



## The *Barong Wae* Ritual from a Critical Ecoscatological Perspective: Manggarai's Local Wisdom as Contemporary Ecological Education

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**Abstract.** The global ecological crisis highlights the need to shift humanity's perspective on nature from one of domination and exploitation toward respect and ecological responsibility. This study aims to analyze the *Barong Wae* ritual of the Manggarai people from the perspective of critical eco-eschatology and to reveal its relevance as a form of contemporary ecological education. The study employs a qualitative approach through a literature review, examining works on the *Barong Wae* ritual, eco-eschatology, ecocentrism, and environmental ethics. The analysis is conducted using a descriptive-critical method, linking the meanings of the ritual, its symbols, verses, and stages of performance to humanity's responsibility toward all of creation. The results of the study indicate that the *Barong Wae* ritual represents hope for the sustainability of life, respect for the sacredness of springs, and an awareness of the interconnectedness of humans and nature. From an eco-eschatological perspective, this ritual affirms that the hope for the restoration of all creation must be realized through ecological actions in the present. Thus, *Barong Wae* has the potential to serve as a source of ecological education that fosters responsibility, an ecocentric attitude, and a commitment to sustainable environmental conservation.

**Keywords:** *Barong Wae*; Critical Eco-Eschatology; Ecocentrism; Ecological Education; Manggarai Community.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nature plays a fundamental role in human survival and the attainment of a good quality of life. Most of nature's contributions to humanity cannot be fully replaced; in fact, some of them are essential and irreplaceable (Sugar et al., 2026). However, this principle is often not reflected in human actions, which are, in fact, becoming increasingly exploitative toward nature. Various global ecological crises reveal a dominant relationship between humans and nature, characterized by greed and the excessive exploitation of resources. Yet nature is the primary foundation that sustains life on Earth. The World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2024 Global Risks Report identifies extreme weather, critical changes to Earth's systems, the loss of biodiversity, and the scarcity of natural resources as significant long-term global risks (Sugar et al., 2026).

The global ecological crisis has now become one of the primary challenges facing the global community. Its impacts are felt by various countries, including developed nations as well as developing and poor nations (Sugar et al., 2026). The threat of ecological disasters—which have the potential to disrupt the sustainability of human civilization—becomes increasingly difficult to address if the pattern of natural resource exploitation continues. This situation is driven by environmental degradation, the overexploitation of natural resources, and

the use of environmentally unfriendly technologies. These factors exacerbate the pressure on ecosystems and increase the risk of environmental damage that threatens human life and other living organisms (Muthmainnah et al., 2020).

Various studies show that the ecological crisis currently facing humanity is inextricably linked to human activity itself. This situation is related to the development of the capitalist system adopted by both industrialized and developing nations. Under this system, nations are required to improve welfare through the maximum possible accumulation of wealth (Hiariep, 2006). One of the measures taken is the massive exploitation of natural resources without considering the resulting ecological impacts. The clearing of millions of hectares of forest in Kalimantan, for example, has reportedly caused social and emotional unrest and exacerbated the environmental crisis (Emmanuel et al., 2022). Meanwhile, geothermal mining activities in the Poco Leok region of Manggarai have also raised environmental concerns and caused anxiety among the local community (Jemadin, 2024). The practice of exploiting nature solely for the accumulation of wealth and human interests is a form of relationship that disregards environmental sustainability. From a biblical perspective, Genesis 1–2 does indeed describe the granting of authority to humans to manage and utilize creation for the sake of survival (Sugar, et al., 2026). However, this mandate cannot be used to justify the arbitrary exploitation of nature. Rather, dominion over creation must be understood as a responsibility to care for and manage nature wisely. Thus, humans are called to utilize natural resources in accordance with their needs and ecological limits, rather than overexploiting them to the point of threatening the sustainability of life (Sugar et al., 2026)

Based on this discussion, it is evident that the role of nature has shifted. Nature is no longer viewed as a shared home for humans and other living beings, but is increasingly treated as a resource to be exploited for the accumulation of wealth (Sugar & Dominikus, 2025). The current ecological crisis demonstrates that a pattern of human-nature relations based on domination, exploitation, and objectification is no longer sustainable. The root of this problem is also linked to an anthropocentric worldview that places humans at the center of life and regards all other creations as mere means to fulfill human needs. Consequently, the value of other creatures is measured based on their utility to humans (Juhani et al, 2021). Based on the above discussion, it is evident that this view reflects a misunderstanding because it ignores the purpose and role of each created being within God's overall plan, including from an eco-schatological perspective.

