

## The Unification of Piar Hot Esen the Original Religion of Buna' Ethnic Group and the Catholic Christian Religion in the Society of Loonuna and Lutha Rato Villages, Timor Indonesia (A Pastoral Theology Study)

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to answer the following questions: 1). Had the Buna' people believed in God before the European missionaries came and taught or introduced the belief in the Lord or the Catholic religion in 1875? 2). How do the practices of the belief following the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* as well as the Christian Catholic religion and the unification of both religions happen? 3). The unification of both religions in the society of Buna' ethnic group has lasted for 147 years from 1875 until 2022. Will the unification last forever? Is it possible for one of both religions to become weak and disappear? In order to gain the results of this research, the method applied was the research methodology of the qualitative descriptive method by using emic approach i.e. the method that is based on the data as found in the research field. The technique used for the data compilation was done by the means of observation and deep interview to the informants living in the research location namely Loonuna and Lutha Rato villages. Based on the result of the study, it is concluded that: **Firstly**, the people of Buna' ethnic group society had believed in God before the missionaries brought and proclaimed the belief to the Lord beginning from the year of 1875. **Secondly**, the unification of the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* (PHE) and the Catholic Christian Religion (CCR) happens because of many reasons, one of which is that there is not any contradiction between both religions. **Thirdly**, the unification of both religions occurs through some steps as presented in this study.

**Key Words:** unification, Piar Hot-Esen, Buna' ethnic group, Catholic Christian religion, Loonuna and Lutha Rato

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### Introduction

Most of the indigenous ethnic groups in Indonesia are the followers of their original religions because there is a motivation in their hearts to meet an Eternal Divine or the Supreme God<sup>1</sup>. The people of Buna' ethnic group society especially those living in Loonuna and Lutha Rato villages as the society of the original religion followers inherited by their ancestors believe in the Supreme God who is called *Hot-Esen* in their Buna' language. *Hot* means the Sun; *Esen* means in the Most High Place; *Hot-Esen* means the Sun in the Most High Place who is known as the Lord. *Hot-Esen* is known as transcendent and mysterious because He reigns in the Most High Place called *Esen Hitu Gene As Hitu Gene* (The High Place the Seventh Sky), the Creator of the earth and the sky.<sup>2</sup>

Buna' people especially those living in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato believe in *Hot-Esen* who is transcendent and immanent, living in a far away residence as well as always close to the people. Therefore, when someone dies there is a death rite called *Taka Gol Lai* (*taka gol* means a small plaited container to put the food in; *lai* means serve or offer) in which there is an offering to the soul and *Hot-Esen* (the Lord) in the forms of food and drinks. It means that *Hot-Esen* (the Lord) is served with food since He is always close to the people or immanent beside transcendent.

Beside believing and honoring *Hot-Esen*, Buna' people including those in the two villages always establish their relationship with the souls particularly with the ancestors named *tata bei mil* (in Buna' language). It is believed that the ancestors always have relationship, help, accompany as well as protect the living family members. *Hot-Esen* and the ancestors are always involved in their life cycles such as in birth event or rite, traditional marriage and death, as well as in working a new garden, building a traditional house, thanks giving ceremony and so forth.

Buna' people including those in the two villages believe in spirits called *muk gomo*. There are good spirits and bad spirits. Even they believe in *Hot-Esen* and as Catholic Christian followers, their relationship and

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<sup>1</sup> Hayon, Nikolaus, 1982. Liturgi dan Adaptasi (Manuscript for Liturgy and Adaptation Lecture) in STFTK Ledalero, Maumere, Flores

<sup>2</sup> Bele, Antonius, 2011, *Nurani Orang Buna'*, Salatiga: Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana

respect to the ancestor and the good spirit can not be neglected as the ancestors are believed to be the mediator between the human being and *Hot-Esen* because they are closer to *Hot-Esen*. They constantly build their relationship by offering their rites to *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and to the spirits according to their original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen*.

