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*Erasmus*

**Healing Old Wound of Mass Violence:  
The Resurgence of Local Tradition as Reconciliation Efforts in  
East Nusa Tenggara**

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## List of Acronyms

PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
IK	Indonesia untuk Kemanusiaan (Indonesia for Humanity)
PBH Nusra	Pusat Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Association) Nusa Tenggara Timur
IPT	International People Tribunal

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## **Abstract**

Late 1965 marked the beginning of anti-communist purge in Indonesia, resulting in millions of people killed, arrested, tortured, exiled, marginalised, and stigmatised. It becomes the beginning of the New Order era under Soeharto, known for its vast development of the country. Notwithstanding the economic growth, human rights violation and mass violence continuously happened. Even during the post-authoritarian Indonesia, the chain of silence has not ended. A half-decade later, people with lived experience of the tragedy are still living in trauma, with most of the victims and perpetrators forced to live side-by-side. Despite the suppression to address the issue, the indigenous people of Sikka in East Nusa Tenggara commenced a customary ritual called *Gren* to enforce a healthy relationship that once damaged. By framing the ritual of *Gren* as an alternative paradigm for reconciliation, this research explores the narrative of ecological reflexivity behind the peaceful initiatives. Through in-depth interview and interpretative analysis of symbols, components, and narratives on how the indigenous people perceived *Gren*, this research surf into the collective healing and its exteriorisation process. It then allows to shed light on how *Gren* gives a holistic set of understanding on prolonging peace that involves a nexus of human-human and human-nature relationship.

## **Keywords**

1965 Mass Violence, Ritual, Restorative Justice, Peace Ecology

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Problem

Indonesia is a fast-developing country and well-known as the emerging market economy in Asia. Since 1999, during the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the economy starts to recover, and growth has accelerated. Sadly, the vast development in the economic sector contradicts to haunting political past. Void history of mass violence persists in the mind of the people and affect a large group of communities which then hamper the effort in human development. This section is a revisit of the violent past, which is one of the iconic political events under the New Order era of Soeharto.

Indonesian society during the New Order era was caught somewhere between tradition and renewal. The Soeharto regime drew, like the Soekarno government before it, on the tradition to maintain control. Nevertheless, it is a total depiction of state control which also include private matters of the people. Every sphere of life was neatly supervised and controlled by the central government, under the justification to provide safeguard and stability away from the threat of communism. Media and information faced much censorship to suppressed the negativity of the government while stressed out the positive. To ensure that nothing distracted Indonesians from feeling part of one large family, New Order ideologues developed the concept of the 'floating mass', whereby people at the grass-roots level were to be excluded from active participation in politics (Vatikiotis 1998: 103).

The global economic forces also play a vital role in establishing Soeharto's regime by giving loans and drastically shifting the political view. New Order regime is a turning point from a highly nationalist government, to economically driven one. To foster the development of the country, with the help of a loan from IMF, Soeharto embraced modernisation and triggered a surge towards social change. It allowed and encouraged the contentious political issues, especially linked to the case of failed *coup d'etat* in 1965 accused to Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia/PKI).

During the late Soekarno's presidency, six Indonesian generals and one lieutenant killed by a military *coup d'etat* movement, namely the 30 September Movement. This event marked the beginning of the communist purge. Indonesian Communist Party accused as the responsible party behind this failed attempt of the coup. As a consequence, the Indonesian Military institution under the commando of Major General Soeharto led the army to



exterminate anything related to the party. Civilian allies consist of religious militias and provoked anti-communist members had the full backing of the military and actively participated in the violence. Between 1965 and 1968, about half a million Indonesian killed, another million detained without trial, tortured and exiled (Eickhoff et al. 2017: 449–464). The occurrence of mass violence is not only limited to the capital city but spread all across regions in Indonesia. In East Nusa Tenggara alone, at least 800 people died in the killings, as reported by researcher James Fox<sup>1</sup> (Farram 2010: 390). The mass violence and murders of accused members and sympathisers is a dark side of Indonesia's history, the biggest communist party outside of the communist bloc disappeared almost overnight, as did its affiliated social organisation.

The Indonesian military's role was central in instigating and coordinating the killings, but they also relied on participation from broader sections of society. The army encouraged a belief in the barbarity of the PKI by means of its propaganda campaign. However, they also maintain training and mobilising people to take part in the arrest and killing of PKI members and those of affiliated organisations (McGregor 2009). This political event did not allow the dead (victim of the mass violence tragedy) to be respected as they should.

In most of local understanding and tradition, the mourning of the dead—whether by cultural rituals or rites—is an important event. Not only it is essential to the family but also for the dead, as it is seen as a closure to their living (See Madrell and Sidaway 2016; Nowatzki and Kalischuk 2009). However, with the political nature of heavily controlled government, this ritual is considered to be a taboo. With hundreds of thousand people accused to be part (or at least sympathiser) of the communist party, a lot of dead body just buried in a mass graveyard with some are still yet to be found. In other cases, the corpses dumped in the sea, caves, major rivers, left on main streets or mutilated and strung up for public display as a further form of terror (McGregor 2009). This is the problem faced by thousands of families. Under extreme political circumstances, they cannot practice the mourning properly according to their belief. Then how can a community accept the tragedy and try to reach collective healing if the killing is not even admitted as past atrocities? How can the missing puzzle of inability to practised proper ritual and rite be replaced after more than half decades since the tragedy?

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<sup>1</sup> This confidential document was declassified by the National Declassification Center (NDC) in collaboration with the National Security Archives (NSA) based at George Washington University (GWU) in October 2017. See the briefing report at <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/Indonesia/2017-10-17/Indonesia-mass-mur-der-1965-us-embassy-files> (accessed 15 March 2020)

After the fall of Soeharto, post-authoritarian Indonesia, with its democratic government, has brought much change to Indonesian society. Nevertheless, until the present day, they have not acknowledged the historical wrong committed by the Indonesian state concerning the event of 1965. The government has been hesitant to organise any kind of reconciliation, suppressed serious research or any open discussion, much less prosecuted those responsible for the violence. 1965 now still seen as a tragedy that Indonesian must learn to accept, yet questioning or discussing what happened in that period are considered as a revive of communism. People forced to forget about what happened and live with their trauma.

In many cases involving civilian killer, both perpetrators or victims, along with their family, has to continue their life and live side by side. It is commonly argued that peace goes hand-in-hand with truth-telling, as “the embers of yesterday’s conflict can become the fire of tomorrow’s renewed conflict” (Bassiouni 1996: 23). Thus, it is not sensible to just swept the narratives under the rug, as unacknowledged past wrongs that were silenced or denied can become a poison to the society that creates a cycle of hatred and distrust, leading to future conflict.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

Interestingly, in mid-2017, a local customary ritual called *Gren* was held in the regency of Sikka, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. After 50 years of silence on the tragedy of communist purge, an initiative to hold the ritual emerged. This initiative supported by PBH Nusra (Perkumpulan Bantuan Hukum/Legal Aid Association Nusa Tenggara) aims to restore the relationship of not only the perpetrators and the victim, but also the family and everyone who directly or indirectly involved during the massacre and live to keep the burden. The core idea of *Gren* rooted in the belief that human and nature supposed to live in harmony. Any imbalance on the relation between human and another human considered to affect relations between human and nature. Sikka's indigenous people believe that since the tragedy of 1965, human relationships in the region are unsettled, resulting on changing of relations with nature as they experienced failed crop, the spread of diseases, and natural disaster.

Therefore, this research aims to understand how traditional knowledge of a balanced relationship between human-human and human-ecology exist in the practice of *Gren*. It is then going to examine further the role of this ritual in invigorating restorative justice and reconciliation process of the past atrocities by analysing the healing process embrace during the ritual.

In order to explore further on the ritual, the question that guides this research is as follows: How traditional customary of *Gren* serves as a key resource for healing the old wounds and reconciliation mechanism to deal with the past atrocities committed during the anti-communist purge in Indonesia?

This question will be addressed through the answer to two secondary questions: 1) What are the components of *Gren* that become the ground-based of peaceful life in Sikka? 2) To what extent *Gren* foster reconciliation process in Sikka?

The present paper is organised in 6 chapters: i) introduction; ii) detail contextualisation of the research problem, methodology, justification and limitation of the study; iii) theoretical and analytical framework of the research; iv) exploration and elaboration on *Gren*; v) an analysis on *Gren* as an alternative approach to reconciliation; and, vi) conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Contextualising the Research Problem

Peace is essential both as an enabler, but also as an outcome of development. As a continuous process, the effort of maintaining peaceful coexistence between the population and ensuring social justice within is a sine qua non to a thriving society. However, it should be put in mind that this world has become increasingly more complex. Peace cannot only be defined as the absence of conflict, and the form of violence also ranged from direct, cultural, and structural, whether it is visible or invisible (Galtung 1969). Furthermore, with the dynamics of the society, no theory and practice should be generalised as a blueprint of maintaining peace. Conflict and violence shatter lives and stunts development. For instance, some people are unable to have access to their needs compare to others when social cohesion occurs, or co-interdependency complex due to disintegration, not to mention the cost of destruction as the outcome of it. One of the expansive notions of development is to get rid of violence, and it involves addressing the past violence. It becomes crucial because past violence can be seen as a barrier to have a constructive vision, especially without the existence of peaceful relationships among different communities.

Contextualising it in Indonesia, most of the discussion on peace and development revolves around religious conflicts between Muslim and other religious groups, but not about groups with different political ideologies. Moreover, it also lacks in touching upon the issue of any marginalised groups (e.g. stigmatised communist and their families) that should be integral in the greater effort of nation-building and human development. Deeping the context to the case study of this research, the political manoeuvre and transition to New Order that become the main historical cause to the communist purge inculcated as the beginning of Indonesia's most progressive development era, but at the same time also the worst implementation of human rights and social justice. Which then become very interesting contrasting to the previous paragraph and common understanding on how social justice supposed to have a positive relationship with development. Then one question should be asked, for whom was the development during the New Order era? Did all of the people in Indonesia experience the same exposure to thriving development? What went wrong?

The development during the Soeharto era categorised into three periods (Indonesia Investment n.d). Which all of its mission only revolves around economic development involving recovery, government intervention, exports, and deregulation. However, it appears to have repressed the human development elements, including the freedom of people to

decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. As a result, economically, Indonesia experienced very significant growth, yet oppressed and haunted by excessive violence; and this is not what development should be. New Order ended 20 years ago, but Indonesian people still are not taught the full story. Unbalance relation that embedded in society, stereotypes and misleading history still become the ghost of New Order that persists up until now. People involved in the intrigue of power struggle during New Order still obtain their position in the current government and has not exposed to any justice they deserve.

Just like peace, development also should be seen as a continuous process and not only as a goal to be achieved. Thus, learning by swallowing a bitter pill is also necessary. It is a long way to go for Indonesia to accept the fact and painful truth about the controversial past, yet it should start step-by-step, and by any means—formally or informally. As it is such a long winding and dangerous road to take reconciliation effort of 1965 tragedy formally, it does not mean we should stop there; and a traditional initiative can be one of the alternatives.

## **2.1 Ethical, Political Choices, and Personal Involvements**

My generation is the one who was born during Soeharto's era but is too young to understand the propaganda by the New Order regime on PKI. However, we experienced a transition phase of reformation, especially during our early educational experiences. Our teacher would come from the previous generation with a solid and settled understanding of the danger of communism because of years of doctrine. However, governmental propaganda did not exist in the system anymore. This transition phase raised a lot of question for me as a teenager, where my history teacher still showed us the propaganda film of *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The Betrayal of PKI on 30 September) in the class while at the same time talking about how Soeharto's regime was corrupt and full of lies. I brought these questions to university, where I started to meet a lot of people and communities who fight against human rights violation during Soeharto's regime as it never been formally settled. One of the demands linked to the mass violence that happened since 1965 on accused PKI sympathisers. During my last year of university, I came across a community called *Studio Malya*, whose project in 2019 mostly related to the victim of the 1965 tragedy. This community try to voice out personal stories through art and performance, humanising victims and survivor who are deeply affected by the tragedy. My interest in this topic, particularly seeing it from the victim's perspective, keep growing since then.

