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Portrait of Mary and Manggarai Women in “*Dere Serani*”: The Encounter of Religion and Culture

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Abstract

Catholics hold Mary, the mother of Jesus, in high esteem. The widespread presence of Marian devotions, teachings, dogmas, symbols, titles, art, and places of pilgrimage in various church regions across the globe demonstrates this phenomenon. This study investigates the portrayal of Mary at the Manggarai Catholic Church, which is situated in the Diocese of Ruteng, Flores. This study aimed to analyze the songs performed by Maria that are featured in the book “*Dere Serani*.” The central investigation focused on whether the depiction of Mary in songs is impacted by the representation of women in the local culture or not. This study utilized two main approaches, namely text content analysis and cultural studies. This study discovered that the depiction of Mary that is adopted by the local community extends beyond local perspectives and incorporates global viewpoints.

Keywords: Catholicism; contextual; feminism; local culture; Mother Mary

INTRODUCTION

Cultural entities and religion are intrinsically intertwined, functioning as two-sided currencies. The cultural milieu shapes one's perception of religious existence, which is indispensable for its existence.¹ Religion is an intrinsic constituent of culture, which in turn comprises religious convictions.² Upon introduction from a different region or culture, a religion will inevitably come into contact with the cultural reality of the host society. It was consistently met with rejection and executed in a manner that avoided any indigenous cultural or traditional influences. One consequence of dialogue and reciprocal influence is the emergence of unique practices and modes of thought. An analogous claim may be posited with respect to the Christian faith. When the church enters particular societies and cultures, it is met with indigenous circumstances and realities. Theology, liturgy, doctrine, and devotion are all facets of Chris-

tianity that may be significantly influenced by both encounters.³

The examination of the intersection of Christian beliefs and indigenous cultures remains a pertinent subject in Indonesia. Some studies have made significant contributions to the theological and practical aspects of Catholic life and society at large.⁴ Despite the existence of some research in this area, there is a notable scarcity of studies that specifically examine Christian encounters with local cultures from the perspective of women. Amidst this limitation, this study addresses the research void by examining the ways in which the Catholic Church's perception of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is impacted by local culture.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, holds a prominent position in the global Catholic Church. Devotion to Mary is widely embraced and considered an essential aspect of the Catholic faithful's life. The profound reverence for Mary is evident via the numerous pilgrimages, grottoes, sculptures, rituals, suppli-

¹ Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate* (Routledge, 2021).

² Luigi Fusco Girard and Marilena Vecco, "The 'Intrinsic Value' of Cultural Heritage as Driver for Circular Human-Centered Adaptive Reuse," *Sustainability* 13, no. 6 (March 15, 2021): 3231, <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU13063231>; Jon P. Mitchell, "Defining Religion," in *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies*, ed. Richard King (New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2017), 327–34, <https://doi.org/10.7312/king14542-032>.

³ Paul Scott Wilson, "Christ and Culture: A Belated Assessment of H.R. Niebuhr for Preaching," *Homiletic*

41, no. 2 (2016), <https://homiletic.net/index.php/homiletic/article/view/4308>.

⁴ Marzanna Poplawska, *Performing Faith: Christian Music, Identity and Inculturation in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2020); Christar A. Rumbay and Johannis Siahaya, "Embracing the Traces of the Deity Opo Empung in Minahasa for Culturative Christianity," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/VE.V44I1.2739>; Vincentius Paskalis Nugroho, Rita Milyartini, and Yudi Sukmayadi, "Iman, Intimacy, and Identity-Inculturated of Indonesian Catholic Church," in *4th International Conference on Arts and Design Education (ICADE 2021)* (Atlantis Press, 2022).

cations, literary works, and religious services dedicated to her. Additionally, there exist towns or districts that employ the name of Mary as a guardian of the area.⁵ In certain locations, individuals pay tribute to Mary through grand, immense, and densely populated processions and celebrations. Devotion and rituals serve as both spiritual practices and tourist attractions in general.⁶

Research indicates that the perception and reverence of Mary are influenced by the local environment, while still acknowledging the global and Western portrayal of Mary. Local traditions and culture frequently intertwine with devotions and ceremonies centered upon Mary. In Poland, the veneration of Mary is widely practiced by Catholics, who commemorate it through the observance of local customs, including attire, music, and ornamentation.⁷ In the Philippines, local Catholics are also interpreting the image of Mary within their specific cultural and social context.⁸ In

