

Sacrality of the Sea: A Contextual Theology of the Sea Meaning in the Cosmology of the Hulaliu Community



Aletheia Christo Pattiasina ^{a,1,*}, Margaretha M. A. Apituley ^{a,2}, Rolland A. Samson ^{b,3}

^a Graduate Program of Indonesian Christian University in the Moluccas (UKIM), Jl. Ot. Pattimaipauw, Ambon 97115, Indonesia

^b Duquesne University, 600 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15282, USA

¹ achrp03@gmail.com ^{*}; ² margarethaapituley@gmail.com; ³ samsonr@duq.edu

* Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation, especially of marine ecosystems, has become an urgent global concern. This is particularly true for Maluku, an archipelago deeply connected to the sea. All forms of ecological destruction should be a shared concern—including for the church and its theological perspectives. Using the qualitative method and contextual theology approach, this study explores the cosmological values of the Hulaliu community as a way for Christian theology to contribute meaningfully to sea conservation in Hulaliu. This research also expresses concern about the sea ecological crisis in Hulaliu and proposes cosmology as an alternative framework to shift from human-centered thinking toward a more profound care for the sea. The primary result of this research is that people of Hulaliu in their cosmological idea emphasizes the sea is more than just a source of livelihood, it is a space where local customs, rules, and social norms are formed. The community's cosmological view understands the sea and the land as one interconnected whole, offering a form of local wisdom that supports environmental protection, including of forests, land, sea, and the wider ecosystem.

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Introduction

Hulaliu village, located on the eastern coast of Haruku Island, one of Indonesia's small islands, is part of the Maluku archipelago. The community of Hulaliu engages in a range of livelihood activities, with many residents working as fishermen. However, fishing activities are heavily influenced by weather and climate variations, leading some individuals also to take up farming as an alternative source of income. Like other coastal communities in Maluku, Hulaliu experiences two primary seasonal cycles: the dry season, locally known as *musim barat* ("west season"), which occurs from November to April, and the rainy or wet season, known as *musim timur* ("east season"), from May to October. Since both fishing and farming depend significantly on seasonal climate conditions, these occupations are inherently seasonal in nature.

The seasonal nature of farming and fishing in the Hulaliu community is closely tied to local climate patterns. During the wet season, strong winds and changing sea surface temperatures—exacerbated by climate change—make fishing difficult. These conditions affect fish migration patterns and limit access to traditional fishing grounds. As a result, many community members turn to gardening or farming during this period. Conversely, when local knowledge systems—such as *nanaku* (weather prediction)—indicate the onset of the dry season, characterized by calmer seas, favorable winds, and increased fish availability, residents return to the sea as their

primary livelihood. However, gardening continues alongside fishing, reflecting a balanced reliance on both land and sea. This interdependence highlights the Hulaliu community's holistic view of their environment, where both sea and land are integral to sustaining life. It reflects a broader Malukan cosmology in which mountains, land, and sea are regarded as an interconnected and sacred unity, noble reality. The sea is perceived not only as a source of food but as the "barn of life" and the "breath of the island," maintaining a vital relationship with the peaks of its mountains (Watloly 2013, pp. 405-407)

The expanse of Hulaliu's marine territory, covering approximately 12,000 hectares (Village Data, 2024), positions the marine and fisheries sector as a central pillar of the local economy. However, the vastness of these waters must not be misused through unsustainable practices such as overfishing, which threaten the long-term health of the marine ecosystem. Environmentally destructive fishing methods, including the use of fish bombs and tiger trawls, are especially concerning. In Hulaliu, one such harmful method is locally referred to as *Seagull* or *Cloudy (reach)*, derived from the Indonesian word meaning "to collect." The community has expressed growing concern over these practices, particularly regarding five individuals identified in Hulaliu who regularly use the *Seagull* method. This technique poses serious risks to marine biodiversity by damaging coral reefs and depleting fish populations at the juvenile stage (Interview with Mr. D.S. May 5th, 2024). These practices are rooted in a utilitarian mindset that perceives natural resources as unlimited and freely exploitable—an assumption that justifies exploitative production at any cost (Banawiratma 1996, p. 39).

The abundance of marine resources in Hulaliu has long supported the local community's needs, provided these resources are managed and utilized sustainably. However, if resource use exceeds ecological limits—especially amid growing community demands—these natural resources risk becoming depleted or even extinct. Fishing locations selected by Hulaliu fishermen typically depend on the length of time allocated for fishing trips. For short, one-day outings, fishermen generally remain within the coastal waters of Hulaliu. In contrast, longer expeditions often extend to the central waters surrounding Haruku, Saparua, and Seram Islands. According to one local fisherman, overfishing has led to negative consequences, such as the discarding of small fish due to their low market value.

