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# HERMENEUTICS OF THE *OENAMES* TRIBE REGARDING *HAU MONEF* AS A SYMBOL OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURAL RELIGIOSITY IN THE BORDER REGION OF INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR

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## Abstracts:

*Each tribe has its own perspective on divinity or the supreme being. Therefore, the procedures for establishing a relationship with the supreme being also differ. Long before Catholicism was introduced by missionaries to the archipelago, traditional communities had unique procedures for establishing a relationship with the supreme being. The method used in this study is the literature method. The author studied library literature and linked it to the traditional practices of the Oenames tribe. The purpose of this study was to examine in greater depth the Oenames tribe's understanding of hau monef as a symbol of patriarchal religiosity. The results of the study show that members of the Oenames tribe believe that hau monef is a symbol of the presence of the Supreme Being through their ancestors. Therefore, whenever tribe members ask for blessings or permission from their ancestors, a ritual is always performed on hau monef. This shows that there is an unbroken relationship between the ancestors and the living members of the tribe. In conclusion, the Oenames tribe has a strong vertical paradigm of the supreme being, which is represented by the symbol of hau monef. Hau monef is a place for prayers and for giving thanks for all the blessings received by tribe members. Hau monef is not just a ritual artefact but a symbol of the presence of the Supreme Being, which Oenames tribe members believe has an impact on their safety and livelihood.*

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**Keywords:**

*Hermeneutics, Hau monef, patriarchy, religiosity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is the customs of a particular community that are passed down from generation to generation by the founders of a cultural tradition to those who come after them. The inheritance of these cultural values and meanings has been consistently maintained to this day. This fact shows that the continuity of cultural value inheritance is caused by a belief in the truth found in the way of life of each community, which is summarized in certain customs. Culture can be defined as the worldview of a community or group. Culture plays a very important role in the communication ecosystem, because the characteristics of culture in communication can distinguish between oral and written culture, which are the customs of a community in communicating its traditions.[1]

Religious symbols are considered sacred and have a function when they have been sanctified through a series of religious ceremonies.[2] The *Oenames* tribe believes that *hau monef* is a symbol of patriarchal religiosity. Why is *hau monef* a symbol of patriarchal religiosity? Men in the *Oenames* tribe have a significant role. Men are the leaders of the tribe, responsible for protecting and caring for others. *Hau Monef* is a symbol of protection for men who protect *Ni Enaf*, which is a symbol of

1 Syakhrani, A. W., & Kamil, M. L. (2022). Budaya Dan Kebudayaan: Tinjauan Dari Berbagai Pakar, Wujud-Wujud Kebudayaan, 7 Unsur Kebudayaan Yang Bersifat Universal. Journal form of Culture, 5(1), 1–10

2 Suwartini, N. P., Sendra, I. M., & Kristianto, Y. (2020). Simbol Agama Hindu Sebagai Produk Tato Di Kuta. Jurnal IPTA, 8(1), 46. https://doi.org/10.24843/ipta.2020.v08.i01.p07

women.[3] In carrying out rituals at *hau monef*, men lead and have the right to be around *Hau Monef*. *Hau monef* literally consists of the words hau (wood) and *monef* (male identity). Thus, hau monef becomes a symbolic machine that reinforces the patriarchal gender hierarchy.

It is undeniable that every ethnic group, wherever they may be, has traditions that recount events or historical life stories and customs that relate to the patterns of community life, such as the *Oenames* tribe, whose traditional customs believe that sacred pillars are present through the relics of their ancestors, namely *hau monef*. Sacred religious symbols are objects that have sacred value, which are used during religious ceremonies.[4] According to the author, hau monef is a three-branched pole that symbolizes the ancestors. *Hau monef* represents the presence of the immanent. Therefore, hau monef is where members of the *Oenames* tribe offer prayers and give thanks for their successes through rituals at *hau monef*. The *Oenames* tribe's symbols of prayer and gratitude are marked by the slaughter of sacrificial animals, whose blood is dripped onto the stone where the offerings are placed. If the ancestors approve, it will be marked by the intestines and liver of the sacrificed animal showing goodness.[5] Conversely, if the intestines and liver of the sacrificed animal do not show goodness, it is a sign that the ancestors do not approve because there are certain things that have not been completed.

*Hau monef* is a three-branched support pole. According to the beliefs of the *Oenames* tribe, this pole is believed to represent the presence of the Divine (*Uis Neno*), which has sacred value. In traditional rituals, their respect is evident in the form of complete surrender to the

[3] Amsikan, H. R. (2024). Makna Simbol Hau Monef bagi masyarakat dawan di pulau Timor. Jurnal Agama dan Kebudayaan. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.69621/jpf.v19i2.276

[4] Suwartini et al., 2020.

