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Nyi Roro Kidul and Marine Eco-Pneumatology

*Javanese Contextual Theological Studies in Maritime Society,
Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

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Abstract

Indonesia is the country with the largest archipelago in the world, with a total of seventeen thousand islands. The term ‘maritime nation’ has actually been surging through stories of local wisdom (culture), but during the colonial period, the term lost its original significance and Indonesia came to be treated as if it were an agrarian country. This paper shows that Indonesian maritime society contains various inherited values of religiosity, including myths, legends, folklore, and oral traditions about marine cosmology. Folklore, myths, and legends have an important position in society, not only referring to cultural traditions but also containing religious or theological values that are closely related to the identity of the Indonesian nation. This paper studies the mythical figure of Nyi Roro Kidul who is considered the sea guardian. The legend surrounding the figure of Nyi Roro Kidul can serve as an important trope to

develop a contextual Javanese eco-pneumatology [Holy Spirit] and help address some of the contemporary ecological issues.

Keywords

Nyi Roro Kidul – Eco-Pneumatology – Holy Spirit – Java – contextual theology – culture

Introduction

As a maritime nation, Indonesia is a country comprising seventeen thousand islands with a coastline of one hundred and eighty thousand kilometres. At the commemoration of National Maritime Day, President Joko Widodo gave a speech declaring that Indonesia is the world's maritime axis.¹ In fact, the daily life of the Indonesian people is closely connected with the rhythms of life on the ocean. The awareness as a maritime nation can actually be traced back to the days of the Majapahit and Sriwijaya Kingdoms, and it is embedded in stories of wisdom and other cultural expressions. However, during the colonial period, the maritime orientation changed to an agrarian orientation.² Indonesia was reappraised as a maritime country by its founders in the early days of independence by formulating the Juanda Declaration.³ The declaration stated that Indonesia adheres to the principles of an archipelagic state.

Ignas Kleden, in his article entitled *Sea: A Mindset* (2004), emphasized that the sea is a worldview (*Weltanschauung*).⁴ It contains various heritage values

1 CNBC Indonesia, 'Jokowi Indonesia's Big Dream to Become a World Maritime Axis', <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20210923121459-4-278570/mimpi-besar-jokowi-indonesia-jadi-poros-maritim-dunia> [accessed on 20 November 2021].

2 Yoseph Yapi Taum, 'Various Myths About the Sea: Revealing the Maritime Concept of the Indonesian Nation', *III International Congress of Asian Folklore* (7–9 June 2013), 3–4.

3 Kompas.com, 'Djuanda's Declaration of Purpose and Impact', <https://www.kompas.com/skola/read/2020/02/18/160000969/deklarasi-djuanda-isi-juang-dan-dampaknya> [accessed on 20 November 2021]. At the beginning of independence, Indonesia's maritime boundaries referred to regulations from the Dutch East Indies era, namely *Teritoriale Zee en Maritieme Kringen Ordonantie 1939* (TZMKO 1939). On December 13, 1957, a declaration was made, while the initiator was Prime Minister Djuanda Kartawidjaja. Djuanda considered it necessary to change Indonesia's maritime system to change its territorial zones. Djuanda provided information to foreign countries that the sea area around which is in the territory of the Indonesian archipelago is the unitary and sovereign territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

4 Ignas Kleden, 'Sea: A Mindset', Public Lecture Paper at the Bandung Institute of Technology, September 5, 2004 (unpublished), p. 1–3.

of religiosity, including myths, legends, folklore, and oral traditions around marine cosmology. Against this background, this paper explores the presence and influence of the folklore myth of Nyi Roro Kidul. Moreover, known as the Spirit of the Sea, she is a Queen of the south coast of Java, who has a significant role in protecting the Mataram kings of Yogyakarta.⁵ There are various myths and legends about her that give hope to people.

Folklore, myths, and legends play an important role in society. Besides embodying cultural traditions, they also contain religious values closely related to the identity of the Indonesian nation as a maritime country. In Yogyakarta, on certain days, there are many ceremonies to honour Nyi Roro Kidul at Parangkusumo Beach. Community members believe that the sea is the source of life because most coastal communities work as fishermen who depend on the sea for their livelihood. This paper explores the figure and character of Nyi Roro Kidul as a legendary of sea guardians and studies the implications for a Javanese contextual theology which in its turn will address meaningfully the present-day ecological issues. The final section of the paper is an attempt to relate the Spirit of the Sea in the maritime community of Yogyakarta with Christian understanding and approach to the Holy Spirit. In short, an attempt is made to read the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit through the lens of the legend surrounding Nyi Roro Kidul.

