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Ngormati as the Ritual Grammar of Ecospirituality: A Contextual Ecotheological Perspective from the *Akit* People of Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines *Ngormati*, a lived ecospirituality of the *Akit* people in Indonesia, expressed through silence, offerings, and ritual attentiveness that bind land, sea, spirit, and ancestral presence. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Teluk Setimbul, Riau Islands, including extended immersion, in-depth conversations, focus group discussions, and participation in sacred rituals, the study interprets *Ngormati* as a vernacular spirituality rooted in sacred rhythm, ethical restraint, and ecological intimacy. The findings show how ritual gestures such as the preparation of *Kepala Jamu* and *Talam Dua Muka*, prayers at sacred springs, and everyday practices of reverence operate as theological responses to ecological disruption. These practices reconfigure wounded ecologies into sacred space, sustain communal resilience through ritual memory, and transmit ecological ethics across generations. Framed by ecospirituality, contextual ecotheology, and Indigenous and Local Knowledge, the study argues that *Ngormati* functions as a contextual *locus theologicus* where ecological reverence and theological imagination converge. In this light, *Ngormati* offers a pedagogy of care and kinship that addresses ecological degradation and spiritual dislocation, and contributes to wider theological conversations on spiritual formation, environmental healing, and the renewal of sacred belonging in an age of planetary crisis.

Keywords: Akit; ecospirituality; cosmology; Indigenous Ecological Knowledge; sacred ecology

Introduction

In the face of accelerating ecological collapse, Indigenous spiritualities offer not only alternative cosmological frameworks but deeply lived ways of being; rooted in reverence, ritual, and sacred relationality with land, spirit, and community. This article turns to *Ngormati*, the spiritual and ecological praxis of the Akit people in Indonesia. Far from a cultural relic, *Ngormati* unfolds as a living grammar of gratitude, humility, and ecological fidelity. It is not a codified doctrine but an enacted spirituality, a ritualized ethic that weaves together humans, ancestors, and the more-than-human world in sacred interdependence.

The ecospirituality of the Akit, grounded in their Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK), expresses a vision of mutuality where nature is neither inert nor utilitarian, but a sacred presence to be honoured and encountered. Ernst Conradie (2006: 41–42) affirms that such cosmological visions offer a theological ethic of care, echoing the affirmation in Genesis 1:31 that "all creation is good." Similarly, Gabriel Nemoga et al. (2022: 227) advocate for biocultural frameworks that centre Indigenous knowledge as essential for planetary resilience. Among the Akit, this ethic is not merely conceptual but ritually enacted. Sacred offerings like *Talam Dua Muka* and *Kepala Jamu* embody cosmological memory; manifesting symbolic interdependence, spiritual accountability, and ecological gratitude.

These expressions of lived ecospirituality resonate with diverse Indigenous practices across Indonesia. *Ruwatan Desa* in Java fosters village harmony through ritual purification (Derung et al. 2022, 1–2), maritime rituals in Maluku uphold sea-based stewardship (Kusnanto et al., 2020: 56), and Tamil Hindu offerings nurture both spiritual and social cohesion (Arumugam, 2022: 275). Collectively, these practices compose a constellation of embodied theologies that confront ecological harm not only in material terms, but through sacred narrative and ritual rhythm.

Yet, despite bearing minimal responsibility for ecological destruction, Indigenous communities like the Akit endure its most devastating consequences. Crook et al. (2018) highlight the disproportionate vulnerability of Indigenous groups to environmental degradation. Within this context, *Ngormati* emerges not as nostalgic heritage, but as spiritual resistance, a sacred praxis that transforms wounded ecologies into theopoetic landscapes, sustaining communal coherence through ritual presence. *Ngormati* is not static. It responds, improvises, and holds rupture within a sacred framework. This study, therefore, explores *Ngormati* as a lived ecospiritual praxis, examining how ritual embodiment and cosmological symbolism cultivate reverence, resilience, and relational ethics rooted in sacred kinship.

Approaching *Ngormati* through the lens of ecospirituality, this research foregrounds lived, embodied, and land-based spirituality grounded in Indigenous cosmology. It does not begin with abstractions, but with the Akit's own wisdom: that the land is not a commodity but a presence; that ancestors are not remnants of the past but co-agents in life's unfolding. For the Akit people in Indonesia, *Ngormati* is not only a belief system to be analysed from afar. It is a a sacred grammar enacted through offering, silence, and symbolic gestur. Resonating with cultural-linguistic account of doctrine as "grammar" and ritual as embodied practice (Lindbeck, 1984; Spickard & Bell, 1993). In this sense, it aligns with what Valerie Lincoln (2000) describes as ecospirituality. Lincoln emphasized ecospirituality as a contemplative awareness of the interconnectedness of self, land, and spirit. Rachel Wheeler (2022) calls this *relational emplacement*; where theology emerges not from doctrine, but from deep listening to land and life. This spirituality is not individualistic. It is practiced communally, intergenerationally, and ritually. It reflects what Teresa Messias (2024) calls a "feminist-decolonial spirituality," where memory, land, and sacred relations are continually regenerated

Contextual theology provides an additional frame. For Stephen Bevans, theology is irreducibly contextual. It is done from within particular cultural and ecological realities and seeks to render its concepts meaningful in those concrete circumstances (1985). This coheres with his later formulation that "there is really no such thing as theology, but only *contextual* theology" (Bevans, 2018: xii). *Ngormati*, in this sense, becomes a locus theologicus: a site where divine presence is discerned

through land-based ritual and ancestral reverence. This view finds resonance with Trinitarian relationality. Jürgen Moltmann (1991) describes the Trinity as perichoresis, a mutual indwelling of love and presence. Joas Adiprasetya (2008: 2017) affirms this indwelling within wounded geographies, a view that mirrors the Akit understanding of sacred presence within ecological fragility. Sallie McFague (1993: 2001) further envisions the world as God's body; a sacramental ecology where divine mystery and creaturely life interpenetrate.

Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK), therefore, contributes not just empirical insight, but spiritual epistemologies that are symbolic, embodied, and ecological. In the Akit context, women do not serve as adjuncts but as spiritual agents who are tending sacred groves, offering ritual foods, preserving cosmological memory. Their presence animates *Ngormati* as a living theology. This study does not impose categories onto their tradition. It listens. It follows. It receives *Ngormati* as a sacred discourse. Articulated not in theological jargon, but in the rhythm of incense smoke, the stillness at a sacred spring, and the whispered names of unseen kin.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach informed by contextual theology and ecospiritual perspectives. The aim was not only to describe *Ngormati* as cultural practice but to engage it as a *locus theologicus* where ecological wisdom and spiritual praxis converge. Rather than observing from distance, the research followed a contemplative paradigm that foregrounds relationality, attentiveness, and theological reflexivity. The methodological orientation drew inspiration from Stephen Bevans's models of contextual theology, which emphasise embeddedness in local realities, and from ecospiritual frameworks such as Valerie Lincoln's articulation of embodied awareness, Rachel Wheeler's concept of relational emplacement, and Teresa Messias's feminist-decolonial insights. These lenses allowed the research to hold together empirical depth and theological imagination while remaining accountable to Indigenous cosmology.