In the context of the ecological crisis, local traditions can serve as an important source of knowledge for redefining how humans understand and treat nature—including the land, trees, water, and entire ecosystems. One such tradition is the *Barong Wae* ritual among the Manggarai people of East Nusa Tenggara. As a culturally rich community, the Manggarai people have inherited local wisdom that reflects ecological awareness. Through this wisdom, humans are understood as part of nature, closely interconnected with all other creations (Sugar et al., 2026). This ecological awareness is reflected in the *Barong Wae* ritual—a series of traditional ceremonies performed during the Penti celebration. This ritual is a cultural expression that reflects the Manggarai people's deep understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, particularly water as the source of life (Jewadut et al., 2026). Through the *Barong Wae* ritual, the Manggarai people express their reverence for water as an integral part of nature that sustains life (Kiven & Yohanes Sudir, 2025). Thus, *Barong Wae* not only holds ritual significance but also represents local wisdom that emphasizes the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

A previous study on the *Barong Wae* ritual was conducted by Jewadut et al., (2026) through a research paper titled “The Concept of Universal Communion in the *Barong Wae* Ceremony of the Manggarai People as Viewed from the Perspective of the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*.” This study examined the concept of universal communion in the *Barong Wae* ritual and its connection to the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*. The results of the study indicate that the *Barong Wae* ritual embodies the values of universal communion and integral ecology, particularly in fostering harmonious relationships among humans, nature, and God as the Creator. Another study was conducted by Kiven & Yohanes Sudir, (2025) titled “The *Barong Wae* Ritual as an Alternative Sacramental Rite for the Blessing of Springs within the Manggarai Catholic Church.” This study explains that the *Barong Wae* ritual is an expression of reverence and blessing of springs as a gift from God. In addition to embodying the value of environmental conservation, this ritual also reflects the Catholic Church's teachings on harmonious relationships between humans, God, fellow human beings, and the environment. Furthermore, a study by Gejang et al., (2026), titled “Examining Eco-eschatological Values in the *Barong Wae* Rite Among the Manggarai People,” demonstrates that local traditions play a significant role in fostering ecological ethics and spirituality. These values serve as a relevant foundation for reflection and action in addressing the current global environmental crisis. Meanwhile, Iswandi et al., (2025) in their study titled “The Concept of Divinity in the *Barong Wae* Ritual in Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara,” reveal that the *Barong Wae* ritual reflects the Manggarai people's understanding of the name, nature, and role of the Divine in their lives. In addition to

recognizing the Creator God known as *Mori Kraeng*, the Manggarai people also recognize *Mori Dewa Wae*, a divine figure who acts as the guardian of water. *Mori Dewa Wae* is believed to ensure the sustainability of springs so that they continue to flow and meet the daily needs of the community.

Although a number of previous studies have examined the *Barong Wae* ritual from the perspectives of universal communion, sacramentality, eco-eschatology, and the concept of divinity, research that critically integrates ecological values within this ritual through an eco-eschatological lens—and explores its relevance as a form of contemporary ecological education—still needs to be developed. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in a critical interpretation of the *Barong Wae* ritual as an expression of hope for the restoration of all creation and as a source of ecocentric values that affirm the sanctity of nature, ecological responsibility, and the balance of the relationship between humans and nature. This research is important for fostering a dialogue between the local wisdom of the Manggarai people and ecological theological reflection, so that ritual values do not remain merely symbolic practices but can be translated into concrete actions to preserve springs and address contemporary ecological crises.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method (Moleong, 2018). This method was chosen because the study focuses on the examination, interpretation, and critical analysis of the meaning of the *Barong Wae* ritual in Manggarai society, particularly the ecological values it embodies and its relevance from an eco-eschatological perspective. This study not only describes the *Barong Wae* ritual as a cultural practice but also examines its theological and ecological meanings in response to the contemporary environmental crisis.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include literature that specifically discusses the *Barong Wae* ritual, including its meanings, symbols, verses, stages of performance, and the Manggarai people's views on the relationship between humans and nature. Meanwhile, secondary sources include scientific journal articles, books, church documents, as well as theological and ecological literature discussing eco-eschatology, ecocentrism, environmental ethics, and ecological education. The literature used was selected based on its relevance to the research focus and its contribution to explaining the relationship between local wisdom, ecological responsibility, and the hope for the restoration of all creation.

