

Contextual Theological Analysis of *Mayo Boyo* Practice among the Maybrat Tribe in Jayapura City

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Abstract

This research stems from the tension between the Mayo Boyo (dowry) cultural practice of the Maybrat tribe in Jayapura City and Christian theological understanding, particularly regarding the values of justice, human dignity, and the sacred meaning of marriage. The main problem in this research is how the Mayo Boyo practice can be understood and contextualized in the light of Christian theology without eliminating its inherent cultural values. This research aims to analyze the socio-cultural meaning of Mayo Boyo, identify potential theological tensions, and formulate a pastorally relevant contextualization model of Christian theology. The method used is a qualitative approach with a grounded theory design, supported by a hermeneutic analysis of cultural practices as social texts in the light of the Gospel. The results show that Mayo Boyo has important relational and symbolic values in maintaining family and community harmony but also has the potential to shift its meaning into an economic burden and a form of commodification. Therefore, a dialogical and transformative pastoral contextual theology approach is needed to reinterpret this practice so that it aligns with the values of love, justice, and human dignity in the Christian faith.

Keywords: contextual theology; cultural transformation; inculturation; *Mayo Boyo*; pastoral theology

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berangkat dari adanya ketegangan antara praktik budaya Mayo Boyo (*mas kawin*) pada suku Maybrat di Kota Jayapura dengan pemahaman teologi Kristen, khususnya terkait nilai keadilan, martabat manusia, dan makna sakral perkawinan. Permasalahan utama dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana praktik Mayo Boyo dapat dipahami dan dikontekstualisasikan dalam terang teologi Kristen tanpa menghilangkan nilai budaya yang melekat di dalamnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna sosial-budaya Mayo Boyo, mengidentifikasi potensi ketegangan teologis, serta merumuskan model kontekstualisasi teologi Kristen yang relevan secara pastoral. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain *grounded theory*, yang didukung oleh analisis hermeneutik terhadap praktik budaya sebagai teks sosial dalam terang Injil. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Mayo Boyo memiliki nilai relasional dan simbolik yang penting dalam menjaga keharmonisan keluarga dan komunitas, namun juga berpotensi mengalami pergeseran makna menjadi beban ekonomis dan bentuk komodifikasi. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendekatan teologi kontekstual pastoral yang bersifat dialogis dan transformatif untuk menafsirkan ulang praktik ini sehingga selaras dengan nilai kasih, keadilan, dan martabat manusia dalam iman Kristen.

Kata kunci: teologi kontekstual; transformasi budaya; inkulturasi; *Mayo Boyo*; teologi pastoral

INTRODUCTION

Cultural practices in Papuan society often demonstrate a complex interweaving of customary value systems, social structures, and religious interpretations. One practice that persists strongly within the *Maybrat* community is *Mayo Boyo* (dowry), which is understood not only as an economic transaction but also as a symbolic mechanism that regulates kinship relations, social legitimacy, and respect for women and their families. In the context of the *Maybrat* community in Jayapura City, this practice has undergone transformation due to interactions with the dynamics of urbanization, religious pluralism, and modern economic

development. Tensions arise when Christian theological values that emphasize equality, love, and the sanctity of marriage confront *prakti adat* that in some cases are considered to have the potential to create economic burdens, family conflict, and even a shift in the spiritual meaning of marriage. This phenomenon has become a problematic one that requires contextual theological study that is not only normative, but also hermeneutic and pastoral. This condition influences the practice of *Mayo Boyo* because the function of this tradition has expanded, especially as a customary social mechanism. In Jayapura City, this tradition serves as a means of maintaining *Maybrat* ethnic identity amidst a heterogeneous environment.

Several recent studies have shown that the *Mayo Boyo* practice in Papuan society cannot be separated from its social function as a tool for building social networks and strengthening community identity, especially among the Maybrat people. Studies on *kearifan lokal* in the making of *Koba-koba* show that the cultural activities of the Maybrat people are always linked to collective cooperation, the transmission of values between generations, and respect for cultural identity.¹ Studies on the traditional marriage system in Papua show that the value of the dowry serves as social legitimacy for marriage and recognition of women's status within the kinship structure. However, in the modern context, this practice is often commodified, reducing its symbolic value to merely a material transaction. Research by Almince Jessica and Margaretta Erna Setianingrum on perkawinan adat Papuan highlights changes in the simplification of customary stages, the commercialization of dowries, inter-tribal marriage, and adaptation to state and religious laws, resulting in a pragmatic reinterpretation of traditional practices.²

The study of contextual theology emphasizes that Christianity does not exist in a cultural vacuum, but rather constantly interacts with the local traditions in which it is lived. A contextual theological approach positions culture as the locus theologicus, enabling reflection on faith to develop dialogically with social realities. Research by Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams on theological inculturation in Indonesia demonstrates that the success of pastoral care is greatly influenced by the church's ability to critically and constructively interpret local traditions, so that Christian faith is not understood as a force that negates culture, but rather transforms it.³ However, the application of contextual theology often faces dilemmas when certain cultural values are deemed to conflict with Christian ethical principles, including in traditional marriage practices. Conversely, this finding connects that *Maybrat* culture also contributes to the church's understanding of the meaning of togetherness, communal relations, and social responsibility. This relationship demonstrates that the process of contextualization is not a process of domination by one party, but rather a creative encounter between Christian faith and local cultural realities.

Based on the research map, a significant research gap is apparent, namely the lack of studies that integratively combine contextual theological analysis with the reality of *Mayo Boyo* practices among the Maybrat Tribe. Most research remains partial, either solely anthropological, sociological, or normative theological without adequate dialogue with concrete cultural practices. Furthermore, there are few studies that position the church as an active pastoral actor in the process of negotiating the meaning of this culture. This research

¹ Azis Maruapey et al., "Kearifan Lokal Dan Sosial Budaya Suku Maybrat Dalam Membuat Koba-Koba (Am) Sebagai Produk Benda Budaya," *Jurnal Noken: Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 9, no. 1 (December 2023): 217–25, <https://doi.org/10.33506/jn.v9i1.2978>.

