Pharos Journal of Theology ISSN 2414-3324 online Volume 107 (1) Regular Issue (2026)

Messianic Hope in the Manarmakeri Myth and Its Influence on Biak Christian Beliefs

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https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.107.5

Abstract

This study explores the resurgence of the Manarmakeri myth among the Biak people in Papua, Indonesia, as a socio-religious phenomenon centered on Messianic hope. Using mixed methods—survey questionnaires (n=38) and ethnographic interviews—this research identifies 14 core indicators, with Messianic Expectation emerging as the dominant factor, accounting for over 25% of the variance. The findings demonstrate that the myth of Manarmakeri is not merely folklore but functions as a theological framework, cultural narrative, and coping mechanism for socio-political marginalization. This belief system aligns local eschatological expectations with biblical motifs, constructing what can be described as "indigenous Christology." The figure of Manarmakeri is perceived as both a liberator and a returning Messiah, with strong parallels to Jesus Christ in Christian theology. The study argues that the myth fosters communal identity, symbolic resistance, and social cohesion. It also highlights the limitations of formal theological rejection by mainstream churches, suggesting the need for inclusive and dialogical pastoral models. Practically, the study urges culturally sensitive development strategies that consider spiritual aspirations, involve local leaders, and integrate material and non-material needs. The research contributes to postcolonial theological discourse and invites further interdisciplinary inquiry into how indigenous narratives interface with global religious traditions.

Keywords: Manarmakeri myth, Messianic Hope, Papuan society, belief, significance, impact, Papua.

Introduction

The belief in the Manarmakeri myth has long been deeply rooted among the Biak sub-ethnic groups, predating the arrival of the Gospel with missionaries Ottow and Geissler on Mansinam Island on 5 February 1855 (Rumainum, 1966:47; Kamma, 1981:65–67). This conviction—also known locally as Mansren Manggundi—has become inseparable from the community's identity, as Kamma's fieldwork in West New Guinea demonstrates. Far from being merely a product of missionary or colonial influence, the myth is a direct outgrowth of indigenous Koreri beliefs that predate any external contact (Kamma, 1952). As Lužný and Soukup (2023) argue, however, "elements of original Indigenous religions can exist in parallel or can create a syncretic synthesis" with Christianity in Melanesia. This helps explain how Manarmakeri has survived and even resurged in contemporary Biak society. Recent studies similarly show that Papuan communities actively reshape Christianity as part of a broader cultural project; as Dale (2024) notes, Papuans "transform and harness Christianity for their cultural, social, and political projects," demonstrating that indigenous theology is not passive but adaptive and dynamic.

Koreri, regarded as the original religion of the Biak people (Subagya 1986:14), persisted despite intense Western penetration—including the spread of Christianity (Wutwensa 2020). Central to this system is the Manarmakeri myth, which promises the return of a Western-born redeemer figure who will usher in everlasting well-being—an embodiment of Koreri hopes (Kamma, 1981:65–67). Among the Biak, Manarmakeri is associated with peace, plenitude, and a Christ-like savior figure in Christian teaching (Yono, 2016). Comparative research on messianic movements also supports the idea that such myths remain socially powerful because they provide a symbolic framework for interpreting present crises; as Carneiro da Cunha (2023) argues in her analysis of the Canela messianic movement, messianic myths operate through a "logic of myth and action," enabling communities to envision renewal through ancient sacred narratives.

Renewed interest in Manarmakeri stems from its revival in contemporary practice. In interviews, a local elder—referred to in Biak as the "Korano Baiboi," or tribal chief—reported that as of 2000, approximately 2,000 adherents upheld the Manarmakeri faith. A census conducted in 2021 recorded some 5,000 households across nearly all regions of Papua—coastal and inland alike—identifying with the movement, not merely as individual members but as family units. By that year, pockets of Manarmakeri believers were also documented among the Kamoro, Amungme, and Moi peoples in Sorong (Thomas Morin, 2022). A community leader on Wundi Island similarly noted that although he was not himself a follower, groups of Manarmakeri adherents frequently traveled from various Papuan locales—such as Sorong—to hold worship gatherings there (Yunus Morin, 2022). This resurgence underscores that the myth is not merely of historical interest but continues to exert powerful spiritual influence among the Biak today. Hence, there is a pressing need for in-depth study of the factors driving this revival, particularly in light of Christianity's impact in Papua.

Widely regarded as a sacred ideology, the Manarmakeri myth has permeated Papua over generations. Its inheritors believe that Manarmakeri will return in the seventh generation to bring peace, resurrect the dead, and establish enduring prosperity. This messianic hope—focused on a Western descent of the savior—is known as "Manseren Manggundi" (The Lord Himself).

This study also acknowledges the foundational contributions of F. Ch. Kamma to our understanding of the Manarmakeri myth in Biak. Kamma's extensive documentation of the myth and its associated messianic movements that accompanied the spread of Christianity in Papua has been invaluable (Kamma, 1972; 1952). While his work provides a comprehensive historical account, the present article aims to foreground the myth's contemporary resurgence among the Biak. This phenomenon marks a shift from a historical narrative to a living, evolving belief system. Beyond describing current Biak beliefs, the article examines the challenges and opportunities facing the church as it seeks to minister to a community that continues to embrace the Manarmakeri myth and its religious practices.

Research Framework

This study aims to identify and explore the factors contributing to the revival of the Manarmakeri myth in the Cenderawasih Bay region, including Biak, Wundi/Moekbundi Island, and Manokwari. To achieve this objective, the research adopts a case study and ethnographic approach, enabling an in-depth understanding of the beliefs and lived experiences of the Biak and Manokwari communities in relation to the Manarmakeri tradition.

The study employs a mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative

methodologies. The primary approach is qualitative, rooted in ethnographic and phenomenological traditions, seeking to interpret how individuals and communities experience, understand, and transmit belief in the Manarmakeri myth. Data collection methods include participant observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:248) and in-depth interviews with key and supporting informants.

