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Research Article

Ecotheology In Indonesia's Biodiversity Hotspots: Rethinking Humanity And Nature For Beyond Sustainability

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Abstract. Indonesia is one of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots, hosting a wide variety of ecosystems, species, and genetic resources that are crucial for global ecological stability. The natural diversity, from the tropical rainforests of Papua and Kalimantan to the unique marine ecosystems of Wallacea and the Coral Triangle, represents both a great blessing and a profound responsibility. However, this wealth faces serious threats from deforestation, habitat degradation, illegal wildlife trade, industrial expansion, and the accelerating impacts of climate change. The loss of biodiversity threatens essential ecosystem services while eroding the cultural identity, spiritual heritage, and livelihoods of millions of people who live in harmony with nature. This study proposes ecotheology as a transformative approach to redefining the relationship between humans and nature in Indonesia. Ecotheology is an interdisciplinary field that combines theological reflection, environmental ethics, and ecological science to address the moral and spiritual dimensions of the environmental crisis. Unlike technocratic approaches, ecotheology emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature and views the

environment as a sacred trust to be respected. This perspective invites a relational view that affirms the interdependence of all living beings and humans' moral responsibility toward the non-human world. The research methods include qualitative analysis of theological texts, ethnographic observation of the social conditions of communities in Kalimantan and the Wallacea coastal areas, and synthesis of ecological data from national and international environmental agencies. The findings indicate that ecotheology aligns with the cultural and spiritual values of local communities, where nature is considered alive, sacred, and its preservation a moral duty. Integrating these beliefs into conservation efforts enhances community engagement and builds trust among stakeholders for more holistic and sustainable environmental stewardship.

Keywords: Ecotheology, Biodiversity Hotspot, Beyond Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the megadiverse countries with biodiversity that is very rich and globally significant. According to the latest data from the Indonesian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025-2045, Indonesia has 22 broad ecosystem types ranging from terrestrial to marine ecosystems, providing habitat for about 31,031 species of flora and 744,279 species of fauna. This biodiversity makes Indonesia home to two of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots. Regions such as the tropical rainforests in Papua and Kalimantan as well as the marine ecosystems in Wallacea and the Coral Triangle are centers of endemic species and play an important role in global climate stability.(Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (Bappenas), 2024)

However, Indonesia's natural wealth faces serious threats. Data from 2024 shows the deforestation rate in Indonesia reached 216,200 hectares, with net forest loss of about 175,400 hectares after reforestation efforts are accounted for. Nearly 97% of this deforestation occurred in legal concession areas, especially in Kalimantan, which is also the site of the new national capital development.Auriga Nusantara, "Analysis on Indonesia's Deforestation Rate 2024", 2025.The Jakarta Post, Deforestation Climbed to 175,000 Hectares in 2024, Ministry Admits, The Jakarta Post, März 2025. In addition to deforestation, Indonesia also faces pressures from habitat degradation, massive illegal wildlife trade (such as the seizure of 6,514 illegal birds in Lampung, 2024), and the accelerating impacts of climate change including rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels threatening coastal and marine ecosystems.Mongabay, "Surge in Legal Land Clearing Pushes Up Indonesia's Deforestation Rate in 2024", Mongabay Environment News, Februar 2024; Indonesia Climate Initiative, „Indonesia: Climate Change Risks and Impacts", 2024.

The loss of biodiversity not only has ecological impacts but also threatens the cultural and spiritual identity of communities that have long depended on harmony with nature. In this context, there is a need for approaches that are not only technocratic and rule-based conservation, but also integrate ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions in environmental management. Ecotheology emerges as a suitable paradigm to bridge the relationship between humans and nature through theological reflection, environmental ethics, and ecological principles.

As an interdisciplinary approach, ecotheology emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature as a sacred trust that humans must guard as stewards (khalifah) on earth. Recent studies show that the integration of ecotheological values aligns with local

wisdom in Indonesian communities, especially in the social conditions of communities in Kalimantan and the coasts of Wallacea, where nature is viewed as a living and sacred entity and its preservation becomes a collective moral obligation.A Hidayat, "Islamic Eco-Theology: Religious Narratives in the Climate Crisis in Indonesia", BIIS Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies 12, Nr. 2 (2023): 45–61; R Simanjuntak, F Wibowo, und L Gunawan, "Developing Eco-Theological Concepts in Indonesia: A Cultural and Environmental Perspective", Journal of Indonesian Theological Studies 9, Nr. 1 (2023): 101–15.