[5] Carsamer, E., & Abbam, A. (2023). Religion and tax compliance among SMEs in Ghana. Journal of Financial Crime, 30(3). https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-01-2020-0007

Holy Trinity, the creator of life. This understanding shows the cultural characteristics of the local tribe in building a relationship with the Supreme Being (*Uis neno*). Assessing a person's religious values cannot be done solely by asking questions about religious knowledge, but also by observing their attitudes and behaviour as a manifestation of the values and teachings they adhere to. The manifestation of religious values can be seen through worship as a form of submission, obedience and surrender. Then in the form of daily attitudes and deeds (morals). There are at least three religious criteria, namely: (1) involvement with the Absolute; (2) consciously linking behavior to a value system that originates from the Absolute; and (3) surrendering oneself, one's life and death to the Absolute.[6]

Sukanto in Mustari (2014,4) states that the process of humanization in accordance with religion is actually a process of internalizing faith, values, knowledge and skills in the context of recognizing and realizing those values into righteous deeds. This internalization process can only occur if there is interaction between human consciousness and God's will, which is brought into social communication. Internalization means 'internalizing' or 'making it part of oneself' or "internalizing" or 'taking possession' or 'becoming a full member'.[7] As religious people, religious values must be truly reflected in the form of attitudes, actions, or behavior and speech in daily life. People who are religious, faithful and devoted to God should demonstrate attitudes that reflect obedience to God's rules and teachings. Therefore, respect for the Supreme Being (*Uis neno*) initially began with traditional

6 Palar, Y. N., & Manua, E. R. (2020). " DUMIA UM BANUA " Sebuah Tradisi " Ator Kampung " Sebagai Upaya Menjaga Harmoni Manusia dan Alam. 69–77.

7 Mastoah, I., Marini, A., & Maksum, A. (2021). Analisis Nilai-Nilai Religius Dan Multikultural Pada Buku Paket Pai Kelas Ii Pada Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Inspiratif Pendidikan, X(20), 81–89.

rituals, establishing *Hau monef* as the main pillar of life. From there, they obtained life, health, blessings and abundant results, as well as a source of strength from a man or tribal chief (*Usif*).

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church, *Gaudium et Spes*, number 59, emphasizes that: 'The Church reminds everyone that culture must be directed towards the perfection of the whole person, the welfare of the community and the whole of human society'.[8] This quotation indicates that the Catholic Church does not prohibit religious practices that it considers to be correct. In essence, the *Oenames* tribe performs ritual practices around *Hau monef,* which signifies that the spirits of their ancestors are symbolically present in the ceremony. The *Oenames* tribe performs ritual practices around *Hau monef* for certain purposes or requests. For example, when the *Oenames* tribe is about to harvest their gardens/fields. Before the tribe members eat the produce from the gardens/fields, they must first place the harvest around the mesbah *hau monef*. The purpose of this ritual is to give thanks and pray for the safety of the tribe members in the future. In this study, the author uses the library method. The purpose of this paper is to examine in depth the *Oenames* tribe's perspective on the *Hau monef* symbol as a characteristic of patriarchal culture.

## METHOD

The method used in this paper is the literature review method. The author uses this method with the intention of studying literature related to the theme of this paper. Through systematic examination and analysis of various texts, publications, and scientific works, this study aims to investigate the depth of the selected research topic thoroughly. By

[8] Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia. (1965). DOKUMEN KONSILI VATIKAN II. 1662–1965.

gathering various information available in the library, this study seeks to explore the intricacies of the situation, thereby increasing its validity. With the various information available, the researcher then critically analyzed and evaluated the existing literature to develop a comprehensive and informed understanding of the research subject. The literature studied can be linked to the real conditions of the hau monef ritual practices carried out by the *Oenames* tribe. Based on the results of the literature study, the author conducted an analysis based on the author's observations and experiences of the hau monef ritual and drew conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Understanding the Terminology of Religiosity, Patriarchy, Hermeneutics and *Hau monef*

#### *Religiosity*

Every religious adherent has a different religious experience. Such experiences are evidenced by the extent of their participation in religious activities. This demonstrates the depth of their faith. Of course, their adherence to the religious values taught reflects the religious dimension of each religion.[9] Therefore, there are five religious dimensions as described by Stark and Glok, namely: 1) The ideological dimension. In this dimension, a person practices their religion according to what is taught. The teachings conveyed are dogmas that require every follower to accept them without question. For example: the dogma of the Virgin Mary as theotokos, Jesus as both human and God. 2) The ritualistic dimension.

[9] Najoan, D. (2020). Memahami Hubungan Religiusitas Dan Spiritualitas Di Era Milenial. Educatio Christi. 2020, 1(1), 64–74

In this dimension, every religion certainly has its own rituals of worship or religious practices. For example, praying, fasting and giving alms. 3) The experiential dimension. In this dimension, what every religious adherent actually needs is the implication of their religious teachings. How a religious adherent applies their religious teachings in their daily life. For example, not committing sins that are forbidden by God, forgiving one another and loving one another. 4) The intellectual dimension. Through this dimension, a religious adherent should deepen their faith with sufficient religious knowledge so as not to misinterpret it. 5) The consequential dimension. What every religious adherent must do is to practice their faith in a tangible way. Practical examples include visiting the sick, helping those in need, and serving the poor and neglected children.

## *Patriarchy*

Etymologically, the word patriarchy comes from the (Latin) word *pater* (father). Patriarchy is a cultural system that places men in a dominant role in social life. In relation to patriarchal culture, it is said that all matters relating to the public sphere are always dominated by men. By placing men in a dominant position, gender discrimination occurs. Women are always labelled as belonging to a second-class group. However, in relation to the theme of this article, it is not intended to suggest that men are more important than women. In this position, religion is considered to have a role in legalizing male domination, thus creating the perception that religion belongs only to men and does not support the existence of women.[10] However, in the context of the *hau*

[10] Putriana, H., & Ariani, S. A. (2023). Agama Dan Budaya Patriarki : Sebuah Telaah Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Religion And Patriarchal Culture : An Study On Gender Base-Violence Pendahuluan. 3(1), 21–34.

