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The Sacrament of Baptism Fulfills A Longing for Salvation in The Mitoni Tradition: A Pastoral Circle Method

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Abstracts:

Some Javanese Catholics still practice the mitoni tradition when a mother is seven months pregnant with her first child. It is believed that by carrying out this mitoni tradition, the birth process will be smooth and the mother and baby will be safe. Javanese Catholics often question whether or not mitoni is allowed according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. In this particular topic, the theological question arises as to whether it is still necessary to seek salvation through rituals, while salvation has been fully fulfilled through Jesus Christ and received in the Sacrament of Baptism. In answering this theological question, the author uses the literature study method as his research method. The approach chosen to discuss the relationship between the mitoni tradition and the sacrament of Baptism is the pastoral circle method from the theory of Joe Holland & Peter Henriot. Meanwhile, to analyze the mitoni ritual, the author uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. From the results of the analysis, noble values were found behind the mitoni tradition that are in line with Christian values. After these values are further examined with systematic reflection on the theological meaning of baptism, it is concluded that the mitoni tradition is very close to the tradition of baptism in the Catholic Church. Therefore, the mitoni tradition that is still carried out by Catholic Javanese can be preserved with some adjustments in accordance with the Catholic tradition.

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Keywords:

Birth, mitoni, myth, sacrament of baptism, Javanese tradition

Introduction

In this modern era, some Javanese community members still live various Javanese traditional ceremonies which are the cultural heritage of their ancestors. One of them is the traditional *mitoni* ceremony as part of a series of preparations for the birth of the first child in the family, when the pregnancy enters the seventh month. With this traditional mitoni ceremony, the family hopes that the mother and child who are still in the womb will be blessed with good health and a smooth birth process on time. The practice of the mitoni ceremony is still carried out in various regions of Java, especially the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Central Java, East Java, and even outside Java where people still hold Javanese customs. This mitoni ceremony is also carried out among Javanese Catholics until now.[1]

With the practice of the *mitoni* ceremony among Javanese Catholics, the question arises about the meaning of salvation, which in the perspective of the Christian faith has been completed and fulfilled through Jesus Christ. This is clear from the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as stated by the apostles: "And there is salvation in no one else but in Him (Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So, where is the relevance of the *mitoni* ceremony that invokes salvation for the mother

[1] As an example is the implementation of the mitoni ceremony in Harjowinangun Village, Belitang District, East Ogan Komering Ulu Regency) in Journal: Eka Riani, "Tradisi Mitoni Pada Masyarakat Katolik (Studi Kasus Di Desa Harjowinangun Kecamatan Belitang Kabupaten Ogan Komering Ulu Timur)", *Jurnal Ilmu Agama* 23, No 1 (2022)

and the child to be born for Javanese Catholics? Does the salvation that is already definitive and fulfilled in Jesus Christ still need to be added or completed from a cultural aspect, namely the *mitoni* ceremony for the process of childbirth in the family? If so, there is a theological problem that it seems as if salvation through Jesus Christ is still unfinished or perfect. On the other hand, there are social and cultural demands from society in general regarding the need for this *mitoni* ceremony. After all, people as social beings cannot escape from their culture. People will tend to undergo rituals in accordance with customs and traditions.[2]

The practice of the *mitoni* ceremony has been written about in various scientific studies. However, it is pointed out that there are no scientific studies that discuss *mitoni* from a theological perspective, especially Catholicism. There is one journal that discusses the mitoni tradition in Catholic communities by Eka Riani.[3]However, the content of the discussion is still in the form of an explanation of the mitoni ceremony procedures carried out by Catholics living in Harjowinangun Village, Belitang District, East Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, South Sumatra. There is no theological discussion in the article. Meanwhile, many scientific studies on the mitoni ceremony associated with Islamic teachings have been written. For example: "Neloni, Mitoni, or Tingkeban: (A Fusion of Javanese Tradition and Muslim Community Rituals)" in 2011 by Iswah Adriana; "Nilai Pendidikan dalam Tradisi Mitoni: Studi Tradisi Perempuan Jawa Santri Mendidik Anak dalam Kandungan di Pati, Jawa Tengah 2018 (Educational Values in the Mitoni Tradition: A Study of the Tradition of Javanese Santri Women Educating Children in the Womb in Pati, Central Java 2018)" by Inayatul Ulya which connects the values

[2] Cf. Nunik Noviani, "Manusia sebagai Makhluk Sosial dan Budaya", Wordpress.com, January 23rd , 2015.

[3] Eka Riani, "Tradisi Mitoni Pada Masyarakat Katolik (Studi Kasus Di Desa Harjowinangun Kecamatan Belitang Kabupaten Ogan Komering Ulu Timur) " *Jurnal Ilmu Agama : Examining Doctrine, Thought, and Religious Phenomena* 23, No 1 (2022)

contained in the mitoni ceremony with Islamic teachings related to child education.

In this article, the author wants to contribute to the discussion of the mitoni ceremony which is still carried out by some Catholic Javanese. The discussion will be carried out by looking at the mitoni tradition that is still being lived with the perspective of Catholic theology. The author argues that this mitoni tradition can be closely linked to the sacrament of Baptism, because mitoni is related to birth, which in the context of the Church's celebration of faith is related to Baptism as the sacrament of new birth.

This article is the result of research that uses the library research method[4] by examining and analyzing literature sources that discuss the mitoni tradition, social anthropological studies, and Church documents and theological writings. The approach chosen to discuss the relationship between the mitoni tradition and the sacrament of Baptism is the pastoral circle method from the theory of Joe Holland & Peter Henriot, "Social Analysis & Theological Reflection: The Relationship of Faith and Justice" (1986).[5] The pastoral circle method, which is a form of contextual theology method, starts from formulating problems that come from experiences, both individual and communal, then social analysis, theological reflection, and finally pastoral planning. To analyze the mitoni tradition, Roland Barthes' semiotic theoretical framework will be used. With Barthes' theoretical framework, the author will analyze the mitoni ceremony and try to find the values behind this ceremony. After that, the author will connect it with the values contained in the Catholic tradition, namely the sacrament of baptism. The last step is to make a pastoral plan for the church.

