

MEANING OF GOD IN EXODUS 14 BASED ON A MARINE THEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Theology is an attempt to interpret God's presence in context and expressed in various symbols. The experience of human encounter with God in this context is particular and cannot be generalized as the only truth. Jürgen Moltmann,¹ connecting this particular reality with the unique self and context that every human being has. But theology itself is not God, but man's attempt to define God with his symbols which is limited. Meanwhile, the existence of God is a mystery that goes beyond symbols, ratios and theological formulations themselves. This article wants to explore the understanding of coastal communities on small islands in Moluccas about God based on their experiences in the context of the vast ocean. A theological context that is sometimes forgotten and a reality that is often seen as something negative.

One of the villages whose experience will be used is *Negeri Titawaai*. Titawaai is one of the congregations of the Moluccas Protestant Church (abbreviated as GPM - commonly known as the Sea - Island Church) which is located in the Lease Islands *Klasis*. From 33 *klasis*² in GPM, 10 *klasis* (30.3%) are on the large islands, namely West Seram, North Seram, East Seram, Taniwel, Teluti, Masohi, Kairatu, North Buru and South Buru. Meanwhile, the other 23 *klasis* (69.7%) are islands, so their congregations are also located in coastal areas, one of which is the Lease Islands *Klasis* where the GPM Titawaai Congregation is located. This condition not only provides an overview of their position in the GPM service map and the map of Moluccas Province, but is an imperative to understand the theology of the people that developed in it.

Titawaai is a village surrounded by the sea and therefore, their history, myths, way of life, perspective, culture, work orientation and theological style are also colored by the sea-island context. In terms of etymology, the name *Negeri Titawaai* is formed from the words *titawaelo* which means "walking on water, through water, breaking water, commanding water or conquering water". This name was given based on the history of their ancestors who passed

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Experience in Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 3, 22.

² Maluku Protestant Church, *GPM's PIP and RIP* (Ambon: Maluku Protestant Church, 2005), 8

through a large and threatening river from Seram Island, namely the Talla River, as well as a wide sea to get to the land of Titawaai on Nusalaut Island. The term Nusalaut in the local Titawaai language is *Nusaelau* (meaning: island across the sea). Its condition is across the sea and surrounded by the vast Banda Sea and Seram Sea, making it look like Nusalaut Island from afar *island anyo-anyo* (floating island).

Israel also has close ties to the sea. Two of the 12 tribes of Israel, namely Dan and Asher, were inhabitants of the coastal plains with a livelihood orientation towards the sea.³ The tribes of Dan and Asher are seafaring tribes (Judges 5:17), where the Danites are sailors (*gērîm*, economy class) on Canaanite or Philistine ships. Meanwhile, the Asherites were 'sailors and dockworkers' in the port of Akko.⁴ On the other hand, even though Israel predominantly inhabits the mountainous region of Palestine, the infrastructure of the City of David, based on archaeological excavation findings, shows the existence of fish buying and selling activities in the form of a 'fish market'. Meanwhile, the source of the fish comes from fishing carried out by both the Israeli people and the Phoenicians.⁵ This shows that the use of the sea as an economic force is not only carried out by a small portion of Israeli society who live on the coast, but also those who live far from the coast. On a macro scale, the sea as a source of economic and political development for the kingdom was also developed during the leadership of Solomon, Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah through controlling trade ports in Palestine and building merchant ships, as well as building trade cooperation with other nations.⁶ The role of the sea as an economic force is also seen in Psalm 104:25.⁷ Apart from the 'sea' as a means of developing economic, social and political activities, Israel also theologized about God and His attributes by using the sea and its elements. The sea in ancient Israelite cosmology was seen as an ordinary liquid element (Gen. 1: 9, 10), but also something animated (Ex. 14:16, 21).⁸ The sea and its elements are also used to describe God's actions in Israel's history, both the sand in the

³ John Rogerson and Philip Davies, *The Old Testament World* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 43.