*monef* ritual, according to the traditions passed down by the ancestors, it is the men who play the leading role in offering prayers to the Divine through the ancestors at the *hau monef* courtyard. However, the *hau monef* symbol of the *Oenames* tribe characterises masculinity in the *Oenames* tribe. In short, the *hau monef* symbol described in this article shows that every married boy who has his own house has a responsibility to pass on the culture of his ancestors. Thus, *hau monef* identifies men. Therefore, the wood used for *hau monef* must be hard and strong.

Patriarchy is referred to as a culture because it is passed down from generation to generation without being recognised. For example, starting from the family structure, a father as the head of the family makes all decisions for all members of his family. It is systematically reinforced by mechanisms or institutions that strengthen the oppression of women. However, as the author explained earlier, the author does not discuss patriarchal culture as a whole, gender differences or the feminist struggle, but rather touches on themes related to the symbol of *hau monef*. For the *Oenames* tribe, talking about *hau monef* means talking about the position of men. According to the author, male names are more prominent than female names not because women are weak and inferior, but because the author sees that God has a purpose in placing more male names in the Bible. Men are given the task and responsibility as God's representatives in the world to love women as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:2).[11]

## *Hermeneutics*

Various philosophical sources mention that the word hermeneutics comes from the Greek verb hermenuein, which means to

[11] Desta Lenta Zebua, 'Theological Criticism of Patriarchal Culture in Hilimo 'asio, Nias' (2018).

understand, interpret, explain or translate. Looking at the origin of this meaning shows that hermeneutics has actually been practiced for a long time. In English, it is hermeneutics. The term in its various forms can be found in a number of ancient Greek texts, such as Aristotle's treatise entitled Peri Hermeneias (On Interpretation).[12] However, it was not until the 17th century that it began to be used to refer to a theory about the rules that must be followed in the process of correctly understanding and interpreting texts from the past, particularly sacred texts and classical texts. In the process of understanding something, whether it be a text or a context, various theories and methods will emerge. Hermeneutics helps us to correctly understand what is being communicated.[13] Hermeneutics is one of several theories and methods for uncovering meaning, so it can be said that hermeneutics has the primary responsibility of uncovering and revealing the meaning behind the symbols that are its objects.

Talking about hermeneutics means 'talking about the concept of understanding; because the core activity of hermeneutics is understanding, or more specifically, understanding texts. Furthermore, Hardiman says that 'hermeneutics is not a modern term, but an ancient term that can be traced back to Ancient Greece".[14] The term hermeneutics is related to the Greek god Hermes, the god of messengers. As a messenger who brought messages from the gods to humans, Hermes had to understand and interpret these messages and then convey their meaning to humans. The act of understanding and conveying the

12 Attamimi, F. (2012). Hermeneutika Gadamer Dalam Studi Teologi Politik. HUNAFA: Jurnal Studia Islamika, 9(2), 319. https://doi.org/10.24239/jsi.v9i2.80.319-341

13 F. Budi Hardiman,' 15, The Art of Understanding Hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Derrida. April (2016): 95–97.

14 Purba, D. W. (2018). Hermeneutika Sebagai Metode Pendekatan Dalam Teologi. Regula Fidei: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen, 3(1), 82–92. http://christianeducation.id/e-journal/index.php/regulafidei/article/view/21

meaning or intent in accordance with the sender of the message gives us an understanding of hermeneutics.

Every culture has its own meaning, purpose and message to convey. Therefore, expertise in interpreting culture is needed in order to build understanding, comprehension and acceptance within that culture itself. The act of interpreting a culture is to understand others who are culturally distant, and only then understand oneself who is culturally close.[15] This means that humans try to understand and comprehend the culture of others or those who are distant, in order to enter and become part of a new culture. There is endless debate about the best techniques or steps for interpretation that most closely approximate the true meaning. Therefore, various methods are needed, such as sociology, philosophy and theology, to assess and interpret religious and cultural symbols accurately and correctly.

## Understanding *Hau Monef* as a Symbol of Patriarchal Religiosity

In principle, every person and region has its own concept of religion and culture. Discussions about religion and culture often become endless debates. This is because understanding religion in a particular cultural context requires analysis from various aspects. Among the various discourses on religion and culture, Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist, contributed his ideas on the pros and cons of both.[16] For him, religion that has been embraced and implemented in a society can be studied without having to pit the two against each other. Clifford Geertz sees the two as

15 Tanuwidjaja, S., & Udau, S. (2020). Iman Kristen Dan Kebudayaan. Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Indonesia, 1(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.46445/jtki.v1i1.299

16 Riady, A. S. (2021). Agama dan Kebudayaan Masyarakat Perspektif Clifford Geertz. Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI), 2(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.22373/jsai.v2i1.1199

complementing each other; religion without culture cannot be actualized, while culture without religion cannot find deep meaning.

To understand *Hau monef* as a symbol of male identity among the *Oenames* tribe, it is first necessary to understand what is *Hau monef*. *Hau monef* is a vessel in the form of a worship pole dedicated to ancestors as a manifestation of the highest form. On the wooden pole of *hau monef*, there is a flat stone used to store offerings when performing rituals for specific purposes. In general, *hau monef* represents patriarchal cultural identity. Every house that has a *hau monef* is a sign that the household adheres to patriarchal culture. *Hau monef* is a symbolic mechanism that reinforces the patriarchal gender hierarchy. *Hau monef* is located on the side of the house facing the sunrise. The *hau monef* that has been planted next to the house has sacred value. This means that no other items are stored or placed on the wood or the *hau monef* platform, except for offerings during certain rituals. The *hau monef* represents the religiosity of the patriarchal system towards a transcendent God.[17] *Hau monef* is a tree with three branches planted outside the traditional houses of the Oenames people as an offering to the highest entity. Symbolizing the role of men in providing for their families, this tree is often decorated with young coconuts on its highest branch as a symbol of *Uis Neno's* position and life.[18] The Oenames tribe believes that the three branches of *Hau monef* symbolize the three highest figures: *Uis Neno* (the creator of life), *Uis Pah/Uis Oe* (ruler of the land and water), and *Bei nai* (ancestor). These three figures are considered to be givers of blessings and protectors. *Uis Neno* is the most exalted figure, interpreted as the king or god of the sky.