Mythology of Nyi Roro Kidul

The mythological birth of Nyi Roro Kidul as a guardian of the sea is inseparable from the identity of the Indonesian nation as a maritime nation. Yoseph Yapi Taum in his research, *Various Myths about the Sea: Revealing the Maritime Concept of the Indonesian Nation* (2003), shows that the Indonesian people have many sea mythologies, such as Ina Fae from Lamalera, Putri Mandalika (Lombok), Nyi Roro Kidul (Yogyakarta), and Ina Kabuki (Buru Island).⁶ The dominance of the maritime motive can be seen in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Arus Balik* (2002). Toer described how the Majapahit Kingdom was the most powerful maritime empire in the archipelago. The Kingdom, in fact, had the most powerful fleets in the whole archipelago. Folk stories originating

5 Wiyatmi, 'When Women Are As Guardians Of Nature: Reading Ideology Of Ecofeminism In Indonesian Folklore', *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Literature: Literature as a Source of Wisdom* (July 11–13, 2019), Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, p. 371–391, DOI: 10.24815/.viii.14472.

6 Yoseph Yapi Taum, 'Various Myths About the Sea', 4.

from ancient literature can help not only to defend the maritime nature of the community but also bring out concepts, norms, and traditions governing the life of the society.⁷

In the Babad Tanah Djawi, a work written by Ngabehi Kertapradja, it is stated that in order to realise his dream of becoming the king of Mataram, Panembahan Senapati meditated and performed rituals and prayers on the waterfront of Parangkusumo, in the south of the city of Yogyakarta.⁸ It appears that to gain power as king, Senapati had to meditate. He performed rituals by the ocean and asked for help from the sea spirit, the female ruler of the sea, namely Nyi Roro Kidul, to help him deal with his enemies. The relationship between Nyi Roro Kidul and Senapati was not only personal but wider implications for politics. She is presented as a teacher instructing in leadership, science and protecting the Javanese political power.

Robert Wessing's research entitled *Roro Kidul in Puger: Local Applications of a Myth* (1997) says that Roro Kidul was originally the daughter of the Galuh Kingdom around the thirteenth century.⁹ Ratu Ayu from Galuh gave birth to a baby girl. Something strange happened. The baby girl who could speak said that she was the ruler of all supernatural beings (spirits) in the land of Java and would live on the South Coast. At the same time, the spirit of King Sindhula of Galuh appeared and said that his granddaughter, in order to protect her chastity, would not marry. If she were to marry, then only Islamic kings in Java could marry her. For two centuries, the Queen of the South Coast (Roro Kidul) has awaited her husband. During the reign of Senapati, who governed Islamic Mataram (1585–1601), he journeyed to the South Coast seeking guidance through meditation. While in deep contemplation, he sought assistance to triumph in the war against Sultan Pajang in Prambanan. Legend has it that his unwavering determination caused turmoil in the southern seas, resulting in the destruction of the palace of the Queen of the South Coast due to the potent prayers of Panembahan Senapati.¹⁰

At Parangkusumo Beach, Yogyakarta, there is a historical place connected with Senapati and Nyi Roro Kidul. This historical place is called Cepuri and it became a place of worship before harbor events that are conducted by the

7 Aili Nenola, 'Gender, Culture and Folklore', *ELO*, 5 (1999), 21.

8 WL Olthof, *Chronicle of Tanah Jawi: From the Prophet Adam to the Fall of Mataram* (Yogyakarta: Narration, 2017), pp. 93–98.

9 Robert Wessing, 'Roro Kidul in Puger: Local Applications of a Myth', *Archipel Année* (1997), 97–120. Retrieved from https://www.persee.fr/doc/arch_0044-8613_1997_num_53_1_3395.

10 Ahmad Arif, 'Traces of Ratu Kidul in South Java: Studies on Tsunami Mitigation', *International Symposium on Javanese Studies and Manuscripts* (5–6 March 2019), Grand Ballroom Royal Ambarrukmo, Yogyakarta, pp. 3–8.

