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THE ECO-THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ATA LONG: CONSTRUCTING LOCAL WISDOM AS A RESPONSE TO INDONESIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

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Abstracts:

Indonesia is experiencing environmental degradation across multiple sectors. This degradation is driven by economic pressures and intensified by an anthropocentric paradigm that places humans at the center of creation. Such a paradigm weakens the spiritual relationship between humans and the natural world by disregarding their common origin and destiny in God as Creator and Sustainer. Mitigation efforts often prove ineffective because they overlook local cultural values that sustain ecological balance. This article examines the concept of Ata Long in Manggarai culture as a source of ecological wisdom. The study employs an ethnographic method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and field observations. Informants were selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using a contextual theological approach, which integrates Catholic teaching with the local Manggarai cosmology. The findings show that Ata Long views humans as "guests on earth." This concept affirms a reciprocal relationship between humans and other creatures. It also rejects human domination over nature. The study further reveals that human well-being is directly linked to environmental sustainability. The ecological-theological values embedded in Ata Long enrich Catholic ecotheology through a relational and inclusive perspective. In conclusion, Ata Long offers a locally rooted theological model that is relevant for addressing environmental crises in Indonesia.

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Ata Long; Ecotheology; Manggarai Culture; Contextual Theology; Environmental Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The global ecological crisis poses a serious threat to human life's sustainability. Climate change, environmental degradation, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity have increased on a massive scale. Their impacts are evident in rising levels of poverty, social inequality, and the vulnerability of local communities.[1, 2, 3, 4] These conditions indicate that the ecological crisis is not merely related to the physical destruction of the environment but also encompasses moral and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, ecological issues require a new, contextual theological approach that is capable of responding to contemporary transformations.

The anthropocentric paradigm is a root cause of ecological problems. This paradigm places human beings at the center of creation and as holders of power over nature. Within this framework, humans are considered to possess intrinsic value, whereas other creatures are viewed as having purely instrumental value.[5, 6, 7] Such a perspective reinforces the logic of domination and exploitation of nature and accelerates ecosystem

1 Ali Chamas et al., "Degradation Rates of Plastics in the Environment," *ACS Sustainable Chemistry & Engineering* 8, no. 9 (2020): 3494–3511.

2 Nor Fasihah Zaaba and Mariatti Jaafar, "A Review on Degradation Mechanisms of Polylactic Acid: Hydrolytic, Photodegradative, Microbial, and Enzymatic Degradation," *Polymer Engineering & Science* 60, no. 9 (2020): 2061–75.

3 Valeria Piñeiro et al., "A Scoping Review on Incentives for Adoption of Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Their Outcomes," *Nature Sustainability* 3, no. 10 (2020): 809–20.

4 Mervan Selcuk, Sakir Gormus, and Murat Guven, "Do Agriculture Activities Matter for Environmental Kuznets Curve in the Next Eleven Countries?," *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 28, no. 39 (2021): 55623–33.

5 Chelsea Batavia, "Is Anthropocentrism Really the Problem?," *Animal Sentience* 4, no. 27 (2020): 20.

6 Helen Kopnina, "Anthropocentrism and Post-Humanism," *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* 1 (2019): 1–8.

7 Paweł Fortuna, Zbigniew Wróblewski, and Oleg Gorbaniuk, "The Structure and Correlates of Anthropocentrism as a Psychological Construct," *Current Psychology* 42, no. 5 (2023): 3630–42.

damage. Religious traditions, including Christianity, are often accused of contributing to this worldview. White and Roccia argue that interpretations of Genesis 1:26 and 1:28 have become theological foundations for anthropocentrism.[8, 9] Many interpreters use these texts to legitimize human authority over creation.[10, 11] The consequence is the emergence of hierarchical relations between humans and other creatures, creating space for environmental exploitation.