Key informants include religious and community leaders, such as:
- The head of the GKI Manokwari Classis,
- Former head of the GKI Biak Classis,
- Leaders of the Manarmakeri Faith Movement in Biak and Manokwari.

Supporting informants comprise:
- A former village chief from Wundi,
- Pastors and elders from the Evangelical Tent Church of Indonesia (KINGMI) in Cenderawasih Bay,
- Current and former members of the Manarmakeri movement, now affiliated with KINGMI Papua.

Interviews were conducted using semi-structured guides covering four main themes:
1. Conversion and acceptance of the Manarmakeri myth – origin of belief, sources of information, and motivations for faith.
2. Typological comparisons between Manarmakeri and Christian teachings – identification of Manarmakeri with Jesus, and Insoraki with Mary.
3. Theology of blessing and eschatological hope – perceptions of the Koreri promise and the second coming of Manarmakeri.
4. Relationship with church teachings – how respondents perceive church doctrine in relation to their current faith.

To complement the qualitative findings, the study also distributed a structured questionnaire to 62 respondents:
- 52 from Biak
- 10 from Manokwari

After data validation, 38 responses were deemed usable. The questionnaire explored respondents' demographics and belief characteristics, including age, occupation, education level, and duration of adherence to the Manarmakeri belief.

These data were analyzed using factor analysis, a statistical technique used to reduce a large set of variables into underlying factors that explain patterns in the data. This allowed the researcher to identify clusters of belief drivers that contribute most significantly to the revival of the Manarmakeri tradition.

By combining ethnographic insight with quantitative structure, this research provides a holistic analysis of the theological, cultural, and sociological dynamics behind the Manarmakeri phenomenon in West Papua.

Interviews and field observations were carried out in Biak, Wundi/Moekbundi Island, and Manokwari—locations that hold cultural and religious significance within the Manarmakeri belief system. Prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained verbally, following Papuan customary communication practices that prioritize relational trust and community approval. Participants were first introduced to the researcher by a trusted intermediary, after which the

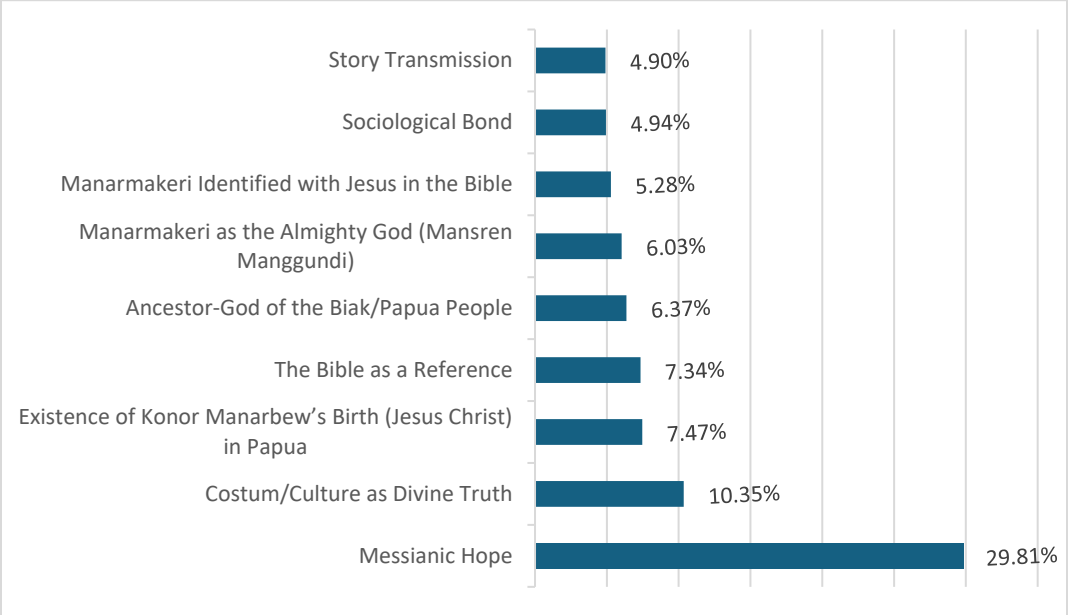
purpose of the study, its academic nature, and the voluntary character of participation were explained in simple and culturally appropriate terms. Participants were clearly informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time, that no sensitive or taboo questions would be forced, and that their identities would remain confidential through the use of initials.

Permission to enter each community and conduct interviews was granted verbally by local customary authorities and Manarmakeri leaders in Biak and Manokwari. In Papuan indigenous contexts, such verbal authorization carries the same weight as formal written consent and is considered the appropriate ethical pathway for community-based research. No personal identifying data beyond initials were collected, and care was taken to avoid topics that could endanger participants or violate sacred boundaries.

All interview notes, transcriptions, and questionnaire data are stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. In accordance with international academic ethical standards, the data will be safeguarded for a minimum of ten years in secure, encrypted storage under the researcher's custodianship. These measures ensured confidentiality, non-coercion, cultural sensitivity, and adherence to ethical norms throughout the research process.

Result: Messianic Hopes as Main Factor

The exploratory factor analysis of 35 survey items (N = 38) yielded nine primary factors that together account for 82.48 % of the total variance in belief in Manarmakeri. These factors represent distinct underlying dimensions driving the resurgence of the myth. Collectively, they exert a strong influence on an individual's decision to adopt the Manarmakeri belief system. In other words, this particular combination of factors constitutes the most substantial—or dominant—set of influences on one's choice to embrace Manarmakeri, while remaining supported by additional, secondary factors.



Graph 1: Messianic Hope as the Primary Driver of Belief in the Manarmakeri Myth

As shown in the figure above, among the nine factors, the single largest contributor is Messianic Hope, which accounts for more than one-quarter of the total variance explained. Messianic Hope is linked to Manarmakeri as "Manseren Manggundi" (The Lord Himself), who is believed to bring liberation, prosperity, and new life to the Papuan people. The expectation of Manseren Manggundi's return from the West in the seventh generation profoundly shapes the lives of those communities that continue to honor Manarmakeri as their divine savior. Indeed, Messianic Hope is found across virtually all regions of Papua. In an interview, Y.M. (Manokwari, June 11, 2022) noted that every area in Papua holds its own messianic beliefs—for example, Wandamen with its Kuripasai tradition. According to him, these various messianic outlooks represent ways in which God leads and guides His people through their distinct cultural frameworks.

