MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Forum Kajian Pendidikan Keagamaan NTT
Jalan Elt Tari, KM 9, Desa Naiola, Kecamatan Bikomi Selatan, Kefamenanu
Home Page: https://multidisciplinaryjournal.ejurnal.org/index.php/mdj

OPEN ACCESS

From Practice to Meaning: A Study of Parishioners' Understanding of the Kure Tradition in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Noemuti

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Abstract

This study examines the understanding of parishioners at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Noemuti regarding the impact of the kure tradition on their faith formation. As a devotional practice rooted in ancestral heritage, kure functions as both a religious expression and a means of shaping community identity. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving priests, catechists, lay leaders, and parishioners across different generations. The findings reveal a generational gap in understanding. Older participants interpret kure as a meaningful liturgical and spiritual act, while many younger individuals regard it as a cultural formality. This disparity reflects challenges in the transmission of faith and a weakening of symbolic theological literacy. Nevertheless, the tradition remains a significant space for inculturation, embodying Christian themes such as intercession, thanksgiving, and communal worship. Kure serves not only as a ritual of memory and faith continuity but also as a pedagogical tool for contextual theology. To preserve its relevance, the kure tradition requires collaborative pastoral efforts that integrate liturgical education, inclusive participation, and creative adaptation to current cultural and generational dynamics.

Keywords: Catholic Faith, Catholic Liturgy, Devotional Heritage, Inculturation, Kure Tradition.

Introduction

Religious belief does not emerge in a cultural vacuum but develops in tandem with the social and cultural dynamics of the communities in which individuals live (Beyers, 2017). Faith that becomes detached from a community's cultural context risks losing its relevance and depth, given that religious identity is often mediated through collective experiences shaped by local traditions. Within this framework, understanding faith involves examining the specific ways in which religious expressions are closely intertwined with the cultural heritage of a community. The *kure* tradition among Catholics in Noemuti represents a concrete example of how local cultural practices can embody profound theological significance (Waruwu & Rumengan, 2023).

As a form of inculturation, *kure* serves not only as a symbolic expression of local spirituality but also as a means of religious transmission and communal identity formation (Manalu, 2021). In many communities, traditions rooted in ancestral heritage continue to shape how faith is lived, practiced, and internalized. For the Catholic community in Noemuti, *kure* is more than an expression of collective gratitude; it also serves as a medium for spiritual engagement that strengthens both social and religious bonds within communal life. This perspective highlights the importance of expressing the Gospel through cultural symbols that resonate with local realities (Gunawan, 2014).

In its theological dimension, faith is not merely defined as intellectual assent but as a personal response involving surrender and commitment to God. The terms *pistis* in Greek and *fides* in Latin both emphasize an existential trust in divine revelation (Ballano, 2020). This relational character of faith is reflected in the idea that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Therefore, faith is understood not only as agreement with doctrine but also as a spiritual disposition made manifest through lived experience, including participation in cultural rituals such as *kure* (Donders, 2013).

Considering that faith experiences are consistently interwoven with cultural practices, local devotional expressions such as *kure* can be seen as spaces where religious symbols and communal experiences converge. Lived religion is deeply influenced by the symbolic systems and cultural structures in which it is embedded (Wahab, 2011). As such, *kure* functions not only as a theological expression but also as a pedagogical space for transmitting the values of faith through experience-based catechesis. Contextual theology integrates cultural continuity with transformation, allowing practices like *kure* to become distinctive and locally relevant articulations of Catholic faith (Bevans, 2020).

As a pedagogical instrument, religious traditions such as *kure* play a crucial role in transmitting faith to younger generations. Ritual practices have the capacity to embody theological concepts in tangible experiences that can be communally interpreted (Gariba & Assenyoh, 2023). In the context of Noemuti, *kure* not only reinforces the spiritual bonds among the faithful through prayer and symbolic repetition, it also affirms historical continuity that links past and present generations. Ritual serves as a bearer of memory and a sustainer of religious meaning across time, while also reinforcing social cohesion within the liturgical cycle (You & Ji, 2023).

The theological meaning of the *kure* tradition can be examined through its explicit and implicit objectives. Explicitly, this tradition involves acts of thanksgiving, communal prayer, and congregational participation in devotional activities that reflect Christian liturgical values such as the Eucharist and communal worship. Implicitly, *kure* functions as a remembrance of ancestral lineage and as an actualization of collective memory concerning divine providence, echoing the faith heritage of earlier sacred traditions (Rukiyanto, 2019).

The aspect of obedience to divine will forms a vital element in scriptural understandings of faith. The stories of figures such as Abraham, Joshua, and Samuel illustrate that genuine faith entails concrete responses in the form of action. In the Gospels as well, faith is closely linked to the act of listening to and fulfilling the word of God. Within this theological context, *kure* should not be perceived merely as a cultural expression but rather as a theological response that signifies the community's participation in the narrative of divine salvation (Nugroho, Milyartini, & Sukmayadi, 2022).

