

Embodying Sacred Cosmic Solidarity in *Tadek* Cultural Dance of the Philippine *Itnegs*

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Abstract

In resonance with the Nicene Creed's affirmation of God as the "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible," this paper articulates on the sanctity and interconnectedness of all creation¹ as embodied in *tadek* – the traditional dance of the *Itneg* indigenous people in the Philippine Cordillera. Employing the decoloniality framework, I analyze *tadek* (its actualities and possibilities) as a space for constructing, educating, and practicing a holistic interconnected creation spirituality and theology. The invocation of decoloniality as an analytical lens is critical and deliberate as I argue that the definition of human development has been systemically positioned by coloniality as dialectically opposed to the flourishing of other creation. Grounded on the *Itneg* indigenous worldview, *tadek* reinforces ontological, epistemological and axiological principles aligned with the transformative aim for cosmic wholeness and solidarity. Additionally, as a solidarity dance, *tadek* also provides pragmatic avenues for an inclusive public and communal engagement with eco-theological (theo-cosmic) and eco-spiritual (cosmo-spiritual) reflection and education. By elaborating on these, I subsequently argue that *tadek* reaffirms the covenantal bond between God and all creation and reiterates humanity's sacred and moral responsibility to care for the world.

Keywords: Nicene Creed, cosmic solidarity, *tadek* cultural dance, Philippine *Itnegs*, creation spirituality, creation theology, decoloniality.

Introduction

This paper explores the nexus between indigenous worldviews, spirituality and eco-theology as embodied in *tadek*, a cultural dance of the *Itneg* people in the Cordillera Region, Philippines. (quote about tadek) The discussion of *tadek* is situated within a broader theological discourse that resounds with the Nicene Creed's affirmation of God as the "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." For the *Itneg* people, *tadek* is not only a dance of cultural expression but also a reflection of an interconnected philosophy of life in honor of the sanctity and unity of all creation.

Similar with other indigenous communities in many parts of the world, traditional dancing is a performative act symbolic of culture. Yet more than a performance, *tadek* takes on a dynamic meaning as an active revelation and a living expression of the *Itneg's* cosmovision, religious worldviews and spiritual wisdom. In the present where modern and technological activities occupy and distract people including those from indigenous areas, *tadek* weaves *Itneg* people back to that which is sacred and spiritual. As a living repository of *Itneg's* collective memory and identity, it is a reminder and reaffirmation of their inseparable relationship with the natural and spiritual worlds. Amidst the overwhelming power of modernity that threatens to break indigenous philosophical traditions, *tadek* is an insisting, resisting and integrating cultural practice and artistic force that sustains the *Itneg* lifeworld. Then, *tadek* is a physical embodiment of the sacred interconnectedness of life between humanity, nature, and the divine. This represents a cosmic solidarity that is life/creation-centered and aligned with the theological affirmation of creation's

¹ In this paper, I use the terms creation, life (bio) and cosmos interchangeably.

wholeness. This creation-centric/biocentric/cosmic solidarity is activated in every moment of *tadek* dancing.

Persistent coloniality and neocoloniality, in my view, are formidable nemesis and present continuous quandary to the re/appearance of cosmic integrity. Coloniality is the ideology that spreads western-centeredness further beyond the life of colonialism. It is accompanied by its corresponding self-sustaining values and principles of binaries, dichotomies and hierarchies. (insert quote on coloniality). It is coloniality's hierarchical taxonomy and ideological elevation of one group over others that is mirrored in the hierarchization of creation in lieu of anthropocentric gains. Colonial structures and systems, including ethical system, have historically caused nature to be instrumentalized and exploited. Coloniality strategically recreates the biblical narrative of egalitarian stewardship into human domination over nature. This creates a disconnect of humanity with their ecological and spiritual contexts. With decoloniality as a framework, this paper attempts to disrupt the disconnection and unravel the decolonial potentials of *tadek* as a space for the construction, education and practice of cosmic wholeness and bio-affirming theology – a holistic theology of interconnected creation. As coloniality places human development in an infinite dialectical opposition with the flourishing of the rest of creation, *tadek* as an embodied manifestation of *Itneg* indigenous wisdom, challenges this inverse binary relation and the ideological separation of the human biosphere and eco-spiritual spheres. In contraposition to the colonial configuration of human wellbeing, *tadek* carves an alternate route of understanding that originates from the ontological, epistemological and axiological principles of *Itneg* indigenous spirituality. Performing *tadek* meant embodying and practicing a kind of spirituality that is intimately link to the wellbeing of all creation. *Tadek* resurfaces *Itnegs'* cosmological philosophy of interconnectedness and mutual flourishing and offers a counter-thought to the western colonial paradigm of development.