Culture also reinforces hierarchical worldviews. Certain cultural systems position humans as the supreme rulers within the structure of the cosmos. The term "indigenous," for instance, is often interpreted as granting legitimate ownership over land and natural resources, which can be used to justify exploitative practices.[12] In the modern context, land certification and state–capital collaborations further intensify the commodification of nature, particularly through economic mechanisms that treat the environment as a market object.[13, 14, 15]

However, religion and culture are not merely part of the problem; both also contain transformative potential for ecological restoration. The Catholic Church emphasizes humanity's responsibility to care for creation as God's work.[16] Humans are called to develop creation sustainably and

8 John F Haught, "Christianity and Ecology," in *This Sacred Earth* (Routledge, 2003), 232–47.

9 Mariana Roccia, "Christianity and Anthropogenic Climate Change: A Broad Overview of the Catholic Church's Response and Some Reflections for the Future," *Religions* 15, no. 6 (2024): 690.

10 Walter Brueggemann and Yosef Maria Florisan, *Teologi Perjanjian Lama: Kesaksian, Tangkisan, Pembelaan* (Ledalero, 2009).

11 P A L Dipanwita, "Christianity and Anthropocentrism within the Poems of Oodgeroo Noonuccal," *SCIENTIA MORALITAS-International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 7, no. 1 (2022): 128–37.

12 Munauwarah Munauwarah, "Konflik Kepentingan Dalam Perebutan Lahan Pertambangan Di Kabupaten Luwu Timur Antara Masyarakat Adat To Karunsi'e Dengan PT. Vale Indonesia," *The Politics: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Politik Universitas Hasanuddin* 2, no. 2 (2016): 132–46.

13 Rizal Akbar Aldyan, "The Effect of Globalization and Capitalism on Forest Damage in Indonesia," *Diadikasia Journal* 1, no. 1 (2020): 1–9.

14 G. Reisman, *Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics* (Illinois: Jameson Books., 1990).

15 Muhammad Shahbaz et al., "Does Globalisation Worsen Environmental Quality in Developed Economies?," *Environmental Modeling & Assessment* 23, no. 2 (2018): 141–56.

16 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2015).

guide all realities toward divine perfection.[17] Hughes affirms that all creatures possess inherent value because they originate from God.[18] Douglas and Drees even encourage the development of green religion and green faith as foundations of contemporary ecological spirituality.[19, 20]

Studies on ecological wisdom in local cultures have also expanded. Sufia, Sumarmi, and Amirudin show that the Rebo Wekasan ritual conveys moral messages about the balance between human nature and the natural world.[21] Denar, Juhani, and Riyanto find that the Roko Molas Poco ritual affirms respect for other creatures.[22] Putra and Wahyuni demonstrate that the Tumpek Wariga ceremony regulates harmonious relations between humans and the natural world.[23] These findings highlight the significance of local cultures as sources of ecological ethics.

Within this framework, Manggarai culture offers a distinctive ecological perspective through the theology of *Ata Long*. This theology views humans as "guests on earth," living in reciprocal relationships with other creatures and possessing no superiority over nature. Such a perspective critiques anthropocentrism and opens space for more egalitarian and relational ecological frameworks. However, scholarly investigations into the ecotheological values of *Ata Long* as a resource for contextual ecological theology remain limited. This gap forms the basis of the scientific novelty of this article.

17 Luke Emehielechukwu Ijezie, "Vocation of Humanity in Genesis 2-3 and Its Implications for Eco-Theology in Africa," *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2021): 1–6.

18 Rachel C Hughes, "Beyond Rationality: Replacing the Anthropocentric Pyramid with a Theocentric Circle," *Undergraduate Research (Journal)* 2, no. 1 (2022): 7.

19 Ian Douglas et al., "Unjust Waters: Climate Change, Flooding and the Urban Poor in Africa," *Environment and Urbanization* 20, no. 1 (2008): 187–205.

20 Willem B Drees, "The Ambitions of Wizards and the Warnings of Prophets: Religious Guidance on Climate Change?," *Zygon* 59, no. 1 (2024): 37–51.