⁴ Lawrence E. Stager, 'The Song of Deborah - Why Some Tribes Answered the Call and Other Did Not', BAR 15, (1989), 63-64 dalam Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, (Louisville-London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 179, translated edition of 'Life of the Biblical Israelites' by Robert Setio (Jakarta: BPK. Gunung Mulia, 2012), 204.

⁵ H. Lernau dan O. Lernau, "Fish Remains" dalam Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville-London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 179, 207-211, translated edition 'People's Lives, 138-139.

⁶ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 208-211. See also Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity press, 1998), 429.

⁷ See more. 1:22, 26, 28; 9:2; Bill. 11:22, 33:10, Yos. 9:1; Ayb. 12:8; Yes. 27:1; Kej. 49:13, 1 Raj. 5:9; 10:22; 2Taw. 2:16; 8:18; Ezr. 3:7; Mzm. 107:23; Am. 30:19; Yes. 18:1; 23:21, Yeh. 27:33.

⁸ See also Ayb. 28:14; Ps. 74:13; 78:13; 114:3.5; 136:13; Yes. 23:4; As. 5:8, 9:6; Place. 5:22; Ayb. 26:12; 38:8; Ps. 33:7; 65:8; 89:10.

sea,⁹ seabed,¹⁰ sea roar,¹¹ and ocean waves.¹² The sea is also a harmonious meeting place for God's other creations (Ps. 104:26).

This paper uses Ricoeur's hermeneutic methodology developed by Dan R. Stiver¹³ based on a marine theological perspective which is the result of a dialogue between the meaning of the sea in the cosmology of ancient Israelite society and the meaning of the sea in the cosmology of the Titawaai society.¹⁴ In the theological perspective of the sea, the sea is interpreted positively based on the experience of the people of Titawaai and ancient Israel. The theological perspective of the sea sees the sea as God's partner in His work of creation in the middle of the world. The sea is an ordinary liquid element but also as a soulful being. Sea: Uncreated, but good and very good. The sea is a mother who conceives, gives birth, breastfeeds and nurtures life with love. The sea is the road that gives life. The sea is a helper and protector. The sea that punishes and renews people and the earth. The sea contains divine wisdom that leads to life.

2. Interpreting God in Exodus 14 based on a Maritime Theology Perspective.

a. Almighty God and sustainer of life (14:1-4).

The LORD forbade Israel from passing through the land of the Philistines even though it was close to Canaan so that Israel would not return to Egypt when faced with war and His plans to reveal His glory. For that purpose, He told Israel to camp in front of Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea. Right in front of Ba'al Zephon, by the sea (v. 2). Historically, the road through the land of the Philistines was a busy trade route along the Mediterranean Sea from the Nile River Delta to Megiddo, which extended into Asia Minor and Mesopotamia,¹⁵ and full of tight Egyptian army guards. This situation has the potential for clashes between the Israelites and nations numbering more than 600,000 (Ex. 12:37) and other nations who have interests in this strategic area. Meanwhile, Israel and the other nations were not ready to face it (Ex. 12:39) because they were expelled by Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, and without provisions (*ṣēdhâ* - provision, food). These historical records indicate that coastal areas (seaside) have long been strategic areas used as transportation routes and means of 'world'

⁹ Kej. 22:17; 32:12; Yer. 33:22; Kej. 41:49; 1Raj. 4:29; 2Sam. 17:1; 1Raj. 4:20; Right. 7:12; Yer. 15:8; 1Sam.13:5.

¹⁰ Ayb. 36:30; 38:16; 38:16 in Am. 9:3.

¹¹ 1 Taw. 16:32; Ps. 96:11; 98:7; Yes. 42:10, Isa. 5:30; 17:12; Place. 6:23; 50:42; Yeh. 26:3.

¹² Isaiah 48:18, Jer. 31:35, Isa. 57:20, Ps. 93:4 and Prov. 23:34.

¹³ Dan R. Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville, London, Leiden, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 57.

¹⁴ Margaretha M. A. Apituley, *Theology of the Sea: Dialogizing the Meaning of the Sea in Exodus 14-15 Based on the Cosmology of the Titawaai People on Nusala Island, Maluku with the Cosmology of Ancient Israel*, (Jakarta: BPK. Gunung Mulia, 2022).