This study will center on Messianic Hope as the principal factor in the resurgence of the Manarmakeri myth in Papua. Not only does it contribute the highest percentage of explained variance, but it is also distinctive in comprising a composite of fourteen specific indicators. Because detailing all fourteen indicators is beyond the scope of this section, the author will focus exclusively on this primary factor, leaving the other eight factors for future discussion. In the following section, each of the fourteen indicators underpinning Messianic Hope will be examined in turn.

Indicator 1: Messianic Message

The Manarmakeri myth is regarded as a divine narrative imbued with messianic hope for the Papuan people, especially the Biak tribe. The figure of Manarmakeri—called "Manseren Manggundi" (The Lord Himself)—is believed to return and bring eternal life, spiritual liberation, prosperity, and a more just world.

According to interviews with A.R. (Biak, June 8, 2022) and H.M.R. (Manokwari, June 13, 2022), Manarmakeri promises salvation and everlasting life for the Papuans. Y.M. (Wundi Island, May 30, 2022) added that this salvation will be fulfilled in the seventh generation. This promise is paralleled with Jesus's declaration in John 10:10 that He came "that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

T.M. Biak, (June 1, 2022) explained that the core of the freedom promised by Manarmakeri is spiritual liberation from sin, as also taught in John 8:30–36. This relates to life in the Kingdom of God on earth, which calls people to live in love and righteousness according to heavenly principles. Although Manarmakeri's Koreri teaching is often interpreted as physical prosperity, its true essence is spiritual freedom—humanity freed from sin and living in peace.

Research by Strelan and Godschalk (1989:118) shows that mythic narratives among various tribes, including those in Papua, parallel biblical motifs such as end-times imagery, the coming of a savior, and the resurrection of the dead into a golden age. This reinforces the view that Papuan myths embody universal hopes for everlasting peace, salvation, freedom, and love, as noted by Giay (1986:21).

Indicator 2: Journey to the West

The myth of Manarmakeri's westward journey depicts a parting steeped in spiritual and symbolic meaning. Accompanied by his wife Insoraki and their son Konor Manarbew (called the "Prince of Peace"), Manarmakeri departed from Wundi Island in response to local rejection (A.R., Biak,

June 8, 2022) and set sail toward the West, bearing blessings and the promise of salvation, with the resolve to return in the seventh generation.

According to F. C. Kamma (1972:23–79), the westward voyage represents both a separation of lineages and a spiritual choice, rich with symbolism of transition and divine mission. During this journey, Manarmakeri is credited with establishing key sites—such as the white-sand island of Poiru and the four clans on Numfor Island—which echo the imagery of Proverbs 8:29c–31.

Manarmakeri's trek alongside Konor Manarbew is also interpreted as analogous to the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-2, wherein Manarbew is viewed as a sacred offering sent by God to reconcile humanity to Himself. He is regarded as both High Priest and Ultimate Sacrifice, reminiscent of Jesus's crucifixion on Calvary.

The trajectory of the Gospel is believed to have originated in Papua (the East), travelled West, and will return to the East (Papua)—the land of the rising sun—symbolizing the beginning and the completion of the salvific mission. T.M. (Biak, June 1, 2022) further explained that Manarmakeri's return in the seventh generation signifies the end times—not in an apocalyptic sense, but as the moment when humanity attains salvation (*Koreri*) in this life rather than afterward.
N.P. (Manokwari, June 10, 2022) emphasized that, having been rejected by the Biak people, Manarmakeri went West to bring blessings and progress to the Western nations, yet he also vowed to return. His route passed through Numfor Island and Mansinam Island (where missionaries Ottow and Geissler first landed in 1855). On Mansinam, Manarmakeri is said to have made a covenant and promised to send a letter—which the community came to understand as the Gospel.

Local belief holds that Manarmakeri—also called Apus (God)—will return to Papua bearing Koreri: a life of peace and prosperity, in fulfillment of his earlier promise.

Indicator 3: Koreri

Koreri, in the belief system of the Biak/Papua communities, is envisaged as a vision of a new, eternal life—one of peace, prosperity, and the absence of suffering, disease, poverty, and death. In his spiritual experience, Manarmakeri received the revelation of Koreri after his voyage to Myokbundi Island, where he encountered Sampari (the Morning Star) who imparted the secret of eternal life (Koreri Syeben) to him (Y.M., Wundi Island, May 30, 2022).

Koreri is depicted as a period of total renewal, both physical and spiritual: the aged become young, the dead are resurrected, and the entire community lives together in harmony (*kan ro mob oser*—"we all eat in one place"). This transformation is understood in both literal and symbolic terms, as exemplified by Manarmakeri's own reversal of old age through the purifying fire, thereby becoming Manseren Manggundi (The Lord Himself).

Strelan and Godschalk (1989:142) observe that people seek Koreri in the same way they seek paradise in the Gospel. Papua itself is regarded as the ancestral land where God has hidden Koreri and its abundant riches, which will ultimately be revealed to the world. This mirrors John 14:3, where Jesus promises to prepare a place for His people. Wanma and Kijne (2016:88–89) describe Koreri as a cultural identity of the Biak, deeply integrated with their customs and hopes for a future of salvation. Hanita (2019) further emphasizes that Koreri serves as the wellspring of Biak ethnonationalism—a spirit of freedom and happiness untainted by colonial rule. Koreri is thus construed as kandomowoser: a life of joy, peace, and justice.

More broadly, Giay (1995) and Hanita (2019) note that messianic beliefs akin to Koreri are also found among other indigenous religions in Papua—such as Hai among the Amungme, Kasiep among the Nimboran, Wege-Bage among the Me, and Simson in Jayapura—all of which embody elements of anti-colonial resistance and aspirations for a just and prosperous new era.

