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Normalization of Religious Hegemony as Destructive Narrative and Bio-Politics in Minahasa

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Abstract

This research analyzes the normalization of religious hegemony as a bio-political text in controlling the socio-religious movements of the Minahasa community through political truth. Using a qualitative approach with an analytical-descriptive method, this study analyzes the process of religious hegemony normalization. Data collection is conducted through literature studies. Christianity, as a world religion, has become a bio-political text for religious elites to control and legitimize actions of right and wrong within society through dogma. Normalizing theological narratives as an instrument of the elite has become a sublimated ideology. The religious hegemony of 'Christianity' has shaped a singular episteme (knowledge) and rejected local wisdom texts in the name of Minahasa's traditions. First, the study discusses how Christianity, specifically the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), has formed bio-politics. Second, the sublimation of colonialist ideology continues to be perpetuated by the church. Third, the normalization of religious hegemony results in the marginalization of local knowledge. The conclusion explains that Christianity has been sublimated to form a singular narrative, becoming a tool for elites to legitimize the socio-religious movements of the Minahasa community.

Keywords: hegemony, religion, bio-politics, minahasa



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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis normalisasi hegemoni agama sebagai teks bio-politik dalam mengontrol gerak sosio-religi masyarakat Minahasa melalui kebenaran politik. Menggunakan kualitatif dengan pendekatan analitis-deskriptif untuk menganalisis proses normalisasi hegemoni agama. Pengumpulan data lewat studi literatur. Kekristenan sebagai agama dunia telah menjadi teks bio-politik bagi elit agamawan untuk mengontrol dan melegitimasi tindakan salah-benar masyarakat melalui dogma. Normalisasi narasi teologi sebagai instrumen elit dalam mengontrol kehidupan religi masyarakat Minahasa telah menjadi ideologi yang disublimasikan. Hegemoni agama 'kekristenan' membentuk episteme (pengetahuan) tunggal dan menolak teks atas nama kearifan lokal Minahasa. Pertama, membahas mengenai agama khususnya kekristenan dalam hal ini lembaga Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) telah membentuk bio-politik. Kedua, sublimasi ideologi kolonialisme terus-menerus dilanggengkan oleh gereja. Ketiga, normalisasi hegemoni agama mengakibatkan peminggiran pengetahuan lokal. Kesimpulan menjelaskan tentang agama 'kekristenan' telah tersublimasi dan membentuk narasi tunggal dan menjadi kekuatan para elit melegitimasi gerak sosio-religi masyarakat Minahasa.

Kata Kunci: hegemoni, agama, bio-politik, minahasa

INTRODUCTION

This article dialectically examines religion, particularly Christianity, as a humanistic narrative normalized into an ideological text of power used to control Minahasa society. Religion has shaped a sublimation of the ideology of religious elites while simultaneously representing biopolitics that hegemonizes the collective consciousness of the community. Narratives of violence and hegemony emerge when the presence of conventional Christian religion marginalizes local beliefs, which are often deemed to still adhere to animism and dynamism. Normalizing religious hegemony over local traditions, such as *tumalinga si Koko* (listening to bird calls) and rituals performed at *waruga* (ancient Minahasa tombs), has become a destructive narrative that sidelines this wisdom. The sublimation of the religious elites' ideology through theological texts has naturally created a narrative of superpower that dictates the right and wrong actions of the society. Through the Protestant Church of Minahasa Evangelical (GMIM), as a representation of biopolitics, this normalization of hegemony is perpetuated in theological narratives.

Historically, Minahasa was a region colonized by the Dutch and served as a territory or subject of Christian evangelization through the organization *Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* (Dutch Missionary Society/NZG) (Pinontoan, 2019a). Fundamentally, the NZG institution represented a Protestant Christian tradition rooted in the seeds of the European Enlightenment, which gave rise to the narrative of Christian Pietism, emphasizing piety and rationality (Kaat, 2024). Colonial education introduced world religions, particularly Christianity, as a conventional belief system and successfully reconstructed the traditional beliefs of early Minahasa society. Through Christian education, the colonial approach effectively hegemonized local Minahasa traditions, which were deemed irrational or associated with traditional mythological narratives of *alifuru* (belum ber peradaban). This foundation led early 19th-century Minahasa society to undergo significant socio-cultural and religious transformations (Pinontoan, 2019b) on a massive scale, resulting in an identity

crisis in later periods.