4 Cf. Mohammad Nazir, *Metode Penelitian*, (Bogor : Ghalia Indonesia, 2009).

5 As summarized by J. Haryatmoko, SJ, "". This article consists of 22 pages for the education purposes at the Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma UniLingkaran Pastoral: Analisis Sosial & Refleksi Teologisversity - not published - 3

Result and Discussion

There are two things discussed in this results and discussion section. The first is to discuss the mitoni tradition according to Javanese tradition as a cultural review. The second is to discuss the results of analyzing the mitoni ceremony with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

The Javanese tradition of mitoni - a cultural overview

The word mitoni comes from the words 'am' (the prefix 'am' indicates a verb or means to carry out) and 'pitu' which means an activity carried out on the count of seven. So "amitoni" which is then abbreviated as "mitoni" is a tradition in Javanese culture which means carrying out a ceremony in the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. The aim is that the fetus in the womb and the expectant mother will always obtain safety from the birth process, the time after birth, childhood, until becoming an adult.[6]Thus, the mitoni ceremony can symbolize that the child will always be blessed by the Almighty.

According to some sources, the origin of the mitoni ceremony is caused by humans who feel they are in a crisis period of their lives.[7] Human life has several stages, namely: birth, childhood-adulthood, marriage, and death. The transition from one stage to the next is often called a crisis period. During their lifetime, human beings often experience many crises that become the object of their attention and it is often very frightening. No matter how happy one's life is, one must always keep in mind the possibility of crises arising in one's life. These crises are mainly disasters, sickness and death. All disasters that befall cannot be

6 Theresiana Ani Larasati, "*Tradisi Mitoni di Yogyakarta*", Yogyakarta: Special Region Library and Archives Article, 2014.

7 cf. Era.id Editorial, "Mengenal Tradisi Mitoni yang Ada di Masyarakat Jawa" Era.id (official website of DPAD DIY), September 11, 2023, Jogja TV Team, "Upacara Adat Mitoni ", Jogja TV, October 2, 2018, Shafa Nurnafisa, "5 Fakta Menarik Mitoni, Tradisi Tujuh Bulanan Khas Jawa yang Nyaris Terlupakan", the Asian Parent, 2023.

controlled by humans with all the intelligence, power, or wealth of property they have[8]

In the face of such a crisis, humans need to do something to strengthen their faith and strengthen themselves. No exception in preparing for a birth, some Javanese people strongly believe that the mitoni ceremony can be a means to prevent the mother and child in the womb from disasters caused by various creatures.[9] The mitoni tradition for Javanese people is very important. In its implementation, there are many things that must be prepared before the mitoni ceremony is carried out, including starting from the preparation of tools and materials, food dishes, preparation of fabrics to be used such as various batik fabrics with different motifs.[10] In addition, this tradition is carried out with the aim of asking for requests to be given safety for the prospective mother and her child. Family, relatives, and neighbors are also invited in the mitoni tradition[11].

Mitoni, or in other terms "tingkeban", is an old tradition passed down from generation to generation. This tradition has developed since ancient times, supposedly during the reign of Prabu Jayabaya. According to the story, there was a woman named Niken Satingkeb who married a courtier of the Kediri Kingdom named Sadiyo. From that marriage nine children were born, unfortunately none of them survived. However, this did not make Sadiyo and Niken feel hopeless, instead they continued to try to get offspring. Finally, they both went to King Jayabaya to complain about their fate and ask for guidance so that they would be blessed with another child who would not suffer the fate of their previous children[12].

8 Era.id Editorial, "Mengenal Tradisi Mitoni yang Ada di Masyarakat Jawa".....

9 Redaksi Era.id, "Mengenal Tradisi Mitoni yang Ada di Masyarakat Jawa"

10 F. Setyaningsih, "Bentuk dan Makna Upacara Manusian Yadnya Mitoni dengan Tradisi Jawa," *Jurnal Agama Hindu* 25, no. 2 (2020): 276–89.

11 K.H. Baidawi, *Sejarah islam di Jawa*, (Yogyakarta: Araska, 2020).

12 Iswah Adriana, "Neloni, Mitoni, Atau Tingkeban :(Perpaduan antara Tradisi Jawa dan Ritualitas Masyarakat Muslim)," *Karsa: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (2012): 243

Furthermore, Jayabaya, the wise king, was moved when he heard the complaint of Niken Satingkeb and her husband. He instructed Setingkeb to do three things. First, he had to bathe every tumbak day (Wednesday). Second, he must bathe every Buddha's day (Saturday). Third, she must take a holy bath at 5 p.m., utilizing holy water and a dipper made from a coconut shell (bathok) accompanied by a prayer or incantation.[13] After bathing, Nyai Niken must wear all white clothes, and two ivory coconuts are placed or attached to her stomach. The ivory coconut has a symbolic meaning, namely Sang Hyang Wisnu and Dewi Sri or Arjuna and Sembadra. This means that the child to be born is expected to be handsome or beautiful, as handsome as Arjuna if the baby is born male, and as beautiful as Sembadra if she is female.

From folklore that is still alive from generation to generation in Javanese society, the mitoni tradition is still carried out. Some Javanese people, regardless of their religious background, still carry out the mitoni tradition. Usually the elders or traditional leaders are the figures requested by the community to perform the mitoni ceremony. Before performing the mitoni ceremony, there are three things that need to be considered, namely the determination of the time for the mitoni ceremony; preparation of tools, materials, and equipment for the mitoni ceremony; and of course the implementation of the mitoni ceremony itself.