¹⁵ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus* 306-307.

trade. So, controlling coastal areas had strong implications for controlling the world economy at that time. Thus, if Israel is on world trade routes, it could disrupt the interests of the nations that depend on it. The impact was that Israel not only became an enemy of Egypt, but also an enemy of nations who felt their interests were threatened. This was dangerous for Israel, which was not a strong nation at that time, former Egyptian slaves, who were expelled and left without sufficient provisions. So, avoiding coastal areas for Israel was aimed at keeping them alive and not because they didn't like or were afraid of the 'sea or coast'. But the need for security and life. Smith asserted that the sea road (*via maris*) which was previously controlled by Egypt and Assyria, was avoided by Israel to avoid contamination of interests.¹⁶ A small portion of the Israeli people eventually settled in the coastal areas, namely the Tribes of Dan and Assyria. Meanwhile, the majority inhabit the central region or mountains of Canaan. This central region is also the center of government, religion, culture and history. This is what makes Israel's history tend *continental oriented*, namely history dominated by the people's experience with land or islands, rather than the sea. Just like the Israeli people, the Titawaai ancestors also chose to live in the mountains and forests when they arrived on Nusalaut Island, not because they didn't like the sea or the coast. Based on historical research, several reasons were recorded for them to choose this option:

- Historical reasons: historically, Titawaai ancestors came from Seram Island, which is a mountainous area with a large land area. So, the habit of living in the mountains shapes their perspective on the world they inhabit. Seram Island is the largest island in Moluccas Province with a land area of 18,659.¹⁷
- Religious reasons: the Titawaai people chant the name of God in their local language viz *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke*. *Solohua* means God who is Almighty and deserves to be worshiped and adored. *Good Words* meaning the King of Heaven who is equated with Jesus Christ, and *Manuke* is the Holy Spirit. So, God is believed to live in high places (mountains). Therefore, the choice to live in the mountains is also a religious choice so that they can be close to God.¹⁸
- Security needs: to obtain a sense of security in the old country (mountain), *Amauna*, so the Titawaai ancestors made a coral fence from the sea to surround it from enemies at that time. This data indicates that in the past there was conflict between the

¹⁶ Smith in John Rogerson and Philip Davies, *The Old Testament World* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 4-6.

¹⁷ A. J. Ayawaila in Aholiab Watoly, *Mirror of the Existence of Island Communities in Nation Building: Indigenous Perspectives of Maluku People* (Jakarta: Intimedia Ciptanusantara, 2013), 115.

¹⁸ Results of interviews with YH and AT, on date. 08 June 2018

countries on Nusalaut Island and in order to avoid it, the Titawaai ancestors chose the mountains as a safe place, rather than the sea as an open area.¹⁹

However, the Titawaai people view the world in monoduality (two but one). This means that sea and land are not two separate things. Land is where they live. But the ocean is the fastest place for them to find food. So, the LORD preserved Israel by diverting the travel route. Says the LORD (*hāyāh* which means: existing, living or coming into existence), according to Chr. Barth shows his existence as God who is present among his people to save them.²⁰ Likewise with the Titawaai people, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* or GOD is the keeper of their lives everywhere.

According to Bouree,²¹ Baal-Zephon, the place where Israel camped, was named after the God Zephon who was worshiped at the location. Baal-Zephon is the God of Ugarit who lives on Mount Zephon. The god Zephon is worshiped by sailors and worshiped in several places in Egypt as the creator of the world and everything in it.²² So according to Gese, the LORD led Israel out of Egypt through the sea which was in the location of the god who was considered the creator of the world and everything in it.²³ Thus, God's plan is also related to the confirmation of His existence before the worshipers of Baal (Egypt) that He is the ruler of this world.