² Almince Jessica and Margaretta Erna Setianingrum, "Transformasi Makna Maskawin dan Implikasinya pada Kebahagiaan Perempuan Papua di Kota Jayapura," *CENDERAWASIH: Jurnal Anropologi Papua* 6, no. 1 (2025): 13–22.

³ Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (James Clarke, 2012), 82.

seeks not only to understand these practices descriptively but also to offer a contextual theological construction relevant to the church in the context of the *Maybrat* tribe. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of contextual theology in Indonesia, as well as practical contributions to the church's pastoral ministry in addressing *budaya lokal* dynamics.

This research aims to fill this gap by offering an interdisciplinary approach to the practice of *Mayo Boyo*. The primary focus of this research is how the practice can be reinterpreted in light of Christian theology, thus maintaining its positive cultural values while undergoing transformation in accordance with Gospel principles. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of contextual theology but also offers practical implications for pastoral ministry in Papua.

Meanwhile, in the context of church pastoral care in Papua, recent research indicates an ambivalence in the church's attitude toward the practice of *Mayo Boyo*. On the one hand, the church recognizes cultural values as part of the identity of indigenous communities, but on the other hand, the church seeks to critique practices that have the potential to cause gender inequality and economic pressure. Studies on marriage pastoral care in Papua indicate that some churches have begun to develop a dialogical approach to understanding marriage customs, but lack a systematic theological framework for interpreting these practices contextually. This demonstrates a gap between normative theological reflection and the practical reality of church ministry among indigenous communities.

Research on the relationship between local culture and Christianity in Melanesia has also highlighted that *praktik perkawinan adat* often serve as a means of maintaining community solidarity and social stability. However, these practices can experience distortions in meaning when spiritual values are replaced by economic interests and social status. Sociological studies of the transformation of marriage customs in Papua show that increasing dowries often trigger conflict between families and delay the marriage of young couples, resulting in the emergence of informal marriages and other pastoral issues.⁴ This situation raises the urgency for pastoral theology to provide reflections that can bridge the gap between customary demands and Christian values.

From a theological hermeneutic perspective, cultural practices such as *Mayo Boyo* can be understood as social texts that require contextual interpretation. Research by Lartey in Christian Ade Maranatha on contextual hermeneutics in church ministry shows that reinterpreting local traditions can result in cultural transformation that maintains local identity while reflecting Gospel values.⁵ However, studies on the hermeneutics of Papuan traditional marriage practices are still relatively limited, particularly in the context of the *Maybrat* Tribe, thus opening up space for further research. From a biblical exegetical perspective, Christian marital theology emphasizes that marriage is a sacred covenant rooted in a relationship of love, fidelity, and shared responsibility. Theological studies on marriage in the Christian tradition show that the value of marriage is not determined by material aspects, but by a spiritual commitment that reflects the relationship between Christ and the congregation. However, contextual theological research shows that biblical values are often interpreted normatively without considering local cultural realities, potentially creating a gap between

⁴ Sem Kepno and Novita Christina Permana, "Paradigma Konstruktivisme dalam Pendidikan Kampung: Studi Kasus Kebijakan Belis di Abenaho Papua," *Epistema* 6, no. 1 (May 2025): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.21831/ep.v6i1.84602>.

⁵ Christian Ade Maranatha, "Penafsiran Alkitab Yang Dinamis: Hermeneutika Kontekstual Sebagai Pendekatan Multidimensional," *RERUM: Journal of Biblical Practice* 4, no. 2 (December 2024): 138–55, <https://doi.org/10.55076/rerum.v4i2.339>.

church teachings and social practices.⁶ Therefore, a contextual exegetical approach is needed that can read the biblical text in dialogue with the cultural traditions of the *Maybrat* Tribe.

A study of liturgical inculturation and marriage pastoral care in Papua shows that integrating customs into church practices can increase community acceptance of church services. Contextual liturgical research shows that churches that accommodate local cultural symbols tend to be more effective in building community spirituality. However, such integration requires a clear theological framework to prevent syncretism that obscures the identity of the Christian faith.⁷ In the context of *Mayo Boyo* practices, the church faces the challenge of assessing which cultural elements can be maintained and which need to be transformed in light of the Gospel.

Theological anthropological research on indigenous identity shows that traditional marriage practices have a spiritual dimension related to the concept of relationships between family, ancestors, and community. In the *Maybrat* community, the practice of *Mayo Boyo* not only has social significance but also symbolizes respect for the dignity of women and the continuity of the lineage. However, social changes resulting from globalization and modernization have caused this practice to shift in meaning, potentially diminishing its spiritual value and increasing its materialistic orientation.⁸ This shift raises theological questions about how the church can present a relevant understanding of faith without diminishing the community's cultural identity.

Based on the problem map, this study aims to analyze contextual theology in the reality of *Mayo Boyo* practices among the *Maybrat* Tribe in Jayapura City through a qualitative approach. This study seeks to answer the questions of how the reality of *Mayo Boyo* practices can be understood in light of Christian theology, how the church can develop a contextual pastoral approach, and how cultural value transformation can be carried out without eliminating the identity of indigenous communities. Thus, this finding distinguishes itself from Papuan studies in general because it focuses not on cultural practices within a relatively homogeneous indigenous society, but rather on cultural transformation and reinterpretation within the urban *Maybrat* tribal community. Therefore, this study makes an important contribution to the development of Papuan contextual theology by demonstrating that local culture is not only maintained but also reinterpreted theologically in the context of contemporary *Maybrat* tribal life, while also offering a relevant pastoral model for the church in addressing the cultural dynamics of Papuan society.

THEORY

Contextual Theology as a Paradigm for Dialogue between Faith and Culture

Contextual theology is a theological approach that places the Gospel in dialogue with local culture so that the message of faith can be understood, accepted, and lived out in the realities of a particular society. In the context of local communities in Indonesia, contextual theology is understood not simply as a process of translating Christian teachings into culture, but also as a reciprocal hermeneutic process that allows local culture to become a space for theological reflection. Research by Jitro Remi Praing et al., on the contextualization of Christian mission in *ritual budaya*, shows that a contextual approach allows the Gospel to be received

⁶ Vhumani Magezi, "History and Developments of Pastoral Care in Africa: A Survey and Proposition for Effective Contextual Pastoral Caregiving," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75 (November 2019): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5423>.