Beside, Buna' people particularly those in the two villages are the Catholic Christian followers who believe in God Trinity, consequently they live their faith in their daily life. Therefore, as a result the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* as the original religion and Catholic Christian religion happens. The unification of the two religions in Buna' society especially in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato becomes an interesting topic to be researched with some research questions or problems as follows:

1. Had Buna' people including those in the two villages believed in God before the European missionaries taught or proclaimed the Lord or the Catholic Christian religion in 1875?
2. How does the unification of the two religions happen?
3. The unification of the two religions has occurred for 147 years since 1875 until 2022. Will the unification last forever? Is it possible for one of both religions to become weak and disappear?
4. What are the reasons for the unification to happen?

### **Research Method**

In order to respond the research questions as presented before, the method applied was the descriptive qualitative method by using emic approach i.e. the method based on the data as found in the research field. This method is also a grounded research i.e. the research that is based on the theory found with the data gained in the research field according to the occurring social situation<sup>3</sup>. The reason of using descriptive qualitative method that belongs to emic perspective method and that is based on the grounded research is because this method is suitable to reveal the fact faced and is going to be researched including the change that has occurred so far. The technique of the data compilation is done by observation and deep interview to the informants in the research location i.e. the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato as a unified society in the Sub-District of Lamaknen Selatan, Belu District, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.

### **Discussion**

In this discussion, the attention is mostly focused on the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* in Buna' society particularly in two villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato based on the problem statements: "Why is there the unification of the original religion *Piar Hot-Esen* and the Catholic Christian religion in their life in general and in living their faith and how has the unification of the two religions happened?"

To begin with the discussion on the above research problems, the discussion on the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* is the following.

#### **1. The Original Religion of *Piar Hot-Esen***

Every religion relates to the relationship between human being and the Almighty or the Eternal Divine (the Lord). *Meslim M.*<sup>4</sup> stated that religion is always related to the idea about worshiping or honoring the Lord. Religion is regarded as a devotion or worship to the Lord according to the tradition of the ancestors as an honor to the Supreme Divine or the Lord.

*Piar Hot-Esen* religion has also strong relationship with the idea about worshiping or honoring *Hot-Esen* (the Lord) and there is always devotion or worship to *Hot-Esen* according to the tradition inherited by the ancestors. In line with *Meslim M.*'s idea, *Piar Hot-Esen* religion is a good religion because a good religion is an old or an original religion as such religion is very close the Supreme Divine or *Hot-Esen*. *Piar Hot-Esen* religion is also very close to *Hot-Esen*, therefore it is called *Piar Hot-Esen* religion.

The desire to encounter the Almighty Divine is always planted in the heart of the original religion followers including those of *Piar Hot-Esen* religion followers that is seen in their belief, rites and daily life., in which the Almighty Divine (the Lord) is involved<sup>5</sup>. The ceremonies and the religious practices as well as the religious tradition are used to reveal their desire to meet the Almighty Divine. All of those are related to the religious life of *Piar Hot-Esen* followers.

Buna' people call the Almighty Divine or the Lord *Hot-Esen*. Bele Anton names *Hot-Esen* as a religious essence of Buna' people<sup>6</sup>. *Hot* means the sun. *Esen* means above. *Hot-Esen* means The Sun Above (the Lord).

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<sup>3</sup> Bele, Antonius, Ibid, page 50

<sup>4</sup> Amfotis, David, 2020. Dissertation: Swoop on the Divine: Ethical and Emic Perspectives, Theological Anthropological Studies in the Bbiboki Society

<sup>5</sup> Hayon, Nikolaus, ibid, page 12

<sup>6</sup> Bele, Antonius. 2011. Ibid. Page 217

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The position of the Throne of *Hot-Esen* is above all creatures. So the Throne of *Hot-Esen* is called *Esen Hitu Gene As Hitu Gene* ( The High Place, the seventh layer of the sky).