Larantuka, Flores, Indonesia, the veneration of Mary is a fusion of indigenous customs and Portuguese heritage, which Catholic missionaries brought to the local inhabitants.⁹

The focus of our study is the depiction of Mary in the Catholic church of Manggarai, located in the diocese of Ruteng, Flores. The Diocese of Ruteng is the largest diocese in Indonesia based on the number of Catholics and Catholic Church institutions it encompasses. The focus of this study is the collection of songs by Mary that are found in the book “*Dere Serani*” (The Christian Songs). The *Dere Serani* is a hymn book that has been utilized in the liturgy of the Manggarai Catholic Church since the 1940s. It was formally published in its initial edition in 1947. The songs were composed in the indigenous language of Manggarai by the local community in Manggarai throughout the period from the 1940s to the 1950s.¹⁰ Given that *Dere Serani* was composed in the vernacular and by the indigenous

⁵ M. Maskarinec, *City of Saints: Rebuilding Rome in the Early Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); C. De Busser and A. Niedźwiedź, “Mary in Poland: A Polish Master Symbol,” in *Moved by Mary* (Routledge, 2022), 87-100.; R.L. Fastiggi and M. O’Neill, *Virgin, Mother, Queen: Encountering Mary in Time and Tradition* (Ave Maria Press, 2019).

⁶ F.J.R. Solans, “A New Lourdes in Spain: The Virgin of El Pilar, Mass Devotion, National Symbolism and Political Mobilization,” in *Marian Devotions, Political Mobilization, and Nationalism in Europe and America*, ed. R. Di Stefano and F. Ramón Solans (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2016), 137-67.

⁷ Mario Kati’c Kati’c et al., “Constructing Mary through Pilgrimages: Lived Catholic Mariology in

Poland,” *Religions* 14, no. 11 (November 13, 2023): 1420, <https://doi.org/10.3390/REL14111420>.

⁸ P. B. A. Smit, “Legitimizing Context: The Literary and Theological Function of Mary and Mariology in Aglipay’s Novenario de La Patria,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 55, no. 165 (2020): 239–64.

⁹ Yohanes Hans Monteiro, *Semana-Santa Di Larantuka Sejarah Dan Liturgi* (Penerbit Ledalero, 2020).

¹⁰ Yohanes S Lon and Fransiska Widyawati, “Adaptasi Dan Transformasi Lagu Adat Dalam Liturgi Gereja Katolik Di Manggarai Flores,” *Jurnal Kawistara* 10, no. 1 (April 22, 2020): 17–31, <https://doi.org/10.22146/KAWISTARA.45244>; William Samuel Gading Sitompul, “Kebangkitan Nyanyian Global Dan Perkembangan Nyanyian Di Indonesia,” n.d.

Catholic community, the study aimed to investigate if the depictions of Mary in the songs were impacted by the portrayals of women in the local culture during that period. If yes, what is the method and extent of its influence? Alternatively, the local composer painted the portrait of Mary. This research aims to gain insight into the interaction between the depictions of local women and the women associated with Mary, as introduced by Western missionaries. Additionally, it seeks to examine the dynamic between local traditions and the (Catholic) religion brought by European missionaries prior to the Second Vatican Council.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology. Two primary methodologies are employed: text content analysis and cultural studies. Text analysis is a method used to extract precise information from a given text or written material. Text analytics is a systematic approach to extracting information from texts, including concepts, words, meanings, relationships, messages, cultures, and temporal features. Based on the references provided,¹¹ a specific conclusion can be drawn. The texts examined in this study are the songs composed by Mary in *Dere Serani*. The ana-

lysis focuses on how the song portrays the characteristics, title, role, or position of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and its connection to the representation of women in Manggarai culture. This research will analyze all 20 songs about Mary that are included in the book. Through textual analysis, we can glean insights into the portrayal of Mary in the regional ballads.