I realise my biased upon this matter as I collected more information upon this tragedy from the victims'/survivors' side. I believe what happened in 1965 was a tragedy of humanity

caused by the elites as they are struggling for power, but dispersed to the grassroots level in horrifying systematic violence. Moreover, the fact that the tragedy was just swept under the rug up until now by the government shows there is never a good intention to settle this problem, as it may immensely hurt people who still have power up until now. I acknowledge my positionality to be fully suspicious on people with power and elites once it comes to the massacre of 1965, as I believed they play a significant role in starting it, maintaining it, and hiding it. However, my research does not aim in pointing the finger on who is wrong and who is right. I am purely motivated to uplift the dignity of victim/survivor, and to seek for an alternative way in settling down with the dark trauma they have encountered—thus, healing the wound.

While conducting the research, all subjects of the interview are aware that everything would go on the records. All the data collected has given consent by the subject to be written, as well as personal information. Another ethical consideration would be in regards to the situation of global pandemic during the interview. It does not directly correlate with the substance of the research, yet I believe the worrisome exist. Especially with the fact that the research team are not only coming from their village. In regards to data analysis, I also acknowledge my position as an outsider who tries to explore a traditional and ancient belief that already embedded in the society since ages. Therefore, my view and interpretation would be affected as well from my background as someone who grows up in a relatively urban area with less attachment to customary law in compare to indigenous people of Sikka.

## 2.2 Justification of the Study

Study and research about the tragedy of 1965 still considered to be dangerous for most people from the earlier generation, as they fed up with massive propaganda of the anti-communist government. Put aside the exact tragedy, even any discussion that brought up a tendency to leftist thinking has been stereotyped to be anti-nationalist. Therefore, nation-scale or local research tends to be limited, both in number and in substance. Most of the prominent research (which was also censored by Soeharto's regime) such as Benedict Anderson's work titled *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965* or commonly known as "Cornell Paper", which debunked the official story of Indonesia's 30 September Movement and the subsequent anti-Communist purges of 1965–1966. Furthermore, with the changes in generation, regime, gradual reduction of propaganda, and open access to information through the internet, the unfolding of the tragedy started to emerge. It was recently marked by the 1965 International People's Tribunal (IPT) which video and report can be accessed

online through the website<sup>2</sup>. Also, the release of the infamous movie by Joshua Oppenheimer titled *Senyap* (The Look of Silence) and *Jagal* (The Act of Killing). It is interesting to see the effect of the propaganda towards people of Indonesia seen from the publication of the tragedy, which people from outside of Indonesia dominate the initiation.

Moreover, most of the products revolve around the unfolding of the atrocities and crimes done by the government through military instances. For example, the work of from Wandita et al. titled “Mass Torture in 1965-66: A Continuing Legacy” focusing on the act of arrest and torture for those who accused of being involved in the party. Also, other forms of violence as written in “Sexual Slavery, Enforced Prostitution and Forced Marriage as Crimes Against Humanity during the Indonesia Killings of 1965-66” by Annie Pohlman. Most of the data taken from the testimony of IPT, which is an excellent entry point to re-narrating the story. However, I found a very limited number of it are focusing on the effort of reconciliation. It might be related to the fact that any effort in re-narrating story or healing process often rejected by the authority, under the justification that there is a fear toward the rise of communism.

Nevertheless, it becomes very intriguing how formally blocking the way to settle down the atrocities is actually open up the possibilities for other alternatives to thrive, one of it is through the use of rituals like *Gren*.

There are not many works of literature can be found in regards to the roles of ritual in reconciliation in Indonesia. Even not specifically on rituals, reconciliation is also an underrated topic to write on. As Braithwaite wrote in regards to the conflict in Ambon, “one reason reconciliation has been less studied in Indonesia is perhaps that little of it has been done by national elites or even provincial elites” (2010: 32). Significant reconciliations mostly happened as a micro-politics and have a bottom-up approach that is massively dispersed among clans, chief of tribes, local village leaders, or religious leaders.

Publication on *Gren* was just done recently on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2020 by PBH Nusra who was one of the initiators. A book by Yulius Regang titled “*Ritual Adat Gren dan Rekonsiliasi?*” or translated into *Gren Customary Ritual and Reconciliation* published in a limited amount. It describes the cultural approach that PBH Nusra tries to imposed to the local people of Sikka in order to build a socially inclusive space for the victims and survivor of the 1965 tragedy. This book gives a detail explanation of the custom procession and documenting symbols used by the people during the ritual.

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<sup>2</sup> Can be accessed at: <https://www.tribunal1965.org/en/final-report-of-the-ipt-1965/>

## **2.3 Methodology, Data Collection, and Analysis**

This research used a qualitative approach mainly through a semi-structured interview and supported with secondary qualitative data. Qualitative research method aimed at gaining an understanding of specific issues or event rather than a surface generalisation from the sample. To deepen the point, this research specifically used a narrative approach for its qualitative methods which weaves together the sequence of events and stories mostly collected from interviews. It then allows this research to explore and elaborate on the topic through the narratives build and perceived by research subjects themselves which cannot be captured by other methods. As this research closely tied to cultural context and indigenous knowledge, emic also become the core approach. When taking an emic, instead of etic approach, the researcher tries to understand a phenomenon through the viewpoints of the research subject (Headland et al. 1990). Thus, prior assumptions and knowledge are put aside to allow participants and data to “speak for themselves” hence allowing themes, patterns, and concepts emerge.

A close relationship between researcher and participants is the key feature of qualitative research; however, due to the situation of COVID-19, most of my interview conducted remotely, either through Whatsapp and Zoom call, or regular phone call. Some of the interviews conducted with the help of research assistants since the village are not reachable by phone signals and the needs of other inquiries such as a translator.

### **2.3.1 Data Collection**

This research used two main data collection methods; the first and primary source is through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are often referred to as semi-structured interviews because the researcher “retain some control over the direction and content to be discussed, yet participants are free to elaborate or take the interview in new but related directions” (Cook 2008: 423). Community reconciliation and healing process is a very personal and abstract matter that cannot be quantified, and even very hard to express with words. Therefore, instead of using heavy words such as reconciliation, life stories become the alternative in structuring the interview without going beyond the context. An in-depth interview with a focus on digging lived-experience and memories not only show people’s experiences but also how they live through and respond to those experiences, which then become very useful in exploring the rituals while understanding how the people perceive it. In compliance with the research objectives, collecting data through in-depth interview allowed this research to explore stories and narratives about local indigenous beliefs that



inherited verbally through generations while linking it to the societal and political dynamics and analyse the pattern and relevancy of both elements.



**Figure 1. Interview Process with Research Assistant**

In total, six individual interviews and one group interview with ten different subjects with different roles and relations to the research topic conducted from July 2020 – October 2020. I directly conducted four interviews remotely through Zoom, Whatsapp, or regular phone calls with the duration of one to two hours per interview. While the direct interview with the help from local research assistants who resides in Maumere range from three to six hours long, mostly also supported with translator from the local language/dialect to Bahasa Indonesia.

To support the primary data gathered through in-depth interviews, secondary qualitative data also used in this research. Secondary data define as “pre-existing data that have been collected for a different purpose or by someone other than the researcher” (McGinn 2008: 804). Despite the limitation and lacking research in this specific topic, some publications are handy for the ground base and early analysis of the research which used to generate interview guidelines. The primary source of secondary data used in this research is the book published by Yulius Regang in 2020 that gives details on the ritual of *Gren* and documentation in the form of pictures (and short captions) by Sigit D. Pratama.

### 2.3.2 Selection of Participants and Sites

The selection of interviewees was based on snow-balling technique, whereas the preceding interviewee gave further contact for the potential person to be interview next. All the participants mentioned below in sub-section are in order based on the first contact and interview I conducted.

#### 2.3.2.1 Sigit D. Pratama

On September 2019, an Instagram account called @1965SetiapHari (literally translated into 1965-everyday) posted a series of pictures by a photographer named Sigit D. Pratama. This collection of photographs was part of the exhibition he had called "Festival 45-45" with the theme of *Mengubur Dendam Menyemai Damai* or translated into "Burying Vengeance, Sowing Peace". Those photos were taken during his visit to Nangahale village during *Gren Mabe* festival in mid-2017. I interviewed him through Whatsapp call at that time. It will be used as an alternative to understanding the narratives of the event without having to visit the site directly. He then introduced me to Lilik HS, who is one of the coordinator programs from affiliated NGO that helps the initiation of *Gren*.

#### 2.3.2.2 Lilik HS

I interviewed Lilik through Zoom call on 17th of August 2020. Lilik is a staff in an NGO called IK/*Indonesia Untuk Kemanusiaan* (Literally translated into Indonesia for Humanity) and actively involved in a program called "Program Peduli" (Care Program) under the mandate of Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs. Her office based in Jakarta, the capital city, and occasionally visits Maumere in regards to this program. She actively involved during the strategizing and initiating *Gren* as a medium for reconciliation. She introduced me to Yulius Regang.

#### 2.3.2.3 Yulius Regang

Yulius is a staff in the Legal Aid Association of Nusa Tenggara in Maumere. He recently published a limited-edition book titled *Ritual Adat Gren dan Rekonsiliasi* (translated into *Gren* Traditional Ritual and Reconciliation) at the end of August 2020, narrating the experience of reviving *Gren* as a form of reconciliation. He sent me the document of his book, as it is yet to be publicly and commercially

sold. I interviewed Yulius through regular phone calls on 5th September 2020. Yulius also advised me to interview the indigenous people of Sikka as he feels that there are still a lot of elements can be dig. As he already in close contact with people who actively involved during *Gren*, he offers himself to be the research assistant who will conduct my semi-structured interview.

#### **2.3.2.4 Indigenous People of Sikka**

Through the help of Yulius Regang and Piter Embu, I managed to get in contact with the indigenous people of Sikka who involved in *Gren*. They are Rafael Rapa (customary leader of previous *Gren*), Ignasius Nasi (son of the executor), Fransiskus Sikut (the new customary leader who replace Rafael Rapa), Ardianus Akar (son of the victim), Simon Satu (participants). The interview conducted by both Yulius Regang and Piter Embu, mostly using the help from two local translators (Antonius Toni, Bartolomeus Tona) to clarify stories that answered using the local language/dialect.

### **2.3.3 Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis is an integral part as its process cannot be separated from both data gathering and analysis of the findings. Analysis of qualitative data involves several common features; these include “simultaneous data collection, writing memos, and development of concepts” (van den Hoonaard 2008: 187). The practice is not limited only after the data gathering phase but continuously happening from the beginning of the resource until the end, including the writing process. The early analysis took place to generate and construct interview guides, setting the focus of the topics, while putting the research questions open-ended. This phase, supported with the secondary data gathered prior to the snowballing interviews, helps in explaining the scope and aims of the research to participants in order to get capable and adequate interviewees.