The identity crisis in the Minahasa context is characterized by the narrative of Christianity becoming an elite instrument to control societal actions by defining right and wrong and legitimizing truths based on the production of power. Consequently, local values and *episteme* (knowledge) production are considered valid and rational only when articulated by authorities through their political policies. The practice of normalizing Christianity as a 'super-power' religion in Minahasa has been used by elites to hegemonize societal consciousness and freedom, placing them under the control of ruling powers. This hegemony transforms the church into a form of biopolitics that governs the doctrinal bodies of society, enforcing compliance with theological narratives and ultimately resulting in structural violence. Compliance leads to the subordination or selectivity of local wisdom produced by indigenous communities. For instance, local wisdom that supports the growth of faith is adopted, while that which does not is marginalized.

Previous research has examined the relationship between religion and the state in the Minahasa context, such as Gaby Mandey's article, which explores the state's legal discrimination against local culture-based beliefs (Mandey, 2022). In line with Mandey, Mordekhai Sopacoly also analyzes how the church perpetuated the destruction of *waruga* as a cultural identity of Minahasa (Sopacoly and Lattu, 2019). Meanwhile, Thiosani Kaat examines the aspect of liberation from colonial ideology in the Minahasa context, which is marked by the persistence of imperial political practices (Kaat, 2023). However, previous studies have not addressed how the normalization of religious hegemony, particularly Christianity, has shaped political power or biopolitics, thereby possessing the authority to legitimize the production of cultural knowledge and define right and wrong actions in Minahasa society. The problematic foundation concerning the crystallization of power in the Minahasa context positions this article as a methodological and theoretical basis to uncover the sublimation of the ideology of the ruling elites in a dialectical manner.

This article employs the theoretical concept of Slavoj Žižek to critique the ideology of power that has given rise to a singular truth. Žižek explains that ideology is a fantasy that captivates the social consciousness of society based on mechanisms of religion, doctrine, politics, and economics (Žižek, 1989). Žižek's theoretical foundation is used to examine how the sublimation of power ideology within the structural body of the church has become absolute and tends to practice the politics of truth. This is then combined with Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics. For Foucault, biopolitics is an instrument of power used to discipline human life (Foucault, 1977a). In the Minahasa context, the biopolitical text is the church, which religious elites use to legitimize the right and wrong of socio-religious actions within society.

Based on the previous exposition, this article is grounded in the question: why does the normalization of religious hegemony lead Minahasa society to comply with power? This article addresses three key problematic issues. First, the persistence of imperialist political practices

in the Minahasa context is facilitated through church policies. Second, the marginalization of local Minahasa narratives, as the sublimation of colonial ideology remains entrenched, with religious elites taking control of knowledge production spaces, including regulating the right and wrong actions of society. Third, as an instrument for creating an egalitarian system, the church paradoxically produces destructive narratives that overshadow Minahasa's values of humanism and culture. The conclusion asserts that the normalization of religious hegemony has turned Christianity into a narrative of power that controls the social structure of society through theological texts, thereby presenting the church as a form of biopolitics

RESEARCH SETTINGS

This study uses a qualitative research method with an analytical-descriptive approach to elaborate on the foundational dialectics of meaning arising from problematic situations. The qualitative method is used in the social sciences to extensively and fundamentally explore the social meanings within a given context (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative instrument with an analytical-descriptive approach is the analytical tool for social meaning in the Minahasa context. Data collection consists of literature study and documentation. The purpose of the analytical-descriptive approach is to dialectically analyze the theoretical and methodological data found through literature studies. The comparison of data from the literature study with the phenomenon of the sublimation of power ideology, colonialism, and religious addiction in the Minahasa context is crucial, as religion has become a force controlling the social body of society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Church as Biopolitics: Legitimacy and Ideological Fantasy