In some cases, however, nets are not discarded but are instead kept for household consumption or sold in local markets (Interview with Mr. O. M., January 9th, 2025). Another fisherman confirmed that most fishing occurs near the coasts of Hulaliu and Saparua. However, when using floating nets, they often fish further offshore, where the range of potential catch is wider. The success of these ventures is highly dependent on weather conditions. On favorable days, floating nets can yield around 50–60 *parteng* (baking pan), whereas traditional nets and other methods may result in catches of 3–5 *parteng* (Interview with Mr. N. P., January 9, 2025).

Hulaliu fishermen also face challenges in identifying strategic fishing locations. As noted by Diposaptono S. Budiman and Agung F., the difficulty in predicting optimal fishing seasons and locations is largely due to fish migration patterns influenced by rising sea surface temperatures caused by climate change (Budiman & Agung, 2009, p. 41). The declining availability of fishery resources is further exacerbated by population growth and the use of diverse—and often destructive—fishing practices, including *karoro*, fish bombs, and the adverse effects of plastic waste and other forms of community-generated pollution. Fishing practices within the Hulaliu community are varied and include the active participation of women. There are currently 15 female fishers (*jibu-jibu*) who typically use floating nets, standard nets, and *karoro* to catch fish, which they then process and/or sell in markets located in Tulehu, Saparua, and Rumah Kay (Seram Island). In terms of fishing infrastructure, the community possesses 18 speedboats, 30 marine engines (including equipment provided through government assistance since 2013), five *karoro*, 20 nets, and one floating net (Interview with Mr. A. T., February 2nd, 2025).

Economic data shows that the majority of the population works as farmers (488 people), followed by entrepreneurs (75 people), civil servants (51 people), and fishermen (46 people). (Village Data, 2024). Although the number of fishermen is not statistically dominant, fishing remains an important activity, even carried out seasonally by various segments of society. This reflects a flexible economic structure, but one that is vulnerable to the exploitation of natural resources, particularly the sea, as an alternative economic pillar when the agricultural sector is unproductive. Therefore, the people of Hulaliu can optimize their strategic geographical location, both on land and at sea. However, upon further examination, the sea is also an area that provides sufficient marine resources. This has also led to the exploitation of marine resources, driven by the advancement of science and technology.

The cosmology of the Hulaliu community reflects a worldview that unites spiritual, ecological, and social dimensions in understanding the sea as an integral part of their lives. The sea is understood as a sacred, living entity that has a direct relationship with the creator—not only as a source of livelihood, but also as a historical space that shapes the collective identity of the community. The sea is a place where people meet, a community unifier, and a means of connecting the mainland and islands, illustrating how everything is interconnected. In traditional practices, the sea sets the timing (*tanati*) for social activities like weddings and farming, and it's also a way to shape the community's morals and ethics through cognitive codes passed down from ancestors. This cosmology also contains ethical values of balance, harmony, and respect for nature, which should form the basis for responding to current ecological threats through the lens of contextual theology. The sea is also a source of life for the Hulaliu community, as evidenced by the phrase "*Huran-Nau-Reu*," which means "the moon has passed." The deity of the Hulaliu region is *Haturessy Rakanyawa*, where *Hatu* means "stone," *Ressy* means 'more' (having an advantage), *raka* means "uprooted/exposed," and *Nyawa* means "soul" (interview with Mr. Y. L., on October 30, 2024).

The awareness of the cosmology that is thick in seeing the sea as a balance of life between mountains-land or sea-island is eroded by threats to the sea, so that the result is excessive exploitation of the sea. Exploitation of the sea also has an impact on marine products consumed by humans which are also threatened, such as the lack of fish seeds and the destruction of coral reefs that stretch across the ocean. The number of fish in the past and now is also different, especially in the country's waters. The decrease in the fish population is caused by the increasing population of the Hulaliu country and the advancement of technology, including seagulls, fish bombs, etc. The influence of weather on *Tanuar* or tenor (uncertain) time also affects the intensity of fish (Interview with Mr. O. L, on June 9th, 2024). Robert Borrong confirmed this and showed that current excessive fishing will threaten food security from the sea in the future (Borrong 1997, p. 27).

The conclusion drawn from this study is that to maintain sustainable oceans, we need to further explore the cosmology that is common sense among island communities. The lens to be used here is the kinship (balance) between humans and the sea as their cosmic reality. Based on this review, the author argues that the ecological degradation in Hulaliu can be minimized or anticipated by revitalizing cosmological values, not merely as abstract concepts, but as a means to contribute to the development of a contextual theology for the church and indigenous community of Hulaliu today. The gap in this research compared to previous studies is that the method used here is contextual theology oriented toward the cosmology of the Hulaliu community to examine the theology of the sea in Hulaliu.

