

# Jesus and Lu Du: Correlation

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## Introduction

**What is Lu Du Theology?** I would like to answer this question in at least three different ways. The first answer is that it is a theology about the Lu Du, the term used to describe the masses of the people of Myanmar who have experienced oppression and political and socio-economic injustice. Hence it is theological reflection on Christian responsibility in the context of the concrete situation which creates the experience of the suffering of Lu Du people. Secondly, the answer may be that it is a theology for the suffering of Lu Du or theology of the message addressed to the suffering of Lu Du people and to which they seem to be responding. Thirdly, the answer may be that it is a theology from the Lu Du, the theology through which they themselves would like to rediscover the new meaning of life for the people living in a society which is oppressive and politically and socio-economically unjust, thus producing a liberation theology unique to Myanmar.

This paper expounds all three answers as I happen to be a Ludu Christian himself. It offers a reflection on the theology of justice and peace not only from a Biblical perspective but also commenting on the interpretations of some theologians and literature on Dalit and Minjung theologies. Of course, Minjung *Han* is a deep feeling that arises out of the unjust experiences of the Korean people in history. Likewise, Dalit *Peeran* is a complex feeling of inner inferiority of dalits, the experience of the dalits' suffering which is created by an unjust society and its structures. In the same sense, the people of Myanmar (Lu Du or Ludu) face the lack of freedom of conscience, expression and association; and suffering and abuses of human rights are growing in Myanmar. Therefore I will examine the meaning of the reality of people suffering for justice and peace in Myanmar (Lu Du Theology of Suffering) and seek to articulate a correct approach to the political-social-economic situation from the perspective of the people of Myanmar. Lu Du Theology of Suffering for Justice and Peace is a contextual theological approach which has emerged in Myanmar. We can say that it is also the outcome of the work of critical theological reflection and re-reading of the real suffering within the socio-political setting of Myanmar in relation to the suffering of Minjung and Dalit.

What are the differences between Lu Du and Minjung Theology? Historically, the two countries had the same experience of military rule where there was no space for the people. But there are differences between Lu Du and Minjung theology. Within the Minjung theological context, the Minjung comprise one nation, one people and one culture while Lu Du is comprised of many ethnicities, cultures, and traditions. Thus, social and cultural diversities in Myanmar are the unique mark of the country, and the most challenging factor which calls for the socio-political rights of the different ethnic groups. For this reason, political struggles among Lu Du are quite different in nature from the Minjung socio-political struggle. Lu Du definitions of justice and peace are quite different from Minjung theological interpretations. Thus, to build a mutual trust and reconciliation is the priority of democratic struggle for Lu Du theology. A Christian Lu Du Theology will be produced by Ludu (lu du). It will be based on their own Lu Du experiences, their own sufferings, their own aspirations and their situation. In fact, the *dukkha vedena* and the journey of the Lu Du must be an

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ecumenical journey, which is to construct justice and peace in Myanmar. Both *Dukkha vedana* (unpleasant body sensation) and *Domanassa vedana* (unpleasant mental feeling) are relevant to the suffering of Lu Du in Myanmar. There are many movements of Lu Du struggling for justice and peace in Myanmar. These movements are known collectively as Lu Du Anti-Military Authoritarianism and Democracy Movements. Democratization in Myanmar is not only the request for democracy and human rights but is also a struggle between justice and injustice in Myanmar.

What would a theology that attempts to take seriously the reality of the Lu Du in Myanmar look like? I would like to demonstrate such a theology by interpreting four crucial ideas: (1) Jesus and Lu Du (2) The Cross of Jesus and the Suffering of the Lu Du (3) The Holy Spirit and Lu Du, and (4) The Resurrection of Jesus and Lu Du.

## 1. Jesus and Lu Du

In this paper, I would like to explore further Jesus' relationship with the Lu Du in His historical existence. "By historical being is meant His existence as someone who lived in a certain place and time, who suffered for the sake of an ideal, and who then was executed because He was seen to be dangerous to the Jewish ruling class as well as to the Roman power."<sup>1</sup>

According to Suh Nam Dong, in the eyes of Minjung theologians, Jesus is truly part of the Minjung, and not just "for" the Minjung. Therefore, Jesus was and is seen as the personification of the Minjung.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Jesus is clearly described by Mark as part of the Minjung (or Lu Du) when he characterizes the life style of Jesus as a friend of tax-collectors and sinners. Suh says that the Q source (the book of sayings of Jesus) exhibits the fact that when Jesus taught, he was not like the lawyers, but like one who had authority. These two facts, namely, that Jesus was a friend of the tax-collectors and sinners, and that He taught like a man who had authority, presented, according to Suh, a montage of the "criminal" Jesus.<sup>3</sup> So, for the Minjung, Jesus was not an abstract figure. On the contrary, He was very concrete. He was a figure who was sought by the Minjung, those who were described as the 'sinners,' a title ascribed to them by the ruling classes who shaped the established value system.<sup>4</sup>

The heart of the method of interpretation of the Bible from the perspective of Lu Du theology is to read and interpret the Bible, through 'the eye of Lu Du' and from 'the perspective of Lu Du'. Ahn Byung Mu, one of the first generation Minjung theologians, probed the term *ochlos* (crowd) in the Gospel according to Mark as a way of understanding Minjung. That is, the Gospel is for the poor, and they are subjects and inheritors of the Heavenly Reign. The poor, the weak, the sick, the crippled, the blind, the captive, the least of these *ochlos* (the Lu Du) - occupy a special place in the Reign of God. The Gospel was truly discovered and rediscovered through the perceptions and perspective of the Lu Du.

