

Theonym of *Mori Keraéng* and its Significance for the Church's Eco-pastoral Practices

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Abstract

This article examines the theonym *Mori Keraéng* as a theological foundation for eco-pastoral practices in the Catholic Church, particularly in the context of indigenous Manggarai cosmology. It responds to the need for contextual theological models that integrate local wisdom with ecological responsibility. The study employs Martin Heidegger's phenomenological methodology, which emphasizes allowing phenomena to disclose themselves and describing what appears without distortion. Fieldwork was conducted in three districts of Manggarai: East Manggarai, Manggarai, and West Manggarai by engaging local informants who have deep familiarity with the *Mori Keraéng* tradition. Informants were invited to share their lived understanding without interference, enabling the emergence of authentic cultural-theological insights. Findings reveal that *Mori Keraéng* is understood as a cosmic deity who not only creates but also sustains the Earth as a common household for all living beings. Nature is perceived as a medium of divine epiphany, revealing God's ongoing presence within creation. Furthermore, the relational dynamic within *Mori Keraéng* marked by mutual self-limitation and interpenetration (e.g., Father-Sky and Mother-Earth) offers a paradigm of intra-divine collaboration that serves as a model for ecological relationships among creatures. In conclusion, the indigenous concept of *Mori Keraéng* provides a rich theological resource for constructing a Catholic eco-theology grounded in local cosmological thought. It affirms the sacredness of

creation and calls for a collaborative and respectful engagement with the natural world.

Keywords: *Manggaraian culture, Mori Keraéng, Catholic Church, theology*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji teonim Mori Keraéng sebagai dasar teologis bagi praksis eko-pastoral Gereja Katolik, khususnya dalam konteks kosmologi lokal masyarakat Manggarai. Kajian ini merespons kebutuhan akan model teologi kontekstual yang mengintegrasikan kearifan lokal dengan tanggung jawab ekologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi fenomenologis Martin Heidegger yang menekankan pentingnya membiarkan fenomena menampilkan diri dan mendeskripsikan apa yang tampak secara autentik. Penelitian lapangan dilakukan di tiga kabupaten di wilayah Manggarai: Manggarai Timur, Manggarai, dan Manggarai Barat dengan melibatkan para informan yang memiliki pemahaman mendalam tentang tradisi Mori Keraéng. Para informan diajak untuk membagikan pemahaman hidup mereka tanpa intervensi, sehingga muncul wawasan kultural-teologis yang autentik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Mori Keraéng dipahami sebagai Allah kosmis yang tidak hanya mencipta, tetapi juga memelihara bumi sebagai rumah bersama bagi seluruh makhluk hidup. Alam semesta dipandang sebagai medium epifani ilahi, tempat Allah terus-menerus mewahyukan diri-Nya dalam ciptaan. Lebih lanjut, dinamika relasional dalam diri Mori Keraéng yang ditandai oleh saling membatasi dan saling menembus antara Pribadi Ilahi (misalnya, Bapa-Langit dan Ibu-Bumi) menawarkan paradigma kolaborasi intra-ilahi yang dapat dijadikan model bagi relasi ekologis antarciptaan. Sebagai kesimpulan, konsep lokal Mori Keraéng menyediakan sumber daya teologis yang kaya untuk membangun suatu eko-teologi Katolik yang berakar pada pemikiran kosmologis masyarakat adat. Konsep ini menegaskan kesucian ciptaan dan menyerukan keterlibatan yang kolaboratif serta penuh hormat dengan dunia alam.

Kata Kunci: *Budaya Manggarai, Mori Keraéng, Gereja Katolik, teologi*

Introduction

The concept of the Supreme Being has been the subject of extensive critique across religious traditions, including Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular. These critiques have played a crucial role in refining theological understandings of God. Historical

doctrinal debates—such as Arianism, which questioned Christ’s divinity; Monophysitism, which challenged his dual nature; and the Filioque controversy, which examined the role of the Holy Spirit—reflect the ongoing effort to articulate the mystery of the divine with greater precision (Pelikan, 1971; Olson, 1999). Such discussions demonstrate that theological reflection evolves through the dynamic interplay between tradition and new insight.

Besides some doctrinal concerns, contemporary criticisms have focused on the relevance of the concept of God to social realities, particularly in relation to justice, gender and ecology. Feminist theologians argue that the traditional portrayal of God through exclusively masculine imagery such as “Father,” “Lord,” and “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” can marginalize women and perpetuate gender hierarchies (Howard, Oswald, & Kirkman, 2018, 2020). Such critiques call for a more inclusive and liberating theological language.

Furthermore, the classical theistic concept of God has been scrutinized for fostering anthropocentrism, in which humans are seen as the pinnacle of creation with dominion over nature. This view, many argue, has contributed to ecological degradation by justifying exploitative relationships with the environment (White, 1967; Burdett, 2015). In this context, a renewed understanding of God that promotes interdependence and ecological responsibility is urgently needed. Theology must seek symbols and metaphors that not only uphold divine transcendence but also affirm God’s immanence in creation and concern for the integrity of the earth.