21 Rohana Sufia, Sumarmi Sumarmi, and Ach Amirudin, "Kearifan Lokal Dalam Melestarikan Lingkungan Hidup (Studi Kasus Masyarakat Adat Desa Kemiren Kecamatan Glagah Kabupaten Banyuwangi)" (State University of Malang, 2016).

22 Benny Denar, Sefrianus Juhani, and Armada Riyanto, "Ecotheological Dimensions of Roko Molas Poco in the Tradition of Making Traditional Houses of the Manggarai Community-NTT," *Journal of Asian Orientation in Theology* 3, no. 1 (2021): 59–88.

23 I Wayan Sunampan Putra and Gusti Ayu Agung Sri Wahyuni, "Etika Lingkungan Dalam Upacara Tumpek Wariga Pada Masyarakat Bali," *ŚRUTI: Jurnal Agama Hindu* 1, no. 2 (2021): 141–54.

The novelty of this research lies in constructing the ecotheological values of *Ata Long* as a theological proposal grounded in local wisdom to respond to environmental degradation in Indonesia. This study enriches Catholic ecotheology through the integration of Manggarai cosmology, which has been largely unexplored in previous research.

Based on this framework, this study seeks to answer the following question: how can Ata Long's theology contribute to the development of a paradigmatic model of Catholic ecotheology rooted in Manggarai local wisdom? Specifically, this research aims to formulate a contextual–theological model that is not merely analytical but transformative: a paradigmatic framework that reinterprets Catholic doctrine in dialogue with Manggarai cosmology in order to generate ethical orientation and practical responses to environmental degradation in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using the ethnographic method. The ethnographic method is defined as "a qualitative inquiry that describes social or cultural realities or interactions as they are, through observation and the closest possible participation in a social or cultural system".[24]

This research was conducted from 14 July to 20 August 2025. The stages undertaken by the researcher follow the method proposed by Jozef Raco, particularly the data collection stage.[25] Data were obtained through observations and interviews with several key informants, namely customary leaders and community elders. Their ages ranged from 50 to

[24] Armada Riyanto and F X E Armada, "Metodologi: Pemantik & Anatomi Riset Filosofis Teologis," *Malang: Widya Sasana Publication*, 2020.

[25] Jozef Raco, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Jenis, Karakteristik Dan Keunggulannya," 2010.

over 80 years. They came from several villages in Manggarai and were selected because they possessed adequate knowledge related to the topic examined in this study. During the interviews, they provided extensive insights regarding the Manggarai anthropological concept.

After collecting the data, the researcher conducted an analysis based on the framework of John W. Creswell. Creswell outlines common steps in analyzing qualitative data, particularly field observations. The first step is preparing and organizing the data. The researcher compiled all raw materials, including field notes and interview transcripts. The next step involved reading the data and assigning codes according to emerging themes. The subsequent phase is making assertions. In this stage, the researcher formulates declarative statements supported by credible evidence drawn from the data.[26]

Since this research is a contextual theological study, the Manggarai anthropological concepts obtained from the field were placed in dialogue with the Christian ecotheological understanding of the human person. The results of this dialectical process are presented in the form of a research report, namely a scholarly article.

Ata Long in The Manggarai-Flores Cosmology

The Manggarai–Flores cosmology understands *Ata Long* as human beings who live within a web of relationships involving nature, the ancestors, and *Mori Keraéng*. *Mori Keraéng,* etymologically, Mori, meaning "lord" or "master," functions in both profane and sacred contexts within Manggarai society. The possessive form Mori(n) marks its explicit reference to the Almighty. Its historical development into Mori Keraéng, shaped by Bugis-Makassar notions of supreme rulership, reflects a process of theological intensification that affirms the highest

[26] John Cresswell, "Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches," 2013.