According to Ahn Byun Mu, who first stressed the importance of the concept of the word *ochlos* to Minjung Theology, it is certain that in the New Testament, Mark is the first to introduce the term.<sup>5</sup> In Mark's use of the term there are some basic characteristics:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ahn Byung Mu, "The Korean Church's Understanding of Jesus," *CTB Bulletin* 6 (January/April, 1986), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Suh Nam Dong, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, (ed) Kim Yong Bock, (Singapore: 1981), 159.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ah Byung Mu, "The Korean Church's Understanding of Jesus," *CTB Bulletin* 6 (January/April, 1986), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Kim Yong Bock, (ed) *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, (Singapore: 1981), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

(1) Wherever Jesus went, there were always people who gathered around him. They were called the *ochlos* (2:4, 13; 13:9, 20, 32; 4:1; 5:21, 24, 31; 8:1; 10:1);

(2) These people were the so-called sinners, who stood condemned in their society. We can see Mark's reference to *ochlos* implies the meeting of Jesus with tax collectors, sinners, and the people who are outcasts of society (2:13-17);

According to the Bible, Jesus always stood on the side of the oppressed, the aggrieved, and the weak. The people (Lu Du) were those who always gathered around Jesus. They formed the background of Jesus' activities. In their relationship to the ruling classes from Jerusalem, the Lu Du took an anti-Jerusalem position and were clearly on the side of Jesus (Mark. 2:4-6; 3:2-21; 4:1; 11:18, 27, 32).

In fact, Jesus always stood on the side of the Lu Du, but He never had the intention of organizing them into a force. He did not provide a program for their movement, nor did He make them an object of His movement. Ahn states that in just in this kind of situation, Jesus proclaimed to them "the advent of God's Kingdom" (Mark 1:15). By this proclamation the Minjung were given a new way, a new hope. On the frontline of this advent, Jesus struggled together with the suffering Minjung.<sup>7</sup>

If Christ is truly a liberator of all people, all Christological statements must be able to withstand any socio-economic, political, cultural and racial-ethnic criticisms, not merely those from a literary, linguistic and positive historical perspective.

A critical assessment of Christology, however, may not be enough to liberate Jesus from the cloaks of the ideology of domination in a given situation. We need to make an attempt to present Jesus to the workers not merely as a person of the past, no matter how great a liberator He may have been, but also as one who is a liberator here and now among the people. This demands a full-scale Christological reflection.<sup>8</sup>

What then is the Jesus-event? It is the liberating event, the event of suffering, death and resurrection. Through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, the *ochlos* of Mark's gospel, which is close to the meaning of Lu Du, have been liberated. Therefore, the Jesus-event means the liberating event. Whenever there is a liberating event, there is the presence of the living Christ. The history of liberating struggle must be seen from the perspective of this Jesus-event. The relation of Jesus with the Lu Du must, therefore, be seen as a relation between the liberator and the liberated. Jesus liberated the Lu Du (Mark 7:1-19). Jesus also associated Himself with the sick, the deprived, the women, and the oppressed. These are all evidence of Jesus' relationship with Lu Du in His historical existence and in Jesus' association with these people (Lu Du), we seen the core of Jesus' behavior. Therefore Jesus had compassion on Lu Du (described as 'sheep without a shepherd' in Mark 6:34). Likewise, the Myanmar Lu Du which is composed of many people who are under social economic and political oppression are definitely the partners of Jesus Christ, the centre of the Kingdom of God and the agents for justice and peace in Myanmar.

## 2. The Cross of Jesus and the Suffering of the Lu Du

Jesus' stand on the side of the oppressed made the ruling classes suspect Him. This brought Him to the Cross. The Cross is seen as a symbol of intense suffering.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the

<sup>7</sup> Ahn Byung Mu, "Jesus and the Minjung," *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, (ed) Kim Yong Bock, (Singapore:1981), 150.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Young-Bock, *Messiah and Minjung: Christ's Solidarity with the People for New Life*, (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, Urban Rural Mission, 1992), 16.

<sup>9</sup> A.A. Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia: Asian Christian Views on Suffering in the Face of Overwhelming Poverty and Multifaceted Religiosity in Asia*, (Sumba, Indonesia, Amsterdam, 1987), 142.