The first is the timing of the mitoni ceremony.[14] In the implementation of the mitoni tradition, what should not be ignored is the timing. This timing is so important because only with the right timing according to Javanese traditional calculations, the mitoni ceremony can bring blessings and safety to the baby to be born and the welfare of the

[13] Ign Gatut Saksono; Djoko Dwiyanto;, *Faham Keselamatan dalam Budaya Jawa* (Ampera Utama, 2012), 133

[14] E. Setiawan, ", Nilai Religius Tradisi Mitoni dalam Perspektif Budaya Bangsa Secara Islami" *Journal of Al-Adalah* 18, no. 1 (2015): 39-52 as cited by : Fitri Nuraisyah, "Mitoni sebagai Tradisi Budaya dalam Masyarakat Jawa" Hudaidah 176 | Historia Mandania Volume 5 (2) 2001.

couple who become the baby's parents. Those who determine the time are the father-to-be and the mother-to-be, who of course consult with the traditional leaders who know the exact time for the ceremony. The time of the mitoni ceremony must be determined in accordance with a good day in the Javanese calendar, for example Monday Kliwon, Thursday Kliwon, Sunday Pon. There is also a date for the implementation of the mitoni tradition set on an odd date and not past the full moon, for example on odd dates including three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, and the fifteenth.

The second is the tools, materials and equipment.[15] Before holding a mitoni ceremony, there are several things that must be prepared so that the ceremony becomes valid, including:[16] small ivory coconuts depicted by a pair of puppets, namely Arjuna who is a male puppet and Sembadra who is a female puppet; water that comes from seven springs or seven wells, the amount of each spring is one dipper; *setaman* flowers, which are seven-colored flowers that will be mixed with water that has been taken from seven springs; seven fabrics with 7 different motifs, each of which symbolizes the goodness that is expected to be owned by the baby who will be born; eggs that symbolize new birth. *Seven tumpeng, jenang procot, jenang clorot, jenang abang, jenang putih, jenang abang-putih, jenang palang abang, jenang sumsum, sego gurih, sego punar, sego guyeng, ketan ponco warno, sega megana, rujak, ketupat* are also prepared. All these types of food have their own meaning, all of which are oriented towards the smoothness of the birth process later, and the various virtues and goodness that are requested for the baby to be born.

15 A complete list of the various tools, materials and equipment used for the mitoni ceremony, including their meaning or symbolic significance can be read in : Fajar Wjarnarko, "Mitoni: Upacara dan Upakaranya", Academia.edu, 2020.

16 This is the result of an interview conducted by Fitri Nuraisyah, Hudaidah, a student of the History Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University, written in the journal: "Mitoni sebagai Tradisi Budaya dalam Masyarakat Jawa" *Historia Madania* 5, No.2 (2021).

The third is the implementation of the *mitoni* ceremony and its meaning. The *mitoni* ceremony includes several stages. The first stage is *siraman* or bathing the mother who is 7 months pregnant. Here the pregnant mother is bathed with water and *setaman* flowers including roses, cantil, jasmine, and kenanga. The bathing is done by the elders or those who are used to bathing in the mitoni tradition. *Siraman* is done 7 times with the aim that later when the baby is born in a state that is holy and clean[17]. *Siraman* is performed by seven people, such as grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law and the husband himself. Another version is that the seven people who perform the *siraman* for the mother-to-be are the father and mother who are role models for the father-to-be and mother-to-be. After that, the stage of putting a native chicken egg in the cloth worn by the pregnant woman and her husband breaking the egg. The breaking of this egg symbolizes the hope that when the expectant mother experiences a rupture of membranes, the baby will be born safely.[18] After breaking the egg, the husband inserts two ivory coconuts into the cloth used by the pregnant woman. The coconuts have been painted with the puppet characters Arjuna and Sembadra, so that if the child is a boy, he will have the character of Arjuna, and if a girl is born, she will have the character of Sembadra. Arjuna's character is described as brave, intelligent, and wise. While Sembrada's character is depicted as a woman who has a broad mind, is not easily jealous, and does not easily accept an issue that is not yet known to be true.

After the insertion of the two ivory coconuts, the mitoni ceremony continues with the stage of changing the pregnant woman's clothes with 7 *jarit* cloths with different motifs. Those who witness the mitoni ceremony

17 I. Ulya, "Nilai Pendidikan dalam Tradisi Mitoni: Studi Tradisi Perempuan Jawa Santri Mendidik Anak dalam Kandungan di Pati. Jawa Tengah," *Edukasia Islamika Journal of Pendidikan Islam* 3, No. 1 (2018)

18 I. Adriana, "Neloni, Mitoni, atau Tingkeban," *Karsa Journal* 19, no. 2 (2011): 239–47.

are asked to choose which cloth is suitable for the expectant mother.[19] The ceremony is followed by the sale of rujak and dawet by the expectant mother. The buyers can only pay with money made from broken roof tiles that have been shaped into round coins. After selling, the money is put into a clay cauldron and then broken again right at the front door. It is intended that the prospective baby will be cheap in his sustenance, and be able to meet his and his family's needs.[20]

The mitoni ceremony ends with a banquet and kenduri. This meal and kenduri are held with the aim of gratitude for the gifts and graces that have been given by God Almighty. The food provided can be in the form of tumpeng with all the side dishes that symbolize that the future baby can be born healthy and strong. In addition, various market snacks are served as a symbol of prayer and hope that will be granted.[21]

Results of Analyzing The Mitoni Ceremony with Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory

To analyze this mitoni tradition, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory framework will be used, which is called the "two orders of signification" theory. Semiotics is a term that refers to the science of signs. Semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion*, which means sign. Terminologically, semiotics can be defined as the study of a wide array of objects, events and entire cultures as signs. Signs, in the communicative process, are used by the sender to convey meaning to the receiver.[22] According to Barthes, semiotics aims to encompass every sign system, regardless of substance and boundaries-the images, movements, musical sounds, objects, and the complex relationships of all these that make up the content of religion,