⁷ Yesri Talan, "Mengkaji Bahaya Sinkretisme Dalam Konteks Gereja," *SESAWI: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1 (December 2019): 43–54, <https://doi.org/10.53687/sjtpk.v1i1.5>.

⁸ J. Boelaars, *Indonesianisasi: Dari Gereja Katolik Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2020), 56.

through local symbols, rites, and value systems without losing the core of Christian teachings. Certain *ritual budaya* can serve as a bridge to understanding divine concepts in the lives of traditional communities.⁹

Contextual theological analysis in various indigenous communities in Indonesia confirms that the interaction between Christian faith and traditional culture produces distinctive and pastorally relevant forms of religious practice. A study of the Sahu community demonstrates that the process of harmonizing Christian teachings and traditional marriage customs can create contextual patterns of religious life rooted in community identity. A theological approach that integrates historical, sociological, and anthropological dimensions has proven effective in explaining the dynamics of the relationship between faith and culture in the daily lives of indigenous communities. Furthermore, research by Styadi Senjaya and Yanto Paulus Hermanto on the contextualization of the Gospel in the Migani community of Papua emphasizes the importance of understanding social structures, traditional leadership figures, and cultural values as the basis for sustainable evangelism. A discipleship approach based on local culture has been shown to increase the acceptance of the Gospel because it respects the value systems that have been present in the community.¹⁰ These findings demonstrate that the success of pastoral ministry depends not only on doctrinal teaching but also on the church's ability to deeply understand local cultural dynamics.

The Dowry Tradition in the Perspective of Theological Anthropology

From a theological anthropological perspective, the dowry is understood as a symbol of social relations, not simply an economic transaction in traditional marriage.¹¹ Thus, the *Mayo Boyo* has complex social functions, such as strengthening kinship ties, maintaining clan continuity, and serving as a means of reconciling conflicts between family groups. Furthermore, the dowry is also seen as a form of respect for women and their role in community sustainability. A theological analysis of the *belis* culture in Sumba shows that the dowry tradition has theological parallels with *tradisi mas kawin* in biblical narratives. From a biblical perspective, the dowry can be interpreted as a sign of respect for the dignity of women and their families. A reflective approach to biblical texts shows that the *praktik mas kawin* is not always contrary to Christian values but can instead be a symbol of commitment and responsibility in marital relations. Cross-cultural research shows that the dowry in traditional societies often functions as a social mechanism for maintaining community stability. From an anthropological perspective, the *sistem mas kawin* is closely related to collective social structures, where marriage not only unites two individuals but also builds social relations between extended family groups. Thus, the dowry has social, religious, and economic dimensions that cannot be separated from contextual theological analysis.

Dialectics of Traditional Marriage and Christian Theology

The intersection of traditional marriage practices and Christian theology often creates a dialectic between traditional values and church teachings. Thus, the influence of dowry payments on sacred marriages demonstrates that customary practices sometimes become a

⁹ Jitro Remi Praing, Erich Naristo Ana Awang, and Stephanie Selan, "Menilik Model Kontekstualisasi Misi Kristen Melalui Ritual Hamayang Di Desa Rindi Kabupaten Sumba Timur," *Makarios: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual* 4, no. 1 (June 2025): 39–53, <https://doi.org/10.52157/mak.v4i1.380>.

¹⁰ Styadi Senjaya and Yanto Paulus Hermanto, "Kontekstualisasi Injil Terhadap Suku Migani Papua," *Kharisma: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi* 2, no. 2 (December 2021): 78–88, <https://doi.org/10.54553/kharisma.v2i2.71>.

¹¹ Selvie Indriani and Pantjar Simatupang, "The Bride Wealth of the Ambai Serui Tribe Marriage: A Christian Faith View," *ENDLESS: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FUTURE STUDIES* 6, no. 3 (December 2023): 265–75, <https://doi.org/10.54783/endlessjournal.v6i3.222>.

pastoral obstacle when communities postpone church weddings due to the economic demands of dowry payments. This phenomenon demonstrates the tension between customary structures and theological understandings of the sacredness of Christian marriage. A study of Savu customary marriage confirms that the church can act as a mediator, integrating customary values with Christian teachings. A church that is open to local culture is able to create a pastoral care model that is more contextual and relevant to the needs of the community. This integration demonstrates that custom can become a space for faith inculturation when interpreted theologically and pastorally.¹² Research by Yulius Defri Sudi and Siong on Dayak Barai customary marriage also confirms that customary law possesses moral and spiritual values that can serve as a meeting point with Christian theology, particularly in understanding marriage as a sacred relationship involving social and spiritual responsibility.¹³ Thus, dialogue between custom and the church does not have to be conflictual, but can become a space for value transformation that enriches understanding of faith.

Pastoral Inculturation in the Context of Traditional Marriage

Pastoral inculturation is a church approach that seeks to integrate faith teachings with local culture through a process of dialogue and value transformation.¹⁴ Research by Febrian Mulyadi Angsemin and Robertus Mirsel on pastoral care in resolving family conflicts in Manggarai shows that the church can use traditional elements as a pastoral tool to strengthen the values of loyalty, reconciliation, and family harmony. Inculturation enables the church to become a relevant social mediator in the lives of indigenous communities.¹⁵ From a pastoral perspective, inculturation aims not only to maintain cultural traditions but also to transform cultural values to align with Christian theological principles. This process requires the church to understand traditional symbols, rituals, and value systems hermeneutically so that pastoral care can address the spiritual needs of the community contextually. This approach emphasizes that church service must be dialogical and transformative in addressing local cultural realities.