This article draws on a larger mixed-methods study of Akit Indigenous ecological knowledge and focuses on Teluk Setimbul and a thematic subset of nine key interlocutors whose narratives centre on *Ngormati* and who hold or negotiate ritual authority. Extended immersion enabled interaction with elders, ritual leaders such as *Batin* and *Bomoh*, women custodians of ritual memory, and Christian leaders negotiating ancestral practices within contemporary faith. Fieldwork took place in April–May and December 2023 through in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions (FGDs), and extended participant observation in everyday life and in sacred ceremonies including *Hari Raya Nek* and *Denes*. These encounters provided access to ritual gestures such as the preparation of *Kepala Jamu* and *Talam Dua Muka*, offerings at the *Kolah* sacred spring, and acts of *betabek* or ritual permission. Documentation took the form of field notes, reflective journaling, and audio recordings. Within this subset, accounts regarding *Ngormati, semangat*, and ecological disruptions began to repeat and no substantively new themes emerged, indicating thematic saturation for this focused ethnographic analysis.

Analysis proceeded through a thematic and contemplative process. Coding was inductive yet guided by theological categories of ritual embodiment, ecological kinship, and cosmological fidelity. Rather than separating data from theology, interpretation emerged dialogically from within the relational space between researcher and community. The categories of ecospirituality helped illuminate how embodied gestures and ritual rhythms carried theological meaning, while Indigenous Ecological Knowledge provided a hermeneutic key for reading ecological ethics as sacred grammar. In this way, analysis was not imposed upon the data but allowed to arise from within the cosmological imagination of the Akit themselves.

Ethical integrity was integral to the research process. Before fieldwork, study aims and possible uses were explained in the local language and Indonesian. All participants were adults (approximately 30 years and older), including both men and women, and participation was entirely voluntary. Interlocutors were informed that they could decline any question or withdraw from the research at any

time without providing a reason and without any negative consequences. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all interlocutors, and permissions were granted by customary leaders to attend and document rituals. No financial incentives or material compensation were offered beyond ordinary local hospitality. Personal names appear only with explicit permission, and sacred sites are anonymized on request. At the same time, community representatives asked that their identity and locations be acknowledged so their voice reaches wider publics. Dated field notes record all consents and permissions, available to the editor if required. Ethical practice also conducts in situ, as sacred places were approached with reverence in accordance with customary elders' guidance to observe them with respect, silence, and appropriate offerings. Reflexive journaling and dialogical feedback addressed researcher positionality and aligned procedures with the NSEF Code of Best Practice.

Ancestral geography and sacred memory of the Akit

The Akit people, an Indigenous community currently residing in Teluk Setimbul Village, Riau Islands, Indonesia, trace their origins not simply through genealogical records but through a sacred cartography of memory, ritual, and cosmological belonging. Today, they inhabit three subareas; Kampung Tengah, Kampung Laut, and Kampung Baru. Yet, their ancestral journey began across the sea, on Pulau Rupat, an island located in the Strait of Malacca (Fig. 1). In Akit oral narratives, migration is not perceived as exile or displacement, but as a spiritual recalibration, a journey of aligning with ancestral guidance, ecological signals, and sacred legitimacy. This memory is ritually sustained through prayer, naming of places, and embodied practices of reverence. As one elder recounted, "Our ancestors didn't just move, they listened. If the tide turned, they followed. If the place accepted them, they stayed" (Akong Setom, interview, 16 April 2023).

Figure 1. Map of Teluk Setimbul Village in Karimun Regency, Riau Island Province, Indonesia. Map data ©2025 Google. Inset adapted from Pemerintah Kabupaten Karimun (https://peta.web.id/peta/kab/kabupaten-karimun/, https://dpmptsp.karimunkab.go.id/, retrieved 12 Aug 2025). Composed by the author's permission on file.

Historically, the Akit were part of the broader Orang Laut, or "sea people", maritime communities that played strategic spiritual and navigational roles in the archipelagic world stretching from Sumatra to the Malay Peninsula. According to Lioba Lenhart (1997: 583), these groups, including the Akit, Duano, and Suku Laut, developed highly adaptive lifeways tied to ocean currents, mangrove ecosystems, and seasonal flows. They were not stateless wanderers but spiritual custodians of marine

geographies. Their presence is historically noted in relation to the Johor-Riau-Lingga Sultanate, where they served as sea navigators and informal guardians of coastal passages (Chou, 1995: 88; Lenhart, 1997: 584). Despite their vital roles, colonial authorities often portrayed them as pirates or fringe dwellers, marginalizing their spiritual identities and disrupting their sacred relationships with land and sea (Chou, 2016: 267). Yet within Akit memory, these colonial ruptures are not simply recorded as oppression. They are remembered as spiritual disorientation: the severing of ties to places where spirits once dwelled, and rituals once held coherence.

The shift from maritime nomadism to coastal settlement, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries, was shaped by environmental pressures and mediated by spiritual-political alliances (Febbriyandi & Evawarni, 2017; Syamsidar, 2014). Oral traditions recall Raja Haji Abdullah, a Malay noble figure, not merely as a political leader but as a cosmological gatekeeper who sanctioned their settlement in Teluk Setimbul (Yosafat, interview, 26 April 2023). This move, seen through Akit cosmology, was not a matter of convenience but of ancestral consent. Even as they gradually integrated with neighbouring Malay, Chinese, and Bugis communities, the Akit preserved their distinct spiritual ecology. The term *Orang Asli* (aboriginal people) is still used not merely to denote ethnic precedence but to assert a metaphysical intimacy with land, water, and spirit beings. Sacred sites such as Kolah spring, Batu Besurat, and Mount Karimun continue to be visited not for their historical significance alone, but for their spiritual resonance. As an elder, explained, “We go there not just for memory, but because the spirit still lives there. It listens when we bring offerings” (Akong Setom, interview, 16 April 2023).

The Akit’s Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) was neither erased by migration nor diluted by settlement. In Teluk Setimbul, elders and ritual custodians consistently describe how *adat* (local custom) and ecological knowledge “move with the people”. These norms continue to govern relations with land and sea, in ways that also resonates with other studies of coastal indigenous communities in Indonesia (Hasbullah et al., 2022; Kurniawan, 2018). Their historical memory, as traced in regional maritime histories (Hall, 2022) and ethnographic accounts of Akit origin and settlement (Limbeng, 2011), is received and re-told in ways that weave together spiritual and ecological adaptation. This memory continues to shape their present-day ethics, including the ethic of *Ngormati*. Thus, the Akit’s history is best understood not merely as anthropology, but as spirituality in motion. Migration becomes sacred movement, territory becomes storied space, and ancestral memory becomes a living archive, transmitted through reverent practice, not preserved in text (See Risamasu, 2023, 2025). Within this cosmology, the interlocutors tend to see the past is not behind but as beneath them, a spiritual substratum that shapes the Akit’s ongoing relationship with creation, community, and the Divine.

