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ARCHIPELAGIC ECOTHEOLOGY
A Theology from Indonesian Indigenous Everydayness

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Abstract

The dominance of the green depicting Eurocentric, land-based colonial perspectives within the subfield of ecotheology has led to the neglect of crises affecting the sea. In response, blue ecotheology reflects a growing emphasis on marine and coastal communities within ecotheological discourse. Yet blue ecotheology has not adequately addressed the crucial issue of interconnectedness between land and sea communities, an entanglement pivotal for both causing and resolving ecological crises at sea. Therefore, this article proposes archipelagic ecotheology as a framework to elevate blue perspectives and simultaneously articulate a vision of interconnectedness between sea (blue) and land (green) communities as a unified planetary entity. This ecotheology draws inspiration from Indigenous Indonesian archipelagic everyday life, encapsulated in sayings such as that from Pantar Island: "tei kari dekang, sera bata ra'ung" (yams come down from the mountains, fish come up from the sea). Navigating archipelagic everydayness, I read the narrative of Jesus feeding the multitude with fish and loaves in Mark 6:30-44 from what will be defined as an ecopneumatological perspective, to construct an archipelagic ecotheology that begins with and aims for the living interactions between sea and land communities. This archipelagic ecotheology may serve as a model for ecotheological discourse that embraces the diverse ecological communities of our planet.

Keywords: ecotheology, Indonesian archipelago, sea, land, ecopneumatology, Mark 6:30–44

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EKOTEOLOGI ARKIPELAGIS
Sebuah Teologi dari Keseharian *Indigenous* Indonesia

Abstrak

Dominasi warna hijau yang menggambarkan perspektif Eropa-sentris yang kolonial dan berorientasi pada daratan dalam ekoteologi telah mengakibatkan pengabaian terhadap krisis di laut. Sebagai respons, ekoteologi biru muncul untuk memberi perhatian pada komunitas laut dan pesisir dalam diskursus ekoteologi. Tetapi, ekoteologi biru belum mampu menjawab isu krusial keterhubungan komunitas darat dan laut, padahal keterhubungan itu menentukan dalam menyebabkan dan mengatasi krisis ekologis di laut. Karena itu, artikel ini mengajukan ekoteologi arkipelagis untuk mengembangkan perspektif biru dan secara simultan mengartikulasikan visi keterhubungan komunitas laut (biru) dan darat (hijau) sebagai satu kesatuan entitas planetaris. Ekoteologi ini diinspirasi oleh keseharian arkipelagis komunitas adat Indonesia, yang terangkum dalam peribahasa seperti "*tei kari dekang, sera bata ra'ung*" (singkong turun dari gunung, ikan naik dari laut) dari Pulau Pantar. Dinavigasi keseharian arkipelagis, saya membaca kisah Yesus memberi makan orang banyak dengan ikan dan roti dalam Markus 6:30-44 dari perspektif ekopneumatologi untuk mengonstruksi sebuah ekoteologi arkipelagis yang dimulai dengan dan bermuara pada interaksi-interaksi menghidupkan antara komunitas-komunitas laut dan tanah. Ekoteologi arkipelagis ini dapat menjadi sebuah model bagi diskursus ekoteologi yang merangkul komunitas-komunitas ekologis yang beragam di planet ini.

Kata-kata Kunci: ekoteologi, archipelago Indonesia, laut, tanah, ekopneumatologi, Markus 6:30–44

Introduction

Ecotheology has grown in Indonesia as the ecological crisis has become a concern of Indonesian theologians since the 1990s. Robert P. Borrong, Karel Phil Erari, and Junus E. E. Inabuy are pioneers, to mention a few.[1] Yet, as a theological sub-discipline, ecotheology has just started to gain more attention in the last decade. Ecotheology now has its place in the theological curriculum in numerous institutions. Another signifier of its rising

[1] Robert P. Borrong, "Kronik Ekoteologi: Berteologi dalam Konteks Krisis Lingkungan," *Stulos* 17, no. 2 (2019): 193.

prominence is the growing number of academic books and papers published in international and (mostly) national academic journals.[2]

Like other global discourses, however, ecotheological discourse in Indonesia is patterned after the dominance of "the green," namely, the near-ubiquitous focus of land-based ecological crises symbolized by the color green.[3] Green itself is not the problem because it connotes an ecological reality of this planet that needs our attention. In Indonesia, for instance, green struggles are present, with mass deforestation and mining resulting in pollution and other damage to the land. Nevertheless, the conceptual domination of the green in ecotheology causes many problems, especially for a nation like Indonesia that has experienced literal colonial domination.[4] Green's discursive prevalence also hinders us from attending to crises at sea.[5] I would argue that this green domination also ignores the everyday relationship between the sea and humans—especially Indigenous communities, reflected in traditional and modern cultures that sustain the common life of all, since, as Sylvia Earle claims, there is no life on this planet without "the blue."[6] With around 70% of Indonesia's area being the sea, overlooking the sea is as unconscionable as endorsing the domination of anyone over another. Ignoring or dismissing the blue denies the very identity of Indonesia, also known as *Tanah Air* (land-water).

