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# Examining Relational Concepts in Manggarai's *Penti* Culture through Martin Buber's Philosophy of Relational Dialogue

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## Abstract

This study examines the concept of relationality within the *Penti* culture embraced by the Manggarai people, with special reference to Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue. The primary focus of this study centers on the rituals woven into the fabric of the *Penti* celebration. The *Penti* celebration signifies the Manggarai people's profound appreciation for their fellow humans, nature, and the Creator. Within Manggarai belief systems, the preservation of *Penti* culture is regarded as an obligation, given its repository of invaluable life wisdom values such as brotherhood, cooperation, and reconciliation. Conducted as a literature study, this research employs Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue as an analytical framework to illuminate the concept of relationality embedded in *Penti* celebration. The findings of this study underscore that *Penti* serves not only as a harvest thanksgiving celebration but also as a way of life, fostering connections with fellow humans, nature, and the Creator. The *Penti* celebration also unveils the identity of the Manggarai people as a community that upholds the principles of solidarity among fellow humans, reverence for nature, and respect for the Creator. In general, this research on the *Penti* celebration enriches the growing studies of local wisdom in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Penti* Culture, Relational Dialogue, Martin Buber, I-Thou Relation, and I-It Relation.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep relasionalitas dalam budaya *Penti* yang dianut oleh orang-orang Manggarai, dengan merujuk pada filosofi dialog relational yang digagas oleh Martin Buber. Penelitian ini berfokus pada ritus-ritus yang terjalin dalam perayaan *Penti*. Perayaan *Penti* menyiratkan penghargaan orang Manggarai terhadap manusia sesama, alam semesta, dan Sang Pencipta. Orang Manggarai meyakini bahwa melestarikan budaya *Penti* adalah sebuah kewajiban sebab di dalamnya terkandung kekayaan nilai-nilai kebijaksanaan hidup, seperti persaudaraan, kerjasama, dan rekonsiliasi. Penelitian tentang kearifan lokal ini menggunakan studi kepustakaan, dengan filosofi dialog relational Martin Buber sebagai kerangka analisa untuk mengungkapkan konsep relasionalitas dalam perayaan *Penti*. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa *Penti* berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai perayaan syukur panen tetapi juga sebagai tata hidup dengan sesama manusia, dengan alam semesta, dan dengan Sang Pencipta. Dari perayaan *Penti* ini terungkap identitas orang-orang Manggarai sebagai masyarakat yang menjunjung tinggi semangat solidaritas dengan manusia sesama, penghargaan terhadap alam, dan penghormatan kepada Sang Pencipta. Secara umum, penelitian tentang perayaan *Penti* ini turut memperkaya literatur tentang kearifan lokal yang terus berkembang di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Penti, Dialog Relational, Martin Buber, Relasi I-Thou, dan Relasi I-It.

## Introduction

Indonesia is a nation blessed with a rich tapestry of values and local wisdom that shape collective ways of life. These values and local wisdom encompass all aspects of life without exception. This reality is evident in the traditions flourishing within communities, including arts, songs, literary works (myths, legends, poetry, stories), and other distinctive creations that define local societies. These traditions emerge from the local community's endeavors to sustain a harmonious relationship with nature, giving rise to creations imbued with profound cultural, social, and religious significance (Jannah & Ida, 2019). Indeed, Soekarno once stated that Indonesia's local wisdom is the 'root' of the values of Pancasila. In a speech at the BPUPKI session on June 1, 1945, which was later designated as the birthdate of Pancasila, Soekarno mentioned that the *philosophische grondslag* of the Indonesian nation is Pancasila. This implies that Pancasila serves as the foundation, philosophy, and soul of the Indonesian nation at its deepest level (Soekarno, 1995). This also means that Pancasila encompasses a broader spectrum than that of Soekarno's doctrines and thoughts.

On several occasions, Soekarno expressed that he was merely an excavator of Pancasila, not its 'creator.' In other words, Pancasila holds a broad interpretation, as vast as the intellectual landscape of the culturally diverse

Indonesian nation (Riyanto, 2015). The comprehensiveness and depth of Pancasila resonate with the thoughts and souls of the various ethnic groups within Indonesia, and the values embedded in Pancasila have been alive and deeply understood by the Indonesian people (Riyanto, 2018a). Therefore, the values of Pancasila can be found within the traditions or ancestral heritage of the Indonesian nation in their everyday life practices (Maknun et al., 2022).

This study aims to explore the concept of relationality embraced by the Manggarai people as evident in the *Penti* culture, employing the philosophical perspective of relational dialogue by Martin Buber. The Manggarai people acknowledge that the presence of 'the other' is palpable throughout their life journey. The awareness of the importance of cultivating relationships with 'the other' is not only demonstrated through daily life interactions but is also joyously celebrated in a traditional ceremonial moment known as *Penti*. *Penti* is a celebration of relationality among the Manggarai people. Through this celebration, the Manggarai people commemorate and reflect upon their relationships with fellow humans, nature (environment), and God (known as *Mori Keraeng*). *Penti* becomes a moment that must be celebrated because the Manggarai people deeply understand that their relationships with fellow humans, nature, and God are key to the goodness, happiness, and completeness of their lives in this world.

In other words, *Penti* is a moment of acknowledgment of the existence of 'the other,' encompassing fellow humans, nature, and the Supreme Being. *Penti* serves as a platform for the Manggarai people to build and strengthen relationships among fellow humans, nature, and the Supreme Being. Within the *Penti* rituals, everyone gathers as a family or communion based on the spirit of love and brotherhood. All participants in this celebration are placed on an equal footing, without any distinction. Thus, during the *Penti* celebration, human existence is interwoven in relationships with 'the other.' The *Penti* ritual stimulates a pattern of inter-subjective relations (intersubjectivity).

Through the *Penti* celebration, the Manggarai people aim to express that their existence is in unity with the universe; the environment in which they live is in parallel with and inseparable from them. With this awareness, the Manggarai people feel compelled to always maintain harmony and balance with nature. Nature is perceived not merely as an object to fulfill their living needs but as an entity possessing the power to shape human life. Similar beliefs are found in the *Ontobogo* mythology in Bubakan Mijen Semarang, which is regarded as a *danyang*. In this context, if the community in Bubakan and its

surrounding areas litter carelessly, engage in reckless activities on the roads, or fail to offer proper offerings, such behaviors may lead to failed harvests, accidents, and disease outbreaks (Aziz, 2020). Therefore, the Manggarai people recognize that they are only a small part of the vast and majestic universe.