Expanding its cultural significance, *tadek* transcends monolithic determination as a traditional artifact by becoming a living avenue for eco-theological and eco-spiritual critical reflections. *Tadek* becomes a decolonial space and a decolonizing act for re/thinking and re/imagining theology of development aligned with a de-hierarchized alliance-forming patterns of relationality between and among all forms of life. Additionally, it also opens a pragmatic setting for an inclusive and pluralistic public engagement which allows the *Itnegs*, other indigenous and non-indigenous groups an experiential learning of the sacredness of creation and humanity's participation in the cosmic circle. While *tadek* is a platform for thought, it is also in itself an arena for acting and living the *Itneg's* eco-theological and eco-spiritual beliefs. As an active space, it is also a ground for contestations, and negotiations and in the process, provokes and incites new patterns of being and becoming oriented toward coalitional mindsets on creation. Nevertheless, *tadek* is a living, provocative, educative, liberative and transformative space of *Itneg* meaning-making in response to the call for re/imagining and re/constructing a more sustainable future for an interconnected and allied creation.

Through the decolonial lens, I am arguing for *tadek* as a critical and creative resource for contemporary eco-theological reflection and praxis in view of destabilizing asymmetric conceptualization and practices toward creation. In an ongoing struggle for ecological justice, *tadek* serves as a dance of interrelation and solidarity that subsequently evokes a sense of moral and sacred responsibility to the world. As a solidarity dance, *tadek* is a communal affirmation of the *Itneg's* commitment to this responsibility and their recognition and demonstration of the covenantal bond between God, human and nature. By exposing and recentering *tadek* as an embodied solidarity practice of interconnectedness of all creation, this paper aims to contribute to

a global discourse on creation spirituality/theology, eco-justice, decoloniality and indigenous culture.

Theological Foundations and Indigenous Worldviews of Sacred Interconnectedness

Many indigenous knowledge and practices are life-flourishing precisely because they are informed by the notion of sacred interconnectedness of life, clearing ways for cosmic unity. *Tadek*, as a cultural performance, underpinned by *Itnegs* view of interconnectedness, collapses the boundary between natural and spiritual. This means that in the very act of *tadek* dancing is an inherent recognition of the divine presence in everything and the constant entanglement of the human, natural and supernatural. *Tadek* is both a symbolic and lived expression of the intermingling of worlds and cosmic unity that can be found in theological and indigenous frameworks.

That there exists a presence of divine imprint in all of creation is conveyed by the Nicene's Creed proclamation that God is the "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." This endows all forms of life/creation (human, nonhuman, living, nonliving) and all worlds (natural, supernatural and in-between) an immutable sacredness as they exist in a relationship with the Creator. This interrelationship with divinity creates sacrality in creation that should impress a deterrence from anthropocentric manipulation and exploitation. The Nicene's Creed annunciation lends a theological credence to a symbiotic relation between and among creation and toward mutual care and respect.

Although historically, theological hermeneutics and biblical exegesis have been skewed in favor of anthropocentrism. In the context of Christ's work of redemption, many theologians were preoccupied with the notion of human salvation and creation as an accessory if not the backstage of its actualization. This is elaborated by Kim (2018, 549-550) when he states "I concede that many of traditional theological representations of Christian faith have focused on Christ's redemptive/salvific work for the wretched human condition understood primarily in terms of moral sin. In this redemption-centred theological paradigm, creation is regarded merely as a stage for God's saving history with the human beings and thus recedes to the background of theological discussions." Kim (2018b) instead pushes for a creation-centered framework to construct what he called a "theology of cosmic hope." A theology of cosmic hope encourages a movement away from religious anthropologizing toward embracing a more comprehensive creation theology. In Kim's (2018b, 530) thought, this is moving away from "theo-anthropology" and stepping into "theo-cosmology." He proposes, "If what Karl Barth called "theo-anthropology," according to which the proper subject of theology is confined to God and humanity almost to the exclusion of the nonhuman created world, has dominated much of modern Western theological discussion up until now, it seems that this is the opportune time to consider a paradigm shift from theo-anthropology to what I call "theo-cosmology," according to the which the proper subject of Christian theology is conceived as the relation between God and cosmos as creation." From this backdrop, it is possible to rethink and conceive of the interconnection and solidarity of all creation. It is also within this theological stance that *tadek* is reimagined as a living symbol of cosmic solidarity.