So it is necessary to discuss an ecotheology that embraces *Tanah Air* as a community of many particularities and to seek implementations of ecotheology to promote the sustainability of the archipelago. Green needs its fellow blue, among others. For that reason, as an Indonesian, I propose an archipelagic ecotheology that emerges from and works for our archipelagic everydayness in Indonesia. To arrive at such an ecotheological construction, I discuss two important concerns in respective

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[2] The number is high enough to warrant being taxonomized by Abel K. Aruan in "Postcolonial Typology: A Pedagogical Note on the Field of Ecotheology," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (2024): 1422.

[3] Elia Maggang, "Blue Disciple: A Christian Call for the Sea in Peril," *International Journal of Public Theology* 16, no. 3 (2022): 320–21; and Rebecca Watson, "The Sea and Ecology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Ecology*, ed. Hilary Marlow and Mark Harris (Oxford University Press, 2022), 324–25.

[4] Whitney Bauman, "Prismatic Identities in a Planetary Context," in *Ecological Solidarities: Mobilizing Faith and Justice for an Entangled World*, ed. Krista E. Hughes, Dhawn B. Martin, and Elia Padilla (Penn State University Press, 2019), 189–90.

[5] Richard Bauckham, "Being Human in the Community of Creation: A Biblical Perspective," in *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*, ed. Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett (Eerdmans, 2020), 15–16.

[6] Sylvia Earle, "Protect the Ocean, Protect Ourselves," in *Coastal Change, Ocean Conservation and Resilient Communities*, ed. Marcha Johnson and Amanda Bayley (Springer Cham, 2016), 156.

sections, which are blue ecotheology and the Indonesian archipelagic everydayness. In the first section, I demonstrate that blue ecotheology, while not comprehensive, is necessary to sail into the notion of an archipelagic ecotheology. In the section to follow, I discuss the significance of Indonesian archipelagic everydayness for constructing or even imagining a so-called Indonesian ecotheology. Both discussions help to build the argument in the final section that ecotheology should begin with and aim for living interactions among the sea and land communities. The five loaves and two fish in a pneumatological reading of the narrative of Jesus' feeding the multitude in Mark 6:30-44 sets the frame for such an archipelagic ecotheology.

On Blue Ecotheology

Indonesia covers more than 17,000 islands and 6.3 million square kilometers of maritime area, comprising nearly 100,000 kilometers of coastline.[7] The ecological significance of the sea for the country is manifest, as the Indonesian seas richly teem with marine biodiversity. At the center of the Coral Triangle, this maritime country is home to 16% of the world's total coral reefs[8] and 22.6% of all the world's mangroves.[9]

The Indonesian Sea, its inhabitants, and all that rely on its health suffer from ecological crises. The sea suffers from destructive fishing practices, climate change, and many forms of pollution.[10] Mangrove forests are in decline,[11] coral reefs have been damaged,[12] and diverse marine creatures have been poisoned by land-based pollutions.[13]

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[7] Subandono Diposaptono, *Membangun Poros Maritim Dunia dalam Perspektif Tata Ruang Laut* (Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Indonesia, 2017), 17.

[8] Lauretta Burke, Katie Reytar, and Mark Spalding, *Reefs at Risk Revisited in the Coral Triangle* (World Resource Institute, 2013), 26.

[9] C. Giri et al, "Status and Distribution of Mangrove Forests of the World Using Earth Observation Satellite Data," *Global Ecology and Biogeography* 20, no. 1 (2011): 157.

[10] Natasha Stacey et al, "Developing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries Livelihoods in Indonesia: Trends, Enabling and Constraining Factors, and Future Opportunities," *Marine Policy* 132 (2021): 1–2.

[11] V. B. Arifanti, "Mangrove Management and Climate Change: A Review in Indonesia," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 487 (2020): 012022.

[12] La Ode Muhammad Yasir Haya and Masahiko Fujii, "Assessment of Coral Reef Ecosystem Status in the Pangkajene and Kepulauan Regency, Spermonde Archipelago, Indonesia, Using the Rapid Appraisal for Fisheries and the Analytic Hierarchy Process," *Marine Policy* 118 (2020): 104028.

[13] Paul Vriend et al., "Plastic Pollution Research in Indonesia: State of Science and Future Research Directions to Reduce Impacts," *Frontiers in Environmental Science* 9 (2021): 692907.

At risk are over 2.5 million households that rely on the sea for their livelihood through mostly small-scale fishery.[14] Hardships faced by the seaside community are further compounded by the fact that the Indonesian government has not made the sea its development priority, nor has it shown adequate concern for the crisis.[15] At present the government does not have the adaptive capacity to deal with the impacts of climate change on coastal communities.[16] Likewise, Christian churches across the archipelago have paid little attention to the sea, in comparison with attention paid towards ecological crises on lands. In theological discourses, that lack of attention is depicted, for instance, in Yusak Budi Setyawan's article published in *Ecclesiology* in 2021.[17] Setyawan reinterprets ecclesiology through a Trinitarian ecotheological lens. Grounding his work of the economy of Trinity, he proposes that Indonesian churches should function as an ecological community to address Indonesia's environmental crisis, recognizing and embodying its identity as deeply connected to Indonesian society and traditional culture, where nature is highly respected. Unfortunately, as I demonstrate elsewhere, Setyawan's approach is predominantly land-focused, making his contribution applicable to only a third of Indonesia's ecological reality. While he discusses numerous environmental challenges on land and identifies deforestation as "the real ecological crisis issue" in Indonesia, he overlooks critical marine concerns and the struggles of traditional fishers.[18]

While Setyawan may not have intentionally disregarded marine and other environmental issues, his concept of an

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[14] Stacey et al., "Developing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries Livelihoods in Indonesia."

