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license**THE SAO STONE COSMOLOGY WITHIN THE AMAN
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IndonesiaCorrespondence E-Mail: sien.matakana@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.30598/baileofisipvol1iss2pp204-218>**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the cosmological significance of the Sao Stone within the indigenous Aman Seri community in Urimesing, aiming to reveal the philosophical dimensions of their worldview and its role in sustaining cultural identity and cosmic continuity. Employing a qualitative approach, the research was conducted through fieldwork, including in-depth interviews, guided discussions, and participant observations. The study examines how the cosmological process surrounding the Sao Stone intertwines the development of human beings, the indigenous Aman Seri community, and other cosmic substances in a continuous, layered flow. The findings demonstrate that the Sao Stone is not merely a physical object but a symbol of existential cohesion that shapes and reflects the evolving identity of the Aman Seri cosmos. Its cosmology is marked by two core characteristics: first, the unceasing, accumulative nature of growth across human, communal, and cosmic levels, where each new incident contributes to an ever-renewing heritage; and second, the sequential realization of cosmic elements, indicating a process without abrupt leaps, grounded in the maturity and density of preceding developments. Each stage in the cosmological process holds autonomous significance, while simultaneously depending on the pressure and specificity of the moment it emerges from. The novelty of this research lies in articulating the dynamic and recursive nature of Aman Seri's cosmology as a framework of cultural resilience and adaptive identity. It contributes to broader discourses in social sciences and the humanities by emphasizing the relevance of indigenous cosmological systems in understanding community-based environmental philosophies, historical endurance, and cultural regeneration. Further studies are encouraged to investigate other cosmological symbols across Maluku that may offer parallel insights into local knowledge systems and their ongoing transformation.

Keywords: Cosmic Continuity, Cultural Identity, Cultural Resilience, Indigenous Cosmology, Local Knowledge Systems

INTRODUCTION

Cosmos, as a harmonious, authentic, fundamental order underlying all other worlds, is now facing various problems and even extraordinary upheavals with various resulting impacts, such as ecological disasters, psychological issues, socio-political problems, intolerance, disintegration, and the spread of hatred and hostility viruses (De Felice et al., 2021; Schwartz, 2022). The upheaval in the cosmos, which affects ecological upheaval, has resulted in ecological disasters leading to a decline in environmental quality, impacting water resources and health,

such as the spread of diseases and viruses like COVID-19 (Planelles et al., 2021). In connection with this, philosopher Žižek (2020, 2021) explains that perhaps now is not the time for us to think about changing the world but to step back and “think about the world.” According to him, the worlds being contemplated now are worlds on the verge of destruction due to expansion, imperialism, capitalism, and materialization.

Ellen (2023) indicates that one of the nations experiencing a severe disruption of the cosmic order due to Portuguese and Dutch colonialism is the Urimesing State in Ambon City. The Urimesing State was completely thrust out of its intact cosmic order, causing the apparent loss and detachment of the cosmic vision and narrative in their lives (Niemeijer, 2021). Gupta (2022) adds that the destruction of the cosmic order in the nation brought about a tragic extinction of the Urimesing State during the long period of Portuguese and Dutch colonization in Maluku, particularly on Ambon Island (1522-1945). According to Wijaya et al. (2021), the fall of Puta was followed by the entire *Aman* in Urimesing, leading to the loss of its status as a Uli, and one of the surviving *Aman* is *Aman Seri*.

Aman Seri, who surprisingly endured the tragedy of colonization, possesses a cosmic center that serves as a robust anchor for the integrity and glory of *Aman Seri*'s defense and security. The highly renowned cosmic center in the history of the Urimesing State is the Sao Stone. The cosmic essence of the Sao Stone marks a center of cosmic power where people are guided on expeditions, delving into the depths and beauty of the emanations of logos within the *Aman Seri* cosmos while reflecting upon and recognizing the essence of the world or the *Aman Seri* cosmos itself. This research aims to discover, reflect upon, and describe the essence of Sao Stone's cosmology in constructing the holistic lives of its people as an integral part of the indigenous community.

