, enslaved people, and possessions. While alone, Jacob wrestled with a man and emerged victorious. His name was changed to Israel. Initially, Jacob was scared to face Esau, but it turned out that Esau had forgotten the past. They reconciled and made amends. (Genesis 31-33)

After burying Isaac, Jacob lived in Canaan. Jacob had twelve children. Jacob loved Joseph. When Joseph related his dream to his brothers and father Jacob, Jacob rebuked Joseph. His brothers hated Joseph and plotted against him. At first, his brothers wanted to kill him, but in the end, they sold Yusuf. After that, they plotted to deceive Jacob so that Jacob believed that Joseph had died (Genesis 37). After twenty years, Jacob was finally able to meet Joseph again. Jacob, his children, and grandchildren moved to Egypt to save their large family from starvation. After some time living in Egypt, Jacob fell ill. Jacob was old and had grown weak; his eyes were blurry, and he could not see clearly. After Joseph heard that Jacob was sick, Yusuf sent messengers to deliver the news that Yusuf would come to visit him. Hearing this, Jacob gathered all his strength and sat on the bed (Genesis 48:1-2).

Jacob received a blessing from the Lord. He asked Joseph to bring his sons Manasse and Ephraim before him. The names of Manasse and Ephraim would be considered to be tribes and his heirs. When Jacob saw Joseph's sons, he asked Joseph who they were. Joseph replied that they were his sons. Israel called them closer so that he could bless Manasse and Ephraim. Israel hugged and kissed his grandsons. Joseph bowed down and pulled Manasse and Ephraim away from Jacob's thighs while his face touched the ground. Jacob placed his right hand on the youngest, Ephraim, and his left hand on the eldest, Manasse. With his arms crossed, Jacob blessed his grandsons. Despite Joseph's objections, Jacob still blessed Manasse and Ephraim with crossed arms



because their destiny was to become great nations. While Manasseh would be great, Ephraim's strength would surpass his brother's.

Joseph

Joseph was the prime minister in Egypt and attained the position through a lengthy process. At the age of 17, Joseph had a dream (Genesis 37:2) and later became the ruler of Egypt at 30 years of age (Genesis 41:46). After seven seasons of fruitful harvests, his brothers arrived in Egypt (Genesis 41:47–49), and about 20 years later, both of Joseph's dreams came true, which humbled him. and allowed him to reconcile with his brothers (Genesis 45:1-15). Joseph's story is a testament to the power of faith and perseverance in adversity. Despite being sold into slavery and imprisoned, he never lost hope and continued to trust in God's plan for his life. After Joseph heard that his father was ill, he sent a messenger to message Jacob that Joseph would come to visit him. As the supreme ruler in Egypt, Joseph could have ordered his troops to bring Jacob to the palace and asked the healers to come to treat him while sitting on his throne. However, Joseph did not do that because Joseph respected Jacob's wishes and wanted to honor him by visiting him personally. Joseph knew it would mean much to Jacob and wanted to show him he truly cared. Despite his high position, Joseph remained humble and compassionate towards his family.

After Joseph heard his father Jacob was ill, he rushed and took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph introduced his two sons to Jacob, and Jacob blessed his two grandchildren. Joseph and his two sons respected Jacob very much. When Joseph took his two sons, they fell face down on the ground. When Jacob made Manasseh and Ephraim his sons, Joseph dared not refuse. Joseph agreed that Manasseh and Ephraim belonged to Jacob. Jacob blessed Manasseh and Ephraim. When Joseph saw his father Jacob blessing Manasseh and Ephraim with crossed arms, Jacob objected, but Jacob remained consistent in his way. Joseph accepted and let Jacob bless Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 48:1-22).

Manasseh and Ephraim

Before the onset of the famine, Joseph married Asenath, who was the daughter of Potifera, and was worshipped . He named his firstborn Manasseh because God helped him forget his past troubles. His second son was called Ephraim, as God made him fruitful even during difficult times in the land (Genesis 41:50–52). Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were very obedient. They followed Joseph's orders and respected their grandfather Jacob's request without hesitation. When Jacob blessed them, they accepted it humbly and without any complaints. Even when Jacob explained that Ephraim would be more powerful than Manasseh, neither showed any jealousy or pride (Genesis 48).

Storyline

The story of Jacob blessing Manasseh and Ephraim is at the climax of Jacob's life. Jacob reached the peak of his life through a long process. The highlight of Jacob's life started when Jacob asked Esau to sell his birthright. Then, Jacob took the firstborn blessing. These two events forced Jacob to wander to the house of his uncle Laban. While at Laban's house, Jacob worked for Rebekah for seven years. After working for seven years, Laban gave Lea according to the prevailing tradition. Jacob worked another seven years for Rebekah.

