



Theological Value in the Bakaua Ritual Tradition in the Sacred Graveyard: A Case Study in Nagari Sungai Limau, Dharmasraya Regency

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Abstract. This article explains the Bakaua ritual at sacred graves, a tradition of the Nagari Sungai Limau community that has deep theological value. This research aims to analyze the meaning of theological values in the Bakaua ritual and how its practice can strengthen people's spiritual relationships. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research examines the spiritual, social, and cultural aspects inherent in the Bakaua tradition. The research results indicate that this ritual serves not only as a means of prayer and respect for ancestors but also as a medium for strengthening social relations and preserving local wisdom. Apart from that, the Bakaua ritual is seen as a form of asking for protection, expressing gratitude, and fulfilling vows, which reflects the close relationship between culture and theology in the life of Minangkabau society. The method used in this research is qualitative, encouraging a different approach from previous research, which only discussed Bakaua dramaturgy in the Minangkabau society. However, this paper places more emphasis on aspects of theological values in the Bakaua ritual tradition at sacred graves. This study highlights how theological meaning is embodied through symbolic practices, offerings, and communal prayers that represent submission to divine will. It also reveals how the ritual facilitates intergenerational transmission of spiritual values, maintaining continuity of belief systems in modern contexts. By analyzing community participation and oral narratives, the research uncovers deep spiritual motives rooted in Islamic beliefs intertwined with local cultural expressions. In addition, the findings underscore the community's resilience in preserving traditional theology-based rituals despite the influence of modernization and shifts in religious interpretations. The Bakaua ritual thus becomes a cultural-theological bridge that binds generations and sustains spiritual identity within the dynamic life of the Minangkabau people.

Keywords: Bakaua Ritual, Minangkabau, Nagari Sungai Limau, Sacred Graves, Theological Values

1. INTRODUCTION

Each region in Indonesia has its traditions, unique to it, that are still passed down from generation to generation, even as times continue to evolve. Additionally, the traditions that exist in a community are often the result of hereditary practices passed down from ancestors. (Darwis, 2018) This is because traditions are created from the community itself. Humans and culture are an inseparable unit, while tradition is an integral part of human beings themselves. Even if human beings die, their traditions will be passed on to their descendants, and so on. (Poerwanto, 2000) Human beings in the process of developing cultural mandates cannot separate themselves from the components of life that are also elements of universal cultural formation, such as language, daily technological systems, livelihood systems, social organizations, knowledge systems, religions, and the arts. Human beings, as social creatures, are culturally influenced; every human being on this earth is born into a particular culture. This culture cannot be separated from humanity and will always accompany it wherever it goes. (Fauhatun, 2020) (Gusnanda & Nuraini, 2020)

Ultimately, the Indonesian nation's culture encompasses a diverse range of traditions, which are practiced by all. Speaking of tradition, it is an integral part of a culture. In anthropological dictionaries, tradition refers to customs that encompass magical-religious practices from the life of an indigenous person, including cultural values, norms, laws, and rules that are interrelated and form a system or established regulation that encompasses all cultural conceptions. (Hasanah & Wisri, 2021)

Diversity of Ritual Practices in Indonesian Culture. Indonesia is known for its rich culture and diverse ritual practices, which are often shaped by local beliefs, religions, and customary values. Rituals have become an integral part of the existence of every individual and group in society. (Rumahuru, 2018) In many regions, the practice of rituals is carried out as a form of respect for the ancestors or spiritual guardians of a place considered sacred, such as holy tombs. This kind of ritual not only holds spiritual value but also serves as a form of culture passed down from generation to generation. (Saikuddin, 2022).

In the Minangkabau community, the tradition of respecting ancestors and sacred tombs is preserved as a form of respect for the history and beliefs that have been held since ancient times. One of the practices often carried out is the mangrove ritual at the sacred tomb, a form of ritual that holds substantial sacred and religious value for the local community. This ritual contains various symbolic meanings that are believed to bless, protect, or connect the community with spiritual and divine aspects. (Mirdad et al., 2022)

One of the traditions in Mianagkabau that still survives today is the *Bakaua ritual tradition*. The existence of *the Bakaua* tradition in the sacred tomb of Nagari Sungai Limau means that this ritual not only functions as a traditional ceremony but also contains deep theological values. This ritual is believed to strengthen the relationship between the community and the Creator through the medium of ancestors or spiritual guardians buried in the place. This research will explore how theological values are understood and applied in the practice of mangroves in Sungai Limau and how these rituals strengthen the spiritual bonds of the community with their ancestors and divine aspects.