[15] Achmad Poernomo and Anastasia Kuswardani, "Ocean Policy Perspectives: The Case of Indonesia," in *Climate Change and Ocean Governance: Politics and Policy for Threatened Seas*, ed. Paul G. Harris (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 113–14; Naimah Lutfi Talib et al, "Three Centuries of Marine Governance in Indonesia: Path Dependence Impedes Sustainability," *Marine Policy* 143 (2022): 105171.

[16] Achmad Rizal and Zuzy Anna, "Climate Change and Its Possible Food Security Implications toward Indonesian Marine and Fisheries," *World News of Natural Science* 22 (2019): 119–28; Laely Nurhidayah and Alistair McIlgorm, "Coastal Adaptation Laws and the Social Justice of Policies to Address Sea Level Rise: An Indonesian Insight," *Ocean and Coastal Management* 171 (2019): 11–18.

[17] Yusak Budi Setyawan, "The Church as an Ecological Community: Practising Eco-Ecclesiology in the Ecological Crisis of Indonesia," *Ecclesiology* 17, no. 1 (2021): 91–107.

[18] Elia Maggang, "Injil Bagi Laut: Sebuah Ekoteologi Indonesia," in *Bumi, Laut, dan Keselamatan: Refleksi-refleksi Ekoteologi Kontekstual*, ed. Hans A. Harmakaputra, Toar B. Hutagalung, Indah Sriulina, dan Adrianus Yosia (BPK Gunung Mulia, 2022), 112–14.

ecological community seems predominantly shaped by a terrestrial perspective. Being attentive to green concerns is not ingerently problematic because Indonesia faces many land-centric issues. However, more Indonesian theologians ought to express awareness of blue concerns, as Agustina Raplina Samosir and Ejodia Kakunsi do in their eco-feminist theology of *Ibu Pertiwi*.[19]

While green is still conceptually dominant, blue is now a growing concern for Indonesian ecotheology. As far as I can trace back, theological attention to the sea was first registered in 1997 in the first volume of the *Setia* journal published by Persetia (Association of Theological Schools in Indonesia) featuring the special issue, "*Laut dan Lingkungan Hidup*" (The Sea and Environment). These concerns arise from acknowledgement that in archipelagic Indonesia, the sea must have a significant role to play in Indonesian theology.

That special issue should be regarded a preliminary theological investigation of the sea, rather than a sufficiently deep discussion on the theme. After demonstrating the significant role of marine ecosystems and the marine crisis caused by human activities, Borrong urges humanity, as *imago Dei* and partners of God, to act responsibly in protecting the sea.[20] From a maritime anthropological lens, Tom Therik highlights the coastal Indigenous practice of cultivating food from the sea as a sustainable method that benefits both the marine ecosystem and the coastal society, which ought to be considered in developing theological reflections.[21] Focusing on the social gift of the sea, H. Sapulete encourages embracing the characteristics of coastal people that are shaped by the sea—such as adaptability, curiosity, and openness to new relationships and experiences—as an expression of God's creative work for island communities and as the communities' way of life that brings praise to God (Isa. 42:10, 23:2; Ps. 104:6).[22] P. Tanamal examines the colonial influence on Indonesian Christianity and urges theologians to work on reinterpreting the gospel in accordance with our maritime cultural identity.[23] Finally, B. Fobia as New Testament scholar outlines the need to read and build reflections on biblical narratives associated with the sea to

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[19] Agustina Raplina Samosir and Ejodia Kakunsi, "Listen to the Earth, Listen to the Mother: Sebuah Usaha Ekofeminis untuk Merespons Rintihan Bumi," *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (2022): 69–70.

[20] Robert P. Borrong, "Laut dan Ekosistem yang Semakin Terancam," *Setia* 1 (1997): 22–32.

[21] Tom Therik, "Meramu Makanan dari Laut: Kearifan Masyarakat Pantai Rote di Semau," *Setia* 1 (1997): 76–91.

[22] H. Sapulete, "Laut sebagai Bagian dari Masyarakat Kepulauan," *Setia* 1 (1997): 5–10.

[23] P. Tanamal, "Penyebaran Injil dan Petualangan Laut Ekspedisi Portugis ke Indonesia," *Setia* 1 (1997): 11–21.

make our readings of the Bible more relevant to the country's maritime peoples.[24]

Those discussions aimed to spark further theological interest in marine issues but received little response, likely due to Indonesia's 1998 political turmoil and its aftermath. Nonetheless, the special issue demonstrates that Indonesian recognize the sea as relevant for doing theology within their context.