17 Uweubun, J. R. (2020). PERAN SIMBOL DALAM LITURGI DAN MANFAAT BAGI PENGHAYATAN IMAN. LOGOS.

18 Lusia Lael, Watu Yohanes Vianney, Hau Monef: A Means of Transcendental Communication and Symbol of the Cultural Trinity of the Dawan Tribe, 2020.

The *Oenames* tribe sees and recognizes that humans are always relational beings. Humans need others in their lives. Human relationships are well established with 'the Divine' or 'Empirical Reality' (vertical relationships) and with fellow humans (horizontal relationships). Humans depend on 'the Divine'. *Hau monef* is a very important symbol in establishing communication with the Divine or the transcendent.[19] Before performing traditional rituals, members of the *Oenames* tribe always ask for blessings and guidance through this symbol. This horizontal relationality in the culture of the *Oenames* tribe is influenced by cosmic relationship patterns. This concept is strongly found in the relationship between '*feto-Mone'* (man-woman) and *Be'i-Na'i* (grandfather-grandmother), which means that a person always exists because of their partner. The question is, how is the relationship between humans and 'The Divine' established? This concept explains that humans always depend on a supernatural reality that is believed to be the highest. This supreme reality is known in the *Oenames* tribe as *Uis Neno*. *Uis Neno* is the highest form of existence, highly revered by the *Oenames* tribe as the giver of life.[20]

## The Values of the Haumonef Ritual as a Symbol of Religiosity

In the implementation of the *Hau monef* ritual as a symbol of the religiosity of the *Oenames* tribe, there are several values contained therein[21], namely as follows:

19 Lusia Lael, et.al., 2020.

20 Adler et al., 2022. Religion-State Interaction at the Local Level: Key Findings from a Survey of Religion and Local Elected Officials. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 61(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12758

21 Manguju, Y. N. (2020). Nilai Teologis Masikka': Sebuah Ritus di Rantai Damai. BIA': Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen Kontekstual, 3(1), 114–127. https://doi.org/10.34307/b.v3i1.169

1. The Value of Loyalty

   An element of wisdom in the lives of members of the *Oenames* tribe in carrying out and continuing the traditional heritage of their ancestors to be carried out consistently.

2. The Value of Unity

   In the *Hau monef* ritual, the *Oenames* tribe continues to build unity without discriminating or distinguishing between one tribe and another, because through the *Hau monef* ritual, even though they are different, they continue to build communication and good relations with the tribes directly involved in the ritual.

3. The Value of Obedience

   One of the elements practised by the *Oenames* tribe, where the community, specifically the Oenames tribe, not only adheres to the *Hau monef* ritual but also does not forget the Church or adhere to Church rules.

4. Religious Values

   One of the beliefs practised by the *Oenames* tribe during the *Hau monef* ritual is that, in addition to believing in customs, they also believe in God as the Supreme Being.

Christian faith recognizes that God has attributes that are different from human qualities. God's qualities are far superior and are even said to be supremely superior to human qualities. The only link between God and humans is God's revelation through the intermediary of Jesus Christ. This is the mystery of the Incarnation, understood as the event of God becoming human, present in and through Jesus Christ.[22] In viewing the

[22] Somawati, A. V. (2020). Uis Neno Dan Uis Pah Dalam Kepercayaan Suku Boti. Prociding, 128.

main pillar as the link between humans and the Divine, the *Oenames* tribe sees and recognizes that there is an intense connection with the Christian faith. Where the main pillar is seen as the center of their lives, so that in traditional rituals the community presents the spirits of their ancestors as the link between humans and the 'Divine', with humans connected from the perspective of the local *Oenames* religion, is what this paper seeks to demonstrate.

## The Relationship Between Humans and 'The Divine'

The Catholic Church has a distinctive symbol: the cross. For followers of the Catholic Church, the cross is a symbol of strength, protection, victory and salvation. The cross is an important element in the Catholic Church, both as a community and as a building. The cross is ever-present in the lives of Catholics, and is used frequently in daily prayers. There are always two crosses in a church, one located outside the church and one inside. The cross outside the church is used as a sign to indicate that the building is a church. The cross inside the church is a means of supporting prayer; praying in front of the cross is more meaningful than praying in front of an object that does not symbolize anything.[23] This understanding indicates that in every regional civilization, certain tribes and nations have symbols that characterize/identify their adherents. This is precisely the case with the *Oenames* tribe located on the border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. One of the symbols of the *Oenames* tribe, which adheres to a patriarchal culture, is *hau monef*. *Hau monef* indicates the masculinity of the

[23] Leonard, L. (2021). Kajian Tentang Tradisi Kepercayaan Masyarakat Terhadap Tetu Uis Neno Sebagai Media Persembahan Pada Masyarakat Biboki Di Timor Kecamatan Biboki Selatan Kabupaten Timor Tengah Utara. 19(2), 202–207.