The choice to change the travel route is also related to the Lord's plan to assert His existence through the desert to Egypt. Israel is described as wandering and confined in the wilderness. Wandering (*n^eb^hukhîm*) means going everywhere without a specific destination or place to stay.²⁴ While confined in Hebrew is *sāghar* meaning: closed. This imagination was deliberately created in Pharaoh's mind so that they would chase Israel back and become a moment of revelation of GOD's power for them. In the perspective of the Titawaai people, the desert is a place that is open, mountainous, arid, difficult to obtain clean water and food, rarely has life, does not have large rocks and caves like the Titawaai forest which is green, lush, and has potential for natural resources. natural resources available in it. So, the wilderness was not a safe and life-giving place for Israel. But for them, it's not just the desert (*midhbār*) alone that

¹⁹ M. Siahay, *The Role of Pusa Pulu in the View of Life of the Nusalaut Indigenous People in Today's Challenges*, Sthesis at the Social Sciences Teaching Faculty, History Department, Teacher Training and Education Institute (Ambon, 1968), 67-80.

²⁰ Chr. Barth, *Old Testament Theology, Volume 1* (Jakarta: BPK. Gunung Mulia, 1970), 128-129

²¹ Bouree dalam Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus: Historical Commentary on The Old Testament, volume 1* (Kampen: KOK Publishing House, 1993), 105-106

²² Michael David Coogen, 'Stories from Ancient Canaan' (Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1978), 86-115, dalam Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, *In the beginning*, 19-20. Also read Jakob H. Grónbæk, '*Baal's Battle with Yam*', 31.

²³ Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus* 106.

²⁴ *KBBI online*, accessed on date. March 06, 2018.

has confined Israel's journey, but the sea (*yam*) also. Because Israel was not used to the sea and did not live by the sea. This intense relationship with the sea is important to shape their adaptability, habits, skills, perspective and belief in GOD. Therefore, let alone Israel crossing the sea, living by the sea was not an easy thing for them.²⁵ So this context that is not safe according to the human mind will be the place where GOD reveals His power. The Titawaai people have many narratives about God's revelation in the sea: the sea is their source of life because they receive blessings in the form of rich sea products such as *food*, sea cucumbers, lola, fish, shrimp and others; Threats on the seashore such as broken house foundations due to waves, high tides, tsunami issues, abrasion and others actually become moments to build an intimate relationship with GOD, God's way of testing faith, rebuking mistakes that must be faced with praise, gratitude and renewal. life. So, in all existence whether calm or bumpy; both on the shore and in the depths, the sea witnesses the glory of God. The sea invites humans to build a more intimate relationship with God amidst the pressures of their lives. So, the threats in the sea show that the sea actually has destructive potential (*Chaos*) However, this potential has been conquered by GOD to organize life together.

So, nature is the order of life that God has given to humans. Nature is not a deficiency and obstacle to God's plan for a better human life, but a partner in His saving work to help humans free themselves from the cruel tyranny of the lives of their fellow humans. Because the nature created by God is not a stage for suffering due to colonialism carried out by strong and powerful people on weak and powerless people. But nature is a stage of harmonious life where all humans can live in peace, and the strong support the weak in harmony too. If these moral values are ignored then the world order created by God will suffer the consequences. Therefore, in order to safeguard the moral values which are the infrastructure of the world order created by God, God can also use the seas that He conquered and His creations other than humans to continue God's work of salvation. Person Titawaai shows that for the benefit of humans, God cooperates not only with humans, but also with the nature that surrounds them. This is important to remind humans that nature is not just an object for fulfilling their needs, but nature is also a natural subject that determines the history of human life equally. Ancient Israelite cosmology shows that the Titawaai view of nature as God's partner was shared by them as will be seen in the following sections. However, this perspective apparently did not work when pressure from Egypt put pressure on their lives at that time.

²⁵ Results of an interview with YH on June 8 2018.

b. GOD partners with nature as a living space for all creation (14:5-14).