Cross and the crucifixion of Jesus hold an important position in Myanmar. The suffering which Jesus experienced in this event of crucifixion is directly related to the people's own suffering, especially during the colonial period, the Second World War and the Japanese rule in Myanmar, and then the military regime from 1962 to 2011. People in Myanmar face the lack of freedom of conscience, expression and association; and abuses of rights to education, health and social welfare. Additionally, human rights violations such as forced labor, forced relocation, child soldiers and laborers, and violence against human rights are also growing in Myanmar. All these experiences lead the people (Lu Du) to identify with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. The Cross becomes the symbol of their crosses.

## 2.1 Neo- Crucifixion and the Suffering of Lu Du

*“The origin of crucifixion is traced to the Phoenicians, from whom it passed to many other nations, including both Greeks and Romans. Later it was confined almost exclusively to the punishment of slaves, foreigners, or criminals of the lowest class, being regarded as incompatible with the dignity of any Roman citizens. Crucifixion is the act of putting to death by nailing or binding the victim to a cross or sometimes to a tree. It is generally included public shame, and torture. The cruelty of this form of capital punishment lay in the public shame that was involved and in its slow physical torture.”<sup>10</sup>*

The purpose of crucifixion was to shut up and shut down those who stood against a particular government, on the assumption that seeing the suffering and death of the crucified would serve as a deterrent and would stop opposition and resistance. In James W. Douglass' words,

*“Crucifixion had a political and military purpose to silence and deter rebels. Jesus was one of those thousands of Jews executed publicly on the crosses, because what they represented had to be suppressed in order to safeguard law and order in the Roman State. In the colonized world Rome controlled, crucifixion was seen as essential to a deterrent policy. Rome therefore made its crucifixion was seen as public and as horrible as possible to serve as more effective deterrent against rebellions.”<sup>11</sup>*

The cross was employed to maintain the security of the Roman Empire and Roman government's power. From the standpoint of Roman security, the choice was either to torture and crucify rebels one by one as a deterrent, or to carry out the ultimate threat by annihilating a whole population center, as the Romans in fact did in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The same desire for the security of the Military Government in Myanmar leads to the persecution of the opposition party members and other political activists.<sup>12</sup> The suffering People (Lu Du) Movements, important human rights movements in Myanmar were opposed and crucified by the military government.

David I. Steinberg describes this crucifixion that has been experienced by Myanmar people:

*“Brutal suppression of popular discontent followed the coup. Dissenters were sought out, jailed, or killed, and although the authorities admitted to the deaths of a few looters and malcontents, observers estimated that over a thousand died in those a few days; in 1988 and the events leading up to the coup perhaps four or five times that number had been killed. Based on photographs taken at the demonstrations, the military conducted house to house searches to seek out those who had participated. Some 10,000 students and young people fled to the periphery, some to Indian border, other to China frontier, but most to Thailand, where*

<sup>10</sup> Umnakui, “Vakok Theology : A Theology of Suffering,” Rays, *MIT Journal of Theology*, Vol.11, (Yangon, January 2010), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 79.

*many sought refuge. Some later returned to Burma. It was widely believed that General Ne Win, former national leader, recently retired, had ordered the coup.*"<sup>13</sup>

In fact, we can say that neo-crucifixion was practiced not only Jesus' time but also at this time in human history – here in Myanmar. Therefore we need to understand the Cross of Jesus in relation to the suffering of the Lu Du.

*"In the New Testament understanding of the Cross of Christ, the cross is understood to have occasioned the breaking of barriers between the human communities: between the male and female, the Greeks and the Jews and between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. This reconciliation is effected by calling those who crucify to repentance by raising the voice on behalf of the crucified. The message of the early Christian faith community was: You killed Jesus, but God raised him from the dead. In this proclamation, the early Christian community declared God's vindication of the crucified people and called the crucifiers to follow the lead of the crucified people for their own salvation. The invitation to partake in the body of Christ is thus a declaration of the emergence of a new community where in all are made to be one."*<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 The Cross of Jesus

The Cross of Christ within the New Testament tradition and in some of the contemporary re-imaginings of the cross is understood to be the divine identification with the suffering humanity. This identification as a theme embodies other themes like solidarity and recapitulation.<sup>15</sup>

For the Lu Du, the Cross of Jesus is seen as historical, just like their own suffering. Thus, the cross is understood as an establishment of messianic solidarity with Minjung suffering through Jesus' participation in historical suffering, as Ahn Byung Mu also stresses the political character of Jesus' Cross. The suffering of the Messiah must be understood politically and historically.<sup>16</sup>

The Cross of Jesus, accordingly, may not be conceived of as a nonhistorical symbol or a metaphysical category, as it was in traditional theology.<sup>17</sup> The Cross must be understood in historical and social terms. In connection with this understanding of the Cross, Bock also sees sin and evil as having a political character. In other words, sin and evil may not be limited only to individuals. Rather, Minjung suffering constitutes a comprehensive story of the contradictions of human history, and therefore, it must be understood as a comprehensive category.<sup>18</sup>