Grounded Theory as an Approach to Contextual Theological Analysis

Grounded Theory is a qualitative research approach that goes beyond simply describing social reality, but systematically constructs theoretical constructs rooted directly in empirical data. Within this framework, theory does not begin with normative assumptions but is instead "discovered" through intensive interaction with the realities of the field. Therefore, in contextual theological studies, Grounded Theory is highly relevant because it allows theological reflection to emerge from the concrete experiences of the congregation, rather than merely from abstract doctrinal formulations. Methodologically, this approach operates through simultaneous and iterative data collection and analysis. Empirical data were obtained through in-depth interviews with traditional figures, church leaders, and community members; participant observation of cultural practices such as *Mayo Boyo* in the context of marriage; and documentation in the form of traditional archives, church records, and local

¹² Hemi Bara Pa, "Perkawinan Adat Sabu Dan Perjumpaanya Dengan Pernikahan Kristen Di Kepulauan Sabu," *Jurnal Teologi (JUTEOLOG)* 4, no. 1 (December 2023): 39–53, <https://doi.org/10.52489/juteolog.v4i1.145>.

¹³ Yulius Defri Sudi and Siong Siong, "Relevansi Adat Tikah Kawitn Suku Dayak Barai Kecamatan Kayan Hilir bagi Perkawinan Gereja Katolik," *Jurnal Teologi Praktika* 3, no. 2 (December 2022): 10–30, <https://doi.org/10.51465/jtp.v3i2.57>.

¹⁴ Alfons Segar, "Inkulturasasi Sebagai Proses Pembatinaan Iman Dan Nilai-Nilai Kristiani," *Jurnal Alternatif Wacana Ilmiah Interkultural* 2, no. 1 (January 2013): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.60130/ja.v2i1.84>.

¹⁵ Febrian Mulyadi Angsemin and Robertus Mirsel, "Intervensi Gereja Katolik Dalam Menyelesaikan Kasus Perselingkuhan: Studi Kontekstual Di Manggarai," *Sapa: Jurnal Kateketik Dan Pastoral* 9, no. 2 (November 2024): 120–25, <https://doi.org/10.53544/sapa.v9i2.657>.

narratives. The collected data were then analyzed through an open coding process to identify initial categories, followed by axial coding to identify relationships between categories, and finally, selective coding to formulate a core theory that explains the phenomena under study. Throughout this process, the researcher employed the constant comparative method, which involves continuously comparing emerging data, categories, and concepts to produce a robust theoretical abstraction.¹⁶

The result of this process is not merely a collection of descriptive findings, but rather a theoretical construct that explains the dynamics of meaning within cultural practices. For example, in the context of *Mayo Boyo*, field data can reveal several key categories such as "symbols of family respect," "economic burden," "cultural identity," and "challenges of Christian ethics." The relationships between these categories then form a theoretical proposition, for example, that *Mayo Boyo* functions as a social mechanism that simultaneously strengthens community cohesion and creates ethical tensions in a modern context. From this, the resulting theory not only explains what occurs, but also how and why these practices undergo transformations in meaning in the interaction between local culture and Gospel values. From a contextual theological perspective, the theoretical construct generated through Grounded Theory has profound reflective value. Community experience is not merely positioned as an object of research, but as a locus theologicus a place where reflection on faith occurs concretely. Thus, the theory developed does not stop at the academic level but becomes the basis for the development of contextual, critical, and transformative theology. Theology is no longer understood as a system "applied" to culture, but rather as the result of a dynamic dialogue between divine revelation and the lived experiences of the people.

Furthermore, the strength of Grounded Theory lies in its ability to capture the complexity and ambivalence of social reality. Field data reveals contradictions, for example, between the symbolic meaning of *Mayo Boyo* as a form of respect and the reality of its practice, which can become an economic burden or a source of inequality. Rather than simplifying these contradictions, Grounded Theory integrates them into a more comprehensive theoretical construct. Thus, the resulting theory is able to represent reality more honestly and contextually. Therefore, the use of Grounded Theory in contextual theological studies allows for the formation of theories that are not only based on empirical data but also theologically and socially relevant. Through the integration of field data and faith reflection, this approach produces a comprehensive understanding of cultural practices such as *Mayo Boyo*, while also opening up space for the church to formulate more contextual, sensitive, and transformative pastoral responses in community life.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a theoretical construction design through grounded theory. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding the theological meaning and praxis of *Mayo Boyo* culture within the framework of the social, symbolic, and religious experiences of the Maybrat ethnic community, thus requiring a method that allows theory to emerge from empirical reality as well as theological reflection. Grounded theory is used to develop conceptual constructions that are sourced directly from field data through a simultaneous and cyclical process of data collection and analysis.¹⁷ This method emphasizes inductive, comparative processes, and concept

¹⁶ Ida Zahara Adibah, "Metodologi Grounded Theory," *Jurnal Inspirasi* 2, no. 2 (2018): 147–66.

¹⁷ Ahmad Kosasih, *Pendekatan Grounded Teori (Grounded Theory Approach) Sebuah Kajian Sejarah, Teori, Prinsip dan Strategi Metodenya*, (Universitas Indraprasta PGRI), 2018, 122–32.

development through coding techniques, constant comparison, memo writing, and theoretical sampling so that the resulting theory is truly rooted in the social phenomena and experiences of the community being studied. This approach is relevant in research on socio-religious phenomena that do not yet have an established theoretical framework because it allows the emergence of new analytical categories that reflect cultural practices and the contextual meaning of faith. In addition, qualitative methods allow for in-depth exploration of the experiences of social groups in interpreting religious and cultural phenomena, resulting in substantive theories that are applicable to the development of pastoral care and contextual theology.

Operationally, this research was conducted through a series of systematic stages that not only stopped at methodological procedures, but also produced concrete empirical findings that can be traced analytically. *First*, data collection was conducted through literature analysis that included contextual theology, cultural anthropology, and pastoral studies, as well as a review of relevant biblical texts using a contextual hermeneutic approach. This approach was concretely implemented by reading the text of Scripture not historically, but by considering the historical context and the social context (family and community relations). The results of the implementation of this stage indicate that the practice of giving in marriage, in the tradition of dowry, has a strong symbolic meaning as an expression of commitment, responsibility, and relationships between families, not simply an economic transaction. These findings then became the starting point for a dialogue with the practice of *Mayo Boyo* in the Maybrat tribe. *Second*, field data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The customary documents used included *Maybrat* tribal regulations, customary council decisions regarding clan structures and customary territories, and recognition of the *Maybrat* tribal legal community. Meanwhile, interviews with traditional leaders revealed that *Mayo Boyo* is understood as a symbol of respect for women and their families and as a means of strengthening kinship relations.

