

**Doing Lu du Theology of
Myanmar from the Kachin
Perspective:
Promoting the role of the
Church in Educating and
Solidarity with Masha Unawng
Toward Self-Determination**

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this research is to suggest how the Christian Church can restore Freedom, Justice, and Peace in the lives and history of Lu du (Masha Unawng in Jinghpaw Language), the major victims of the socio-cultural and political context of Kachin State.

To carry out this research successfully, I will apply the praxis model of doing theology with the contextual approach. This model will be helpful to interpret the socio-political experiences of the peoples in the life of the Church. I will refer to the theological and historically significant of the church in solidarity

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with the oppressed. By applying the contextual model, I will construct a liberative theological mission of the Church which engages to the socio-cultural and political oppression in Kachin region.

The mainstream education of Myanmar is the root cause of socio-cultural and political oppression in Kachin region. But, the Church has failed to extend its mission to engage the current challenges in Kachin region. In this paper, I will mainly cover the following contents: the negative impacts and challenges of the oppressive education in society, teachings and events of the Bible to conscientize Lu du (the oppressed), the Church as major role to realize Kingdom of God in the history of the peoples, critical reading on the role of the churches in Latin America and Minjung Movement, formation of Lu du (peoples) education, new understanding on Missio-Dei as educating and transforming the peoples, proposing new educational activities for the churches, and finally the new presence of the Church in the Kachin region. Through this paper, the Church in the Kachin region will find her new identity in witnessing the Good News of the Kingdom of God in the lives of the peoples.

● Keywords

Church, Education, Freedom, God, Justice, Kachin, Liberation, Lu du (Masha Unawng).

I. Introduction

Kachin State is mainly comprised with major ethnic groups like Kachin, Shan, and Burma (Myanmar). In my conviction, the Kachin context refers to socio-cultural inclusive meaning rather than one particular race. In fact, Education is the main root cause of all socio-cultural and political oppression for the peoples in Kachin region. It handicaps not only peoples' struggle for freedom but also creates violence, corruption, and division among the different ethnic groups in society. Significantly, Lu du¹ (Masha Unawng)² is major suffering peoples of the current socio-cultural and political injustice in Kachin region.

Statistically, the Church is the second largest population in the Kachin region. It is the task of the Church to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God through word and deed in its society. She must follow the footsteps of Jesus who taught and empowered the peoples to transform their unjust society by their own realization and commitment in the Kingdom of God. In contrast to this, the current Church fails to engage in its current socio-cultural and political context. To meet this demand, the mission of the Church is to be refreshed by new liberative education. According to Mark Tamthai, the primary aim of

1 The word, Lu Du, is a combination of the two words of Myanmar. "Lu" (လူ) represents "the people", and "Du" (သူ) is for "the mass" or a "crowd" or multitude of people". Thus, Lu Du means the multitude of peoples, the suffering peoples in the context of Myanmar. See in Wa Gyt Brang Htan, an attempt at Constructing Lu du Theology for Myanmar: In Comparison to Minjung Theology of Korea, A Thesis Submitted to Songkonghoe University for the Degree of Master of Theology (Th.M), (Department of Theology, Songkonghoe university, Seoul: November 7th, 2011), 50.

2 There can be found various expression for multitude in Jinghpaw (one of Kachin tribes) Bible like Masha Wunawng Kaba (mk. 6:34), Shawa Masha (MK 3:20/23) and Masha Wunawng Wuwa (mk. 10:1). I prefer to use the word, Masha Unawng in this paper as it is interchangeable with the word, Masha Wunawng. The word, Masha Unawng has similar meaning with Lu du and Minjung. In depth, it is the relevant term to refer the peoples, who is the main victims of oppression for the current socio-cultural and political context of Kachin region.

Christian education is to implement education for the total being so that human beings may grow into the fullness and maturity of the ideal personality of Jesus Christ. Education can help develop the person's full potentials."³ Thus, the Church currently needs to extend its ministry which can promote the lives of the peoples, and transform their society toward liberation, in term of self-determination in the context of the suffering peoples in Kachin region.

II. Education As Major Challenging Issue for Lu du's (Masha Unawng) Liberation in Kachin State

In fact, education is used as the tool for oppression by the successive governments in Myanmar. General Ne Win took power of the state in 1962. In 1964 and 1965, he nationalized all mission schools and private schools and banned the teaching of ethnic languages soon after the coup.⁴ According to Shae Pa, the effect of the nationalization to all mission schools by the government has born the people who perform the criminal cases, the drug users and dealers, moral corruption, and lack of reasoning power. At the same time, the country became on the list of the poorest country in the world and the education system created uneducated degree holders.⁵ In general, the education system after 1962 fails to promote the quality education of the

3 Mark Tamthai, *Towards a Theological Basis for Education* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1983), 10.

4 Shae Pa, *Mother Tongue Based Education: A Task of Kachin Christian Mission Today*, A Project Dissertation Submitted to the Doctor of Ministry Committee in the Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry, (Insein, Yangon, Myanmar: MIT-CBTS, 2017 Cohort), 61.