That *tadek* operates within an indigenous worldview of sacred interconnectedness is evident in the lifeworld of the *Itneg* people. Like their indigenous neighbors in the Cordillera Region, belief in the divine and supernatural is central to their life. Religion played a crucial role in their lives (Valera and Valera 2016). The significance of these religious beliefs and practices are attached to their individual life as well as to their communal context. The totality of *Itnegs'* life-their worldview, their view of the divine, their relationship with nature and their social or

communal life- are shaped by their religious experiences. This is to say that there is an inseparable link between *Itneg* religious rituals and their community life (Weygan 2009). Also, all ceremonies are imbedded with spiritual and material value in connection to the present and future affairs of the individual and the community (Weygan 2009). This connotes a strong interconnection between the material/physical reality of *Itnegs* and their spiritual life. On this note, the *Itnegs* believe that the spirit world can exert its supernatural force in the physical realm (Cole 1922). This means that the lived realities of *Itnegs* are linked to the inextricable interaction of the biophysical plane with the spiritual plane. To the *Itnegs*, evil spirits are constantly around and have the capacity to injure them when opportunity strikes (Cole 1922). They believe that spirits have magical powers to affect the course of their lives (Cole 1922). Although invisible, these beings are not unreachable. These spirits, generally called *anitos*, can communicate with the people by entering the body of a medium during ceremonies (Cole 1922). Several natural objects are also believed to housed certain spirits. The work of Cole (1922) explains how several stones can be found in the entrance of every village, specifically placed under a house or a tree. These stones, called *pinaing*, are believed to be the guardians or protector of the town. As such, the natural world is imbued with sanctity which makes it imperative for *Itnegs* to respect nature and maintain a harmonious and balanced relationship with their environment. In the present context, belief in the spirits have been supplanted by belief in the Holy Spirit as most *Itnegs* became Christians. I maintain, however that the *Itnegs*' core theophosophy of cosmic interconnectedness, rooted in their indigenous spirituality, remains and re-emerges in their rituals and practices such as the *tadek* dance.

Colonial Ethics and the Disconnectedness of Creation

In my view, the disconnection between creation is tied with the perpetuation of entrenched coloniality and reappearing as neocoloniality at present. Coloniality is “a power structure, an epochal condition and epistemological design” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b, 11) that survived and extends beyond the life of colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b; Maldonado-Torres 2007). It is a “global power structure that sustains asymmetrical power relations between the Euro-American World and the Global South” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b, 11). Coloniality reconfigured the ontological, epistemological, axiological and dimensions of human relations and existence that has didactically redesigned and co-opted, in a self-perpetuating manner, the socioeconomic, political, religious and ethical systems.

The onset of fragmentation in creation that comes in the form of hierarchization and ideological separation are critical for the colonial agenda of expansion. This same logic of division is a requisite for preconditioning and acceptance of the colonial definition of human development. The modern colonial perspective of human development is linked to an ethical grounding that packaged modernity as the greater good that requires sacrifices and offerings. According to Mignolo (2005, 6), coloniality is “an embedded logic that enforces control, domination and exploitation disguised in the language of salvation, progress, modernization and being good for everyone”. In reality, it advances the centrality and dominance of the western interests. In this sense, the underpinning ethical frame of development becomes hegemonic which pushes for the necessity of sacrifices in the name of progress. It became apparent that the goodness brought by modern developments has to be paid through the creation and subsequent negation of victims (the dark side of modernity). This is the ethics of modern-colonial world-system that reverberates in the contemporary context. In this ethical system, hierarchical division is validated and some group of humans and the whole of nonhuman realm are placed at the bottom rung of the modern-colonial taxonomy.

