

## SYNCRETISM ON CATHOLIC SYMBOLS IN THE INVULNERABILITY RITUALS IN WEST BORNEO

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### ABSTRACT

*Catholic churches highly appreciate human customs and cultures to recognize ways for humans to express and develop their humanity. They often include elements of art and culture in liturgical symbols as a form of expressing faith in God. Many liturgical songs use ethnic songs, images and building form with certain traditional and cultural motifs. This study aims at examining the use of Catholic religious symbols by a group of Catholic Youths in West Borneo in practicing invulnerability. The practice actually experienced a mix that creates a religious syncretism and is contrary to the Catholic faith. The work focuses on the use of Catholic religious symbols in the preservation of Dayak customs in West Borneo, the view of the leadership of the Catholic Church on the use of Catholic religious symbols to preserve Dayak customs in West Borneo. This study used a qualitative method with the instruments of Interview and Questionnaire. Some people used church symbols in invulnerability rituals, especially during Dayak cultural activities, such as the cross symbol, the Rosary, statues of Jesus/Mother Mary in various sizes. In addition, they also used Catholic prayers to open with the sign of the cross, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Prayer I Believe. From the church's perspective, invulnerability knowledge is local wisdom that needs to be appreciated. However, it is contrary to the teachings of the Church and is inappropriate to the intent and purpose of their existence.*

**Keywords:** Syncretism; Catholic Symbols; Invulnerability Rituals; West Borneo

### INTRODUCTION

The Catholic faith syncretism with local culture has received in-depth and sometimes controversial studies. It happened because the Catholic Church

claims to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, whose teachings came from Sacred Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium. Adherents believe that Catholic faith as a religion that maintains the purity of its teachings. Meanwhile, in the development of human culture, the Catholic faith encountered different cultures. The Catholic faith encounter with a local culture, consciously or not, has led to syncretism. Syncretism means to unite differences and conflicting beliefs regardless of whether they are right or wrong (Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, 2000: 83). In this study, we tried to describe the results-based obtained data from several regencies and cities. This might have never been explored by the previous researchers, so this was the only case of syncretism that occurred between religion and culture in Dayak communities.

One of the Dayak community traditions practiced by a Group of Catholic Youths (OMK) in West Borneo (also known as West Kalimantan in Indonesian government administration) is the preservation of Dayak customs. Preservation of Dayak customs is a form of social activity in the form of traditional ceremonies. The results of the preliminary study showed that there was a syncretic ritual in which OMK used Catholic religious symbols such as crosses, candles, rosaries, The statues of Jesus and Mary and offerings. Those objects used the ritual aim to get supernatural beings such as spirits of ancestors, creatures to guard certain places or for other purposes. From the theoretical point of view, the preservation of Dayak customs includes syncretization in terms of forms of worship, customs and religious practices (Petrus Citra, 2007:41). This traditional ritual activity using Catholic religious symbols to gain invulnerability (can be categorized as syncretism) is carried out by a group of (several) young people in West Kalimantan, some of whom are Catholic.

Using religious symbols in the practice of invulnerability violates the primacy of worshiping God. Those who are involved in the ritual have been baptised Catholic, meaning that they have violated the baptismal promise to God and the Church. A Catholic catechist (KGK 2117) teaches us: *“All practices of sorcery, by which people wish to subdue supernatural powers so that they may serve them and to gain some supernatural power over others – even if it is only to give them health – grossly violate the virtue of worshiping God. Such acts need to be condemned even more seriously if they lead the intent to harm others or to try to enlist the help of an evil spirit. In addition, talismans do not need to be used . Spiritism is often associated with divination or magic. Therefore the Church warns the faithful not to follow this custom. The application of so-called natural healing powers does not justify the appeal to evil forces nor the exploitation of other believers.”*