Ngormati as embodied cosmological reverence in Akit life

The Akit community of Teluk Setimbul inhabits a spiritual ecology that breathes with the rhythms of land, water, and ancestral presence. Amid environmental pressures such as industrial encroachment, coastal erosion, mangrove degradation, and marine disruptions (Napitu et al., 2010; Risamasu, 2025; Sujarwo, 2022; Supriharyono, 2004), the Akit respond not with confrontation but with sacred attentiveness. Their path of endurance unfolds through *Ngormati*, a cosmological ethic in which the land is a living presence; the sea is listened to, and ritual is not performance, but participation in divine rhythm.

Ngormati flows from the inner well of cosmological consciousness. It functions as more than a cultural value. It constitutes an ethic of spiritual alignment. Although phonetically similar to the Indonesian term *hormat* (to honour), *Ngormati* originates in Akit the vernacular and reflects a deeper cosmological register, as can also be found in other local traditions in Indonesia, such as among the Aboge community in Java (Sofyan et al., 2023). The prefix *ng-* in regional Malayic dialects denotes active, habitual conduct. In this context, *Ngormati* is a lived ethic; repeated, embodied, and socially reinforced, constituting the moral rhythm of life across spiritual and ecological domains. This ethic is embodied through concrete behaviours and oral transmission rather than written codes. Respect for

elders is among its most visible manifestations. Elders are greeted through *menyalami*, a customary gesture performed with both hands and sometimes followed by kissing the elder's hand. This bodily act is not just courteous; it signifies reference to their spiritual authority and experiential wisdom. Knowledge of traditional medicine, sacred places, weather signs, and community taboos is passed on as *pengajaran hidup* (life teachings observed), mimicked, and remembered. During fieldwork, elders such as Pak Engsun and Ibu Niwe explained that younger generations must first learn by observing. They should not be taught with anger, but through example. Eventually, once they are used to participating, they will understand for themselves what is allowed and what is not. This includes knowing when to speak and when to remain silent, how to enter sacred spaces, which offerings are appropriate, which natural elements may be taken, and what must be left undisturbed, including a strict prohibition on killing any living being within sacred sites.

Ngormati also shapes the Akit's approach to sacred geography. Sea, forest, springs, rocks, trees, and other natural features are believed to be inhabited by ancestral or spirit beings. Sites such as Kolah spring are approached through quiet, intentional gestures, pausing at the entrance, lowering one's voice, or offering a verbal salutation such as "permisi, Tuk, Nek, cucu nak lewat" (excuse me, *Tuk-Nek*/ancestors, your grandchild would like to pass through). As explained by Akong Setom (In Akit usage, *akong* means grandfather, *pak* is a salutation for male adults, and *ibu* is used for female adults). He also mentioned, "That every place, like Kolah spring, have a guardian spirit. If you enter without permission, you could get sick or lose your way" (Akong Setom, interview, 16 April 2023). This reverence is observed even among Christian Akit. Pak Jantan Yosafat, for instance, acknowledged the ongoing importance of sacred sites, saying, "Even though we are Christian, we still uphold the rules of our ancestors. The spring is not just water, it is a gift from those who came before" (Yosafat, interview, 26 April 2023).

Ecological practice, too, is shaped by *Ngormati*. It regulates how the Akit interact with the natural world. Values such as taking only what is needed (*ambek secukupnye*), resisting greed (*usah lobe*), and sharing (*bebagi*) inform behaviours surrounding fishing, foraging, and forest use. In-depth interviews revealed that before extracting natural resources, the Akit people often perform a silent prayer or an internal act of asking permission (*betabek*) as an embodied expression of spiritual reverence. This ritualized restraint reflects their ethic of *Ngormati*. Violations of this ethic, such as overharvesting, speaking disrespectfully in sacred areas, or disregarding seasonal taboos, are believed to provoke *tetegur*, a form of spiritual reprimand. As explained by Akong Siran during a focus group discussion, "If someone takes more than they need or shows disrespect to the sea, the spirits may respond with illness or misfortune. Nature will shut itself off" (FGD 1, 2 May 2023).

The ethic of *Ngormati* permeates leadership, household ritual, social conduct, and ecological perception in Akit life, not as a rule-based code, but as a sacred rhythm shaping communal being. Figures such as the *Batin* (ritual elder) and *Bomoh* (spiritual healer) are not administrative leaders but custodians of spiritual equilibrium; intermediaries who hold together the seen and the unseen, the material and the spiritual (See Suroyo et al., 2022). Their authority does not emerge from dominance, but from their capacity to listen deeply; to the land, to the spirit world (*makhluk alus*), and to ancestral memory. As Pak Engsun gently reflected during a *Denes* ritual, "If I say we wait, it is because the place has not yet given permission" (Interview, 4 May 2023). Leadership here is exercised through practices of atonement for perceived breaches ancestral and ecological taboos. For an example, violations of ancestral rules, concerning the sea, the land, sacred places, or communal norms. It is also exercised in daily and ritual life, where elders and local leaders teach and model reverence toward *Tuhan*, *Panglima Alam*, the Four Commanders, the ancestors, and other spiritual beings who guard sacred places..

Within domestic spaces, this spiritual posture is cultivated especially by women, whose roles extend far beyond ritual preparation. Grandmothers and mothers embody *Ngormati* as sacred pedagogy. They teach children to speak gently near rivers, forests, or the sea, to avert their gaze before sacred stones, and to refrain from speech that dishonours ancestors or the land. In preparing the *Kepala*

Jamu offering; comprising black glutinous rice, eggs, and coloured flags. Each gesture is deliberate, each element imbued with prayerful attention. Ibu Niwe shared, “Each item has its meaning. We don’t change it unless the elders say so. Even if it's simple, it must be done with respect. We don’t just teach anyone. We observe first, whether the child listens, whether they are humble” (Interview, 30 December 2023).

Here, knowledge is transferred through instruction and discerned through relationship. It is not accessible to all by default, but entrusted to those who carry the inner posture of reverence. This ethic functions as a spiritual safeguard, ensuring that sacred knowledge is not reduced to information but remains a matter of integrity and embodied disposition. Children are formed through participation, standing beside elders during incense rituals, observing prayers and sacred dances, absorbing meaning through proximity and presence. As Pak Engsun recalled of his father, Batin Bekuk, “Let them follow first; understanding will come later” (Interview, 4 May 2023). This approach reflects a theology of formation rooted in imitation, silence, and repeated sacred rhythm. Ritual is not only a performance to be explained, but also a reality to be inhabited.