Yogyakarta Palace on certain days.¹¹ In this place, there are two stones called 'the stones of love'. The stones served as seats for Panembahan Senapati and Nyi Roro Kidul. Moreover, on the south coast of Yogyakarta, people often organise a ceremony as a symbol of gratitude to God Almighty through Nyi Roro Kidul. As stated by Jalil, the Yogyakarta Palace carries out this Labuhan ceremony in order to preserve nature.¹² This kind of ceremony is not only performed in Yogyakarta but also in East Java and Madura. This is confirmed also from the research conducted by Setiawan. According to him, the people of Muncar Banyuwangi organise a ceremony every 15th of Muharram (suro) called "The sea, picking ceremony." The purpose of the ritual is to give various offerings to Nyi Roro Kidul.¹³ They believe that by carrying out this ceremony, they honor the Spirit of the Sea. It is because the sea is a source of livelihood, especially for fishermen who depend on it. This proves that the Labuhan tradition shows a balance between humans, nature, and the Divine. Humans have a duty to maintain the balance of nature and creation.

Spirit of the Sea Protecting Society – Fishermen

Jose Comblin (1923–2011), a liberation theologian from Brazil, in his work, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, places the study of pneumatology in the context of action. According to him the experience of the Spirit cannot be separated from the actions of individuals, communities, and churches.¹⁴ For maritime people who live on the South Coast of Yogyakarta, Nyi Roro Kidul is the Spirit of the Sea who gives life to fishermen by providing fish in abundance. Regarding the beliefs and practices surrounding Nyi Roro Kidul, there are two traditions. The first is the palace tradition practiced by the nobles and courtiers, which sees Nyi Roro Kidul's relationship with the ruler of the Mataram king of Yogyakarta. The second is the coastal tradition practiced by fishermen and villagers along the south coast of Java, which places Nyi Roro Kidul as the protector queen of society.¹⁵ This coastal tradition is almost entirely oral, while the palace tradition is textual.

11 Abdul Jalil, 'Understanding the Labuhan Ceremonial Tradition and Its Influence on the People of Parangtritis', *El Harakah*, 17:1 (2015), 103.

12 Abdul Jalil, 'Understanding the Labuhan Ceremonial Tradition', 105.

13 Eko Setiawan, 'The Existence of Maritime Culture of the Sea Picking Tradition in Muncar Banyuwangi', *Universum Journal*, 10:2 (2016), 231.

14 Jose Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 20.

15 Robert Wessing, 'Homo Narrans in East Java. Regional Myths and Local Concerns', *Asian Folklore Studies*, 65 (2006), 49.

The Nyi Roro Kidul tradition tells us that the protection of the fishing community and all other divine actions take place through the Spirit that dwells in all things. According to Moltmann, the action of the Spirit is the action that creates, preserves and renews. It is a divine action that takes the initiative to see any context of oppression, including economic, social and ecological marginalisation. This is a movement called the 'rebirth experience', which must be associated with the Spirit.¹⁶ Every initiative is for community liberation, for human justice and for environmental justice because they are the activities of the indwelling Spirit.

On May 27, 2006, Yogyakarta Bantul Regency was rocked by an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale, which killed 6,000 people. Hundreds of thousands lost their homes. A large number of buildings and infrastructure were damaged. Many people implied that the earthquake resulted from the anger of Nyi Roro Kidul towards Sultan Hamengkubuwono X for his involvement with the capitalist system, which sacrificed commoners, destroyed the environment (nature), and failed to maintain Javanese traditions.¹⁷ The Spirit of the Sea is present both in the spiritual realm (unseen) and in the domain of political power. When there is a natural disaster, it means there is an imbalance in the political world. Sea spirits have a significant role in the balance of nature and society.¹⁸ In Javanese cosmology, the relationship between political power and supernatural abilities is known as *kasekten* (a person who is powerful).¹⁹ The so-called person has spiritual magical powers. It is something like what was experienced by Panembahan Senapati, who meditated on the South Coast and boiled the sea in order to become the powerful king of Mataram to protect the people of Yogyakarta from conflict and war.