In the last decade, we see renewed focus on the sea within the context of ecological crisis. In 2014, Julianus Mojau expressed his concern about the marginal position of maritime communities by proposing the need for maritime theology as an effort to engage in theological reflection together with these communities.[25] For him, coastal and at-sea encounters between maritime peoples and God represent a religious experience with theological potential to contribute positively to reflections on both God and various aspects of life—including those of ecological import, which he would address ten years later in a professorship oration.[26]

In an extensive 2022 study, Margaretha M. A. Apituley brings together the cultural meanings of the sea within the cosmologies of the Titawaai people of Maluku and of ancient Israel into dialogue with the liberation narrative of Exodus 14–15. Apituley portrays the sea as a mother participating in God's life-giving and liberating works in all aspects of human life, including ecology in particular.[27]

Some of my own recent academic works seek to address the marine ecological crisis. I explicitly employs the notion of the blue to emphasize the significance of the sea, reflecting in my concepts of *blue* discipleship and *blue* diakonia.[28] In weaving biblical, pneumatological, and Indigenous Indonesian perspectives, I argue that the sea is a Subject, a servant (*diakonos*) in relation to the Creation in which God dwells and empowers participation in God's life-giving and renewing works. In these contributions, I stress that humans and the sea are co-participants in God's works and that humans must work with the sea to sustain life for all.

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[24] B. Fobia, "Yesus dan Badai Laut," *Setia* 1 (1997).

[25] Julianus Mojau, "Teologi Maritim: Suatu Pergulatan Teologis bersama Masyarakat Maritim," *Berita Oikoumene*, 2014.

[26] Julianus Mojau, *Demokrasi Indonesia dan Keadilan Keragaman Hayati Indonesia: Pertanggungjawaban Kesalehan Sosial-Ekologis Keindonesiaan* (Yayasan Taman Pustaka Kristen Indonesia, 2024).

[27] Apituley, *Teologi Laut: Mendialogkan Makna Laut dalam Keluaran 14-15 Berdasarkan Kosmologi Masyarakat Titawaai di Pulau Nusalaut – Maluku dengan Kosmologi Israel Kuno* (BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021).

[28] Maggang, "Blue Disciple: A Christian Call for the Sea in Peril;" Elia Maggang, "Blue Diakonia: The Mission of Indonesian Churches for and with the Sea," *Practical Theology* 16, no. 1 (2023): 43–54.

Blue ecotheology is necessary, therefore, because it speaks of the sea and its ecological crisis. However, blue ecotheology has some limitations. It too risks marginalizing other pressing ecological concerns on land because by focusing predominantly on marine and coastal issues. Furthermore, blue theology is able to situate marine issues as concerns only for coastal communities. Due to these limitations, blue ecotheology fails to address the fact that most sea pollution originates from inland areas,[29] meaning that addressing the ecological crisis at sea cannot succeed without involving inland communities. Blue ecotheology also does not fully account for Indonesia's archipelagic reality, in which the sea and land are inseparable. This archipelagic reality, as I elaborate in the next section, does not permit the domination of the green over the blue, nor the blue over the green.

Blue ecotheology advocates argue that to prevent such domination, we need to highlight the blue. That is true, but only if we do not stop at the blue, as Indonesia's archipelagic reality does not speak merely of two separate realms—blue and green—but of their continuous interactions, along with their inhabitants, as I discuss in the next section.

On Archipelagic Everydayness

As both designation and descriptor, the term *archipelago* epitomizes Indonesia. In Bahasa Indonesia, the word archipelago is often translated as *nusantara,* which comes from the two words *nusa* (island) and *antara* (in between).[30] However, this translation betrays a reversal of etymological nuance, in that the term archipelago technically emphasizes the sea, with islands conceptually entering later. Initially coined as *arcipelago* in Italian, the word consists of *arci* (chief, principal) and *pelago* (pool, gulf, abyss), both deriving from Greek to render as "principal sea."[31] Thus, archipelago highlights the status of a given body of water, such as the Aegean Sea, eventually evolving to connote the prevalence of islands grouped together in a maritime region. Based on that etymological perspective, Oxford English Dictionary provides two historical uses of the term: first, the aforementioned Aegean Sea "between Greece and Asia Minor" and, second, "[a]ny sea, or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands;

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[29] Matt Landos, Mariann Lloyd Smith, and Joanna Immig, *Aquatic Pollutants in Oceans and Fisheries* (International Pollutants Elimination Network [IPEN], 2021), 12.

[30] Hans Dieter Evers, "Nusantara: History of a Concept," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 89, no. 1 (2016): 4.

[31] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Archipelago," accessed 2 March 2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/archipelago_n?tl=true&tab=etymology#39972141.

and *transferred* a group of islands."[32] Therefore, the father of Indonesian maritime history, A. B. Lapian, is right to critique the use of *nusantara* as a translation for *archipelago* because the Indonesian term puts emphasis on (is)lands; he also pointed out that, unlike the singular main sea implied in the term *archipelago*, Indonesia has three primary seas: the Java Sea, Flores Sea, and Banda Sea.[33]

To summarize, *archipelago* arguably portrays Indonesia more suitably as both blue and green than what *nusantara* accomplishes. The latter risks portraying the sea as empty or insignificant. While contemporary usage of *archipelago* still does not fully encapsulate the plurality of Indonesia's maritime domains, it is more appropriate to speak of Indonesia as a unified entity of the seas and (is)lands. Unlike *nusantara*, which conceptualizes Indonesia from a land-based perspective, *archipelago* highlights the sea as the starting point for imagining and understanding Indonesia. The quality of being archipelagic recognizes the sea's existence and agency as fundamental to the making of Indonesia and Indonesia's identity as islands united, with the seas to connect them. At the same time, while *archipelago* begins with the sea and embraces maritime and oceanic contributions, it integrates islands with inland territories as essential components of Indonesia's comprehensive reality. In that sense, *archipelago* encapsulates Indonesia as a whole.

