

Article History

Received: 02 June 2025/ Revised: 27 Oct' 2025/ Accepted: 29 Oct' 2025/Published: 31 Oct' 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54170/harati.v5i2.910>

The Role of the Church and Christian Religious Education in Post-Conflict Social Recovery in the Local Context of Rongkong

Jodih

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Toraja

Coresponding Author: tinurunjodih@gmail.com

Abstract

The Rongkong area in North Luwu carries historical wounds due to the DII/TI rebellion, leaving prolonged social and spiritual trauma. This study aims to critically analyze the role of the Church and Christian Religious Education (CRE) in the process of trauma healing, social reconciliation, and sowing hope post-conflict. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through literature review, in-depth interviews with church leaders and community members, as well as limited participatory observation. The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of memory theology (Johann Baptist Metz and Paul Ricoeur) and critical pedagogy (Paulo Freire), emphasizing the importance of collective memory and liberating education within the context of historical wounds. The findings indicate that the church acts as a healing community through liturgy, pastoral care, and social advocacy, while CRE serves as a transformative space that builds historical awareness, spirituality of forgiveness, and intergenerational participation in reconciliation. This article offers theological-pedagogical reflections and contextual praxis for the church and Christian educators in nurturing memory and fostering hope within post-conflict communities.

Keywords: christian religious education; historical trauma; reconciliation; rongkong

Introduction

Modern Indonesian history cannot be separated from the complex dynamics of conflicts, one of which is the Darul Islam/Indonesian Islamic Army (DII/TI) rebellion that left deep wounds in various regions, including South Sulawesi. The movement, led by Kahar Muzakkar, had its roots in disillusionment with the post-independence central government and developed into an armed struggle based on Islamic ideology to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia. The remote and strategic mountainous area of Rongkong became one of the main guerrilla bases of this movement, especially throughout the decade of the 1950s to the mid-1960s (Sapriyallah, et al., 2012).

This armed conflict has had a profound social, cultural, and spiritual impact, especially for the Christian community that is part of the mission service area of the Church of Toraja (Zending Gereformeerd). The Christian community in Rongkong is under severe pressure: persecution, forced conversion, displacement, church burning, and community divisions. Fear

and loss became part of everyday life, creating historical trauma that was not only experienced by the generation that lived at that time, but was also culturally and emotionally passed on to the next generation through oral stories, collective memories, and even through repressive *silence*.

It is in this context that the church and Christian Education (PAK) cannot be understood solely as ordinary spiritual or educational institutions, but as agents of social and spiritual healing. The Church comes with a pastoral mandate to heal the inner wounds of the people through ministry that prioritizes justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Meanwhile, PAK plays a strategic role in shaping the younger generation's awareness of history, Christian values, and perspectives that promote peace. These two entities have great potential to become reflective spaces where communities can reconstruct their identities scattered by ideological violence.

In a theoretical framework, this paper uses the *approach of memory theology* as developed by Johann Baptist Metz and Paul Ricoeur. Metz emphasizes the importance of a *subversive memory* (*dangerous memory*) that is the memory of past suffering and injustice that should not be forgotten for the sake of the compassionate purity of the Christian faith. For Metz, remembering is an ethical and theological act that refuses to normalize suffering (Manurung, 2020). Meanwhile, the memory that is healed is not only honest memory, but also one that can be transformed into a strength for reconciliation, namely remembering correctly (Sitompul, 2019).

In addition to the theological approach, this paper is also enriched by the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire emphasizes the importance of liberating education as a process of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) in which people who have been oppressed are invited to read their reality reflectively and take an active role in changing it. In this context, PAK plays a role not only as a transfer of doctrine, but as a dialogue space that liberates and restores, where students become subjects who are able to understand their history and process it into hopes that build the future (Lumbantobing, 2017). However, until now there has not been much academic documentation that specifically explores the role of the church and PAK in the post-conflict context of DII/IT in Rongkong. In fact, the process of post-traumatic community recovery is not only structural, but also symbolic, pedagogical, and theological. Untouched collective memory and unheard local narratives have the potential to become unresolved burdens if not flexibly integrated into the praxis of the Christian faith.