The discourse of ethnonationalism across Papua's traditional faiths, as discussed by Margaretha Hanita (2019), underscores that this sentiment extends beyond the Koreri religion of the Biak to include the belief systems of various other local communities:

Table 1. Discourses of Ethno-Nationalism in Papua's Indigenous Religions

Local Religion	Ethnic Group/Religion	Ethnonationalist Discourse
Koreri	Biak	Manarmakeri is believed to return bearing Koreri and kandomowoser—liberation, joy, and a life without suffering—for the Biak people in an independent polity.
Hai	Amungme	The "Age of Happiness" (Hai) will return to bring prosperity, joy, and eternal life to the Amungme people.
Kasiep (Ancestral Spirits)	Nimboran	The Nimboran way of life is governed by Kasiep (the ancestral spirits). Loyalty and obedience to Kasiep are believed to bring deliverance.
Wege-Bage	Me (Paniai)	The movement led by Zakheus Pakage (1952–1954) proclaimed that well-being would follow suffering, as an act of resistance against colonial rule.
Simson	Jayapura	The movement led by Pastor Simson (1946–1947) urged the Jayapura community to resist Dutch colonialism, in hope of attaining collective prosperity through struggle.

The primary objectives of Koreri, as articulated in Biak's customary and spiritual narratives, are to:

1. Foster unity among Papua's peoples
2. Establish true peace across all humanity
3. Ensure shared abundance and communal enjoyment in one place (*kan ro mob oser*)
4. Eliminate suffering and death
5. Resurrect the dead
6. End warfare and secure global justice
7. Achieve the equality of all humanity—no slaves or outcasts, all made in the image of God.

Koreri represents the Papuan spiritual response to life's existential challenges, offering meaning, hope, and solutions to sin, poverty, suffering, and mortality.

Indicator 4: Unity of the Father-Son Relationship (Mythos and Logos)

In the Biak belief system, the relationship between the Father and the Son is understood as a unified mythos and logos. In the Western context (as presented in the Gospel), the Son (Jesus Christ) is the manifestation of the Father—"the Father in the Son" (John 10:38; 14:10–11). In the Eastern context (Papua), however, the Father (Manarmakeri) is revealed first, so the emphasis is on "the Son in the Father."

Manarmakeri—known locally as Mansren Manggundi, "The Lord Himself"—is conceived as God the Father in the Papuan myth, while Konor Manarbew (the "Prince of Peace") represents the manifestation of the Son, namely Jesus Christ. Their relationship is analogized to the dual office of Priest and King, following the Melchizedek typology in Scripture (Hebrews 7:1, 17, 26).

As the High Priest of the Most High God, Manarmakeri offered himself as a sacrifice at the farthest edge of the earth and underwent a "baptism of fire," receiving a glorified body (the Koreri body) that rendered him invisible. Likewise, Jesus Christ, who existed in a mortal body (Sasor), was transformed into a Koreri body after his death and resurrection, paralleling his Father's transformation.

The Father and the Son are inseparable in their ministry and the salvation of humanity—much like the shared service of the High Priest and God in Israel's Tabernacle. In Papua, this divine partnership is reflected in the myth of Manarmakeri and the Prince of Peace as a localized embodiment of biblical truth.

The author underscores the importance of interpreting local myths such as Manarmakeri through rigorous biblical exegesis to discern their spiritual resonance with divine revelation. A contextual and independent theological study allows Papuans to appropriate the Gospel in harmony with their own cultural roots and faith experiences as the people of the "uttermost parts of the earth."

Indicator 5: The Second Coming

One of the central messianic hopes in the Manarmakeri belief system is his promised return in the seventh generation. This hope echoes apocalyptic themes found in Jewish and Christian traditions: the return of a savior who will bring liberation, prosperity, and new life to the Papuan people. Known also as *Mansren Manggundi* ("The Lord Himself"), Manarmakeri is believed to return with the spirits of the dead to usher in a golden age of peace—Koreri (Strelan & Godschalk, 1989:118).

This belief continues to shape the worldview and way of life of the Biak and broader Papuan communities (Thimme 1998:143). Manarmakeri is expected to return from the West to fulfill his promise and bring Koreri to his birthplace, Papua. N.P. (Manokwari, June 10, 2022) stated that Manarmakeri, along with his son Konor Manarbew and his wife Isoraki, is already present in Papua, marking the beginning of a great restoration. A.R. (Biak, June 8, 2022) affirmed that because Papua is the "ends of the earth" where the sun rises, Manarmakeri will surely return there.

Symbolically, 2 Peter 3:8—"With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years"—is interpreted as referring to God's Sabbath. Manarmakeri's return in the seventh generation is seen as the fulfillment of this divine rest (Ezekiel 46:1–3), initiating a thousand-year reign in the easternmost land (Revelation 20:4,6). Papua is thus understood as the eastern heavenly gateway and the point of messianic arrival.

Scholars like Steinbauer and Worsley (Steinbauer, 1974:177–178 in Strelan & Godschalk, 1989; Worsley, 1968:235) classify the Manarmakeri myth as part of a broader Melanesian narrative framework that centers on a returning savior figure. This figure is portrayed as a historical person endowed with religious charisma who returns with ancestral spirits to trigger spiritual and societal transformation. Such narratives legitimize renewal movements and foster cultural revival.

The myth also aligns with Mircea Eliade's concept of "model history," where the future gives meaning to the past (1958:430). Manarmakeri embodies the universal motif of the hero's journey—leaving the ordinary world, facing trials, and returning with blessings for humanity. Just as Moses ascended Mount Sinai and returned with divine law to establish a covenant people, Manarmakeri represents a path of redemptive return. In this way, the anticipation of his coming is

not merely a spiritual nostalgia but a powerful, ongoing force of cultural and religious transformation for the Papuan people.

Indicator 6: Utopia

One of the central messianic hopes within the Manarmakeri belief system is the return of Mansren Manggundi to the ends of the earth—namely, Papua. It is believed that with his return, all forms of suffering, death, poverty, and warfare in the world will be overcome by the arrival of *Koreri*.