Beyond the connectedness of elements—of nature, sea, and land—the Indonesian archipelago represents the *everydayness* of dynamic interactions within and among the multiple ecoregions comprising its biodiversity. Sustaining a meta-ecological understanding helps us perceive human life and environmental nature as theologically inseparable. Considering the interactions of Indonesians in coastal and inland areas, valleys, and mountains, we can glimpse what Michael Marker would term the *agency* of Indonesia's seas and lands through the emergence of human agency.[34] Jerry Lee Rosiek, Jimmy Snyder, and Scott L. Pratt summarize Marker's perspective compellingly: "Sometimes the land enables the agency of the human, and sometimes the human

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[32] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Archipelago." The *OED*'s use of "transferred" reflects metonymy where the meaning of one thing (sea) stands in for another (islands).

[33] A. B. Lapian, "Laut, Pasar dan Komunikasi Antar-Budaya" (paper presented at Kongres Nasional Sejarah 1996).

[34] The perspective I offer aligns with Marker's claims, based on his observations of the cosmology of the Indigenous Coast Salish communities in the Pacific Northwest region of North America. See Michael Marker, "There Is no *Place of Nature*; There Is only the *Nature of Place*: Animate Landscapes as Methodology for Inquiry in the Coast Salish Territory," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 31, no. 6 (2018): 453–64.

becomes the extension of the agency of the land."[35] On one hand, nature shapes living beings, including the people of Indonesia. On the other hand, Indonesians also shape nature—at times literally, for instance, through terraced rice fields, which reflect human responses to environmental nature based on agricultural needs.

In Indonesia's coastal regions, such interactions can be seen in the *Mulung* tradition, a maritime practice of the Indigenous Baranusa people in West Pantar, Alor Regency, dating back to the 15th century.[36] In the local Baranusa language, *mulung* means "prohibition" and refers to a restriction on marine resource utilization within a designated area, such as fishing or harvesting seafood. The practice begins with the *hading mulung* ritual, which involves closing off an area for marine activities by erecting a pole as a marker, accompanied by an oath. This restriction typically lasts for one year, after which the *hoba mulung* ritual is performed to reopen the area for marine activities.[37]

The *Mulung* tradition has proven effective in promoting sustainable marine resource management. Economically, it benefits fishers and traders, while also ensuring the availability of seafood for the broader community. Most importantly, in terms of conservation efforts, this Indigenous wisdom allows marine ecosystems time and space for natural recovery.[38] Thus, we can understand *mulung* as a human response to the agency of the sea. Simultaneously, the sea shapes human agency, fostering coexistence, sustainable stewardship, and a deepened understanding of marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

However, interactions of *everydayness* within the Indonesian *archipelago* are not solely confined to localized exchanges. The most distinctive characteristic of the *archipelago* is its trans-local interactions. This characteristic is reflected in a poetic phrase from the Indigenous community of Pantar Island: *"tei kari dekang, sera bata ra'ung"* (yams come down from the mountains, fish

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[35] Jerry Lee Rosiek, Jimmy Snyder, and Scott L. Pratt, "The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 3–4 (2020): 338.

[36] Paulus Edison Plaimo, Imanuel Lama Wabang, and Isak Feridikson Alelang, "Pola Pemahaman Masyarakat Pesisir Baranusa mengenai Kearifan Lokal Tradisi Mulung," *Geography: Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2020): 58.

[37] Paulus Edison Plaimo, Imanuel Lama Wabang, and Isak Feridikson Alelang, "Upaya Mengembalikan Tradisi Budaya Mulung Masyarakat Adat Baranusa menuju Pengelolaan Sumberdaya Perairan Berwawasan Lingkungan," *Jurnal Masyarakat Mandiri* 4, no. 2 (2020): 257.

[38] Plaimo, Wabang, and Alelang, "Upaya Mengembalikan Tradisi Budaya Mulung Masyarakat Adat Baranusa," 257–58.

come up from the sea).[39] This daily phrase illustrates the interconnectedness between highland and coastal communities through the exchange of life-sustaining food. Coastal communities interact with the sea to provide fish, while mountain communities engage with the land to cultivate yams. However, these food resources are not confined to their respective localities; they are shared across communities. On the same plate, fish and yams coexist to sustain life. This reflects the *everyday* reality of the *archipelago*.

It is important to note that this *archipelagic* interaction is not unique to the Pantar Island community. Similar interaction is widespread throughout the Indonesian archipelago. A popular proverb in Indonesia *"asam di gunung, garam di laut, bertemu dalam belanga"* (tamarind from the mountains, salt from the sea, meet in the pot) echoes that common interaction. While this proverb is used to describe human relationships in marriage,[40] it is inspired by tangible interaction between coastal and mountain communities. This interaction is not limited to human exchanges but also encompasses the relationships between tamarind, salt, land, and sea. The proverb captures the daily interaction of two distinct localities, which is also celebrated as a metaphor for human life and joy. However, this trans-local interaction extends beyond just two places, as salt and tamarind are produced and exchanged among diverse coastal and inland communities in the same or different islands. The agency of humans exists within an interconnected web of plural agencies—of salt, tamarind, trees, the sea, and the land—that transcend multiple localities.