Describing the period immediately before the Japanese invasion, George Appleton, Archdeacon of Rangoon, wrote,

*"On December 23rd, Rangoon was badly bombed, about 2,000 people being killed and more than that number injured. This was followed by another heavy raid on Christmas morning. A group of women did valiant work as ambulance drivers, including three of our*

<sup>13</sup> David I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar*, (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, "A Memory that Re-members Peace and Reconciliation: A Perspective from a Dalit Theology of the Cross," *Towards Theology of Justice for Life in Peace (Minjung-Dalit Theological dialogue)*, (eds) Kwon Jinkwan and P. Mohan Larbeer, (Bangalore, BTESSC, India, 2012), 39–40.

<sup>15</sup> Brad Jersak, "Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ," in Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin. (de) *Stricken by God?: Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Kim Yong Bock, "Theology and Social Biography," 74.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 75.

missionary workers. These two raids disorganized the life of the city, and almost paralyzed the port, so willing people had to turn their hands to all kinds of unusual work. At one juncture five clergy were at work in a hospital laundry, while another with a group of University students scrubbed blood-stained floors. Others assisted with canteens and A.R.P. From Christmas onwards there were constant air-raid alarms, but the R.A.F. and the American Volunteer Group from China prevented any further big raids on the city.

Meanwhile the Japanese had crossed the frontier from Thailand and moved up to take Moulmein. A few days later they crossed the Salween, cutting off the Kappali mission from the rest of us. With the fall of Singapore, preceded as it was by Pearl Harbour and other naval reverses, the fate of Burma was sealed.

On February 19th I was out in the Delta conferring with the clergy and teachers as to what should be done if the worst happened. The scene will always live in my memory. We were squatting cross-legged on the floor of the mission house at Nyaung-ngu, half-a-dozen priests and a dozen men and women teachers. The first question to be settled was what the missionaries should do. I explained that we men were ready to stay if the meeting felt it was right to do so. Ma Pwa Sein, the stalwart headmistress of S. Mary's, Kemmendine, which had transferred to the Delta at the outbreak of war, was very emphatic that we should not fall into the hands of the Japanese. Another speaker said that our presence would only draw attention and suspicion to their villages. The tension was relieved by Own Bwint, our senior Karen priest. With a kindly and humorous look at me he said, "Well, we could dress you in Burmese clothes, we could darken your skin and dye your hair. You speak Burmese well enough. But we could do nothing with that English nose of yours

During the Second World War, there were many Christian leaders and church members who became martyrs by believing and following the Cross of Jesus. Moltmann writes that to suffer and be rejected signifies the cross. To die on the cross means to suffer and to die as one who is an outcast and rejected. If those who follow Jesus are to take 'their crosses' on themselves, they are taking on not only suffering and a bitter fate, but the suffering of rejection. According to their own experience, the greatest Christian saints were also the most profoundly abandoned by God. The expression 'cross' for the sufferings undergone in following Jesus takes its meaning solely from the cross of Christ, not from natural or social sufferings. "The cross . . . is not the sort of suffering which is inseparable from this mortal life, but the suffering which is an essential part of the specifically Christian life. And the cross of Christ, in the context of his life, is explained in the first instance by his mission, which provoked hostility."<sup>19</sup>

Writing from a Dalit perspective, Joseph Prabhakar Dayam argues that peace and reconciliation begins with an act of exposing violence: The early Christian community understood the event of the Cross of Christ as an act of God reconciling the World to God-self and their task as disciples as proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation. However they did this by exposing violence. Their message was: You killed Jesus, but God raised him up, thus declaring God's vindication of the victims.<sup>20</sup> Reconciliation is less complicated when both parties are guilty of something and both have a part in the act of violence. But that is not always true; most often it is the ones in whom power is concentrated who engage in violence, in which case, any talk of peace and reconciliation becomes a double burden for the victims. What makes the victims capable of forgiving? God's participation in their suffering that is

<sup>19</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God : The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, (SCM Press LTD, London, 1974), 55.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, "A Memory that Re-members Peace and Reconciliation: A Perspective from a Dalit Theology of the Cross," *Towards Theology of Justice for Life in Peace, (Minjung-Dalit Theological dialogue)*, (eds) Kwon Jinkwan and P. Mohan Larbeer, (Bangalore, BTESSC, India, 2012), 41.

symbolized in the Cross of Christ. It is the outpoured self-giving love of God which is imparted into the community that enables the offended party to engage in the task of reconciliation. It flows out of the shared experience of vulnerability. It flows from the victims experiencing the grace of God that enables them to be the initiators of peace. It is this recognition of God's location with the victims that enables the perpetrators of violence to turn in repentance to the victims.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. The Holy Spirit and Lu Du

God reveals Himself not only through His Word, but also through history. For the Christians in Myanmar, this means that God reveals Himself in the Lu Du tradition in Christianity as well as in the Myanmar Lu Du tradition. The task of Myanmar Lu Du theology, therefore, is to testify that in the activity of the *Missio Dei* there is a confluence of these two Lu Du traditions. In fact, within the framework of this task of testifying, the work of the Holy Spirit becomes important.