Once the picture is obtained, the subsequent task is to determine the significance of the image of Mary in relation to the representation of women in the local culture. Prior to reaching a conclusion regarding the genesis of the image of Mary within the local culture, the second approach employed is the ethnography of women's portrayal within the local culture. Ethnography, a method often employed in socio-anthropological studies, involves the examination of human beings within their respective cultures to discern and categorize different societies. This research also utilizes it to discern the notions of women inside Manggarai culture. The data gathering methods involves conducting interviews, making observations, and studying existing literature derived from prior research findings. The ethnographic findings about the portrayal of women in this society are subsequently dissimilar with the depictions of Mary found

¹¹ K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (SAGE Publications, 2018).

in the 20 songs of *Dere Serani*. One can determine whether the depiction of Mary in the lyrics is connected to the local perception of women or not.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Depiction of Mary in *Dere Serani*

The significance of *Dere Serani* as a songbook for liturgy and devotion can only be fully grasped by considering the historical background of Catholicism in Manggarai as a whole. The official establishment of Catholicism in Manggarai, West Flores, occurred in the early 20th century. In contrast to the eastern region, the Catholic mission in Manggarai is relatively new and was established later. In the 16th century, European missionaries brought Catholicism to the people of Nusantara, including the inhabitants of Flores in the eastern region. They have been acquainted with this religion since the 16th century through the Portuguese-born Dominican missionaries. The Dominicans did not extend their mission to the western part of the island until the late nineteenth century. After the Dutch army's victory over the Portuguese, the missionaries departed from Flores and were substituted by

diocesan priests and other Jesuits from the Netherlands and Europe. Their mission concluded in the early 20th century and was succeeded by SVD missionaries headquartered in the Netherlands. Regarding Flores, the Dutch opted for the central location of the mission center on the island. This facilitates their access to the unexplored western region that remains untouched by the mission in September 1920, Dutch missionaries formally established the mission center at Ruteng, Manggarai.¹²

Despite commencing in the 1920s, the church's expansion was very substantial. Within a span of only 25 years, the majority of the population in Manggarai has embraced the Catholic faith.¹³ By the 1960s, the Catholic population had surpassed that of other religious groups in the local community. As a result, the entire island has become known as a "Catholic Island" and remains renowned in Indonesia. Over 33% of the Catholic population in Indonesia consists of individuals from the Flores ethnic group. When the Flores were away from the island, they actively embraced Catholicism and played a leading role in church-related endeavors. Several factors con-

¹² Antonio Camnahas, "SVD Genius Dalam Karya Misi Di Sunda Kecil," *Seri Filsafat Teologi* 32, no. 31 (December 12, 2022): 163–96, <https://doi.org/10.35312/SERIFILSAFAT.V32I31.188>.; Fransiska Widyawati and Yohanes S. Lon, "Mission and Development in Manggarai, Flores Eastern Indonesia

in 1920-1960s," *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal* 29, no. 2 (2019): 178–89.

¹³ Fransiskus Borgias M., "The Quick Growth of the Catholic Church in Manggarai: A Phenomenology of Conversion and Some Explanations," *MELINTAS* 31, no. 3 (May 19, 2015): 276–302, <https://doi.org/10.26593/MEL.V31I3.1919.276-302>.

tribute to the rapid acceptance of this religion among the inhabitants. Primarily, the strong backing and collaboration with the Dutch occupying government, which holds significant authority in terms of legislation, providing facilities, and exerting force.¹⁴

Furthermore, missionaries had a crucial role in not only spreading religion but also developing the underdeveloped region by constructing various agricultural infrastructure, irrigation systems, roads, educational institutions, hospitals, markets, and more. These efforts garnered sympathy and fostered a Ca-

tholic identity among the local populace. Furthermore, certain missionaries have a genuine concern for the local Manggarai culture and actively engage in inculturation inside the Church. An option is to include components of music, songs, and dances into the church liturgy. It evokes a sense of proximity to the Catholic tradition. One of the works mentioned is *Dere Serani*.¹⁵

The songs pertaining to Mary can be found in *Dere Serani* numbers 174 to 193. Based on the outcome, there is a depiction of Mary in 20 of the songs.