Therefore, this paper aims to critically analyze the role of the church and PAK in sowing hope in the midst of the Rongkong community who have been hurt by ideological violence. Its main focus lies in pastoral and educational approaches that are contextual, historical, and transformative. This paper departs from the belief that community healing cannot be done without presenting local narratives that are honest, reflective, and integrated in Christian spirituality. More than that, this article is expected to be a reflective model for churches in Indonesia that are also grappling with dark histories, religious conflicts, and social trauma. In the light of the Gospel, theological memory theory, and liberation pedagogy, the restoration of memory and the strengthening of hope are the path to lasting reconciliation and peace.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach (Moleong, 2017), because this approach allows researchers to understand social reality deeply and comprehensively, especially when it comes to human, historical, and spiritual experiences such as those experienced by the Rongkong people after the DII/IT rebellion. The goal of this approach is not just to collect data, but to uncover the meaning behind the religious narratives and practices that live in communities. Data was collected through three main techniques. First, literature studies, which are the search for various written sources such as relevant books on theology, local history, and Christian religious education to build a conceptual and contextual framework for research (Sugiyono, 2021).

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with church leaders, PAK teachers, and residents who had memories of the conflict period. This interview technique allows researchers to explore personal and emotional narratives that cannot be obtained through quantitative methods. Third, limited participatory observation was carried out, namely the direct presence of researchers in worship activities, teaching and learning activities, and community forums to understand the symbols, relationships, and dynamics of healing directly in a real context. After the data is collected, thematic analysis is carried out by identifying patterns of meaning and major themes that emerge from the results of interviews and observations. This analysis is carried out in a gradual, open, and reflective manner so that the researcher not only captures surface data, but also understands the spiritual and social dimensions that come with it.

Findings and Discussion

Christian Religious Education in a Post-Conflict Context

Christian Religious Education (PAK) in the post-conflict context does not only talk about the transfer of theological knowledge or moral values, but is a space for identity formation, inner healing, and social reconstruction. In a society that has experienced violence such as Rongkong, PAK is an important vehicle to form a generation that is aware of the wounds of history without being caught up in revenge, as well as equipping them with evangelical values such as love, forgiveness, justice, and peace.

In this context, PAK cannot be neutral or sterile from the historical reality that surrounds the community. It must carry out a transformative function—changing the way students think, feel, and act towards themselves, others, and the past full of wounds (Manalu, 2016). As emphasized by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, liberating education is education that departs from the reality of oppression and the wounds experienced by students. Therefore, in the context of Rongkong, it is important that the curriculum and approach of PAK do not ignore local history and traumatic experiences of the community, but instead make it an entrance to learning (Lumbantobing, 2017).

Through honest excavation of local history and theological processing of conflict events such as the DII/IT rebellion, students are invited to recognize the reality of wounds and their healing potential in the light of God's love. In this approach, PAK teachers not only act as material presenters, but also as facilitators of reconciliation and spiritual companions, which opens up a safe space for students to dialogue about pain and hope.

A relevant theological approach in designing PAK in the post-conflict region is the theology of incarnation (Sitompul, 2019). This theology states that God does not stay away from human history and suffering, but rather is present in it. The suffering God with His

people becomes a strong theological basis for the PAK to not only speak of the wound, but also live out hope and recovery. When students are invited to get to know the stories of their parents' and ancestors' suffering in the light of the gospel, they not only learn history, but also experience healing spirituality.

To answer the needs of post-conflict communities, PAK's learning strategies must be contextual, creative, and participatory (Sumartana, 2007). One strategy that can be applied is local case studies, where teachers present local narratives in teaching materials, for example the story of a Christian character Rongkong who survived in the faith during a time of conflict. In addition, the reflection forum is also an important space in the PAK class to encourage students to talk about identity, wounds, and expectations through safe and empathetic guided discussions. The use of local cultural media such as traditional symbols and stories can help ground gospel values in languages and traditions that are familiar to students. Peace education can also be integrated into the curriculum, which incorporates the values of reconciliation, empathy, and non-violence associated with biblical stories and the historical experiences of the community (Hutapea, 2020).