Furthermore, the anthropological roots of *kure* add depth to its theological interpretation. The term *kure* is likely derived from the Latin *currere* (to run) and *cura* (care), suggesting that the practice embodies elements of pilgrimage and spiritual care. In this light, *kure* closely relates to concepts of pastoral care and pilgrimage theology within Christianity. This highlights that the tradition is not passive, but rather a manifestation of the theology of presence, intercession, and accompaniment in the spiritual journey of the faithful (Abdillah, 2023).

Nonetheless, in the context of contemporary theology, inculturation efforts face certain challenges, particularly regarding how younger generations understand religious heritage. A lack of sustained catechetical formation has led to a diminishing understanding of practices like *kure*, which are increasingly perceived as mere formalities. Generational communication gaps also contribute to declining religious literacy, a trend that has begun to emerge within the Noemuti parish.

In response to these challenges, contextual theology offers a faith-learning approach that emphasizes local participation, narrative reflection, and the integration of everyday symbols into religious proclamation. By incorporating *kure* into the liturgical calendar, particularly during the Easter Triduum, the faithful are invited to contemplate themes of suffering, redemption, and communal solidarity in the light of Christian faith. This approach enables the community to live out their faith in ways that remain culturally meaningful.

Therefore, preserving and enriching the meaning of the *kure* tradition requires a pastoral strategy that balances continuity with innovation. Active engagement from both the Church and the local community in reexamining the theological meaning of this ritual is essential for revitalizing religious consciousness, especially among younger generations. Transforming ritual practice into meaningful catechetical experience will help ensure that *kure* does not become an empty form devoid of spiritual substance.

Based on this background, the present study seeks to explore the extent of the Noemuti Sacred Heart Parish community's understanding of the *kure* tradition and how this practice contributes to the development of their faith. Specifically, this research aims to uncover the theological meanings embedded in the *kure* ritual, the community's perceptions of its symbols and spiritual values, and the challenges encountered in transmitting this tradition to the younger generation. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the ongoing development of contextual theology rooted in the religious life of local communities.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach to explore the understanding of parishioners at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Noemuti regarding the *kure* tradition and its influence on their faith life. This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, symbolic interpretations, and religious perceptions within the local context. Informants were purposively selected and included the parish priest, traditional leaders, catechists, youth representatives, and adult parishioners actively involved in the implementation of the *kure* tradition. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines, participant observation during Holy Week, and documentation of ritual activities. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and interpretation of findings based on emerging patterns. Source triangulation was applied to ensure data validity, while ethical research principles such as informed consent, anonymity, and cultural sensitivity were strictly observed.

Research Findings

The findings indicate that members of the Sacred Heart Parish in Noemuti exhibit diverse understandings of the *kure* tradition. Most older parishioners perceive *kure* as an expression of faith deeply integrated into their religious and cultural life. The tradition is regarded as a form of thanksgiving, a means of invoking blessings, and a collective mechanism for spiritual

reconciliation carried out during the Easter season. The house-to-house procession within the Ume Mnasi customary framework reinforces solidarity and renews social bonds within the community.

In contrast, younger generations tend to view *kure* merely as a customary obligation, lacking deeper comprehension of its spiritual or liturgical significance. The absence of structured faith formation and the lack of theological narratives in the transmission of this tradition contribute to declining religious literacy among youth. Additional findings include the dominance of male leadership in ritual practices and the limited involvement of women in spiritual and cultural decision-making processes.

Symbols employed in the *kure* tradition, such as the cross, statues of Jesus, and devotional hymns, are understood by some participants as representations of Christ's suffering and resurrection. However, not all respondents are able to articulate the theological meaning of these symbols comprehensively. Participation in the tradition also fosters a sense of communal identity and belonging, although many younger participants appear to be motivated more by social pressure than by religious awareness.

The *kure* tradition has proven to play a vital role in revitalizing the community's faith life, particularly in the aftermath of crises or shifts in values brought about by urbanization and modernization. Collaboration among priests, catechists, and customary leaders has been a key factor in transforming *kure* into a contextually grounded instrument for faith formation. Nevertheless, migration trends, the dominance of digital culture, and the waning interest of younger generations in local religious traditions pose significant challenges to the sustainability of *kure* in the future.

Discussion

The findings directly address the primary objective of this study, which is to assess the extent to which the parish community of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Noemuti internalizes the *kure* tradition and its contribution to the development of faith. The tradition is not merely practiced as a form of ancestral cultural preservation, but has become an integral part of the community's spiritual life. According to Ballano (2020), cultural expressions of religiosity, when fully embraced, can become vehicles for transmitting theological meaning, which affirms the spiritual depth of *kure* as experienced by the Noemuti community.

The involvement of the older generation in conducting the *kure* tradition reinforces the view that it serves not only to uphold customary practices, but also to facilitate the internalization of Gospel values. As Donders (2013) explains, ritual performance by elders often serves as a bridge between Christian teachings and traditional wisdom, enabling a more embodied expression of faith that unites community and doctrine. This is evident in their solemn execution of the rituals, which unify social and religious elements into a living whole.