5 *Ibid*, 57.

students. Instead, “rote learning, drilling, chanting, reading aloud and memorization dominate the pedagogy.”⁶ Many students competitively recite the lessons and spend their entire school education without trying to understand its real meaning and purpose critically.

In addition, teaching bias historical information in the schools causes conflicts and disrespect among the Burma and other ethnic groups. Sadly, the present historical texts of the school of the government omit the remarkable histories of the non-Burma for their respective community and their distinctive cultures but favor a lot the Burma and their histories. In fact, regarding the struggle for independence under the Japanese and British, many ethnic groups like Kachin, Chin and Shan had significant historic landmarks. But many of them are not counted as part of its important historical events by the education ministry of the government until today. The reason behind this is that Burmanization⁷ has deeply rooted in the education system of whole Myanmar. This oppressive ideology is implicitly practiced by the successive governments in Myanmar since 1962. Regarding the job vacancy in the government offices, many applicants who are not Buddhists are not promoted to higher rank regardless of their skill and qualification. Culturally, the people are oppressed even in school. For this regard, the So-Ka-Yae-Tee (Singing-Dancing-Composing-Playing) program under the rule of military government during 2000s is one of the visible types of evidence of cultural oppression in the school system

6 Article by Peter Morris on Critical Thinking in Myanmar Education, see in; <https://prospectburma.org> accessed on 11st October of 2022.

7 Burmanization comes from Burma-nization. Burma is the name of major ethnic group in Myanmar. Traditionally, Burma ethnic people used to try dominant on the other ethnic groups in Myanmar in terms of using language, literature, tradition and culture.

of Myanmar. Likewise, new act of 2022, compulsory to teach Myanmar language for the elementary schools by SAC, State Administration Council of Myanmar, is also currently evident of practicing Burmanization in the school. Saw Augurlion remarks; many Christians, ..., they were more affected by the process of Burmanization. Some younger generation could no longer speak their own ethnic languages as the Burmese language dominated all levels of society and was especially crucially for success in education and work. The intermingling with the Burmese Buddhists also created the chances to be influenced by the Burmese culture. Parents would give their children Burmese names to fit better into Burmese society, to have a favorable position in life and avoid discrimination. Interfaith and interracial marriages became more common than in the past. This ideology dominates widely both in society and politics.⁸

In reality, the motto of the government school, “Seik Dutt, Sii Kann, Pyin Nyar” (Moral, Rules and Wisdom in Myanmar) is the popular one in Myanmar. This motto does not work well in the practical life of the peoples as there is severe corruption, injustice and human rights violations that are deeply rooted and corroded in all sectors of society. Regarding this, the American educationalist, John Taylor Gatto remarks;

The mainstream education bears five types of people. (1) The soldiers who totally obey the order of the army, (2) The workers who obey the orders of the boss, (3) The citizens who extremely follow the orders and obey under the

8 Saw Augurlion, *Christian Existence and Issues Related to Nationalism and Religious Identity in Post-Colonial Myanmar*, (Yangon, Myanmar: Tin Tin Chit Press, 2017), 85.

government, (4) The workers who enormously obey the instructions of the Businessmen and (5) The citizen who uses to follow the popping group.⁹

In fact, education is one of major plans under the new democratic government by Aung San Suu Kyi as her government proposed national strategic educational plan 2016-2021 to promote quality education in the whole country. But, its actual results are not clear; instead, it blames the teachers for not success of its plan; “Despite the historical practice of promoting a critical thinking-focused pedagogy in Myanmar, previous teaching reforms have struggled to make an impact on pedagogy due to weak communication among teachers, limited funding to entrench behavior change, weak consultation with and ownership among teachers, and weak complementary reforms in curriculum and student assessment. As a result, most teachings still rely heavily on rote memorization and didactic strategies that do not engage children, and therefore their learning outcomes are poor.”¹⁰

Oppressive education breeds the new culture that divides and oppresses different ethnic groups and minorities. As mentioned above, the Burmanization policy is the main root ideology that drives education to oppress Lu du, peoples in Kachin State. Under this strategic policy of Burmanization, cultures of non-Burma ethnics including Kachin are not equally treated but the victims of this brutal ideology.

9 Alin Eaine, *Holistic Education for You* (Yangon: Mone Ywae Publishing House, 2014), 4.

10 Article by Peter Morris on “Critical Thinking in Myanmar Education”, see in: <https://www.prospectbur.a.org> accessed on 11st October of 2022.

III. Reviews on the Concerns of Some Myanmar Theological Writings

Most of the theological concerns in Myanmar focus on socio-political sufferings instead of highlighting the oppressive education systems intentionally created by Burmanization-based Myanmar political rulers. Samuel Ngun Ling, in his *“Communicating Christ in Myanmar: Issues, Interactions and Perspective”*, points out how Myanmar people have been struggling under many kinds of oppression and undeveloped situations in every corner, and says, “We cannot talk about theology without reference to the historical and social-political experiences, movements and suffering of the people of the context.”¹¹ But, he has not explored any theological response to the suffering people in Myanmar based on the process of young people’s struggle for education, yet. He just points out that Myanmar Christians need to change themselves into a new form of living in harmony with other faith communities. Joel Tin Moe examined, in his *“Korean theology of Han and Its Relevance to Pyithu Dukkha Theology of Myanmar”*, the concept of *han* and made theological relevancy to develop theological response to the suffering people of Myanmar. He did not emphasize the struggle for educational liberation of the youths in Myanmar.¹² In the book *“Towards A Ludu Theology: A Critical Evaluation on Minjung Theology and its Implication for a Theological Response to Dukkha (Suffering) of People*