It is essential to revive and give meaning to the cosmological thinking of the Hulaliu community, allowing it to be actualized in the community's attitude through the lens of contextual theology. The threat to the sea has a similar impact, affecting not only the sea but also human life and all living things within it. Damage caused by waste and greed in one place can destroy life in another (Grandberg & Michaelson 1997, p. 18). Theologizing in the context of

ecological crisis means theologizing about the threats faced by the environment that has been severely damaged and threatened with destruction by human actions. With this awareness, the author sees that contextual theology is an anthropological model by presenting God through the reality of their cosmology (Bevans 2002, p. 97). Theologizing in the context of environmental damage means an effort to reflect theology in the context of the factual conditions of the environment in crisis. Following up on the environmental damage above, a community paradigm is needed to realize ecological justice (eco-justice), which can be understood through a cosmological approach. The cosmological approach is present to show the relationship between humans and nature.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. Data were collected through field research and a literature study. In field research, the authors conducted observations and interviews with informants, including servants, fishermen (both male and female), and traditional figures. In the literature study, the authors analyzed various references to reveal ideas about cosmology, marine theology, and contextual theology. Contextualization also has two characteristics, namely confirmation and confrontation (Singgih 2012, p. 129). Singgih describes the effort to see contextualization as a process of confirmation and confrontation carried out simultaneously and together. He attempts to explore universal theology by engaging in dialogue between three fundamental aspects: the biblical context, the systematic-dogmatic context, and the Indonesian context (Singgih 2012, p. 122). Thus, both encounter and renewal are complementary elements in the process of contextualization. Singgih states in his book, "Theology in Context," that the embodiment of a theology of the wholeness of creation involves how the church interprets the stories of creation in the Old Testament within the context of today's ecological concerns, thereby making theology more holistic and less anthropocentric (Singgih 2000, p. 30). Other thing that needs attention are tribal religions that are deeply rooted in the lives of the people of Maluku and the congregation of the GPM (Maluku Protestant Church), who live in a context influenced by tribal religions. For example, obedience to ancestors will bring salvation or a curse (Cooley 1987, pp. 335-337). Due to this cultural construct, some people in Maluku believe that in order to communicate with the supreme power, ancestors or elders are used as intermediaries. This is because ancestors are seen as individuals who have a close connection with the supreme power, and it is believed that they can assist in conveying the requests of their descendants to the creator. Each person communicates in their unique way, such as through traditional prayers or rituals (Rumahuru 2017, p. 107).

By employing qualitative research methods in this study, we aim to gather comprehensive information about the cosmology of the Hulaliu community, which has become a shared understanding, as well as the reality of marine damage that occurs in Hulaliu. Thus, this study examines the literature related to the topic of discussion. Through the field data collected and analyzed, the authors intend to see the anthropological model in contextual theology developed by Steven Bevans and its implications for marine conservation in Hulaliu, by focusing on the cosmology of the Maluku community as the integrity of the island community that sees the sea as part of the reality of shared life that needs to be maintained and preserved.

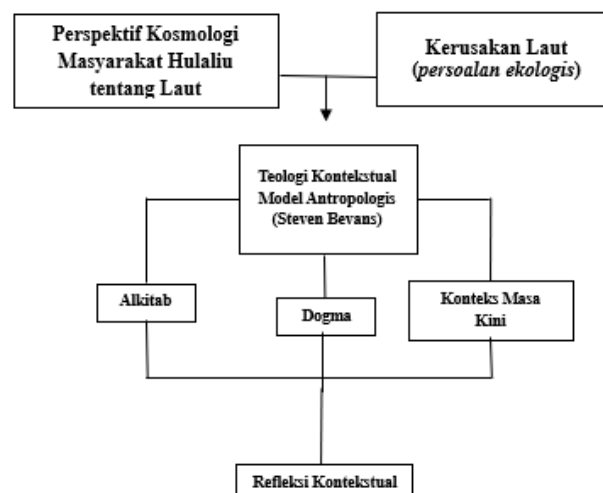


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of this research

The framework for this study is based on the reality of the marine ecological crisis in Hulaliu, which includes coral reef damage, overfishing, environmental pollution, and the marginalization of traditional values in community decision-making. This study employs a contextual theological approach, specifically an anthropological model, to reflect Christian faith within the local culture of the Hulaliu community. Amidst this reality, the cosmological values that have long been embedded in the community—which views the sea as a sacred, living space and an integral part of the relationship between humans and God—no longer fully shape the social and moral practices of the community. The tension between cosmological values and exploitative practices creates a theological space for reflection that demands the integration of tradition, spirituality, and ecological awareness. Therefore, this framework of thinking leads to efforts to reconstruct ecological ethics and spirituality rooted in local cosmology and inspired by Christian faith, with the ultimate aim of fostering transformative actions from local communities, churches, and other stakeholders for the fair and sustainable preservation of the sea.

Results and Discussion

The Sacredness of the Sea

As a community living in a coastal area, the Hulaliu people view the sea as their primary living space and arena, where various life activities take place. The sea is not only used for transportation and communication between islands, and as a source of livelihood because of its economic value but is also understood as an integral part of their identity. This view is reinforced by the existence of traditional symbols such as *totem* and *stand or stand* [Bartles, 2017: 493-496] country, reflecting their spiritual and cultural ties to the sea. In Valerio Valeri's terms, *symbolism thus helps to explain sacredness* (Valerio 2000, p. 50). This fact indicates that a human being is profane at the same time religious and he cannot remove himself from the reality of his customs and the natural cosmos.