These critiques underscore the importance of the theonym, the name by which God is known in shaping religious identity and ecological ethics. Names of God do not merely function as titles; they carry cosmological meaning, ethical values, and spiritual direction. In the Manggarai culture of Eastern Indonesia, the Supreme Being is called *Mori Keraéng*, a theonym embedded in ritual practices, oral traditions, and cosmological narratives. This name reflects a view of God as both transcendent and immanent, as the One who initiates, sustains, and guides life, including the life of the land and its creatures (Verheijen, 1991).

This article aims to examine the theological and cultural significance of the theonym *Mori Keraéng*, its formation and development within Manggarai cosmology, and its relevance for the Church's eco-pastoral mission. Specifically, the study investigates how this indigenous understanding of the divine can enrich and contextualize the Church's ecological pastoral practices, offering a model of divine-human-earth relationship that is relational, cooperative, and life-giving.

The core argument of this study is that *Mori Keraéng*, as a culturally embedded theonym, provides a valuable theological resource for rethinking eco-pastoral engagement in the Church. Unlike dominant theologies that often emphasize anthropocentrism or doctrinal abstraction, the concept of *Mori Keraéng* invites a more integrated vision of God, community, and nature. It challenges the Church to recognize and engage indigenous spiritualities not as peripheral or inferior, but as authentic loci of divine revelation and sources of pastoral inspiration especially in the face of global ecological crises.

Literature Review

The study of the theonymous aspect of the Supreme Being is essential, as the history and meaning of the Divine's proper name profoundly shape believers' perceptions and behaviors. In ancient Israelite society, the names of the Supreme Being recorded in Scripture not only conveyed identity but also revealed God's character and relationship with the people, influencing their communal life. The name *YHWH*, revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as "*I AM WHO I AM*" (*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*), affirms God as the living, present, and faithful One who sustains the covenant. This understanding called the Israelites to obedience and loyalty to divine commandments, as highlighted in Deuteronomy 6:4–5: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*" The recognition of God's holiness and uniqueness shaped ethical values and communal responsibilities, emphasizing justice, compassion, and covenantal faithfulness while rejecting idolatry and social injustice (Vasileiadis, 2017).

References to the Divine in folklore similarly reflect the evolving human understanding of God, as exemplified in Ukrainian society (Matskiv, 2017). Across religions and cultures, theonyms undergo dynamic transformations, illustrating shifts in human conceptions of the supernatural. Religious traditions often employ symbols and images to express their understanding of the Supreme Being. Hinduism's concept of *Saguna Brahma*, God with attributes, is reflected in temple architecture (Heriyanti, 2019). Likewise, Catholicism embodies its understanding of the Godhead through the

Church, perceived as a manifestation of divine presence (Lake, 2019).

In Manggarai-Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, prior studies have examined *Mori Keraéng* from anthropological, linguistic, and cultural perspectives, emphasizing its role in traditional cosmology (Verheijen, 1991; Erb, 1998; Allerton, 2009; Borgias, 2016; Iswandono et al., 2016). Other research has documented *Mori Keraéng*'s presence in traditional rituals (Allerton, 2009; Denar et al., 2021; Denar & Firmanto, 2022; Mbukut, 2023), while oral traditions highlight its influence on Manggarai worldview and ethics (Satyawati, 2019).

However, these studies tend to be descriptive and lack theological engagement that bridges local cosmology with Christian doctrine. *Mori Keraéng* remains underexplored as a theological locus capable of enriching Christian contextualization in Manggarai. Additionally, critical analysis of its potential contributions to eco-theology, creation theology, and contextual Christology is largely absent.

This study aims to address these gaps by offering a systematic theological reflection on *Mori Keraéng*, treating it not merely as a cultural symbol but as a meaningful foundation for contextual theology that honors both Christian tradition and local spiritual wisdom.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach, using Martin Heidegger's phenomenological method. Heidegger defines phenomenology as "letting that which shows itself be seen from

itself in the very way in which it shows itself”. In scientific discourse, it is understood as “the study of what presents itself” (Heidegger, 2001: 58–59).

Data collection was conducted through two primary methods: participant observation and in-depth interviews. Over a two-month period (July–August 2024), the researcher was immersed in several Manggarai communities, actively engaging in community rituals, informal gatherings, and traditional ceremonies where references to *Mori Keraéng* were frequently invoked. This firsthand involvement provided direct insight into the implicit theological expressions embedded in daily life and cultural practices.

In-depth interviews were carried out following a phenomenological approach informed by Heidegger’s hermeneutic philosophy. Informants were encouraged to share their lived experiences of the Transcendent in an open and reflective manner, particularly regarding their understanding of *Mori Keraéng*. While a few open-ended questions were used to prompt discussion, the interviews remained largely unstructured to allow informants the freedom to narrate their experiences without influence from the researcher’s assumptions. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent to ensure accurate transcription and comprehensive analysis.