### **The Religious Essence of Buna' People as Piar Hot-Esen Original Religion Followers**

There are three kinds of the belief in the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* which are followed by Buna' people especially by those living in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato. As Buna' people, those living in both villages believe in *Hot-Esen* in their daily life, maintaining their relationship with their ancestors and with the spirits. As the followers of other original religions in Indonesia particularly in East Nusa Tenggara Province believe in God and give different Names to the Lord they believe, Buna' people including those in the two villages also believe in God named *Hot-Esen*.

**Firstly**, Believing and worshiping the Lord *Hot-Esen*. There are many different kinds of Names given to *Hot-Esen* they believe and worship. For example: *Masa' Giral Kere' Bo'alGepal Uen* (The One who is Noble and Perfect), *Pan o Muk Ukon Gomo* (The One Who Governs the earth and the sky), *Hot-Esen naran darai hase'i Gomo* (The Creator of all the creatures).

**Secondly**, Maintaining relationship with and honoring the ancestors. Buna' people and those in Loonuna and Lutha Rato villages believe that the soul of a departed as well as those of the ancestors are alive. They live in *Masel*, a mysterious place as it is surrounded by big trees (forest) and a terrifying waterfall.

**Thirdly**, Believing in good spirits and bad spirits. Buna' people including those in the two villages believe that there are good spirits and bad spirits. They build good relationship with the spirits which are regarded living in the forest, big tree, spring and so forth.

### **2. The Bellief and the people of Buna' ethnic group society before and after becoming Catholic Christian followers**

The people of Buna' ethnic group including those living in Loonuna and Luha Rato villages believe in *Hot-Esen* (the Lord). Their belief is a gift from the Lord through the Holy Spirit, inherited from their ancestors and it is a Mysterious Noble owned by Buna' people. They fully comprehend their belief in The Most High Divine named *Hot-Esen* in their indigenous religion of *Piar Hot-Esen*. They also believe in the same *Hot-Esen* as the Catholic Christian followers.

By being the Catholic Christian followers, the people of Buna' ethnic group including those in the two villages follow the Christian faith as it is a must to all Christian members. The belief to Jesus Christ brings salvation to all Christian followers. However, the belief itself is not the salvation. Only Jesus Christ becomes the way to salvation. The faith is just a bridge through which the salvation from Jesus can be achieved<sup>7</sup>. As people in Buna' society especially those in the two villages become Jesus Christ's followers, they have their right to receive the salvation from Jesus Christ.

### **3. Adaptation in the Original Religion of Piar Hot-Esen and the Catholic Christian Religion**

There has been so far the adaptation in *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion. The adaptation is also an answer to the reason of the problem statements i.e. 'Why does the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* (the original religion of Buna' people) and the Catholic Christian religion happen?'. 'How does the unification happen?' Both problem statements above are the main problem statements or formulations whose answers will be presented in details in next pages.

There have been some kinds of unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion, some of those are based on adaptation.

#### **a. The Name of the Lord: Hot-Esen**

The Lord is named *Hot-Esen* both in *Piar Hot-Esen* religion and Catholic Christian religion. In *Piar Hot-Esen* religion, the Lord is called '*Hot-Esen*' only. In the Catholic Christian religion, the Lord is believed as only one God but there is The Holy Trinity of the Lord: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. As Catholic Christian members, Buna people and also the people in the two villages believe in The Holy Trinity. They call The Father as *Hot-Esen Ama* (*Amameans* Father), The Son as *Hot-Esen Gol Mone* (*Gol Mone* means Son) and The Holy Spirit as *Hot-Esen Roh Kudus* (*Roh Kudus* means Holy Spirit). So, the belief in *Hot-Esen* in *Piar Hot-Esen* religion is completed by the belief in The Holy Trinity in Catholic Christian religion. This is known as

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<sup>7</sup> The idea was taken from: cumparan.com. 14th September 2021

an adaptation in which Buna' people and those in two villages adapt their faith in the Lord as *Piar Hot-Esen* followers in accordance with the faith in the Lord as Catholic Christian followers.