Meanwhile, interviews with church leaders revealed concerns about the shifting meaning of *Mayo Boyo*, which in some cases has become an economic burden for men. Participatory observation of traditional processions revealed a strong symbolic dimension, such as the handover of certain goods or values accompanied by rituals and customary expressions rich in relational meaning. Documentation in the form of traditional archives and church records also reinforced the finding that this practice has undergone dynamic changes along with the influence of modernization and the market economy. The empirical data were then analyzed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the open coding stage, researchers identified several initial categories that emerged from the field data, including: "symbol of family respect," "social legitimacy of marriage," "economic burden," "cultural identity," "spiritual values," and "ethical tensions." These categories reflect the diversity of meanings attached to the *Mayo Boyo* practice by various social actors.

Furthermore, through axial coding, these categories are connected in more complex relational patterns. For example, the categories "symbol of family respect" and "social legitimacy of marriage" are connected in the socio-cultural dimension, which emphasizes *Mayo Boyo's function* as a mechanism for forming and strengthening relationships between families. On the other hand, the categories "economic burden" and "ethical tension" are connected in a critical dimension, indicating a conflict between cultural practices and the values of justice and welfare from a Christian theological perspective. Meanwhile, the categories "cultural identity" and "spiritual values" are in the theological-contextual dimension, demonstrating *Mayo Boyo's potential* as a means of faith inculturation if interpreted correctly.

Building on these relational categories, the selective coding phase then yielded theoretical propositions that integrated all these categories and relationships. The main proposition generated was that *Mayo Boyo* is an ambivalent cultural practice: on the one hand, it functions as a relational symbol that strengthens social cohesion and cultural identity, but on the other hand, it has the potential to experience distortions of meaning into an economic practice that creates ethical tensions in light of Gospel values. Thus, theological contextualization of *Mayo Boyo* practices cannot be done simplistically (accept or reject), but rather through a process of critical and dialogical reinterpretation. These findings have clear implementation implications. In pastoral practice, the church has begun to develop approaches to catechetics and premarital counseling that emphasize the spiritual meaning of *Mayo Boyo* as a symbol of commitment and responsibility, rather than as a measure of material value. In some communities, more flexible customary negotiation efforts have also been found, such as adjusting the amount of *Mayo Boyo* to make it less burdensome, without eliminating its symbolic meaning. Dialogue between the church and traditional leaders provides an important space for collective reflection on this practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mayo Boyo's Profile from a Christian Theological Perspective

This study found answers to informants through interviews with Rutce S. Bosawer, who said that the benefits of paying *Mayo Boyo* (Dowry) are divided into two, namely 1) respecting customs, and 2) respecting women.¹⁸ Meanwhile, according to Ester Iriani Bosawer, in an interview, the benefits of paying Dowry are to foster a closer sense of family between both families, creating a sense of pride or joy for having fulfilled an obligation that must be carried out by the *Maybrat* tribe.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Yohanes Bosawer revealed that *Mayo Boyo* is associated with Christian values such as love, service and togetherness taught in the church.²⁰ Meanwhile, according to Yakub Sentuf Kagoya, who is a *Maybrat* indigenous community leader, said that the payment of *Mayo Boyo* is a hereditary inheritance from the family.²¹ Thus, the benefits of paying *Mayo Boyo* for the *Maybrat* tribe are not only economic, but also strengthen the symbol of respect, strengthening family relationships, cultural values, preserving traditions, social welfare, and building community identity in the *Maybrat* tribe.

The practice of *Mayo Boyo* in the *Maybrat* community is understood as a symbol of social relations with cultural, spiritual, and communal dimensions. *Mayo Boyo* is not merely seen as a material gift, but as a mechanism of social legitimacy that signifies the acceptance of the woman's family by the man and the recognition of women's honor within the kinship structure. This finding shows that the value of respect for women in *Mayo Boyo* has a meeting point with biblical teachings that emphasize the dignity of humans as God's creations. Research on *belis* revealed by Nadap Rafi Ghungnga et al., in Sumba society also shows that the dowry can be understood as a symbol of social responsibility and respect for the woman's family and thus has theological relevance in the reflection of Christian marriage.²² Therefore, the dialogue between *Mayo Boyo* and the practice of *belis* in Sumba society shows a meeting point in the aspects of respect for human dignity, strengthening social relations, and moral

¹⁸ Rutce S. Bosawer, "Wawancara," (Jayapura), 2024.

¹⁹ Ester Iriani Bosawer, "Wawancara," (Jayapura), 2024.

²⁰ Yohanes Bosawer, "Wawancara," (Jayapura), 2024.

²¹ Yakub Sentuf Kagoya, "Wawancara," (Jayapura), 2024.

²² Nadap Rafi Ghungnga, Eki Neonisa, and Maya Djawa, "Theological Study of The *Belis* Culture in Marriage of The West Sumba Community, Tana Righu District," *International Perspectives in Christian Education and Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (July 2025): 17–23, <https://doi.org/10.61132/ipcep.v2i2.375>.

responsibility in marriage. Based on this analysis, this study views that *Mayo Boyo* cannot be reduced to merely a materialistic traditional tradition, but needs to be understood as a cultural symbol containing ethical and spiritual values relevant to contextual Christian theology.

From this perspective, the church is called to develop a critical and dialogical hermeneutic approach to local culture, namely by upholding values consistent with the Gospel, such as respect for women, family responsibility, and communal solidarity, and reinterpreting cultural elements that have the potential to give rise to social inequality. Thus, *Mayo Boyo* can serve as a contextual medium for the church to present a more down-to-earth understanding of Christian marriage, relevant to the community's cultural identity, and rooted in biblical theological principles. However, this study also found a shift in the meaning of *Mayo Boyo* due to social and economic changes in urban society. In some cases, the symbolic value of *Mayo Boyo* has been reduced to an economic transaction that triggers social pressure and family conflict. This condition reflects a shift from a spiritual meaning to a materialistic orientation, potentially contradicting the principles of Christian marital theology that emphasizes simplicity, love, and fidelity. Studies on the transformation of traditional marriage in Papua show that modernization and the market economy often lead to changes in the values of *praktik mas kawins*, giving rise to tensions between tradition and contemporary social realities.