As explained in the cosmology of the island community, including Hulaliu, the sea is considered an indigenous community that still believes in the existence of supernatural powers surrounding them, in addition to their belief in Jesus Christ. E. G. Singgih stated that contextualization means an effort to find self-esteem as a Christian in the context of each

existence, namely local culture (Singgih 2000, p. 24). It can be concluded that Hulaliu sea cosmocentrism encompasses a complex set of beliefs and rituals, characterized by a ritualistic attitude towards nature and a cosmology that posits humans and nature, including the sea, as integral to the totality of creation. Thus, they realize their closeness to the cosmos of the island society. They see the elements of nature as having a soul and sacred. The Hulaliu people view the sea as the abode of their ancestors. Local myths and beliefs within the community regard the sea as a sacred space. When he was asked about the Hulaliu people's views on the sea, A. T. said:

The myth associated with the Hulaliu people regarding the sea is that they believe two ancestors inhabit the sea. First, from the Mataheru clan with the name *Pariah* Word, which has a known residence at *Wae Mital*. *Pariah* Word it is believed that it can turn into a stingray, so those with the Mataheru surname believe that *Pari* is their ancestor. Additionally, there is an ancestor from the Laisina clan named *Upu Barens Laisina*, who holds the sacred name *Risalau*. The community believes the ancestors who inhabit the Hulaliu sea can guard the Hulaliu land. For example, if someone is found with a "grip" or pack, the ancestors will become angry and cause the boat to capsize in the waves, or, in other words, they will encounter obstacles in the harbor. It didn't rain(name of Hulaliu port). (Interview with A. T., October 09th, 2024)

These ancestral spirit myths are true stories about events that can be felt to have helped shape the world and the nature of moral action, and determine the ritual relationship between humans and their creator, or with existing powers. So, according to functionalist anthropology, myth is a force that institutionalizes society itself (Dhavamondy 1995, p. 151). Myth is a complex of cultural realities that can be approached and interpreted from various perspectives. Myth is a narrative of a sacred history related to the occurrence of events in primordial time, at that time, the initial time (beginning). Myths only tell stories that happened, which manifest themselves completely. The actors in myths are supernatural beings who are known primarily through what they do at that time (Gaspersz 2023, p. 56).

Island people are always in contact with their island sea, so they admire and love the island sea in a strong self-subjectivity. The island sea is a symbol of the island people, closely linked to their thoughts and beliefs (Watloly 2023, p. 171). The archipelago, with its strong cosmic belief system, tends to distinguish sharply between things that come from nature and things that come from humans, between the natural and the artificial. The Hulaliu community also believes in the power of ancestors who guard and protect the children of the country. This experience suggests that ancestors serve as a representation of God who saves (Ayhuan et al., 2021, p. 131). This explicitly indicates God's efforts in making anything according to His will become co-creator in the work of saving humanity and all creation. According to Freithem, creation is the result of continuous creative action. Humans and nature as something created by God and both used by God in His work of salvation. In this case, Freithem refers to three things:

1. The original creation indicates God as the absolute source of creation. Creation is a creative act in the past and ongoing and not only physical but also social (family, culture, religion, and national order).
2. Creation is not something static but dynamic. God continues His creative work both by preserving and innovating (Isaiah 42:9; 43:18-19).
3. While the end of creation confirms that creation is also a divine eschatological act in which God brings in a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65:17-25; Rev. 21:1-5). (Apituley 2021, pp. 34-35).

Concerning the existence of ancestors, GPM Teaching No. 34 emphasizes that God has not ceased to work in His creation. God has worked through ancestors, even when they did not yet know the Lord Jesus (Bright Words) or when they believed in Him because God had introduced Himself before the entry of the Abrahamic religions or during the tribal religions through various cultural identities and the name of God Himself. God's work is a tradition that continues

to work, allowing us to transform the cultural heritage of our ancestors. In short, the cosmology unique to Hulaliu is the work of God, manifested through the heritage of ancestors. God's work is to bring salvation, life, and liberation to mankind and other creations.

In the local belief system, ancestors are often depicted as elderly individuals or ordinary humans. They have died, but their spirits remain together with their children and grandchildren. Local beliefs in natural elements are an explicit effort to maintain ecological balance and demonstrate the value of nature as a protector. Like wise with the ancestral powers used by God in maintaining the order of human life. The existence of ancestral Spirits is a representation of God's creative power that is present in both the sea and on land. Even their power can be present to fulfill the call and memory of their children and grandchildren. Although far from the country, their bond with the cosmos is inseparable. God is the owner of very tight ancestors, and God also determines whether or not very tight ancestors are present. The Hulaliu people do not equate ancestors, nature, and God, but view all creations as God's working partners.

The Sea as One.