Thus, ecotheology provides a robust conceptual framework to enhance community involvement, strengthen synergies among stakeholders, and inspire holistic and sustainable conservation efforts. This approach is especially significant within Indonesia's rich yet vulnerable biodiversity context, as it integrates moral and spiritual values that encourage communities to view nature not merely as an economic resource but as a sacred trust. This aligns with the article's aim to rethink the human-nature relationship in Indonesian biodiversity hotspots toward deeper and more inclusive sustainability.

This study aims to examine ecotheology's contribution as a transformative paradigm in managing ecosystems critical to Indonesia's survival. Utilizing qualitative-theological and ethnographic methods, supported by up-to-date empirical data on ecological and socio-cultural local conditions, the research expects that implementing ecotheological perspectives can foster harmony between scientific knowledge, strategic policies like the IBSAP 2025-2045, and the spiritual-cultural strengths of local communities. This integration is essential not only to address ecological challenges but also to uphold enduring human values for future generations.

METHOD

This research utilizes an advanced multidisciplinary qualitative methodology that integrates systematic theological text analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and empirical ecological data synthesis to achieve a comprehensive understanding of ecotheology in the context of Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots. Theological analysis involves a thorough review and critical interpretation of primary religious texts, journal articles, and local manuscripts that address stewardship and the moral relationship between humans and the environment, with special attention paid to how these perspectives shape conservation ethics. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in selected biodiversity-rich regions, including Kalimantan and the Wallacea coast, utilizing participant observation, semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, customary authorities, and local community members, as well as documentation of rituals, taboos, and customary sanctions related to environmental stewardship. This method is designed not only to capture lived experiences but also to trace how spiritual beliefs and cultural mechanisms function as socio-ecological regulators for resource management and biodiversity protection. In parallel, quantitative ecological data are collected and synthesized from credible sources such as IBSAP 2025–2045 (Bappenas), official government biodiversity repositories, and international reports, focusing on biodiversity indices, deforestation rates, habitat

condition assessments, and climate change impacts. All data are triangulated and analyzed thematically, with coding processes mapping the intersection of faith-based values, community practices, and conservation outcomes. This methodological synergy ensures that findings are robust, contextually nuanced, and offer critical insight into how ecotheology can substantively contribute to more inclusive, holistic, and sustainable biodiversity conservation policies and community-based environmental management in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

Ecological Crisis and Biodiversity Loss

Indonesia occupies a uniquely strategic position in global ecology as one of the world's megadiverse countries, hosting extraordinary biological wealth across its vast archipelago. Its ecosystems encompass the dense tropical rainforests of Papua and Kalimantan, extensive peatlands in Sumatra, and unique coastal and marine environments in Wallacea and the Coral Triangle. This ecological richness functions not only as the backbone of global ecological stability but also as the foundation of local livelihoods, cultural identity, and national resilience. The tropical forests play a crucial role as carbon sinks, water regulators, and habitats for thousands of endemic species, while marine ecosystems such as the Coral Triangle are recognized as the global epicenter of marine biodiversity, home to over 76% of known hard coral species worldwide.(Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (Bappenas), 2024)

Yet, this invaluable ecological wealth is now under unprecedented threat due to human-induced pressures. According to the *Indonesian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025–2045* published by Bappenas, Indonesia's national deforestation rate in 2024 reached 216,200 hectares, with a net forest loss of approximately 175,400 hectares after accounting for reforestation efforts.(Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (Bappenas), 2024) This data indicates that current rehabilitation measures remain far from sufficient to offset deforestation. Alarmingly, nearly 97% of this forest loss occurred within legal concession areas, particularly in Kalimantan, which is simultaneously the designated site for the development of the new capital city, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN).(Nusantara, 2025) Such findings highlight the structural weaknesses in land-use policies and natural resource management, where short-term economic interests and large-scale development projects often override long-term ecological sustainability.