From a biblical exegetical perspective, the practice of giving a dowry parallels the Old Testament marriage tradition, demonstrating that gifts in marriage have symbolic meaning, not merely economic transactions. The biblical narrative of marriage demonstrates that marital relations are rooted in spiritual commitment and a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. According to Altin Sihombing, in his research, contextual theology demonstrates that cultural practices can be understood positively if their symbolic value aligns with the principles of love, equality, and moral responsibility in Christian teachings.²³ Micah 6:8 emphasizes that true worship is not only related to religious rituals, but must be realized in a life that reflects justice, lovingkindness, and humility before God. This means that God does not desire merely religious practices, but rather social life that reflects His character. Therefore, in the context of this research, Micah 6:8 serves as the basis for a theological evaluation of the *Mayo Boyo* practice. This tradition needs to be assessed based on the following questions: 1) Does *Mayo Boyo* promote social justice? 2) Does the practice strengthen love and solidarity within the community? 3) Is it carried out voluntarily and with full respect for human dignity? If these values are present, then *Mayo Boyo* can be understood as a cultural practice that aligns with the principles of God's kingdom. Conversely, if there are elements that result in inequality or certain social burdens, then the tradition needs to be reflected upon and transformed in light of the Gospel.

Meanwhile, in the New Testament, in Romans 12:4-5, the Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of the body to explain the nature of the Christian community. Each member has a distinct function, but all need and complement each other. Unity does not mean uniformity, but rather a connectedness based on love and shared responsibility. This means that Paul rejects individualism that separates one from the community. Instead, the identity of a believer is found in relationships with fellow members of the body of Christ. Thus, the practice of *Mayo Boyo* demonstrates the strong social bonds within the Maybrat community. Individuals are not viewed as standalone entities, but as part of a larger community, as shared life serves as a

²³ Altin Sihombing, "Contextual Theology and Biblical Teaching on Salvation: Reframing Soteriology through Digital Ecotheology," *EDUKASIA Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 737–50, <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v5i2.1770>.

source of social and cultural identity. Therefore, *Mayo Boyo culture* can be seen as a tool that helps people understand the meaning of the church as the body of Christ.

Research findings also indicate that the Maybrat people view *Mayo Boyo* as a means of building collective relationships between families. Marriage in *Maybrat* culture is not understood as an individual relationship, but rather a communal relationship involving a broad kinship network. This perspective shares similarities with community theology in the Christian tradition, which emphasizes that marriage is not only a personal relationship but also a social relationship that impacts the community of faith. According to Santoso, marriage is a transaction carried out to create a contract between a man and a woman. That is why they have full rights to organize their lives within marriage, so that this marriage culture or marriage, the rules apply to a society and a nation, and it is very influential.²⁴ Meanwhile, Daud A. Ngoman et al. explained that the Sahu traditional marriage demonstrates that traditional marriage practices function to strengthen social solidarity and community stability.²⁵

Thus, the results of this study confirm that *Mayo Boyo* can be understood as a cultural practice with theological potential if interpreted contextually and critically reflected in the light of the Gospel. This practice should not be positioned as a tradition inherently contrary to the Christian faith, but rather as a cultural symbol open to transformation so that it remains relevant and meaningful in the lives of the people. However, the process of contextualization has boundaries that cannot be compromised, namely the fundamental values of the Christian faith itself. The principles of love, justice, the equal dignity of human beings as images of God, and the rejection of all forms of exploitation, coercion, and social injustice must remain the primary benchmarks in assessing and interpreting the practice of *Mayo Boyo*. This means that when this practice shifts into an oppressive economic burden, reduces the dignity of women, or creates unjust power relations, the church has a prophetic responsibility to critique and transform it. Within this framework, the contextualization of theology is not an attempt at unlimited compromise with culture, but rather a dialogical process that places the Gospel as a critical norm so that the spiritual values contained in *Mayo Boyo* can be maintained, purified, and developed authentically in the life of faith of the community.

Pastoral Contextual Theology Model in *Mayo Boyo* Practice

In Stephen B. Bevans' work on Models of Contextual Theology, he presents six main models of contextual theology that can be used to read the relationship between Christian faith and local culture, namely: 1) The translation model, this model starts from the belief that the core of the Gospel is universal and can be translated into various cultures without losing its basic substance. 2) The Anthropological Model, this model emphasizes that God has been working in every culture, even before the Gospel was preached. 3) The Praxis Model, emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between reflection on faith and real action. 4) The Synthesis Model, this model seeks to bring together various theologies dialogically through scripture, church tradition, human experience and local culture. 5) The Transcendental Model, this model focuses on subjective human experience as the starting point for theology. Theology is understood as a reflection on the experience of faith experienced by individuals and

²⁴ Santoso Santoso, "Hakekat Perkawinan Menurut Undang-Undang Perkawinan, Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Adat," *YUDISIA: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 2 (2016): 412-34, <https://doi.org/10.21043/yudisia.v7i2.2162>.

²⁵ Daud A. Ngamon, Julio Eleazer Nendissa, and Freby M. Rares, "Tradisi Perkawinan Adat Suku Sahu Dalam Perspektif Teologi Kristen Di Jemaat GKPMI, Halmahera Barat," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 24, no. 2 (October 2024): 231-46, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v24i2.686>.

communities. 6) The Counter-Cultural Model, this model emphasizes that not all cultural elements are in line with the Gospel.²⁶ Thus, the integration between the findings of *Mayo Boyo culture* and Bevans' contextual theology model shows that *Maybrat* culture can not only be appreciated as a valuable social heritage, but also be reflected and transformed theologically so that it remains relevant in the lives of Maybrat Christians amidst social changes and the ever-developing urban context.