For the Hulaliu people, the sea not only promises wealth, but more importantly, it embodies traditional values, culture, and social functions that profoundly influence their life values. Water, mountains, land, and the sea are an inseparable unity with human life. This view represents the Hulaliu people's understanding of their relationship with nature. The relationship that is built between the Hulaliu people and nature is a relationship based on their cosmology that teaches that nature is a fellow human being. The Hulaliu people are very familiar with the sea and even love it. From it they learn to obey the signs and signals of sea changes. The reason is that when people adapt to these signs and signals, a peaceful state can be created (Ihroma 2000, p. 14). The sea has always been important because it served as a means of transportation for ancestors who migrated from Seram Island to *Alaka*. In *Alaka*, all aspects of community life are regulated, both institutionally and constitutionally. A reconstruction of Portuguese and Dutch colonialism has brought the Hulaliu community to the coast, where they originally lived in the mountains. The archipelago sea is a historical space and stage for generations of island communities. The Maluku island community, most of whom are indigenous people, always have an understanding (philosophy) a holistic (whole and complete) history. Therefore, the island community always sees its island sea as something fundamental that reveals fundamental dimensions in its existence as a whole as an island community, both in its past, present, and future history. The sea is a present and future that has historical value that must be maintained. The sea, like mountains, land, water, beaches and capes, inspires, perspective of thought and orientation as well as the spirit of life that enlivens them from time to time or from generation to generation (Watloly 2013, p. 89).

The sea is also part of the historical story of the Hulaliu people and even *Uli Hatuhaha Amarima Lounussa*. The Hulaliu community is so identified with the sea that it cannot be separated from the entry of the Gospel into Hulaliu on December 31, 1590. The Hulaliu community under the leadership of *Simon Supu Laisina*, they came down from *Alaka*, towards *Hurumau beach* (smooth head) to be baptized. Apart from that, the Hulaliu people also hint at water as part of their historical journey in a got, that is: *Wael ti e pamahai ama Haturessy Yalato, kawa wael ti nala aman kupa nain nelti whice means* "water gives life to the land Haturessy Rained, because this country's water is in this place."

What then arises is the problem that when mountain people come down to the coast, they meet with coastal communities, and a kind of fusion of the two communities underlies the collective memory that unites the values of the sea and the islands. According to Watloly, the closeness of the island communities to their island nature is also evident from their distinctive characteristics in viewing their island seas where land cannot be separated from the sea, because both form mono-dualism in the dialectical cosmological unity of the Maluku people

(Watloly 2013, p. 63). Watloly observes that the cosmology of Indonesian archipelago society, in this case, has positioned humans and the island society with the land as a living heritage, not merely in a real and formal sense, but also a mental-spiritual and existential context. This cosmological view unites the sea and land, which have both physical and psychological significance. All cosmological dimensions of the sea and land as a complete and existential land integrity in a maximum cosmic harmony system (Watloly 2013, p. 165).

The historical story that the Hulaliu people have should form a Hulaliu society that is so identical to the sea. The cosmology of the Hulaliu people reveals that the sea is a vital entity, occupying a position so close and integral to their lives. The cosmological world according to Watloly consists of macrocosm and microcosm. Macrocosm refers to the entire universe with all its contents, both those above (the sky above), on the surface and inside. While the microcosm is a human community that has become one with nature so that it has formed a realm of thought, ideas, outlook on life, character, beliefs and culture that provide a shared identity. Louis Bouyer saw that human efforts in seeking meaning for their existence in the world, expand the relationship between the world and humans and bring humans together with God. This relationship is formulated in three forms of human knowledge about reality, namely myth, science, and revelation. The three are interrelated and develop from the roots of the depth of individual and collective human experience (Apituley 2021, p. 24). Thus, the cosmology of the island society has its own unique philosophy to show the emotional bond with nature (cosmos) in the personal, survive and live sustainably (sustainable).

As has been explained regarding the sea according to the cosmology of the island community, including Hulaliu with their strong and unique collective memory, the sea of the Indonesian archipelago is a symbol of the island community that is very closely linked to their thoughts and beliefs (Watloly 2023, p. 24). Thus, according to E. G. Singgih, contextualization means an effort to find one's own self-esteem as a Christian in the context of one's own existence, namely local culture. [Singgih 2000, p. 24]. The perspective of the island community is absolute towards the existence of culture and customs. Every object in nature is a manifestation of ancestors to protect from danger (Watloly 2013, p. 319). On that basis, contextual theology is important because it can answer the needs of the congregation in its context, the existence of theology cannot be separated from the congregation or church. Contextual theology has an important role if theology itself is based on a context, where the act of understanding the Christian faith from the contextual side is a form of true theology (Darmaputra 1998, p. 3). Their theological efforts show their closeness to the cosmos, nature and humans become equal. Thus, the assumption of the sea as something that has a soul, has an identity, must build awareness in moving towards ecological justice. From the cosmology of the Hulaliu Community, God also shows his partiality to nature and humans in achieving harmony of all creation. God who existed before all was created, and is united in one cosmic belief across categories to the spirits of ancestors is a representation of God in the midst of the cosmic community, for the purpose of the integrity of all creation. Singgih sees that the natural world is at the same time a part of God, but is from God, or known as the term Panentheism. This is based on the aim of connecting religion, ethics, spirituality, and morality in relation to nature (Singgih 2021, p. 242).