Recognizing the importance of their existence and relationships with fellow humans and nature, the Manggarai people arrive at an awareness of their dependence on the Divine (*Mori Keraéng*) as the creator and orchestrator of everything (*Mori jari tara dading*). For the Manggarai people, God (*Mori Keraéng*) is the creator, giver, regulator, and sustainer of human life (Pandor, 2015a). The Manggarai people believe that human life relies on the Divine (*Mori Keraéng*) because He is the creator and ruler of all things, both seen and unseen (*Mori Keraéng agu ngaran eta mai, wa mai*). In such awareness, the Manggarai people then strive to cultivate a good relationship with the Supreme Being (*Mori jari agu dedek*), as depicted in the *Penti* celebration.

Martin Buber's philosophy of relationality, rooted in the connection or relationship between the 'I' and the 'Thou' (*I-Thou* relation), becomes evident in the moments of the *Penti* celebration practiced by the Manggarai people. During the *Penti* celebration, the presence of 'the other' is interpreted as a 'fellow being' who actively participates in the human journey of life. The Manggarai people hold the belief that humans cannot live in isolation; they require the presence of 'the other' to complement their existence. This aligns with Buber's idea that the 'Thou' in the relational connection is not understood as a separate entity from the 'I,' but rather as another 'I' interacting with the 'I' (Buber, 1970). This form of relational connection positions 'the other' as a subject. Therefore, the 'I' and the 'Thou' are subjects engaged in a relationship.

Furthermore, in relation with nature, the Manggarai people interpret the existence of the universe in its entirety. This is clearly revealed in the Manggarai people's reverence for essential elements in nature, such as springs (*mata wae*), forests (*puar*), land (used for dwelling, farming, and burial), and so forth. In this way, the presence of the nature is not viewed as an object distinct from the 'I'; rather, nature and all its components are the 'Thou,' subjects that also determine and evoke the 'I' existence as a subject.

At the pinnacle of the Manggarai people's relational connections is the awareness of the presence and existence of the highest reality known as *Mori Keraéng* (God). For the Manggarai people, God is an entity that underlies everything that exists. Therefore, the Manggarai people believe that they can

communicate or relate to God through His creations. This aligns with Martin Buber's concept that the Absolute reality is the peak of human life's journey. In other words, God's position in the *I-Thou* (God) relation represents the direction that humans aim to achieve in the *I-Thou* (human and nature) relation (Herskowitz et al., 2017). The goal of this study is to unveil the dimensions of relationality inherent in the Manggarai people's *Penti* celebration. In this paper, the author emphasizes and broadly elucidates the meaning and values within the *Penti* rituals that spark these dimensions of relationality. The focal point of the discussion to be explored is the relational dialogue between the Manggarai people and nature (environment), fellow humans, and God (*Mori Kraeng*), as expressed through actions and expressions during the *Penti* ceremony.

The concept of the relational dimensions in the *Penti* ceremony is sharpened through the philosophical ideas of Martin Buber as its analytical lens. In other words, Martin Buber's concept of relational dialogue becomes the framework for understanding the relationality of the Manggarai people during the *Penti* ceremony. Hence, the guiding questions for the author in elucidating this research are: How is the cultural reality of *Penti* understood as a celebration of relationality for the Manggarai people? What is meant by Martin Buber's concept of relational dialogue? And what are the implications of the *Penti* culture for the life of the Manggarai community?

A study on the *Penti* culture in Manggarai society was conducted by Resmini and Mabut in 2021, titled *Penti Ceremony in the Rato Village Community in Manggarai Regency*. The research found that *Penti* is primarily a thanksgiving ceremony to the Supreme Being (*Mori Keraeng*) for the abundant harvest. In this harvest thanksgiving ceremony, Resmini and Mabut discovered the participation and cooperation among the *ca beo* (village residents) in planning and contributing to the *Penti* celebration. Therefore, according to Resmini and Mabut, the *Penti* ceremony represents the Manggarai community's effort to preserve the ancestral heritage and wisdom contained within it, such as cooperation and mutual understanding among fellow community members (Resmini & Mabut, 2020).

Research on the *Penti* culture was also conducted by Agus, Anjani, and Darmana in 2018, titled *Penti Ritual in the Ndehes Village Community, Wae Ri'i District, Manggarai Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara*. This study found that the *Penti* ceremony serves not only as a thanksgiving ritual to God (*Mori Keraeng*) but also as a means of reconciliation and peace with fellow humans, nature, and

the Creator. Expressions of reconciliation are conveyed through prayer rituals and the offering of sacrificial animals. Additionally, according to Agus et al., the *Penti* ceremony is also a platform for expressing art to strengthen the bonds of friendship among fellow villagers (Agus et al., 2018). Therefore, for the Manggarai community, *Penti* is an essential element in communal life, as it serves not only as an expression of harvest gratitude but also holds significance in strengthening the bonds of brotherhood among community members and serving as a platform for reconciliation with fellow humans, nature, and the Creator.

Considering the significant meaning of the *Penti* celebration in the lives of the Manggarai people, this study seeks to explore and elucidate the concept of Manggarai people's relationality in the *Penti* ceremony using Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue. The objectives and motivations of this study are, firstly, to delve into and discover the philosophical concepts of the *Penti* celebration in Manggarai society. Secondly, this study also offers a new perspective regarding the patterns of building relationships with nature, fellow humans, and God as the Supreme Being. The proposed approach in this research is a relationality approach aimed at fostering the awareness of the Manggarai people regarding the significance of *Penti* as a celebration of their relationality.

This study employs a qualitative research method, specifically a literature study. The references utilized include works by Martin Buber, particularly his thoughts on human relations with fellow humans, nature, and the Spiritual Being or Ultimate Reality, as well as studies related to the rituals of the *Penti* celebration. The data sources for this research consist of two parts: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are extracted from Martin Buber's works found in his books and scholarly journals discussing the *Penti* culture in Manggarai society. Meanwhile, secondary sources are derived from scientific journals that address the fundamental principles of Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue and research on Manggarai culture

This research is also a study on local wisdom. According to Armada Riyanto (2020), local wisdom encompasses the wisdom of the local community, related to the context of locality and life experiences (Riyanto, 2020). Local wisdom includes rituals, mythology, ancient texts, symbolism, and the relationality of humans with each other, nature, and God. Research on local wisdom, according to Armada Riyanto, generally seeks to engage in a dialogue with relevant philosophical perspectives related to local wisdom. This dialogic

study requires a framework to discuss what is being dialogued, how the dialogue occurs, and how the philosophical intersections are assumed (Riyanto, 2018a). In this research, the point of philosophical intersection is the concept of relationality in Manggarai society's *Penti* culture with Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue.

This research begins by examining the concept of relationality practiced by the Manggarai people in the *Penti* ceremony. Subsequently, the researcher reads and explores the ideas of Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue. Following this, the researcher integrates the concept of relationality in Manggarai culture during the *Penti* ceremony with Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue. In other words, Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue serves as a framework for understanding the concept of relationality in the *Penti* ceremony. This study concludes that the *Penti* celebration is a manifestation of the relationality of the Manggarai people as envisioned in Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue.