19 I. Adriana, "Neloni, Mitoni, atau Tingkeban."
20 Intani dan Damayanti, "Pemaknaan Tradisi Mitoni Adat Jawa Tengah pada Pasangan Jawa dan Padang", 2018
21 Intani dan Damayanti, "Pemaknaan Tradisi Mitoni Adat Jawa Tengah pada Pasangan Jawa dan Padang". 2018
22 Janica Lewinsky," Analisis Semiotik Pada Iklan Bebelac 4 Versi You are My Everything" Paper Komunikasi Antar Budaya, Surya University, 2020.

tradition, or public entertainment. At the very least, they signify a system. Semiotic communication methodology has been widely applied in various situations to convey messages whose meaning is strongly influenced by the interplay between context and the semiotic itself.[23]

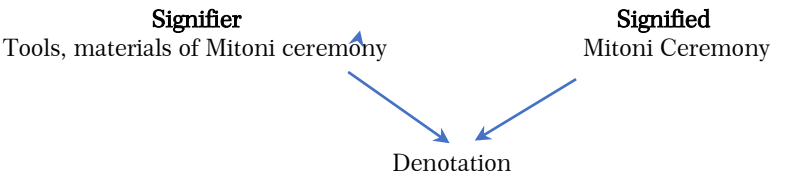
In his semiotic theory "two orders of signification", Roland Barthes explains that the first stage of signification is the relationship between signifier and signified in a sign towards external reality. Barthes calls it denotation, which is the most obvious meaning of the sign. Connotation is the term Barthes uses to denote the second stage of signification. It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the reader as well as the values of his or her culture. Connotation has a subjective or at least intersubjective meaning. In other words, denotation is what the sign describes about an object, while connotation is how it describes it."[24] In the second stage of signification which deals with content, signs work through myth. Myths are how cultures explain or understand some aspect of reality or natural phenomena. Myth is a product of a social class that already has a domination. So, when a sign that has a connotation meaning then develops into a denotation meaning, the denotation meaning will become a myth.[25]

The *mitoni* tradition can be seen through the lens of Roland Barthes' "two orders of signification" semiotic theory. Denotation which is the first level of meaning and connotation which is the second level of meaning, can be found as follows: that all the tools, materials provided in the *mitoni* ceremony are the signifier and the signified is the *mitoni* ceremony. The relationship between the two creates a denotative meaning. If continued to the second meaning, it can be found that the

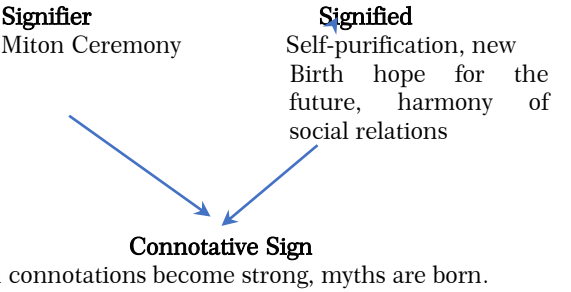
[23] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology,* (Translated from French by Annette Lavers dan Collin Smith) , (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 9.
[24] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology,* 41-50.
[25] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* (New York: Noonday Press, 1972), 109.

mitoni ceremony is a signifier and the signified is self-purification that brings safety in the birth process. The relationship between the two creates connotative meaning. If analyzed with a chart, it can be described as follows:

First Stage:



Second Stage:



Tabel[26]

In today's life, *mitoni* as a sign of self-purification for safety in the birth process is still maintained in Javanese society to this day. So there is an assumption in the community that in order for the baby to be born safely, this mitoni ceremony must be carried out. If it is not carried out, it is "believed" that problems will occur during childbirth, for example, the birth process is not smooth, the mother or the baby can get sick and die. From this context, a myth was born that has been believed by the Javanese community. This ceremony is carried out not only by adherents of the native Javanese religion called Kejawen but also by people of other

[26] This chart is based on the lecture notes of "Semiotics" in the even semester of the 2022-2023 academic year for the Master of Divinity Philosophy Program-Universitas Sanata Dharma by Dr. J. Haryatmoko SJ.

religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Catholicism.

Behind this myth, there seem to be values that are hidden or always held so that this tradition must be maintained and must not be abandoned, namely:

Self-purification that brings salvation

Purity is so important because it is the main requirement to obtain salvation when someone has to enter a new life (birth). First of all, it is realized that the sprinkling ceremony has a meaning or symbol as a statement of self-purification or self-cleansing both physically and spiritually. This symbolic cleansing has the purpose of freeing the baby's mother from sins so that later when giving birth the birth process is smooth and has no moral burden. [27]. The dish "kupat" which means "kula lepat" also shows the effort to build life towards purity. Humans are never perfect. Humans have a tendency to make mistakes against others both in attitude and speech. Therefore, apologizing or forgiving others should be a part of daily life.

New birth

A value that lies behind this mitoni is new birth. The child who has lived in his mother's womb will be born as a new human being. He who lives in a limited environment, namely in his mother's womb and is fully dependent on his mother, will be born into a human figure who lives in a wider environment and has independence or is not fully dependent on his mother, and is able to create according to his life calling. This is

[27] Imas Nurazizah," Tinjauan Filosofis Dalam tradisi Upacara Selametan Mitoni dan Sajian Nasi Tumpeng: Studi Deskriptif di Desa Sumurugul Kecamatan Wanayasa Kabupaten Purwakarta", *Journal of Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, No. 3 (August 2022): 381-398

symbolized in the mitoni ceremony, namely by breaking the egg. The breaking of the egg symbolizes that if the mother-to-be experiences a rupture of membranes, it is hoped that at that time the baby can be born to enter the new world as a new human being safely. The hope of a smooth birth is also with one type of food served in mitoni, namely jenang procot. This jenang has the meaning and hope of the parents that the baby will be born "mrocot", which means born or come out quickly and smoothly.