Exploration of the data through fieldwork memos and transcribing interviews should then generate a particular pattern to analyse thematically. As semi-structured interview should not put any rigid questions that lead to a specific answer, the data gathering is also a parallel practice with impromptu data analysis. Follow up questions or clarification will be based on a simultaneous analysis of the topic to explore but also to going in-depth and specific with certain themes. During this phase, themes that are going to put as categories for analysis started to be visible. After transcribing interviews, this research then used

thematic analysis. There are three themes that I used in this research in order to streamline the analysis. These themes are commensurate with explorative research questions and patterns that I interpret from different research subjects; which are 1) Components of *Gren* in practice as rituals, 2) Motivation behind the re-initiation of *Gren*, 3) The lived-experience of before, during, and after *Gren*.

The last phase is during the writing and analysis of findings. Putting together narratives, framed by concepts and literature, but also adjusting the research questions were also part of the data analysis process of this research. The cycle of going back and forth with research objectives and empirical findings while having conversations with the theories and literature lead to conceptual analysis that answers the final research questions. To conclude, data analysis in this research was inextricable with other process and took place simultaneously during the whole research.

## 2.4 Scope and Limitation

The real restriction on this research is related to the occurrence of COVID-19 global pandemic. I plan to slightly do the ethnographic orientation of participant observation and direct, in-depth interview with the indigenous people of Sikka. However, it is not possible due to the high risk of travelling during the pandemic. Although some of the interviews can be conducted through phone, the signal becomes the main problem for communication, especially in reaching people who live inland and does not have any signal at all. As a result, I cannot communicate directly with my research subject, and I realise it creates a gap, especially during the data generating and analysing. Although I always keep in close contact with my research assistants in order to have the same understanding on aims and questions to ask, a non-direct interview will always be different from the direct one.

Other limitation would be concerning secondary data. Research about reconciliation and rituals is very underrated, especially in Indonesia. I cannot find any journal or book specifically discussing *Gren*, except the one that just recently published by Yulius Regang. That book is the only ground-based that I can get, and Yulius also become my research assistant in doing interviews. Meaning our findings will be more or less in-line with what already written in the book, and I cannot find another perspective upon the matters.

This research conducted in Nangahale Village, Sikka regency, but only covers three hamlets which are Natarmage, Toa Bao, and Tena. These hamlets fall under the same tribe of Soge, and also the only hamlets which are willing to participate in *Gren* in mid-2017. The interviewees were also coming from all three hamlets, yet I am unable to gather information

from women who involved in *Gren*—as their role considered to be less important. This also has something to do with a strongly patriarchal culture in East Nusa Tenggara where most women cannot fully voice-out their concern.

Nonetheless, interviewing with the help from research assistant also gave advantages in a sense that interviewees feel more comfortable with the course of conversation. The use of local dialect/language eases the conversation during the interviews, and it makes interviewees feel more relax in telling stories. The group interviews conducted also bring unexpected narratives to the story, as everyone can jump in and fill the story from their point of view. This group interview lasts until six hours, and it contains narratives that either clarify existing story or giving a new discourse to the discussion. Secondary sources also help this research to fill the necessary details, such as the meeting minutes of each preparation held before *Gren*. It precisely consists of the number of participants (based on gender), the date and time of the meeting, the flow of discussion, and the decision made. Thus, patchworking the primary data with the secondary data helps this research to see the whole pattern of the issue and answer the research questions.

## Chapter 3

# Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Peace Ecology

Peace can be defined from distinct yet related levels of application. Nevertheless, whether it is the making, keeping, or building of peace, in all sense, it possesses an environmental component that should not be detached. Deeping the point, peace studies reflect a natural premise of ecological thinking in striving to understand mutual interdependencies and complex interrelationship and how it affects the dynamics between those relations (Amster and Nagler 2010). Ecology as a term does not refer to a site, but towards relations and interaction within the site. Thus, it consists of a full dimension of relationship not only between a living organism and their environment but also the ways those organisms relate to one another. The entry point of Peace Ecology is not merely a synthesis of peace and ecology. However, in essence, it contemplates the way in which the same environmental processes that often drive conflict can also become profound opportunities for peaceful engagement (Amster 2014: 8). It goes beyond the context of how natural disaster can bond people to work together, but also how nature inherent capacity to function as a healing medium as well. Le Billon and Duffy offer a set of comparison, whereas peace studies and environmental studies can complement each other in giving a perspective of conflict and violence. As violence is seen not only as the outcome of escalating conflict but as a situated multidimensional process that spans in various phases of conflict. Therefore, “Interpreting conflict through the lens of socio-environmental justice thus grants conflict a constructive potential, rather than a universally destructive one” (Le Billon and Duffy 2018: 252).

In the case of the practice of *Gren* as a ritual, the philosophy goes back to the reflection of how human supposed to live in harmony with nature. Living in harmony does not only limited to the relations of human-environment but also reflected from human-human relations. As peace ecology “concerned equally with the human-human and human-environment interfaces as they impact the search for peace at all levels” (Amster 2014: 9), it gives a framework to analyse more in-depth the narratives of peace ecology in the practice of *Gren*. Moreover, political ecology engages conflicts not only through a search for causes and a description of symptoms but emphasises –or even promotes– their transformative and emancipatory effects in challenging structural and cultural forms of violence, done to people

and the non-human (Watts and Peet 2004). It also becomes the entry point for this research to dig into the alternatives of healing an old wound of mass violence and working towards a healthy relationship by reflecting the relation with nature.

## 3.2 Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice from the perspective of those recovering from mass violence and gross human rights violations may be seen as redress for crimes. However, it may also be sought as a way of coming to terms with the past and building a peaceful future (Lambourne 2014: 19). It contributes clearly in peacebuilding field through a relational understanding of past wrongdoings, but rather than focus on making ‘resolution’, it used the term of ‘transformation’ to remind ourselves that conflict is normal and can often be an opportunity for growth (Zehr 2009). Retributive model of formal legal justice dominates the Western liberal tradition of transitional justice, focusing on retaliation or the indebted way in solving conflict. In contrast, restorative justice serves as a customary mechanism, which instead of relying on truth and justice, it aims at rebuilding and restoring the relationship. As many restorative justice advocates are aware, “the ideas and principles at the foundation of contemporary restorative justice have their roots in ancient societies, numerous world religions, and the traditional practices of native or indigenous cultures across the world” (Maruna 2014: 10). The prosecution, trial, truth commission, perhaps sometime incorporating indigenous rituals may be seen as complementary to synthesise both retributive and restorative justice. In order to be sustainable, this transformative process must be based on recognition of the particular cultural and conflict context and the effective participation of civil society.

The term restorative justice firstly traces from a German text as ‘heilende Gerechtigkeit’ (which is more appropriately translated as ‘healing justice’ (ibid). However, its element mentioned by Eglash earlier (1977: 92) as “redefines past responsibility in terms of damage or harm was done, and can therefore accept psychological determinism for our past behaviour without destroying the concept of our being responsible for what we have done. Similarly, it redefines present responsibility in terms of our ability or capacity for constructive remedial action and can therefore accept the free will for our present”. Restorative justice represents a conceptually different approach to conflict and its aftermath from other mainstream justice practice. In short, it has an explicit grounding in the core values for building healthy relationships which practice are not limited to a formal trial.

### 3.3 Rituals and Reconciliation

Deepening the point from the previous sub-chapter, in practice, the idea of restorative justice works in a positive relationship with the use of rituals in reconciliation. As restorative justice focuses more on building a healthy relationship by re-negotiating identity, rituals become a sufficient medium for cases where people who involved in past violence are closely related and dependant on each other. Instead of implementing a formal prosecution process which might lead to disharmony between parties, cultural approach touch upon the web of creativity to externalise the pain of the past wrongdoings with the vision to build a healthy relationship in the future. Lisa Schirch in her book on Rituals and Symbol in Peacebuilding draw the work of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim to examine how symbols function to externalise collective sentiments. Schirch maintains that “ritual does not solve problems by negotiating the best solution, but by creating a new frame for interpreting the problem”. (Schirch as cited in Minkler 2018: 196). Rituals help people to understand the world, especially by making sense of the period of transition. When factors from the old social structures are no longer adequate to express collective sentiment, ritual ultimately has the power to transform the way people see and experience the world.

This concept becomes pivotal in seeing *Gren* as a way of the people in Sikka to address past atrocities communally. By linking back to their indigenous belief which highly intertwined with their spirituality to the Divine and also to nature becomes a core tenet that can link this concept with *Gren's* objective of living in peace. *Gren* can be seen as one of the examples where a metaphysical understanding that will be very challenging to be understood through scientific dimensions, works better in society who still uphold a strong indigenous belief. Especially in seeing the relevancy of the ancient indigenous belief with the effort of reconciliation, a term which frequently seen as a ‘modern solution’ for ‘modern problem’.

The exteriorisation of rituals has embedded the idea of ecopsychology healing, and it can be found in many places all around the world. The latest tenets of psychoanalysis and ecopsychology mostly argue that “it is not we who will heal nature, but nature will heal us” (Puhakka 2014: 19). Nature’s potential to heal human must be followed with human’s effort in restoring their consciousness to relationship and intimacy, not only with other human but also with nature. This idea explored through psychoanalytic thought and practice, such as Donald W. Winnicott who believe that the capacity for the relatedness of human and nature is the key to human health and well-being. While rituals play an important role as the medium of how human regain their consciousness as part of nature. Therefore, specifically for this



research, it then makes ecopsychology as a glue concept between elements in peace ecology and rituals in reconciliation.

### 3.4 Analytical Framework

In order to put together the theoretical framework into one analytical approach, it is also essential to look through the idea of the moral imagination proposed by Lederach. Transitional mostly seen a changing of phase which moving forward in a linear line of time and space, yet the idea of transformation is a lot more complicated than that. Time and space should not be seen as a linear matter that detaches from one another, not a binary and dualistic opposites polar. Instead, it should be seen as a cycle that interconnected with each other, past, present, and future. Lederach proposes an integrated model of peacebuilding, whereas restorative justice plays a significant part in it.

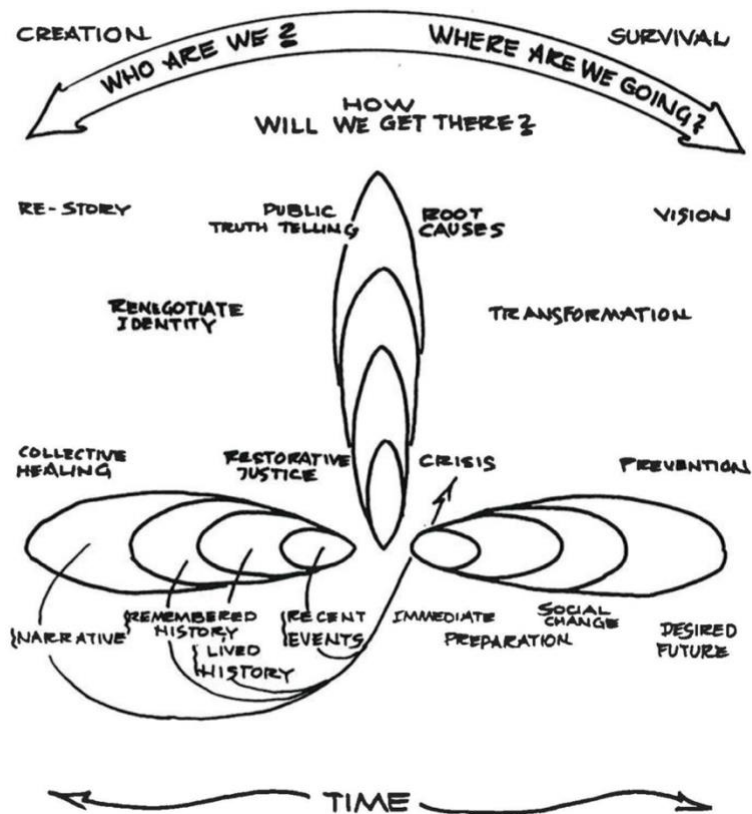


Figure 2. Double Integrated Framework of Peacebuilding

Source: The Moral Imagination, p.144

The framework required a capacity to understand the patterns of the present, imagined a desired future, and design change in process (Lederach 2005: 138) However, this framework will not be worked if there is a missing link from the past that enforce collective healing, as it is important for the people to understand how their identity was shaped, and it continues to shape their identity up until the present time. As Lederach stated, "when the deep narrative is broken, and the journey towards the past that lies before us is marginalised, truncated, we lose our bearing. We lose the capacity to find our place in this world, and we lose the capacity to find our way back to humanity" (ibid. 147).