### **Penti Culture in Manggarai Community**

The Manggarai region is located on the western side of Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara. Similar to other areas in Indonesia, Manggarai possesses a rich and unique cultural heritage. This uniqueness is evident in the traditions of daily life related to nature, human interactions, and the Supreme Being. These traditions include marriage ceremonies (*tae kawing*), childbirth ceremonies (*tae loas*), funeral ceremonies (*tae mata*), communal land distribution processes (*tente teno*), *Penti* celebrations (expressing gratitude to the Ultimate Reality or *Mori Keraeng*), and more (Ngoro, 2016).

The *Penti* celebration, the focus of this research, is a traditional ceremony of the Manggarai people that is still preserved. The *Penti* celebration is a thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest, closely related to the Manggarai region where almost the entire population works as farmers. The fertile land in Manggarai is utilized by the people to cultivate crops such as corn, rice, sorghum, bananas, and more. Additionally, they grow commercial crops like coconut, vanilla, candlenut, coffee, and others (Adon, 2016). This is why the *Penti* celebration is maintained by the Manggarai people as a form of gratitude for the abundant provisions of nature that sustain their lives.

In addition to the strong agricultural context embedded in the lives of the Manggarai people, the preservation of the *Penti* culture also depicts the

religious life of the Manggarai people, which is cosmocentric towards *Mori Keraéng* (the Ultimate Reality). For the Manggarai people, *Mori Keraeng* is the Creator, Provider, and Shaper of both humanity and the surrounding environment. The Manggarai perspective on *Mori Keraeng* as the creator and sculptor of everything leads them to a profound reverence for the existence of *Mori Keraeng* (God) (Iswandono et al., 2016). Therefore, *Penti* can be considered a moment of expressing gratitude and praise by the Manggarai people to the spirits of their ancestors and the Giver of Life or the Ultimate Reality (*Mori Keraéng ata jari agu dedek*).

The expression of gratitude and praise to *Mori Keraeng* is conveyed through prayers and ritual offerings of sacrificial animals such as buffalo and cattle. The Manggarai people also honor their ancestors (*empo*). Ancestors (*empo*) are revered for their contributions to building the village (*beo*) and passing down fertile land (*lingko*). In addition to being an expression of praise and gratitude to *Mori Keraeng* and *empo*, the *Penti* celebration also signifies the *celung cekeng wali ntaung* (change of year and season). Therefore, it can be said that the *Penti* celebration for the Manggarai people is a New Year celebration because during the *Penti* celebration, they express gratitude for the life they have lived while welcoming the new life ahead (Janggur, 2010).

Furthermore, the *Penti* celebration serves as a gathering for entire families, relatives, and village residents to express gratitude for the life they have lived, especially for the abundant harvest. This collective gathering also symbolizes the Manggarai people's awareness of the bonds of brotherhood and kinship that will never be severed. Each Manggarai individual will always remember their *hae wau* (origin or lineage). The Manggarai people realize that every human being is not born out of themselves. One exists because of the presence of family members and ancestors. Such awareness motivates the Manggarai people to appreciate, preserve, and strengthen their kinship relationships (commonly referred to as *wa'u*, clan, or patrilineal descent) (Lon & Widyawati, 2017).

## Various Types of Penti Celebration

### *Penti Beo*

*Upacara*, literally translated as a celebration, in Manggarai culture signifies a thanksgiving feast by a village or *beo*. In the *Penti* celebration, participants only include the residents of the village hosting the ceremony. In



the *Penti Beo* celebration, the entire village comes together to celebrate the harvest and offer sacrifices to the Creator and Sustainer (*Mori Keraeng* and *empo*) for accompanying the entire life of the village residents. The leaders of the *Penti Beo* celebration are the traditional leaders of the village, namely *tua golo*, *tua teno*, and *tua pangga* (leaders of sub-clans). Additionally, the Manggarai community also believes that each village or *beo* possesses sacred power known as *Naga Beo*. Therefore, through *Penti*, the Manggarai people present offerings to their ancestors while seeking blessings for the village (*beo bate kaeng*), play area (*natas bate labar*), spring (*wae tek*), house (*mbaru bate kaeng*), as well as gardens and fields (*uma duat*) (Imun, 2020).

### *Penti Kilo*

The ceremony or ritual in *Penti Kilo* essentially constitutes a family celebration within a patrilineal lineage. Therefore, this celebration is usually attended by *anak rona* (relatives from the maternal side), *anak wina* (relatives from the paternal side), and *hae reba* (friends or acquaintances) (Agus et al., 2018). The rituals performed are more focused on expressing gratitude and seeking blessings from the ancestors to always safeguard and nurture the life of the family. A distinctive ritual in the *Penti* celebration involves a request (*torok tae* or bowing) to be blessed with many offspring (*beka weki*). This plea is articulated through the expression "*beka weki, cing cama nu cing labu, wela cama nu wela ndesi, borek hena bocel, tai hena wai* (as the family grows, spreading like gourds, flowering like the taro, defecating on the calf, and feces on the foot)" (Gabriel et al., 2019).

### *Penti Nongko Gejur*

*Penti Nongko Gejur* is a thanksgiving ceremony conducted after harvesting and gathering the produce. Literally, *Penti Nongko Gejur* means a celebration of the harvest. This type of *Penti* ceremony is usually performed after the harvest season. That is why this celebration is often combined with the annual thanksgiving (*Penti Neteng Ntaung*) as it takes place after the harvest season. The sacrificial animals presented in this celebration are typically *kaba* (buffalo), *mbe* (goat for Muslims), and *ela* (pig for Christians) (Janggur, 2010). Therefore, the central theme of this celebration is gratitude to the Creator (*Mori Jari Dedek*) for the abundant harvest and everything received. The celebration also aims for the success of the upcoming year's harvest. The tone of gratitude is expressed in the following verses, recited over the offerings, "*Kapu lami*

*sanged gejur cama nuhu wua pau ai itas lami hang ciwal, haeng hang kawé lincik ici, weras wua lebo kala weri, wua raci po'ong"* (We accept all the gifts and efforts, just as we accept mango fruits; we find the fruits of our labor in the garden; we get food that is cultivated, clean seeds, and ripe fruit; the betel leaves are all flourishing; all the planted betel nuts also bear fruit).

## **Penti Rituals**

### *Preparation Stage of Penti*

The Penti celebration begins with the determination of the timing (day, date, and year) based on mutual agreement among the villagers. Once the ceremony's schedule is set, all villagers are required to inform their extended families, both those nearby and those in distant lands (migrating family members), to attend the *Penti* ceremony. Before the *Penti* celebration commences, the Manggarai people perform a ritual known as *Podo Tenggeng*, which involves asking for forgiveness from their ancestors and the Supreme Reality for any mistakes and negligence they might have committed. In other words, this ritual aims to dispel anything unwanted, such as famine, diseases, untimely deaths, wars, conflicts, murders, and so forth (Ngoro, 2016).