Enrique Dussel (2013) talked about this ethics of a modern-colonial world-system that legitimizes the existence of victims. In his work *Ethics of Liberation – In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, Dussel (2013) formulated his anti-thesis to the oppressive ethical framework of the modern-colonial world system. Dussel's (2013) ethics of liberation takes the position of the victims whose physical reality was cancelled by the goodness claim of modern ethics. As such, liberation ethics becomes an ethical critique that exposes the problem created by the modern-colonial world system. In the Dusselian philosophy, the universal material principle of ethics is an affirmation of life. For Dussel, the content of ethics (how the musings of the mind are understood in the physical reality) is the "principle of the obligation to produce, reproduce and develop the concrete human life of each ethical subject in the community" (Dussel 2013, 55–56). In this sense, the aim of decoloniality to produce the right conditions for human living is aligned with this principle. However, the ethical demand to produce and reproduce would soon exhaust and destroy lives of living and non-living things. Due to the irrational commitment to the ethical demand, the victims are negated and the evil is concealed (Dussel, 2013) for the sake of the greater good. Particularly, the greater good arising from economic growth as by-products of modern developments is the ethical demand of the modern-colonial world system at the expense of those that are violated. From the vantage point of the dominant, the victims are always the other. Problem arises from the ethics of modernity that demands hierarchies of lives to be produced. For a certain dominant group to live, some groups need to be sacrificed. Human life is hierarchized since the sacrifice would always come from the margins, the indigenous people, women and colored women and people. These hierarchies are imposed to promote and maintain the colonial agenda of power. To make way for these hierarchies necessitate the retention of dichotomy relations – human versus non-humans/nature, civilized versus primitive, superior versus inferior, core versus periphery, etc. With these hierarchical classifications come the promotion of modern values such as individualism, competition, materialism, consumerism and other bottom-line driven values.

Expanding the argument from the perspective of human victims is taking the position of the non-human victims. Although the victims are primarily humans in the Dusselian philosophy, this paper argues for the inclusion of the rest of creation as a major victim of the hegemonic western-centric economic-driven ethical system. The main argument is that the victimized other is not just human. Looking at the hierarchy from a different angle, human life is on top while others, the non-humans and non-living things like the land, rivers and natural resources are at the bottom. The same oppressive ethical system demands that all things are created to foster human life. In order for humans to live, non-humans and non-living entities must pay the price, thus creating a dichotomous relationship and binary opposition between humans and the rest of creation. From a modern ethical standpoint, the violation and harassment of other creation is justified for the sake of an anticipated greater economic good. Within colonial ethics, the idea of good life or wellbeing of humanity broke up its sacred bond with the ecosphere and the spiritual world.

This ethical principle, permeated by coloniality, is also tied to the theological thinking that places human as the center of God's work of salvation. The logic of human's centrality in God's redemptive work engenders an exploitative theology that positions the rest of creation as passive instruments for the wellbeing/development (salvation) of humans. As coloniality has also been spread through civilizing missions, the same principle is at work in the interpretation of biblical passages privileging humans over other creations. In this view, human wellbeing is placed in an inverse polarity with ecological flourishing. I posit that *tadek* represents a contra ontology, epistemology and axiology to the coloniality of being, knowing and valuing that constantly reproduces self-serving ideology of good life. As *tadek* holds possibilities to reverse or dismantle

coloniality's ontological and epistemic disconnections in creation, I argue that it is a decolonial space and a decolonializing act from which a theo-cosmology (borrowing from the work of Kim) or a theology of interconnected and united cosmos can be grounded, re/constructed, re/imagined and re/enacted.

***Tadek* as a Decolonial Sacred Dance of Cosmic Solidarity**

Invoking decoloniality as a critical framework in countering the coloniality-infused ethical demand of development means unearthing and reclaiming the viewpoints of the subalterns, those whose knowledge and practices have been historically marginalized. Decoloniality is a critique to a world system that strategically promotes western centrality and privileges colonial knowledge production that ascertains asymmetric power relations (human-human and human-nature relations). It seeks to dismantle colonial imposition on ways of being and knowing and “disobeys, and delinks from [the colonial matrix of power], constructing paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living” (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 194). It involves an active reclamation of indigenous cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies that have been eclipsed by coloniality of being and knowledge.

