

Cosmotheology and Ecology: Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Environment in the Barong Wae Culture of East Manggarai Slope Community

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ABSTRACT

Cosmoteology refers to a concept that unites the fields of cosmology and theology. In this framework, cosmology functions as the formal object, while theology serves as the material object. Thus, cosmological knowledge is employed as an analytical perspective that enriches and complements theological understanding. This paper aims to explore the culture of *barong wae* through the theory of cosmotheology and ecology. The method used in this writing is literature study, with data collected from literature related to the discussion. The results and discussion in this paper show that *barong wae* culture serves as an initial rite for major events such as the *penti* event, which is a ceremony (thanksgiving for the harvest and celebration of the new year), and *congko lokap*, which is a celebration (the construction of a new traditional house called *mbaru gendang*). Theories on cosmotheology, ecology, and *barong wae* culture are discussed in this paper. The study of the relationship between the universe and God is called cosmotheology, while ecology is the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment. This research discusses the *barong wae* rite, which is performed by the Manggarai people.

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INTRODUCTION

Cosmoteology is a term that combines two fields: cosmology and theology. Cosmology is a formal object, while theology is a material object. This means that discipline in cosmological knowledge is used as a lens to complement theology. This term has not been very popular among Muslim academics, but its meaning has been growing for quite a long time. At least since the time of Stoic philosophy, the concept of cosmotheology has been understood by several thinkers (Budiman et al., 2023; Khafilda et al., 2024; Kamar, 2025; Umam, 2012). Both have explained that these terms have been familiar from Aristotle to Newton. This term is used to describe how theology can cooperate with cosmology in understanding the purpose of the universe under the will of God Almighty (Abdoelah, 2020).

Ecology is basically the study of how energy from sunlight is captured and stored by different plants and environments (Indigenous Water Management Strategies Collective, 2024; Todd et al., 2023). Ecology also concerns how diverse "communities" of plants and animals utilize that energy, aided by or cooperating with inorganic factors, such as soil and rainfall. The diverse system of communities of organisms that intersect, exchange, and utilize natural energy is called an ecological system, or commonly known as an ecosystem. In *barong wae* culture,

these two concepts are very important for understanding the relationship between nature and humans (Jones et al., 2025; Ndalung, 2024; Reed et al., 2018).

Barong wae culture is a Manggarai culture that has deep meaning and an important purpose for the survival of the community in an area in Manggarai. This *barong wae* event is carried out by the villagers, led by *Tua Teno* (tribal chief). This event begins with a patrol starting from *wae tek* (spring), where everyone gathers with the aim of inviting the spirits who guard or dwell in the spring to come together to the village (Gazing Wolf et al., 2024; Jessen et al., 2022). When everything proceeds from the *wae tek* or spring, the wife of *Tua Teno* adds water from the spring using *Loran* (a container made of bamboo), then continues with *Ronda* through *Paan Beo* (the middle of the village) until reaching *Sompang* (the roundabout in the middle of the village). Then the water, which *Tua Teno's* wife poured, is sprinkled on a *sompang* rivet five times, after which it continues with the *Dendek* (traditional danding) event. From there, all residents who participated are directed to enter *Old Teno's* house, where a traditional event is immediately held to receive the spirits (*Sundung*) who come with them to continue together in their next path. This event is often held once a year during the event *ghan woza*, or familiarly called *penti*. This event can be held on any day except Sunday (Hiwasaki et al., 2015; Iswandono et al., 2016; Balcomb, 2022; Smyer Yü, 2024).

Exploring the intersection of faith and the environment means studying how religious and spiritual beliefs interact with environmental issues. It covers how religious principles encourage people to take responsibility for nature, how religious teachings promote environmental conservation actions, and how communities of faith can help address environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change (Behera et al., 2025; Singh & Mishra, 2023; Fowler et al., 2025).