Participants were selected based on specific criteria: (1) recognized as elders or custodians of traditional wisdom (*tua adat*), (2) actively engaged in traditional rituals and community decision-making, and (3) possessing a reflective understanding of the spiritual dimensions of Manggarai cosmology. These individuals were chosen not only

for their knowledge but also for their lived integration of traditional and religious worldviews.

Result and Discussion

The Theonym of *Mori Keraéng*

Theonym derives from the Greek words *Theos* (God) and *onym* (name). It is the study of the proper names of the Divine and forms a branch of onomastics concerned with the etymology, history, and significance of divine names (English Encyclopedia, 2023). This raises the question: How do the Manggarai people understand the proper name of the Supreme Being?

Among the Manggarai, the Supreme Being is called *Mori(n)*. The root word *mori* means master, owner, or ruler and is also applied to individuals of high social status (Verheijen, 1991: 34–35). In everyday usage, government officials are often referred to as *mori pemerintah* (ruling master). Similarly, guests are addressed as *mori* as a mark of respect and honor; for example, *mori hitu ité bo ko* (“Guest, you are welcome”). Thus, in Manggarai society, *mori* signifies authority and respect, applied both to rulers legitimate leaders responsible for social order and welfare and esteemed guests, reflecting cultural values of dignity and hospitality (Jebero, 2024; Das, 2024; Lades, 2024). This term is also used for spirits and individuals considered important within social life.

This dual application of *mori* led to a linguistic adaptation to specify the Supreme Being: the addition of the possessive suffix -n to form *Mori(n)*. This form is exclusively used to designate the Supreme Being (Verheijen, 1991: 36), emphasizing the Divine as the ultimate

“owner” and ruler transcending all things, the source of existence, life, and security.

Over time, the conception and naming of the Supreme Being have undergone significant transformations, shaped by cultural, philosophical, and scientific developments. For example, the Enlightenment’s rationalism and empirical inquiry introduced Deism, positing a non-interventionist Creator, in contrast to classical theism’s personal and active God. More recent theological discourse, influenced by evolutionary biology, quantum physics, and cosmology, depicts God in new ways: Paul Tillich’s “Ground of Being” and process theology’s dynamic, relational God challenge traditional anthropomorphic images (Clayton, 2020; Peacocke, 2001; Haught, 2010).

In Manggarai, external cultural influences have also shaped the theonym. The expansion of neighboring tribes brought linguistic and conceptual exchanges. Notably, the term *Keraéng*, borrowed from South Sulawesi’s Bugis language where it denotes high status or royalty (Verheijen, 1991: 37–38), was appended to *Mori*, creating *Mori Keraéng*. The Sultanate of Goa’s historical influence facilitated such cultural borrowings.

According to theonymic research by Jilis A. J. Verheijen, the addition of *Keraéng* to *Mori* affirms the Supreme Being’s role as “Lord of Lords” or “King of Kings,” clearly distinguishing *Mori* (master) from *Mori Keraéng* (the supreme master) (Verheijen, 1991: 37–38). The various names for *Mori Keraéng* do not indicate separate deities among Manggarai subgroups but reflect diverse aspects and roles of the one Supreme Being within the cosmic and

social order. Names such as *Jari agu Dédék* (Becomer and Shaper), *Ciri agu Wowo* (Becomer and Referrer), *Amé/Ema éta agu Iné/Endé wa* (Father above – Mother below), *Ronan éta mai – Winan wa mai* (Husband above – Wife below), *Tanan wa – Awang éta* (Earth below – Sky above), *Wulang agu Leso* (Moon and Sun), *Parn agu Kolepn* (East and West), and *Ulun lé – Wain lau* (Upstream and Downstream) serve as symbolic references widely recognized across Manggarai society (Badon, 2024; Das, 2024; Terima, 2024). These appellations articulate a relational and ecological divinity rooted in local cosmology. As a native of Manggarai, I personally affirm their significance as integral to the local theological imagination rather than distinct tribal gods.

These names frequently appear in *tudak* (traditional prayers) during rituals such as *léa sosé*, *wasé pasé*, *ndéres*, *ako wéu*, and *penti*. Elders recite these names as essential invocations in ceremonial contexts. For example, in agricultural rites, *Jari agu Dédék*, *Ciri agu Wowo*, and *Amé/Ema éta agu Iné/Endé wa* are invoked, while marriage rituals reference *Ronan éta mai* and *Winan wa mai*. This was expressed by the informants during the interviews (Badon, 2024; Lades, 2024; Terima, 2024). The following table presents the Symbolic Names of *Mori Keraéng* in the Manggarai Cosmology:

