

# Geography Perspective: Spatial, Social, and Ecological Dimensions of the Manggarai Ritual

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**Abstract.** This article examines the Penti rites of the Manggarai people through a cultural geography perspective, emphasizing spatial, social, and ecological dimensions as a system of knowledge. Penti, celebrated as a thanksgiving ritual, reflects a cultural philosophy that guides land use, settlement patterns, and sacred spaces such as mbaru gendang, compang, lodok, and wae teku. The rite demonstrates a relationship between humans, the Creator, and nature through symbols, actions, and spatial arrangements transmitted across generations to sustain social cohesion and environmental balance. Using a literature-based approach, this study shows that Penti is not merely a ceremony but also an expression of geographical concepts. Spatial aspects appear in village layouts and ritual sites, social aspects in collective participation and kinship, and environmental aspects in respect for forests, water sources, and ecological sustainability. These findings confirm Penti as a framework of wisdom integrating cosmology, ethics, and environmental management.

**Keywords:** Culture; geography; penti; relations

## 1 Introduction

Local culture is a culture owned by a certain region that is distinctive and different from foreign culture and inherited from generation to generation. This culture is formed because humans face problems that need to be solved, especially in maintaining and overcoming economic, social, political, and cultural problems. In order to survive and overcome the problems that arise, the community needs organizations to build a consensus on some cultural values and norms, in the local community that will become a tradition and will live and survive in their group [1], [2].

Local culture contains local wisdom (local wisdom). It is born from human interaction with the environment that results in a deep understanding and interdependence. As such, [3] highlights that local wisdom is a form of geographical phenomenon that is manifested by the interaction between humans and the environment. Moreover Local wisdom is a system of knowledge, truth and identity of the community related to its existence in the natural environment. This local knowledge is collected by the local community and has been tested and applies in the local context as well. This is in line with the opinion of [4], [5] saying that local wisdom is known as

local knowledge (indigenous or local knowledge), or local intelligence (local genius), which is the basis of cultural identity (cultural identity).

Many studies on the local wisdom of Manggarai have been carried out. The research that has been conducted examines local culture in relation to the social life of the Manggarai people and their cosmic view of nature and the creator from a sociological and communication perspective [6], [7], [8], [9], [10] and economics and ethnobotany [11], [12]. A study of Manggarai's local wisdom related to the management and utilization of nature in the perspective of Geography has never been carried out by researchers. In addition, efforts and concepts of instilling traditional values carried out in the educational process for the younger generation have not been studied by previous researchers. This is very important to be done to form a noble, conduct, manner and dignified character in the process of interaction with nature and others. Since the sustainability of the traditional values of the Manggarai people and efforts to sustain and preserve local cultural values for generations is essential, a new perspective in examining local culture must be carried out. Based on the two reason in question, the author wants to explain the local culture, especially in the rite of penti of the Manggarai people from the perspective of Geography.

## **2 Geography and Culture**

The Geography and culture are two interrelated terms and are the science of human beings that study about landscape, cultural products and norms as well as the relationship between space and place. In this case, culture in geography studies the earth and its life, which influences the outlook on life and human activities in determining the fulfillment of the needs of life such as the food needed, the clothes we use, the houses we live in and the places of recreation we observe [13]. In line with this, [14], [15], humans create landscape when they take advantage of ecological settings- they then become traces of a particular culture. Culture landscape is not only about the material cultural artifacts, but also the spiritual and religious values inherent, especially in areas that are still inhabited by indigenous peoples [16].

Cultural geography is the main agent of natural transformation, since humans do not build their environment only in a purely productive perspective but also on the basis of their values and representations. This can be interpreted that landscape is a reflection of past and present life. In this regard, such aspects be seen from the number, the location of the building, the design and plan used, the way the surrounding area is organized, the plants in the field, the commercial buildings and their forms of service, as well as other details that tell the overall economic and cultural history of a place. As such, the geography and history of the area are guides to reading this landscape. This is in line with the results of the research [17] that found that culture landscape has values that apply to all scales such as the aesthetic value of conservation culture, which can be used for lessons in environmental management, and can also be used in agricultural management practices as well as other resource management that have relevance to the improvement and sustainability of natural resources. Based on this opinion, cultural geography is important to be studied because of the existence of cultural problems, especially the relationship between population growth, resource consumption, and the increase in the intensity of problems due to overexploitation of resources. In other words that the relationship between geography and culture can provide a strong combination of conceptual tools to understand complex cultural problems of the people.