The critique of religion in the Minahasa context stems from structural violence perpetrated by religious elites who use religion as the ultimate truth. Religion has taken over discourses of authenticity and freedom of expression from the community, thereby controlling the production of Minahasa cultural knowledge, resulting in epistemicide (silencing knowledge). An example is the discourse surrounding local customs, such as the *rumages* (offering) ritual of thanksgiving, which has been modified with a normative political character or adopted because it supports specific policies. The oligarchic relationship between the state and religion in the Minahasa context is marked by the emotional-political closeness between religious elites and politicians, leading to desecularization (Kaat, 2023). In the dynamics of their intertwined relationship, the religious elites and politicians in Minahasa share an emotional bond that culminates in an oligarchic connection.

The process of desecularization involves the fusion of religion and the state in public spaces to promote their political principles, leading to the crystallization of power (Weigel & Grace, 1999). According to Peter Berger, desecularization causes a society with religious tendencies to uphold religious values more strongly, making it easier for these values to enter

political debates in public spaces (Berger, 2001). The thesis of desecularization, when viewed through the lens of European culture, presents an idealistic perspective. However, in the context of Indonesia, this idealism has become materialized or factual. The first principle, *'ketuhanan yang maha esa,'* already represents how religious Indonesian society is. Meanwhile, the union of religion and state in the Minahasa context has turned Christianity, particularly the GMIM church, into a state church that frequently appears alongside politicians in public spaces.

Historically, Christianity as a world religion that entered and developed in Minahasa can be traced back to the seeds of Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch colonialism. The form of Christianity that arrived in Minahasa during the colonial era was the state religion of Europe, particularly the Netherlands, introduced through the political power of the *Indische Kerk* (Dutch East Indies Church) or the *Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indie*, established by the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) from 1602 to 1800 (Pinontoan, 2019c). 1934, GMIM was established and became an independent church, no longer relying on Dutch assistance. However, GMIM had, in essence, been shaped by Dutch colonial influence, both in its structural organization and theological approach. The narrative of colonialism had ingrained the memory or spirit of colonial civilization into the church's structure through normalization and legitimization, making it difficult to erase permanently. Thus, historically, GMIM has existed alongside the political-bureaucratic framework of colonialism, allowing it to persist as a super-power church in Minahasa.

The religious framework in the Minahasa context has led society to seek value (meaning) from truth and purpose in life, which drives them to comply with regulations in the name of religion. The religious life of the Minahasa people has transformed religion into an institution with the power to regulate social order. This politically-driven truth is, for the religious elites, a tool to legitimize the right and wrong of the socio-religious actions of Minahasa society. The people of Minahasa are generally under the grip of religious elites, with formal and informal actions being controlled by an institution called religion through the church. Essentially, institutions such as the church, which consist of synodal power, are controlled by religious elites through socialization, intersubjectivity, normalization, and legitimization. The purpose of this regulation is to establish that religion is highly effective in controlling the lives of society through normalization.

The church has become a form of biopolitics that facilitates religious elites in controlling the actions of society through theological narratives. According to Foucault, biopolitics is an instrument of finality or authority of knowledge used by power to shape society's consciousness with a tendency toward obedience (Foucault, 1977c). The concept of biopolitics is substantively related to the presence of politics over the biological life of humans, particularly in shaping individual behavior. The political power within the structural body of the church has transformed it into a biopolitical narrative that regulates and engineers the psychological life of individuals. Foucault explains how the method or approach of genealogy can reveal the relationship between power and knowledge, which has given rise to biopolitics

(Foucault, 1977b). The nature of the church, particularly GMIM, consistently permeates the actions of society, making it a form of power that is *omnipresent* (all-present).

The power of the church as biopolitics represents the fantasy or obsession of humans with power, for example, one person's attempt to dominate another completely through structural narratives with doctrinal characteristics. The church is no longer a medium for creating egalitarian spaces. Instead, it facilitates religious elites in creating a culture capitalized by political power within an ideology of control. The historical foundation of GMIM as a European colonial church that developed in the Eastern part of the world presents a cultural, social, political, and economic contrast. According to Gayatri Spivak, Western nations viewed the Third World as inferior, thus turning it into an object for ideological experimentation (Spivak, 1987). The basis of superiority within the church body (as a seed of colonialism) has turned the GMIM institution into a super-power endowed with political legitimacy to marginalize local wisdom narratives.