In this paper, *tadek* is conceived as an indigenous decolonial dance that allows for the re/building, re/learning, living and active practicing of the *Itnegs'* onto-epistemic spirituality/theo-philosophy of interconnected and cohesive life. In the context of *tadek*, a decolonial approach involves recognizing the dance as more than a folkloric or cultural artifact. Instead, it is a dynamic and fluid site of indigenous knowledge production that aims at re/constructing, re/educating, re/enacting and re/centering holistic and interlinked modes of being, thinking, imagining, relating, valuing, and becoming. It is a creative resource that opens up toward a decolonial option. A decolonial option “starts from the principle that the regeneration of life shall prevail over primacy of the production and reproduction of goods at the cost of life” (Mignolo 2009, 3). The principle of regeneration of life parallels with *tadek's* underpinning philosophy of a balanced and harmonious relationship of all creation. It is a practice that embodies an alternative worldview that resists any form of hierarchization and colonial binaries between humans and nature and between the material and spiritual world. *Tadek* stands as a counter-narrative to colonially-induced divisions as it expresses a relational mode of existence that recognized humanity as part of a broader cosmic order. By re-centering indigenous spirituality and cosmology, *tadek* disrupts the colonial logic of domination and reasserts a holistic understanding of human flourishing—one that is inextricably entangled with the well-being of the entire cosmosphere.

Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Principles in *Tadek*

Grounded in the *Itneg* worldview, *tadek* is an affirmation of a conception of existence (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and values (axiology) that supports a holistic vision of life. *Tadek* serves as an expression of these principles and presents a transformative model of cosmic wholeness that differs with western ideologies generated and undergirded by coloniality. By focusing on the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of *tadek*, the dance's decolonial and emancipatory potentials are revealed.

The core of western thought on the nature of being vis-à-vis the natural world is one of dualism and separation. In particular, human beings are believed to exist autonomously separate from the biophysical environment, assigning ontological priority to the former. A definition of nature from Oxford dictionary “makes a sharp distinction between humans and non-human nature, the leitmotif of the Western perception of the natural world, where humans and human artifacts are

split and disconnected from nature” (Jarwar, Dumontet and Pasquale 2024, 2). This notion of human-nature dichotomy can be traced from western ontology specifically that of Cartesian dualism – proclaiming the separation of mind and body. Descartes conceptualization of the thinking self, the *ego cogito*, was the starting point of western understanding of human existence. According to Tulloch (2015), “in Cartesian logic ‘nature’ is seen as passive, as an object that is separate from man, just as the body is separate from the mind.” This reinforces the anthropocentric stance of human superiority over other life forms which lead to the human-led damnation (in reference to Fanon’s (2001) use of the term in *Wretched of the Earth*) of nature and ecosystems.

In contrast to a dualist perception of being, the *Itneg* worldview, as expressed through *tadek*, presents an ontology of interconnectedness, where the existence of all beings is relational. Ontology in this context does not focus on the individual’s separation from the environment but rather on the interdependence between humans, non-human entities, and the broader cosmos. All beings are understood to be part of complex, living system that depends on mutual relationships for survival and flourishing. Through *tadek*, the *Itneg* people express an otherwise mode of being founded on their belief in the symbiosis and unity of all creation. The circular movements of the dance represent the cyclical nature of life, where everything is connected in an ongoing exchange of energy and life force. The physical space of the dance, where participants move in harmony with each other, symbolizes the integration of all beings—humans, spirits, animals, and the land—in the cosmic order. This reflects an ontological principle that human existence cannot be understood in isolation but must always be seen in relation to the broader web of life. The *Itneg* view of existence as interrelatedness is a stark contradiction to the western dichotomy between human and non-human entities. In *tadek*, the dancers do not see themselves as separate from nature or the cosmos and instead recognize that they are participants in a larger, sacred order. The ontological foundation of *tadek* reinforces the idea that the flourishing of human life is inseparable from the flourishing of the entire natural world. This view is essential to the *Itneg* understanding of cosmic wholeness.