This interpretation becomes more compelling when examined through the use of religious symbols during the procession, such as the cross and the statue of Christ, which serve as focal points of communal attention at each station. You and Ji (2023) argue that when sacred symbols are localized within communal rituals, they deepen communal participation by invoking shared memory and identity. These symbols are not merely decorative, but are perceived as representations of divine presence among the faithful.

From a theological perspective, the integration of liturgical symbols into *kure* signifies an authentic process of inculturation. Gariba and Assenyoh (2023) emphasize that inculturation does not dilute the universality of the Gospel, but instead allows for deeper theological reflection through cultural embodiment. In this sense, *kure* functions as a space where divine revelation and community narratives intersect, contributing meaningfully to the development of contextual theology rooted in local spirituality.

However, sustaining the theological and spiritual values embodied in *kure* presents serious challenges, especially in relation to the younger generation. This study found that youth participation is often passive and ritualistic, lacking a thorough grasp of the symbolic meanings embedded in the tradition. This trend mirrors the findings of Eckersley (2007), who noted a growing disengagement among youth toward religious traditions when such practices are not adapted to contemporary modes of communication.

To address this challenge, more innovative and communicative pastoral approaches are needed to accompany the younger generation. Nugroho et al. (2022) observe that religious education that incorporates digital storytelling and visual culture has proven effective in fostering youth engagement with local traditions. Developing catechetical strategies that are not only informative but also participatory is therefore crucial.

Beyond generational challenges, the study also revealed structural imbalances in the involvement of women in *kure* practices. Although women take part in the procession, their roles

remain confined to domestic or supportive functions. In a similar vein, Hasan and Susanto (2021) highlight that religious rituals in traditional societies often reinforce patriarchal roles, thus limiting women's full participation in the life of the Church.

Reflecting on these limitations points to the necessity of developing a theology that is more gender-sensitive and contextual. Abdulla (2018) maintains that authentic Christian community must embody inclusivity at all levels, ensuring that gender is not a barrier to meaningful ecclesial participation. If *kure* is to remain a living and open expression of faith, women's involvement must become substantive in all stages of the practice.

At the same time, social changes resulting from migration, digitalization, and globalization have significantly influenced the performance of *kure*. Abdillah (2023) notes that in many Indonesian communities, digital culture and urban migration have led to a rupture in the intergenerational transmission of cultural-religious knowledge. Young people who migrate or live outside the region are increasingly disconnected from their cultural roots.

As a response to these dynamics, the local Church must develop pastoral strategies and faith education programs that are both flexible and rooted in tradition. As Muge (2023) points out, maintaining the vitality of indigenous spirituality in changing times requires collaborative reflection between faith leaders and community members. Collaboration among clergy, traditional leaders, and youth is thus essential in creating shared spaces for reinterpreting *kure*.

In conclusion, this research affirms that *kure* is a religious practice that not only reflects the faith of the community, but also serves as a living laboratory for the development of contextual theology. As Biar (2023) observes, rituals embedded in local tradition offer theological insights that are both pastoral and transformative when they are critically engaged by the community. Recognizing the complexity of these dynamics underscores the importance of collective efforts to preserve, enrich, and reflect on *kure* as an integral part of the faith life of the Noemuti parish community.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study reveals that the *kure* tradition holds significant value in the faith life of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish community in Noemuti. However, certain limitations affect the continuity of its spiritual meaning. These include the lack of contextual faith formation and the absence of relevant theological narratives, both of which weaken the community's understanding of the practice.

The implications for future research highlight the importance of developing innovative and participatory catechetical strategies, such as those utilizing digital media, visual storytelling, and intergenerational as well as gender-inclusive engagement. Furthermore, subsequent studies are encouraged to systematically explore the dynamics of women's involvement in ritual practices and to examine the impact of social change on the sustainability of contextual theology rooted in local traditions such as *kure*.

Conclusion

The findings of this research affirm that the kure tradition plays an essential role in shaping the religious consciousness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish community in Noemuti. More than a cultural inheritance, kure represents a theological expression that reflects the collective faith experience of the community. The integration of symbolic elements such as processions, prayers, and sacred objects reinforces the relationship between liturgical practice and communal identity. The tradition has become a dynamic space for contextual theology in which Christian values are interpreted through local spirituality. For the older generation, kure continues to offer a means of spiritual renewal and thanksgiving that draws upon ancestral wisdom and biblical reflection.

Despite its significance, the sustainability of kure faces critical challenges due to the declining participation of younger generations, insufficient catechetical instruction, and gender imbalances within ritual involvement. Younger participants often perceive the practice as obligatory rather than spiritually formative, indicating the need for innovative and contextual pedagogical strategies. The Church must foster inclusive and dialogical catechesis that upholds local tradition while encouraging theological reflection. Pastoral initiatives involving youth, women, and community leaders are essential to ensure that kure remains a living tradition that nurtures faith, affirms cultural identity, and strengthens the Church’s mission amid ongoing cultural transformation.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish community in Noemuti, especially to the parish priest, catechists and customary leaders who generously shared their time, insights and lived experiences.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no targeted funding from governmental or charitable sources for the completion of this study.

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