This section shows Pharaoh's very intensive efforts to pursue Israel and Israel's response to it. There were 600 chariots (compared with the number of the Israelites as many as 600,000 people without adding women and children, and other nations who joined them), all the Egyptian chariots and the Egyptian people who were mobilized to chase Israel. A policy that is very ironic when compared with Israel's readiness. For Israel, their exit from Egypt was in order to become a nation that was politically, socially, economically and religiously independent. However, for Pharaoh, the departure of the Israelites was solely for his religious interests, without changing any social, economic or political status. Israel remained slaves to Egypt. So, it appears here that Yahweh indeed planned to harden the hearts of Pharaoh and his army to chase Israel back, but Yahweh's plan did not happen in a vacuum. According to the Titawaai people, the fear that gripped Israel was not solely because of Pharaoh's pursuit, but also that their chances of saving themselves were very small. If the Israelites only cared about the wilderness (*midhbār*) as a grave or death space for them, so according to the Titawaai people, their fear is also related to the vast 'ocean' in front of them. So the Israelites felt they had no shelter because the land and sea they passed through could not be a help. This is different from the Titawaai community. Their land and sea are their sources of blessing and help (nature is also a representation of their ancestors – *lesinussa amalatu*). In this logic of thinking, the Titawaai people would actually think the opposite of the Israelites. If Israel complains that the surrounding nature is not a living space, then they will say the opposite when facing challenges. If Israel thinks that living in the overseas land of 'Egypt' is heaven on earth which gives a sense of security and prosperity, then the Titawaai people who live in their cosmology will choose to quickly return home and not want to become slaves in people's country.

c. God is with (14:15-18).

This section contains God's response to Moses regarding the complaints of the Israelites. The LORD sensed worry or fear in Moses: "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the people of Israel that they should depart." Musa's fear for the Titawaai people was because he was also unfamiliar with the sea. Moses had experience with the Nile River as his helper when he was a baby. But he also needed interaction with the sea so that his courage would be formed, just like the Israelites' ancestors when they crossed the Talla River and the Sea of Seram. On the other hand, the limited sea transportation facilities and the order to divide the sea cannot be

understood logically. For Moses the sea was not a creature with a soul. The sea is an ordinary liquid and cannot be split. However, this ancient Israeli cosmology shows that the sea is not just a thing but a creature with a soul. Israel actually adopted the cosmology of the people of Ancient Southwest Asia (ABDk) as beings with souls and many of their creation myths illustrate this, including the Ugarit myth about the struggle between *Yam* and *Baal*; match between *Tiamat* (goddess of the sea) with Marduk; and myths from Egypt about resistance with *water giant* in the framework of the creation of the world. So this perspective was adopted by the writer of Exodus 14 by giving new content to these myths. This shows that the Exodus story is not just a story of human liberation or salvation, but also the re-creation of the world as a newer and more humane order according to the purpose of its creation. In this work of creation, Pharaoh and his army are *Chaos* history that wants to destroy the world order that was created by God. Meanwhile, the sea (ocean) is GOD's partner in the work of creation. So, Moses and the sea became His partners. The Titawaai people also see the sea as a sentient being. Therefore, they often talk to *tanjong* (cape), *topo-topo* sea water is temporarily choppy, throw coins or natzar, clothes, goods, gold and fish caught into the sea as a 'right' and 'part' of the sea to replace their souls or express gratitude to it.²⁶ If the sea is a creature with a soul then the sea is not just an object to fulfill human needs. This concept of the sea as a creature with a soul makes humans aware not to be arbitrary towards the sea and not to brutally exploit its vast and endless love.

Not only the sea, but clouds, wood, wind and *meti* (low tide) are also used by GOD to protect Israel (14:19-22). According to the Titawaai people, cloud pillars (dark clouds, thick clouds, *butu angin*) that they experience on the island and the sea can indeed cause a very dark effect so that they cannot see and approach Nusalaut Island while sailing; ran aground on another island and some were anchored off *sero* (fishing equipment) in the middle of the sea until the situation is clear. So, the darkness created by the pillar of cloud is total darkness. If God uses a pillar of cloud as a symbol of His presence in Israel, it shows that God has great power over this world. Because the pillar of cloud (the Titawaai people call it a thick, dark, black cloud) for those in the context of small islands, is a sign of threat as well as a land of blessing (rain). So, if God uses the pillar of cloud as a representation of that threat to carry out His plan, then that indicates that God is the Ruler of this world. The Titawaai people remind us that nature is God's good creation and its destructive existence is also controlled by Him to bring blessings to humans.