I define the interconnectedness and interaction of archipelagic inhabitants to support their common life, as expressed in their daily lives, as *archipelagic everydayness*. This everydayness can serve as a foundation for constructing an Indonesian ecotheology that embraces the full scope of the interwoven realities of Indonesia—a perspective I discuss further in the following section.

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[39] This phrase comes from the Mauta language spoken on Pantar Island. It is used in daily conversations of people not only from Mauta Village but also from neighboring villages, even though they speak different languages. Typically, under the Lontar (Palmyra palm) trees in a small settlement called To'ang near the coast, people from both the mountainous and coastal areas gather to exchange yams and fish (I am grateful to Fedi Rikson Jella Bing, who introduced this phrase to me when we met at our church youth annual meeting in June 2024).

[40] Cf. Rina Martiara, *Cangget: Identitas Kultural Lampung sebagai Bagian dari Keragaman Budaya Indonesia* (Badan Penerbit ISI Yogyakarta, 2014), 269.

On Archipelagic Everydayness

The Indonesian archipelagic everydayness discussed above discloses the agency of non-human elements in creation, resonating with biblical narratives that connote the agency of land and sea. God empowers those elements and entrusts them with some roles as God commands the waters to "bring forth swarms of living creatures" (Gen. 1:20) and the earth to "bring forth living creatures of every kind" (Gen. 1:24). In her reading of Old Testament texts through the lens of a new animistic perspective, Mari Joerstad highlights the personal agency of non-human living beings and elements of life. In the story of Cain and Abel, for instance, Joerstad emphasizes that the ground is explicitly portrayed as an active subject that intervenes when humans act wickedly. The ground opens its mouth, receives Abel's blood from Cain's hand, and refuses to yield its produce to Cain (Genesis 4:11-12). According to Joerstad, these three expressions indicate that "[t]he ground is not a passive tool that God manipulates to judge or reward; it is a creature that participates in God's interactions with humans."[41]

Drawing on Indigenous worldviews that regard water as a living entity with its own voice, Barbara R. Rossing interprets the Book of Revelation, particularly Revelation 16:4-7, within the context of water pollution. She highlights the agency of water in God's work, demonstrating that water itself cries out against oppressors who contaminate it through violence and bloodshed.[42] Regarding the Red Sea specifically, Apituley in her aforementioned study contends that the waters play a crucial role in Israel's liberation from Egyptian slavery and thus bring new life to the people of Israel (Ex. 14:15-31). Moreover, the Red Sea actively ensures this particular end of Egyptian oppression by closing itself to drown the Pharaoh and his army.[43] Yet, while Apituley emphasizes the hand of God in drying the sea and returning the sea to its place after the crossing, Rebecca Watson and Meric Srokosz offer an alternative reading that highlights the sea's active role as a subject in the narrative. They say, the sea opens itself, "being pilled-up or dried" to allow the Israelites to cross.[44] Hence, from both biblical and Indonesian archipelagic perspectives, the

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[41] Mari Joerstad, *The Hebrew Bible and Environmental Ethics: Humans, Nonhumans, and the Living Landscape* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 58–60.

[42] Barbara R. Rossing, "Waters Cry Out: Water Protectors, Watershed Justice, and the Voice of the Waters," in *Decolonizing Ecotheology: Indigenous and Subaltern Challenges*, ed. S. Lily Mendoza and George Zachariah (Pickwick Publications, 2022), 39–57.

[43] Apituley, *Teologi Laut*, 413–22.

[44] Meric Srokosz and Rebecca Watson, *Blue Planet, Blue God: The Bible and the Sea* (SCM Press, 2017), 3.

sea and land play active roles in God's work of giving and sustaining life, a life free from oppression.

This perspective on non-human agency is further grounded in the Spirit's work, as expressed in Psalm 104:30, which informs the development of ecopneumatology. For instance, Jürgen Moltmann argues that the Spirit "is the life-force of created beings and the living space in which they can grow and develop their potentialities."[45] Similarly, Denis Edwards asserts that "the Spirit also mysteriously empowers creation from within."[46] In the same vein, Grace Ji-Sun Kim says that "the Spirit is God, and no one community can hold it or possess it"—in other words, the Spirit is in but not limited to Christian communities, insofar as the Spirit is in the cosmos, empowering and "moving and working within" all created beings.[47]

Sigurd Bergmann further emphasizes the Spirit's role in God's salvific work through inhabitation. For Bergmann, Psalm 104:30 attests to the Spirit inhabiting and transforming creation from within, working across all spaces and places.[48] This perspective stems from Bergmann's attempt to understand the distinct yet inseparable works of the Son and the Spirit in the Triune God's mission. Drawing on Exodus 25:8 and John 1:14, which highlight God's desire to dwell within creation—fully realized in Christ—Bergmann argues that, following Christ's incarnation, the Spirit continues to dwell within creation to fulfil God's redemptive mission. According to René Padilla's meditation on Luke 4:18-19, "the purpose of the anointing of the Spirit is the fulfilment of Jesus' messianic mission" for the most vulnerable, including non-human creatures.[49] With these perspectives, ecopneumatology speaks of the Spirit's work for and within creation, empowering created beings to participate in the Spirit's life-giving and renewing work.[50]

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[45] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (SCM Press, 1992), 84.