Expectations for a good future for the baby to be born and the parents' responsibility to educate it

Furthermore, the mitoni tradition also contains hopes for the baby to be born. With this ceremony, the unborn baby is expected to be born safely and develop into a truly great person like Arjuna if the baby is a boy or like Sembadra if the baby is a girl. Based on this hope for the child, the parents are responsible for sending the child to a better personality. Parents have built the expectation that they will be responsible for the education of the child who will be born.

Harmonious relationship with social environment

Javanese people believe that a person grows and develops through the influence of the social environment in which he or she is located. The social environment includes the nuclear family, the extended family (breed), the surrounding neighbors, and the scope of organizations or religious institutions to which the family is affiliated. Of course, a child will develop better if the social environment is good and conducive. The environment is conducive when the relationships are harmonious. This harmonious relationship occurs within the family, both the nuclear family and the extended family, and harmonious relationships with the surrounding community. With this mitoni ceremony, the entire

community around the baby who will be born is invited to support the birth of the baby (kenduri) and also later take part in the process of growing up. The surrounding community, which has different religions, also shows its harmony. They still work together, help each other, respect each other, and do not discriminate against each other.

Theological Reflection

From the results of analyzing the mitoni tradition with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, it was found that there are four values contained in the mitoni tradition. The four values are self-purification to bring salvation, new birth, hope for a good future for the baby and the responsibility of parents to educate their children, and harmonious relations with the social environment. Based on the results of this analysis, the author considers that the mitoni tradition has values that are in line with Christian values. Furthermore, the author tries to connect this mitoni tradition with the tradition of baptism in the Catholic Church. We first explore the theological meaning of the sacrament of Baptism, and then we discuss the values of the mitoni tradition in the perspective of Christian theology, especially the theology of baptism.

Theological meaning of the sacrament of baptism

There are many theological meanings of baptism. But systematically, we can summarize them in four main theological meanings of the sacrament of baptism[28].

[28] The idea of four theological meanings of the sacrament of baptism here follows : Martasudjita, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003), 228-232.

Baptism associates a person with Jesus Christ

Baptism takes place in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; cf. 10:48. 19:5). There are many interpretations of this text. However, all agree that baptism always refers to a dynamic thing, namely the inclusion of a person into a relationship with Jesus. Baptism associates a person not only with the person of Jesus Christ, but also includes a person in the event of Jesus Christ. The text of Romans 6:1-14 is the classic text. By way of reminding the basic meaning of baptism, Paul calls Christians to live their new life as Christians: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death? By this we were buried with him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life." (verses 3-4). Similarly it says in Colossians 2:12: ".... For with Him you were buried in baptism, and in Him you were also raised through your belief in my work."

Fellowship with Jesus Christ also means the forgiveness of sins. "For we know that our old man was crucified with us, that the body of sin might lose its power, and that we should not again be in bondage to sin. For he who has died is free from sin" (Rom 6:6-7). The forgiveness of sins is the central meaning of the gift of baptism. This was clearly the belief of the early Christians (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16). But more than that, baptism makes one included and united with the destiny of the life of Jesus Christ which includes His passion, death, and resurrection and life for God. Baptism unites a person with Christ. This communion is profound because through baptism we put on Christ (cf. Galatians 3:27). This means that what happens in Christ also happens in the baptized person. Therefore, from the text of Romans 6:1-14, we can draw three things that happen in baptism: forgiveness or cleansing of sins, sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and finally fellowship with God Himself.

Baptism unites us with the Triune God

By being united with Jesus Christ, a baptized person is united with the Triune God Himself. This is very evident in the text of Jesus Christ's words when sending out the disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). With baptism, people are included in the trinitarian community of love, which is a dialog of love between the Father and the Son that takes place in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit poured out in the heart of the baptized person (cf. Romans 5:5) enables him or her to experience communion with the internal life of the Triune God.

There is a communicative relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in God. Communication in the Trinity is the communication of love between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in such a way that the Three Persons of God remain one divinity (= the one God), while each person is never separate and never mixed. This communication of love that builds the divine community in the Trinity is revealed into history. This is the history of God's salvation, which took place first in the Old Testament time frame and culminated when the Son, the second person of the Trinity, took on flesh and became human and dwelt among mankind (cf. Jn 1:14). The Son became human in Jesus Christ. In the whole life of Jesus, He always remained with the Father and the one who united Jesus with the Father was the Holy Spirit.

Thus, until Jesus died on the cross, the community of divine love in the Trinity was unbroken. At the moment of his death, the Son gave himself totally to the Father in the Holy Spirit and the Father accepted this offering and surrender of the Son in the Holy Spirit as well. The Father's acceptance and the Son's surrender in the Holy Spirit is what is known as the resurrection. Therefore, resurrection is a manifestation of the Father's acceptance and the Son's surrender in the Holy Spirit. Through baptism, a baptized person joins the trinitarian dynamic of love.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit bestowed on the baptized person, he or she enters into the dynamic of the love relationship between the Father and the Son. It is precisely with this baptism that one experiences unity and togetherness with the triune God. The longed-for togetherness is answered in the togetherness with the Triune God. From a human perspective, being together with the Triune God is merely a gift and not due to human merit, and this is what happens in baptism.

Baptism incorporates a person into the fellowship of the Church

By baptism, one is brought into communion with the Church. This is the most visible ecclesiological meaning in the celebration of baptism. By being baptized, one is accepted as a new citizen of the Church. However, baptism and the entire celebration of the sacraments of initiation are not simply a ceremony of when one becomes a formal citizen of the Church. The celebration of initiation further summarizes and encompasses a process of growth in faith. Initiation should not be seen as some kind of one-off point in time, but should be seen as a process, during which one must continue to grow and develop in the faith of the Church.

Baptism always includes two kinds of movements that are actually one reality of communication and encounter. *First,* through baptism, a person is incorporated into the Church. There the person is accepted and recognized as a new citizen of the Church with all its rights and obligations. *Secondly*, in baptism there is also a movement from the opposite direction. The Church becomes alive and grows within the person. This means that the person internalizes the whole life of the Church, both in terms of faith and tradition and all forms of expression. For example, the newly baptized person now begins to diligently attend holy mass and get involved in it, is active in various ecclesiastical

activities, participates in pilgrimages to various places, and more importantly: lives the faith of the Church personally and communally.