Data collection was conducted through the search, selection, reading, and documentation of relevant literature. The collected data were then classified based on three main focuses: the ecological significance of the *Barong Wae* ritual, its interpretation from a critical eco-eschatological perspective, and its relevance to contemporary ecological education. The data were analyzed using descriptive-critical techniques. Descriptive analysis was used to elucidate the meanings of the symbols, verses, props, and stages of the *Barong Wae* ritual, while critical analysis was used to interpret these values in relation to critiques of anthropocentrism, respect for nature, ecological responsibility, and hopes for the sustainability of life.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis are contextualized within an eco-eschatological perspective that views the restoration of all creation as both a theological hope and an ethical calling in the present day. Through this process, the study identifies key values in the *Barong Wae* ritual, specifically the sanctity of nature, ecological responsibility, and the balance in the relationship between humans and nature. These three values are then analyzed to explain the contribution of the Manggarai community's local wisdom to the development of contemporary ecological education. Thus, this research method is expected to yield a critical and contextual understanding of the relevance of the *Barong Wae* ritual in fostering ecological awareness and responsibility amid the global environmental crisis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **The Meaning and Significance of the *Barong Wae* Ritual in Manggarai Society.**

The Manggarai people are one of the ethnic groups on the island of Flores who have consistently preserved their traditions and culture to this day. Their social structure, language, and customs are maintained as a collective identity that distinguishes the Manggarai people from other ethnic groups on the island of Flores (Sugar et al., 2026). Geographically, the Manggarai people inhabit the western part of Flores Island in East Nusa Tenggara Province, which is administratively divided into three regencies: Manggarai Regency, West Manggarai Regency, and East Manggarai Regency (Sugar, et al., 2026). Although they reside in different administrative regions, the Manggarai people continue to uphold the traditions and cultural values passed down through generations. One tradition that is still preserved to this day is the *Barong Wae* ritual.

Etymologically, the term "*Barong Wae*" comes from two words: "*barong*," which means "to invite," and "*wae*," which means "water." Thus, "*Barong Wae*" can be interpreted as the act of inviting water. However, in the understanding of the Manggarai people, this ritual is not merely intended to invite water, but also to honor the ancestral spirits believed to inhabit

the area around the spring. These spirits are believed to reside within rocks, trees, and animals living near the spring and are tasked with preserving it. As a form of respect, the Manggarai people involve these spirits in traditional ceremonies, such as *Penti* and *Congko Lokap* (Kiven & Yohanes Sudir, 2025). The belief in the guardian spirits of the spring demonstrates that water holds a sacred status and plays a vital role in the lives of the Manggarai people. Furthermore, the *Barong Wae* ritual reflects the community's efforts to maintain harmonious relations between humans and nature.

The *Barong Wae* ritual is a traditional ceremony aimed at inviting the guardian spirits of the springs to participate in the *Penti* celebration, which is the Manggarai people's annual thanksgiving ceremony. This ritual is performed as an expression of gratitude for the continuity of life over the past year. In the view of the Manggarai people, *Barong Wae* holds an important position because it is closely related to the existence of water and springs as the main elements of village life. This ritual also serves as an expression of gratitude to the guardian spirits of the springs, who are believed to have maintained the sustainability and availability of water, ensuring that water continues to flow even amid unpredictable natural conditions. Therefore, *Barong Wae* serves as a means to honor and invite the guardian spirits of the springs to participate in the *Penti* celebration (Jewadut et al., 2026).