The church has a strategic role in interpreting and directing the practice of *Mayo Boyo* to align with Christian theological values through an interactive and transformative model of contextual pastoral theology. This model does not merely view cultural practices as static social realities, but as "the light of the Gospel" that must be read, criticized, and transformed in the light of the Gospel. Within this framework, this study formulates a model consisting of four main stages, namely: (1) identification of cultural meaning, (2) critical analysis of distortions of meaning, (3) theological reinterpretation, and (4) contextual pastoral implementation. These four stages form a dynamic process that enables the church not only to understand culture descriptively, but also to transform it theologically and practically in the lives of the people.

First, identifying cultural meaning is the initial step that focuses on a deeper understanding of the *Mayo Boyo* practice within the social and cultural context of the Maybrat community. At this stage, the church, together with researchers and the local community, explores the symbolic meanings inherent in the practice, such as respect for women's families, the social legitimacy of marriage, and the strengthening of kinship relations. This approach aligns with Kris Banarto and Jonri Muksen Siregar's model of pastoral inculturation, which positions culture as a medium for the proclamation of faith.²⁷ findings indicate that when cultural symbols are recognized and understood positively, congregations are more open to integrating Christian faith into daily life without feeling a loss of cultural identity.

Second, a critical analysis of the distortion of meaning positions the church in its prophetic role of evaluating cultural practices in light of Gospel values.²⁸ In the context of *Mayo Boyo*, the study found a shift in meaning from a relational symbol to an excessive economic burden, even in some cases giving rise to social tensions and gender inequality. At this stage, the church, along with traditional and community leaders, engaged in critical dialogue to identify aspects of practices that were no longer aligned with the principles of love, justice, and equality. A cultural and theological dialogue approach is crucial here because transformation cannot be achieved unilaterally, but rather through shared understanding that respects the social structure and values of the community.

Third, theological reinterpretation is a reflective process in which the church reinterprets the meaning of *Mayo Boyo* in light of the Bible and the Christian faith tradition. Using a cultural hermeneutics approach, this practice is no longer understood literally as a customary transaction, but as a symbol of commitment, responsibility, and loving relationships within marriage. This reinterpretation allows the church to affirm that the true value of *Mayo Boyo* lies in its spiritual dimension, not its material magnitude. In this stage, theological values such as gender equality, human dignity, and the sanctity of marriage are reaffirmed as the normative basis for understanding and implementing cultural practices.

²⁶ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis Books, 2002), 120-122.

²⁷ Kris Banarto and Jonri Muksen Siregar, "Teologi Inkulturatif Di Era Globalisasi: Rekonstruksi Spiritualitas Lintas Etnis Dalam Kepemimpinan Pastoral Modern," *Jurnal Studi Multidisipliner* 9, no. 1 (2025): 112-119.

²⁸ Victor Deak, Markus Suwandi, and Solihin Bin Nidin, "Tinjauan Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Sofisme Spiritual: Distorsi Nilai-Nilai Kekristenan Dalam Pelayanan Bermotif Finansial," *CHARISTHEO: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 5, no. 2 (March 2026): 199-222, <https://doi.org/10.54592/jct.v5i2.303>.

Fourth, contextual pastoral implementation is the practical stage in which the results of theological reflection are applied in church and community life.²⁹ This implementation is carried out through various forms of service, such as contextual catechism, premarital guidance, family mentoring, and the development of liturgies that accommodate cultural symbols theologically. Research shows that churches that actively integrate this approach are able to help congregations interpret *Mayo Boyo* in a more spiritual and just manner, and reduce the potential for conflict arising from this practice. Furthermore, a pastoral approach that emphasizes gender equality has proven effective in building awareness that Christian marriage is a relationship of equal love, not one based on economic value.

Thus, these four stages form a continuous cycle of reflection and action, in which the church continually reads, assesses, and transforms cultural practices in light of the Gospel. This model emphasizes that theological contextualization is not a one-time process but a dynamic one that continues to evolve with social and cultural changes. Through this approach, the church plays a role not only as a religious institution but also as a social mediator and agent of transformation capable of bridging the tension between cultural traditions and Christian theological values, so that the practice of *Mayo Boyo* can become a means of growing faith, social justice, and harmony in the lives of the *Maybrat* community.

***Mayo Boyo* Cultural Values from a Contextual Theological Perspective**

The transformation of *Mayo Boyo* cultural values from a contextual theological perspective can be seen as an effort to renew the meaning of culture through a critical dialogue between local traditions and Gospel values. The goal is to preserve culture not only as a legacy from our ancestors but also as relevant to the faith and social life of today's society. The real change in this transformation is evident in how the community understands *Mayo Boyo*, shifting from traditional *prakti adat* to a means of building solidarity, reconciliation, respect for human dignity, and spiritual strengthening of the community. In this regard, the church does not come to eliminate local culture, but rather to undertake a theological reinterpretation of cultural elements that still hold values of humanity, togetherness, social responsibility, and peace. This transformation is new in this study because *Mayo Boyo* is seen not only as a cultural object described anthropologically, but also as an active theological space in creating a contextual and participatory model of church ministry. Thus, local culture is understood not as a barrier to Christianity, but as an incarnate vessel that allows Gospel values to be present tangibly in the daily experiences of the community.

In the *Maybrat* community, *Mayo Boyo* is an important part of the traditional marriage system, possessing social, symbolic, and spiritual significance. This tradition serves as a form of respect for women and their families, as well as a social mechanism that strengthens kinship ties within the extended family. From a cultural anthropological perspective, the dowry is often understood as a symbol of social responsibility, demonstrating a man's readiness to build a family life. According to Lisa Marpaung, the practice of dowry in Papuan society demonstrates that the giving of dowry has an integrative function in maintaining social stability and strengthening relationships between communities.³⁰ This symbolic meaning demonstrates that *Mayo Boyo* has not only an economic dimension, but also an important moral and social dimension in community life.

²⁹ Apriani Mangiu, Monika Silambi, and Rana Bilolo, "Implementasi Konsep Pemulihan Tubuh, Jiwa, Dan Roh Berdasarkan 1 Tesalonika 5:23 Dalam Pendekatan Holistik Konseling Pastoral," *Relinesia: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Multikulturalisme Indonesia* 3, no. 4 (2024): 273–83.