Tabel 1. Songs and the Portrayed of Mary

No	Original Title	Title in Englis	Composer, Place & Year	The Portrayed of Mary
174	O Endé, Campékoé	O my mom, Help me	Y. Kagus, Menggol, 1954	Mary is a mother. She is the helper and the guide for those who are in trouble and lost.
175	O Endé Maria Nggeluk	Holy Mother Mary	N. Djangkung, Manus, 1939	Mary is a holy mother. She hears our prayer and the prayer of the church.
176	E Mai Taung Tité	Let us Praise her	M. Rohong, Heso, 1955	Mary is a good woman who has kindness heart. She is the guidance for those who are suffering.
177	O Endé, Rétang Ko Endé	Mother, we are crying	Y. Djanggur, Riwu, 1955	Mary is the mother who cares of her crying children
178	O Ende Toé Taki lé Ndékok	Immaculate Mother	Y. Djanggur, Riwu, 1955	Mary the virgin, immaculate, holy, beautiful and the helper.

¹⁴ Camnahas, “SVD Genius Dalam Karya Misi Di Sunda Kecil.”

¹⁵ Lon and Widyawati, “Adaptasi Dan Transformasi Lagu Adat Dalam Liturgi Gereja Katolik Di Manggarai Flores.”; Ni Putu Yuniarika Parwati, “Peranan Wihelminus Van Bekkum Sebagai Uskup

Pertama Dalam Menyebarkan Agama Katolik Di Keuskupan Ruteng Tahun (1961-1972),” *Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (February 3, 2020): 34–50, <https://ojs.mahadewa.ac.id/index.php/socialstudies/article/view/640>.

179	Tabé yo Endé go	Hail Mary the Queen	U. Burhanus, Malang, 1959	Mary is a holy mother and a place for her children to ask for help
180	Naring go Endég é!	Let us praise the Mother	Y. Lahu, Lewur, 1958	Mary is the one who gave birth to Jesus. Her is the holiest of heaven and her name is great.
181	Calang kaku Endé	I am lost	R. Romas, Ruteng, 1960	Mary is Mother Protector at night and helper in the afternoon.
182	Yo Ende Rajag- e	My Queen	Nn	Mary is holy, she is queen and helper
183	Yo Hiang Lami	We adore you	Nn	Mary is the one praised by the cherubim and seraphim.
184	Yo Maria, Endé Déwa	Mary mother of God	Nn	Mary is the kind Mother, Mother of Jesus Christ, the Virgin.
185	Tabé Ntala Géwang	Hail the morning star	Nn	Mary is the glorious mother of heaven. She is the Light and helper in trouble. She is the Eastern Star
186	Tabé yo Maria	Hail Mary	L. No'o, Pesi, 1958	Mary, mother of Jesus, mother of God, kind mother and mother of the faithful
187	Yo Endé Nggeluk, Yo Lami Ta	Holy Mother	Av. Bambang, Beo Kina, 1946	Mary is the holy mother and guide of mankind
188	Yo Endé, ba'éng kami gé	Mother have us mercy	P. Mekas Leng kondawang, 1959	Mary is the holy mother and helper of mankind
189	Yo Maria	O Mary	Av. Bambang, Beo Kina, 1946	Mary is a soul comforter and helper
190	Mai Momang Maria	To love Mary	NN	Mary is the holy mother and helper until eternity
191	Yo Endé Raja	The King's Mother	NN	Mary is the queen of help
192	Tabé Sengaji	Hail the Queen	NN	Mary is the helper
193	Tabé Endé Raja	Hail the Mother of King	NN	Maria is a beautiful and helpful queen

Based on this description, Mary in *Dere Serani* can be characterized as a lady who fulfills various roles such as being a mother, helper, queen, maid, and heavenly host. She is depicted as beautiful, like a morning star, and possesses qualities such as kindness, protection, and attentiveness to human suffering.

Women in Manggarai's Local Culture

The Manggarai tribe resides in Flores Island, located in the East Nusa Tenggara Province. From a geopolitical perspective, the Manggarai people in Flores are currently residing in three distinct districts: Manggarai, West Manggarai, and East Manggarai. The Manggarai tribe follows a patriarchal system, in which the father's bloodline has ownership and inheritance rights over the clan. As a result, men have greater control over local government, property, inheritance, power, economy, social affairs, politics, and other areas. Women are in a position of lower rank or authority compared to their father or brother prior to being married. Upon marriage, she becomes a member of her husband's clan. The Manggarai people use the term “*ata one*” to refer to men, which means insiders, and “*ata pe'ang*” to refer to women, which means out-siders.¹⁶

¹⁶ Adrianus Marselus Nggoro, Fx Adji Samekto, and Sukirno, “Recontextualizing the Patriarchal Dominance of Manggarai Heritage Customary Law System by Democratic and Gendered Orientation,” *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 238–46, <https://doi.org/10.31838/IJPR/2021.13.01.038>.