Ngormati extends into the sphere of economic life as an ethic of giving that transcends transactional logic. Within communal rituals such as *Hari Raya Nek*, acts of contribution are not weighed by quantity but by inward intention. Each offering, be it food, incense, or time, becomes a spiritual act, flowing from an interior posture of relational generosity. Giving here is neither obligation nor display. It is an expression of *kesediaan batin*, a readiness of spirit that affirms the interconnectedness of all beings, human and more-than-human (Pak Engsun, interview, 4 May 2023; FGD 1, 2 May 2023; FGD 2, 30 December 2023). In this sacred economy, value reside in alignment. One offers not out of surplus but out of reverence. As elders explain, even a handful of rice, if given with *hati yang bersih* (a clear heart), carries the weight of gratitude and spiritual resonance (Akong Setom, interview, 16 April 2023). Such giving is not measured by social prestige, but by the sincerity of presence. Those who offer without material means are embraced through acts of shared labour, redistributed roles, and communal inclusion. No offering stands apart from the whole, because every gesture contributes to the sacred rhythm of togetherness. This mode of giving affirms creation as gift rather than resource. The land gives without withholding; the sea yields its abundance in cycles of grace.

In mirroring this generosity, the Akit embody a form of theological kinship with the Earth. Offering becomes a way of responding to the Earth’s own sacred generosity, acknowledging that human flourishing arises not through possession, but through participation in a divine ecology of exchange (Boff, 1997; Pope Francis, 2015, LS §220). Such a framework resonates with ecospiritual understandings of interbeing. The act of giving affirms that nothing exists in isolation. The tree that provides fruits and eco-bioenergy fuels for domestic need, the fish that nourishes the feast, the hand that prepares food, all are part of a living tapestry of relationship. Within this vision, offering is not the loss of possession but the deepening of communion. To give is to return what was never fully owned, but momentarily entrusted. This ethic reshapes economic life into sacred choreography: a movement that resists commodification and reclaims the spiritual dignity of contribution. In this sacred logic, *bebagi* or generosity of sharing becomes an embodied theology. One gives not because of theological demand, but because the very structure of life is generosity. The Creator gives breath, the ancestors give memory, the Earth gives sustenance. Human giving echoes this primordial generosity, returning not only goods but gratitude (Pope Francis, 2015). Through *Ngormati*, this ethic is woven into celebration, song, and silence. Participation becomes a privilege, an invitation to step into a sacred ecology of mutual honour and care (Berkes, 2012).

This sacred ethic embraces the more-than-human world with tender attentiveness. Creatures such as crocodiles, tigers, monitor lizards, snakes, birds, and fish are recognised within the Akit’s cosmology as spiritual kin; living presences imbued with meaning and sacredness. Each being may carry the presence of *makhluk alus*, subtle spirits, who inhabit the veiled dimensions of land and sea. Their emergence within human experience invites discernment, humility, and often ritual attention.

Within the Akit worldview, natural events are not disruptions but sacred invitations. The sudden rise of a storm or the quiet hush of a forest grove signals a call to pause, to feel, and to attune oneself to divine presence. The Akit relate to these phenomena not through mastery, but through communion. They respond with listening hearts and reverent bodies, recognising that life unfolds in sacred dialogue with the cosmos. Reverence, in this orientation, arises from the depth of relationship. Every element of the natural world is encountered as already alive with *semangat*, the breath of spirit. The Earth, in turn, is engaged as a sanctuary of divine murmurings, a sacred text written in wave, root, and wind. *Ngormati* thus unfolds as more than a code of respect. It embodies a theology of presence, where silence becomes a form of prayer and each offering gestures toward belonging. Interlocutors describe this as a world in which nature itself responds, either opening or "shutting itself off" when humans honour or violate ancestral rules (Akong Siran, FGD 1, 2 May 2023). Within this sacred choreography of human and more-than-human life, the Earth receives, listens, and blesses in return.

Semangat and the breath of divine presence

The cosmology of the Akit unfolds through ritual, not merely as inherited tradition but as embodied theology, as became evident in ceremonies such as *Denes* and *Hari Raya Nek* (fieldnotes, 2 May 2023; 4 May 2023). Each gesture and each offering is treated as a sacred medium in which the visible world interlaces with the unseen. Within this landscape, *Ngormati* can be read not only as an ethic of respect but as a contemplative rhythm of divine nearness, centred on *semangat*, the vital spiritual force that animates persons and places in many Malay maritime cosmologies (Chou, 1997, 2003; Endicott, 2004).

Their offerings in *Hari Raya Nek* and *Denes* rituals become public expressions of this rhythm. *Hari Raya Nek*, celebrated annually, evokes ancestral presence through offerings and spiritual invocation. *Denes*, held monthly, aligns the community with cosmological cycles. The offerings themselves, *Kepala Jamu* during *Hari Raya Nek* and *Talam Dua Muka* during *Denes*, carry cosmological resonance. Glutinous rice, eggs, and coloured flags serve as vessels of gratitude, memory, and fidelity to the sacred. Rituals take place in sites like *Rumah Sasangke* and *Balai Pertemuan*, which function not only as venues but as spiritual vessels where communion with ancestors and the divine unfolds.

During the *Hari Raya Nek* of 26 April 2023, Pak Ewin's invocation exemplified the seamless weaving of Indigenous reverence and Islamic devotion:

> Ya assalamualaikum. Peace be upon you. We seek forgiveness and offer a thousand apologies to God. To everyone on our left and right we bow, front and back, to God. *Semangat* on lifting the lime fruit, a sacred greeting already embraced by the Prophet. Forgive us, God, forgive us, God.

This prayer embodies a cosmology of hospitality, where divine presence welcomes human sincerity across traditions. *Semangat*, as spoken here, signifies more than life force. It denotes the animating essence flowing through rivers, stones, animals, ancestors, and human hearts. This concept echoes the *Orang Laut* understanding of *roh* and *nyawa*, layers of sacred vitality that sustain existence. Within Akit spirituality, *semangat* is honoured through attentive reverence and relational awareness. It emerges through breath, sound, offering, and presence.

The sacred geography of Teluk Setimbul reflects this theological hospitality. A Vihara, Christian churches, and Akit altars stand side by side, each bearing witness to the shared posture of reverence grounded in *Ngormati* (fieldnotes, April–May 2023; December 2023). Spiritual plurality is not approached as conflict, but as convergence in sacred attentiveness. Here, space becomes a canvas of sacred inclusion, a genius locus, where divine presence resonates through diverse ritual expressions (Vecco, 2020).

Among the ritual forms, *Kepala Jamu* offers a profound theological witness (Fig. 2A). Its structure reveals three layers of sacred meaning. First, it presents a material cosmos. Black glutinous rice stands for land, yellow for sea, and eggs for life. The eggs, adorned with ritual flags in red, yellow, and black, map a sacred topography where land, sea, and life exist in relational harmony. These are not ornamental but sacramental elements, mediating divine presence and ancestral fidelity.