The tradition of *mangrove* rituals in sacred tombs reflects the community's deep-seated theological values. First, this ritual is believed to ward off disasters, serving as a request for protection from the Almighty through the intermediary of a sacred place. Second, *mangroves* foster a sense of unity among families and the community, creating a strong bond of togetherness and family. Third, this ritual is an expression of gratitude for the gifts received, acknowledging the blessings bestowed. Fourth, this tradition is also interpreted as a form of fulfilling vows or paying off promises that have been made. Finally, *mangroves* are also a

unique feature, serving as a recreational event that liven up the atmosphere of togetherness and help maintain cultural preservation.

The tradition of *mangrove* rituals in this sacred tomb reflects rich theological values, particularly in its efforts to maintain a relationship with God and the ancestors. From the observations of residents around the tomb, pilgrims who come from four villages in this area usually perform the mangrove ritual by burning incense, led by a *siak* person. *Urang siak* refers to an *alim ulama*, or a person who understands and practices Islam. This ritual not only reflects gratitude and efforts to avoid disasters, but also strengthens social ties and preserves ancestral cultural values.

This ceremony was also led by *urang siak* (Religious Figures). In this ceremony, it is carried out when the wish is granted, as well as an expression of gratitude. And as a form of vow payment So with the above problems, the author is very interested in conducting thesis research with the title "Theological Value in the *Tradition of Bakaua* Rituals in the Sacred Tomb: A Case Study in Nagari Sungai Limau, Dharmasraya Regency" Indonesia is famous for its rich cultural diversity, where each region has a unique tradition that is inherited from generation to generation. These traditions are an integral part of culture and form the identity of every society. In the Minangkabau society, traditions such as honoring ancestors and sacred tombs have been preserved and practiced for centuries. One such ritual is the Bakaua ceremony in the holy tomb, a tradition that holds profound theological and spiritual significance. The Bakaua ritual, performed at the sacred cemetery of Nagari Sungai Limau, is a form of cultural preservation that maintains a relationship with the gods and ancestral spirits. The ritual not only reflects the values of reverence for ancestors but also serves as a spiritual bridge between the living and the sacred, embodying the theological principles that shape society's relationship with its beliefs, its ancestors, and its God. (Busyro et al., 2019)

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the community, ancestors, and God? How does the Bakaua ritual strengthen social relations and maintain cultural preservation in these times?

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The method employed in this study is a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design. This research will collect data through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with local communities, especially those involved in the implementation of the Bakaua ritual. Additionally, an analysis of related documents and literature will be conducted to enrich the understanding of the theological values inherent in this ritual. The data analysis process will be performed using thematic analysis techniques, where researchers will identify themes related to theological values, social relations, and cultural preservation within the Bakaua ritual.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Theological Dimension in the Bakaua Ritual

Theology is the science of divine things, specifically about God, not according to human reason but through divine revelation, which reveals not only Who God is in Himself but also what He relates to us. It is not just discussing His nature, but also His will —the teaching that God expects of us and what we should expect of God, what we should be afraid of. Mangrove rituals encompass various theological dimensions that reflect the complex relationship between humans, God, and their ancestors.

The first dimension is a form of application for protection. The people who perform this ritual believe that by performing mangroves in sacred tombs, they will be protected from disasters and catastrophes. This illustrates the theological concept in Islam of tawakal to God by utilizing the medium of places considered to have spiritual power. The second dimension is the strengthening of social relations and togetherness. The mangrove ritual is also a venue for strengthening the relationship between families and the community. Through this ritual, the community demonstrates a sense of togetherness and family, which is a highly valued aspect in the Minangkabau community that upholds the importance of collectivity. The third dimension is an expression of gratitude for the blessings given by God.