Life problems will lead us to depend on God and rely on Him. It is that we do not rely on our own strength, even not on supernatural powers. If we act like that, we will turn away from God, and God is really displeased (cf. Jer. 17:5). Actually, the Catholic Church highly honors human customs and culture because it recognizes that they are a way for humans to express and develop their humanity. In fact, they often include elements of art and culture in liturgical symbols as a form of expressing faith in God. There are a lot of liturgical songs with ethnic songs, pictures and building shapes with pure traditional and cultural motifs. Integrating cultural elements into religious practice in the Catholic Church is called inculturation. According to Artantio, inculturation is: “the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the local culture in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in the elements of the culture concerned, but also becomes a force that animates, directs, and renews the culture concerned, and thereby creating a new unity and ‘communio’, not only within that culture, but also as an element which enriches the universal Church.” In fact, the inculturation practice occurred in religions other than the Catholic Church, for example, the shapes and styles of a worship house with a strong motive and power.

From earlier descriptions it is understood that the preservation of Dayak customs is a syncretic tradition because it is contrary to the Catholic faith and should not be followed by the baptized people. However, people combined cultures with religion. Nevertheless, the solid traditions and culture are still maintained today. The Dayak community still lived in an environment of high customs and culture. The presence of Catholicism does not certainly erase the strong religious beliefs of Dayak tribe, including the belief in the existence of ancestral spirits. In the Dayak thinking concept, customs and culture are almost impossible to separate, because these two things bind a person from birth to death. Therefore, it is interesting to discuss how syncretism occurs in the preservation of the Dayak customs from the point of view of Catholic Theology. The main focus of this research is the mixing of Catholic religious symbols with magical or animistic elements. In line with the explanation in the Introduction, a group of Catholic Youths in West Kalimantan have been practicing invulnerability using Catholic religious symbols. This practice involves a mix that created a religious syncretism against the Catholic faith. Based on this, we drew the following formulation of the problem: How are the Catholic religious symbols used in the preservation of Dayak customs in West Kalimantan? What were Catholic Church leadership’s perspectives on the use of Catholic religious symbols in the preservation of Dayak customs in West Kalimantan? This study aimed to analyze and describe how this group of Catholic Youths in West Kalimantan preserves Dayak customs by

using Catholic religious symbols and explains how the Catholic Church leadership's perspectives on the use of Catholic religious symbols. This study used the qualitative method. Qualitative research presents the social world and perspectives in the world in terms of concepts, behaviors, perceptions, and problems faced by humans. It aims to understand the phenomenon experienced by the research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, and other actions. It was also used to analyze in detail the social problems of people in 7 (seven) districts/cities: Pontianak City, Kubu Raya, Landak District, Mempawah District, Sanggau District, Sintang District, and Sekadau District.

Formerly, Dayak tribe lived in nomadic farming land, adapting to their natural surroundings. A sense of togetherness is built through mutual assistance to each other in the work of land-clearing by slashing, burning shrubs, slaughtering animals until the harvest. After the harvest, Dayak people held a thanksgiving party called "Gawai", a thanks giving to their ancestors or Petara/Jubata. This party is held in May every year taking a big meal from house to house in one village. Dayak people had held fast to their local customs long before the arrival of religion, even until now these customs are still well preserved. The entry of religions such as Catholicism and Christianity brought its own nuances by slowly changing people's behavior. However, customs can be maintained if they do not conflict with the teachings of religion. Dayak tribe maintain them because they are the ancestors' heritage that should be respected and protected. According to KBBI, "*adat adalah suatu aturan (perbuatan dan sebagainya) yang lazim dilakukan sejak dahulu kala, cara berperilaku yang sudah menjadi kebiasaan, wujud gagasan kebudayaan yang terdiri atas nilai-nilai budaya, norma, hukum dan aturan yang satu dengan lainnya berkaitan menjadi suatu sistem*". As mentioned above, part of ancestral heritage of the Dayak tribe is invulnerability. Invulnerability in the Dayak tribe is needed to maintain life. In the past, the power of the Dayak depended on how immune they were to sharp weapons, especially when they wanted to do "Ngayau", looking for 7 (seven) human heads. Even though they already have a religion, Dayak community still preserve their customs and traditions, so in certain moments, they are often use religious ornaments that give rise to pros and cons.