Figure 2. The Akit's sesajen/offerings: (A) Kepala Jamu, (B) Talam Dua Muka, (C) Hari Raya Nek (Nek Festival) ritual led by Pak Engsun, performing as Batin (spiritual leader) of the Akit Tribe in Rumah Sasangke. *Source: Author's own field documentation, taken on 20 April 2023. Image used with permission granted to the publisher*

Second, the ritual flags serve as cosmological signals. Red symbolizes the sky and fire, yellow the sea, and black the soul and human protection. Each colour aligns with a spiritual commander (*Panglima*) who governs elemental balance. These flags serve as cosmological codes that enable the offering to enter into spiritual dialogue, affirming *Ngormati* as an ethic structured through ritual mediation. As explained by Pak Engsun, the flags are not decoration. They are the message we send to the spirit world. Each colour has its master" (Interview, 30 December 2023).

Third, *Kepala Jamu* reflects a sacred hierarchy (Fig. 3). At its summit stands *Tuhan*, the source of cosmic vitality. Below this, *Panglima Alam* upholds ecological equilibrium, while four commanders oversee the domains of sky, sea, soul, and clarity. This hierarchy reveals a cosmological order where each layer nurtures balance and sacred reciprocity. As Pak Engsun explained, "The black warrior guards our life and soul, the yellow flag signifies the King of the sea, and the white flag restrains fire. The *Panglima Alam* reigns over the seven layers of the earth and sky, subordinate only to God" (FGD 1, 2 May, 2023).

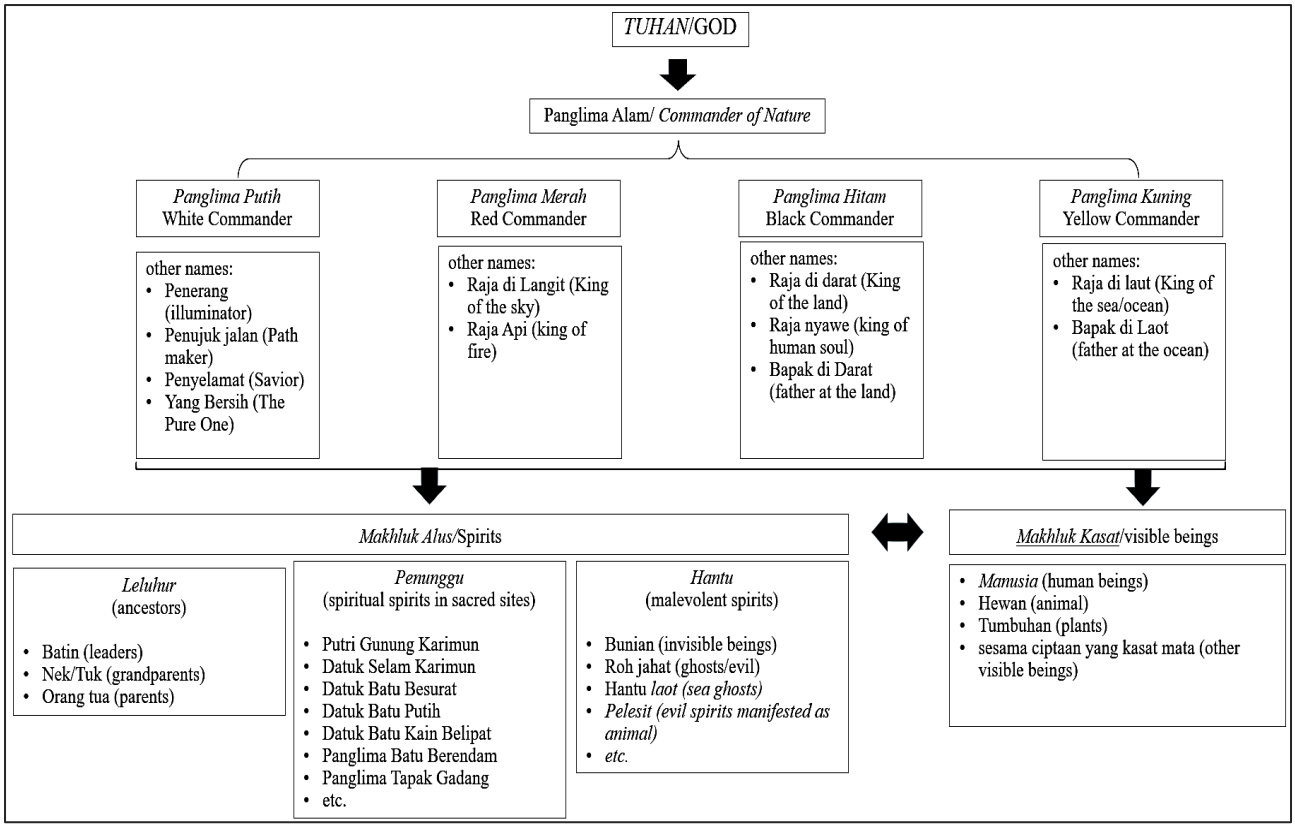

Figure 3. Cosmological and spiritual hierarchy of the Akit. Source: Field data from in-depth interviews (April–May 2023); diagram by the author.

Spiritual sites such as *Batu Besurat* and *Gunung Karimun* are understood as living landscapes, infused with *semangat* that flows and accumulates. Spirits like *Panglima Gadang* and *Putri Alamsyah* mediate healing, fertility, and ecological coherence. Their presence is not imagined but encountered; through ritual approach, silence, and relational care. As Pak Ginang shared, "This pool's water remains sweet despite the surrounding seawater. Believers take it for medicinal purposes" (Interview, 23 April 2023).

Such testimony discloses a spirituality of embodiment, where natural sweetness reflects divine intimacy. Sacredness is perceived in sensation, not only in belief. One of the figures invoked, *Datuk Selam* or *Datuk Islam Karimun*, embodies relational sanctity across traditions. Here, memory functions as a theological virtue, carrying honour without assimilation, reverence without erasure. As Mak Kaseh expressed, "*Datuk* has a house and a life. Islam Karimun is part of our history. Elders taught us to respect him, because some of our ancestors were Islam" (Interview, 3 May 2023).

The sacred rhythm of *Ngormati* is structured through *pantang.* It is an ethic of observance that shapes the Akit's moral cosmos. Honouring springs, guarding speech near sacred places, and upholding ancestral instructions are expressions of fidelity to this spiritual order. When imbalance arises, the community responds through *Bedekeh* or *Betemas*, rituals that realign spiritual energy. These are enacted through posture, voice, breath, and gesture; offering a liturgy of reconnection with the divine. Therefore, every action becomes theology. The way a child lowers their voice near *Kolah*, the way a grandmother prepares an offering, the way one steps into the forest, each becomes a choreography of reverence. Through *Ngormati*, the Akit dwell within a spirituality of presence. Sacredness lives not only in temples or texts but in silence, soil, and shared breath. The hierarchy of life is thus expressed not through dominance, but through participation in the divine ecology where each being, visible and unseen, speaks of God's nearness.