²⁶ Results of interviews with AT, on May 15, 2018.

Likewise, the stick was used as a means of rescue. Regarding the stick as a medium that God uses to express His power in the sea, the Titawaai people are also accustomed to using certain tools when they face difficulties in the sea such as: coins, goods, gold, rings, clothes and even fish to calm the sea. If Moses parted the sea to make a way for Israel, then the Titawaai people interpreted the things he gave to the sea to calm and thank the sea. Those things are understood as symbols of God's way of expressing His power for nature and man. These methods are the product of the ancestors who also obtained wisdom from God to overcome the life context they faced in Titawaai so that they remain *alive*. And when the fruit is goodness and salvation isn't that part of God's work?

Furthermore, just like the dark cloud and Moses' rod, verse 21 also shows that through the strong east wind, God stirred up the sea water and became dry land. The east wind is basically a very strong wind. So, if there is the addition of the word 'hard' in verse 21, it shows that the east wind used by Allah is indeed powerful with the potential for a very big threat. In Titawaai, if it is the east season, the east wind will blow strongly, so that the waves in the sea will be raging and limit people's activities. Of course, there are those who still go to the sea, but there are also those who choose to rest at home or work in the garden. Fishermen who usually go to deep sea will only operate in shallow sea. But there are those who also remain in the deep sea because they understand that the rough sea is a sign of blessing. This description will show that if fishermen, who are only used to the sea, tend to think twice about traveling on the sea or looking for sea products, especially the Israelis who are not used to the sea. But just as Moses, the sea, dark clouds and other media were used by God to be involved in His work of salvation for Israel and the creation of a new world order, so too with the east wind. Likewise, with dry land in the middle of the sea which appears due to the opening of sea water by the east wind. In Titawaai, the dry land that appears in the middle of the sea is usually referred as *meti*. However, *meti* never connects Nusalaut Island with Molana Island or Saparua Island which are nearby. Especially with Banda Island. It means *meti* which is impossible for the Titawaai people to become a road that connects island to island can only happen by God's blessing. Thus, both humans, sea, black clouds, east wind, sticks, coins, natzar, clothes, goods, fish, rings, gold, *meti* are God's partners. This partner of God also shows that the God believed in by the Israelites and the Titawaai people is a God who is involved in human history indirectly. He needs intermediaries from humans, nature and ancestors too. He did this not because He didn't want to know anymore about the world He created. Not because the world He created was too dirty and He was too holy. But because He is the Ruler and Creator who does not hold back that power to Himself, but does it *shareing*

power with His creation so that they are also directly involved in the creation and saving of the world on an ongoing basis. So, the task of creating and saving the world is the task of God together with all of His creation. All of God's creation is tasked with making way for Israel in the sea so that they are safe and have the freedom to build a better life. Living far from systematic colonialism both economically, politically, religiously and culturally. So, the sea is a path of freedom towards the future, ideals and hopes. And therefore, learning from the sea means learning to be a 'path' for others and not hinder or destroy their future 'path'. Learning to be a 'path' is learning not to be oriented towards one's own interests so as not to make these interests a stumbling block in other people's paths. But in verse 22 it also emphasizes that the sea is not only a road, but a wall (a fortress of protection for the Titawaai people) that protects them. They experienced this during the social conflict in Moluccas in 1999. The sea waves became a fortress when the rioters came.

d. **GOD who renews human life (Psal 14:23-31)**

This section shows that God's plan to harden the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people so that they would continue to chase the Israelites into the middle of the sea was realized and in the middle of the sea, He revealed His power for them so that they finally recognized the God of Israel. as the person they are dealing with. In this passage, the sea is not *shirtless*, but instead the sea becomes God's partner in destroying *shirts* historically, namely Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Through the sea, God punished Egypt and created a new future for Israel. The role of the sea as a punisher is also recognized by the Titawaai people.

AT said that a group of people drowned in the shallow sea in Titawaai because they used a power *bullet box* to commit crimes against each other.²⁷ AL also stated that if humans want other people's property, for example villages, land and natural products, then God can use the sea to punish them.²⁸ Meanwhile, ZA stated that if a servant neglects to carry out his service duties, God can also use the sea to punish him.²⁹ And most of the interpreters in the group relate blessings to people's good relationships with their partners, parents and extended family.