transcendent sovereignty in Manggarai cosmology.[27] Humans are not placed as rulers of creation; rather, they are part of a cosmic order that demands balance. The narratives of human origins affirm this relational character. The first humans, *Ndiwal* and *Obak*, originated from Manus and married *Endik* and *Ndaghang*, who became the ancestors of humanity. On the other hand, another version of human origins is that the first humans "emerged" (*bengkar*) from bamboo, symbolizing the womb of the earth, simplicity, and unity with nature. Jilis Verheijen records the story of *Kambu Lawang* and *Wéla Runus*, who were born through the transformation of pigeons and whose story highlights love as the foundation of human existence.[28] Sutam adds another creation narrative involving the cooperation of *Ema Éta* (Father Above) and *Endé Wa* (Mother Below). Sunlight touching a bamboo stalk gave birth to the first two humans, emphasizing both the spiritual and ecological dimensions of human life.[29]

Monggor argues that humans are *ata dédék de Morin*, creatures of *Mori Keraéng* who live because life is bestowed upon them. The human body reflects limitation as well as the medium of relationality with the world. Human dependence on soil, water, animals, and plants reveals the ecological structure of human existence. Early human life relying on forest food, discovering fire from kelo, and making clothing from *teno* and *lalé* demonstrates a life pattern closely connected to nature.

Erb introduces the concept of two souls: an inherent soul associated with water and an additional soul entering through the

27 Sefrianus Juhaniet et. al. Traditional Beliefs as an Ecotheological Force for Sustainability: Reinterpreting Mori Keraéng Amid the Climate Crisis. Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat, 21, no. 2 (2025), 67-76.

28 J. A. J. A. J. Verheijen, "Manggarai Dan Wujud Tertinggi," *Jakarta: LIPI.*, 1991, https://doi.org/10.7226/jtfm.21.2.55.%0A%0A%0A.

29 I Sutam, "Titik Perjumpaan Antara Budaya Manggarai Dan Ajaran Kristen Dalam Peran Dan Makna Air.," *Malang: Universitas Negeri Malang Dan LPPM STKIP St. Paulus Ruteng.*, 2015.

fontanel at birth.[30] The human relationship with water thus signifies an existential bond with creation. The symbol of bamboo further highlights human–nature unity. The *lingko* structure, consisting of *lodok*, *lander*, and *sising*, materializes the relationship between the human body and the land. The *moso* system follows this structure, showing the intrinsic interconnection between humans and the earth.

Taken together, these perspectives portray *Ata Long* as relational, ecological, and theological beings. Humans originate from the earth, depend on creation, and ultimately return to Mori Keraéng. Indigenous work ethics reject idleness and emphasize ecological responsibility. The principle of caution is expressed in the saying "olong asa pong hang kudut hang ata nggalas, boto hang toé tanda."

The Manggarai–Flores cosmology, therefore, rejects anthropocentrism.[31] This understanding provides an important contribution to Catholic ecotheology and can serve as a foundation for constructing local ecological wisdom as a response to environmental degradation in Indonesia.

The Human Person in The Perspective of Catholic Ecotheology

The Catholic ecotheological perspective places the human person as a creature who lives among other creatures. The Book of Genesis affirms that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:31). As imago Dei, humans possess inherent dignity. Pope Francis emphasizes that this dignity is expressed through the capacities for self-knowledge, self-mastery, self-giving, and relationship (LS, art. 65). This view rejects anthropocentric modes of thinking that separate humans from creation.

30 Maribeth Erb, "The Manggaraians: A Guide to Traditional Lifestyles," *(No Title)*, 1999.
31 Maribeth Erb, "The Manggaraians: A Guide to Traditional Lifestyles," (No Title), 1999.

Catholic ecotheology also highlights the social dimension of human existence. Pope Francis states that human life depends on relationships with God, with others, and with the earth (LS, art. 66). These relationships reveal the fundamental limitations of the human person. For this reason, the Pope criticizes the deification of humanity, particularly through technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence, that risk exceeding human limits (LD, art. 21, 68). Humans can coexist with other creatures only by acknowledging this fundamental finitude.