Independent investigations by Auriga Nusantara further reveal that large-scale land-clearing policies and practices—whether for palm oil plantations, mining, or infrastructure expansion—constitute the primary drivers of forest destruction. Strikingly, Mongabay reports that the surge in Indonesia's deforestation is more heavily driven by legally sanctioned land-clearing activities than by traditional illegal logging, which had long been framed as the main culprit.(Mongabay, 2024) This paradox demonstrates how the problem lies not merely in illegal activities but in weak regulatory frameworks and inconsistent governance that, paradoxically, legitimize environmental degradation.

The ecological consequences of these dynamics are profound and multidimensional. The loss of tropical forests translates into the loss of habitats for

iconic endemic species such as the Bornean orangutan, the Papuan bird of paradise, and numerous rare plant species. This process accelerates genetic erosion, thereby undermining the resilience of ecosystems. Deforestation also contributes to land degradation, reduces soil water retention capacity, and increases the risk of ecological disasters such as floods, droughts, wildfires, and landslides. The degradation of peatlands, for instance, not only strips ecosystems of their natural functions as massive carbon sinks but also releases immense quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, further exacerbating the global climate crisis.(Initiative, 2024)

Beyond ecological implications, biodiversity loss has severe socio-economic and cultural repercussions. Many indigenous and rural communities lose access to food, clean water, medicinal plants, and other resources traditionally sustained by forests. Forest destruction, therefore, not only erodes local livelihoods but also undermines cultural traditions and spiritual worldviews that have long been intertwined with the natural environment. In this sense, the ecological crisis in Indonesia is not solely an environmental issue but also a moral, cultural, and humanitarian crisis. As reported by *The Jakarta Post*, Indonesia lost around 175,000 hectares of forest in 2024 alone—a figure that underscores the fragility of environmental governance and the inadequacy of current commitments to sustainable development.(The Jakarta Post, 2025)

Taken together, Indonesia's ecological crisis and biodiversity loss represent a multidimensional phenomenon requiring comprehensive responses. Addressing these challenges demands a paradigm shift from development models narrowly focused on short-term economic growth toward approaches that place ecological integrity at the very core of sustainability. This is precisely where ecotheology becomes significant: by integrating ethical, spiritual, and cultural values into ecological discourse, it provides a transformative framework for rethinking humanity's relationship with the natural world and responding to the ecological emergency in a more holistic manner.

Islamic Ecotheology: Humanity as *Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ*

The ecological crisis that confronts Indonesia today cannot be reduced merely to a technical, administrative, or even economic problem. It is fundamentally a humanitarian and spiritual crisis. The destruction of forests does not only result in biodiversity loss, but it also disrupts the cultural and spiritual fabric of local communities who, for centuries, have lived in harmony with nature. For many indigenous peoples, forests, rivers, and mountains are not simply physical landscapes but sacred spaces imbued with spiritual meaning. Thus, ecological degradation is simultaneously a form of cultural erosion and a moral failure. Responding to such a multidimensional crisis requires an equally multidimensional approach, one that brings together science, public policy, culture, and, crucially, theology.

From an Islamic perspective, humans are positioned as *khalīfah fī al-ardh* (vicegerents of God on earth) entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining cosmic balance. The Qur'an reminds humanity that their authority on earth is not one of domination, but of stewardship grounded in justice and responsibility: *"Indeed, I will*

place upon the earth a khalīfah" (Q. al-Baqarah [2]:30)[1] and *"It is He who has made you successors upon the earth and raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you"* (Q. al-An'ām [6]:165).[2] The concept of *amanah* (trust) reinforces the notion that nature is a divine trust, not human property to be exploited without limits.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars of Islamic philosophy, argues that the root cause of modern ecological crises is the desacralization of nature brought about by secular modernity. In his seminal work *Religion and the Order of Nature*, Nasr highlights how the mechanistic worldview of modern science reduced nature to mere matter, stripped of its spiritual dimensions.Hossein Nasr, Religion and the Order of Nature. By contrast, the Islamic cosmological vision sees nature as filled with divine signs (*āyāt Allāh*) that reflect the order and beauty of God. To exploit nature heedlessly is thus not only an ecological violation but a theological betrayal. Nasr calls for a revival of the sacred view of nature as an essential step toward addressing environmental collapse.