The Church as a Space of Restoration

In the context of a society that has experienced collective violence such as in the land of Rongkong after the DII/IT rebellion, the church has a very important position not only as a religious institution, but as a space for social and spiritual recovery. The wounds left by the conflict not only impacted the individuals living at the time, but were also passed on as social trauma to the next generation. In situations like these, the church is called not only to perform liturgical and spiritual functions, but also to be a community that heals the wounds and fosters hope.

A theological understanding of the church as a *healing community* is very important to be put forward. Howard Clinebell affirms that pastoral ministry must be able to respond to the needs of healing, not only in a personal but also social dimension. The Church as the body of Christ is a place where God's love is manifested through acceptance, forgiveness, and the shared presence of those who suffer. In this case, the presence of the church in Rongkong can be understood as a manifestation of God's mercy that is present in the midst of a wounded world. Therefore, restoration is not just a program, but a concrete form of church spirituality that is rooted in the experience of Christ's own incarnation and suffering (Sitompul, 2019).

Liturgy and pastoral practice have enormous potential to be a path of collective healing. In the Christian tradition, the liturgy is not just a series of rituals, but also an *anamnesis*—an act of remembrance that unites the memory of human suffering with God's work of salvation. The liturgy has transformative power when it is able to connect the narrative of the people's lives with the story of the Gospel (Sitorus, 2014). In the context of Rongkong, the integration of local stories of suffering, lamentation prayers, and songs in the local language that describe feelings of loss and hope, can be an authentic form of spiritual and social healing. This is evident from several churches in the region that are slowly starting to open up space for old stories that have been kept silent.

However, being a recovery room is not without challenges. There are still many churches that are stuck in a spiritualistic approach that emphasizes forgiveness without confession or forgetfulness in order to maintain pseudo-harmony. In Paul Ricoeur's view, this attitude is actually dangerous because it ignores the ethical aspects of memory. He emphasized that memories that are suppressed or denied have the potential to become latent wounds that continue to haunt society. Therefore, the church must be able to develop a culture of healthy memory, namely memories that are based on love and truth, open to reconciliation, but not manipulate or suppress the experience of wounds (Sitompul, 2019).

The role of the church also needs to be seen in the perspective of socio-political reconciliation. Forgiveness cannot be separated from recognition and justice (Hutapea, 2020). In the context of Rongkong, the church can play a strategic role in facilitating intergenerational dialogue, supporting local history education, and fighting for the presence of alternative narratives that are not reduced by state narratives or political interests. The church can also advocate for the needs of victim communities that have been marginalized from development, education, and social services.

Within this framework, the church becomes more than just a place of worship; It is a home for the broken, a school for those who want to relearn about humanity, and a field for those who want to fight for justice and forgiveness. It is not enough for the Church to stand as a building structure, but to live as the body of Christ who suffers with those who suffer, and who rises with those who hope.

Thus, the church in Rongkong has not only a spiritual duty, but also a historical and pastoral duty to be a space where wounds are recognized, suffering is interpreted, and hope is grown. In this context, the presence of the church becomes very relevant and strategic as a center of recovery that not only heals the wounds of the past, but also prepares for a more peaceful and hopeful future.

Christian Education as a Medium of Reconciliation

In a post-conflict context such as in the land of Rongkong, Christian Religious Education (PAK) cannot be positioned solely as an instrument of doctrinal or dogma transfer. It is called to be a medium of liberation, healing, and reconciliation. The social trauma caused by DII/IT conflicts has shaped the social and psychological structure of society with deep wounds, a legacy of fear, silence, and division between groups. Therefore, PAK has a strategic role as a *pedagogical space* where there is an encounter between faith, history, and recovery.

Theoretically, the role of PAK in post-conflict situations can be explained through critical *pedagogical approaches* and *memory theology*. Paulo Freire, in his idea of liberation education, emphasized that education should be dialogical, reflective, and transformative. PAK, in this framework, must dare to touch the concrete reality of students, including painful collective experiences such as a history of violence and discrimination. The learning process must be a place where wounded narratives are reread in the light of the Gospel, and the Christian faith becomes the strength to read history not with grudges, but with hope (Lumbantobing, 2017).