The creation of the human person is rooted in the love of God. Genesis 1:26–31 affirms that humanity is created out of love. Pope Francis describes creation as a personal act of divine love (LS, art. 65). He cites Pope John Paul II, who stressed that the Creator's love confers limitless dignity upon human beings.[32] Pope Benedict XVI adds that every person is "willed, loved, and necessary".[33] This understanding extends to all creation. Citing Wisdom 11:12, Pope Francis affirms that God loves everything that exists (LS, art. 77).

Within an ecological framework, the human person is understood as a guardian of the earth. The earth existed before humans were created; therefore, God entrusted the earth to humanity, not for exploitation but for care. The human vocation is to safeguard the continuity of life. Pope Francis critiques anthropocentrism that reduces the earth to a mere object of human labor (LD, art. 20–23). As Imago Dei, humans are called to be co-workers with God. They must view the earth as a common home in which all creatures sustain one another. Pope Francis underscores the vital functions of ecosystems, such as absorbing carbon, purifying water, regulating diseases, and forming soil (LS, art. 140).

32 Giovanni Paolo II, "Angelus," *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 1980, https://www.vatican.va.

33 Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily: Mass, Imposition of the Pallium and Conferral of the Fisherman's Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome," 2005.

Catholic ecotheology also understands the human person as a sojourner. Peter C. Phan describes God as Deus Migrator, who moves both intra-trinitarily and ad extra.[34] Boff presents the internal dynamism of the Trinity as perichoresis, a circulating current of self-giving love.[35] The migration of God reaches its fullness in the incarnation. As imago Dei, humans share this identity as migrants. They are not owners of the earth but stewards who live by grace. The awareness of being sojourners liberates humanity from anthropocentrism. This disposition directs the human person to care for the earth as a relational space entrusted to be nurtured together.

Ecotheological Interpretation of *Ata Long*

The Manggarai–Flores cosmology presents *Ata Long* as a human being who lives within a web of relationships with nature, the ancestors, and Mori Keraéng. This depiction aligns with Catholic ecotheology, which views the human person as a creature among other creatures. In the biblical perspective, the human being is imago Dei (Gen 1:31). Human dignity arises from the capacity for relationship, self-giving, and self-mastery (LS, art. 65). Thus, the concept of ata long, which does not position the human person as master of the cosmos, reveals epistemological proximity to an ecotheological view that rejects anthropocentrism.

The narratives of human origins in Manggarai tradition, whether through the story of Ndiwal–Obak, the emergence of humans "breaking forth" from bamboo, or the transformation of *Kambu Lawang* and *Wéla Runus*, underline that human beings come from the womb of the earth. This view echoes the Catholic ecotheological principle that human

[34] Peter C Phan, "Christianity as an Institutional Migrant: Historical, Theological, and Ethical Perspectives," in *Christianities in Migration: The Global Perspective* (Springer, 2016), 9–35.

[35] Leonardo Boff, "Allah Persekutuan: Ajaran Tentang Allah Tritunggal," 2004.

existence is rooted in relationships with God, with others, and with the earth (LS, art. 66). These stories highlight that humans cannot live apart from other creatures. Similar to Pope Francis's critique of the deification of humanity through technology (LD, art. 21, 68), the Manggarai cosmology situates the human person in a posture of humility before nature.

The ecotheological interpretation becomes clearer in the affirmation that humans are created out of love. In Manggarai narratives, love is expressed through the symbols of bamboo, sunlight, and divine cooperation in the creation story of *Ema Éta* and *Endé Wa*. This coheres with the teaching that creation is a personal act of divine love (LS, art. 65). Pope John Paul II's assertion that human dignity is born from the Creator's love,[36] and Pope Benedict XVI's affirmation that every person is "willed and loved", Pope Benedict XVI found resonance in Manggarai narratives, which emphasize that human existence is inseparable from the cosmic love of *Mori Keraéng*.

The love of God in Catholic ecotheology also extends to all creation (LS, art. 77). The Manggarai view of humans' dependence on land, water, animals, and plants reveals the ecological structure of human existence. Early human life sustained by forest food, the discovery of fire from *kelo*, and clothing made from *teno* and *lalé*, illustrates interdependence with nature. This reinforces the idea that all creatures possess value and are loved by God, thereby denying any theological legitimacy for human domination or exploitation of the earth.