### **THE CATHOLIC SYMBOLS IN INVULNERABILITY RITUALS**

In a religion, the presence of religious symbols has an essential meaning. A religion has the hallmark of it. The Religious symbols convey as a sign with various forms according to the culture and beliefs of each religion. A religion needs symbols to show the existence of its religiosity so that it becomes visible

to the people. For example, the Ka'bah shows Islamic identity, the shape of the cross indicates Christianity, and so on. The symbols produce a certain religious imagery as a fundamental religion. Catholics, for example, refer to the cross of Jesus, the rosary, the sign of the cross, statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. They are part of Catholic values, not cultural values. The symbols have become part of a distinct Catholic tradition. In addition to religion, symbols are also closely related to culture. Geertz said that a culture is a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols passed down through history (Sobur, 2006: 178). A culture is a system of inherited concepts and expressed in symbolic forms. This symbol is a form of communication, perpetuating, and developing knowledge about culture and attitudes towards life. Driyarkara defines culture as the result of humans in processing or following the cosmos/universe (Driyarkara, 2006:717).

In summary, a religious symbol is a sign that provides an overview of the identity of a particular religion, giving birth to certain connotations that lead to teachings, places, times, materials related to that religion. Meanwhile, cultural symbols are signs of cultural forms that are products that come from humans themselves, in contrast to religion, whose sources come from God's revelation. Cultural symbols here are synonymous with locality or culture as local products. Symbols are a characteristic of religion, born out of a belief, from various religious rituals and ethics. A symbol conveys meaning as a sign and forms according to the culture and beliefs of each religion. This cult then generates a system and structure of symbols that can shape humans into homo symbolicum in their religious type or pattern (Hazrat: 2003, 263). As a cult sign, symbols have a deep meaning or literal meaning to a sacred and deep meanings. Meanwhile, as a structured system, symbols have a coherent logic (interrelated) that can be universally interpreted.

One of Dayak community traditions practiced by a group of Catholic Young People (OMK) in West Kalimantan is the ceremony of invulnerability. This invulnerability is a social activity in the form of traditional ceremonies. In ceremony, in addition to preparing Platar, they also use some Catholic religious symbols. The symbols used in ceremony are a cross, a rosary, a statue of Jesus, and a statue of the Virgin Mary. Then, before doing the ritual, people are engaged in the main Catholic prayers such as opening with the sign of the cross, the Lord's prayer, the greeting of Mary, candles, the Penance, and the prayers of I Believe. They believe that the rituals carried out do not conflict with the Catholic religion. The Catholic Church respects human customs and culture because it recognizes that customs and culture are a way for humans to express and develop their humanity such as the ritual of one of the Dayak

cultures.

The informants reported that, Catholic religious symbols are used only by them, because not all who participated in the ritual are Catholic, a few of the are Protestants, followers of Kaharingan beliefs and other religions except Muslims. The Muslims in particular, cannot attend this ritual because the served meat or food is forbidden in their religion. They are just as sympathizers. The use of Catholic religious symbols and the Catholic prayers is an inculturation in which religion and culture cannot be separated. Dayak people are cultured and religious people, so in expressing their personality they must show it to others.

### **THE OFFERINGS IN THE RITUALS**

In traditional rituals, equipments are needed to achieve the goals. The various supporting facilities or ritual equipment are in the form of offerings. Offerings play an important role in the ritual of invulnerability because it is a means of introducing human prayers to the Jubata (God). In Indonesian Dictionary, offerings come from the word serving which means dish (food and side dishes that have been prepared in a place to eat). Moreover, the offering means offering dishes in religious ceremonies by communicating with supernatural powers and offering food and other objects that symbolize the purpose of the communication (KBBI, 1988: 786).