The basic theory utilized in this research is Christian von Wolff's cosmological perspective (Theis, 2020). He classifies cosmology as a branch of metaphysics distinguished from other branches like “ontology,” “metaphysical theology,” and “metaphysical psychology” (Neumann, 2022). According to Wolff (2022), cosmology is a philosophical branch discussing the origin and structure of the universe. He also distinguishes cosmology from the philosophy of nature, which investigates the fundamental laws, processes, and classification of objects in nature. Habermas, as cited in Kultaieva & Panchenko (2022), reinforces Wolff's view, interpreting cosmology as a reflection of the Divine in the worldly realm. He invites sciences to contemplate within the pure cosmic inner whirlpool to realize and activate logos as divine sparks within the hearts, souls, and collective thoughts of humanity.

In essence, discussing cosmology is an invitation or urging to contemplate within the inner vortex of the cosmos in unveiling the mysteries of the cosmic soul itself. Contemplation here doesn't refer to arbitrary contemplation but rather contemplation of eternal, divine aspects in the archipelagic environment. Contemplation within the cosmic inner whirlpool, in its entirety, reflects the divine in the worldly cosmos. In cosmology, there is an element of mimesis (imitation) as a driving force to imitate the eternity reflected in the structures of the archipelagic cosmos

(Koritelu, 2021). While distinct from island ecology, cosmology strives to determine the most fundamental principles for managing and conserving the environment. Cosmology provides deeper insights and more effective beliefs about the interdependence between humans and society and the arrangement of the universe (cosmos) as an objective, collective reality within the cosmic household (Consina et al., 2023). This cosmic household is filled with differentiation among the intended cosmic substances, encouraging humans to be more responsible for caring for and preserving the universe (cosmos) as their very own “household.”

The cosmos, or the arrangement of the universe, is not a haphazard pile of unordered objects but rather a reality of plural forms that are organized as a household (oikos in Greek). In such a way, humans or societies themselves are part of the cosmos, making the universe (world) a complete household where individuals or communities feel content, comfortable, or at ease (Matakena et al., 2020). Contemplating the world is an effort to recognize the world as a genuine entity, a world as an orderly arrangement of harmony. In cosmology, this is known as the world being a shared home where a diverse yet interpenetrating, absorbing, and harmonizing cosmic essence acts as siblings within a shared family in a cosmic home. On the other hand, the mystic philosopher Orford (2020) refers to the philosophy of understanding the natural world as a form of “cosmic consciousness.”

The cosmology of indigenous communities represents a unique form of local cosmology. Each indigenous community has a local perspective or distinctive view in perceiving, understanding, and living life holistically, harmoniously, and sustainably within the scope of their cosmos or environment. This innate intelligence shapes collective mindset, knowledge, and value systems that are embraced collectively. This is reflected in various forms of local wisdom, traditions, and cultures they adhere to. Indigenous cosmology is not just a collective subconscious concept but also actively shapes all the complex and unique elements in their cosmic system.

The concept of hylomorphism or transubstantiation covertly plays a strong role in influencing phenomenology and existentialism philosophy, serving as a source of inspiration and creativity. This hidden principle of hylomorphism creates bipolarity in three fundamental aspects of the cosmic order or universe: the community as a collective entity, the history and culture of the community forming harmony, and the alignment of structure and norms in a cohesive and creative cosmic unity. The cosmic substance is viewed as inhabitants of the cosmos who not only dwell but also construct and shape it. This reality signifies that cosmology reflects the existence of an inner cosmic reality that is alive and actively operating with the authenticity of energy, power, spirit, soul, heart, and mind (cosmic intellect), as well as a natural and profound cosmic ethos. Furthermore, this creates a cosmic vision in perceiving the archipelagic universe and behaving in accordance with the understanding that nature has its own soul and will, which must be respected and preserved with its inherent order, constancy, and permanence.