[46] Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Orbis Books, 2014), 110–12.

[47] Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Reimagining Spirit: Wind, Breath, and Vibration* (Cascade Books, 2019), 2.

[48] Sigurd Bergmann, "Fetishism Revisited: In the Animistic Lens of Eco-Pneumatology," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 6, no. 3 (2012): 206.

[49] C. René Padilla, "The Holy Spirit: Power for Life and Hope," in *The Spirit over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Langham Global Library, 2016), 172.

[50] I depart from Bergmann's view to argue that the Spirit facilitates the Son's work by empowering created beings to participate in Jesus' ministry. Elia Maggang, "A Trinitarian Pneumatology of the Indonesian Maritime," PhD diss., (The University of Manchester, UK, 2022), 206.

While the biblical and ecopneumatological perspectives outlined above provide a theological basis for recognizing the agency of the sea and land in archipelagic everyday life, they have not yet addressed the interaction between sea and land, which is central to the present argument. Nevertheless, these perspectives serve as my point of departure to construct an ecotheology that articulates the archipelagic everydayness of Indonesia. Therefore, in what follows, I explore this issue further through an ecopneumatological reading of the feeding narrative in the Gospel of Mark to offer a constructive understanding of archipelagic everydayness as an ecotheology of Indonesia—that is, an archipelagic ecotheology where the sea and land and their interaction participate in God's life-giving work.

The feeding narrative in the text of Mark 6:30-44, which tells of Jesus' compassion for the gathered Galileans who had been subjected to the Roman Empire's economic systems, also demonstrates Christ's resistance to that imperial system. Raj Nadella asserts that in this story, Jesus resists the centripetal movement of resources within the Roman Empire, which benefited the ruling elites by exploiting and oppressing Galilean villagers, among others. Through the act of feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fish, Jesus instead demonstrates an economy of sharing—as a centrifugal movement of resources to benefit all people.[51]

Yet a critical aspect of the narrative is Jesus' initial command to the disciples to feed the multitude. How do we make ecological sense of this narrative? First, the narrative suggests resonances with the causes of today's ecological crises. While we submit that Jesus' act was not motivated by ecological concerns, history shows that ecological destruction arises from systems like that of Rome, which was structured to benefit only a small group of elites.[52] Today, most of the profit from natural resource extraction, industrial agriculture, and modern fisheries similarly end up in the hands of elites, while the environment deteriorates and local communities suffer, especially the poor who are dependent on the affected environments.

Second, the Markan narrative highlights the agency of non-human creation and its collective role in participating in God's work through multiple points of interaction. Mark's telling

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[51] Raj Nadella, "The Two Banquets: Mark's Vision of Anti-Imperial Economics," *Interpretation* 70, no. 2 (2016): 172–74.

[52] Cf. Andrew Shepherd, "Being 'Rich towards God' in the Capitalocene: An Ecological/Economic Reading of Luke 12.13-34," *The Bible Translator* 70, no. 3 (2019): 234.

primarily focuses on human actors yet includes the sea,[53] land, fish, plants, and other organic material (represented by the loaves) as participants interacting with Jesus' action. The biblical and ecopneumatological perspectives outlined earlier affirm the agency of these creatures and natural elements within the five loaves that come from land (the green) and two fish that come from the sea (the blue). Both green and blue, together, are called to participate in God's life-giving work, empowered by the Spirit to serve in a particular way, by their interaction to feed the multitude. Unlike the Roman system that benefits only a privileged few, the Spirit's empowerment sustains all life. In this way, living creatures and elements of nature joyfully praise and glorify God as they are given space to participate in God's life-giving work through their interaction. The Spirit's empowering work enables the region of Galilee, both land and sea, to take part in Jesus' mission to feed all people, particularly the oppressed and vulnerable. Through his blessing of this interaction within his hands, Jesus affirms the agency of both land and sea in God's work.

Finally, the narrative emphasizes human agency within this archipelagic interaction as a calling for Jesus' followers. His command to the disciples to feed the multitude clearly underscores the role of human agency in his mission. The act of feeding to sustain the multitude is a cooperative act between humans and non-humans for the sake of life.[54] Ernst M. Conradie asserts that humans and some other creatures relate to one another through eating—to eat and be eaten—in the interest of allowing life to flourish.[55] Hence, to feed is an interaction of humans and non-humans that enables flourishing.

Moreover, the act of feeding itself is an act of life, as it points to the source of food. As the disciples obey Jesus' command, the interaction between sea and land takes place in his hands. However, the disciples are not the sole agents in making this happen. The food from both the sea and land of Galilee is available

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[53] Elsewhere I discuss naming the Sea of Galilee qua sea (*thalassa*, following Evangelists Mark, Matthew, and John) instead of as lake (*limne*) in Maggang, "Blue Disciple: A Christian Call for the Sea in Peril," 332 and Elia Maggang, "Emphasizing Fish, Fisher, and Sea for the Mission of Christian Churches in the Context of the Marine Ecological Crisis: A Response to the Ten Commandments of Food," *Mission Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 17.