In the local context of Rongkong, where traces of DII/IT violence still remain in the form of hereditary trauma, PAK can be an arena for collective memory recovery. Christian educators are called to establish spaces for dialogue in the classroom, both explicitly through the curriculum and implicitly through teaching methods and styles. Lessons about forgiveness, peace, and love for others must be lived out in learning. For example, PAK teachers can bring up stories from the local context of Rongkong – both about suffering and community resilience – as a reflection of faith. In this way, learners not only learn about the gospel, but also experience how the gospel is present in their own historical context.

In the theology of memory developed by Johann Baptist Metz and Paul Ricoeur, collective memories full of wounds should not be forgotten, but processed as a form of ethical responsibility (Manurung, 2020). Thus, PAK can be a container where memories of violence are not suppressed, but processed in faith and ethically for the sake of reconciliation. Reconciliation in the context of PAK is not only about relationships between individuals, but also about the restoration of damaged social relations structures. Therefore, teaching about justice, honesty, and social responsibility must be an integral part of the PAK curriculum. This is in line with *the peace education* approach, where students are not only equipped spiritually,

but also morally and socially to become recovery agents in their society (Sumartana, 2007). In the context of Rongkong, this is very relevant because the younger generation becomes a bridge between the memory of the past and the hope of the future.

In addition, PAK as a medium of reconciliation must also be participatory and intergenerational. This means that the education process does not only take place in formal classrooms, but also through involvement with the community, including with parents and traditional leaders. This is important because post-conflict trauma is not only individual, but collective and cultural. Therefore, the community-based Christian education approach of PAK is very effective in expanding its reconciliation impact. Activities such as reconciliation retreats, open discussion classes, excavation of local history through a faith perspective, and creative worship across generations can be concrete forms of contextual PAK practice.

On the other hand, the success of PAK in becoming a medium of reconciliation depends heavily on the readiness and sensitivity of the educators themselves. PAK teachers must have local historical literacy, sensitivity to social trauma, and the ability to relate biblical messages to concrete contexts. Without it, the educational process risks becoming purely historical and normative, and can even become a means of silencing critical memory. Therefore, teacher training and contextual curriculum development are needed, so that PAK is not only a means of learning faith, but also a means of healing history.

Thus, Christian Religious Education in the land of Rongkong can and must be a medium of reconciliation. Not by imposing a superficial narrative of peace, but through an honest, reflective, and transformative pedagogical process. PAK can be a space where young generations learn to recognize their historical wounds, interpret them in the light of Christ's love, and build a future that is no longer determined by past trauma, but by faith, hope, and love.

Implications

The results of this study provide theological implications that the church in the land of Rongkong can no longer be understood only as a spiritual institution oriented to ritual worship, but as a community of restoration that is present in the midst of the historical wounds of the community. The Church is called to build a ministry that is able to integrate the spiritual, social, and historical dimensions as a whole. Liturgy, pastoral ministry, and community dialogue need to be directed not only at the strengthening of individual faith, but also at the healing of collective memory, social reconciliation, and the restoration of intergroup relationships in the light of Christ's love. Thus, the church has a prophetic responsibility to bring real peace in the midst of a society that has experienced social wounds and historical conflicts.

Practically, this research implies the need to develop a contextual and transformative model of church service. The Church needs to create safe spaces of dialogue for people to share past experiences of wounds, injustices, and traumas without fear or stigma. A pastoral approach that is sensitive to trauma is important so that the church not only offers normative spiritual comfort, but also accompaniment that touches the social reality of the people. In addition, the church's collaboration with traditional leaders, local communities, and educational institutions can be an important strategy in building sustainable reconciliation among the Rongkong community.

Another implication can be seen in the field of Christian Religious Education (PAK). This research emphasizes that PAK needs to move from a doctrinal and verbalistic approach

to a reflective, contextual, and liberating approach. PAK's curriculum and learning process should provide space for students to recognize the history of their community, reflect on the experience of social wounds critically, and build a spirituality of peace and forgiveness. With a critical pedagogical approach and a theology of memory, PAK can be a means of character formation that is not only religious, but also has social awareness, empathy, and a commitment to justice and reconciliation.