Religious elites have collectively crystallized their power through mechanisms of transmission. The normalization of power transmission within the church cannot be separated from the colonial construction of both the *walian* (religious leaders) and *tona'as* (political leaders). In the early Minahasa understanding, *walian* were those with knowledge of the metaphysical or spiritual dimensions of life. The *walian* were highly respected in ancient Minahasa society because they acted as intermediaries between heaven and earth. The status of *walian* was redefined into that of pastors, so contemporary Minahasa society adheres closely to the voices of the pastors.

Meanwhile, *tona'as* were primarily social-political leaders in Minahasa who, under colonialism, were transformed into politicians. Contemporary Minahasa society views current politicians as manifestations of the *tona'as* spirit entrusted with leadership. Within every civilization, different ideological fantasies exist. Yet, colonialism modified these based on political interests and the need for power, seeking to control the authenticity of Minahasa's human freedom.

Critique of the Sublimation of Colonialism Ideology: Towards Liberation

The enduring colonial ideology within the social fabric of Minahasa society is the dogmatization of Christianity through its teachings. The dogma in Christianity has been utilized by the powers that be, turning it into a force that controls the social body of society. The dogmatic narratives born from the interpretation of religious elites effectively constrain the substantial freedom of individuals, as they are used for the benefit of the rulers. Christianity and its dogmatization are colonial ideologies still practiced by theologians in Minahasa. Traditional theology represents a method characteristic of colonialism, rooted in Western reflection (Pui-Lan, 2021). The power of dogmatism has caused the sublimation of power through colonial ideology to become enduring and absolute. The sublimation of colonial ideology has confined the cultural consciousness of society within the prison of

dogmatism, which is inherently restrictive. The iron bars that imprison human authenticity are the theological texts modified for the rulers' benefit. Therefore, ideology is a fact, while ideologism, the doctrine of ideology, constitutes a form of injustice.

According to Žižek, criticism of ideology is crucial because it seeks to uncover a hidden social consciousness (Žižek, 1989). Žižek uses this framework to demonstrate how ideology shapes human consciousness and social reality. Ideologies often present themselves as natural, self-evident truths, even though they are constructed systems of belief designed to reinforce existing power structures (Žižek, 1994). The ideological point of enjoyment is an irrational euphoria fantasy because the power of capitalization has distorted it. The sublimation of ideology does not occur unconsciously but is instead systematically and structurally organized, making it difficult to dismantle using traditional approaches. Žižek offers another method to uncover the hidden nature of ideology through a psychoanalytic approach.

Uncovering the concealment of colonial ideology is equivalent to liberating the traumatized consciousness of society from destructive narratives. One of the enduring colonial ideologies within the structural body of Minahasa is the world religion, particularly Christianity (Tooy, 1984). In Žižek's perspective, religion is an ideology that sweeps human consciousness into the realm of fantasy. Religion functions as floating signifiers (symbols of society) through the intervention of master signifiers (primary symbols) by religious elites (Žižek, 2006). Žižek describes ideological critique as a method for the substantive liberation of humans, free from power intervention. Through Žižek's critique of ideology, this article examines how religion, particularly Christianity, represents a destructive ideology because it does not accept truths outside its own discourse (Wattimena, 2011). Christianity, as a belief system introduced by colonialism, continues to practice the culture of imperialist politics and structured democracy.

The power of the elites through the doctrination of formal texts such as sacred scriptures has become an ideological instrument in altering the socio-cultural perspectives of society towards local knowledge. Since the colonial era, when Christianity dominated the socio-cultural life of the Minahasa people, the values of local wisdom have experienced a degradation of meaning due to their reconstruction by Christian theologians with a destructive approach (Lasut, 2022). The discourse of colonialism was once rejected by local elites such as the *tona'as* and *walian* because it indicated the marginalization of local narratives (Thufail dan Ramstedt, 2011). However, the colonizers successfully controlled the local elites through education, which led to the marginalization of cultural knowledge production for centuries (Kimbal, 2015). The colonial tactic to distance Minahasan identity from the collective cultural memory of the community was dismantling religious symbols (Malonda, 1952). Therefore, in the context of Minahasa, the ideology of colonial imagination remains ideologically entrenched and is subsequently transmitted through the mechanisms of religious institutions.