The presence of male children is crucial in ensuring the continuation of future generations. Historically, the absence of male offspring in a household, and even more so in a clan, posed a significant risk of the family's demise and was regarded as an unfortunate circumstance. Today, this mentality still persists in numerous households, where the arrival of a male child is eagerly anticipated. Nevertheless, there are numerous families who do not feel compelled to have a male if they already have a certain number of daughters. In contrast to previous circumstances, husbands were incentivized to practice polygamy if their first wife failed to bear a male offspring.¹⁷

In the Manggarai language, women are referred to as *iné wai* or *iné-wai*. *Ine* is a term that refers to a mother, parent, or origin. *Wai*, on the other hand, signifies a woman who is giving birth, involved in marriage, or engaged in reproduction. This highlights the women's procreative function as moms. Women are educated and equipped to fulfill their roles as proficient spouses and nurturing mothers. In order to gain acceptance within her husband's family, it is imperative for her to acquire a range of abilities. These skills will help her to fulfill her role of serving her hus-

¹⁷ Yohanes Lon, *The View of Married Couple In Ruteng About Wagal As A Traditional Wedding Ceremony in Manggarai, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara* (STKIP St. Paulus Ruteng, Ruten, 2018), 309-22, <https://repository.unikastpaulus.ac.id/id/eprint/136/>.

band and his family, as well as educating and raising her children. In addition, he is responsible for contributing to the family's financial well-being by engaging in domestic activities such as agriculture, livestock management, or textile production. Despite women mostly fulfilling domestic roles in their daily lives, the Manggarai people hold a feminine concept of divinity in their higher beliefs. God is regarded as “*Ata Jari agu Dedek*,” signifying the Creator and Maker. This title does not inherently possess a masculine connotation, contrary to the prevailing notion in Christianity. Conversely, individuals who possess the ability to give birth and engage in the act of creation are women. The Divine, or Creator, is a female being commonly referred to as the mother or the feminine principle.

During local prayers, the Manggarai people seek protection from a divine entity known as “*Ine rinding wie*,” which translates to “God as the nurturing mother during dark days.” In the local culture, night is often associated with malevolent energies, characterized by peril, hazards, and unpredictability. During times of great adversity such as these, Mother God will serve as the guardian and defender. This is consistent with the significant influence and authority of mothers/women.

Both men and women have the ability to serve as priests, known as *mbeko*, or prayer leaders, in different traditional rites. However, in order to perform the ritual that transforms negative occurrences into positive ones, it is exclusively reserved for women and not open to men. In this context, women are regarded as influential and better equipped to establish a connection with the divine feminine.¹⁸

Women are commonly referred to as *ata wina*, whereas men are commonly referred to as *ata rona*. *Ata* is a term that refers to a human or person, *wina* is used to describe a wife, and *rona* is used to describe a husband. This term conveys the societal expectation for women to fulfill the role of being married partners. In the realm of everyday society, the epitome of Manggarai women are individuals who will enter into matrimony, bear offspring, act as companions and attendants to their spouses, as well as fulfill similar roles for the entire extended family. Their role is mostly centered on domestic affairs, within or in close proximity to the household. However, within a theological framework, the terms wife and husband are also employed to denote the Divine, specifically *Rona Eta*, *Wina Wa* (husband above, wife below), which is analogous to *Awang eta*, *Tana wa* (sky above, land

¹⁸ F. Bustan, A. Semiun, and J. Bire, “Conceptualization of Manggarai Society on Power Relationship in Marriage Kinship,” *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana* 25, no. 6 (2020): 433–41.; M. M. Mahri et al.,

“Sakralitas Perkawinan Cangkang Dalam Adat Manggarai Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Kitab Hukum Kanonik,” *Dharmasmrti: Jurnal Ilmu Agama Dan Kebudayaan* 22, no. 2 (2022): 25–34.

below). Displayed here is the planet Earth and the nurturing environment that will facilitate the growth of life in an upward direction. The terms “up” and “down” do not pertain to vertical positions, but rather have functional, relational, and complimentary meanings. Women possess a heavenly essence.