11 Samuel Ngun Ling, *Communication Christ in Myanmar: Issues, Interactions and Perspectives* (Yangon: ATEM, 2005), 249.

12 Joel Tin Moe, *Korean Theology of Han and Its Relevance to Pyithu Dukkha Theology of Myanmar*. Th.M Thesis., Hanil University and Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2000.

in Myanmar (Burma)", K. M. Y. Khawsiamia attempted for developing a theological response to the people of Myanmar in the context of socio-political suffering.¹³ Khawsiamia aims to see the God who is revealed in Myanmar history so that Ludu may have a mutual understanding of God, and how Ludu may be encouraged, empowered and challenged in the midst of their suffering. His research contributes a way of developing a relevant theology generally for the Myanmar context. His research just raises the question of how to develop a theological response to the suffering of the people who are considered as the *dukkha*-ridden people in the Myanmar context and why need a theological response to the suffering of the Ludu? It only focuses that Myanmar theologians pay sufficient attention to the socio-political and economic realities of the country. He left to engage it with the struggles of young people for their basic and higher education for future. In *A More Relevant Paradigm for Mission*, Lahpai Awng Li mentions that the core of Christian mission in Myanmar should be contextual with Myanmar context of suffering.¹⁴ Even did not mainly focus on the less chance of the Kachin youth people for persuading good education. Researcher hopes that without theological education's concern on the oppressive education system, authentic liberation cannot come true. Theological education needs to address the church as a major role in realizing the Kingdom of God by promoting the education systems for the future.

13 K. M. Y. Khawsiamia, *Towards A Ludu Theology: A Critical Evaluation on Minjung Theology and its Implication for a Theological Response to Dukkha (Suffering) of People in Myanmar (Burma)*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).

14 Lahpai Awng Li, "A More Relevant Paradigm for Mission," *WAYS: MIT Journal of Theology*, Vol. 14 (Yangon: MIT, 2013), 46.

IV. The Church as Major Role for realization of the Kingdom of God in the history of the Peoples, Lu du

Vividly, Jesus' ministry can be outlined as teaching, healing and empowering the peoples for their holistic welfare and liberation (Matt. 5; Luke. 4:16-20, 6:20). Likewise, the Church is faithfully called for the Gospel of Jesus as the Gospel is a message of freedom and a liberating force (31) which fulfills the hope of Israel based upon the words of the Prophets.¹⁵ But, history repeatedly shows that the organized Church, or churches, is a society in which the sinfulness of human communities as such, that is to say, their lack of love and their disregard of justice, is often most conspicuous, shown up by the contrast with the principles by which the Church is called to live.¹⁶ The church is always ready to respond to its calling in its own society. The church is God's yeast; therefore, it needs to be present in the world to help and transform it.¹⁷ Otherwise, it has to bring new hope by reflecting the salvation of God through its word and deed. Jon Sobrino states that the church has to witness the liberating gospel of Jesus "by following him, making him real in history, unconditionally."¹⁸ Thus, the Church is to act and live like Jesus in society where there is oppression. Following Jesus makes us "be" like Jesus, which also means giving historical "flesh" to Jesus, "embodying" him in history.¹⁹

15 "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation", see in <https://www.vatican.va> accessed on 3rd September of 2022.

16 Geoffrey Lampe, *God as Spirit*, (London: SCM press, 1983), 186

17 ORLANDO E. COSTAS, *Christ Outside the Gate; Mission Beyond Christendom*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 93.

18 Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, translated from the Spanish by Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh, 122.

19 Ibid, 123.

In fact, for Paul, the Church is faithful peoples of God and also remnant peoples who will restore freedom, Justice and Peace in its society. (Rom. 11:5, Eph. 1:4-6, Rev. 12:17). Thus, the church, its service to the world is, rather, an aspect of its wider calling which is to serve the Kingdom of God. The Church is that part of God's world where the active, creative, presence of God is recognized as the Spirit that was in Jesus, where men respond in a Christ-like way as sons of God who are being molded in the likeness of Jesus, and where they co-operate, through the Spirit's inspiration, in his creative purpose for the world, the bringing of all men into his Kingdom.²⁰ But, in doing this, it is not by force, but by educating and teaching with loving service in its creative mission which indirectly challenge the injustice and realize the peoples their historical reality. Whereas in the New Testament "diakonia" usually means either the service of God or service rendered to Christians, it became, in the vocabulary of these secular theologians, a designation of the Church' service to the world. Such service, moreover, was seen in secular and social categories. The Church, according to this theology, fulfills its mission to the extent that it succeeds in transforming the world into a place of peace, justice, freedom, and brotherhood. In this way, it was thought the Church could be instrumental in ushering in the Kingdom of God.²¹

20 Geoffrey Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 185-186.

21 Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation*, (Garden city, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1977), 17.