As the Spirit of the Sea who protects the community, Nyi Roro Kidul's physical strength and role in the realm of the invisible demands respect from the community. When Sultan Hamengku Buwono X performs the annual Labuhan ritual, it is meant to maintain the balance between power and harmony in both nature and society. This Labuhan ritual refers to the myth of the union between Panembahan Senopati and Nyi Roro Kidul, which represents the union of the human world and the spirit world. This unity is not only seen spiritually but

16 Jose Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, p. 21.

17 Judith Schlehe, 'Anthropology of Religion: Disasters and the Representations of Tradition and Modernity', *Religion*, 40 (2010), 116.

18 Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson, Ariz: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), p.169.

19 Benedict Anderson, 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 23–28.

also becomes a strong requirement for the peace and prosperity of the Javanese people.²⁰ The Labuhan ceremony underlines that humans exist in harmony with nature. Therefore, the Spirit of the Sea for the Javanese people does not only refer to the ancestors but also refers to the spirits of nature. Labuhan serves as an offering ritual aimed at harmony among all power holders in society.

Spirit of the Sea: Ancestral Spirit of Segoro Kidul

In the cosmology of the people of Yogyakarta, two ancestral features refer to the South Sea – the Palace and Mount Merapi, namely Tri Hita Karana and Tri Anggara. They become icons in a balanced relationship between humans, the Divine, and nature.²¹ Segoro Kidul is an ancestral place, which is also a place for a mystical encounter between Panembahan Senapati and Nyi Roro Kidul as the Spirit of the South Seas. This encounter is symbolized by a black stone located at Cepuri Parangkusumo Beach. In Petilan, people perform rituals to the Spirit of the Sea to get ancestral blessings. The Spirit of the Sea, which is the ancestor of Cepuri, is not only specifically for adherents of Islam but also for all religious groups – Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists. Typically, individuals interested in purchasing offerings in the form of flowers, water, and Chinese incense for the ritual can acquire them around the Cepuri complex. Through this ritual, people believe they can sustain respect for life and maintain harmony with their ancestors.

The mystical encounter between Panembahan Senapati and Nyi Roro Kidul at Cepuri Parangkusumo Beach is a symbol of the supernatural power of the unseen world in the southern region.²² For maintaining peace and prosperity for the people in the Mataram Kingdom, Panembahan Senapati did meditation and penance. For the same purpose, he entered into a sacred marriage with Nyi Roro Kidul. It is a spiritual marriage without offspring, which then applies to subsequent kings.²³ Based on this mythology, the Javanese people believe that Nyi Roro Kidul used the rivers to meet the kings of Mataram in Yogyakarta, especially the rivers Progo and Kali Opak.²⁴

20 Jan Hostetler, 'Bedhaya Semang: The Sacred Dance of Yogyakarta', *Archipel*, 24:1 (1982), 131.

21 Abdul Jalil, 'Understanding the Labuhan Ceremonial Tradition', 103.

22 Dwi Cahyono Aji, 'Conception of Direction for the Javanese (Linguistic Anthropological Review)', *Addabiyat*, 9: 1 (2010), 52–53.

23 Soedjijono and Suryantoro, 'Kanjeng Ratu Kidul Myth Complex (Study with Local Wisdom Approach)', *JIP*, 8: 1 (2018), 89.

24 Moh Soehadha, *The Javanese Interpret Religion* (Yogyakarta: Discourse Creation, 2008), pp. 6–14.



FIGURE 1 Kompas.com, “Mengenal Cepuri Parangkusumo Yang Konon Menjadi Tempat Panembahan”, <https://yogyakarta.kompas.com/read/2023/07/05/221639478/mengenal-cepuri-parangkusumo-yang-konon-menjadi-tempat-panembahan?page=all> (accessed on 27 January 2024)

The people of Yogyakarta hold an appreciation for the existence of an imaginary straight line that extends from Mount Merapi through the Tugu monument, the Palace, the Krapyak Islamic boarding school, and the Cepuri Temple on Parangkusumo beach to the South Sea. This straight line symbolizes the balance (harmony) between microcosm and macrocosm in Javanese philosophy.²⁵ From a cosmological point of view, the activities that occur on Mount Merapi and at the sea are considered the acts of the Spirit inhabiting the universe. In this perspective, the features of the oceans, mountains, and forests, as well as the occult events, are interrelated and inseparable. These features show the implications for harmony and peace, which are Javanese values.