In the *Barong Wae* ritual, there are a number of symbols that carry cultural significance. One of these is the verbal symbol, which is expressed through ritual verses. According to Tapung et al. in Erna Mena et al., (2023), there are several verses used in the *Barong Wae* ritual, as follows: (a)*Mboas wae woang, kembus wae tekus* (Water continues to flow abundantly and does not dry up as a result of efforts to preserve the spring's environment). (b)*Temek wa mbau eta* (The environment is cool and lush due to the availability of water). (c)*Tewar wua, wecak wela* (Natural resources are abundant thanks to the availability of water). (d)*Ewa nggari eta, mese nggari peang* (Fertility and prosperity are realized because of water). (e)*Pateng wa wae, worol eta golo* (The survival of all living things depends on the availability of water). (f)*Waua raci weri lebo kala pong* (Harvests are abundant thanks to the availability of water). (g)*Pa'eng agu poong* (Livestock ownership and agricultural enterprises can thrive thanks to the availability of water).

In the *Barong Wae* ritual, the Manggarai people use a number of ritual objects and items that hold symbolic meaning. According to Erna Mena Niman et al., (2023), the objects and items used in this ritual include the following: (a)*Ruha* (an egg) as a beverage offering to the spirit guarding the spring. (b)*Manuk* (chicken) as an animal or food offering to the guardian spirits of the spring. (c)*Cepa*: a betel nut arrangement consisting of *kala* (betel leaves) and *raci*

(betel nut)—that is, the fruit and leaves of the tree—as an offering to welcome and honor the guardian spirits of the spring. (d)A broom (*dester*) symbolizes humility, appreciation, and respect for the guardian spirits of the spring. (e)A *bakok* shirt (white naju) symbolizes the purity and innocence of the heart in welcoming the guardian spirits of the spring. (f)The traditional sarong (*towe songke*)—specifically a songket sarong—symbolizes respect for the challenges and diversity of humanity in relation to the guardian spirits of the spring.

The *Barong Wae* ritual in Manggarai society consists of three stages: the opening or preparatory stage, the core stage, and the climax stage. First is the opening or preparatory stage. This stage is generally held at the *mbaru gendang* (traditional house). During this stage, the traditional elders select the individuals who will participate in the *Barong Wae* ritual. They are specifically chosen based on their roles and status within the traditional community. In addition, the traditional elders ensure that various ritual items are ready, such as *cepa* (betel nut), *mbako* (tobacco), *ruha* (eggs), *tuak* (palm wine), *manuk lalong* (rooster), and *hang* (rice). The entire preparation process takes place in the main hall of the *mbaru gendang* (Solosumantro & Hadut, 2024).

After the traditional elders confirmed that all preparations were complete, the participants performed the “*pekikan renggas*” chant in the traditional house, led by the *Barong Wae* ritual leader. Next, the participants marched toward the spring, accompanied by the sound of gongs throughout the journey. Upon arriving at the site, each participant took their respective positions. The attention of all participants then turned to the center of the spring, as that was the main location for the core part of the *Barong Wae* ritual (Solosumantro & Hadut, 2024).

Second, the core phase. This phase is led by the *tongka* (ritual leader) and begins with the preparation of offerings to the guardian spirits of the spring. These offerings consist of betel nut, tobacco, *tuak* (moke), and eggs, which are placed on a stone taken from the vicinity of the ritual site. Next, the *tongka* addresses *Mori Kraeng* (the supreme being) and the *empo* (ancestors), who are believed to be the guardians of the spring at that location. The ritual sequence then continues with the slaughter of a rooster. Before the rooster is slaughtered, the *tongka* leads the group in performing the *tudak*—a prayer or supplication addressed to *Mori Kraeng* and the guardian spirits of the spring. Agus et al., (2018) describe the wording of the *tudak* as follows:

*Denge lemeu empo* (Listen, O ancestral grandmother)

*Ho'o de manuk kudu barong wae* (This is a chicken for the ritual at the water spring)

*Wali dia kamping ite* (We express our gratitude to you)

*Morin agu ngaran* (O Lord, the Owner and Master)

*Ai ite poli teing ami* (Because You have given us)

*Wae bate tekug ho'o* (This water for us to draw)

*Tegi kali dami* (We pray and ask:)

*Lami agu riang kole wae teku ho'o* (Please protect and preserve this water source)