*Oenames* tribe. For members of the *Oenames* tribe, *Hau monef* is a symbol of the tribe's religiosity in establishing a relationship with the Supreme Being, or what is known as *Uis Neno*.

In the life of the *Oenames* tribe, there is a myth about God, about the Creator, or about the Holy One, which is institutionalized in the concept of *Uis Neno* (God) and *Uis Pah* (Lord of the Land). *Uis Neno* (God) is the god of the sky, while *Uis Pah* (Lord of the Land) is the god of the earth. The sun is a representation of *Uis Neno* (God), while the earth is a representation of *Uis Pah* (Lord of the Land).[24] The *Oenames* people always strive to create a harmonious relationship with these two gods, because both are very important to the survival of the *Oenames* people, especially in relation to agricultural activities. To ensure soil fertility, bring rain, ward off pests, and produce abundant harvests, for example, the Dawan people perform various rituals and traditional ceremonies, which are essentially to ask for blessings and help from these two cosmic forces. This relationship is part of the religious life of the *Oenames* tribe. This religious life is part of the way of "being" or existing, taking part in reality, complementing oneself with powers beyond the physical. In this case, it can be seen that the life of the *Oenames* tribe contains a dialectical nature, namely between the profane in everyday life and the sacred. The unity of society, nature and the Divine is revealed in a belief that every empirical event is always related to the supernatural or meta-empirical. This unity of society, nature and the Divine is manifested in a respectful attitude towards ancestors, in the performance of ritual offerings, slametan and various other rituals.

*Uis Neno Mnanu* is the Most High God, ruler of the heavens. He is identified with the blazing Sun, source of light, and also the creator and

[24] Leonard, 2021.

sustainer of their lives. He acts as the giver of coolness, comfort and prosperity. *Uis Neno Mnanu* remains distinct from *Uis Neno Pala*. The relationship between the two is identified as a *Feto-Mone* relationship. The term *feto-mone* means: woman-man. *Feto* is the term symbolizing women for *Uis Neno Pala*. And than *Mone* is the term symbolizing men for *Uis Neno Mnanu*.[25] The identification of women and men with the highest reality does not mean the identification of male and female charm. The role of *Uis Neno Pala* is very important and has a very special place in the work of creation for the survival of the *Oenames* tribe. Similarly, the *Oenames* tribe also always builds a relationship with the Divine and has a very special place in the work of creation for the survival of the tribe.[26]

The identification of *feto-mone* needs to be understood in an analogical-metaphorical sense. The aim is to describe the relationship of the 'Highest Being'. Through *Uis Neno Mnanu* (Male or *mone*) flows the fertility that gives life. This means that *Uis Neno Mnanu* is believed to be the giver of life, the Creator, the sustainer of human life. The term feto or woman is a safe place for a new life. The relationship between *Uis Neno Mnanu* and *Uis Neno Pala* is that *Uis Neno Mnanu* (Man) gives life-giving fertility to the people through the womb of *feto* and *Uis Neno Pala*.[27] Thus, for the *Oenames* tribe, the source and purpose of their lives come from the Divine and are bestowed by Him. Therefore, respect for the Divine is very important and is a major part of their lives. This respect can be seen in various traditional rituals that take place in their traditions, one

25 Amsikan, 2024.

26 Matau, T. N. (2021). Sakralitas Tua dalam Ritus Sae Toi Sanu Se'at etnik Amanuban Tengah, Nusa Tenggara Timur. Anthropos: Jurnal Antropologi Sosial dan Budaya (Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology), 6(2), 243. https://doi.org/10.24114/antro.v6i2.19444

27 Afi, K. E. Y. ., & Banamtuan, M. F. (2020). Kajian Sosio-Historis Tentang Pandangan Dunia Atoni Pah Meto Dalam Ritus Poitan Liana. Paradigma: Jurnal Kajian Budaya, 10(1), 49. https://doi.org/10.17510/paradigma.v10i1.335.

of which is respect for the ancestors at the main pole. Therefore, humans need to rely on Him and, of course, must trust in Him. Evidence of their dependence is seen in the rituals they perform to ensure that the source of life continues to be bestowed upon them by the 'Supreme Being'. Thus, the relationship between the two is beneficial for human survival.

## Realising Harmony Between Various Values in Cultural Patterns

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church, *Gaudium Et Spes*, emphasizes that 'the Church reminds everyone that culture must be directed towards the perfection of the whole person, the welfare of the community and the whole of human society'.[28] Therefore, it is necessary to provide guidance in such a way that the ability to feel awe, to explore something, to reflect on it, to form personal opinions, and to foster religious, moral and social spirit develops.[29] This is because culture, which is rooted in the rational and social nature of human beings, constantly requires reasonable freedom to develop itself, as well as the reasonable ability to act independently and according to its own principles. Therefore, it is only fitting that culture demands respect and, in a certain sense, cannot be challenged, without undermining individual or collective rights, both specific and general, within the scope of public welfare.