In this ritual, the Manggarai people provide sacrificial animals, either a black-colored chicken or a male pig if the apology involves a grave offense according to customs. Alongside the sacrificial animals, other offerings include damaged household items such as pots, baskets, plates, or glasses as symbols of life's difficulties and economic limitations. All these offering items are taken to the river estuary where the ceremony takes place, known as *cunga* (the meeting point of two rivers). The offerings, along with the sacrificial animals, are then floated down the river, symbolizing the washing away of all disasters and crises in life (Janggur, 2010). After the ceremony at *cunga* concludes, the machete or knife used for cutting or slaughtering the pig and chicken is cleaned in the river before the villagers return to their homes. The cleansing of the machete and knife in the river symbolizes the villagers' rejection of all evils and disasters, such as epidemics and death.

### **Implementation Stage of Penti**

In the process of conducting the *Penti* celebration, several rituals must be performed, such as paying homage to the spring (*barong wae*), honoring the offering place (*compang*), and gathering with family (*libur kilo*). After the

outdoor homage rituals are completed, the subsequent *Penti* rituals take place inside the house. The indoor rituals are led by the village elder, in this case, the *tua golo*. The indoor rituals involve reciting prayer verses (*tudak*) expressing gratitude to the Creator (*Mori Keraeng*) and the ancestors for guiding, accompanying, and protecting the community with all the blessings in their endeavors and efforts. Specifically, they express gratitude for the bountiful harvest.

### *Barong lodok*

*Barong* means to call, invite, or inform, while *lodok* refers to the central point of land division that, in Manggarai culture, takes the form of a spider's web. This ritual aims to invite the spirits that have guarded and provided a good harvest. These spirits are invited to participate in the *Penti* celebration held at the traditional house (*mbaru gendang*) (Erb, 1999). The *barong lodok* ceremony is usually conducted at the *lodok* itself. This ritual is also intended to show the community's respect and gratitude to the ancestors who bequeathed fertile land or *lingko* to them (Priska, 2007). The sacrificial animal used typically depends on the local customs of the community.

### *Barong wa'e*

*Barong wa'e* is a celebration conducted at the spring that serves as the source of drinking water for the village residents. In Manggarai tradition, there is an expression, "*Mboas wa'e woang, kembus wa'e teku,*" which means the abundance of water that sustains the entire community. This expression holds the hope that the spring continues to flow throughout the seasons. The broader significance of the *barong wa'e* ceremony lies in the appreciation of water as a source of life, relief, and the freshness of human existence. Given the paramount importance of the meaning of *wae* (water) in human life, the Manggarai people make efforts to preserve the continuous flow and cleanliness of the spring (Nery et al., 2021). Thus, the *barong wa'e* ceremony is a manifestation of the Manggarai people's awareness of nature that consistently fulfills their needs. They believe that nature has the power to sustain human life. The *barong wa'e* ceremony goes beyond expressing gratitude for the goodness of nature; it also instills an awareness of the benevolence of God (*Mori Keraeng*), who created the spring (Ngare, 2014).

### *Barong boa*

*Barong boa* is a *Penti* ceremony conducted at the ancestral burial ground (*boa*). The purpose of this ceremony is to invite the spirits of those buried in *boa* to participate in the *Penti* celebration. The Manggarai people believe that through the struggles and legacy of their ancestors (*empo*), they can reap abundant harvests from the land they cultivate (*lingko* or *lodok*) (Verheijen, 1991). They are convinced that the spirits of their ancestors always protect their living descendants. Therefore, during the *Penti* celebration, the spirits of the ancestors need to be invited and offered ritual offerings. For the Manggarai people, the ritual of offering to the spirits of the ancestors is crucial because if the spirits are forgotten and not given offerings, they may disturb and bring harm to their own descendants. In this regard, there is an expression (*goet*) known to the Manggarai people, which goes, “*Boto hamar one anak, dedam one wela, pao one bangkong,*” meaning the spirits of the ancestors take their own descendants to be used as offerings or food (Lanur, 2012).

### *Barong compang*

*Barong compang* or *takung compang* is a traditional ceremony of the Manggarai people conducted at the *compang* (an altar made of stones arranged to resemble a table). The *compang* is usually located in front of the traditional house's yard as it is considered the heart of the village's life and safety. The *compang* is interpreted as an altar for sacrificial offerings to the Supreme Being and the spirits guarding the village (*naga beo*) (Setia et al., 2021). According to the Manggarai belief, the *compang* is the dwelling place of *naga beo* or *naga golo*, which safeguards the lives of the villagers. In the *Penti* ceremony, special respect is given to *naga beo* as it is considered the guardian spirit of the village. *Naga beo* is believed to protect the village from various calamities and the dangers of war. The sacrificial animals for *naga beo* offered at *compang* are chickens and goats. The entire village participates in this ritual. After the ceremony at *compang* concludes, the traditional leaders enter the traditional house to perform the *wici loce* ceremony (*wici*: to spread, *loce*: mat) to welcome the ancestral spirits that will be invited from *lodok*, *wae tekku*, *boa*, and *compang*. Following the *wici loce* ceremony, all villagers are allowed to return to their homes to continue the *libur kilo* ceremony (Marfiatun, 2019).

### *Libur kilo*

*Libur*, literally meaning happiness, prosperity, and peace, while *kilo* translates to family. The *libur kilo* ceremony is an expression of gratitude to God and ancestors for the well-being of the family. According to the customary law observed during the *Penti* celebration, *libur kilo* is a mandatory practice for the entire village community (Wahyu & Edu, 2018). On such occasions, the community is encouraged to mend any disharmonious relationships. They reorganize family life, making the *Penti* celebration meaningful and sacred. The *libur kilo* ceremony begins with the eldest family (*wau kae*) and progresses to the youngest (*wau ase*). Therefore, *libur kilo* becomes a moment of gathering for each family member in an atmosphere of joy and celebration. The rituals performed during *libur kilo* consist of prayers or *torok tae*, accompanied by sacrificial animals according to each family's ability (Agus et al., 2018).

The most significant meaning of the *libur kilo* ceremony is the establishment of *hambor* (peace). In other words, the purpose of *libur kilo* is to achieve repentance and reconciliation for families experiencing conflicts or divisions, as expressed in the saying "*Boto cuku nunga retak cepa-pora raci*" (to stop the hostility among family members) (Janggur, 2010). This expression represents a hope for the family to always be in a peaceful state. This hope is articulated in the saying or *goet*, "*Mori sangget cunckerubet, toe ranga tawa kaeng tana (kilo dami), porong oke one wa'es laud, one leso saled* (God, all grievances and grimacing within our family, let them flow following the water and trail along to the place where the sun sets) (Moses, 2019). Therefore, the *libur kilo* ceremony is crucial to ensure that during the peak celebration of *Penti*, all village residents participate in the festivities peacefully and joyfully.