Baptism as a bond of ecumenical unity

Of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church, baptism and the Eucharist are the sacraments accepted and recognized by all Churches. Increasingly, one Church can also recognize the validity of another Church's baptism. Although such recognition is not always the case, given that each Church has a different rite. Document Five reports on this situation. It says that in general the Churches view the statement on baptism as good and in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles. At issue is infant baptism. Although the Churches generally accept the practice of infant baptism favorably, there are Churches that do not recognize it, such as some Baptist Churches in the United States. However, baptism is generally accepted by all Churches and thus it can be said that baptism is a bond of ecumenical unity. On the part of the Catholic Church, this recognition of the meaning of baptism as a bond of ecumenical unity is reflected in Unitatis Redintegratio (UR) 22: "Baptism is a sacramental bond of unity between all those who are born again because of it".

Values of The Mitoni Tradition in The Perspective of The Catholic Church's Theology of Baptism

After presenting a systematic reflection on the theological meaning of the sacrament of baptism above, the author tries to link the mitoni tradition with the tradition of baptism in the Catholic Church. The values contained in the mitoni tradition as found in the analysis of the mitoni tradition using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory become an entry point to see the relationship between the mitoni tradition and the baptism tradition. The connection can be explained as follows:

Self-purification to bring salvation

The first value found in analyzing the *mitoni* ceremony with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is self-purification to bring salvation. Javanese people who still perform *mitoni* believe that the mother and the baby to be born will be free from impurities (all evil things) so as to obtain salvation. Meanwhile, in the Christian faith, all authority and power have been subjugated to Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3:22). Thus, the power of darkness or evil as the Javanese believe has been conquered by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man must come to Jesus Christ and he will be freed from all evil."[29]

The power of Jesus Christ over evil is manifested when people believe in Him. For all those who have received the Gospel and heard that Christ is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), baptism is the way to God and salvation (cf. CCC 1257-1261). Baptism is necessary because every person is in absolute need of God's salvation which is fulfilled through Jesus Christ (C. Groenen, Theology of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism-Chrismation History and Systematics, Yogyakarta: Canisius, 1992, 222.)] The importance of baptism is also related to gaining participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "For we know that Christ, when he rose from the dead, died no more; death had no more dominion over him. For His death was the death to sin, the death to sin once and for all, and His life is the life of God" (Rom 6:9-10). By partaking of Christ's death and resurrection, one obtains salvation because death no longer has dominion over him, but he obtains eternal life.[30] One of the things believed in mitoni to obtain salvation is the forgiveness by the family and surrounding community towards the mother

[29] Cf. Antonius Koko Kristanto, "The Catholic Baptism Fulfills the Longing for Salvation at Ruwatan : Pastoral Circle Approach Overview, *Journal of Asian Orientation in theology* 04, no 1 (February 2022), 52

[30] C. Groenen, *Teologi Sakramen Inisiasi: Baptisan – Krisma Sejarah dan Sistematika, (*Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), *222.*

and father of the unborn baby after they apologize. The granting of forgiveness by the surrounding people is believed to bring cleansing from evil and bring salvation. From a Christian perspective, the forgiveness of sins that brings salvation only comes from God through Christ. On the one hand, forgiveness from the family conveys the meaning of horizontal harmonization in relationships between people. But on the other hand, the forgiveness from others to the mother-to-be and father-to-be presents the forgiveness of sins which is only God's grace. With baptism the grace of forgiveness has been given, and with mitoni the grace of forgiveness of sins is realized socially and actually.

Brenda Colijn explains that salvation is "a story of God's love for his broken creation, his longing for covenant relationships, and his patience in forming people who will reflect his love for one another and for the world." Brenda J. Colijn, Images of Salvation in the New Testament, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 313] In Ephesians 5:25-26 there is an important saying about baptism: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it, having cleansed it with water and the word". The phrase "water and word" probably refers to baptism, as a means of achieving soteriologically relevant cleansing.[31]

Javanese people who do not believe in Christianity do not recognize the sacrament of Baptism. However, the community has a deep longing for salvation. The Javanese have traditions or local wisdom that are believed to be the means to achieve the salvation they long for. The Church itself recognizes that all people who do not have the opportunity to know Christ and learn the faith, but who sincerely seek God and live according to their conscience also find salvation.[32] But the Church also

[31] Jorg Zehelein, "Baptism and Faith as Means of Salvation: An Exegetical Discussion of Significant Passages in the New Testament," *Africa Theological Journal* 37, No 1 (2020): 10, https://www.academia.edu/46059162/Baptism_and_Faith_as_Means_of_Salvation_An_Exegetical_Discussion_of_Significant_Passages_in_the_New_Testament.

[32] Benediktus XVI, *Youcat: Katekismus Populer*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2012): 24.

teaches that the sacrament of baptism is necessary for one to attain salvation (cf. LG 14).

New birth

The second value behind mitoni is new birth. In the mitoni ceremony, it is expected that the child who has lived in the mother's womb will be born as a new human being. In the Catholic faith, it is believed that the sacrament of baptism also makes a person holy, that is, freed from all sin, including original sin. Through baptism, people are freed from sin and reborn as children of God (cf. CCC 1213). Baptism is the first sacrament received by the faithful. This sacrament is the foundation and entrance to living the Christian life. With the baptism that the baby will receive after birth, he will live a new life because he will be reborn as a child of God.