So, if you follow the series of opinions above, it shows that the sea is God's partner in punishing humans if their relationship with God, nature and each other is damaged. On the other hand, the sea as a punisher also attracts controversy from the Titawaai people because for them someone's death in the sea is fate. Genesis 7 proves that GOD used the great ocean to punish sinful humans and the world. This means that the sea as a punisher is his calling as a partner

²⁷ Results of interviews with AT, on May 15 2018.

²⁸ Results of interviews with AL, on May 16 2018.

²⁹ Results of interviews with ZA, on May 17 2018.

who was not created by Allah, but was conquered by Him. It is not destiny, but a responsibility that Allah placed on him, just like the rest of creation.

3. The Unpredictable Existence of GOD in the Context of Marine - Island Theology in Moluccas.

The above interpretation shows that there is a series of meanings of God that are understood based on Exodus 14 from the perspective of maritime theology. One of the most prominent meanings is about God using the sea as a partner to punish sinful humans and the world.

Tsunamis are a reality that frightens people on small islands in Indonesia and Moluccas. On December 22 2018, the tsunami hit the people at Anyer Beach, Banten and Palu - Sulawesi on September 28 2018. At the same time, tension befell the people of Ambon, Lease and Seram after the 6.8 SR earthquake which forced them to flee to the mountains. mountains including my family on September 26 2019. This event which left the people of Indonesia and Moluccas in deep sorrow gave rise to a deep reflection about the sea which is the source of life and a just God. So, building a theology about natural disasters as God's way of punishing humans and the earth seems to castrate all those who are victims of these processes as sinners and at the same time God will be declared an unjust God. Likewise, when we say that disasters are part of the natural law created by God. On the other hand, this confirmation makes God increasingly powerful in the world He created, but what does this power mean if all humans and the earth that He created in collaboration with humans and nature are destroyed? This is really a question-theodicy which is not easy to answer and may be a Divine secret that is not easily deciphered in limited human language.

But starting from the meaning of the sea in Exodus 14 based on the cosmology of the Titawaai community and ancient Israel it is shown that there is a close relationship between human sin and morality as an infrastructure of the world order created by God. Where the sin not only caused the social order between humans to be destroyed, but also the cosmic order created by God to be destroyed as described earlier. And uniquely, nature is given the responsibility by God to punish and reform, as well as recreate the order of the world. In Exodus 14, the sea was used by God to punish the 600 Egyptian troops with their chariots and riders who acted unjustly to Israel; in Genesis 7-8, the Flood was also used by God to punish sinful humans and the earth. According to the Titawaai community as well, the drowning of the Titawaai people in the sea is related to human sin and the threats on the seashore such as tides, abrasion, wind, earthquakes and tsunamis is a warning from God that aims to remind people of their mistakes and renew their relationship with God and others. This description

shows that there is a relationship between morality and the 'disaster' itself. That the disaster appears not only because humans are unable to maintain their relationship with nature, but if the personal relationships between humans and God are also not going well. For Fretheim, the punishment and renewal of nature and man is part of the creation of a new world order in a sustainable and relational way. In the creation, God involved the sea that He had conquered.

So, what kind of image of God appears behind these disasters? *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is the greeting of the Titawaai community for the God or Allah they worship. In their cosmology, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is a God who inhabits high places, especially mountains. Therefore, when *great aunt arrived* in Nusalaut for the first time, they looked for mountains as a place to meet Allah and obtain His protection. The need to be close to Allah in high places is not only because they are a generation of Seram people as representatives of mountain communities who have an intimate relationship with mountains alone. But also, because they are under pressure from conflicts between countries and between religions. In that perspective, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is God who provides protection and safety for them. *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is God who lives in the mountains and to find him humans must come to the mountains and live close to the mountains. On the other hand, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* Those who live on mountains also reflect a high and distant God or a transcendent God.