### *Peak Stage of Penti*

The pinnacle ceremony of *Penti* takes place at the traditional house (*mbaru gendang* or *tembong*). In the Manggarai belief system, the traditional house serves as the focal point for the entire village's way of life. Hence, the *Penti* ceremony is conducted inside the traditional house. According to Manggarai tradition, there are several stages in conducting the *Penti* ceremony, namely:

*Renggas*, the opening shout;

*Wewa*, a ritual led by the traditional leader (*tua golo*) aiming to invite the community to participate in the *Penti* ceremony with reverence;

*Rahi* or *ked*, a special greeting to *anak wina* to submit their contributions, usually money, as a sign of support for the celebration;

*Kari*, the recitation of poems to initiate the *Penti* ceremony;

*Tudak*, *renga*, or *torok*, a series of prayers to God and ancestral spirits accompanied by the sacrifice of a buffalo. In this stage, the blood of the sacrificial animal must touch the door of the *mbaru gendang* (traditional house) as evidence that the *Penti* ceremony has taken place;

*Toto urat*, a ritual involving the interpretation of the heart of the slaughtered sacrificial animal. This is done to understand the will and thoughts of the ancestors or *Mori Kraeng* (the Creator); and

*Helang*, a ritual offering to the ancestral spirits accompanied by prayers, asking them to enjoy the offerings brought by the community. This ritual also specifically honors the spirits guarding the village.

After completing all the rituals, the villagers are invited to join in celebrating the event by engaging in *sanda* (dancing) and *hang woja weru* (eating new rice) as a symbol of gratitude for the harvest and to strengthen the sense of brotherhood among the villagers.

## **Martin Buber's Philosophy of Relational Dialogue**

The concept of Martin Buber's philosophy of relational dialogue is reflected in the pattern of human relations, namely the *I-It* relation and the *I-Thou* relation. How these relations occur will be explained in the following section.

### *The I-It Relation*

Martin Buber describes the relationship built within the *I-It* relation as a subject-object relationship. The term 'It' refers to the third-person singular pronoun that points to an object. 'It' refers to something that is made an object by the 'I,' which is the subject itself. In this relational pattern, the 'I' or subject is considered to hold a higher position than the 'It' as an object. The 'I' views the 'It' merely as an object or entity distinct from the 'I' as the subject. Buber explains that in the *I-It* relation, the 'It' as an object is not directly presented before the 'I' (subject), and the 'I' (subject) can replace the presence and encounter with the 'It' (object) through the ideas existing in the subject's mind. In this case, the presence of the object does not need to be experienced directly.

The subject merely 'sees' something, senses something, imagines something, and thinks about something. There is no need for the subject to go outside to encounter the 'It' (Buber, 1970). The 'I' perceives the 'It' as part of the experience it (the 'I') undergoes.

The intended experience is that everything is utilized for the sake of the 'I' (subject). The position of the 'It' (object) for the 'I' (subject) is not in an in-between position, thus there is no reality in the *I-It* relation (Mundackal, 1999). The 'I' is present as a self displaying ego, objectifying 'the other' for its (the 'I') own interests. As part of the experience, the 'I' (subject) no longer needs to engage in a dialogue with the 'It' (object). The 'I' (subject) can understand and comprehend the 'It' (object) by placing it within the framework of its rationality without establishing a dialogical relationship with it (Buber, 2004). Objects presented in the *I-It* relational pattern essentially refer not only to things (nature) but can also refer to fellow humans and Spiritual Beings. Humans as well as Spiritual Beings can be replaced or referred to as objects by the 'I' as the subject. Regarding this, Buber states, 'One of the words He and She can replace It' (Pena et al., 2018). Humans can perceive something outside of themselves as the 'It' or an object, resulting in an attitude of control, domination, and exploitation of 'the other' as an object for human interests as the subject. Humans do not see 'the other' as a part of themselves that is present to complement the meaning of their existence as humans. The meaning of the existence and presence of 'the other,' be it an object (environmental nature), a human, or a spiritual being, can be confined by the subject 'I' itself (Goto et al., 2018).

### *The I-Thou Relation*

The relationship established within the *I-Thou* relation is a pattern of subject-subject relationship. Buber expresses that the primary pattern of human relationship is the *I-Thou*, stating, '*I-Thou* is the primary word of relation' (Buber, 1967). The *I-Thou* relation can be described as an intersubjective relationship. In the *I-Thou* relation, there is an involvement of the entire existence of humans. The 'I' does not position 'the other' or 'Thou' as an object separate from the 'I,' as seen in the *I-It* relation. 'The other' is no longer an object for the 'I' (subject) but is considered as another 'I' or as 'You,' equal to the 'I' (subject). The *I-Thou* relation presents as subject-subjects that are interrelated. Subjects in the *I-Thou* relation build connections through intensive and profound communication or dialogue (Riyanto, 2018b).

Buber further articulates that the *I-Thou* relation embodies the entirety of the human essence at its deepest level. Buber asserts, 'The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being' (Herskowitz et al., 2017). 'I' is 'I' when in relation to 'Thou.' Without 'Thou,' there is no 'I.' 'Thou' is not 'non-I' or 'the other.' This relational pattern assumes the presence of 'Thou' as a constituent of communication itself. Logically, 'I' cannot communicate with itself. In intense communication, 'Thou' not only serves as the interlocutor but also as another 'I,' as it (Thou) reinforces the existence of the 'I' as the subject (Banusu, 2018). For Buber, the *I-Thou* relation signifies the fusion of 'I' and 'Thou.' 'I' addresses 'Thou,' as it (Thou) relates to 'I'; 'I' never becomes 'I' if 'Thou' is absent. 'I' comes into being through the presence of 'Thou.' 'Thou' is a being that participates in the 'I' entire existence. Martin Buber states, '*The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You*' (Buber, 1967).

In line with the above idea, Buber asserts that the foundational element for the formation of the *I-Thou* relation is love. Love enables the creation of profound connections between subjects. Buber expresses, '...Love is between I and Thou' (Buber, 1970). Love allows for a deep relationship to exist. Love contains the energy that unifies. Love itself has a character of unity. This means that the person who loves is someone who unites themselves with 'the other' (Riyanto, 2013).