On another point, the epistemological principles expressed in *tadek*—the ways in which knowledge is produced, understood and transmitted—are rooted in experiential and relational ways of knowing. In many indigenous cultures, knowledge is not abstract or detached from the world but is embedded in lived experience and the relationships between beings. For the *Itneg*, knowledge is gained through participation in the rhythms of life, through engagement with the land, and through interactions with other humans and non-human entities, including the spiritual world. *Tadek* plays a crucial role in the transmission of this indigenous knowledge. As a communal and ritualistic dance, *tadek* is a space where participants learn about the interdependence of all life, not through theoretical discourse but through embodied experience. The dance itself becomes a form of knowing, where the movements and rhythms express the relational principles that are central to the *Itneg* worldview. In this way, *tadek* serves as an epistemological tool that teaches participants about their place in the world and their responsibilities to the land, the spirit world, and their community. For the *Itnegs*, knowledge is a process of ongoing engagement with the world. It is through relationships—between humans, nature, and the divine—that true understanding emerges. *Tadek*, as a form of embodied knowledge, reaffirms the importance of experiential learning and relationality. The dance provides a space for communal reflection and the passing down of wisdom from generation to generation. It reflects an epistemology that values the collective and interconnected nature of knowledge, where the well-being of the individual is always tied to the well-being of the community and the natural world.

This relational epistemology is a contradistinction to the western format of knowledge creation in its preference for the objective and positivist methods. Its valuation of scientific knowledge results to a drawn up rigid boundary between the knower and the known. Like its ontological determinations, western epistemological designs have its roots from Cartesian rationality. In Quijano's (2007, 172) thought, the western framework of rational epistemology conceives knowledge "as a product of a subject-object relation" where the thinking subject "constitutes itself in itself and for itself, in its discourse and in its capacity of reflection. The Cartesian 'cogito, ergo sum', means exactly that." The problematic in this line of discourse is that "it made it possible to omit every reference to any other 'subject' outside the European context" (Quijano, 2007, 173). In this logic, Quijano (2007, 174) argues that "only European culture is rational, it can contain 'subjects' – the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbor 'subjects'. As a consequence, the other cultures are different in the sense that they are unequal, in fact inferior, by nature. They only can be 'objects' of knowledge or/and of domination practices." This enabled the obscuring of colonial violence and epistemicide done to the colonized people and their indigenous ways of knowing. This Cartesian epistemic tradition elevated western knowledge as the only valid and legitimate form. Moreover, the subject-object orientation of this rational knowledge seamlessly tied with the objectification of some group of people and anyone or anything determined as without possession of rationality. Such is the justification of the violation committed against the colonized – they have to be reduced to a thing, animalistic or beastly and devoid of humanity; thingified to make way of colonial exploitation. This is the western epistemological deployment of anything defined as a thing. Hence, the creation of the damned (Fanon 2001) is not only about humans but also non-humans – natural resources, ecosystems and the rest of creation.

The perpetuation of western ontology and production of rational epistemology fuels the re/production of modern colonial values. Coloniality's redefinition of flourishing in development discourse implies the dominance of economic-oriented, extractive, industrial and liberal values, which then reappeared as neoliberal values. In contrast, the axiological dimension of *tadek* reflects the *Itneg's* holistic and integrative understanding of the world. The values expressed through the dance are those of reciprocity, balance, and respect—principles that guide not only human relationships but also interactions with the natural world and the spiritual realm. These values are embedded in the *Itneg's* cultural practices and are central to their conception of a good life.

Reciprocity is a key axiom in the *Itneg* worldview. In *tadek*, this principle is reflected in the reciprocal movements of the dancers, who engage in a continuous exchange of energy and intention. This mirrors the broader cosmic principle that life is sustained through reciprocal relationships—between humans and the land, between the living and the spirits, and between all forms of life. The dance serves as a reminder that balance and harmony are maintained when these relationships are honored and nurtured. Balance, another core value, is both a cosmological and ethical principle in the *Itneg* worldview. *Tadek* symbolizes the balance between human and non-human forces, reflecting the importance of maintaining equilibrium in the world. The dance reinforces the belief that imbalance—whether in the environment, in social relationships, or in spiritual practice—leads to disharmony and suffering. Through the performance of *tadek*, the *Itneg* reaffirm their commitment to sustaining balance in all aspects of life. Respect, too, is fundamental to the axiology expressed in *tadek*. The dance itself is a form of respect, paying homage to the spirits, the land, and the community. It teaches participants that respect is not merely a social nicety but a sacred duty that must be extended to all beings, human and non-human alike. This value of respect stands in contrast to the exploitative practices often seen in western models of development,

where the natural world is treated as a resource to be consumed rather than a partner in the ongoing process of life.