Manarmakeri is expected to return one day and establish a prosperous kingdom on earth (Pijnappel, 1854). The ideal nation envisioned will come into being through the return of Mansren Manggundi, who will bring Koreri—a life of joy untouched by physical suffering or death. It is a life free from both bodily and spiritual affliction, with no economic hardship, political oppression, disease, or death—a life of everlasting happiness (Yono, 2016). Koreri has thus been interpreted as an ideal nation or a utopian society (Bruyn, 1949 in Hanita, 2019), where human beings live in perfect peace and eternal joy, akin to life in heaven.

The image of a supremely beautiful and peaceful natural world—a “Garden of Eden” from the past—is believed to have been lost due to the ignorance, disobedience, or recklessness of individuals or groups (F. C. Kamma, 1972:23–79). The Koreri movement is characterized as an ongoing effort to bridge the gap between everyday realities and the vision of an ideal world.

Indicator 7: The Golden Age of the Papuan People

The Manarmakeri myth paints a vivid picture of liberation and joyful anticipation. It promises a golden age for the Papuan people. According to this belief, Manarmakeri will return and establish a prosperous kingdom, ushering in the long-awaited golden era for Papua. In this golden age, no one will need to work, yet food will be abundant. It envisions a new reality—one that reverses the present condition—where Westerners will become the servants of Papuans, tribal chiefs will be made equal with commoners, ancestral lands and long-lost freedoms will be restored, and a time of overflowing abundance will begin. Believers will be granted eternal life. Mansren Manggundi will be the source of all progress—where ships are built, goods are produced, and all these will one day be brought to Papua. At that time, the dead will rise, peace will prevail, and prosperity will be fulfilled (F. C. Kamma, 1972:23–79).

Everything deemed supernatural or extraordinary—whether ancient or modern—is believed to originate from Manarmakeri. All forms of technological advancement, such as machines, factories, ships, and airplanes, are seen as deriving from him. As documented in ethnographic studies, the Biak people's myth of Manarmakeri posits that all technological advancements originated from this cultural hero who journeyed to the West. The appearance of ships and airplanes is thus interpreted not as foreign innovation, but as a sign of Manarmakeri's impending return and the knowledge he once took away (F. C. Kamma 1972:48; Rutherford 2000:325). As explained by N.P. (Manokwari, June 10, 2022), although Manarmakeri journeyed West, there will be signs of his imminent return—such as the appearance of ships that float on water and aircraft that soar in the sky. These advancements exist because Manarmakeri went to the West and granted knowledge to the Western nations, making them more intelligent than the Papuans. Manarmakeri also gave a message to the Papuan people to return to the worship of Apus Manarmakeri. When Papua achieves independence, it is believed that the hidden riches of the land—such as minerals—will rise to the surface naturally, ready to be gathered by the Papuans, and foreign nations will bow in reverence before them.

This hope for a golden age also appears in the indigenous belief of the Amungme people. The "Age of Happiness" (*Hai*) is expected to return, bringing joy, prosperity, and eternal life to the Amungme. *Hai* is the local spiritual belief of the Amungme, who inhabit the valleys surrounding Mount Grasberg—a mountain rich in copper and gold, mined by Freeport McMoRan. *Hai* expresses the longing for a blissful era that will come upon the Amungme. Their suffering has reached its peak since Freeport seized their sacred mountain, regarded as the "Mother" of the Amungme people, resulting in continued persecution, violence, and displacement. The Amungme believe that *Hai* will one day arrive—at an unknown time—and bring prosperity, finally delivering them from their prolonged suffering caused by the presence of outsiders on their ancestral land (Hanita 2019).

Indicator 8: The Restoration of the Papuan People's Destiny

The mystery of the Father, the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth, and its fulfillment on the land of Papua—referred to as the ends of the earth—is grounded in Revelation 1:3: *"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."* Manarmakeri, a figure believed to possess supernatural power, is expected to bring restoration to the Papuan people. For now, Manarmakeri is said to have blessed the Western nations (the white-skinned) with a better life, but upon his return, he will grant *Koreri* to the Papuan people. The arrival of *Koreri* represents the beginning of that restoration.

This era is regarded as an idealized time—*"a realization of the people's memory of a time they believe once truly existed in their history, however idealized it may now appear"* (Lanternari, 1965:240–241). It reflects the hope that Manarmakeri will renew the world and particularly Papua, restoring it to its original order and way of life. The return of Manarmakeri as a messianic savior is seen as the sign of the beginning of the golden age. As Wanma and Kijne (2016:12–13) stated: *"Upon this rock, I lay the entire civilization of the Papuan nation. No matter how highly educated or virtuous a person may be, they cannot build the Papuan people. For Papua will rise and lead itself."* This signifies that Jesus Christ, returning in the person of the Father—the God of Papua who dwells within the race, customs, and culture—will rise, lead, and deliver the Papuan people from bondage into their golden era.

Politically, the tensions between Indonesia, the Netherlands, and global powers of the time (such as the U.S. and its allies, as well as Russia, China, and their allies), led Wanma and Kijne (2016:151-152) to return to the Netherlands with a conviction: Papua would be controlled by powers driven by political interests in its vast natural wealth. These powers would not govern with love, and truth and justice would be overturned. New developments would arise that would cause the Papuan people to regret. This, they believed, was not God's intention but the will of man. Nevertheless, they affirmed that one day, the Papuan people would come to understand God's true purpose for their land—full of mystery, hidden truth, and a certain hope for the future.

Politically, Papua's independence is expected to be granted by Manarmakeri himself. In an interview, N.P. (Manokwari, June 10, 2022) explained that Manarmakeri will fulfill his promise to grant freedom to the Papuan people—but only if they return to worship *Apus Manarmakeri* (God). Similarly, A.R. (Biak, June 8, 2022) stated that while the land of Papua is indeed blessed, its people have not yet received that blessing. No matter how much wisdom a person might possess, they cannot build this nation (Papua); only Manarmakeri, upon his return, will restore and rebuild it—something that was also conveyed to I.S. Kijne.