The depth of the meaning of 'Thou' in the *I-Thou* relation is reached when directed towards the Spiritual Being or God. For Buber, human relationships become possible not only with 'Thou' among fellow humans but also with 'Thou' God (the Eternal Thou). The awareness of the relationship with God is what Buber describes as the pinnacle of human relationality. For Martin Buber, the *I-Thou* relation ultimately leads humans to a spiritual taste. This means that the relationship with the particular 'Thou' can bring humans into unity with the Eternal 'Thou' (God) (Mundackal, 1999). Encounter with God (Eternal Thou) occurs through human relationships with others (the nature or fellow humans). This understanding indicates that the relationships built by humans with others contain unity and interconnectivity. Humans become aware of their relationship with God (Eternal Thou) when they have established a deep connection with nature and other fellow humans.



Buber stated that God (the Eternal Thou) cannot be directly experienced because He possesses characteristics that transcend human existence and the universe. God has a transcendental nature. However, this transcendence does not imply that humans cannot experience an encounter with God, establishing a relationship or communication. God as the 'One who is far' is not related to distance, space, and time but to relationality. The relationship between humans and God (the Eternal Thou) takes on a unique form and understanding. This relationship is found in the connections humans build with 'the other,' namely nature (environment) and fellow humans. Buber also expressed that if humans wish to encounter God, they do not need to 'run away' from the world but should enter into the world because there they will encounter God (Wood, 1969).

### **I-Thou as the Fundamental Principle of Relation**

Buber expresses that humans possess richness within relationships. He articulates this by stating, 'all real living is meeting' (M. S. Friedman, 1955). According to Buber, the reality of human life is colored by encounters with entities outside oneself. Humans experience this through encounters with various other living beings in their daily lives. Through these experiences, humans engage in dialogue and communication. In dialogue, individuals become aware of themselves in relation to others.

As explained in the previous section, humans construct two models of relationships, namely the *I-It* relation and *I-Thou* relation. However, for Buber, the *I-Thou* relation is an ideal model and the fundamental principle of relationships. According to Buber, *I-Thou* serves as the foundation for dialogical relationships between humans and 'the other.' The *I-Thou* relation model allows the characteristics of dialogue to actualize in human social life. In other words, the *I-Thou* relational model underlies the dialogical 'I.' The dialogical 'I' embraces the truth that the 'I' is similar to 'the other,' fostering a sense of empathy, solidarity, and equality in rights and dignity (Riyanto, 2018b). Therefore, in the *I-Thou* relational model, there is a manifestation of attitudes such as appreciation, respect, equalization of status and rights, as well as acceptance of components of the universe and fellow humans.

For Buber, the *I-Thou* relation asserts the truth of the *Beziehung* world, where there is the 'I' addressing the 'Thou' and the 'Thou' addressing the 'I', thus enabling genuine dialogue. Genuine dialogue allows humans to build relationships with others based on love, brotherhood, and freedom (Bartens,

1983). Buber emphasizes that human fulfillment occurs when one is present in unity with others. In all their uniqueness, strengths, and weaknesses, humans find fulfillment in the *I-Thou* relation. The *I-Thou* relation then leads humans to the pinnacle of their relationship with the Supreme Reality or God, which serves as the foundation for human goodness and wholeness as individuals. Humans discover the magnificence of God as the Absolute Reality through daily relational experiences with the created world and fellow humans (Juhansar, 2022). Thus, when humans reach the zenith of their relationship with God, they experience fulfillment in their existence.

### *Penti as Relasional Celebration in Martin Buber's Philosophy*

The *Penti* celebration among the Manggarai people leads to an awareness of the existence of human beings in connection with nature, fellow humans, and God. The Manggarai people realize that their daily lives are inseparable from their interactions with nature, fellow humans, and God. Thus, the *Penti* celebration, observed by the Manggarai people, encompasses a relational dimension. The relational dimension in question is related to two attitudes of humans in their relationship with 'the other.' These two human attitudes are (1) maintaining a distance (*I-It*) and (2) cultivating deep connections (*I-Thou*). Therefore, there are two types of relationships proposed by Buber, namely, the *I-It* relation and the *I-Thou* relation, which are manifested in the phenomenon of the *Penti* celebration celebrated by the Manggarai people. In this context, *Penti* encompasses both models of relationships, namely, the *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations.

### **The I-It Relational Model in Penti Celebration**

In the *Penti* celebration, a phenomenon indicating the *I-It* relation is observed. In the rituals of *Penti*, an *I-It* relational model is identified in the interaction between humans and nature, among themselves, and with God as the Supreme Being.

#### *Penti: the I-It Relation and the Nature*

The *Penti* celebration in Manggarai culture vividly depicts the relationship between humans and nature. The rituals performed during the *Penti* celebration always involve elements of nature, such as animals, plants, and others. In the *Penti* rituals, the Manggarai people utilize sacrificial animals like chickens, pigs, goats, and others as offerings for ancestral spirits and God

(*Mori Keraeng*). These sacrificed animals are seen as offerings that can appease the forces of nature, ancestral spirits, and God (*Mori Keraeng*). Thus, the *I-It* relational model in the *Penti* celebration is evidenced by the Manggarai people's approach of using and exploiting elements of nature for ritual purposes. This aligns with Buber's philosophy, which considers the '*I-It*' world as the space where humans reside to live (Buber, 1967). Without the '*It*' world, humans cannot survive. In such understanding, humans can experience and utilize various items for their livelihood. Because in their actions, humans require specific objects. Moreover, the Manggarai people's selective attitude in observing, examining, and sorting elements of nature for the purposes of the *Penti* ritual reflects a pattern of the *I-It* relation.

#### *Penti: the I-It Relation and the Humans*

In the *Penti* celebration, there is also an *I-It* relation pattern in the interaction among community members. The *Penti* celebration mandates the involvement of all village residents, whether living within or outside the village. *Penti* is a sacred traditional celebration that requires the participation of the entire village before entering the new planting season (Resmini & Mabut, 2020). This involvement is linked to fundraising for ritual purposes, such as acquiring sacrificial animals (pigs, chickens, goats, etc.), rice, *tuak* (palm wine), betel nut (*cepa*), and other necessities.

This indicates that *Penti* necessitates the presence and involvement of others, suggesting that the value of human presence is for ritual purposes. In Martin Buber's perspective on the *I-It* relation, fellow humans appear as accompanying objects that must be present in the *Penti* celebration. Moreover, in *Penti* rituals, there are moments where the presence of village residents is seen merely as complements or participants in the ritual activities. This is evident in the *teing hang* ritual (prayer to ancestors and *Mori Keraeng*), where only one person, the *tua golo* or *tua teno*, acts as the prayer leader. The rest of the community plays the role of obligatory participants attending the ritual.