From this point of view, Suh Nam Dong calls this fact "the pneumatological historical interpretation," which he compares with the traditional Christological interpretation.<sup>22</sup> I affirm that Jesus of Nazareth redeemed us from sin according to the traditional Christological interpretation. But the pneumatological historical interpretation goes further than that by stressing our imitation of the life of Jesus, and by repeating in our life the events which Jesus has undergone. From this perspective, we also need to emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit.

#### 3.1 The Language of the Holy Spirit and Lu Du

There are many names and images that designate the Holy Spirit (among others, Wisdom, Mother, paraclete, wind, fire, water, cloud, light, dove, and the hand of YHWH). Each provides important insights into aspects of the Holy Spirit. For example, when we call the Holy Spirit a spring, it shows the character of the Holy Spirit as the source of life, hope and courage.<sup>23</sup> In fact, among many, Kwon Jin Kwan has selected three and explored their meanings very briefly. These are (1) Life Force (*Ki*) (2) Sophia/Mother and (3) Paraclete.

##### (1) Life Force (*Ki*)

The Eastern term (*ki*) includes various meanings. It refers to the field of power like a magnetic field, wind and the breath of life. The force that was moving over the chaotic waters was the *ruah* of God, the spirit of life. The life force moves in all directions like wind. It blows as it wills. This wind is not just a natural power, but it is a force of justice and *shalom*. It brings judgment to oppressors and monopolizers. Isaiah's vision was the realization of *shalom* within creation and history (Isa. 32:15-18). Such *shalom* is achieved by the *ruah*, the life force from God.<sup>24</sup>

In this sense, the Christian language of the Holy Spirit is not strange to the people of Myanmar. "The Christian language of Holy Spirit was primarily related not to nature or natural forces but to the person."<sup>25</sup> The Holy Spirit was a power that worked both in the believer and within the Christian *koinonia* to complete Messianic mission of Jesus, Messiah.<sup>26</sup> In the context of Myanmar, spirits appear in traditional worship. Buddhism takes two forms in Myanmar: normative or traditional Buddhism known as Theravada

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> Suh Nam dong, "Historical References," 179.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Yong bock (ed), *Minjung Theology: People as the Subject of History*, 213-214.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 214.

Buddhism, and the non-normative Buddhism which is mixed with the worship of *nats* or spirits.

Theravada Buddhism refuses to identify Gautama Buddha with God. He was not God or a god. He was a human being who attained full enlightenment through meditation and showed his followers the path of spiritual awakening and freedom from suffering. Therefore in the Theravada Buddhist's view Buddhism is not a religion about God but a religion of wisdom, enlightenment, and compassion. They believe that this Buddha-nature or Buddha-mind, i.e., the enlightened mind -- is inherent in all people.<sup>27</sup>

An important difference between Theravada Buddhism and Christianity is that Buddhism sees the true identity of the human person and of all reality as inherent in the Buddha-nature, whereas Christianity sees the true identity of the human person in the image of God within. In this Buddhist tradition the meaning of the Buddha nature manifests itself in the concrete experience of wisdom and compassion. For the Christian the activities of knowing and loving are the fruits of the spirit of God within human beings. Non-normative Buddhism, which is mixed with the worship of *nats* and *devas*, i.e., lower and higher spirits, like to address the Buddha as God, and believe that *nats* and *devas* could save them in the time of crisis.<sup>28</sup>

Whatever their beliefs may be, Christians must respect and appreciate the Buddhists because they are also the children of the one Creator who loves and cares equally for all His children and who will also judge them equally. This view is validated by the Christians' perspective of the work of God's Spirit as being twofold, that is, the creation of humankind and nature and the perfection of the work of nature. We see an affirmation of the continual activities of the Spirit of God on earth in Psalm 104:30: "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground."

The same Spirit of God led Jesus of Nazareth to understand his mission of messiahship to save the world from hatred and violence. This same Spirit continues to be with the Church and makes believers see in Jesus Christ God's self-revelation to the world. It continues to teach them and guide them to participate in God's mission of the world peace and reconciliation.