The New Testament tells the story of John the Baptist who baptized people in the waters of the Jordan River. Christ's disciples were also baptized. Baptism is a symbol of new birth, just as when a baby comes out of the protective sheath of amniotic water and takes its first breath. This sacred ceremony is a public declaration that one is on God's side and has become His child. It is important for his own spiritual growth and as a witness to others. Jesus answered Nicodemus, saying: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). Jesus told Nicodemus that unless he was born again, he could not see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was initially confused by this metaphor. So Jesus replied: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5,6). The flesh refers to our natural birth, and the Spirit speaks of our spiritual rebirth. We are all born of the flesh, but not

everyone is born of the Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50).[33]

Baptism makes us children of God. So it says in John's Gospel: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1: 12, 13). This passage says that "to become" children of God, we must believe in His name. The result of accepting Christ as your Savior is being born again.[34]

Hope for a good future for the baby-to-be and parents' responsibility to educate their children.

The third value contained in the mitoni tradition is the hope for a good future for the baby-to-be and the responsibility of parents to educate their children. With the mitoni ceremony, the child is expected to become a noble person. As stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a child who receives baptism becomes a new, more sublime creation. Baptism not only cleanses from all sins but simultaneously makes the newly baptized person a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). The Holy Trinity bestows upon the baptized the grace of sanctification, the grace of justification, which enables him by divine wisdom to believe in God, hope in Him and love Him, enables him by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live and work under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and enables him by moral virtues to grow in goodness. Thus, the whole organism of a Christian's supernatural life is rooted in holy baptism (Canan Law 1265).

The main role in mitoni is for the parents of the baby-to-be to determine when and how the mitoni ceremony is held. It is assumed that parents will continue to play a role in accompanying their child. Similarly,

[33] Amazing Fact Indonesia Editorial Team, "Mengapa Baptisan (Dilahirkan Kembali) Penting Bagi Keselamatan?"

in the sacrament of baptism for infants, parents are made aware of their responsibility to educate and accompany their child's faith. In order for the grace of baptism to flourish in the child, the help of the parents is essential. They must be good Catholics, able and ready to accompany newly baptized children and adults on the path of Christian life (Canon Law 1255). It is the parents' role to choose the best for the development of their children such as choosing the best food, clothing, education, and various good habits for their children so that the child develops and grows into a person who is mature and firm in the Christian faith.[35]

Harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment

The fourth value found is harmonious relationships with the surrounding environment. The environment plays a significant role in the growth of a child's maturity, so it is expected that the family and the surrounding community are truly conducive to their growth. In infant baptism, it is believed that faith is not a one-time event, but a continuous growth process. People must grow continuously in faith, and infant baptism is no different. With baptism, a child is prepared for a process of faith growth that is expected to continue to develop. The development of a child's faith ultimately also depends on the environment and company. Of course, a good and faithful environment and community will shape the child's personality to be good and faithful[36]

The Mitoni Tradition should be preserved.

Through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, it was found that many good values are contained in the *mitoni* tradition. It turns out that after being aligned with Catholic traditions, especially the sacrament

35 E. Martasudjita Pr, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja,* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003): 240.
36 E. Martasudjita, Pr, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja,* hlm.240

of baptism, there are values contained in the *mitoni tradition that are still correlated with the values contained in the sacrament of baptism. Of* course this greatly strengthens the faith of Javanese Catholics who still maintain the *mitoni* tradition. Therefore, the *mitoni* tradition needs to be preserved because it can enrich the faith of Christians. *Mitoni* reminds Javanese people to understand the importance of purity to obtain salvation. *Mitoni* reminds us that the birth of a human being is so important and needs to be well prepared. *Mitoni* reminds parents and the community to take part in the growth of a person's maturity through attitudes, actions, and conversations. By living the Javanese tradition, Catholics can live with other communities who still maintain Javanese culture or traditions. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said: "Whatever is good, sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the customs and culture peculiar to nations, is not only not lost, but is healed, elevated and perfected to the glory of God, to the shame of the devil and to the happiness of men" (AG 9).

Pastoral Steps

In the pastoral step, the first thing that needs to be done is catechesis or teaching to the people about the mitoni tradition. People need to understand that the mitoni tradition does not contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, the mitoni tradition contains noble values that are in line with Christian understanding so that it should be preserved. For this reason, people need to learn about the mitoni tradition so that they get a correct understanding of the mitoni tradition from a Catholic perspective. It is not enough for Javanese Catholics to only perform the mitoni ceremony, but they also need to understand it correctly in the context of the Christian faith message for salvation that is fully realized in Jesus Christ. This correct understanding needs to be given to the next generation of Javanese Catholics, so that

they understand and place mitoni as a cultural expression of the longing for salvation fulfilled in Christ and also the new birth and growth of faith and maturity of a Christian.When everyone understands the meaning or value of a tradition, then the tradition can be preserved and remain strong, although there are always adjustments because it follows the times. Thus, Javanese Catholics who still practice the mitoni tradition are firm in carrying out the mitoni tradition without feeling that they are violating the teachings of the Catholic Church. Likewise, Catholics from other ethnic groups can understand it and accept it without hesitation.

For catechesis or teaching materials, a guidebook needs to be prepared that contains the tradition of mitoni according to Javanese custom, a systematic reflection on the theological meaning of the mitoni tradition in relation to the sacrament of baptism, and an explanation of the mitoni ritual interpreted in a new way. For the mitoni tradition and theological reflection on it, it has been described above. As for the interpretation of the mitoni ritual, it can be explained as follows:

The materials prepared for the mitoni ritual need to be interpreted in a Christian way:

The water that comes from the seven springs is interpreted as an important source of life for all living things on earth. In the Bible, water is often referred to as the "water of life". In Jeremiah 2:13 and Jeremiah 17:13, God is referred to as the "spring of living water". In the Gospel of John, Jesus said that "whoever drinks the water He gives will not thirst forever. Instead, the water He gives will become a well of water within him that flows into eternal life". In the Book of Revelation, the water of life is described as "crystal clear water" flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. It is also mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel as "water that

comes out from under the threshold of the house" and flows towards the east.[37]

The seven flowers mixed in the seven springs can be interpreted as symbols of those supernatural privileges, namely grace and virtue with which our souls should be adorned. Flowers symbolize the fragrance of God's own glory. So flowers have a special place in the liturgy and worship of the Church. Many altar decorations are adorned with flowers according to the liturgical period. Likewise, flowers are used in order to sow flowers on the graves of the deceased. The fragrance and beauty of the flowers bring us to the glory of God's own salvation which deserves to be honored and praised. The seven flowers that are mixed in the seven springs are certainly related to the grace of salvation that is asked for throughout the birth process, the safety of the mother and child, and the good development of the baby so that he will live as a person who has a fragrance of name and virtue as children of God.