*Dasor mboas kin wae woang* (May the spring water flow abundantly)

*Kembus kin wae bate tekug'm ho'o* (May drinking water be plentiful)

*Dasor neka koe do'ong le roho* (May it be kept away from all disturbances)

*Agu rone le lus wae teku ho'o* (And from landslides that could cover this water source)

*Porong inung wae ho'o* (May we drink this water)

*Wae guna laing latangt* (Water that is beneficial)

*Weki agu wakar dami* (For our body and soul)

*Porong mese kali bekek dami* (May we become strong and prosperous)

*Mbiang ranga* (With fresh and radiant faces)

The main themes of the traditional prayers recited during the *Barong Wae* ritual include serenity, peace, abundance, and fertility. After the *tongka* (ritual leader) recites these traditional prayers, a rooster is slaughtered and roasted. While waiting for the rooster to cook, the participants drink water and wash their faces at the spring. While washing their faces, each participant voices their personal prayers and intentions. Once all the offerings have been prepared, the ritual continues with the presentation of the offerings. Next, a traditional leader representing the group of heirs invites the guardian spirits of the spring to join them on their way to the *mbaru gendang* to celebrate Penti, the traditional New Year's ceremony of the Manggarai people. The core phase of the *Barong Wae* ritual concludes with a "renggas" shout led by the *tongka*. Afterward, the sound of the *gong* accompanies the procession of all participants as they return to the traditional house. Along the way, the participants sing and perform movements resembling a dance (Jama & Pande Artadi, 2022).

Third, the culminating stage. This stage marks the conclusion of the *Barong Wae* ritual and is characterized by the presentation of water to the traditional elders inside the *mbaru gendang* (traditional house). This presentation of water symbolizes the presence of the spirit of the spring's owner or guardian. This procession is led by the heir to the traditional chief and is received by the traditional elders. According to Manggarai belief, those being welcomed in the procession are not the physical participants of the ritual, but rather the guardian spirits or owners of the spring, who are believed to be present through the ritual (Solosumantro & Hadut, 2024).

### **The *Barong Wae* Ritual from a Critical Eco-eschatological Perspective**

Eco-eschatology is a theological approach that integrates ecological awareness with the hope for the ultimate fulfillment of all creation (Sugar et al., 2026). Eco-eschatology addresses not only the ultimate fate of humanity but also the salvation and restoration of all creation as part of a holistic divine plan. Within this framework, the future of the earth is not merely a subject of speculation regarding the end times, but rather an ethical call for humanity to safeguard the sustainability of life in the present (Dames, 2024). The *Barong Wae* ritual can be interpreted as a local eco-eschatological expression of the Manggarai community. Through this ritual, the community not only expresses gratitude for the water available today but also directs its hopes toward a future marked by an abundance of water, fertile soil, community well-being, and the continued existence of all living beings (Jama & Artadi, 2022). Thus, *Barong Wae* embodies a vision of an ecological future that is inseparable from humanity's relationship with *Mori Kraeng*, ancestors, and the guardian spirits of the springs (Nanur et al., 2023).

First, the hope for a sustainable life. The verses in *Barong Wae* carry a strong eschatological message. References to water that flows endlessly, a cool and lush natural environment, abundant crops, and the continued existence of all living beings reflect the Manggarai people's hope for a sustainable future. This hope is not a passive one, but rather a hope tied to humanity's responsibility to care for the environment, particularly spring areas (Nanur et al., 2023). From an eco-eschatological perspective, water serves as a symbol of hope for a life of abundance. Water that continues to flow signifies that the community's future remains open, while dry or polluted water signifies a threat to survival (Sugar et al., 2026). Therefore, the plea for water to remain abundant in *Barong Wae* is also a plea for the ecological future of the Manggarai people to be preserved (Nanur et al., 2023).

This perspective aligns with Christian eco-eschatology, which emphasizes the hope for the restoration of creation, not merely the salvation of individual human beings. Ernst Conradie, as cited in Tranter (2024), demonstrates that the relationship between the present order and the new creation can be understood through several models, including the restoration and elevation of creation toward its divine fulfillment. In the context of *Barong Wae*, the hope for a continuous flow of water can be interpreted as a local expression of the hope for cosmic restoration: a broken natural world is restored, life is sustained, and humanity's relationship with creation is restored (Iswandi et al., 2025).

