

# The Internalization and Interpretation of Bible Teaching through the Tradition of Picking Up Nutmeg Seed in the Booi Congregation

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**Abstract**— This article shows the meaning of the Bible-based ecclesiastical teachings as the Word of God in an effort to fulfill the needs of the poor in the congregation of Booi village through the tradition of picking up the nutmeg seeds. The fulfillment of the needs of the congregation of the country Booi is sourced from nutmeg (nutmeg seeds and flowers/nutmeg). The result shows that although nutmegs have very high economic value and are the main source of income for Booi congregation, evidently they always leave nutmegs to “poor people” (widows and orphans) when harvesting. This behavior allows every member of the congregation to continue to survive in an effort to meet the needs of their life even though the *dusun* (farmland) is not theirs. In addition, this phenomenon also provides opportunities for the development of rural community industries. The tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds is also influenced by the process of internalization and interpretation of Christian teachings depicted in the Book of Deuteronomy. For Deuteronomy, knowing and loving God means loving others and being fair to them. Deuteronomy 24:19-21, clearly shows concern to the poor and becomes the law for the life of the people. “When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands (NIV).” This law is intended to the landowner so as to enable the poor to survive without asking for mercy.

**Keywords**— *internalization, interpretation, tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The lives of rural communities are still influenced by the environment in which they work, even as a place to fulfill their household needs. Their lives are often identified with poverty though in reality the environment in which they live is surrounded by abundant natural resources. The activities of rural people’s life are still strong with the interaction among fellows wrapped in the attitude of mutual help, tolerance and kinship including customs, habits and traditions in utilizing natural resources that exist around it based on the experience and inheritance of the previous generation.

Booi village community is an indigenous people who still practice tradition in the process of exploiting natural resources to fulfill their home needs. One of those practices is the tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds. This practice has been passed down from generation to generation. The existence of

the tradition of picking up is inseparable from the ownership of the farmland inherited to the boys (patrilinealistic) based on the paternal lineage. Because of this inheritance system, women are very vulnerable to lose assets and even their income sources, especially women who have become widows.

The empirical data shows that, in general, Booi community is a Protestant Christian community which is marked by the only worship house, the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM). The existence of the church will certainly influence the behavior of the Booi community, including the behavior of the utilization of their natural and economic resources. After understanding the reality mentioned above then, this writing focuses on the utilization of tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds and how the community of Booi village interpret the process of internalization and interpretation of Protestant Christian teachings into the tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds?

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research using phenomenology approach. The phenomenology approach is a qualitative research tradition that focuses on human experience. Life experiences are used as a tool to understand better the socio-cultural, political or historical context in which the experiences take place. Thus, the author uses phenomenology to understand the meaning of the traditional behavior of picking up nutmeg seeds in Booi domestic community.

This research will be conducted in the Booi village, Saparua Island. The considerations of the selection of Booi village are as follows: 1) Booi village is known as a spice-producing village (nutmeg and cloves); 2) The main livelihood of Booi community is as farmers, and the main source of farmers’ household income is nutmeg. Sources of data in this study were obtained from: Primary data, obtained through field observations and interviews. While secondary data, obtained from research reports, books, internet and available government official documents.

Data collection is done more emphasizing on “process” than “result”, therefore the data taken as the material of analysis will follow the process of society in utilizing nutmeg plants as their livelihood. The data taken is the emic data (emic perspective), that is seen in human, perception, attitude and belief. The process of collecting data in this research will use

several methods, among others: First, interview without using questionnaire (unstructured). With a view to exploring the problem in depth, how the attitudes and perceptions of Booi domestic community are related to the tradition of sharing nutmeg seeds. In addition, unstructured interviews are also used to avoid mistakes (inappropriate questions can be changed during the interview process). Second, field observations, to extract data or information from information sources, events, places or locations and image recording.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Dusun as a place of sharing

“Pala is the eternal treasure of Booi people” (PH, 60 years old, farmer). The above sentence describes in full the meaning of nutmeg for Booi community that the informant disclosed during the research took place. Nutmeg (*myristica fragrans*) in the domestic community is the main source of income as well as the majority plant within their own *dusun* (farmland). Talking about nutmeg in the view of Booi community is not about fulfilling the life needs of the *dusun* owners but also about meeting the needs of other people’s household life (not the owner of the *dusun*). This phenomenon is illustrated in the activity of picking up nutmeg seeds that have fallen on the ground based on tradition “on the tree belongs to the owner and under the tree belongs to everyone”.