## Chapter 4

### The Long-Forgotten *Gren*

Addressing past violence through the re-narrating story of what actually happened is necessary for fostering restorative justice, yet it is not the highlight of the process. Thus, solely tracing the root of the violence is not the main objective of this research, although, to a certain extent, it is critical also to address the specific issue. In order to analyse more in-depth on the role and function of *Gren* as a medium to foster reconciliation, what critical is also to explore the ritual itself. Especially on how it was conducted, what components are in the rituals, and how it is being internalised and given meaning by the participants involved.

#### 4.1 Unpacking the Mass Violence

As stated previously, and also in line with the practice of *Gren*, the reconciliation effort through this ritual does not focus on publicly condemning the issues. Instead, it just is seen as one of the stepping stone that is necessary, not only for the victim/family but also for the perpetrator/family. The necessity of confession is not based on putting the burden of guilt to the perpetrator; instead, it gives them the feeling of relief, while at the same time giving acknowledgement to the victim as well. This particular section will discuss the findings on the field from both sides of victim's and perpetrator's son, as well from people who lived the experience when the mass violence happened. It then gives a more detail on what relationships that the community trying to heal, and how the mass violence affects their life ever since

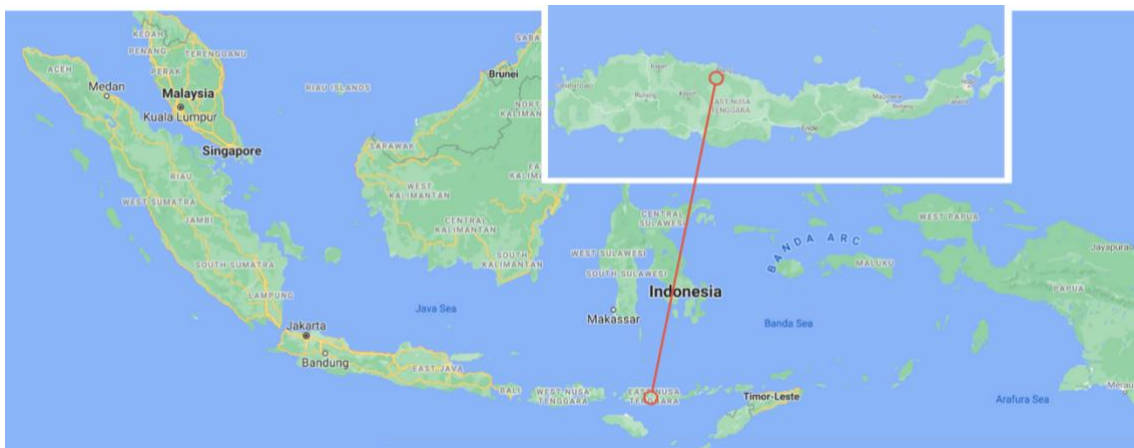


Figure 3. Map of Indonesia and Flores Island

The purge against the largest communist party outside China began with the key island of Java, Sumatra, and Bali, which by the end of 1965 had resulted in the murder of over a million people; mostly not Party members but local leaders of grassroots movements, many involved in land reform (Prior 2011: 119). The logic of obliterating the sympathiser makes the killing grows massively and blindly. Maumere, located 1,500 kilometres to the east of Jakarta heard a little of the political intrigue from the capital, this is also due to massive and strict censorship for newspaper and radio. As the mass murder start to ease in Java by the end of 1965, the army triggered a massacre in the isle of Flores, Maumere (ibid, 120). This delay is the reason why most people in Maumere refer to the tragedy as the killings of 1966, instead of what commonly known as the massacre of 1965.

Compiling the story from interviewees, it is confirmed that early 1966 was known as the 'hungry season'. The soil was dry, and the crop always failed, people lived in the misery of lacking food. Until one day, some people who use the symbol of hammer and sickle (symbol of the communist party) came and offered assistance<sup>3</sup>,

Groups of people (brought the flag with a logo of hammer and sickle) came to the village, stating that they want to give social assistance in the form of farming tools, we think that is why they have this logo of hammer and sickle as well. They gave the people a T-shirt with the logo, and then promise that they will come back with rice if they register and put their name on the list. People were hungry, those innocent people. Little did they know this list will be used to arrest and kill them, they were killed because they were hungry.<sup>4</sup>

Labelling of 'communist' would legitimise the arrest and the disappearance of people in Maumere. Moreover, just like the pattern of its implementation in other regions in Indonesia (See Rey 1966; Cribb 2002; Üngör and Adler 2017; Melvin 2017), the involvement of the local people make the violent propagate massively. Specifically, in Sikka, people who asked to conduct the killings were taken from those who used to affiliated with *Seinendan*. *Seinendan* is a youth organisation formed during the colonisation era of Japan in Indonesia. The young-age men will be trained in a semi-military education to 'protect their home countries' (or to make the Japanese occupation last longer, in this context). Those who used to register as *Seinendan* was seen to possess more strength and 'loyalty', this confirmed by my interviewees whose father forced to be an executor in 1966.

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<sup>3</sup> It is unknown whether this people were actually members of the communist party who run their social assistance program, or someone in disguise. Referring to the timeline, at this time PKI was hunt down, thus it is unlikely for them to still showing their affiliation with the party. Yet, this cannot be confirmed.

<sup>4</sup> Group interview (On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

(The victims) were either directly arrested, or were given the order to do community service. They were asked to build some warehouse for the rice, they said, but they did not know what will happen next. They will receive a lot of order to keep on working; the last order will be to dig a hole. They did not know and are not allowed to ask, what they believed is that since their name listed to received rice, they have to do *rodi* work (a term of forced labour during the Japanese occupation). After they finished everything, they will be asked to get into the warehouse, beaten and tortured there, called one by one according to the list and asked to stand by the hole, and then killed.<sup>5</sup>

From the story told during the interview, most of the executors were forced to kill, with a direct threat to their own lives and also their family. Any rejection in fulfilling the order seen as an apostate; therefore, communist. From this case, it can be seen that even the executor kill without their own willing, but solely as an act of survival. The line between the labels of victims and perpetrators/killers, in this case, become very blurry. In most of the cases, even the executor can also be considered as the victim of the situation. The son of the executor confirms this as the main reason why in several cases, the executor experienced mental health issues and changes of behaviour, which according to their belief needed to be purified and can only be done by conducting rituals. However, the complexity increases when rituals and indigenous belief were forbidden because it does not reflect the characteristics of religious people; therefore, again, affiliated to communist.

Since then, people have to forget and not to talk about what happened in 1966 anymore. As if nothing happened, they have to continue their life, without any possibilities for them to channelling their trauma and pain. From this story, I want to emphasize one thing. The wound in the community does not only limited to the victim/family, but also for the perpetrator/family, and even people around them. This wound belongs to the community, it damages their relationship to another level, as it happened beyond their control, beyond their intention, and beyond their understanding. Constant fear of revenge, stigmatization of communist descendant, the idea of unrest souls, nature turns their back on the people are a few of many disturbing feelings the community has to experience for the past 50 years, and that is what they believe needs to be healed.

## 4.2 Re-Initiation of *Gren*

The re-initiation of *Gren* is not as easy as it seems; it had gone through a long winding road. The journey started when a program launched under an NGO called IK (Indonesia Untuk Kemanusiaan/Indonesia for Humanity) based in Jakarta. This program titled

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<sup>5</sup> Group interview (On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

“Program Peduli” (literally translated into “Care Program”) fall under the mandate of Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs. According to my interview with Lilik HS, a member staff of IK who assigned to this program, it has an extensive scope and consists of several pillars which one of them includes human rights and social restoration.

Our aim is victim/survivor-based achievement, in a sense, we strive to provide equal access that was hampered by their affiliation of a certain event, also to create social acceptance by the community.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, for the case in Sikka, East Nusa Tenggara, the 1965 anti-communist purge become the main case study as people who involved in the massacre are forced to move on with their life and coexist in the same village. Interdependency cannot be separated on their daily interaction; however, the ghost of the past, the trauma, and even grudge still linger and yet to settle. Under this condition, IK together with a local institution called PBH Nusra (Legal Aid Association of Nusa Tenggara) starts to exploring the possibilities to create a socially inclusive community, especially for the victim/survivor of 1965-66 tragedy. Reconciliation was never part of the plan; it is deemed as a very ambitious dream to achieve. The initial plan was plain and simple, so that people in Sikka has a safe space to actually talk about what happened in the past, so it will not scare them anymore. It will not generate any further stereotype on victim/survivor so their family can live in peace:

Our first entry point is through providing access to those affected by the tragedy—for example, national identity card. As the tragedy leaves a massive trauma to the people, they tend to go on with their life without even wanting to administer their rights as a citizen to the local government. Resulted on, they have been living for all this time without national identity card which then affected their access to social assistance from states (rice, healthcare, etc).<sup>7</sup>

However, the tragedy of 1965-66 leaves a profound trauma to the people in Sikka. Supported with the fact that up until now the anti-communist law (TAP MPRS XXV/1966) still exist in the national legal act, the ghost of “communism” still ceased to haunt the people who have a terrible experience in the past. Even IK and PBH Nusra were not succeeded to gain the trust of the people to open up about what happened, most of them would just start crying, as testified by Yulius:

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Lilik HS (On 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Lilik HS (On 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

We gather information regarding which family or household is the victim of the tragedy, (with expectation) they will speak-up. But once we mention “the 1965-66 tragedy”, this middle-aged lady just starts crying and refused to talk.<sup>8</sup>

After one year of wandering around the village to convince the people of Sikka, no progress can be seen. Even worse, the team faced direct rejection from villages to continue their exploration as it considered to be dangerous because they try to “revive communism”, a term widely used in Indonesia to debunk any narratives of re-opening the discourse of 1965-66. Moreover, the team also face several interceptions by the authority, the police, and the army, as Yulius stated:

(for some of the specific stories) we never dig deep enough about that, because when we tried, the military and the police always chased us and asked us to stop. Even in several regions, someone will visit our office (PBH Nusra) in Maumere and told us to stop whatever we are doing and to wipe out all the data we gathered. <sup>9</sup>

In addition to the struggle, in most of the attempt to explain their aim with the program, two local terms keep on repeated by the people. Those are *Ami Blau/Brau* and *Ali-Abo Papa-Kewe*. *Ami Blau/Brau* is a local phrase or expression to show fear. A refusal to talk or comment based on an excessive fear that they have. *Ali-Abo Papa-Kewe* is a clause, whereas *Ali* means digging, *Abo* means sealing, *Papa* means split or rip apart, and *Kewe* means sealing or shutting down. It is a reminder to the people that any phenomena happened in the past cannot be rediscovered, it used to be there, open, but once it passed then you close it and you should not re-open it again. East Nusa Tenggara typically has a robust indigenous culture and kinship. Traditional belief also has a very significant power towards the people. Hence, as the people face external pressure to keep silent, supported with the discourse in local belief, they start to internalise the idea of keeping it in the dark. Lisa Schirch, in her book, mentioned how culture should also be seen as a neutral tool which people can use either for the betterment or destruction (Schirch 2014: 23-4). Although this paper focuses on the constructive roles of ritual and other symbolic act in terms of reconciliation, it is important to keep in mind that like other social tools, it can also be used for both good and bad. Interestingly, this example can be seen at the beginning of the re-initiation of *Gren*; whereas the counter-narratives of reconciliation program by PBH Nusra are also using a symbolic phrase of *Ami Blau/Brau* and *Ali-Abo Papa-Kewe*.