The ontological, epistemological, and axiological principles embodied in *tadek* converge to support a creation-informed life-promoting eco-theology/spirituality (henceforth I use the terms theo-cosmology and cosmo-spirituality), and a theology of cosmic solidarity that are promoted in the Nicene's Creed. These principles in *tadek* create decolonial pathways for re/constructing, re/surfacing and re/activating a theology of cosmic hope and transformative vision of creation/cosmic unity. For the *Itneg* people, *tadek* is a space of unlearning and act of resistance to the fragmentation and compartmentalization of life that is introduced and imposed by western coloniality. It offers a holistic perspective that sees all beings—humans, animals, plants, spirits, and the earth—as part of an integrated, sacred web of life. This vision of cosmic wholeness challenges the dominant narrative of human exceptionalism and calls for a rethinking of what it means to flourish in harmony with the world.

***Tadek* as a Decolonial Pragmatic Dance of Solidarity**

In my view, *tadek* as a pragmatic decolonial resource occurs in two ways: as an actual space for theo-cosmological and cosmo-spiritual public pedagogy and communal reflection and as an act of resistance and solidarity – a lived theology of an interconnected holistic and harmonious creation.

The communal and public nature of *tadek* dancing makes it a readily available, ever-present and accessible space for intergenerational and transcultural education and reflection of cosmic solidarity. *Tadek* is danced during communal assemblies or ceremonies and is never performed alone. The inclusive structure of *tadek* allows for a shared participation of anyone (*Itnegs*, visitors, indigenous and non-indigenous people, young to old, and any gender) either by joining the dance or simply being an active spectator. In this context, the *Itneg* pedagogical approach manifest in watch-and-learn and do/participate-and-learn modalities. This consequently enables an embodied experiential learning and a fuller appreciation and understanding of indigenous wisdom, theology and spirituality oriented toward creation/cosmic solidarity. While watching or dancing *tadek*, performers and spectators alike are engaged in a participatory learning and reflection elicited by the choreography and formation of the dance. The choreography and formation of *tadek* not only reinforces social solidarity but also reemphasizes the cohesion and interconnection of the whole cosmos. The movements, gestures, rhythm and sounds of gongs during *tadek* dance are close representations, resemblances and mimicry of the ecological realities of the *Itnegs* and the intimate affiliation of their natural and spiritual contexts. The physical setting of the dance itself also invites an inclusive and cohesive participation. *Tadek* is usually held in any open space wide enough to accommodate an audience and for dancers to move freely. This physical open space elicits a sense of organic solidarity among participants and audience. More importantly, this physical space of *tadek* dancing, which is land itself, models an unconditional symmetrical relationality as it welcomes, embraces and gathers all in one natural space and evokes a realization of humanity's entanglement with nature. The possibility of physical and bodily performance of *tadek* on land and nature is a reminder of the reciprocal and interconnected feature of God's creation. All of these elements – the structure, content, participants and setting of the dance – makes *tadek* a decolonial practical space for engaging and re/educating the public on indigenous theo-cosmology and cosmo-spirituality and re/thinking and re/learning a theology of cosmic solidarity.

On a further point, *tadek* has been referred to and described, at one point or another, as a solidarity dance precisely because of its openness and all-embracing inclusion to anyone who