Picking the nutmeg seeds in Booi community is only for widows and orphans who in the community view are parts of the “*orang kurang*” (poor people) in order to fulfill their household needs, as the following informant narrates:

*“About nutmeg, we are not just talking about ourselves but also about others. I have a nutmeg plantation, but someone else can fulfill his life needs in my garden. In Booi known by the term, “on the ground it belongs to everyone, on the tree it belongs to the owner”. It had been arranged by our ancestors, we just follow the tradition for a good life in the future.”* (PH, October 2017)

The informant’s description above shows that the *dusun* of nutmegs is not only used by *dusun* owners, but others can fulfill their needs by conducting activities on the *dusun* in Booi village territory. This was further reinforced by other informant explanation:

*“Nutmeg is the source of life for himself and others ... it is a blessing. We live in this world is not alone, there are others too. If the nutmeg has fallen on the ground, anyone can take the nutmeg; it is the right of the person while the remains in the tree are mine. It has been arranged from the past until now.”* (JP, December 2017)

The utilization of the *dusun* as a place of fulfillment of their needs in the explanation of informants above implies that, the activity can occur due to the tradition of Booi community that have existed since the past and continue to be practiced until now. This tradition in their view only applies to fellow members of Booi’s domestic community and does not apply to “*orang dagang*” (outsider of Booi community). This was emphasized by informants after they found “*orang dagang*” conducting activity in the territory of Booi village and the activity was a violation of Booi village border.

#### B. Women the collectors of nutmeg seeds

Activities of picking up nutmeg seeds by women starting from “*buka siang*” (day open) by first preparing the needs of family members. The writer’s observation, the activities of female nutmeg collectors are not organized but when they begin to go to the *dusun* of nutmegs, they have their own place to wait for their friends (other female nutmeg collectors). Each group usually consists of 4-6 people. The trip to the nutmeg village they travel for 40 minutes to 1 hour on foot. Sometimes they give each other information about the selling price of nutmeg or buyers that give a “good” price. Equipment for picking nutmeg seeds are only a knife and a pouch as a container to hold nutmeg (the pouch can be a plastic bag / crackle or a bag of woven bamboo). Every now and then it appears that each woman is looking and “*mencakar*” the dry foliage just to make sure there is a nutmeg around their path.

The tradition of picking up their nutmeg seeds is not limited to certain *dusun* (eg, having a familial relationship with the owner of the *dusun*), but applies to all *dusun* in Booi’s “*petuanan*” (territory) without any prohibition from the owner of the nutmeg farmland.[1] They are free to enter each *dusun*. Sometimes they meet the owner of the *dusun* of nutmeg and mutual greeting happened between them. Starting from just asking for news to give each other information related to the existence of “*orang dagang*” in the village on a few days earlier. There is no objection from the owner of the *dusun* to the presence of female nutmeg collectors. The activity of picking nutmeg seeds that have fallen on the ground is a custom (tradition) among fellow “children of the land.” As the informant narrated below:

*“I am free to pick up nutmegs seeds in every farmland ... the owner of the village never forbade me. This is a tradition that we Booi people have, in other villages not like this ... I have to keep the owners’ trust by not picking up the nutmeg still in the tree, even though the nutmeg is ‘split’ it is not mine, it belongs to me if already fallen on the ground.”* (SN, July 2017)

Based on the experience of the informants above, there is trust and respect for the property of others (in the tree belongs to the owner of the village). This behavior according to informants is a guarantee for them to be able to pick up nutmeg seeds again in the future. The length of time required to collect the nutmeg depends on each women. For them the longer they are in the *dusun* of nutmeg, then the opportunity to get the nutmeg grow bigger.[2] Usually the average time they require ranges from 2-3 hours per day and this activity can be done as much as 2 times a day. Sometimes the behavior of the female nutmeg collector is economically contradictive in their activities, for example, they are willing to show the location of nutmeg or nutmeg tree that they have not picked up on others who picked up a little. They believe that this behavior will bring a blessing to him in the future.