An informan indicates that actually “there is no such thing as a ritual to get invulnerability, but all is an activity to preserve the ancestral traditions of the Dayak community”. It means that it is not solely to gain invulnerable knowledge but to preserve ancestral traditions. If someone gets a strong power, it’s just a bonus, a gift from Jubata (God) because he has a strong belief in what he believes in. Since not all who do it get invulnerability. It is an ancestral tradition that must be passed down from generation to generation as a form of gratitude to Jubata and honored the ancestors. By doing this, someone keeps away from danger, reinforcements, and provide good harvests. Platar needs to prepare in regarding the offerings required to perform these traditional rituals (Crock, Pulut Rice, ordinary rice, yellow rice, eggs, chicken, lime, betel, pork, areca nut, palm leaves, and also nails/metal). This ceremony illustrates the welfare of the Dayak community living in abundance due to the blessings of Jubata (God).

### **TIMES, PLACES AND PROHIBITIONS OF RITUAL**

There is no special place for this ritual to be performed. Because this

invulnerability is obtained by carrying out customs and worshiping God. God will bless them wherever they is. However, based on the informant's account, the place where this ritual was carried out should be a place suitable for prayer, meaning a quiet place away from the noise. This can be done at home or also in the forest. If this activity is done at home, it is usually done by individuals by providing a special place such as in a room. Even though the ritual is carried out at home, all necessary mats are still fully prepared such as Crock, sticky rice, ordinary rice, yellow rice, eggs, chicken, lime, betel, areca nut, palm leaves, nails/metal, and also Catholic spiritual objects such as the cross of Jesus, the rosary, the candle.

If the activity is carried out outside the home, usually by visiting the forest to plant the Pantak Statue in the area. Pantak is a medium that can create a relationship between ancestral spirits (Pama) and their living descendants, as well as a means to honor ancestors (Pama). This shows that Pantak which is a medium for communicating with ancestors is part of the symbol because every communication that uses language or other means is part of the symbols. The manifestation of respect for ancestors (Pama) cannot be separated from the will of the Almighty, because it is part of their belief system.

This media is based on the belief system of the Dayak tribe itself, namely the belief in ancestral spirits and one God. The Dayak people have a belief that humans have a soul and spirit that cannot escape death. This belief is based on the belief in the origin of their life, which comes from nature and will eventually return to nature. Dayak people distinguish between soul and spirit. The soul is the core force of the body, so it can think, feel, and act. Meanwhile, the spirit of humans will go to subayatr/heaven (place of divinity) upon death. For the Dayak tribe, giving a mark of honor to those who have contributed and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the community is an important thing and needs to be actualized and remembered.

Dayak tribe have abstinence that people must comply with or it will be fatal otherwise. Not everyone can have invulnerability knowledge because the taboos are so difficult for ordinary people except for those who have strong determination. People have to keep 5 (five) senses from doing negative things such as eyes (keeping eyes from not looking at indecent things such as porn), nose (not using drugs), ears (not listening to gossip), tongue (not drinking alcohol, not saying dirty words or insulting others), skin (not committing adultery, not stealing from others, not destroying the nature). This prohibited things are usually applied in the life of the Dayak if they want to be a good person. The body's invulnerability from sharp weapons is also used by the community, not as an act of valor or showing off to others. This ritual serves

as a provision for self-defense if one day they encounter an unavoidable fight.

### **KEEPING TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND SELF EXISTENCE**

The customs and wisdom of the traditions take place in the community. They preserve and carry out traditional rituals according to customary provisions and as a form of maintaining the customs and wisdom, to enforce the existing tradition to the next generation. It does not fade with time. They present the form of preserving traditional customs in every sacred event, such as a ritual to gain invulnerability, the matters surrounding their traditional procession and fulfill the traditions that applies in the local community, namely the Dayak community.

In addition, traditional wisdom in the Dayak invulnerability that has a relationship with etiquette issues has become a model, especially for the lives of the people around them. As stated by the informant, each member knows their respective rights and obligations in accordance with the rules and customs, which are called rules, and norms or standards that serve as guidelines. The norms have two kinds according to their contents, namely 1) an order that is a must for someone to do something because the consequences are considered good and 2) a prohibition which is a must for someone not to do something because the result is considered bad (Zulkifli, 2010:18). Norms are binding provisions used as guidelines, arrangements, and controls for appropriate and acceptable behavior (KBBI, 2016:203).