Jacob had twelve children. One of them was Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers, and Jacob's love for Joseph caused social jealousy. This jealousy prompted Joseph's brothers to plan to kill him, even though they sold him to the Midianites in the end. Joseph's brothers concoct



a trick to make Jacob believe that Joseph died under a star. Jacob never thought that he would see Joseph again.

The great famine that befell the world prompted Jacob to order his son to buy grain for Egypt. Jacob never thought that this long process was the starting point for Jacob to meet Joseph again. When Jacob heard that Joseph was still alive and became ruler, Jacob was excited again. He left with his extended family to move to Egypt. Jacob spent the rest of his life in Egypt. Even though Jacob was sick, when He heard Joseph was coming to visit him, Jacob gathered all his strength to get up from his bed and sat down to meet Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim. Jacob remembered and said God's promise to Jacob that his descendants would become a group of nations. Based on this promise from God, Jacob asked Manasseh and Ephraim to be his, just like Reuben and Simeon.

When Jacob told his life journey, Jacob saw Joseph's children. Jacob asked that Manasseh and Ephraim be closer to him. Jacob kissed and hugged Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob never thought he would meet Joseph again, but God allowed him to see Joseph and his descendants from Joseph. After that, Joseph grabbed Manshe and Ephraim, and they fell to the ground.

Joseph held his two sons; with his right hand, he held Ephraim to the left of Jacob. He held Manasseh with his left hand and kept it in Jacob's right hand. Jacob laid his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. Then Jacob said a blessing to Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph realized something was lacking; Joseph advised Jacob, Jacob answered that Manasseh and Ephraim would become a great nation, but Ephraim's power would be greater than Manasseh's.

Interpretation

Joseph's presence to visit his father shows respect for his parents. As the highest-ranking person in Egypt, Joseph could have ordered his subordinates to pick up his father, and he did not do that because he respected his parents. It proves Joseph respected his parents because when Jacob asked Manshe and Ephraim to be his, Joseph did not refuse. Joseph followed the request of his father, Jacob.

Further evidence is when Joseph was worshiped by bowing down on the ground. Even though Joseph was the tallest person in Egypt, he still wanted to bow down to respect his parents. The subsequent evidence in this context is when Joseph advised Jacob; Jacob refused, and Jacob continued to bless Manasseh and Ephraim with crossed arms, and Joseph again accepted without protest. Joseph's original intention was to visit his ill parents. After visiting Jacob, Jacob was delighted because God still allowed him to see Joseph and his descendants. In this joy, Jacob remembered God's promise. Based on God's promise, Jacob asked Manasseh and Ephraim to be counted as Jacob's descendants on behalf of Reuben and Simeon. In response, Joseph gave Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob between Jacob's thighs. Even though there were no words of submission from Joseph, in reality, Joseph handed over Manasseh and Ephraim.

This passage also describes the authority of parents in two ways, namely, how to bless and say blessings. Ideally, Jacob should have put his right hand on Manshe, then Jacob's left hand on Ephraim. Jacob did it upside down, so his arms were crossed. Even though, according to Joseph, something was not quite right, Jacob was still blessed in his way. The blessings spoken to Manasseh and Ephraim are the same but different in power. The difference in the power of the word blessing lies in Jacob's hands.

Theological Study of Paabingkon Pahompu

The Application of the Fifth Commandment.



There are many ways that one can pay homage to their parents, one of which is by carrying out the prevailing customs in the society in which they reside. One of the rituals to honour parents in the Simalungun traditional tradition is *paabingkon pahomp*. Three things symbolize respect for parents. First, the Paabingkon Pahomp ritual shows that children respect their parents, either based on custom or primarily on the word of God. Second: surrender of children to parents. In the context of Joseph handing over Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob, there is no process like that in the *paabingkon pahomp* ritual. However, the essence is the same: handing over grandchildren to grandfather (or grandmother). It is a tribute where parents can see their grandchildren and give their offspring a token of their love.

Third: giving love to parents. In the past, the two children's parents bought a pair of jackets for grandfather and a kebaya for grandmother, and now some are buying jackets. The gift of love is not following the abilities of the two parents who gave up their child. The best gift from Joseph to Jacob was to stay in the land of Goshen and provide for his family during the famine. Similarly, buying jackets may seem small, but it can be a way to show love and care for someone during the cold winter months. It is not always about grand gestures but rather the thought and effort put into showing genuine care.