This research also has implications for the development of academic studies of theology and Christian education in Indonesia. The themes of collective memory, social trauma, reconciliation, and healing theology still need to be explored more deeply, particularly in the context of local communities that have a history of conflict and social wounds. Therefore, further research can be directed towards the development of a model of reconciliation education based on local culture, pastoral practices of trauma healing, and the construction of contextual theology rooted in the experience of Indonesian society. Thus, the church and PAK can be increasingly relevant as a force of social transformation that brings hope, recovery, and peace in the midst of people's lives.

Conclusion

The church in the land of Rongkong has great potential as a space for spiritual and social recovery, where past wounds can be recognized, interpreted, and processed in faith. Through liturgical, pastoral, and community dialogue approaches, the church can be a place where collective memory is restored in the light of Christ's love. However, this role requires courage to step out of the spiritualistic comfort zone towards active engagement with the social and historical realities of its people. Christian education in the region must move beyond a normative approach towards a contextual, reflective, and transformative approach. PAK has a strategic role as a medium of reconciliation—building a space for the younger generation to recognize its history, cultivate the narrative of wounds with faith, and foster a spirit of forgiveness and justice. Through critical pedagogical approaches and memory theology, PAK can be a liberating and healing educational force.

Bibliography

- Arifin, Syamsul. (2015). *Teologi Sosial: Membaca Ulang Misi Gereja di Tengah Realitas Sosial*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Hutapea, L. (2020). "Memori Kolektif dan Spiritualitas Pemulihan dalam Iman Kristen." *Jurnal Soteria* 2, no. 2:66–81.
- Lase, M. (2021). "Pendidikan Agama Kristen sebagai Pedagogi Kontekstual dalam Masa Krisis." *Jurnal Transformasi Pendidikan Kristen* 6, no. 1:77–90.
- Lederach, John Paul. (1997). "Reconciliation: The Building of Trust in Post-War Societies." *Peacebuilding Journal* 1, no. 1:23–38.
- Lumbantobing, S. T. (2017). *Pendidikan Kristen yang Membebaskan: Suatu Telaah Teologis-Pedagogis*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Manalu, T. (2016). *Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Dunia Postmodern*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.

- Manurung, B. (2020). "Teologi Luka dan Keadilan Restoratif dalam Pelayanan Gereja." *Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Indonesia* 4, no. 2:88–105.
- Marbun, A. (2018). "Gereja Sebagai Agen Perdamaian dalam Masyarakat Multikultural." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen Transform* 3, no. 1:59–72.
- Mokoagouw, F. (2022). "Integrasi Pendidikan Kristen dan Penyembuhan Sosial." *Jurnal Misiologi Indonesia* 5, no. 1:43–58.
- Palmer, Parker J. (2004). "Teaching as an Act of Hope." *Journal of Religious Education* 49, no. 2:30–42.
- Pannen, J. B. (1992). *Manusia dan Agama*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Rambu, F. A. (2022). *Gereja dan Misi di Tengah Krisis Sosial*. Kupang: Akademia Pressindo.
- Sapriallah, dkk. (2012). *Sejarah Sosial Masyarakat Rongkong*. Makassar: Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Makassar, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI.
- Saragih, B. H. (2020). *Pendidikan Teologi Kontekstual dan Kritis*. Bandung: Kalam Hidup.
- Simamora, J. (2021). "Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Konteks Keberagaman Sosial." *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika Religia* 7, no. 2:112–128.
- Simanjuntak, R. D. (2012). *Teologi Kristen Kontekstual di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Sitompul, H. (2019). "Peran Gereja dalam Membangun Rekonsiliasi Sosial Pasca-Konflik." *Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 5, no. 1:34–49.
- Sitorus, R. H. (2014). *Gereja yang Relevan: Antara Kekudusan dan Keterlibatan Sosial*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Sumartana, Th. (2007). *Pluralisme, Konflik dan Pendidikan Agama*. Yogyakarta: Interfidei.
- Tilaar, H. A. R. (2004). *Multikulturalisme: Tantangan-tantangan Global Masa Depan dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Nasional*. Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Wulandari, Eka, Jumadi, dan La Malihu. (2020). "Aktivitas Gerombolan DI/TII dan Dampaknya Terhadap Masyarakat Sidrap 1950–1965." *Pattingalloang* 7, no. 2:160–171.