[54] A fruitful discussion could be had regarding the presence of Jesus' disciples and the non-human beings (loaves and fishes) as forms of "agency" that made Jesus' feeding ministry possible. However, due to the limitations of this article, my focus is on the agencies of Galilee's waters and land, and their interaction.

[55] Ernst M. Conradie, "To Eat or Be Eaten? That's the Question," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Nature: The Elements*, ed. Laura Hobgood and Whitney Bauman (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 77.

because of the work of fishers and farmers. The interaction of farmers and fishers with the land and sea lead to the provision of food in Jesus' hands. At this point, we see that human agency is crucial, as it extends the agency of the sea and land through their interaction. This is the kind of human agency that Jesus expects from all his followers, including farmers and fishers.[56] In this reading, the feeding narrative outlines archipelagic ecotheology as an ecotheology that emphasizes the importance of agency and interaction between sea and land communities, the blue and green ecologies. Elements of nature and living creatures cooperate in dynamic interaction. None of them is an object to exploit and commodify because each of them has something to share. This interaction fosters life through the Spirit's creative and renewing work. There is no space where the Spirit is not at that creative and renewing work; there is no life without the Spirit's work. The green matters, and so does the blue. Most importantly, the blue-green interaction matters. They all matter because the Spirit dwells in and works from within each community, as well as their interaction, to give and renew life for all.

Accordingly, the interconnectedness of both communities must support life held in common. The land community works for its own sustenance, but not in isolation. While striving for its own well-being, it must ensure that its actions do not threaten the life of the sea community. Instead, the life that the land community cultivates and celebrates must also bring life to the sea community. The same principle applies to the sea community, which must work for and celebrate not only its own life but also the life of land communities. As this archipelagic interaction continues, the commonality and everydayness of blue-green life prevail.

This means that ecotheology should both begin with and aim for living interactions between sea and land communities. It should not be the domination of one over others because the Spirit dwells in and works from within these archipelagic interactions to fulfil God's redemptive mission, which Jesus establishes through his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, as attested in Scripture. In this archipelagic ecotheology, the Indigenous proverb *"tei kari dekang, sera bata ra'ung"* (yams come down from the mountains, fish come up from the sea) becomes a living everyday expression of the Spirit's work in Pantar Island and other communities in the archipelago. It can also serve as an everyday expression for the communities across the planet, reflecting the interconnectedness of all life. As Earle reminds us, "with every drop of water you drink,

[56] Cf. my discussion on the importance of including farmers and fishers in God's mission to address food insecurity in Maggang "Emphasizing Fish, Fisher, and Sea for the Mission of Christian Churches."

every breath you take, you're connected to the sea—no matter where on Earth you live."[57]

Archipelagic ecotheology presents an invitation to embrace the blue and green realities of planet Earth in academic theological discourse. Jesus' command to his disciples to feed the multitude is also a call to theologians and academic institutions. Just as the disciples fulfilled this command by working together with the land and sea communities in Galilee, theologians and academic institutions can do so by engaging in discourse and developing archipelagic ecotheology as a way of collaborating with sea and land communities as our academic everydayness.[58]

Conclusion

Upon demonstrating the importance of doing ecotheology in ways that embrace both the green and blue realities of our planet, I have proposed archipelagic ecotheology for that purpose. Archipelagic ecotheology, which may be called "inter-contextual theology" in a broader theological discourse, emerges from the everyday life of the Indonesian archipelago, where sea and land communities interact to sustain life for all. This daily interaction is rooted in Jesus' ministry of feeding the multitude with food provided by the sea and land communities of Galilee. The participation of non-human creatures and natural elements is made possible by the empowering work of the Spirit, experienced both in Galilee and the Indonesian archipelago.

Archipelagic ecotheology is, therefore, a method of doing ecotheology that respects and creates space for the participation of both blue and green communities in God's work of giving and renewing life. It is true that archipelagic ecotheology arises from a specific ecological context, namely, Indonesia. While one might argue that this idea applies only to that archipelago, the fact is that the geological composition and daily interconnectedness of those seas and (is)lands being conceptualized as the Indonesian archipelago already mirror those of our blue planet. Ergo, archipelagic ecotheology has the potential to be developed further as a model for ecotheological discourse that embraces the diverse ecological communities of the world. Hence, it is an open invitation

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[57] Earle, "Protect the Ocean, Protect Ourselves," 156.

[58] In Indonesia, Jakarta Theological Seminary has set its course in that direction through its institutional concept of "Green Campus, Blue Seminary." See Septemmy Eucharistia Lakawa, "Toward a Blue Missiology: Theological Education as Eco-Missional Formation," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 40, no. 3 (2023): 232–44. Similarly, the theological postgraduate program at Artha Wacana Christian University, where I teach, has established a new curriculum that focuses on green and blue communities and their interactions as key characteristics of its contextual theology.

for theologians and theological institutions to engage in and develop archipelagic ecotheology, as Jesus' command remains the same: "You give them something to eat" and the Spirit is at work on empowering sea and land communities and their interaction to give and renew life for all.

About the Author

Elia Maggang holds a PhD from the University of Manchester, UK. Based in Indonesia, his theological work revolves around the intersections of Christianity and Indigenous traditions, especially their theology and practice regarding the sea and humans' relationship with the sea and land.

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