#### **b. Baptism to a Child**

In the society of Buna' ethnic group as well as in both villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato, there is a birth rite in which the new born baby is given its name. It is hoped that the process of the rite will last well or successfully, therefore a *mako'an* ( a traditional expert) leads a prayer asking *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and the spirits for a successful birth rite. When a difficulty occurs in the process, the *mako'an* will ask *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and the spirits for help<sup>8</sup>. One of the ancestors is asked for his or her permission to give his or her name to the new born baby. If the ancestor agrees, the new born baby immediately or spontaneously will suck his or her mum's breast. It is called a traditional baptism<sup>9</sup> to the baby. Then the new born baby will be baptized in the Church following the Catholic Christian liturgy. The baby is given a Christian name. Now the baby has owned the traditional name and the Christian name. A unification of the two religions happens in the birth rite and Christian liturgy.

#### **c. Marriage**

In the society of Buna' ethnic group as well as in both villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato, marriage is legitimated traditionally and it is blessed in Church by a Catholic Priest. Traditionally there are some steps to follow in order to legitimate a traditional marriage.

**Step one:** *Sigal Saen* that means traditional engagement. **Step two:** *Molo Pu Tomak* that means paying an amount of money. **Step three:** *Tazu' Lor Hoto* that means also paying some money less than the money paid for *Molo Pu Tomak*. **Step four:** *Pe' Liti ne'* that means sharing the money collected in step two to all members in the extended family. The village government and the Catholic Priest come to lead a prayer and to bear testimony to the marriage steps. Finishing the marriage tradition, the Parish Priest will bless the marriage in Church following to the Catholic liturgy.

#### **d. Language**

The official language used in Liturgy in Catholic religion in the past was Latin language. In this case the people attended passively the Holy Mass and other ceremonies and they did not understand the language as well as the meaning of the Holy Mass and the ceremonies. Some years later Indonesian language was used in Liturgy, consequently people understood and were familiar with the Liturgy and other ceremonies. The Bible was also translated into Indonesian language. Indonesian language has been used even until now. Buna' language is also used in Liturgy, in the Bible and in all prayers. The unification happens by using Buna' language in Liturgy celebration, in all prayers and ceremonies.

#### **e. Clothe for Liturgy**

When the European missionaries came to Nualain parish, they brought the official clothe for Liturgy especially for Holy Mass celebration with different colours such as black, green, white, pink and brown. The black liturgy clothe is not worn nowadays when there is a Holy Mass celebration for the soul of a departed. It is replaced by a brown colour. Other Liturgy clothes with different colours are worn in different Liturgy seasons. Nowadays the official Liturgy clothes are also made from the traditional woven clothes. They are also worn (beside the European Liturgy clothes) in Holy Mass celebration by the priest and the people as well as in different events too such as in Marriage sacrament celebration, by the choirs, by children in their first communion celebration, by the dancers in Holy Mass celebration. The traditional woven clothes are also used for decoration in Church.

#### **f. Dance in Liturgy Celebration**

Traditionally dance is performed to welcome a noble person, a hero as a winner in a war. It is also performed in a traditional event like building a new traditional house. Dance in Liturgy celebration especially in Holy Mass has been performed since around 1980-s (nineteen eighties). There was no such performance before. Dance is performed to praise the Lord especially in Holy Mass celebration, from the beginning of the Holy Mass to welcome a Bishop or a Priest, when singing the Glory, offering and by the end of the Holy Mass.

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<sup>8</sup> Bere, Mali, Benediktus. 2021. *Malu Aiba'a*, Jakarta: Cerdas Pustaka

<sup>9</sup> Bere Mali, Benediktus, *Ibid.*, Page 22

**g. Offering**

In Eucharist celebration of Catholic Christian religion, there is an offering brought to the altar in the official or main forms of bread and wine. Nowadays, from around 1980, beside bread and wine, there are many different kinds of offering brought to the altar such as money, food and drinks like different kinds of cake, beer, agricultural produce, corn, rice, banana, soap, soap powder, tooth paste and so forth. Such kinds of offering are brought to the altar in order to thank God because the Lord has provided everything for the needs of human being

**h. Mourning**

One of the Liturgy ceremonies performed or offered in the Catholic Christian religion is lamenting. It is usually performed on three days in the Holy Week i.e. on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The purposes of lamenting are to reflect on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, to welcome all people to reflect on Jesus' suffering and to remind every member of the sins committed in order to repent.