The identity of Minahasa has undergone systematic and massive marginalization through the normalization practices of religious elites. The dogmatic bars of Christianity have sidelined the authenticity of the Minahasa people, stripping away their freedom. The sublimation of colonial ideology through religion has become an instrument of the divine panopticon, controlling the actions of right and wrong within society. According to Foucault, the panopticon functions continuously, offering a strong and sophisticated internal coercion that regulates and disciplines individuals (Foucault, 2017). Religion as a divine panopticon allows for total surveillance and constructs consciousness based on the sublimation of colonial ideology. In Žižek's critique of ideology, he dialectically illustrates how ideologies are channeled through political narratives of truth. Žižek takes a radical approach to narrate how the fantasy of ideology has deprived human beings of their substantive consciousness (Žižek, 1997). Colonialism is an ideology rooted in the body of religion within the Minahasa context, resulting in the degradation of human authenticity.

The sublimation of ideology occurs based on the normalization of power transmitted structurally. The institution that symbolizes the persistence of colonial ideology in the Minahasa context is religion, specifically Christianity (Kaat, 2024). The church, in this case, GMIM, is a colonial church that has persisted as a religious institution, thus giving birth to and perpetuating colonial memory. This colonial memory can be reconstructed by accepting and openly recognizing the Minahasan identity without reducing the hybrid values of Minahasan culture and Christian identity. Christianity is not a religion that teaches evil; its theological texts are humanistic and open to differences (Lattu, 2009). However, due to the interests of power, humanistic values have been altered with ideological narratives aimed at controlling and ensuring compliance with the authenticity of human life.

The foundational problem of the sublimation of colonial ideology in the context of Minahasa results in the marginalization of narratives fundamentally opposed to colonial discourse or approach. Among the marginalized narratives is the local wisdom of Minahasa, which did not support the church's growth. Normatively, local wisdom narratives that supported the church's growth were endorsed and adopted for political interests. From Žižek's perspective, this paradoxical action is the seed of a fantasy that has been sublimated. Ideological fantasy is an excessive or irrational pleasure that those in power have systematically infiltrated into the establishment of an ideological structure within the subject (Dean, 2006). Ideological mechanisms will heavily influence the cultural structure of a religious society through a system of ideological fantasy (Žižek, 2008). Thus, in Žižek's perspective, religion is not merely a fantasy but a consciousness of fantasy constructed into an ideology in everyday reality.

In contrast to Žižek, Marx offers a narrative of ideological critique emphasizing unconsciousness, where escape from reality is seen as an illusion. Marx views reality as politicized by bourgeois consciousness, where the capitalist class presents symbolic realities, such as religion, which effectively make society conform (Marx and Engels, 2012). Escaping into the symbolic order is akin to being trapped within ideological values that are capitalist

in nature. Therefore, Žižek offers a revolutionary critique of Marx's utopian discourse through the mechanism of the pervasive presence of ideology. The foundation of ideological critique also examines the relationship or anchor between power and knowledge, a symbolic order of social engineering nature (Hadirman, 2009). Žižek's perspective has contributed to understanding how ideology operates based on its illusory forms of parallax.

The narrative of liberation from the confinement of human authenticity through the dogmatic power of religion represents a structural evil. The existential philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche long criticized slave morality, which relies on truth rooted in religion or traditional metaphysics (Wibowo, 2017). Religion has become a frightening narrative, representing destructive power through its finality of truth, while theology is used as an ideological instrument to control the dogmatic body of society. The singular power of religion lies in the concept of divinity articulated by humans through fundamental interpretations, making it a narrative of control with absolute characteristics. Therefore, the supreme-being entity in Christian understanding is absolute in faith. However, theology positions the supreme being as a dialogical narrative, preventing it from becoming absolute.