The Council now explains what was taught by the First Vatican Council, stating that there are two different levels of knowledge, namely faith and reason; of course, the Church does not prohibit "the realm of

28 KWI, 1965.

29 Surbakti, P. H., & Surbakti, N. G. (2019). Hermeneutika Lintas Tekstual: Alternatif Pembacaan Alkitab Dalam Merekonstruksi Misiologi Gereja Suku di Indonesia. Societas Dei: Jurnal Agama dan Masyarakat, 6(2), 209. https://doi.org/10.33550/sd.v6i2.116

culture, art and human knowledge. Each, within its own sphere, uses its own principles and methods, ‘so’ while acknowledging that reasonable freedom," the Council declares the autonomy of culture, especially science, which is only natural. Paul Budi, ‘Standing on Earth - Standing with Humanity.[30] Therefore, it is important to emphasize that culture should not be diverted from its purpose, nor should it be forced to serve political or economic powers (*GS.59*). The Council wants to talk about ‘the Church in the midst of the world’. The world is defined as the human world or society. Therefore, from the outset, all attention is focused on social life.

The Council wishes to speak about the present situation, so attention is directed to concrete issues in human society. These concrete issues have a connection between the message of salvation and culture. For God, who revealed Himself fully in His incarnate Son, spoke according to the culture characteristic of various times. Likewise, the Church, which has lived throughout the ages in various situations, has drawn on the resources of diverse cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations through its preaching, to explore and deepen it, and to express it more effectively in liturgical celebrations and in the diverse life of the faithful.[31] However, the Church, which is sent to all nations of all ages and in all regions, is not exclusively bound to any particular tribe or nation, to any particular way of life, to customs, whether old or new. While holding fast to its own tradition, and at the same time being aware of its universal mission, the Church is able to establish fellowship with various cultural patterns.

30 Budi, P. (2013). Berpijak Di Bumi – Berpihak Kepada Manusia (Mandat dari Gaudium et Spes ) Paul Budi Kleden. Dokumen Gereja.

31 Randa, F. (2020). Karya Keselamatan Allah Dalam Yesus Kristus Sebagai Jaminan Manusia Bebas Dari Hukuman Kekal Allah. LOGON ZOES: Jurnal Teologi, Sosial dan Budaya, 3(1), 35–62. https://doi.org/10.53827/lz.v3i1.17

Thus, both the Church itself and various cultures are enriched. The good news about Christ ceaselessly renews the lives and cultures of sinful humanity, and combats and eradicates the errors and misfortunes that stem from the incessant temptation of sin, which is a constant threat. The Gospel continually clarifies and elevates the customs of nations. It enriches the spiritual heritage and innate talents of every nation and every age with supernatural riches, strengthening, completing and renewing them in Christ. Thus, the Church, in fulfilling its own mission, automatically plays its part and contributes to human culture and society. Through its activities, including in the field of liturgy, it educates people to inner freedom.[32] Human beings are characterized by their personal journey towards true fulfilment of their humanity through culture, namely by preserving what is good and valuable in their nature. Therefore, wherever human life is discussed, nature and culture are closely intertwined. Therefore, human culture encompasses historical and social dimensions, and the term culture often has sociological and ethnological meanings. It is in this sense that people talk about various types of culture.

## The Religiousness of the *Oenames* Tribe regarding *Hau monef*[33]

To understand religiousness, as discussed by previous researchers Lukman Rais et al., (April, 2025), there are three terms that each have different meanings, namely religion, religiousness, and religious. Religion comes from the word 'religion', which means religion or belief in a

[32] Sidabutar, H. (2020). Teologi Keselamatan Injil Lukas 19 : 1-10 dan Implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Agama Kristen. 10(1), 1–16.

[33] Rais, L., Ramli, U., Pattisahusiwa, F., Hidaya, N., & Maqfirah, A. (2025). Religiusitas , Konflik Gender , dan Pencegahan Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan dan Anak di Kota Sorong. 11(1), 1–20.

supernatural power above humans, and 'religiosity', which means piety, great devotion to religion. Religious means religion or the religious nature inherent in a person. Every religious person uses religiosity as a basis for behavior, which encompasses all human activities, not only acts of worship, but also the way they interact with one another.[34] Thus, religiosity means the extent to which a person adheres to religious beliefs and practices. Catholicism came to Asia with a surprising proclamation that Christ was the only way to salvation. Christ was understood as final and superior. Eben Nuban Timo, 'The Search for Relevant Christian Witness in Asia (Kosuke Koyama: The Gospel According to an Asian Perspective),' Ledalero Journal 12, no. 2 (2017): 289. Long before Christ's teachings were brought by the colonizers, the Oenames tribe had a way of building a relationship with the Supreme Being (*Uis Neno*).[35]

In the era before the arrival of Catholicism in Timor, the *Oenames* tribe had a number of religious practices dedicated to the Supreme Being. The *Oenames* tribe believed in the concept of a transcendent and immanent God (*Uis Neno Mnanu* and *Neno Pala*). The concept of a transcendent God is connoted by *Uis neno mnanu*. This means that God is distant and invisible, but is believed to exist as the Creator. Meanwhile, the concept of an immanent God is connoted by *Usi Neno pala*, which means that God is close through ancestors, parents, fellow human beings, and people found everywhere.[36]

The concepts of divinity practiced by members of the *Oenames* tribe in the border region between Indonesia and Timor-Leste lead them to perform ritual practices as a symbol of building a relationship with the

34 Rais, Lukman, et.al.2025.

35 Timo, Eben Nuban. "PENCARIAN KESAKSIAN KRISTEN YANG RELEVAN DI ASIA (Kosuke Koyama: Injil Menurut Pandangan Asia)." Jurnal Ledalero 12, No. 2 (2017): 289. Https://Doi.Org/10.31385/Jl.V12i2.93.289-310.