Borrong Moltmann's idea, classical theism always has a latent tendency to imagine a relationship between God and creation that assumes an uncrossable distance. Creation is far outside God. However, Moltmann says that if creation takes place in the empty space inside God, because God limits himself, empties himself, and withdraws himself "inside" himself, then there is no other possibility to say than that creation is "inside" God. If creation comes out (ad extra) takes place in a space freed by God himself, so in this case the reality outside of God still remains "inside" God who surrenders that "outside" within himself (Moltmann 1993, p. 90). Catherine Keller sees the concept Panentheism with another dimension. Keller came up with the analogy of the sea, in which God is likened to a divine ocean in which creation emerges and develops in

connection with Him. Keller rejects the idea that God is an absolute ruler who created the world without the involvement of His creation. Instead, he describes this relationship as waves in the ocean, in which God and creation influence each other (Keller 2023, p. 218). Boff further suggests that, "Ecology and Theology: Christian Panentheism" (Boff 1995, p. 43). Boff's statement highlights the ecological challenges facing theology. Theology is always about a relationship with God. According to him, theology must review past concepts and see if new ideas emerge, or in other words, renew old ways of seeing things that only fit experience and not the central questions of today.

The Sea is the Source of Wisdom for Island Communities

Marine ecosystem damage refers to physical and biological changes resulting from irresponsible human activities such as fishing practices involving the use of explosives or fish bombs (illegal fishing) in the village of Hulaliu. These practices have led to the destruction of coral reefs in the waters around Hulaliu, resulting in a decline in the region's fishing potential and, consequently, an impact on the local economy. This destructive fishing method has replaced environmentally friendly fishing methods such as bubu, which is made of bamboo. According to several sources, the practice of fishing using explosives by the Hulaliu community has been going on for quite some time, and the use of fish bombs is still common today. Mr. K. S. and D. S. stated this when the author asked them about the marine damage occurring in Hulaliu.

The sea in Hulaliu has been exploited for an unknown period of time. Still, with the increase in population and technology, the people of Hulaliu began to think of ways to obtain fish more easily, using fish bombs and *karoro* (tiger nets). The people of Hulaliu thought about how to obtain fish without considering the ecological impact, especially on the sea (Interview with K. S., October 30th, 2024). In addition to K. S., Mr. D. S., explained that since operating in the sea for 10 years, while also working as a net craftsman, the people of Hulaliu have the habit of storing fish—whether small or large—for sale or family consumption. However, some families, especially those involved in *karoro* fishing, sometimes let the small fish rot, discard them, and use them as pig feed when there are too many (Interview with D. S., October 07th, 2024).

Similarly, Borrong said that if nature is destroyed, it is tantamount to humans deliberately cutting off their own livelihood alongside other creatures. [Borrong, 2021: 66]. Borrong also emphasizes that the environmental crisis faced by modern humans is a direct result of how we manage our lives, that the earth is being massively destroyed without regard for ethical values. Human concern for the natural environment is concerning because humans often act arbitrarily. Moral values in natural resource management are almost non-existent. All activities are carried out based solely on human egoism (Borrong 2019, p. 1). Based on the opinions of several informants, the research findings identified several techniques and equipment that can harm marine ecosystems, including explosives, toxic substances such as sodium and potassium cyanide, and the use of tiger nets. The use of explosives can cause damage to coral reefs and harm other marine organisms. The use of toxic substances such as sodium and potassium cyanide can also cause fish mortality and damage the environment.

Judging from the reality of the damage that has occurred, environmental ethics are necessary for coastal communities, because the problem of marine ecosystem damage due to a lack of awareness of environmental ethics continues to occur in coastal communities. Therefore, it is necessary to revitalize the strong cosmological values to respond to the urgency of today's ecological problems. Cosmology according to Anton Bakker is the science of nature or the world. The world in question is what is experienced and experienced by humans as an environment, especially in direct relation to themselves. Humans live and relate to the world. Their concrete and holistic self-reflection is their reflection of the world. Therefore, the world cannot be understood without humans and vice versa (Bakker, 1995, p. 28)

For the Hulaliu people, the sea is an opportunity and a context from which they gain not only economic, but more than that, a deep order of life. The Hulaliu people gain experience and have a closeness to the sea that is unique. The function of the sea for the Hulaliu people is as a signal, such as the function of a signal to build a house, especially in the place men the *does not know* and cut kayo pole started, entering a new house and giving thanks for it. The sea also gives a sign in traditional wedding ceremonies such as when the bride is escorted into the groom's house and then out of the house to the wedding venue. The same thing also applies to people who elope or run wife. The sea really functions as a signal to village head to help the birth process. In *Palamana*, in the wedding ritual, the king is also known as the "holder of the net head" or ingot, which is usually recited as "*pamase uet huhui eke ama Haturessy yalato*" This means the holder of the net head in the Hulaliu country with the name teong Haturessy. (Interview with A. T., October 07th, 2024). The meaning of "net head holder" itself reflects a leadership that has power and holds control in a government structure. Thus, activities or habits on land but have a direct connection with the sea as a sign. Humans strive to adjust and align themselves with the rhythms of the laws and forces of nature, which are often considered sacred, yet also cruel and educational (Borrang 2019, p. 26). Phenomena such as those that occur are interesting phenomena in the context of learning about cultural values that unite the sea and land as part of the norms and rules as a characteristic of island society.