Word of Blessing

In the *paabingkon pahomp* ritual stages, the grandfather says *umpasa* or follows the given object. The words spoken are not just meaningless words but words of prayer and blessing. Food and objects used, such as *dayok na binatur*, *parombah*, *ulos*, *boras pears*, and *rings*, are media for praying according to the objects. This object gives a physical and spiritual meaning. The Simalungun believe the words of blessing will come true in everyday life.

When Jacob blessed Manasseh and Ephraim, the words of Jacob's blessing were fulfilled in their lives. The words of blessing occur because there is parental authority over children and their offspring. The same goes for *paabingkon pahomp*. If the first child does not have a younger sibling, then the words of blessing from the parents are for them to have a younger sibling for the first child soon. If *paabingkon pahomp* is for naming, then the words of blessing from parents are 'embedded' in that name.

The words of blessing are still related to honoring parents. Words of blessing from parents can happen in every child's life. Therefore, every child is obliged to respect his or her parents not only in traditional rituals but in everyday life as well. Honoring parents is a fundamental value in many cultures and religions, and honoring them brings blessings and good fortune. By showing respect and gratitude towards our parents, we fulfill our duty as children and cultivate positive relationships with them that can last a lifetime. It is important to remember that words of blessing from parents are not just a formality but an important heartfelt expression of love and care that can uplift and inspire us in all aspects of life.

In this case, the author does not mean to deny that God is the source of blessings and He is our Father. God is the source of blessings. God can bless the words of the parents' blessings so that the words of the parents' blessings happen in the lives of His children (Walton et al., 2000). However, it is essential to recognize that individuals also have agency and responsibility for shaping their lives. This success means that personal effort and decision-making play a key role in achieving success and happiness alongside the blessings of God.

Especially the blessing from God, namely the blessing of honoring one's parents, are happiness and longevity. It is essential to acknowledge that while external factors such as socioeconomic status and access to resources can impact one's opportunities, it is ultimately up to the individual to take action and make choices that will lead them toward their desired outcomes. Additionally,



recognizing the role of personal agency can empower individuals to take control of their lives and work towards achieving their desired goals.

Love is giving.

According to the *Paabingkon Pahompu* custom, love is expressed through giving. In this custom, parents show their love for their son or daughter by handing him or her over to his grandfather or the grandmother. The parents cover all expenses associated with this act, and both express their love by giving a gift to the grandparents, even if it is optional. If they cannot afford a jacket or kebaya, at least a jacket should be given. Furthermore, grandparents show their love for their grandchildren by accepting them and giving them items such as *dayok nabinatur* (arranged chicken), *parombah* (long cloth), *ulos* (traditional shawl), and *tintin* (ring) as proof of their love.

In true love it is impossible not to give. Love always gives. Just as God loves all humans, God gave Jesus Christ to humans as a saviour. Jesus Christ loved all human beings; Jesus Christ gave his life as proof of His love for God the Father and His love for Man (Keneer, 2015). Love will always give and this is also the *paabingkon* tradition. Parents love their children and grandchildren and give their best according to prevailing traditions. Likewise, children demonstrate love for their parents. Because when there is love for parents, children give good things to their parents based on the prevailing traditions and customs. This cycle of giving and receiving is an essential aspect of the *Man* culture, as it reinforces the value of love and respect within families and communities. Through this practice, the spirit of generosity and kindness is passed down from generation to generation, creating a strong sense of unity and belonging among the people.

Pray for One Another.

Paabingkon Pahompu is one of the suggestions for praying for one another. First, we see parents who pray for their daughters, in-laws, and grandchildren through *dayok na binatur*. Their prayer is that the lives of their daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren will be in order so that they will be happy, healthy, and live longer. They are organized according to Simalungun custom, especially according to the word of God. After that, the parents of the *dipaabingkon* (presented) children hand over their children to the grandfather (or grandmother), praying that the parents will be happy to receive their grandchildren, always be healthy and live long so that they can be role models for their grandchildren. Next, the grandfather (or grandmother) prays for his grandson to have a younger sibling soon or prays based on the new name given.

Grandfather and grandmother use *ulos* (traditional shawl), as a suggestion to pray so that the family of the handed-over *pahompu* gets comfort mentally and spiritually. Grandfather pray to strengthen the bond in the family. *Boras pir* is a medium of praying so that God strengthens the soul and spirit of the submitted *pahompu* in daily life. The father's ring is a suggestion to pray for *Pahompu* so that he will have a bright future like gold.