Ngormati as the spiritual and ecological depth of Akit rituals

Ngormati, as practiced by the *Akit* community in Teluk Setimbul, represents a theological grammar of ecological spirituality. This spirituality lives through daily rhythms of offerings, gestures, silence, and restraint that are shaped by ancestral memory and by what the *Akit* describe as *semangat*, the vital force flowing through land, sea, and community. Chou (Chou, 2003: 56–57) shows that Orang Laut cosmology recognises *semangat, nyawa,* and *roh* as dimensions of sacred vitality. McFague (1993) presents the world as God's body that breathes with divine presence, while Wheeler (Wheeler, 2022, pp. 6–7) affirms that sacred awareness arises from embodied emplacement. Within this continuum, *Ngormati* becomes a living theology that grounds ecological intimacy in ancestral wisdom and in the sensed vitality of creation.

To interpret such a spirituality, theology requires a framework that honours lived practice as a locus of reflection. Bevans (1985) provides this opening through his vision of theology from below, which locates meaning in cultural experience and everyday ritual. Asian scholars, such as Chung Hyun Kyung and Heup Young Kim from Korea, and extend this trajectory by rooting theological reflection in Asian cosmologies, indigenous spiritualities, and ecological struggles, thereby affirming practices such as Ngormati as vital resources for responding to contemporary ecological crises (Chung, 1994; Kim, 2009). Lincoln (2000) adds to this orientation by describing ecospirituality as an embodied awareness of the sacred relation between soul and soil. The *Akit* articulate this awareness through a ritual ecology that integrates offerings and daily disciplines, where cosmology is not described in theory but enacted in practice.

Rituals such as *Kepala Jamu* and *Talam Dua Muka* employ symbolic elements; black and yellow glutinous rice to represent land and sea, and coloured flags to signify the elemental guardians (*Panglima*) of air, sea, land, and life. These offerings are not merely symbolic. They are prepared through deliberate bodily gestures. *Kemenyan* (incense) is burned to honour the Creator, *leluhur* (ancestors), and *makhluk alus* (spiritual beings). Lime is sliced for purification of body and soul. Offerings are placed at sacred sites and domestic thresholds, accompanied by prayers or invocations to both divine and ancestral forces believed to safeguard and guide. Such rituals reflect a cosmology in which the visible and invisible realms are deeply intertwined through acts of reciprocal reverence (Suroyo et al., 2022). Material gestures, whether placing an offering or walking silently through a sacred grove, are simultaneously spiritual enactments, animated by *semangat* (life-force) and framed by an ethic of restraint and attentiveness. This worldview aligns closely with Pope Francis's (2015) notion of *integral ecology*, which affirms that ecological, cultural, social, and spiritual realities are inseparable and co-constitutive (Laudato Si', §§137–142). Rather than viewing these practices as syncretic deviations, they can be understood as expressions of ecological holiness, embodied theologies that affirm creation not simply as resource, but as revelation, as a locus of divine indwelling.

This sacred grammar extends into the moral economy of the community. *Ngormati* cultivates kinship with land and sea, resonating with *Laudato Si'* (§91) which invites communion with the natural world as a form of spiritual kinship. Daily prayers, restrained foraging, and thanksgiving rituals embody this posture. Genesis 2:15 calls humanity to till and to keep the land, which is interpreted as a divine commission to work, to serve, and to fully protect the God-given land, and this vocation is mirrored in the *Akit* ethic of fidelity to ecological limits. Adiprasetya (2017: 36–39) *perichoresis-realitas* further elucidates this dynamic, presenting divine-world relationality as an asymmetrical yet intimate embrace. Within this perspective, the theology embodied in the offerings of the Akit, expressed through quiet prayers, reverent postures, and elemental symbols, reflects this relational vision in which divine presence is sensed through embodied space and ritual rhythm.

The *Akit* understanding of *semangat* functions both as spiritual vitality and as ethical compass. This vitality animates people, rivers, trees, winds, and ancestral beings. Ritual greetings at sacred trees or prayers before harvesting awaken this force. Wheeler's (2022: 6–7) interprets such gestures as relational emplacement, where theology arises through embodied attentiveness to place. Within

Christian pneumatology, *semangat* resonates with *ruach* and *pneuma*, the Spirit of God who animates, heals, and sustains. Adiprasetya presents the Spirit as one of God's two arms gathering creation with intimacy. Within this resonance, *semangat* is honoured in water that heals, winds that guide, and rituals that restore belonging. McFague's (1993, 138) metaphor of the Earth as God's body reinforces this, where creation is not symbolic of the divine, but sacramentally inhabited by it. The Orang Laut's triad of *semangat* (life-force or animating spirit), *nyawa* (soul or personal vitality), and *roh* (spirit or spiritual essence) (Chou, 2003: 56–57) offers a parallel ontology, while the *Akit* frame *semangat* as ritualised theology expressed through presence, attentiveness, and ecological reverence.

This understanding invites an expanded pneumatology. *Semangat*, as perceived through Akit ritual life, becomes a theological analogue of the Holy Spirit, not by direct equivalence, but through resonance. It reveals how Indigenous categories like *semangat* enrich theological imagination by affirming divine presence within land, body, and gesture. The Spirit is thus encountered not in abstraction but in wind that carries signs, water that heals, and rituals that reconstitute belonging. Adiprasetya's (2017) view of the Spirit as one of God's "two arms" embracing creation finds tactile expression in how *semangat* is honoured. Through *Ngormati*, the Spirit breathes in rivers, forests, and ancestral stones. Such a reading deepens, rather than dilutes, Christian theology.

McFague's (1993) incarnational vision affirms this sacred materiality. The rejection of dualism between spirit and matter allows land, sea, and forest to be seen as divine speech. In Akit ritual, the offering itself becomes incarnation, where the divine made tactile through *sesajen*, bodily reverence, and ecological ethic. Rather than proclaiming a theology of incarnation, the Akit perform it. Their rituals do not merely describe reverence. They embody it.

This embodied theology takes disciplinary form. Ecological sites such as coasts, forests, and springs, are approached with gestures of reverence. Arbitrary cutting or noise is avoided. *Betabek* (ritual salutation), bowed heads, and silence mark spiritual zones. These bodily actions constitute a pedagogy of formation: spirituality is learned through gesture. McFague (1993: 145) affirms such embodied disciplines as necessary for ecological theology. In the Akit cosmos, reverence is not taught through catechism, but through posture, touch, and silence.

Suffering and healing also disclose theological meaning. Illness is interpreted as relational rupture involving humans, spirits, and land. Fever, miscarriage, or accident are understood as *teguran*, sacred admonitions calling for response (Akong Siran, FGD 1, 2 May 2023; Mak Kaseh, interview, 3 May 2023). Rituals such as *Bedekeh* and *Betemas* restore *semangat* and realign ecological bonds. Healing becomes reconciliation with Creator, ancestors, and Earth. McFague (1993; 2001) affirms that Earth's pain is human pain, and healing arises from restored communion. Such reconciliation is enacted in sacramental gestures: incense lit with intention, rice placed at stones, lime used for cleansing. Therefore, theology flourishes in abstraction but also in the faith practices of communities.