Second, springs as a symbol of an open future. In Manggarai cosmology, springs are not merely physical sources of water, but sacred spaces where humans encounter the divine presence, ancestors, and the guardian spirits of nature (Magung, 2024). Therefore, springs hold

eschatological significance: they point to the source of life that sustains the present while ensuring the survival of future generations (Jewadut et al., 2026). *Barong Wae* positions springs as a sign of an open future. When the community prays for the water to keep flowing, they simultaneously express the hope that life, agriculture, health, and the community's survival will continue. Within the framework of eco-eschatology, this symbol affirms that the future is not entirely detached from humanity's responsibilities in the present. Hope for a better future demands responsible ecological action today (Dames, 2024). From a Christian perspective, the spring can also be interpreted as a symbol of grace and life. However, this interpretation must not reduce the meaning of *Barong Wae* to merely a symbol of Christian theology. *Barong Wae* possesses its own distinct religious and cultural logic, namely its relationship with *Mori Kraeng*, *Mori Dewa Wae*, ancestors, and the guardian spirits of the spring. Therefore, the dialogue between Christian eco-eschatology and Manggarai eco-eschatology must be conducted respectfully, without negating the uniqueness of local faith experiences (Subantar et al., 2026).

Third, a critique of ecological anthropocentrism. A critical eco-eschatological reading of *Barong Wae* must reject anthropocentric tendencies—that is, the view that places humans as the sole center of salvation and nature merely as a means to serve human interests. Contemporary eco-theology asserts that salvation concerns not only humans but also all of creation (De Wit, 2013). In this regard, *Barong Wae* offers a corrective to anthropocentrism. The ritual verses state that the continuity of life belongs not only to humans but also to animals, plants, the earth, and all elements of nature. Water is understood as a condition for the life of all creatures, not merely a resource for human economic interests. This perspective aligns with Pope Francis's principle of integral ecology, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans, nature, and social justice (Sugar, 2025). However, a critical analysis must also acknowledge that the ecological value within traditional rituals can be undermined if their practice remains confined to symbolic celebrations. *Barong Wae* will lose its eco-eschatological power if the community continues to destroy forests, pollute springs, or overexploit nature after the ritual concludes. Thus, the authenticity of *Barong Wae* as an expression of ecological hope must be measured by the alignment between the ritual's meaning and the community's actual practices in protecting the environment (Dames, 2024).

Ecological eschatology does not stop at hope for the future, but demands ecological conversion in the present. Ecological conversion is a change in human attitudes, perspectives, and behavior—from exploitation toward the preservation of creation (Juhani, 2025). In the context of *Barong Wae*, this conversion is manifested through the community's willingness to

protect springs, respect nature, and pass on traditional values to the next generation. Hope in *Barong Wae* is proleptic in nature—that is, a hope that is already partially present in current actions. When the community protects the springs, cleans the environment, and prays for the water to keep flowing, they are in fact anticipating the future they hope for (Jama & Artadi, 2022). A sustainable future is not something that is merely awaited; rather, it is something that begins to be built through ecological responsibility today (Sonny Keraf, 2010).

From the perspective of Christian eco-eschatology, the hope for a new creation must not be interpreted as a reason to neglect the earth (Pope Francis, 2015). On the contrary, this hope actually strengthens the motivation to care for the earth, because creation has value within God's plan of salvation. In a dialogue with *Barong Wae*, Christian hope and Manggarai hope converge on one crucial point: a good life in the future is only possible if humans maintain right relationships with God, one another, and nature.