Normalization of Religious Hegemony and Marginalization of Local Narratives

Religious elites power to discipline society's social body lies within theological texts narratives. The mystic legitimacy of these theological texts takes over the authentic existential freedom of the Minahasa people due to control based on religious values. Essentially, the people of Minahasa are deeply religious, as almost every aspect of their life is preceded by ritual. However, in the 19th century, socio-religious changes occurred through colonial education, alongside introducing and developing world religions, particularly Christianity, as a new belief system (Pantouw, 1994). The transformation of the Minahasa people's belief system into Christianity was fully achieved, as evidenced by using the *manguni* symbol in the GMIM logo. Incorporating the *manguni* symbol affirms that the people of Minahasa have wholly accepted Christianity. However, over time, uneven socialization regarding using the *manguni* symbol as the GMIM logo has led to multiple interpretations among the congregation (Roeroe, 2003).

For the Minahasa people, *manguni* is a symbol of cultural identity closely linked to the community's collective memory regarding its cultural function. One of the cultural functions of *manguni* is to serve as a sign of life and/or the tradition of *tumani* (building the nation) (Mamoto, 2007). The church's adoption of the *manguni* logo, particularly GMIM, has a total political dimension, marked by the absolute presence of Christianity within the Minahasa context. Therefore, using the *manguni* logo as a symbol of the GMIM church affirms that Minahasa has embraced Christianity, resulting in the acculturation of both Christian-Minahasa and Minahasa-Christian identities. Although a positive penetration occurs through the use of the *manguni* logo as a hybridized identity, it also illustrates the encounter between Christianity and colonialism (Pinontoan, 2019a) there has also been a structural marginalization of the narrative. The cultural narrative surrounding *manguni*

has been sidelined, as it is only understood as a church logo and a marker of the early congregations or districts of church regions in the 20th century.

A fundamental explanation for using the *manguni* symbol as the GMIM logo is that it represents another form of global religious hegemony over Minahasa's cultural symbols. The normalization of the hegemony of religious elites and the power of global religions, particularly Christianity, in the Minahasa context, has, up to the present, shaped the narrative of control within spaces of justice production and epistemology. Previously, the mechanisms of power in Minahasa were comprised of *ukung*, *tona'as*, and *walian*, which were reconstructed by Christianity and colonialism to become instruments of Dutch imperialism (Malensang, 2016). Control occurred through Christian education as well as the political mediation of the Dutch, based on the meetings of the *ukung* in each *walak* (region/district), which were facilitated by colonialism (Supit, 1986). Therefore, the power structure in the contemporary Minahasa context, which includes religious elite figures, politicians, and bureaucrats, cannot be separated from the constructs of colonialism.

Although Dutch colonialism is no longer physically present in Minahasa, the spirit or consciousness of colonialism remains persistent. The church's highly colonial approach perpetuates this enduring colonial spirit. The marginalization of local culture, the misguided legitimization of indigenous communities, and the destructive theological approach are characteristic of colonial methods. Colonial religion applies imperialist politics through religious institutions, particularly the church (Hart, 2002). The church, in this problematic context, has become a destructive narrative that creates a misguided social stratification—those who are oppressed while the obedient are embraced. As employed by religious elites, Christianity has become a method of controlling the doctrinal bodies of society through theological texts. In other words, Christianity within the church has given rise to the sublimation of colonial ideology, which is inhumane, as it has been used as a tool of power to legitimize and hegemonize Minahasa's cultural consciousness.

World religions are conventional legal normative powers supported by the state's constitution, particularly in Indonesia. It is only in Indonesia that there is an organizational structure for the Ministry of Religious Affairs. After the 1998 reform, President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gusdur) revoked Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 1967 and the Ministry of Home Affairs Decision of 1978, affirming that Indonesia has six official religions: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This is reflected in Article 1 of Law No. 1 of 1965 on the Prevention of Abuse and/or Desecration of Religion, which states that the religions embraced by Indonesia's population are Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Furthermore, local beliefs are also protected by the state's constitution through Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution. However, the state's legal discrimination against local beliefs structurally persists, marked by the presence of narratives of intolerance and the enduring ideology of majoritarianism.