Table 1.
Symbolic Names of *Mori Keraéng* in Manggarai Cosmology

Symbolic Name	Translation	Ecological Meaning
<i>Jari agu Dédék</i>	The Becomer and the Shaper	Signifies God as the dynamic source of creation and transformation in nature
<i>Ciri agu Wowo</i>	The Becomer and the Referrer	Points to divine guidance in the natural order and direction of life

<i>Amé/Ema éta agu Iné/Endé wa</i>	Father above and Mother below	Reflects balance between sky (male) and earth (female); symbol of cosmic harmony
<i>Ronan éta mai – Winan wa mai</i>	Husband above – Wife below	Represents gendered complementarity in the universe, fostering relational wholeness.
<i>Tanan wa – Awang éta</i>	Earth below – Sky above	Denotes the vertical cosmology of fertility (earth) and transcendence (sky)
<i>Wulang agu Leso</i>	Moon and Sun	Symbolizes the cycles of time, light, and agricultural rhythms
<i>Parn agu Kolepn</i>	East and West	Marks the spatial completeness of the cosmos; sunrise and sunset as life symbols
<i>Ulun lé – Wain lau</i>	Upstream and Downstream	Reflects the integrity of water systems and their interconnected life-giving flows

Significantly, *Mori Keraéng* is closely identified with the cosmos heaven and earth, upstream and downstream, east and west, sun and moon emphasizing the Divine as Creator and sustainer who embraces all creation, yet transcends it. This cosmic dimension underlines *Mori Keraéng* as the universal source of harmony, punisher of disorder, and willer of biodiversity.

Historically, prior to the Catholic Church's arrival, Manggarai spirituality recognized many spirits subordinate to *Mori Keraéng*, categorized into four levels: plant spirits (watu agu haju), land and animal spirits (ngongo de golo kaka de tana), human spirits (asé-ka'é weki), and ancestral spirits (ata pa'ang be lé) (Sutam et al., 2022: 30). Despite this spirit cosmology, Manggarai belief is best described as animistic with an implicit monotheism centered on *Mori Keraéng* (Verheijen, 1991: 33–37).

The Catholic Church has contributed to the transition from implicit to explicit monotheism by popularizing *Mori Keraéng* as the Christian God's name in local liturgical texts (Verheijen, 1991: 37).

Regarding form, the Manggarai traditionally do not ascribe a visible form to *Mori Keraéng*. Ancestors left no descriptions, and the people say, “Bom ita litéy” (We cannot see Him) (Jebero, 2024; Badon, 2024; Verheijen, 1991: 69–70). Though intangible, *Mori Keraéng*'s presence is felt in material manifestations or dreams, often perceived through shamans but never in a physical form. Thus, *Mori Keraéng* remains a profound mystery, inviting questioning and theological reflection rather than taboo silence.

The dual attributes *Amé-Iné* (Father-Mother) reflect a genderless, non-patriarchal concept of the Divine. These dichotomous but inseparable terms express a holistic perfection: *Amé rinding mané* (Father who protects in the afternoon), *Iné rinding wié* (Mother who protects at night), *par awon-kolep salén*, and others articulate a balanced cosmological understanding. The Manggarai also conceive *Mori Keraéng* as Bapa (Father) ruling the upper universe, and *Endé/Iné wa* (Mother) nurturing the lower universe. These appellations permeate agricultural rites and enrich Manggarai theology.

Though anthropomorphic, this dual imagery challenges exclusively masculine and patriarchal depictions of God, presenting *Mori Keraéng* as simultaneously omnipotent and nurturing. This resonates with feminist theological critiques that reject the limiting notion of God solely as male, Father, King, or Lord.

***Mori Keraéng* and His Divine Attributes**

After discussing the theme of the *Mori Keraéng* Form, another thing that needs to be explored is the properties possessed by the Supreme Form. There are several traits that emerged in the discussions with the subjects. They are as follows. First, *omnipresentia*. The Manggarai people believe that *Mori Keraéng* can be present in various places at any time and simultaneously. Space and time cannot limit His movement. He is found and encounters creation in all the events of their lives. This Supreme Being is metaphorized by the Manggarai people as the Lord of the upstream and downstream (Ulun le Wa'in lau), the One who makes the rising and setting of the sun possible (Parn awo kolep sale), the One who guards humans day and night (Ame rinding mane, Ine rinding wie). These expressions speak of the presence of *Mori Keraéng* who is present and ever-present in the entire history of His creation from the beginning to eternity.