#### *Penti: the I-It Relation and the Spiritual Being*

In the *Penti* celebration, there is a network of relations that evokes the *I-It* relation concerning God or *Mori Keraeng*. This is evident in the ritual expressions of *Penti*, which seem to implore God, such as the calls "denge lite mori" (listen, O God), "paka okes lite sangged da'at" (discard all that is bad), "paka neka tei ringin ti'is" (ward off all disasters), "paka neka nepo lesu" (do

not make us work too hard), "neka mangas peleng ngger le" (do not turn away), and "neka po'ongs jogot, bete nggete" (may there be no more sorrow and distress). According to Ustadi Hamsah (2020), these expressions serve as initiation rituals transformed into a system of ideas that later become a set of rules governing community life (Hamsah, 2020). Additionally, in the *Penti* celebration, God or *Mori Keraeng* is often considered the cause of misfortune in human life. Manggarai people associate *Mori Keraeng* (God) with phenomena such as famine, natural disasters, drought, illness, and death (Pasi, 2021). Certainly, beliefs about *Mori Keraeng* as the cause of all misfortune in human life cannot be accepted without scrutiny. In reality, phenomena like landslides, floods, or droughts are generally caused by human activities that often disrupt the environment, such as massive deforestation or burning to clear new land.

### The I-Thou Relational Model in Penti Celebration

The *Penti* celebration among the Manggarai people deeply encapsulates the relationship of humans with nature, fellow humans, and God. In the *Penti* celebration, dialogical relations are discovered, sparking richness and depth in the relationship of humans with nature, fellow humans, and God.

#### *Penti: the I-Thou Relation and the Nature*

The Manggarai people fundamentally possess a profound awareness of the significance of nature. They recognize a deep unity and harmony between humans and the cosmos (nature). In the context of the Manggarai people, this harmonious cosmic unity is vividly expressed in the saying: *tana wa* (earth below), *awang eta* (sky above), *parn awo* (rising in the east), *kolepn sale* (setting in the west), *ulun le* (upstream), and *wa'in lau* (downstream) (Pandor, 2015a). In addition to their awareness of harmonious connection with nature or the environment, the Manggarai people also perceive nature as a source that abundantly provides for their livelihood. Therefore, nature, for the Manggarai people, is often referred to as *ema eta agu ende wa* (father and mother providing life and abundance) (Sutam, 2012). Thus, the term "ende wa" (mother) for the earth is an expression stemming from the Manggarai people's consciousness, viewing the earth as a 'Thou' subject that sustains and determines the direction and well-being of Manggarai life.

The unity of the relationship between humans (Manggarai people) and nature is also expressed through the principle of 'gendang one, lingko peang.' *Gendang one* signifies the traditional house (it can also mean the residence of

each village inhabitant) as a dwelling place that correlates with *lingko peang*. *Lingko peang* is communal land cultivated for the livelihood of the Manggarai people. *Gendang one* and *lingko peang* can be seen as the identity of the Manggarai people because these two elements are inseparable in their lives. This is clearly revealed through the Manggarai people's actions when performing the ritual of offering food or offerings (*teing hang*) to the *naga mbaru* (spirit guarding the house) when they are about to inhabit a new house (Sumardi et al., 2017). Similarly, with *lingko* (garden), which is not only regarded as a cultivated land but also as a sacred space containing the force and power that determine the efforts and sustainability of Manggarai life. Thus, for the Manggarai people, nature is not just an object or a collection of things merely utilized to meet human needs. Instead, nature also possesses a force and power that can determine the direction and purpose of human life itself.

In addition to the reverence for natural forces in the *lingko*, there is also a ritual to honor the spirits residing in the *mata wae* (water source). There, the customary leader offers prayers of gratitude and praise to the water guardian spirits for safeguarding the water source, ensuring a continuous flow that sustains the entire village. The act of prayer and offerings (such as a chicken or a single egg) serves as a form of respect and appreciation from the villagers to the natural forces inhabiting the water source. The water they use every day serves not only to quench their thirst but also as a source of life. Therefore, the presence of water is fully and holistically interpreted as a source that sustains human life and other living beings. Thus, the existence of both *lingko* and *mata wae* contributes to fulfilling the existence of humanity itself (Riyanto, 2022). Another form of reverence for the forces or spirits inhabiting the *lingko* and *mata wae* is by specially inviting them to attend the *Penti* ceremony organized by the villagers. Hence, during the *Penti* celebration, all the forces inhabiting nature are invited to be present and rejoice with the people (villagers).

In the *Penti* celebration, the people of Manggarai also engage in reconciliation with nature. This act of reconciliation is related to the unfavorable or challenging experiences that the villagers have encountered, such as crop failures, disease outbreaks, unnatural deaths, conflicts, and other unfortunate events (Lanur, 2012). For the Manggarai people, all disasters or difficulties they face in life are closely connected to the influence of their relationship with nature. Phenomena like crop failures, droughts, unnatural deaths, diseases, and the like are viewed and reflected upon as nature's response to human actions that no longer respect the existence of the

environment. Therefore, the Manggarai people strive for acts of reconciliation with nature to prevent the ongoing wrath or displeasure of nature in their lives. Reconciliation rites during *Penti* are commonly conducted at the *wae teku* (water source), the *lodok* (central plantation), and the *compang* (an altar in the middle of the village).

### *Penti: the I-Thou Relation and the Humans*

The *Penti* celebration among the Manggarai people can be considered a forum for meetings among fellow human beings or villagers. In the *Penti* celebration, there are values that evoke the depth of relationships among fellow humans, such as the values of brotherhood, respect, love, solidarity, and reconciliation. Therefore, the *Penti* celebration observed by the Manggarai people triggers actions that position fellow humans as "Thou" subjects who should be valued, respected, and acknowledged in their existence (Riyanto, 2013). This is why, in the *Penti* celebration, all relatives, whether residing inside or outside the village, must be invited or encouraged to celebrate *Penti* together (Pandor, 2015b). No one should be forgotten because every villager has the equal right to participate in the celebration of *Penti*. This action signifies that every villager is one family with an equal right to celebrate *Penti*.

In the *Penti* celebration, the Manggarai people (villagers) also invite others from outside the village to join in the festivities. The invited guests are referred to as *meka landang*. The presence of 'the other' (*meka landang*) is a form of participation from external parties to partake in the joy and happiness of the villagers celebrating *Penti*. The invited guests are welcomed with *kepok tuak* (Ngoro, 2016). *Kepok tuak* is a symbol of acceptance that places the guest in a position of respect. This respect is expressed through offerings such as chicken or *tuak*, which literally means "carrying the guest" (Pandor, 2015b). The moments of brotherhood are further expressed through the traditional dance called *caci*.