V. Critical Reading on the Churches in Latin America and Minjung of Korea from Kachin context: The Church on Prophetic calling and Creative mission

To transform its unjust structure of society, the Church set its focus on the poor as its core theological praxis and subject. Moreover, the Church's preferential option for solidarity with the poor implies that it is the poor themselves, "conscientized and organized," who must become the primary agents and operators of their own liberation.²² For solidarity with the poor and their liberation, the Church in Latin America seek a "new way of being Church," in the context of base Church communities where the poor are conscientized and educated for the realization of the Kingdom of God in their unjust social reality. In fact, the Vatican II had a remarkable role for the theological formation of the Church in Latin America to meet its demand in context. Thus, Vatican II asserts that the Church ought to carry out its mission as Christ did "in poverty and under oppression" (*Lumen gentium*, no. 8).²³ Along with this theological conviction, the nature of solidarity of the Church is changed in practice. Instead of talking about the Church of the poor, we must be a poor Church.²⁴ In fact, it is, a new historical "*process-and-project*" of Christian community. This "new (way of being) Church" is identifiable by two constitutive traits:

1. It is a *participatory Church*, in line with the emphasis on

22 Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff: *From Dialogue to Confrontation*, Robert R. Barr (Trans), (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 55.

23 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 70.

24 Ibid, 70.

the people of God in *Lumen Gentium*. This means that, in the make-up of the Church, priority falls to baptism and the baptized. It means that each member of the Church is considered to be a living, active “ecclesial subjects” (active agent of being–Church), actively sharing and participating in what it means to be Church. Pastors and clergy have come second. They are in a subordinate position; they are the servants of the people of God and the inspirations of their faith, hope, and love.

2. The Latin American Church is a *church of liberation*, in keeping with the emphasis on a “Church in the world” seen in *Gaudium et Spes*. In our case it will be a “Church in the sub-world” of the poor, espousing their cause, taking, flesh in their popular milieux, being the leaven of prophecy and justice and the seed of new social order.²⁵

In fact, the Church in the context of Minjung of Korea is a Church struggle with the people, minjung of Korea, the “uprooted people” in their own society, and for their rights, in terms of freedom. The Church of Korea Minjung itself comprehends that “Christian identity can be defined as Christian identification with the people of the basis of the Gospel.”²⁶ With this theological conviction, the Christian church in Korea incarnates itself in the suffering of minjung and struggles with them for their freedom as Jesus Christ, the Messiah who was in solidarity with the people. The Messiah is of the people, and the

25 Ibid, 28-29.

26 Kim Yong-Bock, *Messiah and Minjung: Christ's Solidarity with the People for New life*, (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, Urban Rural Mission, 1992), 58.

people are of the Messiah.²⁷ In turn, being One Body with Christ, (Rom. 12:5) means that the Church is an agent for new exodus and creation for the minjung and its history of Korea.

Kim Yong-Bock remarks that “the Church as One Body of the Messiah” for the minjung of Korea. To be Messiah body, the Church is to be solidarity with the minjung in its socio-economic and political context of Korea with the essence of *koinonia* (communion) and *diakonia* (Servanthood). In fact, Servanthood (*diakonia*) of the Church means sharing the suffering of the oppressed slaves and restoration of their masterhood (subjecthood) to participate in the Messianic Regin.²⁸ Certainly, along with the suffering with the minjung of Korea, the Church with the various mission works, had actively taken part in educating minjung and empowered them to stand against the oppressive power and injustice in history. To be added more, M. J. Joseph stated in his book *Church as People’s Movement*:

“The Church is a people’s movement. The early church was born in the context of the struggles of the people for salvation. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God; and in Him, we see God’s participation in history with the people for the total liberation of human beings. In every word and deed of Jesus, we witness His struggle along with the people for the Kingdom. Being with the people meant restoring the brokenhearted, releasing those in bondage, cleansing the Temple and religion from the worship of a God who dominated and oppressed, being on the cross ‘to be broken

27 Ibid, 56.

28 Ibid, 52.

for others.”²⁹

According to Ahn Byung-Mu, who identified with Jesus’ event community in Galilee, the nature of the Church in the context of minjung is like a “*sending community*.” The Galilee community was a sending community. The leadership, in particular, left for different places and proclaimed repentance.³⁰ To be noted, this sending mission of Minjung of Korea derives from Minjung’s understanding of salvation in the bible on its social reality. In this context, the Church is not a Church only for its member concern, but it is a Church living for others outside the Church; the poor, oppressed and marginalized in their own history. In truth, the Church and its members are sent to the world where there is oppression and injustice, and inhumane for their liberation by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in solidarity with their history reality. Thus, “the church must be a moving body that empties itself in order to be sent to the world, to the minjung of Jesus, to the site of minjung’s life.”³¹ In this respect, the church and its actions are to reach out to the peoples outside the church and to transform its society and history by inviting each person as the agent of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, it is evident that the Church’s active participation in the historical realities of the peoples, poverty of Latin America and struggle for the rights of minjung of Korea, is the commitment of the Church in its *prophetic calling* for freedom and justice by the critical reflection on its faith and gospel. On this basic frame

29 Ibid, 59.

30 Wongi Park (edit), Hanna In (Trans), *Stories of Mingjung Theology; The Theological Journey of Ahn Byung-Mu in His Own Words*, (Atlanta, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2019), 127.