Secondly, *Mori Keraéng* is experienced by the Manggarai people as both *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans* a divine mystery that evokes both awe and fear (Otto, 1979: 13, 29, 42–52). On the one hand, the people express a deep sense of reverence and fear toward *Mori Keraéng*, as He is believed to possess the power to bring about misfortunes such as droughts, crop failures, injuries, illnesses, and even curses when humans violate ritual obligations or show disrespect toward Him. Within the agrarian context, any unexpected disaster such as a failed harvest or wounds incurred while tending the land is often interpreted as a consequence of neglecting this sacred relationship. Rituals of restoration (rekok kulung or rasang sola) are thus performed to appease His anger and

restore cosmic harmony. This reverent fear constructs a hierarchical relationship between humans and the Divine, one that resembles that of servant to master. On the other hand, *Mori Keraéng* is also seen as a benevolent and fascinating presence who bestows life, abundance, and protection. The people recognize His blessings in signs such as fruitful harvests, good health, and safe labor in the fields. As a native of Manggarai, I affirm this dual perception of *Mori Keraéng* as deeply consistent with my own lived experience and cultural-religious understanding. This theological tension between awe and affection, fear and trust is not contradictory, but rather reflects the richness of the Manggarai cosmology, in which the Divine is both transcendent and intimately involved in the rhythms of everyday life.

Third, *Mori Keraéng* is described as a person. Although most Manggarai people do not know the form of *Mori Keraéng*, they try to imagine him as a person, as an anthropomorphization of the Supreme Being. This can be seen in various testimonies. In many mythical accounts of the creation of humans and plants, God comes to people in dreams. He takes the form of an unknown person. There are also many accounts of Him appearing as an old man.

As a personal God, *Mori Keraéng* is understood by the Manggarai people as One who has ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to feel. This intimate belief is reflected in the *tudak*, traditional prayers, where each invocation begins with the words *dengé* (hear) and *lélo* (see), calling upon *Mori Keraéng*'s attentive presence. For example, a typical opening of a *tudak* prayer may be: “*Senget koe ami, lélo koe ami, Mori Keraéng*, hear us, see us, *Mori Keraéng*” (Das, 2024). This approach emphasizes the relational and responsive nature of the

Divine, affirming that He listens and observes human actions closely. Because of this attentiveness, *Mori Keraéng* can become jealous or angry, punishing people through various calamities when they transgress moral or ritual boundaries. These consequences manifest as misfortunes affecting the community and the environment. However, alongside His capacity for anger, *Mori Keraéng* is also merciful and forgiving. Forgiveness is granted when the community undertakes rites of restoration or repentance, such as the *rekok kulung* or *rasang sola* ceremonies, which seek to reconcile humans with the Divine order. This duality of justice and mercy characterizes the dynamic relationship between the Manggarai people and *Mori Keraéng*, highlighting a theology rooted in both accountability and hope.

This personal God never shows Himself directly. He takes other forms such as appearing through creations. For this reason, the Manggarai people have great respect for other creations. In the old days children were taught not to hurt other creations. The reason is that *Mori Keraéng* can get angry. Therefore, parents always remind their children not to hurt or shout loudly, especially when they enter a new area. The phrase ...*jaga itang laing* (watch out for plagues, repentance and disobedience). For example, if someone is not careful in throwing hot water, the parents will remind him: him ... *néka oké pina naéng waé kolang hitu jaga lowas balak, oné ité itang* (do not throw hot water carelessly, watch out for the *bengkarung* [skink]; if harmed, we will be punished by a plague). This reflects a traditional belief that harming animals carelessly may bring misfortune, as animals are seen as part of the sacred web of life (Verheijen, 1967, 181). However, this belief does not imply that all

animals must be spared under any condition. In Manggarai customary understanding, harmful animals such as rats that destroy rice crops or mosquitoes that spread diseases may be controlled for the sake of communal health and food security provided that it is done with responsibility, necessity, and without cruelty. Thus, respecting animals is not absolute pacifism, but a call for discernment and reverence in our interactions with all living beings. To hurt an animal without reason is to hurt the Supreme Being himself; but to protect life through necessary action is a moral duty, even in traditional cosmology.

Understanding *Mori Keraéng* as the God Beyond and Within History

Mori Keraéng is recognized by the Manggarai people as a transcendent and immanent Supreme Being. Although the term “transcendent” is not explicitly used by local respondents, they describe Him as “beyond human” and affirm, “we do not know the true form of *Mori Keraéng*.” These statements indicate an epistemological distance between the Creator and human beings. *Mori Keraéng* is believed to surpass human comprehension. The name itself, meaning “Lord of Lords” or “King of Queens” (Jebero, 2024; Wade, 2024; Verheijen, 1991, pp. 37–38), signifies supreme divinity. He is *maha*, the utmost in all things. This transcendent Being is not to be equated with creation but exists beyond everything He has brought into being. Remarkably, the belief in *Mori Keraéng*’s transcendence, as documented in the early 1990s, continues to shape the religious consciousness of the Manggarai people today, demonstrating the enduring relevance of their cosmological worldview.

Despite this transcendent understanding, *Mori Keraéng* is more often portrayed in relational terms as “Father” and “Mother.” The immanent dimension of the Divine is deeply emphasized in Manggarai culture. Ethnographic research and sustained cultural engagement reveal a shared theological framework across Manggarai communities: *Mori Keraéng* is revered as the Creator (Ata Jari agu Dedek), the Sustainer of life (Amé rinding mané agu Iné rinding wié), and the eschatological destiny of all creation (wé’é kolé kété). These expressions, found in ritual prayers and oral traditions, testify to a coherent cosmology that remains vital in Manggarai religious life.