Facing two obstacles from both ways at the same time, force the team to search for a new strategy. Until they came across a fact that after the tragedy, some elderly women have

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

a habit of lighting a candle at night to respect the dead, especially those who are not appropriately buried according to culture and religion. They would light the candle at night to avoid suspicion; they are not even daring to put it near the site of mass graves because they are afraid to be seen affiliated with communism. Moreover, there are more than one mass graves in the area. As no one knows for sure where their relatives' dead body located exactly, these women chose to light a candle in their own houses.

(Mothers) usually light the candles in their own houses. There are three mass graves (that we know) here, *Napung Biri* has two, one behind the Camat (civil servant responsible to the regent/mayor) office, one by the bridge, one next to Obor Mas office, a lot. No one knows who was buried where.<sup>10</sup>

This finding indicates that the people still believe that closure has never been done, especially from the cultural perspective. Then the idea to link it to ritual emerged because what can go against the discourse of *Ami Blau/Brau* and *Ali-Abo Papa-Kewe* must also come from the culture itself. When we asked about the practice of lighting up the candle to the indigenous people of Sikka, they refer it to the common practice of funeral for people who dies because of illness.

There is a tradition called *Lo'en Unur*, which aim to 'cool down' the soul from the corpse that died because of illness (or considered to be unnatural). We have to take one of their nails and some hair to be put in a special place. However, we cannot do it for people in the mass graves. They have not been 'cool down'. Then probably doing (religious) spirit mass by lighting up candles might help them. (They are) such a poor soul.<sup>11</sup>

In short, *Gren* was initiated by the NGO and the Legal Aid Association team as they were trying to run the CARE program. Nevertheless, instead of implementing a top-down plan of the program, the team prefer to facilitate what was already there in the society and helping them reviving it. The team start to explore, which ritual might suit the best for their interest. Once they start to change their strategy to use culture as their entry point, emphasizing on an effort to re-initiate a ritual, responses from the people start to shift positively—they are more open to the narratives. It also confirmed that mothers who also previously lighting up candles for the victim included in the meeting of preparation. As testified in regards to the rediscovery of *Gren*:

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Bartolomeus Tona, translated to Bahasa Indonesia by Antonius Toni (17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Fransiskus Sikut (17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)



(Its) unexpectedly very complete! The process of the rituals covers the truth-telling through confession, there is also the part where they are not only reconciling with people but also with nature, and lastly, there is also a part. Where they show happiness and joy of settling down wrongdoing in the past.<sup>12</sup>

*Gren* gives a new hope to restore a healthy relationship between people in Sikka who has been silenced by the national political interest. The cultural approach is one of the soft spots that give conformity to the indigenous people as they believe this root is what has been passed through from generation to generation and there is no harm in reviving it. Moreover, it can be considered as a 'kill two birds with one stone', with both goals of passing the knowledge to the future of the new generation and restoring the wound of the past achieved at the same time.

## 4.2 Preparation

It took months for the people of Sikka to prepare for *Gren*, as it is considered as a massive traditional ritual. The preparation was not only limited to the technical and practical issues, but it also includes deliberation from the elders and customary leaders in regards which component will be inserted to the series of events. This deliberation went through a very lengthy process and debate, as community leaders that involved has to agree on which rituals will be the most suitable for specific reasons. The first meeting to prepare for *Gren* recorded in July 2017. The first meeting includes the discussion to explore and determine the series of events, through the delivery of views from the elders (and customary leaders) regarding what rituals are suitable for the current conditions of the community (as well as the reasons referring to customary sins that have committed). During the discussion, several alternatives to rituals emerged, and this meeting is open for all to participate. At the end of the meeting, they agreed to conduct *Gren Tana* as the opening of the series of events.

Seeing the current condition in Nangahale, with changes of season, weather, and nature; it is decided that the earth/soil needs to be cooled down. Therefore, it (*Gren Tana*) is considered to be the most suitable ritual all will be the first customary event.<sup>13</sup>

On the 31st of August 2017, another meeting held to discuss the practicality of the events further. In the meeting, matters discussed include making a list of shopping for goods and tools, making arrangements for events, forming a committee and distributing tasks.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

<sup>13</sup> Meeting minutes (10<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

During this meeting, the decision on how many goats/pigs that need to be prepared for the rituals also determined by the customary leaders. Thus, people know how much money or goods that they need to prepare as the contribution to the rituals. At this time, the schedule of the series of the event was already decided, which is *Gren Tana* on the 11-12 September 2017, *Gren Nuba* on the 8-9 December 2017, and *Gren Mahe* on the 24-25 August 2018. In between the series of events, meetings regularly held for technical matters of the upcoming rituals.

The preparation process is also one of the essential elements that foster the effect of rituals in terms of restoring a healthy relationship; it helps with the bonding process and building momentum. The idea that this community has to come to a commonly agreed decision for the good of the community, the work division, and regular meeting conducted before the ritual itself stimulate the idea of interdependencies between them as one community. Moreover, fostering trust in community leadership also took place, which then rooting back their indigenous identity as one entity. This practice omitted barriers of differences and shows interdependency with each other, which then makes the closure to the past wrongdoings seemed to be more relevant than ever.

### **4.3 Who is *Gren* For**

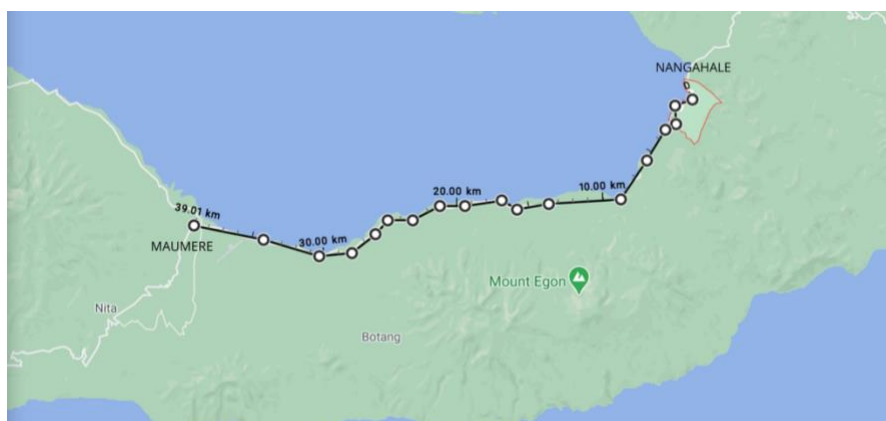
It is important also to get familiar with the subject involved in the ritual in order to explore the components deeper. I find it interesting that every time the interview refers to participants of the ritual, there will be two categorisations made. The first one is the usual participants, which refer to the indigenous people of Sikka, but more specifically to people of 3 villages that unite under the same tribe. The second subject that always repeated during the interview is the non-human one that they describe as the divine being. This is particularly a prevalent assumption in the nexus of peace studies and environmental studies, including the beliefs in the diversity of subjects, its interdependency with each other, and the importance of “place” (Amster 2014: 16). It expands a relational aspect of peace-making and reconciliation that integrates the stabilisation of both human-human and human-environment relationship at all levels of engagement, even by symbolising the nature itself as a subject being.

Subjects who involved in the ritual shows that *Gren* did not solely focus on the issues-specific of the problem, the actor is not divided based on who they were during the occurrence of the mass violence (e.g. victim, perpetrator, bystander, mediator). However, it looks more holistically on the relational and structural views as well. As Dugan stated in her

Nested Theory of Conflict, what triggers the conflict cannot be seen as the only problem needed to be solved. However, the interaction patterns of the parties and how they feel towards each other, or more holistically also structured and systemic problems that institutionalised between parties (1996: 14-5). In seeing actors who involved more broadly, it then tries to connect people with material, social, and symbolic worlds. In contrast, everyone can position themselves to be part of each other's story and how they can contribute to the betterment of the relationship.

### 4.3.1 Indigenous People of Sikka

Sikka regency has 147 villages in it. However, only three villages involved in 2017-2018 *Gren*, which are Toa Bao, Natarmage, and Tena. All these three villages are separated administratively by the local government; however, they are coming from the same tribe called Soge. This is one of the reasons why out of all villages, these three are the one who willing to participate because coming from the same tribe also means they have the same understanding and belief in rituals and most likely will also have the same procession. The tribe put another level of kinship as they believe that their ancestral pattern must be crossing somewhere between their great grandparents. Just like Lederach's diagram of embedded circles that flow toward the past—exploring the setting of cycles in understanding who they are, gives a more holistic understanding that fosters collective healing (2005: 143-4). The idea of kinship becomes a healing link of re-story their identity and eventually their relationship with each other. Thus, their focus since the beginning always revolves around reflexivity of their relationship and how to restore it for the future.



**Figure 4. Map and Distance Measurement of Maumere-Nangahale**

In regards to the area, most people who participate are the local people who live in a rural area. All three villages located more or less 40-45 kilometres from Maumere, which are the big city on the island. The majority profession is farmer, and this is also the reason behind

their belief that their life is closely intertwined with nature as that is their main source of income as well.

#### **4.3.2 *Ina Nian Tana Wawa/Ama Lero Wulan Reta***

Another significant subject that keeps mentioned is called *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* and *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*. These two subjects are the representation of divine and superior being in the traditional belief of Sikka. *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* is characterised as a mother of earth, while *Ama Lero Wulan Reta* characterised as the father in the form of the sun. *Ina* in the local language can be translated into mother, while *Ama* is the father. According to local belief, mother or *Ina* is very identical with soil—hence earth—because it is the place where everything grows; plants, crop, and also a place that hold us and where we stand. While *Ama* is identical with sun and moon, and everything located above us. During the ceremony, these two divine beings will always be mentioned, as according to Yulius, they have a very important role in the life of the people:

in Sikka, people have a principle that they have to be close with *Allah* (which are subjected to *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* and *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*), with *Alam* (translated into nature) which are everything provided by *Allah* such as the sea, hills, mountain, tree, forest, river, and also with *Arwah* (translated into spirits).<sup>14</sup>

The categorisation of mother and father has a strong connection with the tendency of patriarchal culture in East Nusa Tenggara as well. Whereas mother, in this case, the earth, has an obligation to produce/reproduce while at the same time also serving. The father figure, symbolised by the sun exists to give and fulfil the needs of the mother to produce something. The discourse regarding the position of the symbol is also interesting to be pointed out, as the people believe that the sun will always be located “above” the earth, and earth will be unable to produce anything without sunlight. Nevertheless, the interdependency of earth and sun in fulfilling the needs of the human being can also be seen from this analogy, that one cannot function without the existence of others.

The symbolisation of divine being, which is closely related to nature shows the importance of the environment to the indigenous people of Sikka. Acknowledging their existence in an anti-anthropocentrism way change the way the people relate and act towards their fellow eco-denizens. It then bridges them to the notion of phenomenology and ecological inquiry that led to examining the relationship between the experiencing organism (the body) and the earth it is implicated in (Vakoch and Castrillón 2014: 3). Shifting the idea of defining and interpreting experiences only from the human perspective, but to

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

acknowledging human as part of the universe that need to coexist with other beings, especially nature.