People who perform mangroves consider this ritual a form of gratitude to God for all the gifts that have been received, both in the aspects of daily life and in the spiritual aspect. This expression of appreciation reflects the understanding that everything received is a gift from God Almighty. The fourth dimension is the fulfillment of vows. Mangrove rituals are also

often performed as a form of payment for vows or promises made by individuals or community groups. Nazareth is a personal commitment that is frequently spoken to seek blessings or ward off calamity, and the mangrove ritual serves as a means of fulfilling this commitment.

Theology, as it is known, discusses the fundamental teachings of a religion. Everyone who wants to delve into the intricacies of their religion needs to study the theology contained within the religion they follow. Studying theology will give a person beliefs that are based on a solid foundation. And which is not easily swayed by the passage of time. Theology is a discipline that discusses divinity, specifically examining God's nature from various perspectives and its relationship with the natural world. Therefore, theology is typically accompanied by specific qualifications, such as Jewish theology, Christian theology, and Islamic theology (kalam science). (Latif, 2023)

Theology is a term that is synonymous with the science of belief, the science of monotheism, and the science of faith, because this theology is based on a certain understanding and pattern of thinking that contains the content of these sciences. (Abdillah et al., 2022) From the above review, we can understand that Theology is not only limited to the study of scripture and religious doctrine but is also evident in traditional practices that reflect the relationship between humans and God. There is a theological area in the context of mangrove rituals that interprets how spiritual values, faith, and gratitude are manifested in the form of local rituals rooted in the culture of the people of Sungai Limau.

Understanding and Application of Theological Values in the Bakaua Ritual Tradition at the Nagari Sacred Tomb in Sungai Limau

The theological value in the Bakaua ritual tradition at the sacred tomb of Nagari Sungai Limau is understood as a form of profound spiritual devotion to God, mediated through the ancestors who are considered to have a special affinity with the divine aspect. In the view of the Minangkabau people, sacred tombs are not only considered a physical resting place for ancestors, but also a place with spiritual power that serves as a medium to draw closer to God. This theological value is applied in various ways during the Bakaua ritual. First, this ritual is interpreted as a request for divine protection. The community believes that performing rituals in mangroves can ward off dangers and disasters. This reflects the Islamic belief that all protection comes from God, while places considered sacred serve as intermediaries to strengthen the relationship with Him. In addition, the Bakaua ritual is also viewed as a form of gratitude for all the blessings bestowed by God.

The people who perform this ritual express their gratitude and appreciation for all the gifts they have received in their daily lives. This indicates that the Bakaua ritual is not only a request for, but also an expression of gratitude to God for all that has been bestowed upon them. The application of this theological value is also reflected in the form of fulfilling vows. For some individuals, this ritual is performed as a form of payment for vows or promises made previously to God or ancestors, demonstrating a commitment to remain faithful to the religious teachings and cultural values that have been inherited. Meanwhile, the Bakaua ritual can be explored from the origin of the word or the etymology of the term "Bakaua ritual" itself. *Bakaua* in Minangkabau has the root word '*kaua*', which in Indonesian is '*haul*', which gets the prefix '*ba*' (equivalent to the prefix '*ber*' in Indonesian), so if it is made into Indonesian, it is '*berhaul*.' The word '*kaua*' originates from the Arabic word '*khaul*', which means: strength; sufficient limit of obligation to pay zakat; commemoration of a person's death day, which is held once a year, usually accompanied by the salvation of the spirit. Based on this, Bakaua can be understood as a form of ritual carried out to fulfill an obligation, which is perceived as having been completed because a sign indicates that the count or measure of the obligation has been reached.

In relation to disasters and outbreaks, *Bakaua* is a celebration or event that serves as a benchmark for the threat of disaster or plague. (Pramayoza, 2022a) In addition, during the implementation of the mangrove ritual, which involves making a wish and a request, a *tabarruk* is performed at the sacred tomb, with the hope that the great name of the scholar and the blessings he has bestowed can overcome the problems they experience.