## (2) *Sophia/Mother*

Kwon Jin Kwan notices that with the term *Sophia* (Wisdom) the Holy Spirit proceeded to become more personified. The *Sophia* is not a static and abstract principle that does not change, like a universal law of nature. *Sophia* walks and shouts in the market and street (Prov. 2). *Sophia* persuades the people to live toward the vision of a just and harmonious society. *Sophia* judges the people who do not follow the way of justice. The Book of Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs are full of descriptions of the character of the *Sophia*.<sup>29</sup>

One of the characteristics of the *Sophia* is that of mother. Mother is a figure of wisdom for life. Mother gives birth to life, raises and educates her children. The Holy Spirit is sometimes called Mother. Mother's wisdom is fundamentally based on the love for her children.<sup>30</sup> In this way, we can say that *Sophia/Mother* is essential in a family or a country. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar was called Mother Land for the people of Myanmar.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Dun, "The concept of God in Myanmar Context," *Called to be a Community: Myanmar's in search of new Pedagogies of encounter*, (eds) Samuel Ngun Ling, Than win, Peter Joseph, The first Seminar of Myanmar Theologians, (Yangon, 2002), 164.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>29</sup> Kwon Jin Kwan, *Theology of Subjects: Towards a New Minjung Theology*, PTCA Series No.1, Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia, (Kway Jen, Tainan 71101, Taiwan, 2011), 156.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



### (3) *Paraclete*

Kwon Jin Kwan notes that the Holy Spirit is called *Paraclete* by Jesus himself. *Paraclesis* is one of the main functions of the wise mother, and refers to comfort and counseling. According to the gospel of John, the Paraclete has several functions (John 16:1) She makes us remember Jesus and what Jesus has taught. She makes us to remember the “past future” or “in the past.” Remembering the future in the past originates imagination and creativity. 2) Paraclete is the Comforter, Consoler and Healer of the suffering people. To console is to stand with and support. Consoling is standing with and supporting the sufferer, so that he/she can stand by him/herself. It is giving life and courage to the discouraged. 3) The Paraclete is the spirit that judges and punishes the worldly powers (John 16:11).<sup>31</sup>

In these perspectives, Paraclete is one of the main functions of the wise mother for Lu Du, those whose suffering may be political, social, or economic in nature. The Paraclete will stand with and support the weak Lu Du and She will be a helper for Lu Du in Myanmar forever.

### 3.2 The Holy Spirit and the Suffering of Lu Du

The Spirit-Mother is partial to the poor. It is through the poor that the Spirit acts to take history forward to a finer humanity. Jesus, anointed by the Spirit, opts to be poor, to work among the poor and address his gospel to them. He introduces himself as one anointed with the Spirit and sent as liberator of the downtrodden. It is right, then, to discern the Spirit's stirrings and her summons to action in all liberation struggles throughout history.<sup>32</sup>

In the third World, this means the struggles of slaves, colonized peoples, dalits, the victims of *apartheid*, marginalized women, victims of fanaticism, racism, and imperialist wars. The Spirit calls for radical freedom and radical communion. She comes to transform all hierarchies into God's family and the Body of Christ.<sup>33</sup> My encounter with Minjung Theology demonstrated that Ahn Byun-mu's interest in the historical Jesus and the Jesus-event in Mark is complemented by Suh Nam-dong's interest in the movement of the Holy Spirit. The Jesus-event, which was manifested in liberation movements, had been taking place in Korea long before the first Christian missionary set foot on Korean soil. This was possible because of the movement of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual presence of God is presupposed in the liberating movement of the Minjung. God as the Holy Spirit is more relevant to minjung theologians than God the Father or God the Son. The God who works in us and in acts of liberation in the past, present and future is best understood as the Holy Spirit.

Because God works as the Holy Spirit, God's work is not confined by time or space. The Holy Spirit is ever present throughout history. Coming out of the Korean cultural background, minjung theology is tintured by the shamanistic worldview. According to shamanism, everything is regarded as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit or spirits. The spiritual presence is known everywhere. Unrestricted by time and space, emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit makes minjung theology easily adaptable to various cultural and religious forms existing in Korea. Nevertheless, it is interested in the historical character of Christianity. The “pneumatological” or “spiritual” approach makes Christianity truly universal and inclusive.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>32</sup> S. J. Samuel Rayan, “Holy Spirit,” *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, (eds) Virginia Fabella, M.M and R. S. Sugirtharajah, (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, New York, 2000), 100.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jung Young Lee (ed), *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), 13.

By stressing the importance of the Holy Spirit, minjung theology rejects an undue emphasis on Christology. The *christo*-centric approach to theology is closely allied with traditional Western theology. As Suh Nam-dong describes his approach, "I call this the pneumatological historical interpretation, which I would contrast with the traditional Christological interpretation."<sup>35</sup>

Constantinian Christianity is the religion of the ruling group and the religion of domination. Minjung theology is a counter-movement against such a faith. Furthermore, the movement of the Holy Spirit was the beginning of the Christian Church. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that moved the hearts and minds of the people. Likewise, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that carries out the work of justice and liberation for the poor and the oppressed. The Jesus-event is carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without this power the Jesus-event remains only a distant occurrence in the historical past.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, the Holy Spirit is a primary force in the movements of Lu Du in early history. The Holy Spirit motivates and persuades the Lu Du for freedom as it is the ultimate Will of God. Culturally, the Christian language of the Holy Spirit is not strange to the people of Myanmar as they have traditionally believed in spirits, which are omnipresent for them, but which have nothing to do with history and society.