## 4.4 Series of Events

*Gren* ritual procession divided into three series of events, which are *Gren Tana*, *Gren Nuba*, and *Gren Mabe*. All three of the events has its own goals and ceremonies that can be differentiated with one another but still connected as a whole. This practice is completely different from the usual one-time event justice system that usually takes place in the court of law after the occurrence of violence. The distinction can be seen in terms of time horizon, the participation of different groups, and elements involved in the ritual. This sub-chapter will explore deeper on each of the series of events, including detail procession of the ceremony and how some of the components can be analysed through corresponding concepts.

### 4.4.1 *Gren Tana*

The first series of event in *Gren* is called *Gren Tana* or known as a ritual to cooling the soil. It was held for two days, on the 11th and 12th of September 2017. This ritual is the symbol of purification, cleansing, repentance, liberation and confession of mistakes or sins for violating customary and cultural values. Technically, the confession from the suspect (does not necessarily the one who conduct the wrongdoing, but can also be a family member) are not announced publicly like an open trial but told directly to the customary leaders. Before they start, they have to do the procession of reception; there will be a symbolic act in dancing and singing of accepting guest or people who attend the rituals but does not come from the same customary land. However, this procession can also be seen as a way of the people in accepting the fact and the condition right now, a sign that they are open to any confession and will accept that as a community as they are open to whatever encountered them.

The customary leaders must also have gone through specific self-purification rituals, which can be interpreted that they will come as a neutral listener to the sin about to be confessed to them. After that, the customary leaders announced that they are open to any confession of past wrongdoings and those who want to be forgiven on their sin must meet them in a traditional house (although informally before the day of *Gren Tana*, announcement already circulated). Before people start to confess, the customary leaders will start reciting a verse while putting an offering in the form of rice and eggs to *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* and *Ama*

*Lero Wulan Reta*. This is done in order to ask for permission as well as an invitation to these divine beings to always supervise and ensure the safety of the people during the whole rituals (Regang 2020).



**Figure 5. Confession Session**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2017)

During the confession session, the role of the customary leaders is not as a judge who then would give preaches or shaming and condemning the sin. In contrast, they will appreciate the bravery in confessing and willing to settle things down in regards to the sin, and they will take counsel in deciding what will be the most suitable way to pay for the sin. Unlike a formal fine in a trial, the point of this ritual is not how many pigs/goats the suspect has to sacrifice to pay for the sin because that is merely a symbol of repaying. Even the customary leaders will ask and adapt to the capabilities of the confessor on how many will be suitable and affordable for them. Nevertheless, the point is for the suspect to express the regret of their wrongdoings and has the willingness to restore and change their relationship with other people.

Then question emerges, why sacrificing livestock? According to the belief, this is the symbols of purification. People in Sikka believe blood as a medium of purification, and thus cooling the land should use the blood of livestock that purposely are for a good cause. In practical matters, they will cook and eat meat together. This practice can be linked to ecopsychology and psychoanalysis in the notion of reparation work. Sacrifices are seen as a way to ‘repair’ the damage. The killing of an animal is a dramatic exteriorization of an inner debt from the past wrongdoings. To sacrifice life is to symbolically offer to the Divine the invaluable and the priceless of life itself. It could also be seen, in this particular setting, as a symbolic way of displacing the killing of oneself as compensation. Rituals allow multiple

interpretations on how to see the practices, in which each participant can give meaning and feel the experience different from others, and that reflexivity is the whole point of healing.



**Figure 6. Animal Sacrifice**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2017)

Another thing that should keep in mind is that not everyone in this region can afford pig or goat meat in their daily consumption. Thus this ritual is also a form of sharing and eating good food together with their own kin. Purifying or ‘cooling down’ the soil becomes the main symbol and aim of *Gren Tana*. The use of this metaphor is also a core tenet of ritual through a symbolic act as a form of communication. Yet, instead of using a direct form to communicate the meaning, these symbols “give messages that can convey multiple, ambiguous messages to different people” (Schirch 2014: 17). Some might see the effect from the process of sacrifices as a reconnection to the earth, some might emphasize more on the kinship and collective sharing of the sacrifices, or some also see the whole process in preparation as a way to reconnect with their own community.

#### **4.4.2 *Gren Nuba***

The next series of events in *Gren* is called *Gren Nuba*. It was also held for two days, on the 8th and 9th of December 2017. It is believed that after the matter with the fellow human being is settled during *Gren Tana*. Then the next step is to ask for forgiveness to nature and reconcile with them. These series of the event are a whole part where it cannot be omitted or done separately; otherwise, it cannot fulfil the goals. Thus, the apology does not stop until suspects are confessing and ask for forgiveness to the people. But then the whole community (not only the particular suspect) also obliged to ask for forgiveness to the other two subjects in this ritual—the divine being and nature, including spirits that inhabit. During this practice,

spirituality plays an important role as it goes hand in hand with the healing work through psychotherapy. Landslides, drought, irregular rain, dry springs, reflect as punishments given by *Ina Nian Tana Wawa*, *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, and ancestral spirits because of the imbalance caused by human behaviour. Compare to *Gren Tana*, *Gren Nuba* feels more intimate and sacred, because it is the ritual that tries to reconnect and reconcile the relationship between human with the non-human:

Their main goal on why they want to restore relations with nature is because they believe if their relations are balanced, and if they ask for an apology for the imbalance happened (due to some tragedy), then nature will be on their side. Especially related to crops production, natural disasters can be reduced, (thus) their economic life can be a boost because of their harvest.<sup>15</sup>

There are two different locations used to held *Gren Nuba*. It is a separation between the good things they get from nature that they will take home (1<sup>st</sup> phase) and the bad they currently possess that will be thrown to the sea (2<sup>nd</sup> phase). The 1<sup>st</sup> phase should be done in the land, but it is located far from the residential areas and fall under a protected forest area. The centre of the ritual must be close to a stream or a river. Moreover, it must also be surrounded with large sacred trees that are protected by the customary resident of Soge tribe (Regang, 2020). During this phase, they express remorse for all the sins and mistakes that have been committed to *Ina Nian Tana Wawa*, *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, and ancestral spirits while mentioning that they have reconciled with a fellow human, so they want their relations to be restored, to be forgiven, and to be freed.



**Figure 7. Location of *Gren Nuba***

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2017)

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)



The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of this ritual took place in the estuary, the meeting place between freshwater and seawater believed to be the place where bad things end. The symbolisation of this ritual is to differentiate and filter good and bad things. In contrast, bad things that threaten the safety of human life will be rejected, restricted and thrown into the sea while the good things are called home, guarded, and protected.

During *Gren Nuba*, an offering for the divine being and spirits also exist in the form of pigs, rice, and eggs. After the sacrifice of the pig, the blood smeared to set if stones arranged under the sacred tree and the customary leaders will start reciting the traditional verses to express a request for a successful life and to be kept away from any calamity or disaster. The pig that slaughtered then cooked and served to be eaten together with everyone until all the meat finished. The food was not served on a plate, but on leaves prepared as a plate table. This symbolises humans to be at one with nature.



**Figure 8. Eating on Leaves**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2017)

The reflexivity occurred in *Gren Nuba* can be linked to the idea of ecopsychology. As the core sensibility in ecopsychology (as well as phenomenology) is the emphasis put on the suspension of our understanding and calculating manner of approaching the world in favour of our directly felt experience of things (Vakoch and Castrillón 2014: 3). In a broader sense, the indigenous people of Sikka tried to come back to their senses and realise that they are indeed a part of the rest of nature, and not apart from nature. In realising so, it then also changes their mindset and the way they relate or act towards nature and “other” inhabitants. Looking at nature as a healing medium and an element to reflect on their wrongdoing is the essence of *Gren Nuba*, which then makes human acknowledge that any action they did will be eventually intertwined and responded by nature itself. The core idea of the ritual cannot be seen as something rigid, and the correlation cannot be explained scientifically. However, if we see it case-per-case, the mass violence and massacre of 1965-66 must impact the nature

in a certain way (e.g. polluted river because of the dead body and blood, destruction of forest used as execution field). This understanding of consequences from human activity to nature, and nature response to human is a cycle that the people dearly hold, and it can be a very effective deterrence approach as well.

#### 4.4.3 *Gren Mahe*

The last series of event is *Gren Mahe*. It is the culmination of the entire process of repentance, self-purification, reconciliation and gratitude, the moment where humans meet the highest form (*Ina Nian Tana Wama, Ama Lero Wulan Reta*), guardians of nature, ancestral spirits and other fellow humans. During this phase, it is believed that humans come face to face with their creators through signs and symbols. Not only that, but it is also the time when the divine beings, guardians of nature, and ancestral spirits able to hear, consider and granted all confession, complaints, and requests submitted by humans during the previous series of events. In the end, all problems that occurred and resolved by a customary procession in for months considered to end at *Gren Mahe*. These intrinsic elements of indigenous justice and reconciliation paradigms can also be found in aboriginal culture, explored and beautifully written by Rupert Ross. In the sense that there is an emphasis on the ‘harmony in universe’ for it means “part of the investigation in every case will involve looking into the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dynamics—as well as nature of the relationship that surrounds, in a very real sense, define them as human beings” (Ross 2006: 24). Reflections on the effect to the surrounding (whether to the human and non-human) and how making peace means to have harmony in the universe embedded in many indigenous beliefs, that unfortunately eroded by the modernity of the times.



**Figure 9. Building Hut**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2018)

*Gren Mabe* is the peak event; therefore, the preparation took longer than other series of events. This is also the reason why it was held almost one year after the *Gren Tana*. However, similar to the previous two events, *Gren Mabe* also held in two days total, which was on the 24th and 25th of August 2018. Prior to the starting of *Gren Mabe*, participants must build two small huts called *Woga* and *Lepo* with thatch roofs, and other materials must be taken from the surrounding of the location and not anywhere else (Regang, 2020). The idea of working together with anything they can find around them is also one of the catalysts for harmonious social life. It is a good metaphor for having a goal together to build something for the sake of ritual that they are going to have collectively. Thus, any problem they encountered must be solved and strategised collectively. Technically, the implementation of ritual has this characteristic from the very start, as it is not an individual project or task to do. A ritual must be collectively done, and it forces the people to work together despite any friction they have previously.



**Figure 10. Symbol of the Divine**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2018)

As a form of gratitude for meeting *Ina Nian Tana Wawa*, *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, the guardian of nature and ancestral spirits, people voluntarily bring and donate sacrificial animals to be killed. The blood of the sacrificial animals then smeared on a forked wooden pole (called *Mabe Mo'an*) as a symbol of masculinity (*Ama*/father of the Sun, Moon) and a stone (called *Wu'a-Du'a*) a symbol of gentleness (*Ina*/mother Earth):

The wood was made of special wood as well, which starting from the logging until the shaping of it are full of customary standards. It has a certain shape (2 branches facing upward) as a symbol of openness and character of being able to accept anyone. The edge of the branches is pointy and facing upwards; it is a symbol of prayer/begging. At the same time, the arrangement of stones has a function to put offerings. Like a mother who always serves foods and drinks. The arrangement of the wood and stones are the symbols of the presence of *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* and *Ama Lero Wulan Reta* in the rituals.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Rafael Rapa translated to Bahasa Indonesia by Antonius Toni (12<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

When the ceremony is ready to be held, the opening marked with the war dance called *Labit*. The dance performed by two men with their respective roles. One acts as an enemy ready to attack with a spear, and the other holds a shield and a knife. However, there is some modification to the dances performed in 2017 compared to how it used to be held:

In the actual ritual, this is not merely a dance move; they actually hit and hurt each other. Some using wood, some using machete. Those who got hurt in this ritual must exile themselves to the forest and heal themselves using anything they found in nature. But because it is no longer relevant right now with the concept of human rights and non-violence, *Labit* undergo some changes and become a war dance move.<sup>17</sup>

*Labit* emphasizes the traditional side of violence, to show the magic of being invincible and the ability to heal through nature. It is also a reflect the ancient tradition of tribes in East Nusa Tenggara that always involved in a war between each other. However, then at the end of the dance, there is a movement that shows a form of peace and reconciliation between the fighters (Regang, 2020). The implied meaning behind the violent nuanced dance is to teach participants not to commit violence or violations of customary and cultural values whether against *Ina Nian Tana Wawa*, *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, guardians of nature, ancestral spirit, or fellow humans. The consequences, in the form of wound, pain, blood, can be seen directly. Thus, not repeating the tradition of war, or any violence from wrongdoing in the past is indirectly encouraged through this dance.