On Good Friday, after delivering the homily, some ladies mourn or cry for Jesus Christ who died because of the sins. There was not such performance before in Liturgy. It has been performed since 1980-s.

**i. Prayer, Singing and Holy Mass celebration during a death event (when someone dies)**

Every time when one member of Buna' ethnic group dies, including in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato, many traditional death rites are performed or done. Beside such traditional performances, there are also some chances provided to pray, to sing and to celebrate the Holy Mass following the Catholic Christian Liturgy for the salvation of the soul of the departed person. Such Liturgy was not found before. When there is prayer, singing and Holy Mass celebration, all traditional activities are stopped until the end of the Liturgy celebration performance. This is one kind of the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* religion and the Catholic Christian religion.

**j. Cross, Candles and Offering at the Grave**

There was not any cross, candle at a grave in the past time since the departed Buna' people were still pagans; they were not baptized yet to become Christians. Only food and drinks were offered at the grave. Gradually many Buna' people were baptized, as a result all Buna' people including those in Loonuna and Lutha Rato villages have been baptized and become Catholic Christian followers. Since then, crosses have been planted, candles have been lighted and offerings in the forms of food, drinks have been brought to the graves. Beside, the pictures of: Saint Mery, Jesus, the Last Super of Jesus with His disciples have been stuck at the graves. The candle is the symbol of the light of the risen Jesus Christ. People visit the graves in groups or privately to pray for the salvation of the souls. The visitors also ask the souls of the departed to protect, to pray to the Lord asking for their successful life in the world as it is believed that the souls are close to *Hot-Esen* (the Lord). It is one kind of the unification too.

**k. The Holy Mass celebration at the Christian Grave**

There had never been any Holy Mass celebration at the Christian Grave on 2nd November before Father Vinsensius Wun, SVD was in charge of being Nualain Parish Priest. Father Vincent was the first to celebrate the Holy Mass at the grave. It is called Christian Grave as all people buried at the graves were Christians. Every date of 2nd November is dedicated to pray and celebrate the Holy Mass for the repose of all souls of those who have died. All candles were blessed before being lighted at the grave.

**l. The Holy Mass celebration at Mot and Bosok**

Buna' people including in the two villages have the specific places to hold rites in order to worship *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and the spirits for instance in the traditional house, at graves, at the center of a garden called *umon* as well as at *mot* and *bosok*. *Mot* is known as a unifying place, a meeting place, a place to handle problems including crime. *Mot* is also a common place where people can pray or worship *Hot-Esen* as well as the ancestors and the spirits together. *Bosok* is also a place to worship *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and the spirits. *Bosok* is like an altar, it is not a common place like *Mot* is. Every extended family has *Bosok*. Holy Mass had not been celebrated in *Mot* and *Bosok* before Rev. Father Vinsensius Wun, SVD became the Parish Priest of Nualain parish. He was the one who celebrated the Holy Mass at *Mot* and *Bosok*.

**m. Having retreat and celebrating the Holy Mass in the traditional house**

Every extended family has their own traditional house. Retreat as well as Holy Mass celebration had never been done in a traditional house before. Rev. Father Dedi, Pr. was the one who held the initial retreat and the Holy Mass celebration in the traditional house. He had the retreat for one week (six days) from 2nd

until 8th November 2020 and the Holy Mass was celebrated every afternoon in the traditional house<sup>10</sup>. The money offered in the Holy Masses in the traditional house was brought to Church to be offered again for the same intention by the Parish Priest. Rev. Fr. Dedi, Pr. also spent the time on reminding the people joining the Holy Mass and his own family members not only pay attention on the traditional rites in the traditional house, but they also as the Catholic Christian followers should attend the Holy Mass in church.