31 Ibid, 132.

of theology, for the Church in Kachin region, it is a new journey of searching for a prophetic faith and its creative action to transform Masha Unawng as the partners of Jesus messiah.

VI. Applied Liberation Theology for Lu Du Education

In my observation, liberation theology reflects Christian messages into their context by three theological reflections: “social critical reflection, hermeneutical and theological reflection, and pastoral reflection.”³² Through these theological reflections, the theology of Liberation is made uniquely to transform its social injustice.

Regarding critical social reflection, it assumes that our relationship with God and our social situation cannot be separated but they belong together. For this reason, the extreme poverty in Latin America does against the will of God. It is a man-made evil thing that hostiles to God. In a word, the existence of poverty represents a sundering both of solidarity among persons and also of communion with God. Poverty is an expression of sin, that is, of negation of love. It is, therefore, incompatible with the coming of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love and justice.³³ Thus, “to eliminate it is to bring closer the moment of seeing God face to face, in union with other persons.”³⁴ In this regard, for Gustavo Gutierrez, liberation theology found its point of departure from the experience of the

32 Gustavo Gutierrez and Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Muller, *On the Side of the Poor*, Robert A. Krieg and James B. Nickoloff (Trans), (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 65-74.

33 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 168

34 Ibid, 168.

poor with God and “God’s experience” with the poor.

Likewise, history testifies that there is no harmonious development of potentialities among people because of the current socio-economic exploitation and oppression in society and even between first and third-world countries. In Christian understanding, all people participate in the conflicts of grace against sin. More specifically, all people share in the incarnation of salvation in a society’s life-shaping social structures and in the overcoming of sin and sin’s objectification in exploitative economic systems.³⁵ But, in this situation, it is not possible for the person to be self-transcendence in relation to God and neighbors in faith and love as he or she is estranged from God. To become a self-transcendence, he or she needs to be a new person in nature. Thus, .. the redeemed and liberated human nature can be realized anew only in relation to the person of the new human being, the new Adam, in other words, in relation to Christ.³⁶ Being becoming a new human created by God in salvation and justification, he or she is a liberated person who is the freedom to act in a new manner. In this, he or she can participate in God’s liberating action in the history of the people.

In the hermeneutical and theological reflection, God chooses history as a place to reveal God’s liberating action. On the other hand, salvation is God’s unmerited action in history, which God leads beyond itself. It is God’s gift of definitive life to God’s children, given in a history in which we must build fellowship.³⁷ In fact, God’s act of redemption has liberated human beings not from history but for history as the arena for the realization

35 Gustavo Gutierrez and Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Muller. 69.

36 Ibid, 70.

37 Gustavo Gutierrez, xxxix.

of material conditions appropriate for human beings in their actualization into spiritual persons.³⁸ For liberation theology, it perceives that there is only one history that expresses the salvation of God in human history. Biblically, God's redemption can be vividly found in the exodus experience. It is not situated in the inside of the soul where man cannot touch. Instead, salvation occurs in God's actual liberating action, in God's overcoming of the Israelites slavery.³⁹ It is a life that encompasses material conditions and also leads to a covenant with God. Thus, liberation is the outer manifestation of the covenant, namely, of the personal and communal loving union of human beings with God.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, this transcendence of salvation is not ended in human history, but becomes self-transcendence in the everlasting community of love with God. It means God's salvation is to be practiced in the love of God and neighbor. The prophets in the Old Testament time rebuke too much religious activity that ignores the love of God and neighbor, and announce God's favor for the poor, Good News (Isai. 40-55). Similarly, Jesus proclaims the Good News for people who are poor and marginalized. Through his death, Jesus demonstrates "God's world-transforming" and liberating love for all, especially sinners. He becomes the new covenant (1Cor. 11:25, Mark. 14:25). Here, the cross of Jesus manifests itself as the revelation of God's option for those who are poor. God is engaged in the comprehensive process of history on the side of the people who are oppressed to lead them to freedom and to make it possible for them to participate in the realization of the

38 Gustavo Gutierrez and Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Muller. 70.

39 Ibid, 71.

40 Ibid, 71.

salvation promised by God to all human beings.⁴¹ Likewise, in Jesus' resurrection, God has shown what life actually is and how we can translate freedom into society's tangible structures through our being-there-for-others.⁴²

In pastoral reflection, the church is to be a church for others, the poor or the oppressed in society. The church exists in the service of God's goal for the human family in history.⁴³ Its action is to be a living faith that renders praxis of liberation. The church has to proclaim God's salvation in word and deed. In fact, God shares God's self with us as the content of human freedom, and God gives God's self as the goal of human beings' movement to freedom, as the goal to which human freedom dynamically moves for its historical and material completion. This orientation manifests the transcendence of salvation.⁴⁴ Within this frame of understanding, the mission of the church and Christian existence is to involve in the eschatological and historical process of freedom. In this involvement, there is solidarity with the poor people, and the development of consciousness on their reality and shaping their own lives by themselves. But, to be with the oppressed is to be against the oppressor.⁴⁵ In that sense, Christian solidarity means struggling with the poor to transform their unjust society with evangelical service.