This concept of *Mori Keraéng* goes beyond a deistic view of a detached creator. He is not understood as a God who abandons creation after initiating it; rather, He journeys with His creation toward its ultimate fulfillment in union with Him what is termed *pa’ang be lé or kété* in Manggarai eschatology. This continuity of belief across generations reveals a living tradition: dynamic in form yet consistent in its theological essence.

Additionally, *Mori Keraéng* is viewed as the Lord of time. This understanding is expressed in traditional prayers where He is invoked as *parn awo kolep sale* (the One who makes the sun rise and set). This metaphor signifies His presence throughout the historical continuum: from the dawn of creation (sunrise) to its consummation (sunset). He is believed to be actively involved in both progress and decline, remaining faithful even in moments of crisis.

The Divine's involvement in history is also understood through the lens of revelation. While the modes of revelation in Manggarai culture are not explicitly doctrinal, informants recount myths and rituals that suggest *Mori Keraéng* communicates through dreams, entrusted individuals (e.g., shamans and elders), and natural signs. One such ritual, *téka nampo*, is performed to discern divine will through natural omens. However, the interpretation of such signs remains subjective and culturally bound.

A theological gap is observed in Manggarai cosmology regarding the Incarnation, the concept of God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ. Unlike Christian theology, Manggarai tradition does not articulate the incarnation of the Divine. This raises theological challenges when considering the authenticity and discernment of divine revelation in local traditions, especially when revelations are mediated through individuals or rituals that lack ecclesial verification. Nevertheless, the Manggarai people affirm that *Mori Keraéng* reveals Himself, and they encounter this Divine presence through their enduring cultural practices.

Furthermore, the concept of *Mori Keraéng* reflects historical transformation. As outlined in the discussion on theonym, the name and attributes of the Supreme Being have evolved through time. Unlike the theological development of the Trinity in Christian doctrine—marked by rigorous debates and ecumenical councils the understanding of *Mori Keraéng* has developed more organically, without formalized theological discourse. This is partly due to the cultural taboo against questioning the Divine, as noted by several informants.

The question remains: does divine revelation occur in Manggarai history? Ennio Mantovani (2017, pp. 181–182) offers a valuable framework, defining revelation as the experience of God's love—past, present, and future. Drawing from Romans 1:19–20, Acts 14:16–17, and John 1:1–5, Mantovani emphasizes that God reveals Himself through creation, providence, and relational goodness. Revelation is not merely the transmission of esoteric knowledge but a self-communication of God as love, manifested through the Word and through lived experience.

Applying this framework, one can affirm the presence of divine revelation in Manggarai culture. The people experience *Mori Keraéng* through His creative work through rain that nourishes crops, fruitful harvests, communal harmony, and ecological rhythms. Furthermore, *Mori Keraéng* is understood to reveal Himself through customary laws that regulate social and environmental life. These cultural expressions reflect a divine self-communication that calls for discernment and response.

In conclusion, God's revelation is not exclusive to the biblical tradition or the institutional Church. It is also present in diverse cultures. The signs of divine communication expressed through goodness, justice, and ecological harmony affirm that *Mori Keraéng* continues to reveal Himself to the Manggarai people through the language of creation, culture, and community.

The Concept of Eco-Pastoral

Eco-pastoral refers to a form of pastoral engagement that integrates ecological consciousness into the Church's mission of spiritual accompaniment. The term pastoral denotes the role of religious

leaders—particularly priests in guiding the faithful in matters of faith and moral living (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2023). The prefix eco- is derived from the Greek word *oikos* (household or home) and *logos* (discourse or study), implying a theological and ethical concern for the Earth as a shared home. Thus, eco-pastoral denotes a pastoral praxis oriented toward care for the Earth and all of creation as an integral dimension of Christian discipleship.

In the Catholic tradition, the significance of eco-pastoral has long been recognized. This awareness is evident in various magisterial documents addressing the relationship between faith and ecological responsibility. Pope Paul VI, in *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971, no. 21), affirmed the moral responsibility of humanity to preserve nature (Indonesian Bishops' Conference [IBC], 2015, p. 21). The 1972 Synod of Bishops also urged wealthy nations to embrace a simpler lifestyle, recognizing that the ecological crisis is closely linked to human greed and overconsumption (IBC, 2015, pp. 21–22).

Pope John Paul II, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987, no. 34), emphasized the importance of ethical stewardship of creation, noting that environmental degradation endangers both current and future generations. Pope Benedict XVI, in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009, no. 48), called for a proper theological understanding of creation, portraying the natural world as a manifestation of God's love and truth. Pope Francis continues and deepens this ecological theology in *Laudato Si'* (2015), *Querida Amazonia* (2020), and *Laudate Deum* (2023), identifying the Earth as a common home for all beings and urging the Church to engage actively in its protection. Human actions toward nature, he insists, must reflect the relational character of the Triune God, in whose image humanity is created (*imago Dei*).