#### **4. Why does the unification of Piar Hot Esen happen?**

##### **Or What are the reasons for the unification to happen?**

The unification happens because or there are some reasons for the unification to happen as follows.

##### **a. The same Faith**

One of the key informants named *Bele Antonius* stated that the people of Buna' ethnic group including those in the two villages follow their faith as the followers of *Piar Hot-Esen* religion and the Catholic Christian religion in their daily lives because they believe in the same Lord called *Hot-Esen*<sup>11</sup>. They have the same faith as the same followers of both religions. The unification happens because of the same belief in God owned by the same followers of the two religions.

##### **b. No Contradiction**

The unification of the two religions happens as there is not any contradiction between both religions as stated by the informant named *Bele Antonius*.

##### **c. The Catholic Christian religion completes or enriches the *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion**

The Catholic Christian religion is a formal religion followed by people in the world and it has a broad Dogma teaching while the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* is an informal religion followed by a small ethnic group of Buna' society with about 100.000 people. They have limited dogma teaching. They just believe in *Hot-Esen*, their ancestors and the spirit. They worship *Hot-Esen*, the ancestors and the spirits in their traditional "liturgy" called the traditional rite. As the followers of the Catholic Christian religion, people of Buna' ethnic group including those living in the two villages have believed not only in *Hot-Esen* but also in the Holy Trinity God: The Father (In Buna' language: *Hot-Esen Ama*), the Son (*Hot-EsenGol Mone*) and the Holy Spirit (*Hot-Esen Roh Kudus*) since 1875. As Christians, they receive the Holy Sacraments, the Liturgy and their Dogma teaching becomes more comprehensive. The Catholic Christian religion enriches *Piar Hot-Esen* religion. The unification becomes more intensive and strong.

##### **d. The Belief in *Piar Hot-Esen*: The Basis to Become Catholic Christian followers**

The people of Buna' society including those in both villages believed in *Hot-Esen* (the Lord) before becoming the Catholic Christian in 1875. Such belief has become the basis for the unification to happen.

##### **e. Adaptation and inculturation: The basis for the unification**

There should be an adaptation in the Catholic Christian liturgy. It means the good, suitable or proper tradition or culture of a nation or an ethnic group should be used in the Catholic Liturgy so that the people feel being touched and their faith becomes deeper. Inculturation means the integration of a tradition or a culture of a nation or an ethnic group with the Catholic Liturgy so that the people feel being touched and the faith of the people becomes deeper. The thirteen kinds or examples of the unification in number 3 above are mostly based on adaptation and inculturation.

##### **f. The Second Vatican Council**

The Second Vatican Council underlined or stressed the importance or need of the Liturgy adaptation with the tradition or culture of a nation or an ethnic group. Church appreciates and develops the beauty and the spiritual wealth of a nation or an ethnic group (SC. 37b).<sup>12</sup> The positive element in a culture or tradition should be protected or defended and it should be included in Liturgy as needed (SC. 37c).

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<sup>10</sup> This data was achieved based on the interview held with Rev. Fr. Dedi, Pr. on 7th October 2021

<sup>11</sup> *Bele Antonius* is the first one who named the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen*

<sup>12</sup> SC. Stands for "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*" i.e. The Constitution of the Second Vatican Council about the Holy Liturgy

**g. The Models of the Religions Encounter<sup>13</sup>**

There are some sorts of religions encounter models such as: “Replacing Model: ‘There is only one Right Model’”, “Complementing Model: ‘The one that completes the other’”, “Mutual Model: ‘Many Religions are Called to Have Dialogue’”, “Accepting Model: ‘Many Religions are True: ‘Just Leave Them’”. One of the Models selected to become the basis of the unification is ‘Mutual Model’. This model chooses love and the universal God’s presence in every religion. This Model underlines how to build the right dialogue with other religions. This model followers cannot imagine about following Jesus without having dialogue with other religions. There should be a mutual relationship between two religions that means both religions should listen to one another, learning from each other and ready to change. In this case the Catholic Christian religion is always ready to have dialogue as proved by the thirteen unifications above.