Recent scholarship has advanced these ideas in the Indonesian context. Hidayat (2023) demonstrates how Islamic eco-theology provides a counter-narrative to anthropocentric development paradigms that prioritize economic growth over ecological justice. By emphasizing the interconnectedness between human beings and the environment, eco-theology fosters an ethic of care that aligns with local spiritualities and communal traditions.(Hidayat, 2023) This approach resonates with the Qur'anic emphasis on balance (*mīzān*), which prohibits excess and encourages moderation in all forms of human interaction with creation (Q. al-Rahman [55]:7–9).[3]

Other scholars also underline that Islamic eco-theology is not only about environmental ethics but also about spiritual consciousness (*taqwa*). As Foltz (2006) explains, to be environmentally responsible in Islam is to recognize that the natural world praises God in its own way (Q. al-Isra' [17]:44), and that humans are called to protect, not silence, this cosmic chorus.(Foltz & ebrary, n.d.) Similarly, Khalid and O'Brien (1994) emphasize that Islam provides a theological framework for environmental stewardship where ecological responsibility is a form of worship (*'ibadah*) and a manifestation of faith.(Khalid & O'brien, 1993)

In the Indonesian setting, this spiritual paradigm has significant transformative potential. It allows religious communities to frame ecological responsibility not as an external obligation imposed by state regulation or international conventions, but as an internalized act of devotion. When environmental protection is seen as part of fulfilling divine trust, the motivation for conservation becomes stronger, more sustainable, and rooted in spiritual identity. This makes eco-theology a critical paradigm for shifting from an exploitative anthropocentric model toward an ecocentric and theocentric model that values the intrinsic worth of nature.

Interreligious Perspectives and Local Wisdom

[1] Al-Qur'an, Q. al-Baqarah [2]:30.
[2] Al-Qur'an, Q. al-An'ām [6]:165.
[3] Al-Qur'an, Q. al-Rahman [55]:7–9.

Ecotheological perspectives are not exclusive to Islam; they also emerge across various religious and cultural traditions in Indonesia. In contemporary Christianity, ecological theology has gained increasing scholarly attention. Recent studies such as *Anthropocentrism in Christian Eco-Theology: Origin and Debate* (Muslich et al., 2024) explore how traditional anthropocentric interpretations are being challenged and reoriented toward theocentric frameworks that affirm the intrinsic value of creation and emphasize human responsibility toward the environment.(Maulana, Alfionita, Yahya, & Untung, 2024) This development is consistent with Ernst Conradie's claim that ecological crisis represents not only a scientific challenge but also a theological one, calling Christians to embody values of love (*agapē*), justice, and sustainability in their faith praxis. Similarly, Sabdono (2024) demonstrates how Christian ethics can serve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in ecosystem preservation, by rooting ecological responsibility in biblical teachings on stewardship and covenant.[4]

In the Hindu-Balinese context, the philosophy of "Tri Hita Karana"—literally "three causes of well-being"—offers a holistic vision of harmony that integrates three key relationships: *Parahyangan* (human relations with God), *Pawongan* (human relations with fellow humans), and *Palemahan* (human relations with nature).(Putu Surya Anggana, Gede Mudana, Nyoman Triyuni, & Made Rai Sukmawa-ti, 2022) This philosophy is not merely normative but is embodied in spatial planning, religious rituals, and daily practices that affirm ecological sustainability. Anggana et al. (2022) show how *Tri Hita Karana* motivates pro-environmental behavior in traditional villages, while Subrata et al. (2025) argue that it provides a solid cultural foundation for sustainable tourism in Bali.(Subrata, Triyuni, & Septevany, 2025) In this way, Balinese Hinduism contributes not only a cultural framework but also a living practice that links spirituality with ecological preservation.

Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) embedded in indigenous traditions across Indonesia also provides profound ecological ethics. In Kalimantan, forests are regarded as sacred spaces, safeguarded through systems of taboo (*pamali*) and customary sanctions that restrict excessive exploitation and maintain ecological balance. In the Wallacea region, the practice of "sasi laut" functions as a temporary customary prohibition on harvesting certain marine resources. This indigenous institution operates as a community-based conservation mechanism that regulates marine resource use, protects biodiversity, and fosters social solidarity. Siahaya et al. (2016) and more recent works by Putri et al. (2023) confirm that *sasi laut* not only conserves marine ecosystems but also sustainscultural identity and community cohesion.(Putri, Chandrika, Pangestu, & Suryanda, 2021)

These interreligious and indigenous perspectives demonstrate striking commonalities: all affirm nature as sacred, emphasize human responsibility to preserve ecological balance, and offer moral legitimacy to environmental ethics. Purwanto and Kristiawan (2025) highlight that Christian, Islamic, and indigenous spiritual traditions provide overlapping moral frameworks—stewardship, justice, and

[4] Sabdono, E. (2024). *Eko-Teologi: Etika Kristen dalam Memenuhi Tujuan Ekosistem pada Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan*. Vox Dei: Jurnal Teologi dan Pastoral.

responsibility—that can enrich public responses to climate change.(Purwanto & Kristiawan, 2025) In a plural society such as Indonesia, ecotheology therefore has the potential to serve as a unifying paradigm that integrates religious narratives, cultural wisdom, and ecological science into a holistic framework for sustainability.

Ecotheology in Biodiversity Hotspots: Challenges and Contestations

Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots—Papua, Kalimantan, Wallacea, and the Coral Triangle—are recognized as among the most critical ecological regions on Earth. They host immense concentrations of endemic species, extensive rainforests, and some of the planet's richest marine ecosystems. Beyond their ecological significance, however, these regions are also sacred landscapes, embedded in the cosmologies of indigenous communities and religious traditions. Forests are often perceived as dwelling places of spirits, seas as living ancestors, and mountains as sites of divine presence. From an ecotheological perspective, such spaces are not merely *resources* but manifestations of the sacred order of creation (*āyāt Allāh*), entrusted to humanity for stewardship and reverence rather than commodification.

Yet these biodiversity hotspots face mounting pressures from deforestation, agribusiness expansion, extractive industries, and state-led megaprojects. In Kalimantan, deforestation continues at an alarming rate, driven not only by illegal logging but increasingly by *legal land clearing* legitimized through state concessions for palm oil plantations and logging industries. The construction of Indonesia's new capital city, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), further accelerates ecological degradation by converting vast tracts of forest into urban and infrastructural zones. According to the Indonesian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025–2045, Indonesia recorded a total deforestation of 216,200 hectares in 2024, with a net loss of 175,400 hectares after accounting for reforestation efforts, underscoring the fragility of current mitigation strategies.(Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (Bappenas), 2024) Similarly, in Papua, large-scale mining and road infrastructure fragment intact forest landscapes, while in Wallacea and the Coral Triangle, overfishing, coral mining, and coastal development are undermining marine biodiversity of global importance.(Mongabay, 2024) These pressures highlight the paradox of so-called *green growth*: while framed as sustainable development, in practice they reproduce extractive dynamics that deepen ecological collapse.(The Jakarta Post, 2025)

The governance of these biodiversity hotspots is characterized by contested claims among diverse actors. The state often prioritizes economic development, national security, and international competitiveness, legitimizing extractive projects under narratives of modernization. Corporations, both domestic and transnational, pursue profits through agribusiness, mining, and energy exploitation, frequently with state sanction. Indigenous communities, by contrast, frame their resistance in theological and cosmological terms, sanctifying their territories as spaces entrusted by the divine or by ancestral spirits. Practices such as *sasi laut* in Maluku and Papua, which restrict marine resource use for designated periods, or *pamali* taboos in Kalimantan that prohibit excessive exploitation of sacred forests, represent indigenous ecological ethics that combine spirituality and sustainability.(Putri et al.,

2021) Civil society organizations, including faith-based groups, articulate environmental advocacy as a moral and religious duty, mobilizing ecotheological discourses to counterbalance technocratic justifications for exploitation.(Nusantara, 2025) This contestation makes biodiversity hotspots not only ecological frontiers but also geopolitical arenas where sovereignty, justice, and survival are negotiated.