Based on observations of interviews with the local community and pilgrims of the sacred tomb, various requests were made by pilgrims, including seeking soul mates, wanting to have offspring, and seeking success in a particular activity or field, as well as protection against disasters, to achieve their desired goals. He further explained that the request remains with Allah SWT, only conveyed through *me*, because *I* am the guardian of Allah. In addition, the form of ritual in the Bakua tradition practiced by the Sungai Limau Regency Nagari Community in Dharmasraya involves paying vows.

From various villages located in Kecamatan Asam Jujuhan, Dharmasraya Regency, there are also visitors who pay vows, starting with a request, and the request must be fulfilled when it is achieved, because if it is not, it will cause the army to come after the person who made the vow. One of the visitors who was going to pay the vow revealed that two years earlier, he had made a vow that if he got married, he would take his wife to visit the kermat tomb, which is located at the end of the river. Sheikh Burhanuddin. After the intention is achieved,

he pays for the purpose. All he did was visit the tomb of the Shaykh and ask for prayers so that they would be a peaceful family and not have many problems.

Symbolic Meaning in the Mangrove Ritual and Its Influence on Community Relations with Ancestors and God

The Bakaua ritual in the sacred tomb is rich in deep symbolic meanings that not only foster reverence for ancestors but also serve as a means to strengthen spiritual bonds with the Divine. **Symbolic Meaning of Ritual Mangroves: Burning of incense:** One of the symbols that is often seen in the Bakaua ritual is the burning of incense. This incense not only serves as a means to create a sacred atmosphere, but is also considered a medium that connects the human world with the spiritual world. The burning of incense is a symbol to honor the spirits of ancestors and ask God for protection. **Prayer and Dhikr:** Through prayers and dhikr offered during rituals, people believe they invoke God's grace and protection. This prayer is a form of devotion and recognition of God's greatness that is the core of the ritual. **Closing with Food and Offerings:** Certain elements in this ritual, such as the presentation of food or offerings, hold symbolic meaning as a form of tribute to ancestors and sacred guardians, signifying respect and gratitude for the blessings bestowed.

Influence on Relationship with Ancestors and God: With Ancestors: The Bakaua ritual strengthens community relations with ancestors who are buried in sacred places. The tomb is considered a place that not only stores physical bodies, but also stores blessings and prayers addressed to ancestors. The community believes that their ancestors still have a spiritual influence that can provide guidance and blessings. This ritual enables people to feel connected to their deceased ancestors and to receive spiritual guidance. **With God:** This ritual also serves as a means to draw closer to God. Through the intermediary of ancestors who are considered sacred, the community prays and asks for protection and blessings. This reflects the belief that God is the source of all things and that through various blessed intermediaries, they can connect themselves with Him. People feel God's presence through these practices that strengthen their spiritual bonds.

Some pilgrims pay their respects to visit the tomb and give alms. As revealed by one of the pilgrims, carrying out the mangrove tradition involves burning kamian and concluding with a bajamba meal around the sacred tomb complex. As a ritual, even though it is carried out in different places by actors or participants who are also not the same, the Bakaua ritual has a tradition of activities, namely in the form of several meaningful theological values that convey essential values and are still maintained by the supporting community. During the planning of

the *Bakaua ritual*, the values of deliberation and consensus, as well as a sense of togetherness in facing threats to living together, emerged. In the preparation of *Bakaua*, a traditional governance value was reflected in the division of labor and burdens. During the implementation of *Bakaua*, the values of leadership, volunteerism, and order were raised. Meanwhile, in the period after the implementation of *Bakaua*, the values of brotherhood and bonds between fellow members of the community of a nagari were reinforced.

Thus, the *Bakaua ritual* is essentially transformative, serving as a vehicle to change the views, attitudes, and behaviors of its supporters. Through the symbols used in the implementation of the *Bakaua ritual*, each member of the community has the opportunity to assess and reflect on the strength they have to act and behave in daily life. The purpose of implementing the *Bakaua ritual* is thus to neutralize the personal interests of those involved as participants in the ritual, prioritizing attitudes that maintain the behavior of community life or living together in *the nagari*.