The form of fusion between the microcosm and the macrocosm gave birth to the myth about Nyi Roro Kidul, the Sea Spirit of the ancestor of Cepuri Parangkusumo.²⁶ Cepuri has a function as a place of prayer and ritual connected with the harbor. People throw offerings into the South Sea as a form of respect for the Spirit of the Sea ancestor Nyi Roro Kidul.²⁷ The harbor rituals are connected with ancestral graves which represent blessings and

25 DIY Culture Service, *Profile Book of Yogyakarta City of Philosophy* (Yogyakarta: DIY Culture Office, 2015), p. 8.

26 Laksmi Kusuma Wardani, *Archeology Art And Identity* (Yogyakarta: Kepel Press, 2012), p. 12.

27 Abdul Jalil, ‘Understanding the Labuhan Ceremonial Tradition.’, p. 103.

spiritual encounters. Usually, harbor ritual can be carried out every day, except at certain times, such as the night of *satu Suro*, Friday Kliwon, and Seloso Kliwon. Pilgrims understand that the ritual is a form of respect for the struggle of Panembahan Senapati and, at the same time, is a form of harmonisation between humans and supernatural powers.

Nature Guardian and Life-Giving Sea Spirit

In contextual theology, nature is one of the doors through which the Bible can enter into the lives of Asian peoples.²⁸ Eco-theology typically delves into the perspectives of Lynn White, regarded by some theologians as the trailblazer who ignited the focus on ecological concerns back in 1967. He laid the blame of ecological disasters at the door of Christianity.²⁹ There are several theologians who support White's contention that Christianity has cultivated a harmful subject-object attitude toward nature, which separates human beings from nature and promotes an instrumentalist mentality. It leads to acts of exploitation. Gerrit Singgih, in his article entitled *Religion and Ecological Damage* considers White's thesis still valuable and requiring consideration in the Indonesian Context (2021). White is an active Protestant Christian. Hence, White's thesis is seen as an auto-criticism of one's own religious identity calling for "religious mobilization" to overcome ecological damage, at least in Indonesia.³⁰ Singgih proposes that the divine immanence in nature need not be condemned as pantheism but refers to Whitehead, who spoke of "pan-en-theism", which means that God exists in nature, though not identical with nature.

The "pan-en-theism" refers to the picture of "the Spirit of God hovering over the surface of the waters" as depicted in the book of Genesis 1:2. The word "hover/swept over" used in Genesis. 1:2 also refers to Deuteronomy 32:11, "as an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions." The Spirit of God in this verse is associated with the creative act of God. Michael E. Lodahl is of the

28 Masatoshi Doi, 'Religion and Nature', in *What Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book*, ed, Douglas J. Elwood (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1978), p.119.

29 Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, 10 (March 1967), 1203-1207.

30 Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, 'Religion and Ecological Damage: Considering the "White Thesis" in the Indonesian Context', *Gema Theologika*, 5:2 (October 2020), 132-133.

view that “the Spirit of God hovering over the waters” in Genesis 1:2 echoes with Exod. 14: 21 which says “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.”³¹ This shows that the Spirit of God is the life-giving power, sustaining all animate nature with its divine breath.³² In Moltmann’s terms, the Spirit of God denotes God’s active and creative presence throughout creation.³³ Through the life-giving Spirit, God the creator is present in creation. Moltmann called this the “fountain of life”, implying that everything exists and expressing not only God’s transcendence but also immanence in creation.³⁴

Elizabeth Johnson, a feminist theologian, calls the life-giving Spirit the “Spirit of Sophia” as a source of power that transforms all creation, initiates newness, drives change, and transfigures what has become a culture of death into a culture of life.³⁵ The Spirit of Shopia shows female figures in ancient Israelite traditions resembling Nyi Roro Kidul, the giver of love and life in the ocean.³⁶ The myth of Senapati and Nyi Roro Kidul shows that the power of a Javanese king is a woman who is one with nature, meaning the sea. Indonesian feminist activist Arivia observes that since the Paleolithic era, predating Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, there existed a belief in a goddess. This suggests that the concept of God as a female figure, reminiscent of Nyi Roro Kidul, lent legitimacy, power, love, and independence to women.³⁷ Basuki Abdullah executed one of the well-known paintings of Nyi Roro Kidul in 1955.³⁸ According to the painter, Nyi Roro Kidul appeared directly to him. His painting depicts Nyi Roro Kidul as the guardian Spirit of the South Coast Sea.

31 Michael Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion, Studies in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: A Stimulus Book, 1992), p. 43.