Indicator 9: Salvation (Eternal Life)

The hope in the return of *Manseren Manggundi* from the West significantly shapes the lives of the Papuan people. His coming is understood as a messianic promise that marks the beginning of eternal life—a time when disease will be healed, death will be abolished, and life will continue without end. It is a new era in which humanity will enjoy everlasting life, joy, well-being, and inexhaustible abundance. Manarmakeri is believed to hold the secret to eternal life (*Koreri Syeben*), while *Manarbew* (the bringer of peace), also known as *Konori*, is expected to bring about the resurrection of the dead and the gift of eternal life.

The arrival of this "messiah" signals the fulfillment of *Koreri Syeben*, as the savior will come, and all the dead will be raised to live together with the living. Furthermore, the living will undergo a transformation known as *rer* (a renewal of the body), receiving new bodies just like the resurrected dead. This covenant expresses the messianic hope found in the Manarmakeri belief system, which continues to influence Biak and Papuan communities today. This messianic expectation parallels the Christian faith's hope in the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead, as described in 1 Corinthians 15:12–58.

Religions and *cargo cults* that look back to an idealized past often share a common goal: *salvation*. In Melanesian anthropology, cargo does not simply refer to goods or material items; rather, it signifies Western manufactured products (ships, machines, cloth, money, tools) believed to originate from ancestors or divine beings and expected to be returned to indigenous peoples in a future age of renewal. This symbolic meaning is well attested in studies of Papuan and Melanesian millenarianism, where cargo represents divine blessing, abundance, and the restoration of cosmic and social order (Worsley 1968; Trompf 1991). Within such movements, salvation is imagined not only as spiritual renewal but as a transformation of the entire world—social, economic, and cosmological.

In this sense, the pursuit of salvation in cargo movements parallels the Old Testament Psalms, where the longing for salvation is deeply rooted in real-life situations. It means deliverance from death, healing from illness, liberation from enemies, redemption from slavery, help in legal matters, victory in war, peace following political negotiation, and so on. Salvation in this context is present-oriented, tied to this-worldly concerns and daily existence; it does not primarily involve spiritual salvation. Salvation as deliverance from sin is not strongly emphasized in the Old Testament (Green, 1965:46–52).

It is therefore understandable that the salvation sought by traditional religions and cargo cults—rooted in the memory of the past—is associated with liberation from exploitation and the struggles of everyday life, including peace, wholeness, healing, health, and well-being. Such salvation is believed to be attainable when the ideal models for human conduct and social institutions—established in the past through history or myth—are actualized and renewed in the present.

The concept of messianic salvation (*Koreri Syeben*) clearly differs from that of Christian theology. Christian theology does not regard salvation as a general category, but rather as a unique and distinct concept (Sharpe & Hinnells 1973:17–37). Salvation, in Christianity, is the result of God's mercy through Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11–12), proclaimed in the Gospel through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18; 6:2). It is offered to all humanity (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3–7), because salvation meets the deepest need of humanity (Romans 1:18–3:20).

Indicator 10: The Message (Prohibitions and Instructions)

Manarmakeri and his son, Konor Manarbew, departed from Numfor Island with a promise to return in the seventh generation. However, to avoid hindering this return, Manarmakeri left behind a series of messages containing specific prohibitions and instructions that must be observed. In preparation for his coming, people are expected to ready themselves by following these guidelines:

1. Believe in and fully surrender to Mansar Manarmakeri.
2. Trust in the miraculous events that have occurred, as signs of Konor's acts—which prefigure the greater miracles yet to come.
3. Engage in worship through songs of praise (*wor*) and prepare many hymns to welcome his arrival.
4. Collect as much firewood as possible, because there will be three days of darkness.
5. Prepare a large house for the ancestors who will rise from the dead.
6. Build storage barns to receive the food supplies that will be brought by Manarmakeri.
7. Consume all current harvests and livestock such as pigs, chickens, goats, etc.
8. Refrain from eating specific foods such as pumpkin, pork, shrimp (*amos*), and certain types of fish, which Konor will reveal.

During his westward journey, Y.K.S. (Biak, June 1, 2022) explained that while waiting for Manarmakeri's return, these prohibitions must be strictly followed. However, many of these instructions have been disobeyed to this day. As a result, it is believed that various misfortunes and tragedies experienced by the Papuan people—such as natural disasters, killings, and other calamities—are consequences of violating Manarmakeri's commands.

Indicator 11: Papua as the Final Destination of the Gospel's Journey

In the Manarmakeri belief system, "the ends of the earth" refers specifically to the islands in the East, especially Papua. This interpretation is rooted in the book of Isaiah, where the East is seen as the origin point of the Deliverer's movement toward the West. Followers of this belief see Papua as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy—a sacred land from which God begins His redemptive plan for the world.

Papuan theologian I.S. Kijne's prophecy—that Papuans will rise to lead themselves—is understood as a divine affirmation that Jesus Christ will return as the "Father God of Papua," embodied within the Papuan race, culture, and traditions. This vision echoes Isaiah 41:2, ("Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow" (NIV) portraying Papua as the place from which God raises a leader to bring justice, defeat kings, and liberate nations.

Isaiah's writings are interpreted by Manarmakeri believers as identifying Papua not only as the "ends of the earth" but also as a future battleground between divine light and global darkness. The devil is seen as trying to prevent Papua from falling into the hands of the returning King. Isaiah 24 and 42 are cited as evidence: from the ends of the earth comes a song of praise to the Righteous One, and the coastlands are called to exalt God's name—believed to be a reference to Papua's role in end-times fulfillment.

This eschatological narrative places Papua as the eastern gateway to heaven, where the final unveiling of God's kingdom will begin. According to this belief, unlike most regions where political

powers came before the Gospel, Papua received the Gospel first, followed by colonial rule. This reversal is viewed as spiritually significant, affirming Papua's sacred status.

The "eastern star" (Revelation 22:16), symbolizing Jesus, is believed to rest over Papua—meaning His second coming will be through the East. Isaiah 9:1 is quoted to affirm that a great light has dawned on those dwelling in darkness—interpreted as the Papuan people.