RESEARCH METHOD

To gain a profound understanding of the Sao Stone cosmology within the Aman Seri community in Urimessing, Ambon City, this research employs a qualitative research method, as outlined by Creswell (2017). The choice of this method is grounded in the exploratory nature of the research objective, which necessitates an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. The primary focus of the research is on the use of interview techniques, guided discussions, and field observations to obtain rich and holistic perspectives. The qualitative approach is selected for its flexibility in exploring contexts and describing the Sao Stone cosmology in detail. The research design ensures that the acquired data will provide a comprehensive overview of the essence of this cosmology.

Research participants are purposively selected from members of the indigenous Aman Seri community in Urimessing, Ambon City. The selection is based on criteria ensuring the involvement of individuals with relevant knowledge and experience regarding the Sao Stone cosmology. Data collection methods involve interview techniques, guided discussions, and field observations. In-depth interviews are utilized to explore individual understandings, while guided discussions aim to foster group idea exchanges, and field observations provide a visual dimension related to the community's daily practices regarding the Sao Stone cosmology.

Research procedures include participant identification, the formulation of interview and discussion guides, and the execution of interviews, discussions, and field observations. All steps are conducted with attention to research ethics principles, respecting the beliefs and values of the indigenous community. Data analysis is conducted inductively, detailing findings from interviews, discussions, and field observations. Grouping these findings will form patterns that depict the meaning and role of the Sao Stone cosmology in the holistic lives of the Aman Seri indigenous community. The results of this analysis are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the Sao Stone in their lives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cosmic Connection with the Sao Stone

The indigenous Aman Seri community firmly believes that the Sao Stone is the most fundamental and essential point that is always closest and sustains their lives. The Sao Stone is considered to occupy the most authentic position in the comprehensive understanding of the Aman Seri cosmos construction. It is regarded as the cosmic substance, becoming an inhabitant of the cosmos, and simultaneously serving as the core or foundation in its construction and constitution. From discussions and observations regarding the Aman Seri indigenous community's relationship with the Sao Stone, it is evident that there is a cosmological connection with inner vision concepts, marking a strong, vibrant, and active cosmic vision in their collective subconscious. This forms part of their belief system, local knowledge, and behavioral norms or ethics of their lives. The world around the Sao Stone is perceived as a mysterious realm, akin to

the Nukunahu cape located on Mei Beach with two water heads and its water source filled with sacred codes that must not be violated. This necessitates approaching it with a cautious attitude (taboo), known in the local language of the people of Maluku as *pamali*.

The indigenous custodian of Aman Seri explains that the Sao Stone embodies the traditional concept as the center of sacredness, the center of power, the center of sovereignty, and a strong center of integrity that resiliently withstands storms or challenges. If the Sao Stone were to be lost or destroyed, the strength and integrity of life would be threatened to collapse, break, shatter, and be engulfed by the storms of time. Traditional leaders and several figures engaged in discussions at the waiting house on the Aman Seri beach, where the Sao Stone is located, are highly confident that the Sao Stone holds the logic of the cosmic as an important divine path and carries significant meaning. They express that the mystery of the cosmic power of the Sao Stone is known even in Banten, Java Island, as there was once a visit from a high-ranking official from the Pattimura Military Command (Kodam 15 Pattimura) originating from Banten, Java Island.

When the high-ranking officer from the Military Command originating from Banten arrived at the Sao Stone, he fell momentarily silent, observing the Sao Stone and its surroundings. Then, he spoke, "Sir, do not take this place lightly" (pointing to the Sao Stone and its surroundings), "because this is a sacred place with extraordinary cosmic power and mystery." The officer was startled from his position as if receiving a vision or inner sight from the depths of the Sao Stone's cosmos. He remained momentarily stunned, then rose to his feet in amazement, beginning to inquire about various aspects he observed from the location of the Sao Stone. He stated that from there, he saw a kind of cosmic path with strong mystical logic, and urged the indigenous leaders not to conceal it. He indicated that from the foundational point of the Sao Stone location, a path extended towards various cosmic points in Aman Seri. The officer gestured with his hand and finger inland as if showing a path to the Batu Baileo on land and even towards the Batu Bakar Dupa at the summit of the Aman Seri hills, where ancestors gathered for prayers.