32 Tormod Engelsen, ‘The Gift of the Spirit: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Charismatic Movement from a Lutheran Theological Perspective’, PhD Dissertation (Dubuque, Iowa: Aquinas Institute of Theology, 1981).

33 Tormod Engelsen, ‘The Gift of the Spirit..’, p. 370.

34 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, The Gifford Lectures 1984–1985*, trans, Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), p. 9.

35 Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 135.

36 Yoseph Yapi Taum, ‘Various Myths about the Sea’, 5.

37 Girl Arivia, ‘Goddess, Body and Nature: Ecofeminism Spirituality Study’, *Women’s Journal*, 19:1 (2014), 58–59.

38 Karen Strassler, ‘Seeing the Unseen in Indonesia’s Public Sphere: Photographic Appearances of a Spirit Queen’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 56:1 (2014), 122.



FIGURE 2 Okezone.com, “Mengapa Basoeki Abdullah Melukis Nyi Roro Kidul?”, <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2023/07/14/337/2846444/mengapa-basoeki-abdullah-melukis-nyi-roro-kidul>, accessed on 27 January 2024

From “Mother Earth” Towards the Spirit of the Sea

We referred above to the thesis of Lynn White on how the interpretation of the text of Genesis 1:26, 28 holds Christianity most responsible for the ecological crisis. White said that the command to rule over the earth and conquer it in Genesis 1, had placed humans superior to nature and entitled to exploit it for their benefit.³⁹ That interpretation resulted in a hierarchical theology of creation in which God is in the highest place, followed by human beings and nature occupying the lowest rung. The stature of humankind as *imago Dei* has become a biblical justification for that hierarchy as well as exploitative human actions against nature. Therefore, White accused Christianity of being the most anthropocentric and environmentally destructive religion.⁴⁰ Asian

39 Lynn White, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis’, *Science*, 155: 3767 (1967), 1205.

40 White, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis’, 1206.

theologians do acknowledge the enormous influence Christianity has had on the ecological crisis that White points to; however, his characterization of Christianity as the most anthropocentric religion is questionable. An anthropocentric interpretation of Genesis 1:26, 28 is but only one and not the only meaning of the text.⁴¹ The words 'rule' and the command 'conquer' could be interpreted differently, meaning stewardship. Humankind is given the responsibility to manage and care for God's creation, not to corrupt it. This is the kind of interpretation that ecotheology in Indonesia adopts, establishing a harmonious relationship between humans and other created beings.

The renewal by the Spirit of God refers not only to human beings, but it is also addressed to all creation (cf. Romans 8:22; Psalm 104:30b). The restoration of the relationship between humankind and other creations is a sign of the working of the Spirit. Mark 1:13, echoing Isaiah chapter 11, illustrates how, at the commencement of His ministry, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where He peacefully coexisted with wild animals.⁴² The Holy Spirit encourages a shift in believers' perception and relationship with nature, offering a new, broader, and deeper perspective that connects the Divine, humanity, and nature. Ernst Conradie maintains that ecotheology embodies Christianity's concern for the environment while simultaneously offering renewal and reform within Christianity.⁴³

The paradigm of stewardship, too, has recently been considered inadequate to deal with ecological crises. Elizabeth A. Johnson states that this paradigm creates room for perspectives that ontologically position humans at the center of creation, upholding their role as stewards but also potentially reinforcing the superiority of human beings.⁴⁴ According to Richard Bauckham, stewardship has been used as an ideological justification for the exploitation of nature by humans.⁴⁵ Based on Psalm 104; 148; Matthew 6:25-33; and Job 38-41, Johnson and Bauckham then proposed a paradigm namely the community of creation as a paradigm that is more appropriate to be a framework for Christian thinking and behaving in dealing with ecological issues. I see Johnson and Bauckham's ideas happening in Javanese Christian communities that are

41 Robert P. Borrong, 'Kronik Ekoteologi: Berteologi Dalam Konteks Krisis Lingkungan', *Stulos*, 17:2 (2019), 185–212.

42 Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), pp. 11–32.

43 Ernst M. Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.

44 Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 266.

45 Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010), p. 37.

in a maritime context. Specifically, in the context of Javanese Christianity, creatively dialoguing the meaning of Bible texts with local culture or wisdom to produce contextual ecotheological reflection is very important.