**Figure 11. Labit the War Dance**

Source: Personal Documentation (PBH Nusra 2018)

Deepening the context, Turner link the act of performative genres to the idea of liminality, which he argues that “every major social formation there is a dominant mode of public liminality, the subjunctive space-time that is the counterstroke to its pragmatic indicative (Turner 1979: 468). Simpler society will have rituals or rites as the way they express their

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

meta-social performances. During the ceremony of *Labit*, people would have a feeling of scared, anxious, while joy at the same time because the whole procession was based on the idea of festive. When the dance started, they can feel the variation of spaces, where sacred time is dramatically separated from “mundane” time.

The dance was serious; everyone will cheer, scream, some are scared. All the emotions are mixed into one. It gives a chilling vibe.<sup>18</sup>

The escalation of feelings and vibes shaken the emotions of the participants, especially as they see how terrifying a “war” pictured in the dance move can be. With the music and verse on the background, the cheering and shouting, vibrations from every step of the fighters, dust flying, and the sound of machete hitting shield, all the senses enlisted to feel the horror of the experience. Suppose the procession is referring to the old version of *Labit*; it will also include actual fighting with blood and wound, which might affect everyone who participates on another level. A portrayal of violence that affect their emotions can be seen as a reconstruction of what happened in the past, which then will be another milestone of their healing process of not denying how horrifying it was back then but brave enough to re-imagine and move on from it. Therefore, *Labit* can be seen as one of the key moment of *Gren* in regards to healing the old wound.

After *Labit*, a ceremony called *Himo Tamu* started. It is a form of respect and appreciation to the guests who came to witness the traditional ritual. All the guests have to walk rounding *Mabe* (the wood and arranged stones) three times as a customary form of acceptance by the local people. Everyone who comes and is involved in *Gren Mabe* traditional ritual considered to become a large family that cannot be separated between one ethnic group and another. The spirit of unity and oneness, friendship and kinship can be seen in the joyful atmosphere performed by the entire Soge tribe who are involved in the entire series of rituals (Regang, 2020).

Animal sacrifices also took place in *Gren Mabe*, as giving an offering from the meat of pig/goat is a symbol of respect to the divine being. The goat’s horns tied on a wooden stake (*Mabe*), as a memory of repentance, liberation or self-purification and reconciliation. The blood also smeared to the wood and arranged stones. The number of animals sacrificed during this ceremony can reach hundreds. These sacrificial animals come from voluntary donations from participants also traditional leaders from the Soge tribe, it is seen as a symbol of responsibility and penance for sins/mistakes as well as an expression of gratitude for

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sigit D. Pratama (8<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

success in life. In the end, all the meat from the animals will be distributed equally to everyone present.

The end of the whole series of *Gren* called *Pati Gorok Ulan*, whereas the customary leaders carry out traditional ceremonies to clean all the “dirt” at the ceremonial location. The symbolic act also called *Sesok Mein* or can be translated into blood cleansing; through this ritual, the customary leaders ensure that the ceremonial location left in a pure and clean state (ibid). Furthermore, the ceremonial area for *Gren Mabe* is in the protected forest area; thus, it is surrounded by trees and still very well preserved. The last ritual resonates how human has to be responsible for any activities they do with respect to nature:

We see everything we do will connect to nature. Loving the nature is synonymous with loving *Ina Nian Tana Wawa* and *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, respecting the creator of heaven, earth, and all of its contents. *Gren* is like you are doing Sunday worship.<sup>19</sup>

In a broader context, the traditional ritual of *Pati Gorok Ulan* is a ritual of cleansing humans from mistakes and sins that have been committed to *Ina Nian Tana Wawa*, *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, guardians of nature, spirits of ancestors and fellow humans. All human problems, including the human tragedy of 1965-66, presented openly through the confession of sins, have been freed.

Everyone involved in the *Gren* returns clean, holy, free from sin and guilt, full of peace, unity and integrity, friendship and kinship. Furthermore, if in the future, there are members of the community who violate customary and cultural values, it is counted as new sins and mistakes. Then, the term *Ali-Abo Papa-Kewe* can properly use after this form of settlement.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Rafael Rapa translated to Bahasa Indonesia by Antonius Toni (12<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

## Chapter 5

# Alternative Approach to Reconciliation

It is evident to say that ritual affect the restoration of interpersonal relations within a community due to its long and complex preparations (and implementation) that have to be done collectively. Like it or not, everyone must work together according to their role for the success of the event. Nevertheless, does the outcome only resulted from that? This chapter is going to dig deeper into the function and roles of ritual, specifically the case of *Gren* in fostering reconciliation in Sikka regency.

### 5.1 Rituals and Identity

During the time of exploring the stories behind *Gren* and trying to understand how it is being perceived by the community and such power or influence it possesses to the indigenous people in Sikka, I was wondering, why now? Why after more than half-decades of the tragedy, they suddenly remember the existence of *Gren* and willing to re-initiate it after being long-forgotten? While people seemed to be very happy when it was held, what hampers them to reconnect to their tradition? Then the questions answered with a story of how during the 1960s, religion started to enter Sikka, Western missionaries reside there and started their program in teaching Catholic to the people, and that is where the tradition got cut out:

At that time, customary law still exists significantly in Sikka. However, this clash of two practices seen as a counterculture to one another (between tradition and Catholic). Western pastors entered Sikka and restrict a lot of traditional rituals as it is not in line with the church's interest. For example, as *Gren* used a lot of symbols like specific rock arrangement or the use of livestock's blood, the church saw this as "heathens" act because the people worship stones which is very primitive. Therefore, a lot of rituals are forbidden.<sup>20</sup>

The extreme shift in perceiving culture and tradition described as a hard time by the indigenous people. They believe that this tradition can only survive as it is being inherited verbally from generation to generation. Once it is being cut out, it can be gone forever.

I always believe that even our life is a form of rituals. Started from the day you are born, until the day you die, even whatever happened afterwards is a ritual of life. So, it is something that embedded in you as a human; it is stronger than the religion itself.<sup>21</sup>

These findings then lead me to another interesting story on how the narratives of being accused as PKI also give pressure to people not to conduct any traditional rituals. After the

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Yulius Regang (On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Rafael translated to Bahasa Indonesia by Antonius Toni (On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

tragedy of 1965-66, the narratives circulated around the people in Sikka is that those who affiliated with the communist party does not believe in God. Which then translated into synonymously to worshipping stones or anything, but God. The term “heathens” closely affiliated with the term “communist”. With the massacre that was happening during 1965-66, if someone accused to be communist, they will definitely be killed. Therefore, if someone got accused of being heathens, means they are communist, it means their life is not safe at all. Catholic become a safe escape for them to show that they believe in God, and they did not affiliate with PKI. This mindset full of fear and trauma then indirectly put rituals, and cultural ceremony in a common understanding of must be avoided.

However, as time goes by, according to Yulius, churches started to open up, as they are aware of how cultural space can be incorporated with religion and how religious space can also be incorporated with culture. In fact, a paper published by John Mansford Prior (2011) shows the story behind how some pastors also experienced a horrible dilemma during the massacre yet unable to do anything, and it became one of their great regrets. Churches started to see the needs of acculturation between their teachings and the local identity that the indigenous people believe. Thus, during the formulation to re-initiate *Gren*, churches did not forbid it nor actively involved.

In this sense, *Gren* can be seen as an effort to reconnect to their root identity, specifically the pre-religious one. It is, of course, facing challenges when religion started to enter Sikka, as unenlightened mystical worships are perceived as something that needs cleansing by modern religion. However, as Lederach point out in his book, it is “only apparent difficulty was that it flew in the face of the dominant Western cultural view of the proper interpretation of reality” (Lederach 2005: 137). The identity and belief that they have in the past considered being primitive and does not match with the modern culture of the West. However, erasing their root identity and distancing them from it does not do any good. In fact, their root identity offers a set of understanding that is beyond an intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship with a human, but also an interpersonal relationship with the living being surround them. Their way in perceiving the world is richer than putting themselves or human as the centre of the universe, but instead putting them as a part of the universe that has to live in coexistence with their environment.

The question of “who are we?” in Lederach’s peacebuilding framework can be answered through the implementation of *Gren* as a ritual that reconnects the mythical identity that indigenous people of Sikka has lost for more than 50 years. The practice where people are able to “re-story” and “re-negotiate” their identity and relationship as coming from the same



tribe, and acknowledging the same divine-being touches the web of community and foster the collective healing process.

Related to restorative justice, Lambourne proposes the term 'psychosocial justice' to "encapsulate the dimension of justice that addresses the need for truth in terms of both knowledge and acknowledgement of the violation and its human and relational impact...it can contribute to a psychological process of healing and building inner peace" (Lambourne 2014: 22) The phase in *Gren Tana* that requires confession from the perpetrators cannot be entirely accepted if there is no common understanding in the beginning. Truth must be hurtful for those involved in the tragedy, but their root identity is what bond them together as a community, and that is what they keep in mind and keep being reminded during the ceremony. Hence, truth is needed during restorative justice, but I believe the outcome of the confession depends on the human relationship built at that time. Moreover, the main focus of restorative justice is not on what is the truth, but more on what kind of relationship was damage and how to then fix it. Thus, by referring to their root identity, the emphasis on the relationship is ubiquitous along with the practice of the ritual.

Deepening the point, identity and the indigenous belief of reality cannot be compared to the western understanding of single truth as well. As in Western-based trial, it is believed that there will always be a single, objective reality out there that is discoverable and therefore it should occupy the primary justice spotlight. In contrast to that, many indigenous beliefs understand that there is something called individual reality, and it is imperative to be acknowledged in justice ceremony. Ross (2006: 103) discuss further on the root metaphors hidden in the language used to address aboriginal reality compare to how it usually expresses in English, and it shows a very interesting idea on how there is a possibility that English (and other European languages) focus on trying to capture and express one aspect of reality, while Aboriginal languages commonly try to capture a very different aspect. Instead of giving label on what an object is, Aboriginal language structures their sentence by emphasising on how this particular object makes them feels, and weighting on how reality is understandably subjective.

The role of local language and dialect also significant in the practice of *Gren*. In some of the rituals, the customary leader will start chanting some verses in the local language, expressing the feelings, the anger, the hope on that particular time. When we asked about the verses, outside from the one that has verbally passed down from generation to generation, most of the verses remains secret.

The one who knows what that is (the verses) is just the customary leaders; it is not disclosed publicly and only during *Gren*. Some of it was chant unconsciously, most likely coming from the spirits. We understand, and live up to every word from the customary leaders, because it speaks to each of ourselves in different ways.<sup>22</sup>

This point also confirmed by the son of one of the executors, who stated that the whole process of the rituals does not put him as the “bad” guy, or the “perpetrator”. Instead, during the confession, the term used was how the tragedy was scary for the community, and also how the elders or customary leaders were happy with his willingness to open up about his wound with the vision to have betterment for the community.