The traditional way of life in Manggarai culture revolves around a communal central area known as the hamlet. The main house, known as *mbaru gendang*, serves as the focal point for both government and religious activities. The presence of the *mbaru gendang* signifies the authority and influence of a village. Gendang houses typically exhibit the most substantial dimensions compared to other dwellings within the community. The village is populated by the village chief and delegates from the clans residing in the village. The *mbaru gendang* holds significant social, religious, and cosmological significance for the local community. The village center serves as the locus of authority, where rituals are performed, and where the tribal chief and clans, who act as representatives of the tribe, reside. Each component of the house represents the connection between humans and other individuals, spirits, ancestors, supernatural entities, and the universe.

The original traditional house has a conical shape resembling an inverted ice cone, with the primary timber structural element known as *Siri Bongkok*. The structure rises vertically from the ground to the roof, symbolizing the integration of the mortal realm with the celestial, the higher realm and the lower realm, the terrestrial (maternal) and the celestial (paternal). Additionally, it consolidates the connecting poles and several minor components that contribute to the structural integrity of the house. In the local culture, *Siri Hunchback* is shown as a female figure. In order to acquire and cultivate the *siri bongkok*, a grand procession is conducted to transport the timber from the forest, accompanied by a highly elaborate and significant ritual. The event is called *Roko Molas Poco*, which translates to “proposing to a forest girl.” From a philosophical standpoint, women serve as the primary foundation of both the household and the community. It encompasses and links all facets of social interactions. Women serve as the link between different individuals or groups. They possess the ability to safeguard others and exhibit strength. Additionally, they possess a unique and sacred hue.¹⁹

In Manggarai culture, women are portrayed as being primarily involved in home

¹⁹ Maksimilianus Jemali, Rudolof Ngalu, and Adrianus Jebarus, “Tradisi Roko Molas Poco Dalam Hubungannya Dengan Penghargaan Terhadap Martabat

Perempuan Manggarai,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Missio* 9, no. 2 (2017): 85–94.

affairs, according to patriarchal norms, but also being associated with divinity and religious practices. They fulfill the roles of mothers, assistants, protectors, harmonizers, dependable individuals. They possess divine qualities, like goddesses or a motherly deity.

Similarities and Differences

This research identifies two primary patterns when comparing the portrayal of Mary in *Dere Serani* and Manggarai culture. Firstly, the portrayal of Mary in *Dere Serani* bears a resemblance or likeness to the representation of Manggarai ladies in the picture. The prevailing and widely held picture depicts women primarily as mothers. Manggarai women and Maria are associated with the feminine qualities of beauty, sweetness, gentleness, and kindness due to their role as mothers. In addition to their character traits, both Maria and Manggarai women share comparable roles in the family and community. They serve as mother who gave birth, servant, helpers, faithfully supporting their children, displaying a propensity for giving, generosity, and a deep concern for their children's well-being. This is evident in the songs of *Dere Serani*.

Upon further investigation, it becomes evident that this job is not significantly distinct in other cultures and societies. Maria, in her capacity as a mother, exhibits a distinctly feminine and domestic nature and assumes

corresponding responsibilities. This is typical in almost all cultures. In the previous section, we discussed the image of female divinity in Manggarai culture. Unfortunately, local composers of Manggarai songs did not incorporate this image into their compositions. Instead, they predominantly depicted Maria attributes as mothers. This maternal image is not exclusive to the Manggarai people. It resonates across cultures worldwide.