We understand that while Bevans privileges inculturation and rational reflection, Wheeler (2022: 6–7) reframes theology through the relational, intuitive, and bodily. In Wheeler's perspective, theology is not only something to be articulated, but also something to be lived, to be perceived, through bodily encounters. *Ngormati* for Akit people is an ancient value which reveals that sacredness already dwells within the Akit world. Therefore, long before modern religions arise, the Akit do not seek to theologize reverence, they perform it. Their ethic of "soul to soil" (Lincoln, 2000|: 227) reveals belonging that is spiritual and ecological. When forests are cleared or stones obstructed, the rupture is not just environmental. For the Akit, it is spiritual brokenness. Yet *Ngormati* sustains resistance. It embodies a theology of breath, rhythm, and ritual, a sacred ecology where divine presence is honoured through touch, offering, and reverent silence.

Ngormati as grammar of healing and hope

Ngormati unfolds as a grammar of spiritual coherence (Lindbeck, 1984), responding to wounded ecologies and dislocated cosmologies with embodied fidelity (Bellah & Rappaport, 1999; Spickard & Bell, 1993). In Teluk Setimbul, amid ongoing socio-ecological disruptions, *Ngormati* becomes a sacred choreography of resilience, interweaving gestures, spatial memory, offering, and restraint. This theological language enacts healing as a reweaving of fidelity, where *semangat* (*life-force* or *vital spiritual energy*) (Chou, 2003), reverent silence, and ancestral attentiveness realign relational bonds between human, divine, and more-than-human realms (Lincoln, 2000).

Ritual acts such as burning *kemenyan* (*incense*), bathing with lime at the *Kolah* (*sacred spring*), and placing *sesajen* (*ritual offerings*) on sacred sites become sacramental enactments. Women, as ritual custodians and ecological interpreters, embody what Teresa Messias (2024) describes as ritual praxis, their theology embedded in crushed leaves, handwoven offerings, and whispered invocations. These daily practices cultivate ecological reverence through embodied fidelity. Alongside them, the Akit community also sustains collective rituals of protection such as Bele Laut (Sea Defensing) and Bele Kampung (Village Defensing). Historically, these rituals safeguarded seascapes and forested lands, integrating communal presence with ecological guardianship.

Today, Bele Laut and Bele Kampung are no longer performed across wide landscapes but are confined to Rumah Sasangke (Akit sacred house) or Balai Pertemuan (community hall). This spatial compression reflects both vulnerability and adaptation. *Ngormati*, however, continues to endure as a resilient grammar expressed through space, rhythm, and relational memory. Brisman et al. (2014) describe this spatial compression as a fragmentation of sacred geography, while Kröger (2021) interprets such encroachment as epistemicide, the erosion of Indigenous cosmologies under extractive pressures. These insights underscore how ecological disruption is simultaneously a spiritual rupture, displacing ritual from its ecological anchors.

Despite these constraints, the potency of ritual endures. Offerings of *pulut kuning* (yellow glutinous rice) and *pulut hitam* (black glutinous rice) continue to encode cosmological meaning, linking earth and sea, light and mystery. Their vitality, however, is inseparable from ecological memory: without living landscapes to sustain them, these symbols risk detachment from the cosmologies they once enacted. This tension reveals both fragility and resilience, where ritual objects preserve theological depth, yet their endurance depends upon continuity of sacred ecologies. Here McFague's (1993) vision of ecological asceticism becomes salient here: through restraint, attentiveness, and bodily presence, spiritual healing takes form. Conradie (2021) echoes this by framing such practices as an ethic of sacred care rooted in the goodness of creation. *Ngormati* thus exemplifies how ritual sustains theological imagination within fragmented ecologies.

In this sense, *Ngormati* becomes a counter-narrative, not through ideological opposition but through liturgical continuity. Invocations of *semangat*, sacred greetings, and elemental offerings enact a vernacular theology; rooted, resilient, and ritually animated. Observing *pantang* (sacred taboos) ensures that rivers, forests, and spirits remain honoured as relational agents. This is not nostalgia but ethical resistance, an embodied theology that addresses what Higgins et al. (2022; 2013) describe as moral injury: the rupture of sacred trust through ecological desecration. In Teluk Setimbul, this wound is immediate, seen in degrading coastal and coral reefs, lost foraging paths, missing medicinal plants, and the silence of formerly sacred groves. The Akit interpret these not as environmental losses alone, but as fractures of spiritual continuity. Healing, therefore, is covenantal: a reaffirmation of bonds with Creator, earth, and community.

Ngormati, in this theological horizon, becomes jurisprudence of the sacred. Each ritual act reframes ecological collapse as a theological breach demanding discernment and embodied response. Mehta and Merz (2015) link extractive economies to the erasure of Indigenous agency. Yet, through *Bedekeh* (*healing ritual*) and other practices, the Akit reclaim spiritual agency through rhythm, gesture, and

cosmological invocation. Kowalska (2023) affirms that when coherence is violated, communities do not only resist but also regenerate ethical and symbolic meaning. Thus, ritual improvisation becomes a sacred mode of renewal.

Healing in this cosmology is neither biomedical nor abstract but relational. As one elder, Pak Ginang, explained, "If a fish disappears, or the river changes, it is not just nature. It means our path is out of line. We must *ngormati* through offerings, so the *semangat* can flow again" (Interview, May 2023). This testimony echoes Lincoln's (2000) vision of soul and soil, where sacredness is intuited through ritual presence rather than imposed. Each invocation and silent act beside sacred trees or rivers reactivates divine nearness. *Ngormati* sanctifies rupture not by masking it, but by gesturing through it with reverence and rhythm. The Earth's pain becomes sacramental, not by abstraction, but through body and breath (Boff, 1997; McFague, 1993; Pope Francis, 2015). This is spiritual resilience enacted as hope.

Ngormati thus constitutes a theological matrix in which Indigenous cosmology, Trinitarian relationality, and embodied ecological ethics converge as a contextual ecotheology. Rather than constructing theology from doctrinal synthesis, *Ngormati* articulates a spirituality of participation, where land, memory, and gesture form the sacred text. This praxis, grounded in cosmological fidelity and ritual rhythm, responds to ecological fragmentation with spiritual improvisation. Displaced from ancestral sites; *Gunung Karimun* (Karimun Mountain), *Batu Besurat* (Inscribed Rock), *Batu Putih* (White Rock), *Batu Lipat Kain* (Folded-Cloth Rock), rituals have found renewed expression in *Rumah Sasangke*, on household thresholds, or forest edges. These shifts reflect not only ecological loss, but theological reconfiguration, in which, the locus of the divine (ancestral presence) is no longer tied only to distant mountains and sacred stones/rocks, but re-inscribed in the everyday spaces where the community now lives. As corporate intrusion and environmental degradation alter sacred geographies, we believe that the Akit enact what Adiprasetya (2017) calls *perichoresis-realitas*, a divine presence that moves into wounded space without being diminished. Within fragmented ecologies, ritual continues to inscribe sacredness.