The relationship between geography and culture is characterized by the way humans interact with nature and their works. This is in line with the opinion of [2] highlighting that the cultural stream of geography prioritizes the study of various forms of human work on the surface of the earth as a region. The study of cultural geography is human space, namely population (population geography), human activities such as economic activities, social activities (social geography) and cultural activities. Cultural geography places humans at the center of human geographical knowledge, with the various beliefs they have, their motivations and life experiences [16], [4], Geography and culture are meant to be human sciences with a special approach to people's lives. This reveals how the relevance of cultures around the world today relates to the manner human has, facts, and emotions. Geography affects culture when the environment influences cultural change. The cultural environment forms a cultural ecosystem; the cultural ecosystem creates a dynamic cultural ecology.

Furthermore, Geography not only studies nature (earth) and its physical symptoms, but also studies non-physical human beings and all the cultures that they produce from their interactions. Regarding space, [18], [19] emphasized that there is a need to combine the two things mentioned above into four main parts, namely: 1) natural physical phenomena (physico natural-phenomena) which are symptoms that show the physical expression and the process of formation is caused by nature itself, 2) physical/artificial (physico-artificial phenomenon) which is a phenomenon that shows that physical bearings with human process of formation, 3) non-physical cultural phenomena (nonphysico- cultural phenomena) are a non-physical phenomenon (untangible) and its existence is due to the power of taste, creation and human karsa, 4) non-physical phenomena (nonphysico -natural phenomena); symptoms that are not physical (untangible) but occur due to natural forces. Thus, geography recognizes the influence of humans on nature and nature on humans.

Addressing environmental problems and disasters, it is assumed to be the result of an imbalance in interaction between the environment and human activities [20], [21]. Human environmental interaction is part of the study of geography that uses an environmental approach. Environmental problems are complex, multi-dimensional, interrelated, so their solutions require an integrated approach. In this context, geography places a phenomenon to be solved holistically so that development continues- while still paying attention to environmental sustainability. Many cases of environmental exploitation have brought disaster to the local area, such as gold mining, manganese mining and others that do not pay attention to the impact on the local community both now and in the future. The environment is the interface between the natural and cultural environment, land and life, people and their biophysical environment [22].

### 3 Method

This article belongs to a qualitative approach with a literature study method to examine geographical aspects in the local culture of Penti of the Manggarai community. Data collection was carried out through the search of various written sources such as academic journals, ethnographic books, research reports, and local documents relevant to Penti's practice and the context of the Manggarai space. The analysis was carried out in a descriptive-interpretive manner by linking the concepts of cultural geography, including space, place, environment, and cultural landscape, with the meaning of the Penti rite in people's lives. Through this conceptual approach, the article aims to build a comprehensive theoretical framework of understanding of how geographical elements form, influence, and are represented in the Penti tradition.

### 4 Discussion

Penti culture is one of the many local cultural celebrations of the Manggarai people. Lexically, penti is rejuvenation, conservation, peace (repentance/forgiveness). In the Manggarai dictionary, [23], penti is interpreted as a Manggarai New Year's party. Penti is a New Year's party of the Manggarai people and is interpreted as a thanksgiving party for the harvest as well as a sign of the start of a new work season, celebrated together by all villagers/villagers every year at the beginning of the planting season or after the harvest season. Penti has norms that regulate the relationship between the Creator (Mori Jari agu Dedek) and his creation (the earth and its contents), so that in penti culture there are vertical dimensions, horizontal dimensions, and socio-cultural dimensions

Penti has a core philosophy that describes the existence of land use. The philosophy is *lingko peang*, *gendang one*, *wae tekun compang*, *natas labar* [24]. From this philosophy, penti ritual describes the existence of land use as well as cultural spatial planning. This is in line with [11] who found that the spatial pattern of traditional settlements in Manggarai is in direct contact with the Penti cultural ceremony. In addition, penti is a geosphere and a cultural phenomenon, based on land spatial planning, which is an interesting geographical fact and cultural spatial planning to learn. Cultural spatial planning in local culture is closely related to the spatial approach. The spatial approach discusses diversity, distribution, use, organization, provision, and use of space [25]. Spatial planning in the penti culture is part of the ritual stages consisting of traditional houses (*mbaru gendang*), offering altars (*compang*), village courtyards (*natas labar*), spring water sources (*wae tekun*) in sacred forests (*wae tekun/wae barong*), communal garden centers (*lodok*), and ancestral graves (*boa*). Each stage has its own function in the context of Manggarai spatial planning [12].