Even inside the Holy Bible, Mary is also depicted in this manner. Mary's initial portrayal is found in the New Testament Scriptures, specifically in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Each of the Gospels contains unique narratives concerning Mary. Matthew extensively discusses Mary's significant contribution to salvation history. The gospel opens with the presentation of Jesus' genealogy. Mary is referred to as Joseph's wife and the mother of Jesus, who is known as the Messiah (Matt. 1:16). Verse 18 elucidates that Mary conceived Jesus via the agency of the Holy Spirit. Following the birth of Jesus, a group of knowledgeable individuals from the Eastern region arrived and located Jesus and Mary. They paid homage to him (Matt. 2:11). Mary is referenced in the account of Joseph's family seeking refuge in Egypt to escape Herod's pursuit, as described in Matthew 2:13-18. Mary was there during a specific event in Jesus' adult life, when his brothers sought him out as he was engaged in teaching (Matt.

12:46-50). The Gospel of Mark offers a restricted amount of information regarding Mary. In Mark 6:3, Jesus is said to as the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. In Mark 15:40, it is stated that Mary, the mother of James and Joses, witnessed Jesus' death from a distance. Mary is Jesus' mother.²⁰

Luke is the primary source of information regarding Mary. Luke provides a comprehensive account of Mary's experiences, including the visitation by the Angel Gabriel (1:26-38), her conception, the visit to her sister Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56), the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-7), their presence in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52), and Mary's attendance at the Wedding Feast in Cana (Luke 2:1-11). Maria assumes the character of the attentive mother during the celebration. A mother experiences dissatisfaction when there is an insufficiency of food and beverages in the household, particularly during a social gathering. She serves as an assistant or aide.

In the Gospel of John, Mary is featured in two specific narratives. The first is the account of Mary's presence at the feast at Cana, where Jesus performed his inaugural miracle of transforming water into wine (John 2:4). The second story depicts Mary standing at the foot of Jesus' cross, where he com-

mitted her to the care of the beloved disciple (John 19:25-27). In addition to the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles have a single mention of Mary in Acts 1:14. Mary was among the individuals who persisted in praying alongside the apostles and a few women following Jesus' ascension.

According to the Holy Bible, Mary is primarily depicted as the mother who conceived, gave birth, and remained with Jesus from his birth until his death and even after his ascension. These pictures are prominently depicted in *Dere Serani*: Mary embodies the roles of a mother, a faithful companion, a supportive figure, and a constant presence in her child's difficulties.

Secondly, in *Dere Serani*, Maria is portrayed in a manner that deviates from the customary practices of the Manggarai culture, particularly in terms of the absence of honorifics or designations often used for Manggarai women. Some of the titles associated with Mary are Mary as Virgin, Mary as Mother of God, Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and Mary Star of the East. Upon additional investigation, it appears that these titles are not of local origin. These titles, which are well-known in the Catholic tradition, are predicates of Mary that have been translated into the local language of Manggarai. Therefore, the

²⁰ Michael J. Vernarelli, "Rethinking Mary in the New Testament," *The Catholic Library World* 89, no. 3 (2019): 201–2.

predicate Maria is not derived from the local culture, but rather originates from translations of other cultures or traditions.

These titles plainly stem from the dogma disseminated and instructed by the Church. At the time of Dere Serani's book publication, there were already four significant dogmas established in the Church. The four dogmas pertaining to Mary are her status as the Mother of God, her immaculate conception, her perpetual virginity, and her assumption into heaven. The doctrine of Mary, Mother of God, known as "*theotokos*," confirms that Mary is both the mother of Jesus and the mother of God. Mary, being the Mother of God, shares a personal and intimate connection with Jesus. She conceived, delivered, and nurtured Jesus. Mary underscores the coexistence of Jesus' human essence and his genuinely divine nature. Mary has played a significant role in God's plan throughout redemptive history. This doctrine was officially validated at the Council of Ephesus in 431.²¹

Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of Mary's Immaculate conception, known as *Ineffabilis Deus*, on December 8, 1854. Mary is considered to be divinely favored, as she is

believed to be the fulfillment of God's promise and played a significant role in the redemption brought about by Christ. She is believed to be free from the taint of original sin and was conceived without any blemish. In the 4th century, Santu Epharem expressed the belief that God and His Mother are the sole beings who possess absolute beauty in every aspect, as they are devoid of any imperfections or blemishes. In the 5th century, Saint Augustine expressed his belief in the importance of accepting the holy Virgin Mary. He emphasized that he never doubted her purity when discussing sin, as he held great reverence for God. Augustine acknowledged that God's abundant grace enables us to overcome even the smallest sins, and he recognized that Mary was chosen to conceive and give birth to Jesus, who was completely without sin.²²