Mystical philosopher Šorli et al. (2022) depict the reality of the cosmos as a dynamic power without which being cannot fully exist, while Geertz & Cossu (2021) describe it as a profound painting. In the cosmological belief, the Sao Stone is considered to hold a crucial key in uncovering and tracing the traces of the Aman Seri indigenous community's cosmos in the vast and deep expanse of the universe.

When we confirmed the reality experienced by the officer with several indigenous elders involved in focused group discussions at the Aman Seri beach location where the Sao Stone is situated, they affirmed that it aligns with the long-inherited local cosmological views of their ancestors. The history of Urimesing State notes that the Sao Stone is not only the key to revealing the process of cosmization of the Aman Seri indigenous community but also the key to understanding the cosmization process of several Aman in Urimesing State, such as Aman Puta, particularly related to Lasatira and Aman Kappa. According to the accounts of the Aman Seri

indigenous leaders, in the past, Siwang was part of Seri, known as Soa Siwang or Soa Kappa). Soa, in ancient times, was known as Aman.

Aman Kappa is a region stretching from Mount Siwang to South Daya, encompassing the areas from Kudamati to Batu Capeu. The historical records of Urimesing State convey that Aman Kappa was led by Captain Latuhurupao, also known as Captain Silang Bessy. He was a figure who undertook the cosmization mission and was the first person to set foot in the Aman Seri location, anchoring his boat with a sail or anchor (referred to as Sao) on the Seri beach, later known as Sao Stone. Captain Latuhurupao had initially been in Aman Seri, then ascended to the summit of Mount Siwang because the previous area was deemed insufficiently bright. The formation of Siwa City in that region served as a sign that Captain Latuhurupao had reached a bright place.

The term 'Aman Seri' originates from the words 'Ese,' meaning ruling power, and 'Ri,' meaning pillar. Thus, Seri can be interpreted as the first ruling pillar. The Aman Seri region is situated between Bukit Hitiari (the boundary marker) and Serikateruan led by Ama Tita. The role of Aman Seri is that of a connector. In the historical records of Urimesing State, Aman Seri was once led by Upu Latu Salakay, also known as Captain Latuhurupao before ascending to the Siwang summit. Johan Seripan, Andris Tempessy, and Pedro Ursila also had leadership roles in Aman Seri.

As previously explained, the Sao Stone or Batu Sauh is a stone that plays a crucial role in cosmization, opening the pages of expeditions and contemplation about the cosmology of the Aman Seri indigenous community. Despite physically being located on the Aman Seri beach, Sao Stone is believed by the Aman Seri community to be a vital cosmic center that unites them as a genuine world order. Sao Stone is considered the cosmic substance or inhabitant of the Aman Seri cosmos and also the foundation or fundamental basis for constructing and constituting it.

The cosmization history of the Aman Seri indigenous community is narrated as a process that did not unfold neutrally or without challenges. It involved various incidents or encounters with sudden, harsh, and weighty occurrences. These incidents are always used as solid cornerstones, guiding stones, and anchor stones for the evolution of cosmization towards higher and maximal stages, with new incidents becoming more perfect. This reality shapes the cosmology of the Aman Seri indigenous community, where unique and genuine diversity unites within the household of the complete Aman Seri cosmos, colliding, penetrating, infiltrating, absorbing, and harmonizing as one family of the Aman Seri indigenous community.

The cosmology of Sao Stone reflects the existence of a living and active cosmic dimension, operating with the authenticity of energy, power, spirit, soul, heart, mind, and the original and profound cosmic ethos. This creates a worldview that guides the way of perceiving the vast universe of the archipelago and interacting with that reality with a commendable attitude, in line with the principles of wholeness and order, and in accordance with the mechanisms, constancy, and permanence that exist. This reality emphasizes that the cosmology of Sao Stone creates a living and active inner dimension of the cosmos, filled with the authenticity of energy, power, spirit, soul, heart, and mind (cosmic wisdom), as well as the authentic (natural) and profound cosmic ethos of the Aman Seri indigenous community. The cosmology of Sao Stone also creates

a cosmic vision that views the Aman Seri universe and governs behavior in accordance with a reality that possesses soul and will, interwoven in wholeness and order with the mechanisms, constancy, and permanence inherent in the cosmos. In terms of physical appearance, Sao Stone resembles a person in meditation or lying down and is located in the middle of the sea. This place can only be accessed when the sea is at low tide.