36 Afi & Banamtuan, 2020.

Supreme Being. *Hau monef* is a means of communication between ancestors and living members of the tribe. The Oenames tribe's concept of *Hau onef*, symbolized by a three-branched tree, indicates *Uis Neno*, *Uis Pah* and *Amnasi* (grandfather and grandmother); the ancestors. These three individuals have a significant relationship because members of the *Oenames* tribe believe that their ancestors are always present and faithfully carry out every request made by members of the *Oenames* tribe. Below, the author shows an example of a three-branched *hau monef* model.

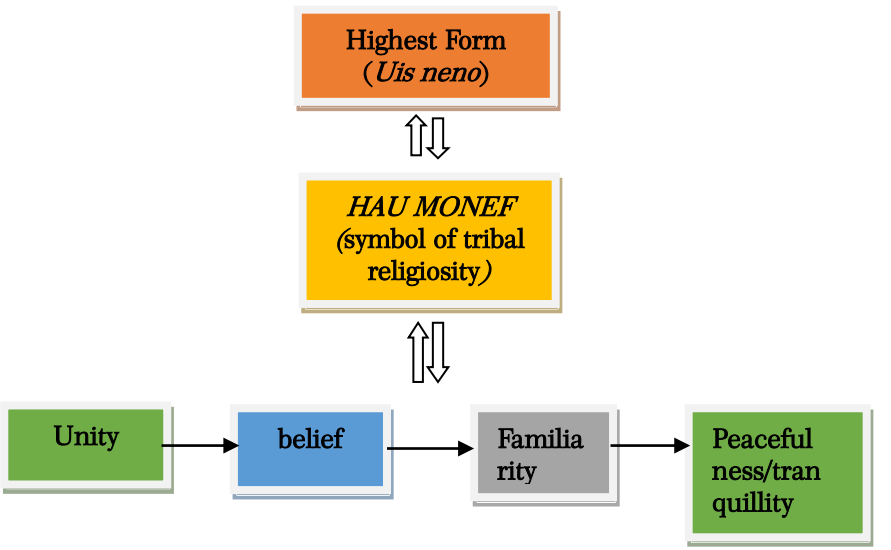
**Figure 1**. Three-branched haumonef model.

The *Hau monef* symbol shown in the picture is an example of one of the *Oenames* tribe's *hau monef*. The deepest meaning behind the *hau monef* ritual is to pay respect to the ancestors. This is because the *Oenames* tribe believes that the ancestors are the “connecting link”

between God and humans. In carrying out the *hau monef* tradition, tribe members place offerings on a flat stone between the branches of the *hau monef*, as seen in the image. The *hau monef* ritual is performed as a form of respect for the ancestors, and this tradition is a symbol of God to the tribe members. Below, the author presents the pattern of the relationship between humans and the Divine.

The *hau monef* symbol shown in the picture is an example of one of the *hau monef* of the *Oenames* tribe. The deepest meaning of the *hau monef* ritual practice is to pay respect to the ancestors. This is because the *Oenames* tribe believes that the ancestors are the "connecting link" between God and humans. In carrying out the *hau monef* tradition, tribe members offer sacrifices placed on a flat stone between the branches of the *hau monef* tree, as seen in the image. The *hau monef* ritual is performed as a form of respect for the ancestors, and this tradition is a symbol of God to the tribe members. Below, the author presents the pattern of the relationship between humans and the Divine.

**Figure 2.**
Diagram of the *Oenames* tribe's belief in the Supreme Being



Based on the diagram, it shows that the *Oenames* tribe in the border region between Indonesia and Timor-Leste has a tradition of honoring their ancestors through the symbol of *hau monef*, which is possessed by every member of the tribe. The *hau monef* possessed by each member of the tribe represents the relationship between living tribe members and their ancestors. The ancestors are believed to be the visible manifestation of the immanent God. In this concept, members of the *Oenames* tribe believe that their ancestors are mediators between the tribe and the transcendent Supreme Being (*Uis Neno*). The impact of this relationship results in unity, trust, familiarity and peace/tranquility. In the concept of the relationship between members of the *Oenames* tribe and the supreme being, there is a reciprocal relationship. In reality, when tribe members perform rituals to honour their ancestors, they will receive peace and tranquility in their daily lives.

The value contained in the *hau monef* tradition is the value of intimacy that is woven into the *hau monef* tradition. This closeness demonstrates the value of religiosity (where tribe members remain faithful in continuing the traditional heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation), the value of unity (where tribe members continue to build unity without discriminating between one tribe member and another because what is required in this ritual is unity among fellow members in building good communication), loyalty (where tribe members remain loyal to this ritual) and trust (where tribe members place trust in one another).[37] The *Hau monef* symbol is the foundation and basis of life

[37] Mastoah, I., Marini, A., & Maksum, A. (2021). Analisis Nilai-Nilai Religius Dan Multikultural Pada Buku Paket Pai Kelas II Pada Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Inspiratif Pendidikan, X(20), 81–89. http://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/Inspiratif-Pendidikan/article/view/17071

for the *Oenames* tribe. Members of the *Oenames* tribe demonstrate their existence as a tribe with distinctive characteristics. In addition to inheriting this culture, the *Oenames* tribe also lives in a religious context that determines their lives.[38] Furthermore, they also live in a kinship system that highly values togetherness and brotherhood, so that the *Oename*s tribe can live in prosperity and harmony among tribes, communities, and religions around them.

The above concept explains that there would be no culture without its supporters, namely humans. Humans can shape a life that contains cultural values that become the characteristics and distinctive features of their personality. Thus, humans cannot live alone but form a community in which they live together and begin to live the cultures that are generally accepted in that community. Cultural heritage is a form of respect for *hau monef*, which refers to the Supreme Being. This respect has always been a custom practised by the *Oenames* tribe in interpreting the Christian values contained therein.