Penti is a medium of communicating with the creator, the natural environment and fellow humans. This is relevant to the results of the research [26], [14] who concluded that the penti ritual has a role as a traffic sign that provides a cue in actions, moral power, and is useful for all behaviors of the Manggarai people. This can be seen from the behavior of the Manggarai people in interacting and applying traditional values, norms and rituals- vertical and horizontal communication, people and Mori Keraeng (the Creator) and people and their neighbors and natural environment. These three things are an inseparable unit. This opinion is supported by [8] saying that communication is necessary in order to repair the less harmonious dialogical

relationship between humans and the creator through metanonia (repentance and cleansing). Metanonia is one part of the penti culture that conducts repentance communication.

Moving further ahead, Penti that is a cultural ceremony aiming to give thanks for the harvest, and nature and all life during the past year, has several stages. The stages are the preparation stages (Pre- penti), core (whilst), and the final stage (Post-penti). In each of these stages, the spatial aspect in Geography is fully appeared. Spatial aspects is more on the selection of places or locations that are used as the ritual. This is closely related to the philosophical views of the Manggarai indigenous people, who interpret nature is a unity of the cosmos and integrated with human life as living beings and as social creatures [27, 28]. This is inseparable from the belief of the local community, that these locations have meanings and values that also influence the lives of the surrounding community, both in terms of the physical natural environment, the social environment and also the meaning of religiosity contained.

In addition to location, interpersonal relationships and social resilience are also found in the penti. Stages reflects a complete and harmonious social relationship that regulates its relationship with fellow members of society as a social group [24]. This indicates that in addition to regulating the relationship with nature, philosophically penti has a deep social meaning in arranging their lives with others; human interaction with nature is a geographical concern. The attitude of brotherhood and sense of belonging as a member of an indigenous people is built with a strong customary relationship and formed with a familiar collegial spirit as well as a harmonious vision and mission that is in line with the essence of their lives as part of nature. This awareness makes them grateful for what they get from nature and highly committed to a cultural social forum and interaction to maintain its sustainability and sustainability [25].

To date, the context of Geography in penti refers to social life, spatial context and its orientation. The ceremony is embodied in the philosophical and cosmos concepts inherent in the Manggarai indigenous people. People's recognition of the environment is actually an expression of dignified and responsible awareness in arranging a harmonious life, harmony between humans and nature. This is manifested in cultural behavior at each location and the sacred symbols used. These efforts are carried out to organize the existence and sustainability of the natural and social environment which are covered in the context of spatial geography, social geography and environmental geography.

Geography of space in Penti reflected in the arrangement of the traditional spatial arrangement of the Manggarai community which is very structured and full of meaning. Sacred locations such as mbaru gendang (traditional house), compang (sacrificial altar), lodok (communal garden), natas labar (circular village yard), and wae teku/ulu wae (spring) show that the Penti rite always considers the function of space and its connection to the cosmos. This spatial pattern does not change from generation to generation because it is believed to be an ancestral heritage that maintains a balance of life. Thus, spatial geography in the Penti examines how space is used, arranged, and interpreted as part of a customary system that unites humans with nature and the spiritual world.

Social geography in penti is seen in the relationships and interactions between community members that are strongly established through all stages of the ceremony. Penti unites all elements of society, both through mutual cooperation, division of roles, and symbols of traditional communication; so as to form harmonious and collective social relations. This ritual also emphasizes the social structure, kinship system, and the value of togetherness that is the

basis of the life of the Manggarai people. Social geography in this context explains how Penti culture shapes patterns of social interaction, group identity, and community dynamics that are bound by customary norms and values [21].

Environmental geography in Penti can be seen from the deep respect of the Manggarai people for nature, especially forests, soils, and springs which are considered as the source of life. Forests are understood as sacred entities that give birth to and sustain life, so they must be preserved. Through symbols such as sacred forests, ulu wae, and lodok, the community customarily sets rules for environmental use to remain balanced and sustainable [13]. Therefore, environmental geography in Penti examines the mutual relationship between humans and the environment, as well as how cultural practices play a role in maintaining ecosystem sustainability and community quality of life.

## 5 Conclusion

Penti culture is a traditional ceremony of the Manggarai people that serves as an expression of gratitude for the harvest as well as a marker of the start of a new work season, and contains spiritual, social, and ecological values that are reflected in cultural spatial planning such as mbaru gendang (traditional house), compang (sacrificial altar), lodok (communal garden), natas labar (circular village yard), and wae teku/ulu wae (spring). Penti not only regulates the harmonious relationship between humans and the Creator, but also human interaction with others and with the environment, so that it becomes a form of local wisdom that preserves nature and strengthens community social relations. All values, symbols, rites, and spatial arrangements in Penti are covered in the study of geography, both social geography, spatial geography, and environmental geography which describe the deep relationship between humans, their living space, and the sustainability of nature.

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