41 Ibid, 73.

42 Ibid, 73.

43 Ibid, 74.

44 Ibid, 74.

45 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 173.

VII. Traditional Folktales and Stories As the Tools For Lu Du Education

Significantly, traditional folktales and stories of various ethnicities can be utilized to conscientize Lu du for liberation. Among many stories I would like to use as an illustration is the story of a widow's son and aggressive brothers' story ("Jahkrai Ma the La Law Ma"). This story vividly portrays the current socio-cultural and political oppression and injustice in the lives of the peoples, Masha Unawng, in Kachin context. The story says;

"Once upon a time, there is a widow who lived with her son in a village. Same as another family who has aggressive brothers lived in the same village. Often, the aggressive brothers used to bully and beat the widow's son whenever they played together. So, the widow's son suffers their intimidation and torment helplessly. Meanwhile, one day, the aggressive brothers surprisingly ask the widow's son for hunting like trapping the animal in the forest. When they arrive in the forest, the widow's son sets his wild trap on the bottom of the tree where there aggressive brothers have set their trap on its top. The next day, the aggressive brothers go to check their trap in the jungle in the early morning. They caught a hornbill bird in their trap while the deer is caught at the trap of the widow's son. After seeing this, the aggressive brothers take the deer and set it at their trap. And then, they replace the trap of widow's son with their hornbill bird. Also, when the widow's son sees that the deer

was hanged at the trap of aggressive brothers on the top of the tree, he thinks that he is treated unjustly again. So, he asks the aggressive brothers why you treated me like that. They say to the widow's son you can ask anyone who can help you to judge this case. The widow's son replies to them. Then, I will.

The aggressive brothers have called many gentlemen in their villages while there is no one in the side of widow's son except the pigeon (seems there was a time that human and animals communicated each other). Many of the gentlemen of the aggressive brothers are waiting for the pigeon, the only delegate of the widow's son. As soon as the pigeon arrives, the aggressive brothers complaint that why you are so late that much? The pigeon replies that I am late because I was busy bringing water with my basket to extinguish the fire on the sand on my way to this meeting. As soon as they heard this, the aggressive brothers said, it cannot be possible to bring water with basket and fire on the sand. After hearing this from them, the pigeon also replied that it cannot bepossible that the deer is trapped at the trap on the top of the tree. Finally, the aggressive brothers feel ashamed for their unjust action to the widow's son."

In fact, this story is often told among the peoples in Kachin region. It helps the people to realize the current injustice and oppression in their society and resist it in their life. Similarly, to promote unity among Lu du in Kachin region, the Church can apply the story of "Zon Pan Yone" can be applied in educating Lu du. The story says;

“a man with his bullock cart goes on his way. But, somewhere near Zon Pan Yone, a small bush of flower, his cart is stopped in the muddy road because the wheels are blocked and halted by something in the mud. Even though the owner beats the cows to make a move, it was in vain. He tried again and again, but not moved. Finally, he asks help to the villagers near around. The villagers who hear his voice comes and push. Even then, it was not moved. Finally, someone said, if we make effort at one time, we can do it. Then, they make an effort at one time, and the cart released totally from that muddy blocking.”

The purpose of the story is to inspire Lu du to have unity to overcome all kinds of hardship and challenges in society. In my conviction, the Bullock Cart refers to the lives of Lu du, and the muddy presents the current socio-cultural and political oppression that blocks and stops the people heading to a better future. At the time, the peoples from many ethnic groups tried separately to move but did not move. Through the power of unity of the Lu du, the nation is free from blocking like oppression. Similarly, many other cultural stories can be utilized to empower the peoples for their liberation.

VIII. New Understanding on Mission of the Church: *Missio-Dei* as Educating and Transforming Lu du (Masha Unawng)

Being the Church is to be part of the mission of God. Mission

is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission (Aagaard 1973:13). There is a church because there is mission, not vice versa (Aagaard 1974:423). To participate in a mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a foundation of sending love.⁴⁶ Thus, the present Church is to witness God's liberating Gospel in the current socio-cultural and political challenges of the peoples in Kachin State. Harvey Cox affirms it clearly: "..... God is at work in the world in self-disclosure, leading people to strive for justice, liberty, equality, and the humanizing of society and culture. The church shape and form in these places, and to call others to the struggle."⁴⁷ In addition, the conciliar document *Mission and Evangelism: "Ecumenical Affirmations"* provides the illustrations of mission fields as follows:⁴⁸

- people who have no opportunity to know the story of Jesus;
- the poor of the earth, to whom Jesus promised the Kingdom of God, who constitute the majority of the world's population;
- people struggle for justice, freedom, and liberation, often without the realization of their hopes;
- the marginalized and dropouts of affluent society, searching desperately for comfort and identity in drugs or

46 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

47 Owen C. Thomas, *Introduction to Theology* (Revised Edit), (Wilton, Connecticut: More house-Barlow Co., Inc, 1983), 234.