The understanding of humans as guardians of the earth in Catholic ecotheology finds strong parallels in Manggarai customary principles that condemn laziness and demand work as a form of ecological responsibility.

[36] Pope John Paul II, "Angelus."

The view that the earth predates human beings and is entrusted to them for care (LS, art. 66–69) is reflected in the structure of the lingko and the moso system, which maintain balance in land distribution. The relationality between lodok, lander, and sising is not merely a technical land-management pattern but a cosmic reflection of the mutual support between humans, land, and social order.

Pope Francis criticizes anthropocentrism that reduces the earth to an object of human labor.[37] Manggarai cosmology expresses a similar critique through the ethical saying "*olong asa pong hang kudut hang ata nggalas, boto hang toé tanda*," which emphasizes ecological prudence. This value system portrays the human person as part of a fragile web of life. Thus, *Ata Long,* as a relational being, contains an internal critique of environmental exploitation and supports a vision of the earth as a common home.

The ecotheological interpretation also enriches the meaning of the human person as a sojourner. Manggarai tradition understands humans as *ata dédék de Morin*, creatures who have received life from Mori Keraéng. This understanding corresponds to Peter C. Phan's notion of God as Deus Migrator and Boff's view of perichoresis as a dynamic current of divine love. If God "migrates" in creation and incarnation, then the human person as *imago Dei* also exists as a sojourner, not the owner of the earth but its steward. This awareness dismantles anthropocentric attitudes and opens the way toward a humble and relational ecological ethic.

Taken together, these perspectives show that the concept of *Ata Long* bears deep theological resonance with Catholic ecotheology. Both traditions place the human person as a creature formed from the earth, living in relationship, and called to maintain cosmic balance. Thus,

37 Pope Francis, "Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis," *Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*, 2021.

Manggarai wisdom can serve as a theological and cultural foundation for constructing a contextual ecological ethic for Indonesia. In the face of escalating environmental degradation, an ecotheological construction of *Ata Long* offers an important contribution to the development of an ecological spirituality that is both relevant and transformative.

Pastoral Implications as a Response to Environmental Degradation in Indonesia

Several theological implications arise from the points discussed above. These implications include the following.

First, the Church needs to reaffirm the identity of the human person as the *imago Dei* who lives among other creatures. This perspective is essential for dismantling the still-dominant anthropocentric mindset. The Manggarai narrative of *ata long*, who originates from the womb of the earth, can be used in ecological catechesis to help the faithful understand that human beings are not rulers of the cosmos but part of the web of life. Such catechesis must be designed contextually so that the faithful realize that environmental destruction is also a violation of the dignity of creation loved by God.

Second, the Church's pastoral ministry is called to cultivate an ecological spirituality grounded in the creative love of God. Manggarai cosmology portrays the human person as emerging from the loving communion between Mori Keraéng and the earth, thus framing the natural world as a relational and sacred gift rather than a neutral object of exploitation. This anthropo-cosmic vision converges with Pope Francis's teaching in *Laudato Si'* that creation is a personal act of divine love, thereby establishing a theological bridge between ecological reflection and liturgical expression (LS art. 65). Because liturgy is the privileged locus in which the Church sacramentally celebrates God's creative and redemptive

action, ecological theology must move beyond abstract ethical discourse into symbolic and ritual embodiment; accordingly, the integration of elements such as bamboo, soil, water, and ancestral narratives within inculturated celebrations becomes a performative affirmation that the earth participates in God's salvific economy, enabling the faithful to internalize and renew their spiritual communion with creation within the Church's worshipping life.