In the traditional ceremony of *mangroves*, the author suggests that a container should be used to explain the meaning of the ceremony itself; this is intended so that future generations will understand that this ceremony will be preserved. Here, the teenagers now mainly participate in the ceremony, but they do not know why it is held. In the case of *mangroves*, parents should also play a role in providing cultural knowledge to their children, such as the importance of mangroves, so that it is embedded in the child's understanding of the value of traditional cultures. The government of the author hopes to also be able to make the *traditional ceremony of the mangrove* as a written asset, there it can be explained that the activity they are doing is not a sacred activity according to their beliefs, because there are other people outside who do not see this ceremony deeply or at a glance with the assumption that what they are doing is an activity that is sacred or condemned by God.

Implementation of the Bakaua Ritual

The implementation of the mangrove ritual in sacred tombs typically involves several key elements, including burning incense, prayers, and ritual leaders referred to as *urang siak*. *Urang Siak* is a religious figure who has a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and is believed to be able to lead the ceremony effectively. The burning of incense has a symbolic meaning in this ceremony, as a form of respect for the spirits of ancestors who are considered to be present, as well as a means to offer prayers and requests to God.

In addition, the mangrove ceremony is also viewed as an opportunity to strengthen social ties within the community. Pilgrims from four villages surrounding the tomb participate

in this ritual together, fostering an atmosphere of togetherness and mutual cooperation in preserving their culture.

The Role of the Bakaua Ritual in Society

The mangrove ritual at the sacred tomb of Nagari Sungai Limau is not only a holy traditional ceremony, but also has deep social and cultural values. This ritual serves as a platform to strengthen the bond of brotherhood between communities, uphold theological values that emphasize respect for ancestors, and preserve cultural traditions that have endured for centuries. Indirectly, this ritual also plays a role in safeguarding Minangkabau culture, which is rich in traditions and deeply rooted in religious values. In addition, this ritual also serves as a medium to convey moral messages to the younger generation about the importance of maintaining a relationship with God and ancestors, as well as maintaining unity and togetherness in society. (Pramayoza, 2022b)

The Role of the Bakaua Ritual in Strengthening Social Relations and Maintaining Cultural Preservation

The Bakaua ritual plays a crucial role in strengthening social relations and preserving cultural heritage, even in an increasingly advanced era.

Strengthening Social Relationships:

Friendship Between Family and Community: The Bakaua ritual is often carried out by several families or community groups together. This fosters a sense of togetherness and unity among fellow community members, creating opportunities for them to share and maintain the bond of brotherhood.

Shared Recreation: In addition to the spiritual aspect, this ritual also serves as a social recreation event that unites the community. People come together to pray, share stories, and renew relationships between individuals. In this case, the Bakaua ritual serves as a moment to strengthen social bonds.

Gotong Royong in Implementation: During the implementation of rituals, the community often collaborates in preparing all the necessary elements of the ceremony, such as burning incense, praying, and serving food. This mutual cooperation activity creates a sense of togetherness and interdependence between individuals in society.

Preserving Culture: Preserving Traditional Values - The Bakaua Ritual is a form of cultural preservation deeply rooted in the lives of the Minangkabau people. Even though times continue to change and technology advances, this tradition remains a form of respect for ancestors and inherited traditions. By involving the younger generation in this ritual, the traditional and cultural values it embodies continue to be introduced and preserved.

Forming Cultural Identity: The Bakaua ritual is also an integral part of the cultural identity of the

Minangkabau people. The individuals involved in this ritual feel proud of their cultural heritage and strive to preserve it. This ritual reinforces a sense of pride and love for the local culture, even as the world becomes increasingly connected through technology and globalization.

4. CONCLUSION

The tradition of the Bakaua ritual at the sacred tomb of Nagari Sungai Limau holds profound theological significance, which is applied in various aspects of people's lives. This ritual serves not only as a form of respect for ancestors but also as a means to draw closer to God, ask for protection, and express gratitude. The symbolic meanings contained in this ritual, such as the burning of incense and prayers, strengthen the community's relationship with ancestors and God, as well as social bonds between fellow community members. In these times, the Bakaua ritual also plays an important role in preserving culture and strengthening the identity of Minangkabau culture, making this tradition still relevant and respected by the new generation.

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