This perspective criticizes anthropocentrism—a worldview that places humans at the center of life and disregards the intrinsic value of other creations (Sugar, et al., 2026). If plants, animals, and humans all possess souls in accordance with their nature and purpose, the entire natural world cannot be viewed merely as an object of exploitation, but rather as a creation that possesses dignity because it originates from the Creator (Layantara, 2018). A hierarchy of souls does not justify the exploitation of creatures considered to be of a lower rank. On the contrary, this hierarchy affirms that every creation has its own role, purpose, and perfection (Sugar & Darling, 2025). From an eschatological perspective, God guides all of creation toward its ultimate fulfillment. As rational beings, humans have a moral responsibility to ensure that other creatures can achieve their natural purposes (Layantara, 2018). In line with this view, eco-eschatology offers a perspective that connects worldly reality with eschatological hope. This connection affirms that the world is a space for the manifestation of faith in Jesus Christ through concrete actions in daily life. Ultimately, the eco-eschatological perspective guides humanity to care for all of creation in the hope of the fullness of the Kingdom of God (April et al., 2024).

### **The *Barong Wae* Ritual as Contemporary Ecological Education**

The *Barong Wae* ritual is one of the cultural heritages still preserved by the Manggarai people in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. Lexically, “*barong*” means “to invite” or “to inform,” while “*wae*” means “water”; thus, the *Barong Wae* ritual can be understood as a ritual to invite the presence of the Divine, ancestors, and the guardian spirits of springs into the lives of the community (Solosumantro & Hadut, 2024). This ritual not only incorporates specific language,

symbols, sounds, and movements but also highlights the profound relationship between the Manggarai people and nature, particularly springs as the source of life. The relationship between humans and nature in the *Barong Wae* ritual is built upon three main principles:

First, nature as the source of life. In the *Barong Wae* ritual, the Manggarai people view nature as the source of life that is inseparable from human existence. This awareness stems from the experience that water, soil, forests, and the surrounding environment play a vital role in meeting the needs of agriculture, consumption, and daily life. Springs are not understood merely as physical sources of water, but as sources of fertility, health, and community well-being (Nanur et al., 2023). The *Barong Wae* ritual is performed near springs considered sacred, which serve as the places where residents obtain water for their daily needs. Therefore, nature must be respected because human survival is deeply dependent on it. This perspective reflects the ecological awareness of the Manggarai people that humans are not entities separate from nature, but rather part of an interdependent web of life. Through *Barong Wae*, the Manggarai people affirm that nature is not an object to be exploited excessively, but rather an essential component that sustains life. In this context, the *Barong Wae* ritual embodies ecological values that position nature as the foundation of human survival, while also serving as a medium for ecological education for future generations of the Manggarai people (Hamat & Pandor, 2024).

Second, reverence for springs and the environment. The *Barong Wae* ritual is an expression of the Manggarai people's reverence for springs as the source of life. For the Manggarai people, springs not only provide water but also hold spiritual significance because they are associated with the continuity of life, blessings, and divine power. In this tradition, the community invites *Mori Dewa Wae*—the Divine One—along with their ancestors and the guardian spirits of the springs to be present during the ritual (Iswandi et al., 2025). This reverence is expressed through traditional prayers, offerings, dances, and a series of rituals performed around the springs. In addition to being a religious expression, this practice embodies moral values that encourage the community to maintain the cleanliness and sustainability of the environment surrounding the water source (Magung, 2024). Thus, *Barong Wae* serves not only as a cultural activity but also as a source of local values and wisdom for safeguarding environmental sustainability.

Third, the balance between humans and nature. In the *Barong Wae* ritual, the relationship between humans and nature is built on the principles of harmony and balance in life. The Manggarai people believe that a good life can be achieved when the relationships between humans, nature, ancestors, and spiritual forces are in harmony. Therefore, humans have a moral obligation to treat nature wisely and not to treat it merely as an object of exploitation (Niman

et al., 2023). This harmony is reflected in the attitude of respecting springs, protecting the environment, and preserving traditional rituals as a means of maintaining the relationship between humans and nature. From an ecocentric perspective, humans are not positioned as the center of all life but rather as part of an interconnected ecological system (Sugar, 2023). The *Barong Wae* ritual thus serves as a collective reminder of the importance of maintaining harmony with nature.