In today's era, the influence of globalization has spread to our country, Indonesia. The entry of globalization can bring a positive or negative effects. As we know, in this era of globalization, there is freedom of relations between nations so that it brings foreign cultures that can slowly shift the local culture of the Indonesian people. It is very worrying that the younger generation is starting to follow current things that are very deviant from civilized character and nature of Indonesian people.

In this regard, every individual or society certainly does not want to lose its identity from its cultural roots. Talking about national identity or ethnic group seems to be traced from the traditions possessed by the ethnic group concerned (Giddens, 2003). In this regard, the understanding of ethnic culture is rich in local wisdom values and discussion of local collective awareness issues that reflect the identity of an ethnic group or nation need to be improved.

### **THE CATHOLIC LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES**

Catholic leaders argued based on the official teachings of the Church. Official



Church documents that are the source of Church teachings do not specifically discuss the Church's attitude towards traditional rituals and other religious rituals (beliefs), even about invulnerability rituals. The documents of the Church contain the perspectives and attitudes towards beliefs and customs (culture) other than the Catholic Church. The informant stated that the Church is very open to existing beliefs, traditions, customs and culture that have been practicing from time to time. This attitude and perspectives of the Church stems from and refers to Jesus Christ attitude" who did not come to abolish the law but to perfect it." "Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish it, but to fulfill it" (Matthew 5:17). Continuing the spirit and positive attitude of Jesus towards the belief of Israel that recognizes the law as a guide for his life, the Catholic Church respects and upholds what is good from human belief and culture for the sake of his nobility. The informant further quoted the Document of the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* §24: "The Church does not reject anything, which in religion is all true and holy. With sincere reverence, the Church contemplates ways of acting and living, principles and teachings, which indeed differ in many respects from what she herself believes and teaches, but not infrequently reflect the rays of truth, which illuminate all people. However, the Church continues to proclaim and is obliged to proclaim Christ, namely "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6); in Him man finds the fullness of religious life, in Him also God reconciles all things to Himself. Thus, the Church urges her sons to wisely and lovingly, through dialogue and co-operation with adherents of other religions, while bearing witness to the Christian faith and life, to recognize, preserve and develop the moral wealth and socio-cultural values.

The Church responses by respecting local beliefs, customs and culture as an attitude reflecting a high sense of tolerance, respected each other and allows other faiths to carry out worship (rituals) as an attitude of worshipping the Almighty. The Church has genuine respect and acknowledges that "it is not uncommon to reflect a ray of truth, which illuminates all people" of beliefs held outside the Catholic Church. The Church recognizes, maintains and develops the wealth of moral, socio-cultural values found in people of other faiths. So the Church always encourages Catholics to dialogue and cooperate with adherents of other religions for the sake of progress and interests.

Regarding the practices and invulnerability rituals in the Dayak communities, the Catholic Church, based on the findings, regarded them as a local wisdom that is highly respected. Each community group has customs that characterize and distinguish it from other communities. In Dayak, one of the wisdoms that has been undergoing from generation to generation is invulnerability.

Traditional rituals with the intention to attain invulnerability, might be taken as long as it is the way to pass on local wisdom and communicating with their ancestors. However, the informant further said that the trend of demanding invulnerability should be out of date. Invulnerability means little if the people are not prosperous. Strive for the welfare and advancement of Dayak community was far more necessary and urgent than pursuing invulnerability. Particularly, if the interest was to seek and practice invulnerability, to the detriment of family, by leaving work and neglecting their responsibilities to provide for their family. Another informant added that the preservation of customs, including attaining invulnerability, was alright but not something absolute. The respect in the Dayak community is not determined by how much they have invulnerability, but rather the extent to which Dayak community contributes to the progress of the wider community. The more Dayaks participate in various fields of life for the advancement and general welfare the more the Dayak community values and respect. Dayak Catholic Youth should empower themselves.