For Watloly, the sea has inspired practical thinking skills, navigation, and various local wisdoms about gardening seasons or managing nature on land. All of these views and insights into life can be traced back to multiple forms of local wisdom possessed by each community in the Maluku Islands (Watloly 2013, p. 89). The Hulaliu people understand the sea and land as sources of life, as events at sea influence events on land and vice versa. For example, a rooster crowing at night is a sign that the sea water is receding, and also gives a signal to carry out activities *bameti* and *balobe* to find fish and food. Low tide is also an opportunity for hunters to pursue wild animals, as the receding tide allows animals on land to become quiet, making it easier to catch their prey.

For the Hulaliu people, when the water recedes once (put) or high tide is prohibited from making activities on land. This is based on the following philosophy:

Moti laha soot son a kupa marina
Eke lamuri kupa marina.
When the tide rises, the fish are silent
All the animals on land were silent.

This philosophy is correlated with the custom when the water recedes once the farmers start planting, because when the water recedes, dry rocks will be visible so that the pumpkins will be dry (good). For farmers in Hulaliu, rocks symbolize pumpkins that will be harvested. The seriousness of their work, both on land and at sea, is evident from the way they spend more time in the garden during the day as farmers, and sometimes some of them go to sea at night. Thus, it can be seen that the work done by the Hulaliu people, both on land and at sea, is done based on the rhythm of the movement of the sea water (high tide and low tide) (Interview with Y. L., October 30th, 2024).

The sea is part of the wisdom of the island community, which is also seen through construction of *baileo* (a traditional fellowship house). *Baileo Asari Lounussa* which is located on the coast is understood as a sacred transitional space, a meeting place between two essential elements in community life—not just land or sea that is sacred, but both in balance. In addition, *baileo* as a meeting space, not only representing relations between humans, but also the entire archipelago ecosystem. Within this framework, the Hulaliu community should understand itself as a community called to be a blessing to both land and sea ecosystems and also realize itself as a unity and social interaction across islands.

The sea becomes part of their awareness of the cosmos through construction of *baileo*. Likewise, Aholiab Watloly explained that in the middle of the village stood *baileo*. Its location alone shows its important role. *Baileo* in a microcosm that reflects the structure and order of the world. Located near a mosque or church, *baileo* symbolizes the traditional culture which is the center of the cosmos of the country's society. Architecture *baileo* reflects a microcosm of the traditional universe. The separation between *Patasiwa/Patalima* can be seen through the means *baileo* built and location taboo stone (Bartles 2017, pp. 163-164). Apart from through structure *baileo*, horizontally, group in the long run divide the world a swipe (ocean) and good (land = land) or top (top =mountain=sky) and bring (under=ground) or mountain (mountain=sky) and paint (beach=land) (Watloly, 2013, p. 381).

Regardless of position *baileo* which points to the sea and land, the sun sets and the sun rises, the Hulaliu people also understand themselves and their cosmology through the placement of stones practical or in Hulaliu it is better known as *Hatu Matun Kamal* which means "light-bearing stone" (Interview with Y. S., March 13, 2025). Taboo Stone this is seen symbolically as a social reality in the sense profanity, but also part of the cosmic reality, namely the sacred world. They see the elements of nature as something special and in it they are connected with aunt of ancestors. In Hulaliu taboo stone still exists and is currently located in the courtyard *baileo* the country as one of the sacred places for the Hulaliu people. Various traditional rituals that are carried out as general rituals are always carried out on *baileo* and taboo stones (Hetharion, et.al., 2012, p. 72).

Robert Borrang quotes David Ray Griffin stating that theology is oriented towards nature and that means four aspects. First, there is no dichotomy between humans and nature. All non-human individuals possess intrinsic value (inherent purpose) and therefore contradict anthropocentrism. Second, the intrinsic value of each creature is not the same. Third, however, all creatures are bound to each other; thus, humans must not only care about the intrinsic value of individuals, but also the ecological value. Fourth, God permeates all nature and is present in every individual from protons to humans (Borrang 2019, p. 190). Elia Maggang saw something similar in narrowing down Elizabeth A. Johnson's view that all creations have intrinsic value and exist in an interconnected and interdependent relationship, all within the embrace of God's life-giving love. This connectedness and interdependence should be appreciated and celebrated. For Maggang, in the paradigm of the community of creation, all of God's creatures have a role and function for life together. So among them, none is higher in position than the others or more superior, but equal because all have intrinsic value. Maggang refers to Johnson's view that humans as one of the communities of creation really need other species. All creations, including the sea, are participants in the life that God created and sustains. Their existence in the world has the purpose of complementing each other, including making humans aware that humans are not creations but are also participants. Humans are equal to other creations (Maggang 2019, p. 179). Therefore, all of God's creations deserve respect, and their voices should be heard as part of the divine manifestation.