### C. *The Potential and Reality of Community Life in Utilizing Nutmeg*

The nutmeg plant is the majority plant in the *dusun* of Booi people community as well as their main source of income with total production of nutmeg per year is 10.5 tons. Overall the area of nutmeg plant is 13 hectares of the total 31 hectares of plantation cultivated traditionally by the people community of Booi. With such great potential, it is unfortunate if the utilization pattern is limited to nutmeg seeds and maces (flower). The nutmeg flesh that has the largest composition of the nutmeg itself is not used at all. Yet by utilizing the waste of nutmeg fleshes that considered as garbage can bring additional income to the local community and provide opportunities for the establishment of home industry with the diversification of processed nutmeg products that can increase the value added products, and provide employment opportunities for local communities.

As a traditional village, Booi community still maintains and practices culture in their daily lives including traditions or customs in fulfilling their household needs. One of the traditions is picking up nutmeg seeds that are only intended for widowed women and orphans. This tradition is motivated by the awareness of the Booi community that, not all members of their community have a *dusun* of nutmeg. This is what drives them to share nutmeg seeds. In its development, this tradition not only shows the relation between the owner of the *dusun* and the female nutmeg collectors as the users of the *dusun*, but the social relation is also framed amongst the collectors of nutmeg seeds which gave birth to the sense of solidarity. The behavior is reflected in the attitude of leaving the farmland or showing the location of nutmeg seeds for women that the result of picking up is still small.

In the economic view, of course this behavior creates a contradiction in terms of their economic interests. On the one hand, they are required to meet the needs of their household life and on the other hand, they still show their solidarity behavior. The author views the behavior of women's solidarity in the tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds is not only related to helping each other in lightening the burden of each other, but there is hidden rationality underlying the behavior. They believe that the current goodness they do, they will reap the next time.

### D. *The Internalization and interpretation of Bible teaching in the tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds*

The empirical findings show this tradition has existed for a long time. This behavior is "allegedly" influenced by the entry of Protestant Christianity (ca. 1600-1630) in the land of Booi village brought by the Dutch. This caused the entire community of Booi village is Protestant so that the above understanding of course can not be separated from the influence of the church based on Bible teaching. The views in the empirical findings imply an understanding of Booi community of Bible-based church teaching, such as the nutmeg harvesting process at the time of nutmeg season only once and the activity of picking nutmeg seeds for women (widows and orphans).

The behavior of the Booi community in the tradition of picking up the nutmeg seeds shows the "obedience" which is reflected in the mutual sharing of nutmeg seeds with others in an effort to fulfill their household needs. The behavior of Booi domestic community indirectly shows the "face" of Israel's obedience to its appearance. The book of Deuteronomy shows that as the basic point of life of ancient Israel. In the book of Deuteronomy there are four discourses of Moses to Israel who taught advice. This book aims to encourage Israel to obey the law. Advice to obey is at the heart of the book of Deuteronomy, as it appears in Deut. 29:1.

This counsel was changed in the form of a covenant between God and Israel. Ancient customs and laws governing mutual relationships between nations are the proofs to their obedience to God. For Deuteronomy, knowing and loving God means loving others and doing justice to others. This is also found in the New Testament for example; Mark 12:29-31 and I John 4:7-12 which gives new values and importance of obedience. Deuteronomy is very concerned about the lives of the poor.[3] In Deut.24:19-21 it clearly shows concern to the poor. This concern seems to be the law for the life of the people at that time. "When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands" (NIV).

This law is addressed to those affluent landowners and asks that they not be too stingy in the harvesting process. This will allow poor people to survive without asking them to accept compassion. They should work to support themselves. Deuteronomy reminds the rich men that the Israelites used to have slave status if God was not merciful to them. This law provides an opportunity for the poor not to receive help or compassion from others, but they will work to get results by taking the not taken by the owner of the field.

Deuteronomy 24:19-21 is about to declare the God of Israel, Yahweh who is always solid with the presence of the poor. This revelation of God clearly commands those who wish to harvest in order to keep the rights of the women of the widow, the poor and the stranger. This means that these people are classified as weak people in a society that need help. This law or command has been done for generations by the Israelites who want to harvest, because beside that command God also gave a guarantee of blessing that God will bless those who do His will also their work. On the basis of the blessing of God and the faithfulness of Israelites to God, this way of life is still held by the Israelites. Every harvest is done, the landowner always pay attention to the rights of the poor, widows and strangers as commanded by God. It is this act of obedience that blessed them in every harvest season.