### **INCULTURATION IN CATHOLIC CHURCHES**

Anthropologists define inculturation as the adjustment of a human into a particular culture to become part of that culture. Meanwhile, according to Ansgar J. Chupugco, inculturation is a combination of two different cultures in such a way as to produce a new Christian culture. In this context, the Catholic Church wants to adapt to the local culture and customs based on the area. Here inculturation is a high transformation of indigenous cultural values integrated with Catholicism into different human cultures.

Since Catholicism entered and was accepted by the Dayak community, the religious expression of Catholic Dayak community included elements of Dayak culture in it. Catholic Church inculturated many cultural elements in Dayak communities. The inculturated elements are church building that incorporates typical Dayak carvings, liturgical clothing (clothing for Catholic religious rituals) with Dayak motifs, liturgical music with Dayak nuances, and dance presentations in the Dayak style. Incorporating elements of Dayak culture in Catholic rituals was in line with the Church's teaching as stated in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* art 123: "The Church does not regard any artistic style as unique to itself. But for taking into account the temperament and people situation and the needs of the various Ritus, the Church welcomes the artistic forms of ages, and the carefully managed treasures of art. Also, the arts of time, nations and regions should be allowed to exist in the Church, provided that they serve the sanctity of churches and rites

with reverence and respect. In this way, the arts could combine the voices in a wonderful hymns, in which the accomplished artists lauded to the Catholic faith.”

Based on the finding, referring to the teaching, informant said : “In cultures, there are seeds of salvation so that the Church appreciates the existing customs/ cultures.” It is the reason the Church that lives and develops in the Dayak lands incorporates elements of Dayak cultures into the practice of worship and religious expression of Catholic. For example, the Church appreciates the “Naik Dangau” which is an annual ceremony as a “thanksgiving feast” for the harvests obtained during a year of farming. The thanksgiving ceremony celebrated by the Dayak community every year by the Church is given the meaning of “more” and having a “new” element with a Catholic religious ritual, namely the Thanksgiving Mass (which is official worship in the Catholic Church). It contains gratitude for the fortune and blessings from God in the form of abundant harvests asking for blessed farming for the coming years. It raises cultural ceremonies to a higher and nobler level: they are signs and expressions of gratitude to mercy, inclusion, blessings, and protection from Lord during this one year. “Customary and cultural values” were given a new meaning, blessed, and given a new name by the Church: “Naik Dangau” which then became “Annual Thanksgiving” as an expression of gratitude for His blessings, especially in the form of fortune from the harvest. At first, Naik Dangau or Gawai Dayak was celebrated with parades by walking around the streets of the city. Nowadays, it is observed with the worship of Thanksgiving with a meal together in an atmosphere of brotherhood and harmony. The Symbols, in a certain sense, were outside of Dayak customs in traditional rituals, including the impact/effect on invulnerability. To a group of Dayak, it was a reflection of the openness from Dayak people to other people along with their customs, culture, and beliefs. To Dayak, any good thing that comes is accepted. The symbols by a group of Catholic Youths are considered good tools that prevent invulnerability. There is an assumption that Catholic symbols in the ritual of invulnerability can increase the belief in invulnerability.

### **THE CATHOLIC SYMBOLS AND THE INVULNERABILITY RITUAL**

The existence of religious objects is a must to support religious expression. The Catholic symbols are means and tools to express respect and worship of God, which consist of among others: (a) crosses (in various shapes and sizes), used in a public church service and private worship to help draw attention on crucified Jesus on the cross. (b) Jesus and Virgin Mary statue are a means of worship to help the prayer focus on the personal figure depicted in the statue.