48 CF. J. A. Scherer, *Mission and Unity in Lutheranism: A Study in Confession and Ecumenicity* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1969), 25-29.

esoteric cults;

- people who find little meaning, except in the relative security of their affluence; many Christians who are nominal in their commitment to Jesus Christ;
- a world where wars and rumors of wars jeopardize the present and future of human-

kind, and an enormous part of natural resources and people are consumed in the arms race.

Thus, Jesus identified with the poor, proclaimed wholeness for the sick, liberty for the captives, and restoration for the marginalized and deprived.⁴⁹ Jesus commands his disciples, and then the Church, to continue the mission he began until the end of the time (Mark. 16:15).

In reality, “Mission” cannot be separated itself from the church, but “rather, mission is *mission Dei*, which seeks to subsume into itself the *missiones ecclesiae*, the missionary programs of the church. It is not the church, which “undertakes” mission; it is the *mission-Dei* which constitutes the church. The mission of the church is constantly to be renewed and reconceived.”⁵⁰ For this reason, the mission of the Church for the present Church in Kachin region needs to be contextual to meet its socio-cultural and political context. Through its witness and service, the current Church is to be a channel for educating Masha Unawng to realize their reality and transform it toward a better society. The primary purpose of the *mission ecclesiae* can, therefore, not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather,

49 ORLANDO E. COSTAS, 67

50 David J. Bosch, 519.

it has to be a service to the Mission-Dei, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participation in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil (Schere 1987:84).⁵¹ Thus, the mission of the Church has constantly to proclaim about the reign of God in their history by nurturing the peoples to become the agents of their own history.

In reality, the education mission is crucially important for the Church because "Edu-cation ranks as the oldest form of diakonia in the modern history of mission."⁵² Different from the old model, the Church has to update its mission education mission of the present Church is a new calling of the Church to take part in the service (diakonia) to promote the quality of lives of the peoples in Kachin region. In fact, the new service of the Church in education for Lu du is merely a liberating service mentioned in the Bible. The church should bear witness to the liberating God of the Bible; it should anticipate shalom of God's Kingdom; it should practice his justice; it should be a "free" servant community that celebrates God's love in daily life.⁵³ Thus, being part of the mission-Dei, the Christian Church in Kachin region is not to be proud but "to be a serving community with humbleness"⁵⁴ to promote the dignity of Masha Unawng as Jesus, he had come not only to heal men's bodies or spirits, but

51 Ibid, 391.

52 J. Verkuyt, *Contemporary Missiology, An Introduction*, Dale Cooper (Edit and Trans), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 212.

53 ORLANDO E. COSTAS, 68

54 David J. Bosch, 372.

to bring them total liberation from all their needs.⁵⁵

In fact, mission of educating Masha Unawng is a clear conviction and responding of the Church on the revelation of God on the socio-political struggle of the peoples in Kachin context. Thus, "Revelation is God's self-disclosure to man in a situation of liberation. To know God is to know of his activity of liberation on behalf of the oppressed. God's revelation means liberation and emancipation from the political, economic, and social structures of the society."⁵⁶ J. Verkuyl affirms it in his writing, "thus, for Jesus, healing is only one part of the total picture. He had come not only to heal men's bodies or spirits, but to bring them total liberation from all their needs."⁵⁷ In this sense, "the Christian mission will relate to the whole of life: taking as its model the ministry of the Messiah, up to and including the bearing of his cross; as its content the proclamation for Christ crucified and risen, along with the entire counsel of God; and as its goal the witness to God's kingdom through the world by word and deed."⁵⁸

IX. Literature Lectures as the Relevant Educational Activity for the Future Mission of the Church in Kachin region

Urgently, the Church is required to engage in the socio-cultural and political situation of Kachin region for the freedom of Lu du

55 J. Verkuyl, 213.

56 Ibid, 91.

57 Ibid, 213.

58 James A. Scherer, 47.

(the peoples). To meet this demand, the Church needs to have a new relevant education mission. For this, literature lecture is the most applicable education mission that the Church can apply in its future mission. There are three main categories in the process of literature lecture: speaker (instructor), listeners (audience), and the contents. Literature lecture is a common activity among Burmese people in Myanmar, but not among ethnic regions like Kachin, Chin and others. The speaker can sometimes be a popular writer or poet or knowledgeable person in society.

Through the literature lectures, Lu du is enriched knowledge, inspired and awakened to the current social and political issues in society. Sometimes, peoples have fun, sorrow and anger on the contents presented by the speakers. Thus, under the military government, it is hard to get permission to have literature lecture programs in many places. There are many popular literature lecturers like Saya Ne Win Myint, Saya Chit Oo Nyo, Saya Aung Thin, Juu and Akyi Daw, etc. Regarding the audience, they can be different peoples regardless of religion and culture. They sit together, listen carefully to the lectures of different speakers, and raise questions to the speakers and even the audience. Depending on the interest of the speakers, the topics can be different from time to time. This education program can be arranged everywhere, regardless of religion and culture.