This shift can also include theological and philosophical thinking about humanity's relationship with nature. Examples include concepts such as *caliph* in Islam, *stewardship* in Christianity, or *ahimsa* in Hinduism and Buddhism. Additionally, these investigations may involve tangible actions such as ecotheological movements, sustainable farming practices based on religion, or environmental advocacy led by spiritual leaders.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, primarily utilizing literature study as the method for data collection. The data are gathered from relevant literature related to cosmotheology, ecology, and the *barong wae* culture, analyzing existing texts, articles, and studies to explore the intersections of faith and environment within the context of the *barong wae* tradition in the East Manggarai community. The research is designed to investigate cultural practices and their implications for ecological understanding and spiritual beliefs, particularly through the lens of cosmotheology. Data collection involves literature reviews, interviews, and observations, with a focus on the East Manggarai community and individuals who actively participate in or possess knowledge about the *barong wae* culture, including traditional leaders and local residents. The analysis employs thematic coding of qualitative data obtained from literature and interviews, identifying key themes and patterns related to the relationship between the *barong wae* rituals, ecological awareness, and cosmological beliefs. The research process is structured over a timeline that includes initial observations, data collection periods, and

analysis phases, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the topic. By integrating literature study with direct insights from the community, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how the *barong wae* culture embodies the intersection of faith and environmental stewardship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The cumulative destruction of the relationship between the human species and the ecological sphere has reached a stage where purely technical and social adjustments to existing models of development are no longer sufficient to sustain the sustainability of the planet. The rise of a completely new metaphysics that recognizes the mutual relationship between humans and nature has given rise to various schools of thought such as natural ecology, environmental philosophy and eco-feminism. Even with a more comprehensive view, Thimas Berry eloquently describes the essential dimensions of an Ecological Age that we are now entering. All these schools of thought, in one form or another, call for a transformation of consciousness that leaves the view of the earth as a collection of natural resources to be exploited and consumed towards a view of living humanity as an integral and creative part of the ecological sphere. This fundamental change involves the appreciation of the spiritual dimension as an essential element of our relationship with nature both individually and collectively.

By nature, humans are individual and social beings who have intellect. As a creature with intellect, he is unique, autonomous and prioritizes individual interests. As social beings, humans are born and raised to interact with each other in a certain culture. This statement is reaffirmed by Bakker that human culture is entirely determined by the social and collective environment. At this point, the author wants to review more deeply and broadly about the *barong wae* culture and how the process of the *barong wae* rite is carried out and the author wants to display some important things related to this rite so that readers can understand this *barong wae* rite well.

a. Overview of cosmoteology

"Cosmoteology" is a term that combines two words: "cosmology," which means "the science that studies the order of the universe," and "theology," which means "the science that studies God or divinity." In addition, cosmotheology is a new epistemology that juxtaposes the divine aspect in religions with the study of the universe. religion and God emerged to govern and control man. Cosmotheology is more radical than other types of controlling consciousness because it seems to put humans in an unimportant position. It doesn't matter in terms of size, physical strength, intelligence, and various weaknesses. Cosmotheology encourages man to understand that he and the Earth must unite to solve the same problem: that this unity is useless in the middle of the universe.

Definition And History Of Ecology

Ecology comes from two Greek words, namely *oikos* (habita) and *logos* (science). The term ecology began to gain popularity in the mid-19th century. The term ecology was first proposed in 1869 by a German biologist named Ernst Haeckel who defined ecology as the relationship between animals and their organic and inorganic environment. If ecology is so broad, then according to other scientists there are almost no studies that are not ecological. In

1961 Andrewartha defined Ecology quite clearly and narrowly as the scientific study of the distribution and abundance of organisms. There is an important thing that is overlooked in this definition, which is about interaction. Thus, Andrewartha's definition was elaborated into the most widely accepted definition, namely: "ecology as the scientific study of the distribution and abundance of organisms and the interactions that determine distribution and abundance". With this definition, scientists have succeeded in answering how nature works. Ecology deals with complex, varied, and hierarchical relationships. Ecology is a pluralistic science or interdisciplinary discipline. Since ecology concerns the human environment, its object includes the objects of many sciences, which study the human environment from various angles, such as physical, biotic, psychological, and so on.