In subsequent developments, when the sea and no longer the mountains became the center of life for the Titawaai people, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is no longer understood as a God who only lives in the mountains, but a God who exists in the lowlands, coasts and even the sea. In other words, this change in society's cosmological orientation causes an understanding of God who only stays in one place to become a God who is everywhere. *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* is God who is omnipresent and immanent in His works. He expresses himself in the life-giving results of the sea. He also helped by sea as access that made it easier for the Titawaai people to build economic strength, education, health, work and so on. He is present through waves that are sometimes calm and violent. So, the sea changed the way the people of Titawaai thought about *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* from a transcendent God to an immanent God, who is close to human life and struggles. It is God who is near who keeps them alive in Titawaai even though the land is narrow, has limited fresh water and is surrounded by a vast and sometimes threatening ocean. Even *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* promised blessings in the midst of the threat of violent waves in the sea. So even though He is the source of life and is able to preserve the lives of the Titawaai people, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* educates the Titawaai people not to achieve His blessings in an instant way.

In that way too, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* teaches Titawaai children to appreciate the context of their lives surrounded by the sea as a source of life so that they love and be close to it. In this logic, the 'world' in the perspective of island communities is not just a flat world but a dynamic world, which is threatening and full of challenges. But in the midst of this 'world', God gave life and expressed His love for them.

As an immanent and omnipresent God, *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* partnering with humans, nature and ancestors in carrying out His works in the world. Through this cooperation, Allah gives life, protects, punishes, transforms and creates a new world full of hope for humans. So, in this way humans, nature and ancestors are subjects in the world created by God because they also receive power from God to work together with Him in the midst of the world. *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* as a partnering God, we remind humans that to build a better world, humans cannot work alone and use others as objects. However, humans must work together with other creatures who also received the mandate of creation from God. If humans commit moral violations as the infrastructure of the world order created by God then *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* can also use other creations to rebuke humans, both nature and ancestors. So, the partner's function is also to evaluate humans so that humans do not claim to be rulers and act arrogantly with their power in the world so that their fellow humans and other creatures suffer. So, in the context of the sea and islands which are sometimes calm and sometimes choppy, the Titawaai people depict *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* as God who is unpredictable. God worked in miraculous ways in the sea to save them. Allah is able to protect them from the threats of the sea on the coast which is the 'home' He gave them. Because waves, tides, tsunamis, earthquakes and cracking of house foundations on the coast are God's ways of testing faith, strengthening faith and transforming human life. God who promises blessings in the midst of violent waves and promises help and protection through them too. It is Allah who demands hard work and shapes them into people who are strong enough to withstand the waves of 'challenges' so that they are not easily carried away by the current of challenges. In the context of island communities, marine challenges are threatening and tend to be avoided by large land communities or *continental* is an award provided by *Solhua Upu Lanito Manuke* to build their lives. And that challenge is a path to the future and a path to share with anyone. So, God is *unpredictable* is an attempt to provide a picture of God whose existence and works cannot be understood by limited human ratios and language. But behind his unpredictable character there is goodness and renewal of life. For the Titawaai people, that is God *unpredictable* in His existence and works. So maybe a tsunami for many people is an unfair punishment for humans. But God's justice is *unpredictable*. It also goes beyond justice in the

formulation of logic and human language. Because the tsunami not only reflects aspects of God's punishment on humans and the earth, but also *continuity of creation* that never ends. Human morality has a relationship with the world infrastructure order created by God. Therefore, when humans act evilly, it is not only humans who are punished, but the earth is also punished. In this concept, humans and the earth must be responsible for the reality of crimes committed by humans without any classification. So where is God's love and justice? His justice and love are not defined by human logic. So, disasters (conflicts) do not always leave painful suffering behind. But disaster needs to exist as an alternative for change and a better life. Learning from the social conflict in Moluccas in 1999 shows that the conflict that once caused my family and I to lose everything to the point where we had only the clothes left on our bodies was also the beginning of the creation of a new Moluccas world. Indeed, there are no cheap changes. This change requires a heavy price, namely sacrifice, loss, crying and suffering. But everything is valuable for the world that God is still creating.

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