Being in the paradigm of the community of creation, affirms that the relationship between humans and the sea is not an anthropocentric subject-object relationship, but rather a subject-subject relationship where mutual dependence and interconnectedness are valued and celebrated. Respect and appreciation among participants are a must because not only humans, but the sea is also God's working partner for the life He created, Apituley emphasized (Apituley 2021, p. 368). Therefore, the church is required to play an active role in word and work in an effort to maintain the integrity of the sea through liberation and transformation in restoring the relationship between all creation.

Based on the above view, the Church has a responsibility to revitalize the relationship of all creation by preserving the marine ecosystem and creating the earth as a habitable place for every creation. The church should take concrete steps as an effort for transformation as follows:

First, establish active communication with the government and stakeholders in an effort to care for the marine ecosystem. Second, promote environmental management by organizing community-based initiatives, especially targeting church members and the community to engage in various activities that protect the marine ecosystem. These initiatives include educating the congregation and the community about the sustainability of the marine ecosystem, encouraging them to plant trees, and stopping over-fishing by using destructive tools, such as fish bombs, etc. Third, by involving environmentalists and holding environmental seminars with a Christian perspective, we can accurately inform the public about the Christian faith's responsibility to prevent damage to marine ecosystems. The church can actively contribute to making the world a better place for all creation and preserving marine ecosystems by adopting these steps in realizing a sustainable marine ecosystem (Awulle, et.al., 2018, p. 952).

In the context of the marine ecosystem, the church also plays a *Diakonia* role, namely providing appropriate solutions for the needs of fishing livelihoods at sea and assisting in the procurement of environmentally friendly fishing gear. In addition, the church also has an ecological responsibility to maintain the stability of the marine ecosystem and create the world as a habitable shared home. In this case, the church must understand that nature is God's creation that has intrinsic value and must be treated with respect (Awulle, et.al., 2018, p. 956). Maggang also sees that it makes sense to say that the destruction of the sea is the destruction of human life. According to Maggang, "blue diakonia" is a mission that recognizes and supports the sea as an active participant in the work of the Triune Spirit by accepting God's action of preserving and renewing, as well as feeding the poor and giving life to all who depend on the sea (Maggang 2022, p. 2).

Conclusion

The sea is a dominant reality and plays a crucial role in the lives of the island communities in Maluku. Its role needs to be understood deeply so that it can inspire efforts to create a just life between humans and others. This justice can occur when the church and society continuously emphasize the importance of an environmentally friendly lifestyle, following the strong ties with the island's nature. Therefore, the strong cosmological values must shift actions that tend to be anthropocentric, so that there is no shift in the customary values that have been instilled in land and sea. Both must be given balanced attention so that they have a holistic impact on human life.

The cosmology of the Hulaliu people about the sea should not limit the existence of the sea as a mere object. Still, rather a subject who will partner with God to create and fight for justice, then humans will be free from their anthropocentric perspective so that they will be more appreciative of other creations (nature) and a harmonious life will be created. Thus, the myth of ancestral spirits is neither animism nor paganism, but rather a representation of God through His creative power, involving Him in the pursuit of equality between God, humans, and nature. Thus, justice for ecology can be realized.

This research recommends that the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) should develop a theology that is oriented towards the sea, as part of the archipelago's identity, by incorporating local community beliefs that view nature as possessing a spiritual essence. Thus, nature is not seen as a satisfier of human needs, but as a relative. This is a source of contextual theology that the Protestant Church of Maluku can apply. These cultural values need to be used as sources of theological ideas at the Synod, Classic, and congregation levels.

Efforts to revitalize cosmological values must be seriously pursued in traditional forums. Traditional figures and the government must unite and build an ecological community from various levels of society that is based on the marine cosmology of the Hulaliu people. Therefore, the government needs to carry out its duties and functions that are pro-ecology and focus on human and natural welfare, while also showing work programs that are not detrimental to

society and the earth. In the context of today's massive ecological damage, efforts are being made to reconstruct biblical texts in a contextual manner as a response to addressing the various realities of ecological crises at the global, national, and regional levels. Both cultural narratives and biblical texts have riches that can be explored and dialogued together in studies that are oriented towards human and natural justice, by giving birth to contextual theological thoughts that are relevant and measurable for the church and society. An interdisciplinary approach between theology, sociology and ecology is needed to formulate a contextual theology that is relevant to the dynamics of indigenous peoples, natural resource conflicts and environmental crises. Further research will highlight best practices in the perspective of contextual theology that can be applied anywhere and anytime.

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