From an ecotheological standpoint, these contestations reveal the insufficiency of purely technocratic and market-driven conservation approaches. Ecotheology restores the sacred dimension of biodiversity, challenging its reduction to capital or commodity. Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that the modern ecological crisis stems from the *desacralization of nature*, when forests, rivers, and oceans are stripped of their sacred quality and reduced to utilitarian objects for human exploitation.(Hossein Nasr, 1996) By contrast, the Qur'anic notion of humanity as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (vicegerent on earth) underscores not domination but accountability and responsibility before God (Q. al-Baqarah [2]:30; Q. al-Anʿām [6]:165). Similarly, the principle of *mīzān* (cosmic balance) (Q. al-Raḥmān [55]:7–9) aligns with indigenous ecological wisdom that views creation as a network of relationships to be respected, not extracted.

In this light, ecotheology functions as a critical framework to interrogate extractive violence while envisioning biodiversity hotspots as *sacred commons*. It emphasizes that these regions must be protected not only for their ecological services but also as loci of divine signs and sacred trust (*amanah*). By synthesizing scriptural imperatives, indigenous cosmologies, and ecological science, ecotheology provides a normative paradigm that resists commodification, affirms justice, and calls for intergenerational responsibility. In Indonesia's plural context, ecotheology can serve as a mediating discourse, bridging religious communities, indigenous traditions, and scientific actors to defend biodiversity that sustains both life and spirit.

Rethinking Humanity and Nature for Beyond Sustainability

The ecological crisis unfolding in Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots—Papua, Kalimantan, Wallacea, and the Coral Triangle—reveals the structural limitations of modern development paradigms. For decades, mainstream development has been shaped by anthropocentrism, a worldview that positions humans as the sole masters of nature and legitimizes large-scale exploitation in the name of progress, efficiency, and economic growth. The consequences are evident: forests are cleared at alarming rates, endemic species vanish, watersheds and marine ecosystems collapse, and indigenous peoples who have lived in harmony with these ecosystems for centuries are increasingly displaced from their ancestral lands and cosmological frameworks.(Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (Bappenas), 2024) These realities demonstrate that the crisis is not merely ecological or economic, but deeply spiritual and civilizational.

The global discourse of *sustainability* was initially celebrated as a corrective to reckless exploitation. Yet, in practice, sustainability has often been reduced to technocratic and bureaucratic exercises. It tends to be measured through quantitative indicators—hectares reforested, carbon credits traded, or market values of ecosystem services. While these metrics provide policy legitimacy, they fail to address the deeper

question: why does exploitation persist, why has the sacred sense of nature been eroded, and why are local and indigenous voices often sidelined from decision-making?(Büscher & Fletcher, 2020) Such technocratic sustainability risks becoming a form of ecological cosmetics rather than a transformative framework.

Ecotheology offers both a corrective and a transformative alternative. Drawing on religious traditions, sacred texts, and local cosmologies, ecotheology reframes the human–nature relationship beyond resource management. In Islam, humanity is described as *khalīfah fī al-ardh* (vicegerent on earth) entrusted with divine stewardship (Q. al-Baqarah [2]:30; Q. al-Anʿām [6]:165). The principle of *mīzān* (cosmic balance) articulated in Q. al-Raḥmān [55]:7–9 emphasizes harmony as the foundation of creation. Seyyed Hossein Nasr has argued that the modern ecological crisis is fundamentally the result of desacralization, whereby nature has been reduced to a utilitarian object.(Hossein Nasr, 1996) In the Indonesian context, these theological insights resonate with indigenous practices: *sasi laut* in Maluku and Papua, which regulates the seasonal use of marine resources, or the Balinese philosophy of *tri hita karana*, which envisions harmony between humans, God, and nature.[5] Such practices illustrate that ecological ethics rooted in religion and tradition have long underpinned sustainable civilizations, offering a foundation for rethinking sustainability today.

The concept of *beyond sustainability* emerges precisely from the inadequacy of the dominant model. It is not content with maintaining ecosystems for their functionality; rather, it calls for ontological, ethical, and spiritual transformation. Eco-spirituality restores reverence for nature as an integral dimension of faith and daily life, inspiring practices such as "green mosques" or "eco-churches" that integrate ecological care with religious devotion.("The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future. - Thomas Berry," n.d.) *Deep ecology*, as proposed by Arne Naess, demands a radical shift in ontology: the recognition that non-human beings possess intrinsic value, not merely instrumental worth for human needs.(Naess, 1973) Meanwhile, *planetary ethics* expands the horizon globally, grounding sustainability in planetary boundaries and emphasizing humanity's collective responsibility across nations, generations, and species.(Rockström et al., 2009) When combined with ecotheology, these approaches articulate a vision of sustainability that is not merely managerial but cosmological.