According to Moe Moe Nyunt, traditionally, mission strategy in Myanmar included both evangelistic and social work. Some missionaries focused on proclaiming the Gospel and disciple-making whereas some stressed education and medical work. They did not give much attention to the work of the Holy Spirit, and they did not address the Burmese belief in *nats*/spirits.<sup>37</sup> In a deep sense, worship of *nats*/spirits is the religion of the Lu Du as it was the early primary religion of the people of Myanmar. According to Hall, "Burmese Animism is made up of the worship of a host of spirits called *nats*: local nature gods, the spirits of earth and sky, rain and wind, whirlpool and whirlwind, of mountains, rivers and trees, of jungle, and even of villages and houses."<sup>38</sup>

Of course, most of the Burmese Buddhists in Myanmar believe in the teachings of the Buddha together with persons believed to possess supernatural power (such as Bo Bo Aung and Bo Min Gaung), more than *nats* (earthbound spirits), astrology, fortune tellers, spirit mediums and superstitions.<sup>39</sup>

In the present day, Burmese astrologers, fortune tellers (Burmese: *bodaw* or *weikza*) and spirit mediums (*nat-Kadaw*) who are possessed by their life-partner spirits/*nats* play a prominent and significant role. If they are facing daily problems, most Burmese want to know what the future holds and how to overcome the problems (*dukkha vedana*), so they consult a spirit medium, astrologer, or fortune teller to meet their spiritual, social and economic needs. When the military dictatorship was in power in Myanmar, most of the General Leaders, who believed in Burmese astrologers and fortune tellers, consulted them for advice on ruling the country. For example, when the military junta changed the country's name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989, they did so on the advice of the astrologers and fortune tellers. According to the interpretation of the astrologers the word *Myan* means "quick" and *mar* means "robust." Therefore by making the country internationally known as

<sup>35</sup> Kim Yong Bock (ed), *Minjung theology: People as the Subjects of History*, (Singapore: CCA Publication, 1981), 163.

<sup>36</sup> Jung Young Lee (ed), *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> Moe Moe Nyunt, *A Pneumatological Response to the Burmese Nat-Worship*, Myanmar Institute of Theology, (Seminary Hill, Insein, Yangon, Myanmar, 2010), 80.

<sup>38</sup> D. G. E. Hall, *Burma*, (New York: AMS Press, 1950), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Moe Moe Myunt, "Burmese Reaction to Christianity," *Rays: Journal of Theology*, vol.9 (Yangon: MIT, January 2008), 106.

Myanmar it was hoped that the country could quickly be developed and become hard and robust.

While displaying variations, spirits/*nats* worship was the primary religion of all ethnic groups in Myanmar, including the Bah-mas, Kachins, Shans, Chins and Kayins. The object and purpose of propitiation are basically similar. It is therefore most appropriate to call it collectively *Nat Worship*.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Resurrection of Jesus and Lu Du

The resurrection of Jesus means that there is hope for perfection, not in a return to the old, but in the creation of the new. This is the saving work of Christ. Jesus Christ is the Agent of creation and its savior.

The resurrection of Jesus lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel. As Brown mentions, the content of the earliest gospel consists not of the virginal conception, nor of the miracles of Jesus; but of the death and the resurrection of Jesus (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 4:10; 10; 39-40; 1 Cor. 15). It is crucial because faith in Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

According to Dunn, it can even be said in historical terms that without the resurrection of Jesus, there would not have been Christianity.<sup>42</sup> Therefore the resurrection of Jesus is the center in Christianity and also the victory which Jesus is giving Lu Du people for their hope and salvation. Of course, the resurrection signifies a concretization of the kingdom of God in the life of Jesus. In fact, according to Boff, now we know: Life and seemingly meaningless death have their meaning assured in the resurrection of Jesus. Paul, thinking of this, was triumphant and could joyfully say: "Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55). Because he rose, Jesus possesses a decisive significance for us. If he had not risen, then "your believing is useless" and "we are the most unfortunate of people" (1 Cor. 15: 14-19).<sup>43</sup>

The resurrection is the fulfillment of history; it is the partial exposure of the meaning of history that is filled with suffering, pain and despair as well as a full disclosure of the mystery of history at the end of time. With the resurrection of Christ from the dead, a new history of God's dealings with the world has begun in the midst of a history that is still under the power of destruction. Under the impact of the resurrection, the cross can now be borne in hope, for a new life has already begun.<sup>44</sup>

In this connection our thoughts go back to the disciples who were instructed by the risen Christ to return to Galilee where Jesus had begun his ministry. According to Matthew's account, the risen Christ told the women at the tomb early on Sunday morning: "Do not be afraid. Go and take word to my brothers that they are to leave for Galilee. They will see me there" (Matt. 28:10). This instruction seems to imply that the disciples are to start their ministry all over again from the very place where Jesus began with them three years earlier.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> S. Pau Khan En, "Nat Worship: A Paradigm for Doing Contextual Theology for Myanmar," A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Birmingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, March, 1995), 59.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Myint Htet, "A Critique of Christian Interpretation of the Resurrection from a Myanmar Perspective," Rays: MIT Journal of Theology, Volume 12, January, (Yangon, Myanmar, 2011), 108.