To be more effective and contextual, the Church can use the cultural stories, poems, and proverbs from different ethnics as the main contents of the literature lectures. To meet this goal, the mission of the Church is to promote the cultural literatures and heritage like folktales, poem, and even arts and the ethno music from Kachin, Shan and Burma in Kachin State. It is not

only to develop the cultural literatures but also to collect the suitable cultural resources to conscientize Lu du for their action change toward their freedom, in terms of self-determination. Through this promoting cultural literatures among the different ethnics in Kachin region, there will be more mutual trust and understanding amidst Lu du. Similarly, the Biblical stories like the stories of Joseph, Moses, and other Israelite stories can also be used as tools in the literature lectures to awaken Lu du to resist injustice and work together for their liberation. Significantly, this kind of literature lecture of the new education mission of the Church is culturally oriented one, and to be carried out by the “critical dialogue” method between the speaker and the audience to get the true solution.

X. The New Presence of the Church: Education Oriented Church toward Liberation (Self-Determination) in Kachin context

According to Bonhoeffer, the church is the church only when it exists for others.⁵⁹ To be a true Church, it has to be contextual without losing the essence of liberating gospel of Jesus in its context. But contextualizing the church is the attempt to be church in ways that are both faithful to Jesus and appropriate to the people the church serves.⁶⁰ At this point, the Church is to remind itself that she is called not only to be solidarity but also to waken Lu du for the salvation of God in their history. Vividly,

59 D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, enlarged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972),

60 Micheal Moynagh with Philip Harrold, 151

“the church is in the history, but it should be a transformer of the history for the sake of the people under oppressions because Christ tends to be seen as Lord and Liberator of history rather than merely as Founder of the church.”⁶¹

The Church must be prophetic in its context. Through the new education mission, it has to challenge Lu du to become true agents of transformation by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in the lives of Lu du. Thus, the church, it is not called to identify itself with the world; its power and values, but to transform them in God’s kingdom values; justice and peace and freedom. The church, on the other hand, cannot escape from the world, since the Kingdom is the world; on the other, neither can it conform to the values of the world, becomes worldly, since the Kingdom is of God. Taking the Kingdom of God seriously is what enables and forces the church to be of the world but not the world.⁶² Prophetically, it is time for the churches in Kachin region to stop too much focusing on the building new churches, conversion of non-Christians and being busy with the activities. Instead, it must become a church to transform its community and nation by empowering the peoples to become the active transformers of their society. Thus, its existence is not “for self” but rather “for others”. Its center is outside itself; it is in the work of Christ and his Spirit.⁶³

Theologically, through the new education mission, the Church in Kachin region will become a Church that truly incarnates

61 Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc, 1984), 138.

62 Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, translated from the Spanish by Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 123.

63 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (eds), (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1971), 260.

in the suffering of the peoples. It will also be the source for the new spirituality that invites all peoples to walk a journey of freedom. Surely, to incarnate Christ in our respective situation of oppression, the church, collectively and through its members, must become immersed in them and work for their transformation.⁶⁴ On this basis, the liberation of Lu du will be started by the true believers and their commitment to engage in injustice in their society. The Church is to carry out the liberating legacy of Jesus in its society through its ministry. It has to educate Lu du to become its partners to transform its society. As a sign of the liberation of man and history, the Church itself in its concrete existence ought to be a place of liberation.⁶⁵ Thus, the present Church in Kachin State is to be a model for freedom and Justice in its community to foretaste the Kingdom of God by promoting the rights of all genders within its administration. In this regard, the churches are requested to practice widely the women ordination in different churches.

To implement the different education activities effectively, the churches are to follow Jesus' ways of teaching the Kingdom of God. Clearly, the lordship of Christ is not grounded on military might, but on sacrificial love. It is not oppressive and emasculating, but creative and liberating. It is not totalitarian, but communal and fraternal. It facilitates the formation of a new world community on the basics of love and service.⁶⁶ Thus, the education mission of the Church is not to transform its oppressive society by might, but by non-violence action of Lu du through their own realization on its situation. Through this

64 Orlando E. Costas, 16.

65 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 261.

66 Orlando E. Costas, 9.

loving service of the Church in liberating education mission, it will surely rediscover its identity.

XI. Conclusion

The primary task of the Church is to witness the Kingdom of God in its particular society to be the relevant and contextually. While, unfortunately, the churches in Kachin region fail to raise its prophetic voice through mission in its context, it is to remember what Nelson Mandela stated: “education is the most powerful weapon you can utilize to transform the world.” His word indeed reminds us that the Church is to extend its mission to educate and empower Lu du to become an active and accountable people for their society.

Education is getting not only knowledge but also wisdom for Lu du and their liberation. Since the current education system breeds violence, corruption and division among Lu du (Masha Unawng), and unable to liberate them from oppression, to be a trans-formed society and for building a better future situation, Lu du needs special education like literature lectures which can enlighten them to know themselves and their situation. In a word, through this education mission activity, Lu du will get wisdom vividly mentioned in the Bible as fearing God in life (Pro. 9:10), and awaken them to do the right action or acting justly in their society. In fact, this wisdom is the Truth, emphasized by Jesus, which liberate every human being from kinds of oppression as mentioned in John 8:32: “they will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

To be more meaningful, practical and contextual in the real situation, it is the ultimate mission of every Christian to take part in fulfillment of the Will of God in Lu du history as Jesus prayed, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done” (Matt. 6:10). Finally, the Kingdom of God will be established in the soil of Kachin region through Lu du who realize the truth of God in their history and life and respond it accountably in their society.

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