In this framework, Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots must be seen as *sacred commons*—not only repositories of ecosystem services but also sacred spaces imbued with cultural, spiritual, and moral meaning. Protecting these areas should not be driven solely by economic calculation or technical benchmarks but by an awareness that their destruction constitutes a cosmic rupture that undermines the very fabric of life. Ecotheology thus operates not only as a critique of the old paradigm but also as a blueprint for a new one: a cosmocentric vision that redefines humanity's role as caretakers of creation rather than dominators of nature.

[5] M. E. Siahaya et al., "Sasi Laut: Adat Institution and Marine Conservation in Eastern Indonesia," *Ocean & Coastal Management* 119 (2016): 58–65; I. G. N. Bagus, *Tri Hita Karana: The Spirit of Balinese Hinduism* (Denpasar: Udayana University Press, 2000).

This reorientation has profound implications for practice. In policy, environmental protection must go beyond technical regulation toward recognizing the legal rights of nature and the ancestral rights of indigenous communities who sustain ecosystems.(Stone, 1988) In education, curricula must be infused with spiritual and cosmological dimensions, ensuring that young generations see nature not only as an ecological system but as a sacred trust. In social movements, religious institutions can become ecological agents through initiatives such as green religious spaces or interfaith eco-dialogues. In each domain, ecotheology is not abstract theology but a practical ethic capable of reshaping how societies engage with the earth.

Ultimately, *rethinking humanity and nature for beyond sustainability* compels us to move beyond rhetoric into a civilizational transformation. Humans must reposition themselves from rulers of nature to caretakers of the cosmos, from exploiters to guardians of life. By centering ecotheology, the human–nature relationship can be restored as one of reciprocity, responsibility, and reverence. This is the heart of true sustainability: a cosmocentric vision that safeguards not only resources but also the sacred harmony of creation, ensuring the flourishing of life across generations and species.("The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future. - Thomas Berry," n.d.)

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots—Papua, Kalimantan, Wallacea, and the Coral Triangle—are not only ecological treasures of global significance but also sacred landscapes that embody cultural identity, spiritual meaning, and moral responsibility. Yet these regions face escalating threats from deforestation, agribusiness expansion, extractive industries, and large-scale infrastructure projects that continue to prioritize short-term economic gains over ecological integrity. The resulting biodiversity loss is not merely an environmental crisis but also a cultural and spiritual crisis that disrupts the deep relational bonds between humans and nature.

Against this backdrop, ecotheology emerges as a transformative paradigm that reframes sustainability beyond its technocratic confines. By integrating religious teachings, spiritual consciousness, and indigenous wisdom, ecotheology challenges the reduction of nature to a utilitarian object and restores its status as a sacred trust (*amanah*). In Islam, the concept of *khalīfah fī al-ardh* and *mīzān* underscores humanity's responsibility to maintain balance and justice within creation, while indigenous practices such as *sasi laut* and the Balinese philosophy of *tri hita karana* exemplify how local cosmologies already embody ecological ethics. Such convergences reveal that faith traditions and cultural wisdom can enrich sustainability discourses with values of reverence, restraint, and responsibility.

The findings highlight that rethinking humanity and nature for *beyond sustainability* requires moving from resource management to cosmic responsibility. This involves shifting from an anthropocentric paradigm to a cosmocentric one that recognizes the intrinsic value of all beings and the interdependence of life systems. Practically, this reorientation calls for policy frameworks that respect the legal rights

of nature and indigenous communities, educational curricula that integrate ecological spirituality, and faith-based initiatives that mobilize collective ecological action.

In conclusion, ecotheology provides not only a critique of current development models but also a constructive vision for future pathways. It offers a moral, cultural, and spiritual foundation upon which holistic and just environmental governance can be built. By reframing sustainability in Indonesia's biodiversity hotspots through ecotheological perspectives, this study underscores the urgency of a civilizational shift: from exploitation to stewardship, from domination to reciprocity, and from sustainability-as-management to sustainability-as-sacred responsibility. Only through such a transformation can Indonesia's ecological wealth continue to flourish and sustain life across generations.

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