Through the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition, parents, children, and extended families pray for one another. The prayers that are said follow the media given. The media has no power and is only a tool to pray specifically to God; it is prayed that may God grant the prayer according to the media conveyed.

The family believes that through prayer, individuals can find strength, comfort, and guidance on a daily basis. This tradition is deeply rooted in the belief that prayer is a powerful tool for seeking blessings and protection from God. It also fosters community and togetherness among families who pray for each other's well-being. These prayers strengthen the bond between family members and bring them closer to God. Additionally, this practice helps instill a sense of faith and spirituality in children, which they can carry throughout their lives.



Implication

One of the media for missions is culture. As a result, understanding the local culture is crucial for serving in missions. For missionaries, a lack of cultural knowledge can be problematic. Every culture can serve as a gateway to missions, but finding that gateway requires effort and comprehending how to do it. Building trust and lasting relationships with the local community is critical to practical mission work, and cultural sensitivity and understanding can aid in these efforts. This can assist them in sharing the message of their faith respectfully and appropriately for the local context, and missionaries must take the time to learn about the customs, beliefs, and values of the people they are serving.

The Bible entered Simalungun through culture because the Simalungun people have a strong hold on their traditions and culture. Even the church today upholds culture for the good and prosperity of the congregation rather than for salvation, since salvation is entirely God's gift of grace and cannot be merited by cultural practices. Their worship services, music, and artwork reflect this strategy's distinctive blending of Christian and Simalungun cultures. The Simalungun culture and language, which were once in danger of disappearing due to modernization and globalization, have also been preserved thanks to this integration.

Before the Gospel entered Simalungun, Simalungun culture was an inherited tradition for hundreds of years. Currently some Simalungun cultures were previously not Christian, but now they appear to be. The accomplishments of missionaries and church planters in Simalungun exemplify how the Bible can permeate local culture and constructively transform it. A distinctive and vibrant culture deeply rooted in history and open to new ideas has been created by blending Christian values and beliefs with traditional Simalungun beliefs.

Missionaries and theologians should be able to study a local culture from various angles, especially biblical and theological studies when considering culture as a mission 'door'. This understanding will help each local culture uphold Christian values and principles while embracing particular traditions and practices. This strategy supports cultural diversity within the larger Christian community while enabling more respectful and effective evangelization to take place. The ultimate objective ought to be to establish a harmonious coexistence between Christianity and local cultures so that both can grow and learn from one another.

Conclusion

Based on this research, the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition has theological values—the first theological value is the implementation of the fifth commandment of GOD. One of the highest forms of respect for parents can be through the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition. The *paabingkon pahompu* process shows how children respect their parents. This first theological value shows that the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition does not contradict Bible teachings.

The second theological value is as media of blessing. Parents continuously proclaim blessings to their children and offspring as was done during the patriarchal era. Even though there are different ways to bless children and their offspring, the most important thing is for parents to say words of blessing to all their offspring—the same as the tradition of *paabingkon pahompu*, *ompung* blessing his daughter and son-in-law, especially *pahompu*. The meeting of the sayings of blessings in the Bible and the *paabingkon* tradition proves that the *pahompu paabingkon* tradition is still relevant to Bible teaching.



The third theological value is that love gives. Love is impossible without giving. God is love. As proof of God's love, God gave His only begotten Son. The Bible teaches us to love God and fellow human beings. The *paabingkon pahompu* tradition can be proof of love for fellow human beings. The two *pahompu* parents carry out the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition for their parents, giving *pahompu* to *ompung* and giving a sign of love to their parents, which can be in the form of a suit, kebaya or jacket, or other forms. Likewise with *ompung*, they not only pray for and give *boras pears* but also give *dayok nabinatur*, *parombah*, *special ulos*, and *cicin*. So *paabingkon pahompu* can be a medium for mutual respect and giving to one another. In this case, the *pahompu paabingkon* tradition does not contradict the Christian faith but in essence supports it.

The following theological value is praying for one another. The words spoken in the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition are beautiful words and our prayers and supplications to God. God is the source of life, the source of blessings, and the source of all goodness. The goodness expected and prayed for in the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition comes only from God.

Based on this research, the *pahompu paabingkon* tradition does not conflict with the Bible and the Faith of Christ. The *paabingkon pahompu* tradition has theological values. Traditional stakeholders can preserve the *paabingkon pahompu* tradition, and the church can be involved in preserving it from a biblical perspective. The *paabingkon pahompu* tradition is still relevant to today's life. Therefore, related parties must hold Simalungun cultural education events and increase references to Simalungun cultural knowledge so as to broaden understanding.

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