The Church's ecological vision becomes transformative when it is operationalized through concrete pastoral policies and practices. For this reason, eco-pastoral is not an optional or peripheral concern but a pressing ecclesial mandate. The Catholic Church in Indonesia has responded to this call. In 2001, the Indonesian Bishops' Conference issued a Pastoral Letter on the environment, affirming the kinship of all creation and advocating for a culture of love and ecological awareness (IBC, 2015, pp. 210–214). This eco-pastoral orientation has also shaped the pastoral priorities of the Diocese of Ruteng since 2015, where environmental issues have become integral to diocesan programs and synodal discernment (Post-Natal, 2017; Committee for the Third Synod of the Diocese of Ruteng, 2017; Diocese of Ruteng, 2023).

Effective eco-pastoral praxis requires clarity in terms of focus and locus. The focus pertains to the specific ecological and pastoral challenges facing a community. Identifying these concerns is crucial to ensure that eco-pastoral initiatives are contextually grounded and missionally directed. Clarity of focus allows pastoral agents to formulate coherent goals and measurable outcomes.

The locus refers to the concrete settings and target groups where eco-pastoral action is enacted such as traditional leaders, families, youth, or local governments. This strategic localization enables the Church to tailor its pastoral methods and approaches to the realities of particular communities. Beyond focus and locus, eco-pastoral also necessitates a robust theological foundation. This foundation is drawn from Scripture, ecclesial tradition, and the magisterium, but it can also be enriched by local cultures, which function as *loci theologici*.

Several key theological themes undergird eco-pastoral thought and action: the nature of God, the integrity of creation, human responsibility, ecological justice, and eschatological hope. A crucial aspect of this foundation is the theological naming and understanding of God (theonym), which informs ethical behavior. In Catholic theology, God is understood as Creator, Sustainer, and the One who draws all creation toward its eschatological fulfillment. God is also perichoretic, dwelling within the Triune communion and present within creation. Accordingly, creation becomes a sacramental sign of God's self-communication (Boff, 2004; Pope Francis, 2016). God is both the origin and the ultimate goal of the pilgrimage of all beings.

The Significance of the Theonym *Mori Keraéng* to the Ecopastoral of the Church

The question that needs to be answered in this point is what is the significance of the concept of the *Mori Keraéng* theonym to the ecopastoral of the Catholic Church? The answer is that the ecopastoral of the Manggarai Catholic Church in general and the universal Church require a theological basis in their ecological pastoral activities. The self-name of the Supreme Being in Manggarai culture has a meaning that can be used as a reference in the Ecological Movement in the context of Manggarai. Several significances can be explained as follows:

Firstly, the Manggarai people refer to *Mori Keraéng* as *Ema/Amé eta agu Endé/Iné wa* (Father and Mother). In this conception, divine roles are differentiated through voluntary self-limitation: Ema/Amé governs the upper realm (the sky), while *Endé/Iné* is entrusted with

the care of the earth and all that inhabits it. Rather than overlapping or negating each other's functions, these divine manifestations coexist in mutual respect and distinction. Their relationship is expressed symbolically through the notion of a cosmic union, whereby each participates in the reality of the other. This interpenetration bears resemblance to the Christian theological concept of perichoresis, which describes the mutual indwelling of the Divine Persons within the Trinity.

Perichoresis comes from the Greek *peri*, “to go around” and *chōreō*, “to go, or come”. Literally, perichoresis is understood as mutual giving and receiving or mutual absorption. In the history of theology, this term was first introduced by Pseudo-Cyrillic in the 6th century. This term was popularized by John Damascenus in his work entitled *De fide orthodoxa*. This word was translated into Latin as *circumincensio* by Burgundian of Pisa (Boff, 2004, pp. 152–153; Stamatovič, 2016, p. 303). According to the most common theological interpretation of perichoresis, this term is an important idea of Trinitarian theology that expresses the mutual indwelling and restraint of the persons of the Most Holy Trinity, their presence in each other, in which each contains the other (Stamatovič, 2016, p. 304; Watu, 2024).

Perichoresis can be found in the concept of cosmic marriage. *Ema/Amé eta agu Endé/Iné wa* mutually absorb each other in the ritual of *tente teno*. At that moment, *Ema/Amé* symbolized by *teno* wood is stuck into the ground, a symbol of the womb of the Mother. This moment becomes a time of mutual absorption between the Persons. Thus They become one. Consequently, the presence of *Ema/Amé* in the organization of the upper world brings within Him

Endé/Iné, and vice versa. The continuity of life occurs when the Persons of God collaborate. Humans get a harvest, if Mother Earth gives her womb to be a place for the seeds planted by humans. The seeds can grow and bear fruit, if Amé above sends down rainwater and allows the sun for the photosynthesis activity of the plants.