Third, the Church is called to formulate a model of ecological education that integrates theological reflection with local wisdom in a coherent pedagogical framework. Ecotheological insights cannot remain confined to doctrinal affirmation; as Pope Francis emphasizes in *Laudato Si'*, ecological education must foster an "ecological conversion" that shapes habits, virtues, and patterns of life (LS art. 209–215). In this light, narratives surrounding the *lingko* land structure, the *moso* system, and ethical maxims such as *"olong asa pong hang kudut hang ata nggalas, boto hang toé tanda"* function not merely as cultural artifacts but as formative pedagogical resources capable of mediating ecological consciousness. By integrating these local cosmological insights with Catholic teaching on creation, the Church can cultivate an educational praxis oriented toward behavioral transformation, where care for the earth is understood as a concrete participation in God's ongoing work of sustaining and nurturing creation.

Fourth, the Church can develop community-based ecological empowerment programs. In Manggarai cosmology, human beings live through communal work and reciprocal relationships with nature. This worldview can inspire parishes and basic ecclesial communities to initiate collective ecological efforts such as water conservation, reforestation of degraded land, waste management, and ecological agriculture. Community-based approaches offer the faithful opportunities to experience once again the mutually sustaining nature of ecological relationships.

Fifth, the Church needs to strengthen its role in ecological advocacy. Pope Francis's critique of the divinization of technology and the exploitation of natural resources (LD, art. 21, 68; LD, art. 20–23) encourages the Church to speak out against environmentally harmful policies. Insights from Manggarai wisdom, especially the understanding of humans as ata dédék de Morin, creatures who live by grace, can serve as a moral foundation for advocating public policies that honor ecological sustainability. The Church can serve as a bridge between Indigenous communities and the state in the pursuit of ecological justice.

Sixth, the Church's pastoral ministry must cultivate the awareness that human beings are migrants on earth, not absolute owners of it. In Christian ecotheology, this vision is illuminated by the notion of *Deus Migrator*, which reframes the relationship between God, humanity, and land as one of pilgrimage and stewardship rather than possession. Such a perspective challenges exploitative attitudes toward natural resources and grounds a humble ecological ethic. The Church may concretize this vision through ecological retreats and recollections that invite the faithful to recognize the earth as a relational trust entrusted for shared care.

At the same time, the integration of the Ata Long narrative into the Church's pastoral framework deepens this formation. By presenting the human person as relational, ecological, and theological, this narrative strengthens an ecological spirituality capable of responding to urbanization, digital expansion, and industrial exploitation. In this way, the Church becomes not only a moral teacher but also a companion in ecological transformation, standing with communities amid Indonesia's environmental crisis.

Seventh, the Church can promote dialogue and collaboration with Indigenous communities. Manggarai wisdom regarding human origins, the relationship with land, and socio-ecological structures such as the

lingko provides valuable insights for ecological pastoral ministry. Collaboration with customary leaders can enrich the Church's approach to caring for the earth and strengthen cross-cultural and interreligious solidarity. Such collaboration prevents the Church from adopting a pastoral approach that is doctrinally centered yet detached from the lived practices of local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that religion and culture possess significant potential in responding to the environmental crisis in Indonesia. The *Ata Long* theology exemplifies an effective integration between Manggarai local wisdom and the Catholic faith tradition. The concept of the human person as a sojourner rejects anthropocentric patterns of thought. Humans are understood as part of the cosmos, living in relationship with other creatures. This awareness fosters attitudes of reverence, prudence, and ecological responsibility. Thus, *Ata Long* theology offers an ethical framework that challenges exploitative paradigms that have long contributed to environmental degradation.

This theological perspective also helps cultivate a renewed worldview for Manggarai society and for Indonesia as a whole regarding the relationship between humans and nature. Collaboration between religion and culture can strengthen the moral motivation to care for the earth as a common home. The *Ata Long* perspective enriches Indonesian ecotheology through a contextual and relational approach. Such an approach is relevant for the development of ecological pastoral ministry and for seeking solutions to environmental damage. Therefore, *Ata Long*'s theology can become a significant contribution to the formation of an ecological spirituality that is humble, inclusive, and oriented toward the sustainability of life.

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