(c) The Rosary necklace is a way to devote to Mother Mary as a model in terms of faith. (d) Candles as a means of worship that symbolize the light of Christ that illuminates life in prayer. It is like a lit candle for a person to be aware of the surrounding environment, they are intended that the person who prays through life will shine with the light of goodness that radiates in attitude and example of life, becoming self-brightness for others. The Catholic symbols are contrary to the nature of their existence and obscured their true meaning. According to the leader of the Catholic Church, the symbols such as spiritual objects, Catholic prayers, the cross, body postures that reflect surrender, and the attitude as a Catholic are a means, infrastructure, and way of expressing his faith in God. It becomes a problem when traditional ceremonies, such as invulnerability rituals, apart from the typical offerings of the Dayak people wear religious symbols.

Furthermore, the invulnerability rituals use and combine symbols and offerings that reflect traditional Dayak symbols as a form of worship to Jubata (God) and respect for ancestors (to teach good" relationships" with the ancestors). The combination of them with offerings is traditional Dayak culture that leads to "deviation" from the nature of the existence and purpose of these symbols. The symbols originally used to glorify and worship God have lost their meaning, serve "only" as objects to gain invulnerability. Moreover, using religious symbols combined with traditional offerings for worship (to Jubata and his ancestors) is considered as a practice of syncretism (a blending of various religious traditions and different beliefs). In this case, according to the informant, the Catholic Church considers this a "problem" that is not "justified." Using the religious symbols coupled with traditional offerings to gain invulnerability reduces the noble meaning for practical purposes. The Church's attitude towards this syncretistic practice departs from the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. For example, the attitude of the Apostle Paul as written in his letter to the Colossians, who responded and addressed the practice of mixing faith in Jesus Christ with beliefs and false teachings and superstitions, which seemed to assume that faith of Christ was not sufficient for their salvation. The Apostle Paul asserted that: "Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead and we are filled in Him, rooted and built up in Him. Therefore keep living in Him, taking root and being built up in Him" (Col 2:6-7). Paul asked his congregation to hold fast and have faith in Christ. There should be no doubt in the power of the saving power of Jesus Christ. Turning to other teachings, not to mention superstition and heresy which also means doubting the salvation that comes from God through Jesus Christ.

Referring to the teachings of the Bible, the informant emphasized that as

one of the Catholic leaders concerned with invulnerability knowledge. “I ask especially Catholic Youths not to join in attaining invulnerability knowledge because there is no Catholic teaching delivering such thing. It is not important that Dayaks should be invulnerable because they have been already empowered.” Furthermore, the informant emphasized that the Catholic Youth must strive to get out of ignorance with a high education, get out of poverty by developing a creative and economically independent, and get out of physical fragility due to illness by maintaining physical and mental health. The situation has now changed. People live in harmony, no more wars between tribes or physical/body invulnerability as a show of strength. The respect of the strong community for the Dayak is not based on it because all humans will die. Appreciation for the Dayak community actually occurs when many members of the Dayak community contribute to bringing progress and prosperity together.

#### **THE HARMONY AND THE UNITY OF THE BELIEVERS**

The Catholic Church leaders explicitly forbid Dayak Catholic Youth to participate in the practice of invulnerability. However, the Catholic Church does not expressly prohibit it. It is understandable that it strives for and prioritizes a humanist approach. Based on this point of view, living in harmony among people is far more important than holding an open “resistance” against those who engage in “deviant” practices. Pastoral considerations (pastor = shepherd, pastoral = shepherding the people) to continuous guidance, through a humanist approach, sincere, selfless service, and awareness should be the main choices to be taken rather than strictly prohibiting the practice of invulnerability, which may lead to a formidable resistance. The Church refers to what Jesus Christ did as a Good Shepherd. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”* *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”* (John. 10: 11-18).

Regarding the case of invulnerability practice using Catholic religious symbols, the Church refers to the text of the Bible above, namely be a good shepherd who wants to save all his sheep and unite them into one flock. The Church welcomes those who took the rituals, imitating the Great Shepherd, who is even willing to sacrifice His life for the salvation of His sheep. Having people on the right path and uniting them into one flock was useful compared to scattering them with a criticizing attitude and language, which results in division. Furthermore, pastoral considerations prioritized the theological reasons and adherence to Church doctrines. Hopefully, through a sustainable approach and development, the violated practices will slowly be corrected and straightened out.