The presence of the Divine in all forms of traditional rituals, especially the honouring of ancestors through the *hau monef* ritual, is believed by the *Oenames* tribe to be a symbol of communication. *Hau monef* is a means of communication between members of the *Oenames* tribe and their ancestors.[39] Such rituals are performed as a form of respect for the ancestors. So the tribe does not "worship" idols. According to local tribe members, *hau monef*, in every culture that is lived and felt, is a means of bridging the relationship between humans and the

[38] Lakonawa, P. (2014). Memaknai Simbol-Simbol Religius Injil Yohanes. Humaniora, 5(1), 324. https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniora.v5i1.3031

[39] Handayani, M., Damayanti, N., & Saragih Manihuruk, A. (2011). KOMUNIKASI TRANSENDENTAL (Suatu Tinjauan dari Dimensi Ilmu Antropologi Metafisika). Jurnal Ilmiah Imu Komunikasi, 10(2), 1–19. doi: https://doi.org/10.32509/wacana.v10i2.455

Creator.[40] The belief in God's presence in people's lives is experienced through God's intervention as a protector and guide, who always directs their lives towards a safe and prosperous goal. They experience this during and after the traditional ritual is performed in a ceremony to honour their ancestors, which takes place at *hau monef*. Their purpose in honouring *Uis Pah* is so that they will always be blessed, protected, given safety, and so that the crops they will harvest or have already harvested will be blessed so that they will always have enough.

In the beliefs of the *Oenames* tribe, *Uis Pah* is likened to a mother who fulfils the needs of her children. *Uis Pah* is likened to the ruler of the earth who provides prosperity and welfare, as well as supervising and protecting the universe. *Uis Pah* also raises and protects humans, especially the *Oenames* tribe. Meanwhile, *Uis Neno* is believed by the *Oenames* tribe to be the father who rules the after life. It is *Uis Neno* who will determine whether a person will enter heaven or hell based on their deeds during their lifetime. When associated, the concept of *Uis Pah* is 'Ruler of the Earth', while *Uis Neno* is 'Ruler of the Sky'.[41] *Uis Pah* is the place where humans exist, where humans obtain life and protection, while *Uis Neno* is the source of life and human life itself. *Uis Neno*, as the supreme deity with greater power who rules over heaven and earth, must not be referred to directly. This supreme and almighty deity is given a name that is none other than an attribute of *Uis Neno*, the God of the day (sky). It was the missionaries during the Portuguese colonial era who gave the name *Uis Neno* to the 'God of the Christians'. However, here *Uis Neno* is understood as the 'king of the sky'. The *Oenames* people themselves never refer to *Uis Neno* as the highest being directly.

40 Lusia Lael, 2020.
41 Somawati, 2020.

Here we can see that members of the tribe recognise and believe that humans are always dependent on a supernatural reality that is believed to be supreme. This supreme reality is often referred to as *Uis Neno,* which is the highest form of existence that is highly respected by the community as the Giver of Life. Christianity recognizes that God has different characteristics from humans in viewing *hau monef* as a link between humans and the Divine, so the community believes that there is a close relationship with the Christian faith, namely that *hau monef* is seen as the center of their lives, so that in these traditional rituals, the community presents the spirits of their ancestors as a link between humans and the Divine.[42] This custom is always upheld by the community in viewing *hau monef* as a link between their relationship with God.

## CONCLUSION

The *Hau Monef* symbol represents the presence of the ancestors (*be'i na'i*) who connect the tribe members with the Divine. *Hau Monef*, depicted as a tree with three branches, symbolizes the spiritual strength and patriarchal identity of the *Oenames* tribe. In the context of the relationship between tribe members and the Supreme Being, tribe members believe that the type of wood chosen as the symbol of *Hau Monef* indicates the strength of the tribe members. The wood used is also selected wood that has meaning. For example, *hau matani* (hard wood/strength). The deepest meaning of this wood indicates the strength of the tribe, which is not easily shaken by disturbances from outside the tribal community. The meaning of this wood in the tribe's perspective is a

[42] Mussa, D. P. F., & Ngabalin, M. (2022). Konsep Keselamatan Menurut Rasul Paulus : Kajian Historis Kritis Dalam Roma 5 : 1-2 dan Implikasinya Bagi Orang Kristen. 1407(November), 1–2.

symbol of the tribe's strength that protects them from various threats of evil. The *Oenames* tribe believes that the God they believe in is a God who always protects (*Uis Neno afatis*) them from all threats of mortal danger. Furthermore, the *Oenames* tribe's concept of God is a God who always guides (*usi neno anonot*) tribe members to the path of righteousness.

The *Oenames* tribe believes and trusts that by performing traditional rituals, they will receive abundant blessings from God that are beneficial to their lives and livelihoods. The beliefs and trust of the *Oenames* tribe have an impact on their lives, namely receiving blessings and safety in life. Therefore, the symbol of *Hau monef* cannot be ignored by any male member of the *Oenames* tribe. Behind *Hau monef* lies the essence and identity of patriarchal religiosity. From this article, the author's contribution to the reader is that the *Hau monef* tradition of the *Oenames* tribe is a spiritual cosmological symbol. *Hau monef* is not only a sacred three-branched tree, but also an important symbol that reflects the spiritual strength of the *Oenames* tribe members.

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