Since 1246, the church has observed the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on December 8. The Council of Trent (1546) declared that Mary, by virtue of a unique endowment, was exempt from all crimes, including venial sins, throughout her entire life. The dogma initially established by Pope Sixtus IV in the 15th century was subsequent-

²¹ Paul Ihebata Abbulimen, "Theotokos: Minimalistic Conceptions," *EKPOMA REVIEW* 5, no. 1 (2018): 16–35, <https://www.acjoi.org/index.php/ekpoma/article/view/928>; Don W. Springer and Kevin M. Clarke, *The Divinization of the Theotokos: Fifth-Century Christological Controversy and the Figure of Mary* (Brill, 2022), <https://brill.com/display/book/9789004526983/BP000026.xml>; Andrew Joseph S.

Chanco, "The Moon Embracing the Sun: An Understanding of the Dogma of the Theotokos in Relation to Mark 6: 3," *Voice of Intellectual Man-An International Journal* 10, no. 1–2 (2020): 131–44.

²² Dang Huy Duong, "The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary—A Theological Study of the Historical Development of the Doctrine" (Concordia University, 2021).

ly proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in the 19th century. Mary herself proclaimed the doctrine of her immaculate conception during her 18 apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. This event took place four years following the acceptance of the dogma.²³

The Dogma of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary was officially formed on the same date. Pope Pius XI declared that Mary perpetually maintained her virginity during her entire life, therefore establishing Jesus as her sole biological offspring. Mary was conceived by the process of immaculate conception, where the Holy Spirit played a role in her conception without the involvement of male reproductive material. Mary maintained her virginity throughout the birth of Jesus and subsequent to it, so she did not have any siblings. Church councils affirmed the pregnancy of Mary with Jesus, who was recognized as the Son of God. These councils also acknowledged that Mary's virginity, known as *aeiparthenos*, was a visible demonstration of Jesus' holiness. The church fathers in the 4th and 7th centuries recognized and accepted this statement during several ecumenical councils. Pope Pius issued the dogma of Mary's assumption into heaven in the document *Munificentissimus Deus*. The Church com-

memorates this dogma annually on August 15 as a compulsory observance.²⁴

Unlike the Bible's portrayal of Mary, which is more aligned with common life and general culture, the four dogmas concerning Mary present her in a theological and philosophical context that is distinctly European in nature. The common culture is not acquainted with these concepts. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this is absent from the indigenous customs and traditions of the Manggarai community. While the Manggarai people acknowledge the presence of divine forces in women, their beliefs diverge from the dogmas surrounding Mary. Nevertheless, the dogma's teachings have been universally embraced by Catholics worldwide, including those in Manggarai. Additionally, he was discovered in *Dere Serani*. The book assimilated traditional and theological teachings, integrating them into songs of adoration dedicated to Mary. Several songs were not locally composed but rather translations of Mary's Latin songs.

CONCLUSION

Dere Serani, a collection of liturgical songs in the indigenous Manggarai language, serves as an exemplary representation of religious and cultural interactions. The study of

²³ Rastislav Nemec et al., "Saint Bonaventure's Doctrine on the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception," *Religions* 14, no. 7 (July 18, 2023): 930, <https://doi.org/10.3390/REL14070930>.

²⁴ Kevin Raedy, "Munificentissimus Deus and the Unity of Body and Soul," *Nova et Vetera* 20, no. 2 (March 2022): 403–19, <https://doi.org/10.1353/NOV.2022.0032>.

images of Mary, particularly in the 20 Marian hymns found in *Dere Serani*, reveals the various ways in which religion and culture are interconnected. In its initial manifestation, Maria is shown in accordance with the Manggarai people's description of a woman's visage as that of a mother - one who embodies qualities such as kindness, love, care, assistance, companionship, and all other positive attributes associated with a woman's maternal function. Via the utilization of these notions in the song *Dere Serani*, this songbook endeavors to engage in conversation and establish a solid foundation for the portrayal of Mary from an external perspective, incorporating local language and culture. By adopting this approach, the concept becomes more comprehensible and progressively integrates into the Manggarai people's longstanding practice of venerating Mary.

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