Nature itself is seen as proclaiming Papua's divine role: the sun and moon rise from the East, and the bird-of-paradise—called the "heavenly bird"—exists only in Papua. In an interview, a local (N.P. Manokwari, June 10, 2022) stated that the bird's exclusive presence is a sign that "Papua is paradise." For believers, these are divine confirmations of Papua's role in God's eschatological plan. Only those with divine wisdom, they claim, can truly perceive the depth of this mystery involving Papua and its people.

Indicator 12: Manarmakeri is Jesus

The Manarmakeri myth is revered by its narrators as a sacred story deeply rooted in Biak culture. It expresses the community's longing for a joyful future through the coming of the Messiah figure—Mansar Manarmakeri. Even before the arrival of Christian missionaries, the Biak people had long believed in the Koreri message, which promised peace, renewal, and eternal life. When missionaries later preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ—about the new humanity, resurrection, and Christ's second coming—the Biak community interpreted this message through their existing mythological framework. Many concluded that Manarmakeri and Jesus were one and the same.

To the Biak people, Manggundi, the creator of Numfor Island, is identified with Jesus. They believe the Gospel of Christ mirrors the Koreri message and that parts of the Bible referring to Manarmakeri were metaphorically "torn out" by missionaries who misunderstood its cultural significance. For them, Manarmakeri is not just the God of Papua but also the God of all nations, whose return they still await.

This belief aligns with their reading of John 16:25, where Jesus promises to one day speak plainly of the Father. According to the community, the Bible actually reveals the mystery of Mansren Manggundi (the Father) and His Son, Konor Manarew (the Deliverer), who was born in Papua. Their narrative echoes the story of Christ:

1. His birth at the ends of the earth (Isaiah 9:6),
2. His journey from the eastern islands to the Middle East (Isaiah 41:2–5),
3. The calling of Israel's ancestors from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 41:8–9; Acts 15:14).

Personal testimonies reinforce this belief. T.M. (Biak, June 1, 2022) described hearing the voice of Apus Manarmakeri, interpreted as Jesus, instructing him to love others. After praying for the sick, he witnessed healing—similar to miracles in the Gospels. Likewise, N.P. (Manokwari, June 10, 2022) reported healing experiences through prayer to Manarmakeri, affirming his faith that Apus Manarmakeri is the Lord, God, and King of the Papuan people.

Manarbew's presence in the myth further supports the idea of Manarmakeri as a Messiah. Born miraculously through Insoraki, Manarbew (also called Konor, "the one who raises the dead") symbolizes renewal. He represents not only supernatural power but also the hope of spiritual regeneration, central to the Koreri vision of a restored and eternal life. Through these stories, the Biak people express a contextual Christology—one shaped by cultural memory, spiritual longing, and a reinterpretation of the Gospel through indigenous lenses.

Indicator 13: The Birth of the Messiah in Papua

The Son of the Messiah, the Deliverer (*Putra Damai* / *Konor Manarew*), is believed to have been born on the islands—specifically in Papua—in what narrators describe as a time "long before the birth of Jesus Christ." This expression does not refer to measurable historical chronology but to what scholars of Melanesian religion call mythic time, a sacred, pre-historical era outside linear dating (Eliade 1963:172‑173; Burridge 1969:200). Within this mythic framework, the belief is link to the prophecy in the Book of Isaiah, which according to local interpretation, identifies the "ends of the earth" (*ujung bumi* or *ujung-ujung bumi*) as located in the East. These island regions are regarded as the origin point of the movement of the Righteous One, *Konor Manarbew*, the Son of Peace—identified with Jesus, the Anointed One—toward the West, toward the land of Canaan. The designation of the Eastern islands as the *ends of the earth*, and the place of the Messiah's birth, is reinforced in the Great Commission as the place from which Jesus began His movement to the West, the final and stationary goal for the fulfillment of the entire process of Gospel proclamation.

Konor Manarbew (the Son of Peace) was born to a virgin named *Insoraki* (the First Daughter), the daughter of the *mambri* village chief. One day, Insoraki and several other young women were bathing on the beach while *Manarmakeri* watched them. Manarmakeri, standing on the shore, picked up a *marsbon* fruit (bitanggor fruit) and threw it into the sea. The fruit floated and touched Insoraki's chest. She picked it up and threw it away, but it returned and touched her chest again. This happened three times, and afterward, Insoraki became pregnant. From that pregnancy, a baby boy was born and named *Manarbew* (the Bringer of Peace), also called *Konori* (the one who brings resurrection for the dead and eternal life). A celebration (*wor*) was held to identify the father of Manarbew. It was revealed that the father was *Manarmakeri*, whose body was covered with sores. As a result, all the villagers abandoned the island, leaving behind Manarmakeri, Insoraki, Manarbew, and Insoraki's younger brother.

This event parallels the biblical story of Jesus' birth, which was first announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:26–31). However, unlike Mary, the conception of Manarbew (the Son of Peace) is described as being directly revealed by the Spirit of God, who introduced Himself as the "Morning Star" to Manarmaker as proof and guarantee of the truth of the *Koreri* secret (eternal life) that He had revealed. The struggle between the Morning Star and *Yawi Manarmaker* at the top of a coconut tree just before dawn echoes Jacob's struggle at the ford of the Jabbok River before daybreak (Genesis 32:24–26).

The incarnation of the Spirit of God as the Son of Man is symbolized by the act of throwing the *mars* fruit into the sea by *Yawi* (Manarmaker). This event occurred through the miraculous conception of a baby boy by the virgin *Insoraki* (the First Daughter), without any sexual union. The baby was a male and was named *Manarbew* (the Son of Peace), as the embodiment of the Spirit of God—'the Morning Star'—as the 'Son of God', born through the natural process of a 'Son of Man'.