This concept of God should be taught and echoed in the context of Manggarai? The reason is that spirituality of self-limitation and spirituality of mutual absorption have begun to disappear in the lives of the Manggarai people. This is evident in the exploitation activities in the agricultural world. Manggarai residents sometimes do not limit their desires which results in forcing the land to provide what is desired. This coercion is evident in the use of agricultural technology such as machines and chemical drugs that are not environmentally friendly. As a result, the land becomes thin and difficult to produce anything else. In addition, the temptation of monoculture agriculture also has an impact on the elimination of plant biodiversity. For example, the great temptation of long-term crop cultivation. Many secondary crops have disappeared. This reality occurs because Manggarai residents do not limit their desires and also do not pay attention to the limitations of other creations in providing them. Therefore, Manggarai residents must learn from God himself who limits himself, even though he is omnipotent. Humans are not omnipotent, they are only creations that have limitations. Maintain the spirituality of limiting yourself so that the earth, which is the oikos for all, remains safe and sustainable.

Beyond the spirituality of self-limitation, Manggarai cosmology also reveals an implicit spirituality of mutual absorption. This worldview is evident in the understanding that human beings are not isolated

entities, but are constituted by and through their relationships with other elements of creation. The human body, in Manggarai thought, is materially and existentially formed by that which it absorbs from the environment such as food, water, and air. Plants become part of human life through consumption; water drawn from the earth sustains and refreshes the body; and the oxygen produced by plants enables respiration. These examples illustrate that the boundaries between human and non-human life are porous, suggesting a cosmological framework in which humans embody the presence of other beings. Consequently, the destruction of any element within this web of interdependence is understood not merely as environmental degradation, but as a diminishment of human life itself. Such a perspective aligns with broader ecological theologies that emphasize the ontological interconnection of all forms of life.

God who is mutually permeating and limiting himself becomes a reference for creation, especially humans in behaving. Humans are required because He is a creation that has reason and free will. Limiting oneself means suppressing the ego. The ability to limit oneself will create space for others to exist and develop themselves.

Second, *Mori Keraéng* as a collaborative God. The striking image of God in the concept of *Mori Keraéng* is a collaborating God. The collaboration is carried out ad intra and ad extra. Collaboration ad intra is manifested in the cooperation between Amé/Ema (Father: sky) and Iné/Endé (Earth: soil). The cooperation is seen in the action of the Father who sends down *ilur* (blessings such as rain, etc.) so that the womb of the Mother (earth) can grow various plants. Without the cooperation of both of them, creation, new birth will not occur.

Collaboration *ad extra* is realized in the act of *Mori Keraéng* which involves creations in giving life to the world. This is seen in several creation myths. For example, in the myth of human creation, *Mori Keraéng* involves bamboo, the sun to realize His will. In the creation of plants, He involves humans, namely by growing plants from human bodies that have been sacrificed.

Collaboration is not only carried out by the Supreme Being at the time of creation, but He carries this out in the entire process of organizing His creation, namely from creation to the fullness of the existence of the creation. In the explanation of Divine Providence, the existence of God is clearly seen as God who opens himself up and synergizes with creation. He is the *causa prima* and the creation that is made a partner in continuing creation (*creatio continua*) is the *causa secunda*. The reality of God above is a reference for Manggarai humans in behaving towards creation. Their future is very dependent on their collaboration with other creations. As social beings, they need the help of other creations. Without the presence of other creations, they cannot become perfect individuals. This should be the awareness of Manggarai Catholics.

Conclusion

The theonym *Mori Keraéng* offers a contextual theological perspective that is both deeply rooted in culture and highly relevant to ecological discourse. As the Supreme Being in Manggarai cosmology, *Mori Keraéng* embodies divine sovereignty while also reflecting relationality, gender complementarity, and cosmic balance. This understanding presents a vision of God who self-limits to allow creation to flourish, integrating both nurturing and

governing attributes. Such a framework invites the Manggarai faithful—and, by extension, the broader Indonesian Church—to embrace an ethic of ecological humility, self-restraint, and shared responsibility in caring for the Earth. Theologically, it supports a decolonized eco-pastoral approach in which indigenous cosmologies are not merely acknowledged but actively woven into the Church's life and mission.

Practically, this perspective has several implications for eco-pastoral ministry. It encourages catechesis and liturgical practices to incorporate local divine symbols, advocates for ecologically oriented pastoral programs rooted in indigenous wisdom, and challenges patriarchal and anthropocentric theological frameworks through inclusive symbolic language. However, this study remains focused on symbolic names and cosmological themes, without yet assessing their reception or impact within ecclesial praxis. Future research should explore how *Mori Keraéng* theology is engaged in parish life, Catholic education, and interreligious dialogue, employing empirical and participatory methods to evaluate its potential in shaping local eco-theological consciousness.

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