<sup>42</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 826.

<sup>43</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Time*, 123.

<sup>44</sup> Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, (New York; Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1979), 187-188.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 188.

This meeting of the risen Christ with his disciples in Galilee is of fundamental historical significance. It drives home to the disciples that he is and will be as fully involved in history as he was before. Galilee, the site of Jesus' ministry, serves as the link between the risen Christ and the historical Jesus. The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are essentially one. There is no Christ of faith without the Jesus of history, and the Jesus of history cannot be correctly understood and experienced apart from the risen Christ. What is to confront the disciples in Galilee is the Jesus of history now appearing as the Christ of faith. They are to meet the crucified Jesus in the risen Christ.<sup>46</sup>

Thus it is not the empty tomb but Galilee that makes the resurrection of Jesus Christ a historical event.<sup>47</sup> As long as the suffering Lu Du people in Myanmar view the cross in the historical context, we cannot help but hope for resurrection in our historical future. We cannot stop at the idea that the resurrection of Christ was his own unique miraculous doing. The resurrection is the hope of the community of the table; it is the search for Lu Du coming together at the Lord's Table as a community in Myanmar. Resurrection must be eating and drinking together at the same table with the Lord in a community (Myanmar).

## Conclusion

All the experiences of political and socio-economic suffering lead the people (Lu Du) to identify with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. The Cross becomes the symbol of their crosses. For the Lu Du, the Cross of Jesus is seen as historical, just like their own suffering. Thus, the cross is understood as an establishment of messianic solidarity with Lu Du suffering through Jesus' participation in historical suffering. The Holy Spirit is one of the main functions of the wise mother for Lu Du, those whose suffering may be political, social, or economic in nature. I believe that the Holy Spirit as Paraclete will stand with and support the weak Lu Du and She will be a helper for Lu Du in Myanmar forever. The Holy Spirit is ever present throughout history. Coming out of the Myanmar's cultural background, Lu Du theology is colored by the traditional Myanmar worship of the spirits. In the light of this traditional belief in spirits, everything is regarded as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit or spirits. The spiritual presence is known everywhere. Unrestricted by time and space, emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit makes Lu Du theology easily adaptable to various cultural and religious forms existing in Myanmar. Nevertheless, it is interested in the historical character of Christianity. The 'pneumatological' or spiritual" approach makes Christianity truly universal and inclusive. The resurrection of Jesus is the hope of the community of the table; it is the search for Lu Du coming together at the Lord's Table as a community in Myanmar. Resurrection must be eating and drinking together at the same table with the Lord in a community (Myanmar). "Really, to be a Christian is to accept and to live - in solidarity in faith, hope and charity - the meaning that the word of the Lord and our encounter with him, give to the historical becoming of mankind, on the way toward total communion."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, (New York; Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1979), 188.

<sup>47</sup> Karl Barth regards the empty tomb as "not the same as the resurrection. It is not the appearance of the Living; it is only the presupposition. Hence it is only the sign, although an indispensable sign. Christians do not believe in the empty tomb, but in living Christ" (Church Dogmatics III/1, Doctrine of Creation, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 453.

<sup>48</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of liberation*, (New York; Orbis books, 1973), 49-50.

### Abstract

Today Myanmar is a multi-racial and multi-religious country and has an estimated population of 60 million people. The population is comprised of some 135 ethnic groups speaking 106 languages and living together under the generic name, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The civil war in Myanmar has lasted for 64 years, from 1949 until now. Today the people (Lu Du) of Myanmar are powerless and cry for justice and peace. This paper proposes a theology appropriate for the Lu Du by tracing the correlation between Jesus and the Lu Du. It builds on the work of Minjung and Dalit theologians to emphasize the importance of the historical event of the cross of Jesus for interpreting the suffering of the Lu Du. It also stresses the place of a theology of the Holy Spirit in the context of Myanmar. Finally, it describes the significance of the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event which gives motivation and hope to Lu Du to work for and claim the promise of their special place in the Reign of God. The imagery of God's Reign provides a concrete aspiration for an ecumenical journey towards justice, unity and peace. Building a peaceful community in Myanmar is not the sole responsibility of Christians, Buddhists, Muslims or people of other faiths. In fact, the Holy Spirit is a primary force in the movements of Lu Du from the beginning. The Holy Spirit motivates and persuades the Lu Du for freedom as it is the ultimate Will of God. It should be the product of peaceful transformation of the poor -- empowering individuals and building relationships.

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