The seven motifs of cloth and kemben used express the hope that the baby will also have the goodness implied in the symbol of the cloth. When related to the sacrament of baptism, the use of cloth and kemben motifs in the mitoni tradition is similar to the use of white clothes worn for someone (including babies) who are baptized. White clothes symbolize purity. It is hoped that one day a baptized person or baby will become a holy person. In the early Church, a baptized person would be dipped in a pool three times and would then put on a new garment, a white garment, symbolizing a new, clean life. He was once again holy in God's eyes and would do things according to His will. He will no longer live according to the flesh, but according to the gift of the Holy Spirit. For infant baptism, the white garment symbolizes that they have been cleansed from original sin and have become Christ's.[38]

37 Aswin Lumintang, "Air Kehidupan yang Memulihkan", *Tribun Manado*, Oktober 22nd, 2022

38 Kenya Ayunda, "5 Simbol dalam Sakramen Baptis", in: BersamaKristus.org, Agustus 29th, 2023.

The number seven (pitu) worn for the spring, type of flower, and type of cloth symbolizes a "pitulungan" which means getting help from the Almighty. It is hoped that in the labor process the mother who gives birth and the baby who is born get help and protection from God himself. In the Catholic tradition, the number 7 has many symbolic meanings. In the Bible, the number 7 is often used to signify completeness or totality. In addition, the number 7 is also often used in connection with punishment. In the book of Revelation, the number 7 is used to mean the perfect or complete number of everything. In addition, the number 7 is also used to mean the number of sins to be forgiven."[39] In the Catholic tradition, the number 7 also has a special meaning, especially with the seven sacraments of the Church. St. Bonaventure, a Catholic theologian, often used the number 7 symbol in his writings. The number seven for Saint Bonaventure has a special meaning because it symbolizes fullness or balance for both human beings and the whole universe.[40]

The two ivory coconuts are depicted with the puppet characters Arjuna and Sumbadra in the hope that the baby to be born will be a great person like Arjuna and Sumbadra. When associated with the baptism ceremony, this has something in common with the naming of saints known as saints or saints. Boys will be named a saint while girls are named a saint. The naming of a saint or saint gives hope that the child will grow up to be a mature person and have a strong faith like the saint or saint whose name is worn.[41]

The ritual in mitoni, especially at the sprinkling stage when the mother is doused with water, is certainly reminiscent of the baptismal water poured on the person being baptized. If the sprinkling in the mitoni

39 Lynne Newell, "Eksposisi Daniel 9". *Pelita Zaman Journal* 5, No. 1 (1990).

40 Andre B Atawolo OFM, "7 Pertanyaan untuk Makna Hidup", *Cristus Medium*, March 30th, 2020

41 Cf. Yenny Suriya & Marcel Saragosa, *Pendidikan Agama Katolik SD 3 (KTSP)*, (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008), 119.

ceremony is a form of supplication to God for the purification of the prospective mother and the child she is carrying, then in the sacrament of baptism the water poured out becomes a real symbol of God who is bestowing forgiveness of sins and purification on the person being baptized. Here it is clear that in the mitoni ceremony salvation in the form of purification and forgiveness of sins is still longed for because it is still requested, while in the sacrament of baptism the forgiveness of sins is granted. Thus the mitoni ceremony is a ceremony of longing for salvation in Jesus Christ which is bestowed in baptism.

Another important pastoral step is to formulate a Catholic mitoni ritual or ceremony. It is necessary to adjust the formulation of prayers so that the prayers used are truly Catholic. The Diocesan or Kevikepan Liturgy Commission needs to look at the Catholic mitoni ceremony book that has been spread among the people so that the mitoni ceremony really still contains the noble tradition of the Javanese mythode and at the same time the standard Christian faith tradition.

The last is the training of the leaders of the mitoni ceremony. Traditionally, mitoni ceremonies are performed by local elders, also known as shamans. In the Catholic Church, perhaps eucharistic ministers or pastoral workers such as catechists can lead this mitoni ceremony. For this reason, there needs to be a program for teaching/catechesis and training for prospective mitoni ceremony ministers.

Conclusion

Most Javanese people still practice Javanese traditions. One of them is mitoni. It turns out that some Javanese Catholics still practice this mitoni tradition. In its implementation, the practice of this mitoni ceremony often raises questions and doubts in the minds of Javanese Catholics. There are doubts whether this practice is in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church or not. There are also those who

argue that salvation is already fully in Jesus Christ, so why perform the mitoni ceremony?

In this paper, it is found that the practice of mitoni does not contradict the Catholic faith tradition. There are four noble values of the mitoni ceremony found in this study, namely self-purification to bring salvation, new birth, hope for a good future for the prospective baby and the responsibility of parents to educate their children, and harmonious relations with the surrounding environment. These values can be given new meaning in the perspective of the theology of the sacrament of baptism according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Salvation only comes from Jesus, baptism is a new birth as children of God, ecclesiological meaning when a baptized child becomes a citizen of the Church and parents are responsible for the faith education of their children, and the grace of the sacrament of baptism which gives the gift of peace and harmony with others as well, because in Christ all have been reconciled. It appears from this research that the mitoni ceremony is actually a Javanese cultural custom characterized by a longing for the fullness of human salvation, which in a Christian perspective only occurs through Jesus Christ as received in the sacrament of baptism.

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