**h. Complementing Model**

One of the Religions encounter Models is “Complementing Model: ‘The One that completes the Other’”. It is also a basis or reason of the unification to occur. The followers of this model are Lutheran Church, Reformation Church, Methodis Church, Anglican Church and Rome Catholic Church. The followers believe that there is a good spiritual value and the Lord is in other religions as well. The pioner of such theological view is Rome Catholic Church. There should be a dialogue among the religions.

**i. Positive Sincretism**

*Niels Mulder* formulated the meaning of sincretism as an effort to make various differences to disappear and to produce unity of various sects and the philosophical ideologies<sup>14</sup>. There are negative connotation of sincretism and positive connotation of sincretism. The negative connotation of sincretism is meant by combining or mixing some religious teachings of different religions so that the authentic teaching of a religion disappears due to the domination of other religion. The positive connotation of sincretism is meant by different religious elements which complete one another as well as respect one another. By the middle of the 20th century, *Melville Herskovits* (1958) regarded sincretism as a valuable concept to determine how far the various traditions or cultures had been integrated; sincretism is not a ‘bridge’ towards destroying a religion, but it is a way towards an ideal cultural integration<sup>15</sup>. Based on the positive connotation of sincretism the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* religion and the Catholic Christian religion happens.

**j. Religion Elements or Components<sup>16</sup>**

Every religion has eight elements or components such as the elements of: Faith, rite, leader, offering, prayer, time, place, and symbol. The original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* has the same religion components. However, as an informal religion such components should be enriched or completed by the components of Catholic Christian religion, the formal religion with the larger Dogma teaching and followed by people all over the world. The unification occurs based on the same religion components.

**k. No Prohibition from Church and the Catholic Priests**

The people of Buna’ ethnic group including those living in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato have become the followers of Catholic Christian religion for 147 years while they are also the followers of *Piar Hot-Esen* religion. Such situation has lasted without any prohibition from church and Priests. Rev. Father Yustus Asa, SVD as the former Vice-Bishop of Atambua Diocese does not have any objection to the situation because the people always neglect or do not obey his suggestion.<sup>17</sup> People are afraid of neglecting their tradition inherited by their ancestors. Rev. Fr. Vincent Wun, SVD as the former Parish Priest of Nualain Parish (now he is the Vice-Bishop of Atambua Diocese) does not have any objection because of the principles of Second Vatican Council stated in the Decrees of *Ad Gentes* and *Nostra Aetate* that Catholic Church is open to other religions and traditions. Rev. Fr. Lazarus Mau, SVD also does not have any objection to such condition as there is not any contradiction between the two religions of *Piar Hot-Esen* and the Catholic Christian.

**l.** There are thirteen kinds of the unification (as presented above) regarded as one of the reasons for the unification to happen.

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<sup>13</sup> Knitter, Paul, 2008. *Pengantar Teologi Agama-Agama*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, page 71-187

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia; [referensimakalah.com](http://referensimakalah.com)

<sup>15</sup> <http://arti-definisi-pengertian.info>. 14th July 2021

<sup>16</sup> Dhavamony, Mariasusai, 1995. *Fenomenologi Agama*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius

<sup>17</sup> Asa, Yustus, 2021. *Pastoral Kehadiran*, Kupang: Gita Kasih

### **5. What are the Steps of the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion?**

The unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion has lasted for 147 years. There are some steps or processes of the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion as follows.

**First step:** The people of Buna' society especially those living in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato, as *Piar Hot Esen* followers have their own original belief in *Hot-Esen* the Lord. They had believed in *Hot-Esen* as inherited by their ancestors before the European missionaries especially the Portuguese came and proclaimed the belief in God in 1875<sup>18</sup>.