In the context of Minahasa, the destruction of *wale paliusan* (places of worship) of the Laroma belief community (*lalan rondor malesung*) is another form of structural violence by the state, resulting in the phenomenon of marginalization (Mandey, 2022). The structural violence experienced by the Malesung belief community serves as a problematic basis for understanding how the state legally discriminates against non-conventional religions. Drawing on Will Kymlicka's perspective, he explains that the constitutional rights of citizens in a plural society are the state's responsibility (Kymlicka, 1995). Kymlicka provides a foundation for human rights, emphasizing that the state guarantees individual freedoms. However, in the context of Minahasa, the people's freedom has been trapped within the cage of hegemonic power. According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony occurs through the cultural, social, and political normalization facilitated by compliance mechanisms based on bureaucratic policies (Morton, 2007). Religious hegemony is another form of the sublimation of power by religious figures, which has become absolute due to its intertwining with political narratives.

Christian religious hegemony in the Minahasa context has led to a state of euphoria among the people. The interpretation of theological texts often follows the logic of elites within the ideology of power, making the practices of authority through their policies usually perceived as absolute. According to Marx, religion is an expression of the oppressed and the sigh of the spirit of civilization in its quest for a utopia of equality; however, it is politically exploited by the bourgeoisie through capitalization mechanisms (Marx, 1978). Marx criticizes religion's workings for intoxicating society's social consciousness through transactional theological texts. Religious elites often use theological texts as a means of control, making religion an addictive substance because it provides comfort. The sociological fact explains that religion is the opium of the people, while theology serves as an ideology that fosters euphoria.

The euphoria of religion places society's fantasy in a state of unconsciousness regarding the control of the rulers, thus accepting it as an absolute narrative that cannot be questioned. According to Izak Lattu, religion is not inherently a destructive narrative; elite interests often use it as a source of legitimacy for their actions (Lattu, 2018). Lattu explains how dialogue in the name of religion frequently ends up within the realm of conventional elitist texts, preventing it from penetrating the spaces of everyday life (Lattu, 2019). Religion has become a destructive narrative and a source of political conflict in the name of elite interests, which claim the doctrinal truth of each religion without considering human values. In the context of Minahasa, religion has perpetuated the culture of Dutch imperialism through the GMIM church institution. The penetration of Christianity into Minahasa culture is not limited to cultural acculturation and Christian identity but also involves a lasting imperial political system (Mawuntu, 2020).

The Minahasa community, in its social structure, has never known mechanisms of imperialization or a singular political power emerging through the voice of a king. The social structure of Minahasa is inherently egalitarian, based on the circles of *kewalakan* (tribal units). However, with the arrival and development of Christianity and colonialism, various

structural mechanisms were introduced, the most significant being imperialism or monarchy. The Dutch introduced the system of imperialism, using the *ukung*, *tona'as*, and *walian* as figures of authority who were subjugated through political mediation (Kimbal, 2015). The church transmitted Imperialist politics through generational processes, maintaining the structural memories of Dutch colonialism. The imperialist system gave rise to a new culture within the religious structure of Minahasa, particularly in GMIM, including a culture of nepotism, collusion, and the practice of "pipeline democracy." The infiltration of totalitarian ideology and imperialist politics into the presbyterial-synodal system was legitimized by changes in the church structure that were non-procedural or contrary to strategic principles. Additionally, the practice of *one man, one show* has become a specter haunting the structural development of the GMIM religious institution.

CONCLUSION

Žižek and Foucault have provided critical frameworks for analyzing the relationship between power and ideological control in a more universal context. Žižek has contributed to uncovering the hidden ideology of colonialism within the power structures of the church's 'bio-politics,' making it easier to expose. On the other hand, Foucault laid the foundation for understanding how bio-politics operates within the church to control, legitimize, and hegemonize human authenticity, leading to its reduction. Minahasa, in totality, remains under the grip of colonial ideology transmitted through religion, particularly Christianity. Therefore, religion is a destructive monster, while theology acts as an instrument to perpetuate the ideology of compliance through theological narratives. The ideological power embedded in theological texts has created a singular narrative characterized by finality and absoluteness, necessitating continuous critique of its practices of power.

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