An Overview of the Water Supply

The barong wae tradition is a traditional ceremony that aims to honor the highest living beings. The figure of god or the highest form in Manggarai is called Mori Kraeng. The people of Manggarai implicitly believe that there is a figure of Allah with all the power behind the traditions that are carried out. The barong wae tradition is usually carried out in two major events: the penti event, which is a ceremony (thanksgiving for the harvest and the celebration of the new year), and the Congko Lokap event, which is a celebration (the construction of a new traditional house called mbaru gendang). In an effort to facilitate the big ceremony, the barong wae ritual was made to ask for the protection of Mori Kraeng and Empo (ancestors) as the main water givers. Inviting the presence of water guardian spirits is the goal of this barong wae tradition. This shows that water is something sacred and important to society. Furthermore, another purpose of the barong wae tradition is to maintain a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Processes in the Barong Wae Rite

The Barong Wae process is a ceremony carried out at Mata Wae (spring), where villagers draw water to meet their living needs. The Manggarai barong wae tradition consists of three parts in its implementation: the opening or preparation, the core part, and the top part. First, the opening or preparation part. This is done in Mbaru Gendang, or traditional houses or drums. This part is called the preparation stage because the traditional elders appoint the person who will perform the barong wae ritual. In this case, the participants of the barong wae event are specially selected and have a role and interest in indigenous peoples. In this case, the people who carry out the barong wae event are those who are specially selected and have interests and roles in indigenous peoples. Traditional elders also ensure various ingredients used in rituals such as cepa (areca nut series), mbako (tobacco), ruha (eggs), tuak (wine), manuk lalong (rooster) and hang (rice). The main setting of this preparatory event is the main room in the traditional house.

After the Traditional Elders ensured all the preparations, the participants performed a renggas shout at the traditional house. Renggas is led by the leader of the barong wae ritual. The participants then went out of the traditional house. The gong is sounded during the journey to the spring for the ritual and stops when it arrives at the spring. Arriving at the ritual location, participants took their respective positions. The center of attention of all participants is located

at the center of the spring, because it is in the center of the spring that the core of the *barong wae* tradition itself occurs. Second, the core part. The event is led by a *tongka* (ritual leader). This stage begins with the *tongka* by preparing an offering to be offered to the spirit of the water guardian. The ritual leader placed betel nuts, tobacco, *tuak* and eggs on stones taken from around the ritual location. After that, the leader of the ceremony will greet *Mori Kraeng* (the highest form) and *empo* (ancestor) as the spirit guardian of the water in that place. The next event sacrificed the rooster. Previously, the ritual was carried out by saying *tudak* (supplication) to the highest form or water guardian spirit. Applying coolness, peace, abundance, and fertility is at the heart of ritual speech. The rooster is slaughtered and burned after the *barge* delivers a speech. Everyone who participates drinks water and washes their face while waiting for the chicken to cook and be ready to be served. Everyone who does this personally asks for permission. After all the preparations were completed, the event continued with the presentation. Furthermore, a traditional leader from one of the heirs stood up and invited the spirit of the water guardian to go to the traditional house together in order to celebrate the New Year ritual or *penti* event. This core ritual was closed with a *renggas* scream led by the ritual leader. After that, the gong was sounded again to accompany the procession of all participants back to the traditional house. During the procession, participants chanted songs and movements resembling dances (Solosumantro & Adventiunus, 2024; Ndalung, 2024; Jama & Artadi, 2022).

The last stage. As a symbol of the presence of the spirit of the owner or guardian of the water, one of the heirs of the traditional chief is responsible for handing over water to the traditional elder in the traditional house. Traditional elders welcomed them to this event. At this time, the people of Manggarai believe that the person who is welcomed is not a participant in the *barong wae* ritual, but the spirit of the owner of the water or a guardian. They continued the two great ceremonies because of this power.

CONCLUSION

The theories of cosmoteology, ecology, and *barong wae* culture in the East Manggarai slope village community are discussed in this paper. Cosmology is the study of the relationship between the universe and God, which includes aspects of cosmology and divinity. Ecology is the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment, encompassing aspects of distribution, abundance, and interaction. Meanwhile, the *barong wae* culture is a rite performed by the Manggarai people, especially in slope villages, to express gratitude to the spirits who guard the spring. Opening, inviting spirits, and closing are part of the *barong wae* ritual process. In addition to expressing a sense of gratitude and respect for the spirits who protect the environment, this *barong wae* culture embodies an understanding of the relationship between nature and humans.

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