Fourth, the values of ecocentrism in the *Barong Wae* ritual. The values of ecocentrism in *Barong Wae* stem from the life experiences of the Manggarai people, who depend on nature—particularly springs as a source of life. There are at least three main values embodied in this ritual, including:

First, the sanctity of nature. For the Manggarai people, springs, the land, forests, and the surrounding environment hold spiritual significance. Springs are understood not merely as physical sources of water, but as a gift from God that must be respected and protected (Mustofa, 2020). The sanctity of nature is also reflected in the Manggarai people's view of the forest (*puar*). The forest is viewed as a sacred space, the dwelling place of the Holy One and the guardian spirits of nature. Therefore, people must not engage in actions that degrade the dignity of nature or disrupt the balance of life within it (Niman et al., 2023). For example, before cutting down a tree or clearing new land, the Manggarai people perform a ritual to seek permission from the forest's inhabitants. One such practice is *tudak ruha kudut tegi haju agu tombo kud neka babang agu bentang*, which involves placing a free-range chicken egg as a sign of petition and notification to the forest's guardian spirits. This practice demonstrates that nature is regarded as a subject possessing dignity, not merely an inanimate object to be freely exploited (Hamat & Pandor, 2024). An awareness of the sacredness of nature fosters an emotional and religious connection between the community and its environment. These spiritual values form the foundation of an ecological ethic that promotes respect, responsibility, and sustainability in the management of nature.

Second, ecological responsibility. In addition to the sanctity of nature, *Barong Wae* also embodies the value of ecological responsibility. Ecological responsibility is the awareness that humans have a moral obligation to protect and care for nature. Respect for springs goes beyond the symbolic; it is manifested in concrete actions to maintain cleanliness, preserve water sources, and protect the surrounding environment (Hamat & Pandor, 2024). In the practice of *Barong Wae*, ecological responsibility is evident in the community's collective effort to protect the spring area from pollution and damage. Customary laws and community practices serve as social controls to ensure the environment remains preserved. This awareness demonstrates that

the relationship between humans and nature is reciprocal: humans benefit from nature, but at the same time are obligated to protect and preserve it (Hamat & Pandor, 2024). From an ecocentric perspective, ecological responsibility is a form of respect for the existence of all elements of life within an ecosystem. Thus, *Barong Wae* serves as a vehicle for ecological education that instills the awareness that the preservation of nature is a prerequisite for human survival (Gejang et al., 2026).

Third, harmony and balance with nature. The values of harmony and balance are at the core of the relationship between humans and nature in the *Barong Wae* ritual. The Manggarai people believe that a good life can be achieved through a balance between human needs and the preservation of nature. This ritual serves as a means of maintaining a harmonious relationship between humans, the environment, ancestors, and the spiritual forces believed to govern life (Fatritya & Taslim Sjah, 2025). This harmony is reflected in the community's way of life, which utilizes nature in moderation without compromising the sustainability of the ecosystem. Nature is not treated as an object of human domination but rather as a partner in life that must be protected. This perspective affirms that humans are not the center of all life but rather part of an interconnected ecological system (Niman et al., 2023). Thus, the *Barong Wae* ritual serves as a collective reminder of the importance of maintaining harmony with nature. These values make *Barong Wae* relevant as a form of contemporary ecological education, as it is capable of shaping the community's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors regarding environmental sustainability.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The *Barong Wae* ritual is an expression of the local wisdom of the Manggarai people that embodies ecological and spiritual values. Through symbols, verses, offerings, and a series of rituals centered on springs, this tradition reflects reverence for nature as the source of life and affirms humanity's interconnectedness with all of creation. From a critical eco-eschatological perspective, *Barong Wae* offers hope for the sustainability and restoration of creation—a hope that is not only future-oriented but also demands ecological responsibility in our present lives. This hope simultaneously serves as a critique of the anthropocentric worldview that justifies the exploitation of nature for human benefit.

The values embodied in *Barong Wae* are relevant for developing the foundation of contemporary ecological education, particularly through fostering awareness of the sanctity of nature, responsibility toward the environment, and the balance in the relationship between humans and nature. However, the ecological relevance of this ritual must be realized through

concrete actions, such as preserving springs, preventing pollution, and conserving the environment for future generations. Thus, a dialogue between Manggarai's local wisdom and eco-eschatology can enrich theological reflection while promoting sustainable ecological practices. The preservation of *Barong Wae* should not stop at the continuation of the ritual but should also be reflected in a collective commitment to caring for all of creation.

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