I was not afraid. Everyone knows already what my dad did in the past, and it makes our family feel miserable for more than 50 years. I am here to release that feeling from me, from my family, and at the same time asking for forgiveness to the Divine, so my community can live in peace again<sup>23</sup>

The whole practice of truth-telling, restoring relationship, re-story, renegotiate identity, and end up in collective healing is in line with the double integrated framework of Lederach in understanding the creation of the conflict. Answering the question of ‘who are we’ through looking back into what kind of relationship was there before the crisis is vital to then understand that the people as one community have the same root of identity and therefore their life are intertwining and interdependent to each other. Rituals as an exteriorisation of these existing knowledge dramatically remind the indigenous people of Sikka of who they are and how their relationship should be.

## 5.2 Rituals and Imagination on Virtuous Life

The past cannot be revisited but can be grasped from the present, and it is equally important to look at the construction of knowledge about this past that not only shaping how people perceive the present, but also the future. After unpacking how *Gren* plays roles in understanding the past and reconnect to identity, the practice can also be seen as a bridge of imagination on virtuous life in the future.

*Gren* cover the idea of restorative justice as it challenges the notion of ‘corrective justice’, a “form of redress seeks to make ‘right’ a past wrong usually consists of monetary compensation” (Laplante 2014: 67). Instead, it expected a reparation and restoration of the relationship that has to do much more than simply right or wrong. This is why the series of events in *Gren* is very important to be implemented as a whole, instead of just doing *Gren Tana* or the confession phase. Because it views corrective justice, done in *Gren Tana*, only as

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Fransiskus Sikut (On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ignasius Nasi (On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

a starting point but not as the primary goal. It goes beyond confession and truth-telling, but also restoring the relationship by imagining how life is supposed to be, not only between human but also with nature. This can be related to the verses/traditional poetries that the indigenous people of Sikka used during the procession of *Gren Nuba*, or the reconciliation with nature phase. Some of which I collected during the interview<sup>24</sup>. However, these are the one that is publicly passed on to younger generation (there are a lot more that they have) during *Togo Hu'a Neni Plawi E'i Nuba Nanga-Ilin Wolon Wair Matan-Terang Pu'an*, which is a name of dancing to wake up nature and divine-being so they can listen to all prayers and requests:

a. *Neni, uran lohor-wair lema, utan nurak-wair du'e, besi lanan- pote lodong*, traditional poetry with the request that it rains regularly, water remains, plants remain green, lush and fresh. The earth keeps in a healthy and good condition.

b. *Wua du'a-a'e la'i*, traditional poetry implores fellowship, unity, harmony, cooperation between human beings, follow with safety, health, good education, and good future for their children.

c. *Wi'in blatan- tebon bliran*, traditional poetry implies physical and spiritual health, away from illness and disease.

d. *Uma ibin-tua dolo*, requests for abundant crops (rice, maize, barley, beans, commodity crops and/or other businesses can be successful and meet the needs of human life until the next harvest season.

e. *Guru blu-lio hepok, poing-pening, bisa bekar-detun-benu. Woer Soge, noran ea, rehi tinu beduk tau to'o-woter balik, na'i men-nalun pun*, domestic livestock can breed to fill the yard of the Soge tribe in healthy conditions. Domestic livestock to be a wealth that can be passed on to children and grandchildren.

f. *Apun patan*, personal request to the divine being, *Ina Nian Tana Wawa, Ama Lero Wulan Reta*, while expressing their gratitude and respect.

From these verses used during the ceremony, it is evident to see that the correlation for the longing of peace and the idea of the sustainable environment are inextricably linked and seen to be the idea of virtuous life by the people. This is a transformation that imminent in Lederach' peacebuilding framework, whereas not only the past unite the community to be on the same boat together, but how they perceive their desired future also plays an important

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Rafael Rapa and Fransiskus Sikut translated to Bahasa Indonesia by Antonius Toni (On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020)

role. As to whether they can picture themselves collectively as one community to living the desired life and coexist with each other. Whether they can project themselves to share the same space with the subject they try to reconcile with. With the fact that the ritual of *Gren* does not solely cover reconciliation with human, but also with nature, then ecology also becomes the subject of the desired future that the community have to think of. Thus, an additional element that can be inserted to Lederach's framework in the case of *Gren* is how nature also plays a significant role in composing the idea of a virtuous life.

The whole ritual emphasise deeply on the restoration of relationship, and in line with the idea of peace ecology, "(it) deeply interwoven nature of peace among human communities and peace between humankind collectively with the balance of the environment" (Amster 2014: 23). Alternatively, as Barnett stated "peace and environment security are therefore intimately related, and neither can be achieved without the other" (Barnett 2007: 12). The vision and prevention embedded in the peacebuilding framework are not limited to how the relationship with other human is being formed and transformed, but how the human relationship should also consider nature as a subject whom they share the space with. Therefore, the sustainability and balance of ecology must be preserved in order to achieve peace. Having a holistic view on the interconnectedness of people and place, culture and nature, or societies and their environments is the core idea of building a sustainable peace that is being emphasised through the symbolic act in *Gren*.

### 5.3 Mapping the Function of *Gren* in Reconciliation



1 Re-Story	2 Space	3 Communicates Symbolic Message	4 Forming	5 Transforming
Reconnect to the roots and subjugate modern narratives that divide them	Creates a safe space for people to re-open controversial narratives	Communicates complex, ambiguous, and dissonant messages through symbols, senses, physical actions, and emotions	Helps understanding and making sense of the world through cultivating values and shaping memory	Creates and strengthen joint identities within community that create a bridge across their shared humanity
Reflect self-being as part of the nature and should act accordingly	Bring attention of common ground between people	Communicates across cultures through symbols that allow for multiple interpretations	Builds, affirms, and heals identities that may be at risk or damaged	Assists transition in worldview, identity, relationships, and social structure
Staging past traumas with collective aim to heal	Allows for a liminal or in-between place where transformation can take place	Express and channels emotions in a safe way; rhythm, repetition, and patterned actions	Improves self-esteem of participants, allowing them to see and feel their ability to act in the world	Reframe problems and rehumanises people who have been dehumanised through perceptual processes
	Creates an atmosphere where people can relax, feel fully human, and see others as fully human	Allows people to enact their full humanity and share it with each other	Builds bridges and boundaries around relationship, giving people a structures way of interacting with each other	Provides a pathway for transformation, a rite of passage from one state to the next
		Allows people to learn through improvised ways of acting and behaving		Ignites collective vision of desired future

**Figure 12. Analysis on Function of *Gren* in Reconciliation**

Excerpted with modification from Lisa Schirch's *Function of Rituals in Peacebuilding* (Schirch 2014: 61)

Three out of five qualities characterise the process that has advanced reconciliation in the setting of deep-rooted violent conflicts can be seen in the practice of *Gren*. According to Lederach, they are 1) The reconciliation is centred on relationships, and not issues; 2) Reconciliation includes the personal and interpersonal process, yet goes beyond to include community processes, the fabric of the larger community. (3) Reconciliation is wandering in the desert- that is, it consists less of a linear, formulaic progression, and more of a fitful, long series of steps forward and backwards and forward anew. (Lederach 2001). These three characteristics can be further elaborate form in Figure 12, which is a modified version of mapping the function of rituals in reconciliation proposed by Lisa Schirch. One element that I found should be inserted in the discourse is how not only rituals play an important role in number 2 until number 5 (Space, Communicates Symbolic Message, Forming, and Transforming), but it also imperative in linking back to the past and re-story, both in terms of narratives and the identity. It then contributes to staging past traumas while at the same time smashing the barriers of differences between conflicting parties.

The process of reconciliation through rituals cannot be generalised from one to another. Although some similar intrinsic elements can be found, for example between *Gren* and the Aboriginal justice ceremony; or with other indigenous belief in different parts of the world that also see harmony with nature as core point, it cannot be simplified. Research in rituals has to be specific, not only on which community, on what kind of ritual, under which culture, but even on which case it can be implemented. Referring back to Schirch, the process of peacebuilding through rituals can be paradoxical, and it requires a stretch of imagination (Schirch 2014: 64). Especially with the dynamics of knowledge influenced by Western thought, a stretch of the imagination and questioning the concept of rationality is necessary.

*Gren* teaches us about how reconciliation is a very holistic process. It does not only cover a set of agreement or negotiation between conflicting parties, but it is a communal effort, whereas everyone can position themselves contributing to building peace. It teaches us that human is not apart from nature, but a part of it that we as human often neglect and forgot that they are, also, the silenced victim of violence that occurred. It gives a set of teachings and understanding on how reality is not singular, and everyone are allowed and has the ability to interpret their surroundings based on their own experience, and it is normal to do that. It shows how rituals work with unconscious forces and deeply buried emotions—where rational and intellectual thinking cannot reach, yet it touches the web of the community on a deeper level.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

The trauma of mass violence hidden in fear and vengeance is a complex issue and the effort in addressing that should not be generalised, as each case has its own characters and dispositions. A characteristically rigid neo-liberal blueprint of solution often proven to be insufficient in addressing deeply manifested structural violence. In the context of Indonesia, the violence affected societies of 1965-66 massacre are struggling to internalise their experience and how it corresponds to their future. The lack of acknowledgement of what happened in the past plays a significant role in hampering the reconciliation effort, whether its community-level or national-level. Notwithstanding the controversies, the cycle of keeping it in the dark has to break at some point. The spectrum of using a different paradigm of healing and reconciliation should be taken into consideration instead of just forgetting the past atrocities and keeping the victim just as a number.

*Gren* offers a set of understanding and teachings for a very particular society, and it provides us with an alternative to collectively healing the wound. Through each multi-interpreted components that affect differently to a different audience, it connects to the people in a psychologically deeper level. Emphasising on renegotiating identity and re-telling story, it does not aim to repeat the past, or to see the past as the solution to the current problem, nor to act as if it does not exist. *Gren* speaks in a different language, upholding the values of how transformation does not only mean to ignore the generational future, nor is an attempt to control it. It creates a non-rigid space that makes human realise that at some point, they are bound to each other and has the same vision to reach virtuous life. It acknowledge the idea that time is not a linear phase that can detach the past, present, and future; instead, it is connected in a paradox relationship which then resonates the idea of giving meaning to life and ongoing relationship of the human being.

Not only that we have to see time as something that is not linear, but in thinking about restoring relationship and reconciliation, we must acknowledge that multidimensionality should be present, like how both interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship of human must be taken into account in seeing restorative justice. Taking it beyond that, *Gren* shows how human often forget that they are part of the rest of nature, and at some point, restorative also involved the one with nature. Thus, it is not only healing through nature as the medium but also healing with nature.

*Gren* pushes the people to re-imagine their position in the unconventional time and space. Stretch their understanding of each other, with fellow human and with nature. Which then gives a holistic view of how prolonging peace is pertinent with the well-being of themselves and their environmental surroundings. The ritual reminds them of how connected they are to each other as a community, and how they cannot detach themselves from nature as well; an understanding rarely visits in the modern time.

Conflict and violence are inevitable in human lives, but this research reminds me that most of the time the solution is already there for ages; dispersed in indigenous understanding on life, and we often belittle it. It is undeniably challenging to understand this research through the dominating discourse of scientific and western-centric framework of knowledge, yet does not mean it is not relevant. To conclude this work, I want to borrow Lederach's statement that "to live between memory and potentiality is to live permanently in a creative space, pregnant with the unexpected" (2005: 149). A space that we, ourselves, have to generate in order to bounce back to life, re-design the present, while moving into the future.



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