### *Penti as a Celebration of Reconciliation with Fellow Humans*

Reconciliation (*hambor*) with fellow humans is one of the essential elements in the *Penti* celebration. This reconciliation is grounded in the Manggarai people's awareness of seeing fellow humans as 'the other.' The *hambor* ceremony in the *Penti* celebration takes place when there are rifts in relationships within a family or sub-clan in a village. Therefore, through the *Penti* celebration, all family members and villagers are expected to forgive one

another and foster mutual understanding among family members and fellow villagers. The significance of the *hambor* ritual is expressed in the saying or *go'et: boto cuku nungan retak cepa-pora raci; kudut oke one waes laud-one lesos saled* (So that enmity among family members does not persist; all disputes are discarded following the flow of water and tracing the direction of the setting sun) (Ndiung & Bayu, 2019). The Manggarai people hope that all damage or fractures in relationships that have occurred will be restored so that they enter the new year with hearts full of peace, love, and brotherhood.

In this reconciliation process, all family members gather to provide offerings to the ancestral spirits (*téi hang empo or ata tu'a*). In the *tei hang* ritual, each family prepares *manuk* (chicken), *cepa* (betel nut), and *tuak* (local palm wine) as food and drink for the ancestral spirits. During the *tei hang* process, each family member also addresses issues that have damaged their relationships. This open attitude can create a dialogue that leads to mutual understanding and forgiveness (Ulya, 2021). Thus, the *I-Thou* relation is initiated, laying the foundation for the awareness of 'I' as a human being. This awareness also applies to the 'Thou.' Therefore, the consciousness held by both 'I' and 'Thou' becomes a unification that equally possesses the awareness as 'I.' This perfect unification leads to the fulfillment of humans as 'I' (Adon, 2021).

### *Penti: the I-Thou Relation and the Spiritual Being*

The culmination of human relations with 'the Other,' according to Buber, lies in their connection with the Spiritual Being. In the *Penti* celebration, God is believed to be the Supreme Being from whom all forms of life, both visible and invisible, flow. In *Penti*, despite the rituals honoring the ancestral spirits, the Manggarai people believe that these spirits coexist with God. Ancestral spirits are considered as collaborators with God (*Mori Keraeng*). Thus, in the *Penti* celebration, there are dimensions that specifically demonstrate acknowledgment of the existence of God as the Supreme Being and as the fullness at the peak of human relations (Pandor, 2015a). Although the relationship between humans and the Spiritual Being is not physically visible, for Buber, their relationship is indeed real. Humans themselves are aware of their limitations and shortcomings. Therefore, the awareness of the fullness and completeness of their existence as humans is not found within themselves, nor in their fellow humans (Amaliyah & Nurhadi, 2022). Wholeness and fulfillment are discovered in their relationship with the One who is perfect, namely God as the 'Eternal and Perfect Thou.'

The *Penti* celebration, as an expression of religiosity, is inseparable from the Manggarai people's perspective that views nature as something sacred. For the Manggarai people, nature is not just a collection of physical or material objects; it is also a force that determines the sustainability of human life. Awareness of the power and force of nature beyond human capabilities leads the Manggarai people to a mystical view of nature. Nature is then seen not only as a place but also as a sacred space, the center of all meaning and life, and the primary source of existence (Perdana, 2016). In this sense, the Manggarai people understand that there is another reality that manifests and inhabits this nature. In other words, the Manggarai people's understanding and awareness of the Supreme Reality occur through their marvel at the phenomena of nature. Therefore, the *Penti* celebration, observed by the Manggarai people, is essentially a thanksgiving celebration to the ancestral spirits inhabiting specific places in the surrounding nature and to God (*Mori Keraeng*) as the creator of everything that exists (Sutam, 2012).

Therefore, in the formulation of prayers during the *Penti* celebration, there is always an expression that points to a transcendent reality, such as the title *Mori Keraeng* (God the creator); *Mori Ngaran* (God the ruler), *Jari Agu Dedek* (God the maker and shaper), *Ciri Agu Wawo* (God the maker and reference point), *Jari Agu Dading* (God the maker and giver of birth), *Ema Eta*, *Enda Wa* (father above in the sky and mother below on the earth). Usually, in customary expressions (*torok*) or in customary sayings (*go'et*), the mention of *mori agu ngaran-jari agu dedek* is expressed in a unified phrase (Pandor, 2015a). In addition, during the *Penti* celebration, there are also songs expressing belief in God as the Supreme Being. One distinctive song in *Penti* is the *sanda lima*. The essence of this song is an expression of the greatness of God or *Mori Keraeng* as the creator. Besides praising the greatness of God or *Mori Keraeng*, the *sanda lima* song also expresses the disposition of humans who always need God's presence. Thus, the song's lyrics include prayers to God or *Mori Keraeng* for the fulfillment of all basic needs of the Manggarai people in the future (Wahyu & Edu, 2018).

In Buber's view, humans have not found fulfillment and completeness in their relationship with the world and fellow humans. Humans will find completeness and fulfillment in their connection with the Supreme Reality, namely God (Suryosumunar, 2021). Thus, humans always direct themselves towards the Supreme Being in their relationship with nature and fellow humans. That is why humans always depend on and need God to give meaning



to their lives (Buber, 1967). Therefore, the title *Mori Agu Ngaran* or *Jari agu Dedek* (God the owner and creator) expresses the awareness of the Manggarai people regarding the identity of God (*Mori Keraeng*) as the creator and owner of everything that exists. Because everything that humans obtain in their lives, including their own lives, is considered a gift from *Mori Keraeng*.

This awareness then leads the Manggarai people to the belief that everything in the universe is connected to God. Therefore, for the Manggarai people, harming or damaging nature means harming or injuring *Mori Keraeng*. In this regard, reconciliation in the *Penti* culture is not merely related to objects or animals; it is connected to the Creator. In other words, damaging the handiwork of God is equivalent to making an error against Him. This notion aligns with the idea of Martin Buber, who states that reconciliation with the 'Eternal Thou' is the pinnacle of human reconciliation.

## Conclusion

The relationship of the Manggarai people with nature, fellow humans, and God is fundamentally tangible, as evident in the *Penti* celebration. *Penti* is a local wisdom that involves attitudes of respect, appreciation, and responsibility towards nature, fellow humans, and God. The *Penti* ritual brings forth an awareness within the Manggarai people to nurture the virtues of 'the other' through respect and appreciation for the existence of nature, fellow humans, and God. Through this celebration, the Manggarai people are led to a profound understanding of these relationships. In this sense, the Manggarai people express the existence of the universe as a part of their lives. Nature, for instance, is not seen as a collection of objects that can be exploited for human interests. In fact, there is a harmonious unity between humans and the cosmos (nature). Thus, the *Penti* celebration is a collective event where everyone is seen as subjects celebrating together. In this celebration, there are values that trigger the depth of relationships among human beings, such as brotherhood, respect, love, unity, and reconciliation. Ultimately, through this celebration, the Manggarai people also realize that everything is not born spontaneously but is created by *Mori Jari Agu Dedek* (God, the Creator).

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