desires to participate, its circular flow and formation and the united movement of the dancers. This resonates with the traditional death dance called *Ma'badong* in the Torajan indigenous group in Indonesia (Tendenan and Bigornia, forthcoming). Just like *Ma'badong* is itself an earth-dancing solidarity (Tendenan and Bigornia, forthcoming) so is *tadek* a cosmos/creation-dancing (theo-cosmic/cosmos-spiritual-dancing) solidarity because it is underpinned by *Itnegs'* ontological, epistemological, and axiological worldviews that are rooted from their theological /spiritual belief and lived experiences of the sacred interconnectedness and unity of the entire creation/cosmos. Solidarity is shown in *tadek* when anyone of any age or gender, whether insider or outsider to the community, are all openly invited to participate in the dance. The circularity of the dance also points to solidarity as the circle flexibly expands to a bigger circle to accommodate incoming new participants or shrinks to a smaller one to adjust with those who chose to leave the dance. This also implies the non-rigidity or fluidity of *tadek* solidarity dancing. Sometimes, it can break and shift to form another circle in a different location. Solidarity is also enacted in every movement or gestures of the participants. Usually, the *tadek* solidarity dance is led by one person who spontaneously makes the initial hand gesture and feet movement to be followed by the rest. Almost as if reading each other's bodily vibrations, dancers maintain the seamless flow of *tadek* by picking up on each other's body and kinesthetic signals. The harmony and synchronicity of the dance, although at times imperfect, is maintained by the willingness of the participants to adjust their own to the group's gestures, movement, and tempo. As *tadek* is danced to the accompaniment of sound from traditional instruments called *gangsa* (gong), the gong players or sound makers too are essential participants whose role activates and exhibits solidarity. In some instances, the gong players are part of the dance itself and in some, they make the sound on the side. As the sound makers, they set the tempo and rhythm of the dance. In making a united and harmonious blending of sounds, the players have to listen to how others beat the gong and then feel and adjust to each other. Although there is also an appointed leader among them, who initially sets the tempo and signals the changing of the dance rhythm, the leader too has to adjust to the group in order to create a raw, sometimes unpolished but nevertheless beautiful unity of sounds that subsequently produce a cohesive music. In another way, the gong players show oneness with the dancers of *tadek* by checking and making sure that the latter adapts well to the tempo and rhythm they set. Else, the gong players make appropriate adjustments. Even as the setter for the tempo and rhythm of *tadek* dance, the music producers do not arbitrarily and unilaterally impose their own beats. The interconnected and harmonious character of *tadek* becomes alive in the dancers' and music makers' readiness and openness to hear, negotiate, and alter each other's positions in the whole dance scheme. This way, *tadek* manifests a relationship of reciprocity, mutual care and respect.

It is in this context that *tadek* is a decolonial radical act of resistance – an active disruption to the colonial framework of separation. *Tadek* dancing is itself living a theo-cosmic/cosmo-spiritual solidarity – a lived theology of cosmic/creation interconnection and cohesion. As a living, dynamic practice, *tadek* is inherently provocative, educative, and transformative. It challenges participants to rethink the dominant paradigms that shape their understanding of the world—particularly those imposed by coloniality. By performing *tadek*, the *Itneg* people engage in the reclamation, re/assertion and re/construction of their ways of being, knowing, imagining, and doing which are directed toward interdependent, dehierarchized and mutual coexistence of all creation. *Tadek* is theo-cosmic/cosmo-spiritual solidarity dancing of opposition against western coloniality formulation of development or wellbeing. It is a creative protest dancing against a hierarchical, extractive and exploitative perception of human-nature relationship.

As *tadek* is an actual embodiment of *Itnegs'* theo-cosmology and cosmic-spirituality, the indigenous philosophy of sacred interrelatedness and unity of all beings transform into a tangible, lived reality. In this sense, *tadek* goes beyond its representational form and becomes a spiritual, theological and cosmological praxis. By dancing *tadek*, the *Itneg* community actively participates in the maintenance of balance and harmony within the cosmos and in the creation of a flourishing future for all. The dance is an act of reciprocity—an offering to the natural world, an expression of gratitude, and a reaffirmation of the sacred relationship between humans and the earth. In *tadek* dancing, the *Itneg* people physically, theologically and spiritually re/enacts their commitment to the well-being of all creation. On this note, *tadek* reiterates humanity's sacred and moral responsibility to care for the world. It becomes an affirmation of a covenantal relationship between humanity and creation and reflects the covenantal bond between God and creation.

Concluding Thoughts (in progress)

By continuing to perform *tadek*, the *Itneg* community assert the value of their worldview and resist the coloniality forces that seek to sever their connection to the land, nature and their sacred traditions. Therefore, *tadek* offers transformative insights into how humanity might rethink its relationship with the cosmos in ways that embrace and protect the interconnectedness of all life – one that is urgently needed in the face of global ecological injustice.