### **THE PRODUCED FRUITS, NOT THE SOWN**

The Church is quite tolerant of those who use the symbols in the rituals. It means the Church does not forbid harshly and decisively because of the produced and good attitudes among Dayak Catholic Youth. Regarding the developing attitude among Dayak people, It needs the maintenance of customs with traditional ceremonies, including the ritual of invulnerability, noble and commendable attitudes, and behavior of Dayak Catholic Youth. For example, they must refrain from being greedy, care for and be sensitive to the needs of others (help each other and be in solidarity), defend and fight for customary rights, stay away from drugs and alcohol, and be more active in prayer and worship.

The Church sees the positive behavior and attitude displayed by the Dayak Catholic Youth in the ritual of invulnerability by combining Catholic symbols in it as good-produced fruits. Invulnerable power as a goal is not to damage or even show off the strength. It is not a final goal to pursue. All traditional activities directly foster a love for local culture, exploration the values of customs and as an expression of local wisdom. In reality, for example, young people dare to appear united in defending the rights of indigenous peoples. In several cases of injustice experienced by indigenous peoples, these youths dared to be the pioneers to voice it. This youth group fought to free farmers imprisoned in Sintang city, accused of being the perpetrators of the forest burning and shifting cultivation. What happened was that the palm oil companies were the perpetrators because they considered it the easiest and cheapest way to clear land. In another case, the youths urged one of the politicians to apologize and express his regret for being deemed to have insulted Dayak customs. Finally, the Church felt the need to open dialogue and cooperation with Dayak youth groups, who tried to pursue physical invulnerability with the ritual of invulnerability. The Church and the group need to have the same perception

about the invulnerability rituals. The Church realizes that the way Catholic Youths preserve customs, including seeking physical invulnerability is part of the local wisdom of the Dayak community. On the other hand, they need to realize the church teachings are based on the doctrines. It only allows the symbols to be worn for the beneficial purposes.

## CONCLUSION

The use of Catholic religious symbols in invulnerable rituals involves preparing the platform, the typical offerings and the Catholic symbols. The Catholic religious symbols are the cross, the rosary, the candles, the statue of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The rituals begin with the prayers of the Catholic Church for opening with the sign of the cross, the Lord's prayer, the greeting of Mary, the Repentance and "I Believe". The Dayak people believed the rituals do not conflict with Catholicism. The invulnerability ritual is an inculturation of religion and custom. They are human beings who are civilized and religious, so in self-expression, they must show people that they are civilized and religious. The Church leader stated that Catholic symbols in rituals are reflected in the attitudes. To combine them with offerings regarding the use of the traditional symbols in an invulnerability ritual is a form of "deviation" of the nature of the existence and purpose of these symbols. Religious symbols originally used to glorify and worship God have become lost in meaning, where they serve "only" as objects to gain invulnerability. Above all, using religious symbols combined with traditional offerings for the purpose of worship (to Jubata and his ancestors) is regarded as a syncretism practice (a blending of various religious traditions and different beliefs). However, in order to maintain harmony and unity, the Church does not expressly prohibit it. Hopefully, the continuous guidance and assistance will be able to provide awareness for Catholic Youths to avoid practicing syncretism. As believers of Jesus Christ, combining the culture with the Catholic faith is forbidden because the ceremonies or events welcome other spirits (Jubata and ancestors spirit) besides Holy Spirit. The ritual with the Catholic symbols, services and offerings is not allowed by Jesus Words because it tends to invite another power or spirit.

The Catholic symbols or Catholic prayers in traditional rituals are not advisable for the Catholic Youths (OMK) because they contradict the nature of their existence and obscure their true meaning. It is hoped that there will be guidance for OMK from an early age to anticipate the misuse of the symbols. There must be dialogue between Catholic church leaders and conservationists of Dayak culture, especially practitioners of the rituals, to straighten out how the Catholic symbols should be used properly.

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