**Second step:** The Catholic Christian religion was proclaimed in 1875 in which Buna' people including in the two villages became the Catholic Christian followers<sup>19</sup>. Two people were initially baptized in Kewar, Lamaknen, Belu District, Timor, Indonesia. They were: *Loro Loi'Mau'* (his traditional name; his Christian name was Abraham) and *Bei Siri Loko'* (his traditional name; his Christian name was Fransiskus<sup>20</sup>). Since then the Catholic Christian religion has grown and developed flourishly in Buna' society including in the two villages. Many people have been baptized from year to year while following or practising their belief as *Piar Hot-Esen* followers.

**Third step:** As the people in Buna' society including in both villages become the followers of both religions of *Piar Hot Esen* and the Catholic Christian, the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion happens even until now.

### **Conclusion**

The following is the conclusion drawn based on the above presentation.

**Conclusion one:** The people of Buna' ethnic group as well as those in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato had believed in *Hot-Esen* (the Lord) before the missionaries introduced and proclaimed the belief in God that began in 1875. They had lived as the followers of their original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen* that was inherited by their ancestors from generation to generation before becoming the Catholic Christian religion followers.

**Conclusion two:** The reasons for the unification to occur have been presented above. Only the topics of the reasons are presented below: **a.** The same faith; **b.** No contradiction; **c.** The Catholic Christian religion completes or enriches the original religion of *Piar Hot-Esen*; **d.** The belief in *Hot-Esen* in *Piar Hot-Esen* religion: The basis to become the Catholic Christian followers; **e.** Adaptation and inculturation: The basis for the unification; **f.** The Second Vatican Council; **g.** The Models of the religions encounter; **h.** Complementing Model; **i.** Positive Sincretism; **j.** Religion Elements or Components; **k.** No Prohibition from Church and the Catholic Priests.

**l.** The thirteen kinds of the unification presented above are also regarded as one of the reasons for the unification to happen.

**Conclusion three:** There are some steps or processes of the unification of *Piar Hot-Esen* original religion and the Catholic Christian religion as previously presented above.

**Step one:** The people of Buna' society as well as those living in the villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato, as *Piar Hot-Esen* followers had their own original belief in *Hot-Esen* (the Lord). They had believed in *Hot-Esen* as inherited by their ancestors before the European missionaries especially the Portuguese came and proclaimed the belief in God in 1875.

**Step two:** The Catholic Christian religion was proclaimed in the society of Buna' in 1875. Consequently Buna' people including those in the two villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato became the Catholic Christian religion followers. Two people were initially baptized in Kewar, Lamaknen, Belu District, Timor, Indonesia. They were: 1. *Loro Loi' Mau'* (his Christian name was Abraham). He was called Abraham *Loro Loi' Mau'*. 2. *Bei Siri*

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<sup>18</sup> Bere Tallo, A.A., 1978. *Tata Bei Gua/TeteTiep Gua: Kisah Peperangan*, Manuskrip

<sup>19</sup> Bele, Antonius, 1992. *Sejarah Paroki St. Gerardus Nualain*, Atambua: Puspas

<sup>20</sup> This data was obtained through the interview with *Yos Laku Mali* in Kupang, Timor, Indonesia on 17th August 2021



Loko' (his Christian name was Fransiskus). He was called Fransiskus Bei Siri Loko'. Since then, the Catholic Christian religion has grown and developed flourishly in Buna' society particularly in the two villages of Loonuna and Lutha Rato. Many people have been baptized Christians from time to time while following or practising their belief as Piar Hot-Esen followers.

**Step three:** As the people in Buna' Society including those living in both villages become the followers of both religions of Piar Hot-Esen and the Catholic Christian, the unification of Piar Hot-Esen and the Catholic Christian religion happens even until now.

**Conclusion four:** There is not any dualism in practising or following the two religions because dualism has negative connotation of contradiction. For example there is contradiction between bad and good, bright and dark and so forth. If there is a contradiction between Piar Hot-Esen religion and the Catholic Christian religion, there will not be any unification of both religions to happen.

**Conclusion five:** Since there is a strong unification of Piar Hot-Esen religion and the Catholic Christian religion that has lasted for 147 years, the original religion of Piar Hot-Esen will not disappear or vanish due to the various reasons of the unification as presented above.

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