This hope is not abstract. It lives in the gestures of women who chew tobacco before entering the forest, light incense before foraging, and whisper *betabek* (ritual salutation) to ancestral trees. As one informant, Ibu Engwe, described:

> When we go to the Kolah, we carry lime with us. We squeeze it into a pail, draw fresh water from the spring, and we stay quiet. No loud voices. That place, there is a feeling, like something shifts inside. The hair on my arms rises. It is as if the *nek-tuk* (ancestors) are watching… I do not speak. I just sit and feel. The wind passing through the trees, the sound of the leaves, the touch of water on my skin. When I pour the water over myself, it is not only refreshing. There is something deeper. I feel their nearness, like they are not far. The elders say the spirits may come. I have not seen them, but I can sense their presence. (Interview, 26 April 2023)

She further elaborated:

> Before I take anything from the forest, I chew tobacco and light some incense. I sit with the smoke and wait. Then I say with care, *"kamek nak minta izin"* (I ask permission). After that, if I feel peace, I continue. It's not about what I take, but how I ask. (Interview, 26 April 2023)

Her silence at the *Kolah*, the sensation of ancestral presence in wind and leaf, becomes the theopoetic grammar of *Ngormati*. Such ritual attentiveness constitutes what Lincoln and Wheeler describe as co-emplacement, where body, land, and spirit interpenetrate.

In this spirituality, ritual becomes resilience, a performance of memory, but also a mode of hope. Ritual actions function as theological enactments, sustaining not only ecological reverence but spiritual continuity. As McFague (1993) proposes, ecological asceticism sanctifies the ordinary through reverence. *Laudato Si'* (§217, §222–227) echoes this: ecological conversion is rooted in daily gestures of restraint and care. Women remain the liturgical heart of the community, sustaining both ecological knowledge and spiritual continuity. As herbalists, foragers, and ritual agents, they enact feminist-decolonial spirituality of embodiment, resistance, and sustainability. These roles are not framed by romanticism but by covenantal practice. Through rituals, such as preparing Kepala Jamu and Talam Dua Muka, lighting incense and whispering *betabek entering forests or coastal areas;* through tending sacred springs and household thresholds, and through ecological attentiveness in restrained foraging and teaching children to speak softly near rivers and forests, Akit women embody theological presence in everyday life. This reflects Dolamo's (2019) vision of stewardship as sacred participation rather than dominion. In this lived spirituality, the Akit articulate faith and enact it through rhythm, gesture, and relational fidelity. Their spiritual agency is integral, not peripheral, revealing how contextual theology is sustained through practice and not only proclamation.

Thus, *Ngormati* becomes a lived expression of ecospirituality, transmitted through practice, inherited through ritual, and rooted in ancestral fidelity. It re-engages models of theological meaning (S. Bevans, 1985) by grounding them in ecological participation and embodied rhythm. Through repetition, silence, and sacred gesture, spiritual memory is not only preserved but made to flourish. In the light of Romans 12:1, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices", Akit ritual affirms ecological spirituality as vocation, enacted in soil, season, and gesture. *Ngormati* teaches that hope is not deferred but lived here and now. Ultimately, it articulates a grammar of ecospiritual hope, responding to ecological displacement with sacred improvisation and to cultural erosion with embodied witness. It breathes through land, sings through liturgy, and sustains covenant through gestures of reverence. It reminds spiritual communities that Earth-care is not peripheral but the deepest embodiment of spiritual life. This commitment echoes Pope Francis' insistence that ecological commitment is not an optional or a secondary aspect (Pope Francis, 2015: §217) and McFague's vision of the world as God's household, where just and sustainable relationships are constitutive of authentic life (McFague, 2001: 125–126, 132–133).

Conclusion

Ngormati, as practiced by the Akit community, emerges as a profound expression of lived ecospirituality, a sacred grammar that binds land, body, and spirit through ritual reverence and ancestral fidelity. Rather than forming an abstract doctrinal framework, *Ngormati* manifests through the rhythms of life: offerings placed with care, silence held in sacred groves, and gestures shaped by cosmological awareness. It is within these embodied actions that ecospirituality takes root; contextual, intuitive, and transformative. It cultivates an ecospiritual *habitus*; an ethical posture emerging from liturgical repetition and cosmic attentiveness, through seasonal disciplines, spatial memory, and intergenerational wisdom. This orientation shifts contextual reflection away from systematic construction toward a grammar of presence and responsibility. Here, spirituality is lived through breath and soil, through restraint and reverence, through movement and offering.

As a performative ecospirituality, *Ngormati* reveals how Indigenous epistemologies create meaning within the fragility of damaged ecologies. The Akit's ritual faithfulness affirms creation as covenantal kin, the Creator as immanent companion, and community as bearer of liturgical memory. Drawing upon Adiprasetya's vision of perichoresis-realitas, where divine presence moves into wounded realities with intimacy and grace, *Ngormati* is interpreted here as a sacred choreography that re-inscribes divine nearness amidst ecological dislocation. The sacred is encountered not through transcendence alone, but in the touch of lime, the rising of incense, and the whisper of wind.

Rather than anchoring itself in nostalgia or abstraction, *Ngormati* gestures forward with improvisational resilience, echoing contextual and ecospiritual theologies that emphasise adaptive, embodied responses to ecological crisis (Bevans, 2018; Lincoln, 2000; McFague, 2013). It offers a living model of spiritual wisdom drawn from ancestral insight, ecological reverence, and bodily devotion. The grammar of *Ngormati* is vernacular and grounded, yet speaks to wider resonances. It invites spiritual communities to rediscover reverence as posture, not proposition; to embody sacredness through presence, not proclamation.

The significance of *Ngormati* lies not in its aspiration to universality, but in its profound local rootedness that offers echoes of wisdom for global ecospiritual reflection. It affirms that spiritual formation grows from attentive relationships; with land, memory, and the unseen. It exemplifies what sacred life can look like when ritual is not a relic, but a response to ecological pain and a testimony to sacred fidelity. Nevertheless, this study contends that *Ngormati* contributes meaningfully to global ecospiritual discourse by offering a concrete, practiced model of spiritual response to environmental degradation. Its grammar of silence, offering, and ancestral breath invites educators, communities of faith, and spiritual seekers to reimagine the formative power of ritual. At the same time, the analysis is limited to one Akit community in Teluk Setimbul and a relatively small group of key interlocutors; it does not compare other Akit settlements, nor does it trace quantitatively how Ngormati shapes ecological outcomes. Future research could extend this work through comparative studies with other *Suku Asli* and Malayic coastal communities, or through collaborative ecotheological and ecological projects that follow how Indigenous ritual practice informs concrete environmental decision-making and youth formation. In this light, Earth-care becomes not simply a moral imperative, but a liturgical vocation, where ecology and spirituality meet in the soil of reverent embodiment.

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