In Western Christian discourses, the aspect of the Spirit is often neglected, in contrast to Eastern Church theology, which emphasises pneumatological aspects in soteriology and ecclesiology.⁴⁶ Moltmann points out that theological traditions are not just an “adaptation process; we also need to “rediscover” their own original truths, often distorted through anthropocentric dominative ideologies over nature.⁴⁷ Pneumatology forms the basis for the ecological theology of creation and the spirituality of eco-feminism, both of which emphasize a holistic and relational life among humans, nature, and the Divine. Thus, the earth and everything in it, including the land and sea have a sacramental character, pointing to the divine presence. There are interrelated systems that support life on both land and sea, which can be perceived as the domain of the life-giving Divine breath.

When addressing ecological crises, constructing a contextual theology could begin with Pneumatology, aligning with the Asian/Indonesian way of life. The Spirit of Sophia, who is considered the mother of the earth, the Spirit of the Sea, and the goddess of the cosmos, vibrates with Indonesian culture and ethos. Indonesia is often described as a mother who grieves when something bad happens in ecological, social, economic, and even political realms. Conclusively, one can say that the symbol of Mother Earth has become an effective symbol for raising people’s awareness of ecological, economic, political, and national issues.

Similar to the mother in “motherland”, the Indonesian people imagine the sea also as a mother figure full of love, tenderness, and life-giving.⁴⁸ There are several examples that depict Mother Earth in the cosmology of the archipelago, such as on Buru Island, where the spirit of Ina Kabuki is believed to live in Kayeli Bay. In the Lamalera area, there is a sea called Ina Fae Bele, which means the womb of the mother signifying the spirit of love. The Lamalera community is a fishing community whose daily life depends on sea products.

In Lombok society, there is a deep appreciation for Princess Mandalika, known as the daughter of the sea, who sacrificed herself to become food for the local community. It is believed that to prevent war and bloodshed, Princess Mandalika threw herself into the sea, transforming into nyale, sea worms that

46 Veli Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 12.

47 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 12.

48 Yoseph Yapi Taum, ‘Various Myths about the Sea’, 8.

became a source of food for the people. As for North Sumatra and Aceh there is Putri Hijau mythology. She is a very beautiful princess who inhabits the seabed around Berhala Island.

When discussing pneumatology as a subject of theological reflection, Javanese contextual theologians often overlook it, despite the fact that the way of life of the Javanese people is greatly influenced by the maritime context and experiences. Often, the Holy Spirit is solely perceived as the force that helps believers conquer various challenges. However, within Javanese life, cosmology revolves around the spiritual realm, encompassing phenomena like birth, death, disease, drought, harvest, accidents, storms, and earthquakes – all interpreted within the context of the spiritual struggle between good and evil forces. Javanese Christian pneumatology not only emphasizes individual well-being but also addresses the requirements of society and the importance of harmonizing with nature.

The Javanese eco-pneumatology can depart from the spirit of *kasekten* (the Spirit of the Sea who has supernatural powers), a power that shows human life is intertwined with the divine, ancestors, humans, animals, and plants. Similar concepts exist in Hinduism as Prana (spirit, life), referred to as the powers of Qi in Korean culture, and known as Chi in Chinese traditions. In Islam Allah is described as a source of special power for every creature. He is the Spirit of the Sea who protects nature and the coastal communities of the South Coast of Yogyakarta.

Conclusion

The Bible refers to the Spirit as *ruach* in Hebrew, and *pneuma* in Greek. This Spirit can also be seen as the spirit of the sea “hovering over the surface of the water.” (Genesis 1:2). The Spirit of the Sea is also important in the discourse of pneumatology and ecology. To speak the Spirit of God is to speak of the Spirit who is present in the cosmos, the “vivifying power” of the entire earth. The Spirit who is called the breath of life (Gen. 1: 2, Ps. 104: 29-30), is like the wind that heals (Judges 6: 34; John 3: 6; Acts 2: 1-4), like living water, and divine dove. The Spirit of God embodies the Cosmic Spirit, fostering dynamic energy to uphold the universe and spark life. It’s the force that initiated creation, ushering in freshness and fostering interconnectedness among all beings (the network of creation). Through this perspective, the Spirit of the Sea, known as Nyi Roro Kidul, represents more than individual devotion; it also safeguards society on a social level. It stands as the ancestral Spirit of Segoro Kidul, overseeing the entire cosmos.

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