The law of Deuteronomy was a reference to the action of Ruth.[4] Ruth was a Moabite woman, in the days of Israel's judges. Ruth married Mahlon (Ruth 4:10), Elimelech's eldest son and Naomi of Bethlehem-Judah, who came to Moab by hunger. The danger of hunger was God's judgment on the people of Israel. When Naomi became a widow Ruth was determined to be with her, and decided to worship God. After returning to Bethlehem, Ruth asked Naomi's permission to go to the field to pick grains of barley into Boas's land (Ruth 2:

2), for at that time the harvest season of barley started. Naomi and Ruth were poor, they had no livelihood, so Ruth was going to the fields and would follow the barley stalks from behind, looking for the grains that had escaped the hands of the sorcerers. Such acts are indeed permitted in the law (see Lev. 19:9, 23:22; Deut. 24:19).

What Ruth did described how the people of Israel kept God's laws and ordinances in the process of a harvest. The rights of widows, the poor and foreigners continued to receive attention from the owners of the fields and surrounding communities. The owners of the fields never harvested their crops until they were finished, they still provided the rights of the poor as God has commanded them. This obedience in giving in the harvest kept God blessed their work. The Israelites with a genuine awareness and obedience to God believed that by doing the will (tradition) commanded by God, God will bless every effort. This Old Testament tradition has become the fulfillment of the New Testament and the pattern of the ministry of Jesus as it is in the Law of Love (Mark 12:30-31) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your might. And the second is: love your neighbor as yourself." God teaches Christians how to love God, which is by loving others.[5]

Giving to the poor, strangers, and widows will certainly not make people suffer losses or shortcomings, but in their obedience to God they will live in abundance and blessings, not lacking, but sufficient.[6] Sufficiency has one meaning. Sufficiency comes from word base sufficient. Sufficiency has a meaning in the noun so that sufficiency can state the name of a person, place or all things. Sufficient noun (*autarkeia*) noun in the New Testament is used only in 1 Timothy 6:6 (but Paul uses his adjective form for himself in Philippians 4:11). This word, used by the Stoics, describes a "perfect state of being where there is no need for help and support". The word ability (*hikanotes*) in 2 Corinthians 3:5 refers to "the competence to do something". These two terms are not the same; someone may have that one without having another.

One of the sufficient concepts in the Bible can be seen in 2 Cor. 9:8 "And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." In 2 Cor. 9:5-15, Paul presents a theological and biblical basis for his demand on financial matters. Generosity has its own value. Anyone who gives freely will benefit from the same gift. Paul reflects Jesus' teaching on the use of talents and about the measurement, with which a believer is asked to share. God is not limited in giving gifts. The task of the faithful is to reflect God's mercy in the concerns of the poor while acting as God's servants. This form of justice requires faith in the infinite source of God. All these acts of sharing are driven by the desire to proclaim the name of God and express their due gratitude to God.

From the biblical basis above, it can be concluded that God is not limited in giving blessings and gifts to His people, therefore with others in need. Giving to the needy will not make us lacking, or others become excessive, but by giving or sharing to people in need God will always provide all our needs. Being sufficient in this context means not being

excessive and not lacking. Understanding the concept of sufficiency will make people more grateful and continue to share. Because, by giving we are blessed, and people who receive help are not lacking but sufficient.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The above findings indicate that:

a. The tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds has been long rooted in the life of Booi domestic community and is still practiced today. The tradition is not limited only to the personal or large family farmland (*dusun*) but to every farmland in Booi village territory. The experience of Booi domestic community shows that women's dependence on this tradition is enormous and has provided them with sustainable livelihoods. In this case, the authors view there is informal insurance that guarantees the income of women, so that the fulfillment of household needs can be fulfilled all the time.

b. The nutmeg plant is the majority plant in the *dusun* (farmland) of Booi people community as well as their main source of income with total production of nutmeg per year is 10.5 tons. Overall the area of nutmeg plant is 13 hectares of the total 31 hectares of plantation cultivated traditionally by the community of Booi village. From the industrial side, this harvesting capacity provides opportunities for the establishment of home industry, the diversification of nutmeg products and the opening of employment.

c. The tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds in the community of Booi village was influenced by the church through the process of internalization and interpretation of Protestant Christian teaching. Their behavior in the tradition shows their "obedience" which is reflected in the mutual sharing of nutmegs seeds with others in an effort to meet the needs of their household lives. The behavior of Booi domestic community indirectly shows the "face" of Israel's obedience to its appearance. The book of Deuteronomy shows that as the basic point of life of the ancient Israelites that taught advices. This book aims to encourage Israel to obey the law.

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