Indicator 14: Konor Manarbew (Jesus) the Giver of Eternal Life

Sampari, the Morning Star, gave to *Manarmakeri* the secret of eternal life (*Koreri Syeben*). Through a young woman named *Insoraki*, who was struck with a *bitanggor* fruit thrown by *Manarmakeri*, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son named *Manarbew*, meaning "bringer of peace" or *Konori*, who would bring resurrection to the dead and eternal life. *Konor Manarbew*,

the Son of Peace / Lord Jesus Christ, is the Way and the Truth who leads humanity to eternal life (John 14:6).

As explained by Y.M. (Wundi Island, May 30, 2022), the Morning Star offered *Manarmakeri* wealth and various other things, with the final and greatest offer being resurrection and life—*Koreri Syeben*. To convince *Manarmakeri*, the Morning Star instructed him to take a *bitanggor* fruit and throw it into the water while young women were bathing on the beach. The fruit floated and touched the chest of *Insoraki* three times. *Insoraki* was the most beautiful woman in Wundi village. She later became pregnant and gave birth to her child, *Konor Manarbew*.

Significance of the Dominance of Messianic Hope

Factor analysis shows that *"Messianic Hope"* is the main driving force behind the resurgence of the Manarmakeri myth. This factor contributes the largest portion of variance in the model—over 25%—indicating how powerful the collective hope is for the return of the figure of Manarmakeri to liberate, prosper, and renew the life of the Papuan people. The fourteen key indicators, from visions of independence to the promise of new life, reveal that the Manarmakeri narrative is deeply interwoven with an eschatological framework similar to the promises of the Messiah in Christian tradition.

Socially, Messianic Hope serves as the foundation of a shared identity. The Biak community—including the diaspora in Manokwari—understands themselves as a *"chosen people"* awaiting the fulfillment of local prophecy. Sabbath rituals on Wundi Island, worship songs, and inter-village fellowship strengthen bonds across groups. Thus, the hope for Manarmakeri's return is not merely a theological idea but a form of social capital that reinforces solidarity and communal cohesion.

In Papua's ongoing context of economic, political, and health challenges, Messianic Hope functions as a collective coping mechanism. Faith in divine power to erase suffering cultivates optimism—even when structural change is not yet visible. By positioning Papua as the *"ends of the earth"*—the starting point of the mission of salvation—followers gain a concrete framework of hope that strengthens symbolic resistance to marginalization.

Since this messianic hope emerges from spiritual need, normative theological discourse—such as the rejection of the Manarmakeri movement by GKI or KINGMI—struggles to suppress these expectations. Formal delegitimization without cultural dialogue may in fact widen the gap between the church and local communities. Therefore, pastoral approaches and policy must be inclusive: honoring eschatological roots, involving traditional leaders in program planning, and designing interventions that go beyond material aspects to also nurture the community's spiritual longing.

By emphasizing the dominance of Messianic Hope, this study opens space for contextual ministry and development strategies—ones that respect local tradition, respond to eschatological longing, and at the same time communicate the substance of the Gospel in an inclusive and applicable manner.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings on the dominance of Messianic Hope in the revival of the Manarmakeri myth not only enrich the treasury of Christology through the emergence of what could be called "indigenous Christology", but also challenge the assumption that Christian theological models are homogeneous and universal. The Biak community interprets the figure of Christ—or in their discourse, Manarmakeri—through local symbols, rituals, and narratives that affirm their identity

as a chosen people. This is similar to what transpires in many African indigenous cultures that have adopted Christianity as their faith of choice, for example the Zulu in KwaZulu Natal Province in South Africa. Thus, this narrative functions as a counter-narrative to imported religion, providing space for autonomous and sovereign religious expression within a postcolonial cultural framework. In terms of church practice, this research reminds us that doctrinal rejection alone—such as banning Manarmakeri rituals or gatherings by church institutions—will not suppress the eschatological hope deeply rooted in community life. Without genuine dialogue that respects spiritual roots and local traditions, normative policies risk creating distance and deepening stigma. Therefore, inclusive and dialogical ministry models—for example, involving traditional leaders in formulating contextual liturgies or opening space for collaboration in community activities—are essential steps toward building a bridge of shared understanding and easing theological tension.

On the other hand, successful development interventions−such as economic empowerment programs, community health initiatives, or capacity-building projects−in Biak, Papua must take into account the spiritual dimension of messianic hope as a foundation for program design. Economic or health projects designed without regard for the community's eschatological longing are likely to be ignored; conversely, approaches that emphasize communal values—such as community cooperatives with the participation of traditional leaders, mobile clinics led by local facilitators, or empowerment programs based on local liturgical traditions—are more likely to be accepted and sustainable. By involving both traditional leaders and local churches in co-designing programs, and by setting success indicators that include the enhancement of hope and social cohesion, policymakers can design interventions that balance material and spiritual needs and honor the community's cultural heritage.

Conclusion, Limitation, and Directions for Future Research

This study affirms that the revival of the Manarmakeri myth emerges from a complex interaction between the community's eschatological needs, local theological innovation, and a strong cultural symbolic system. The dominance of the *"Messianic Hope"* factor—reflected in fourteen indicators of hope for the coming of a Saviour—proves that eschatological narratives serve as the foundation of solidarity and shared identity among the Biak community and the Manokwari diaspora. Within this framework, the emergence of what can be referred to as *"indigenous Christology"* shows how the people interpret the figure of the savior through local wisdom, while simultaneously forming a postcolonial counter-narrative to imported religion.

Practically, these findings lead to two main implications. First, ministry models and development interventions must adopt a dialogical and inclusive approach—respecting local customs, involving community leaders, and designing programs that balance material needs with spiritual longing. Second, churches and policymakers need to create spaces for co-design with local communities so that normative policies do not marginalize eschatological beliefs that are deeply embedded in everyday life.

However, there are also limitations in this study, and the first is the limited scope of data—only 38 valid questionnaires and interviews conducted in Biak–Manokwari—makes it difficult to generalize the findings to wider regions of Papua. Furthermore, the cross-sectional research design is insufficient to capture the dynamics of shifting messianic hope in relation to political and economic fluctuations. Therefore, longitudinal studies and interdisciplinary approaches (such as sociology of religion, existential psychology, and visual anthropology) are necessary to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding.

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***Conflict of Interest Statement**: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*