³⁰ Lisa Marpaung, "Maskawin Dalam Sistem Perkawinan Tukar Suku Isirawa Di Kampung Wari, Sarmi, Papua," *KENOSIS: Jurnal Kajian Teologi* 7, no. 2 (December 2021): 315–36, <https://doi.org/10.37196/kenosis.v7i2.377>.

However, modern social dynamics indicate that the *Mayo Boyo* practice has undergone a shift in meaning due to the influence of the market economy and societal modernization. In some cases, the symbolic value of the dowry has been reduced to an economic transaction that places a financial burden on the groom's family and even triggers inter-family conflict. This social transformation poses a pastoral challenge for the church, as cultural practices that originally held symbolic value can transform into practices that no longer reflect the moral and spiritual values of the community. According to Jean Anthoni et al., the dynamics of dowry in Papuan society indicate that increasing dowry values often lead to delayed marriages or family conflict, necessitating a pastoral approach capable of reinterpreting the cultural meaning theologically.³¹

Within the framework of contextual theology, the transformation of cultural values is never without tension. Efforts to reinterpret the practice of *Mayo Boyo* in light of the Gospel demonstrate a tension between fidelity to ancestral traditions and the ethical demands of Christian faith amidst modern social change. Theological inculturation, which essentially aims to integrate faith with local culture, on the one hand opens up space for preserving the cultural identity of the *Maybrat* people, but on the other hand also raises ambivalence: to what extent cultural practices can be maintained without obscuring or even contradicting Gospel values such as justice, equality, and human dignity.

This tension is evident when *Mayo Boyo* is practiced in a modern economic context. A tradition originally steeped in symbolic meaning as a sign of respect, commitment, and interfamily relations often shifts into a transactional practice. In certain situations, a high dowry can burden the groom and his family, potentially even leading to social injustice or interfamily conflict. This is where theological ambivalence arises: does the practice still reflect love and relational responsibility, or has it been reduced to an economic mechanism distanced from its spiritual meaning.

A cultural hermeneutics approach helps interpret this ambivalence by viewing *Mayo Boyo* as a dynamic "social text." According to Paulus Eko Kristianto, the church does not simply accept or reject the practice, but rather interprets it critically in light of the biblical narrative.³² In the dowry tradition, marriage gifts do have a symbolic dimension that affirms relational bonds and moral responsibility. However, hermeneutics also reveals that this symbolic meaning can be distorted when cultural practices lose their spiritual orientation. Thus, the church faces a dilemma: maintain the cultural form for the sake of community identity, or transform its meaning to align with Gospel values.

Another conflict arises in power and gender relations. In some contexts, the practice of *Mayo Boyo* can be misinterpreted as a material "value" for women, potentially reducing them to mere objects of exchange. This contradicts Christian theology, which affirms the equality of men and women as images of God. However, local communities often view this practice as a form of respect for women and their families. This ambivalence demonstrates how a single cultural practice can have dual meanings: both as a symbol of respect and as a potential source of inequality, depending on how it is understood and implemented.

It is in this context that dialogue becomes crucial. The transformation of *Mayo Boyo values* cannot be carried out unilaterally by the church without involving traditional and community leaders. Dialogue creates a space to uncover conflicts of interest, differences in interpretation, and tensions between the older and younger generations. The younger

³¹ Jean Anthoni, Wiesye Agnes Wattimury, and Elisabeth Akwan, "Pengaruh Pembayaran Mas Kawin Terhadap Pernikahan Kudus : The Effect Of Dowry Payment On Holy Marriage," *EIRENE : Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi* 9, no. 1 (August 2024): 01–019, <https://doi.org/10.56942/ejit.v9i1.210>.

³² Paulus Eko Kristianto, "Gereja Dan Kebudayaan," *JURNAL DEKONSTRUKSI* 12, no. 1 (2026): 42–52.

generation, for example, is often more critical of the economic burdens and social implications of this practice, while the older generation sees it as an integral part of cultural identity. The church plays a role as a mediator, not only bridging these differences but also guiding a process of collective theological reflection so that the meaning of *Mayo Boyo* can be reinterpreted more fairly and contextually.

Thus, the transformation of *Mayo Boyo* cultural values from a contextual theological perspective is a non-linear process, but rather filled with tension, conflict, and ambivalence. However, it is precisely in this dynamic that contextual theology finds its relevance. The Church is called not to eradicate tradition, but to critique, purify, and transform it so that it remains rooted in cultural identity while reflecting Gospel values. Through an ongoing dialogical and hermeneutical process, *Mayo Boyo* can be reinterpreted not as an economic burden or a symbol of transaction, but as an expression of commitment, responsibility, and a loving relationship that glorifies God and strengthens social harmony within the *Maybrat* Christian community.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the practice of *Mayo Boyo* (dowry) among the *Maybrat* tribe in Jayapura City is not merely an economic customary mechanism, but rather contains complex social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions and has an integrative function in maintaining inter-family relations, community identity, and social structure. In the context of Christian theology, this practice cannot be rejected simplistically, but needs to be read as a "cultural text" that has values that can be encountered with the principles of the Gospel, such as responsibility, respect, and commitment in marriage. However, this study also emphasizes that without a process of critical theological reflection, the practice of *Mayo Boyo* has the potential to experience distortion of meaning into an economic burden or even the commodification of women. Therefore, the author's argument emphasizes that contextualizing Christian theology through a dialogical and transformative pastoral approach is a relevant path to reinterpreting this practice so that it remains culturally meaningful while being in harmony with the values of the Christian faith.

Based on the discussion, it can be emphasized that the church has a strategic role as a mediator between the Gospel and culture in directing the practice of *Mayo Boyo* toward a more just, humane, and theological form. This contextualization does not mean eliminating cultural identity, but rather purifying, restructuring, and transforming values that are inconsistent with the principles of love, justice, and human dignity. Thus, the practice of *Mayo Boyo* can be maintained as part of the *Maybrat* people's cultural heritage, but with a new, more reflective and contextual meaning in light of the Christian faith. This also emphasizes that the encounter between the Gospel and culture is not a space of conflict, but rather a creative space for presenting a living, relevant, and grounded faith in the realities of local communities.

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