Figure 1 Baileo Stone
Source: Field Document, 2021



Figure 2 Sao Stone during Low Tide (left) and High Tide (right)
Source: Field Document, 2021

The uniqueness of this stone lies in its ability to appear to float like a boat during high tide, making it one of the significant cosmic centers and a historical testament for the Seri people. From the Sao Stone location, we can observe other cosmic centers such as the Pamali Stone, Baileo Alam, Bakar Damar Stone, and Incense-burning Stone, all of which hold strong historical significance in the evolution of the cosmology of the Seri indigenous community. The resilient Sao Stone stands on the shores of Aman Seri, facing both the sea and the land, serving as a sturdy defense anchor and a cornerstone providing stability to the Aman Seri cosmic structure.

The history of Sao Stone begins with the grand tale of the ancestral Seri people, Captain Latuhurupao, later known as Agustinus Latuhurupau. He hailed from Seram, Gorom, and crossed the Sapalewa River on his journey. During this voyage, Captain Latuhurupao encountered a boat that also held a grand gathering, and through various incidents culminating in the stage of maximum cosmological engagement across island seas, this boat became a challenging,

meaningful, and valuable cosmic substance. The dramatic incident of the leaking and sinking boat in the middle of the sealed these ancestors into a cosmos-transforming flow involving both sea and land. Through experiences of sailing, swimming, and floating in the vast sea, they not only developed a close relationship with the sea but also formed a family and a household together with the sea.

The cosmologically rich and meaningful events led Captain Latuhurupao and Lasatira into the strata of cosmological engagement on the human level when Captain Latuhurupao found Lasatira in distress, swimming and floating in the vast sea, needing assistance from a fellow cosmic being. This encounter was filled with the power of love and friendship. They permeated each other as cosmic substances, absorbed into each other's minds, hearts, and souls. Such profound transformation resulted in the evolution of humane cosmological engagement, leading to true humanity. Subsequently, they discovered new meanings and values in their inter-human relationships, forming a kinship between two different cosmic beings followed by their followers. This kinship, originating in the sea as a cosmic home, continued to evolve towards cosmological engagement on land. The individual who floated and sank in the sea was named Lasatira, who later evolved into Tisera. Latuhiurupau then continued the Wattimea lineage in Aman Seri, and Lasatira passed down Tisera.

After Captain Latuhiurupau arrived at Mei Beach, he briefly anchored before continuing the journey with Lasatira and their followers toward Aman Seri Beach. Upon arrival, Captain Latuhiurupau promptly released the anchor stone, or sau stone, at the location. Alongside his followers and Lasatira with her followers, they landed on the beach. Sao Stone, resembling a person in meditation and lying in the middle of the sea, can only be visited during low tide. Another uniqueness of this stone is evident during high tide, where it appears to float like a boat anchored, becoming one of the cosmic centers and a historical testament for the Seri people.

Once on land, they proceeded to the location where the Baileo stone, a place full of mystical power, was situated. There, Captain Latuhiurupau and his followers celebrated a ceremony to sanctify their surroundings, turning it into the natural Baileo of the Aman Seri people. The Baileo stone became one of the cosmic centers and the meeting place for Captain Latuhiurupau with the terrestrial environment of Aman Seri. This marked the point of building kinship with the terrestrial environment of Aman Seri, uniting it with the Sao Stone and the island sea, where the encounter with Lasatira formed a complete and mystical cosmic household.

The Baileo of Aman Seri, built by Captain Latuhiurupau, was a natural Baileo without structures. From the Baileo location, Captain Latuhiurupau and his followers then proceeded to Batu Dupa, the incense-burning stone above the village of Aman Seri, to offer traditional prayers. The Baileo stone marked an elevation in the level of cosmological engagement from a human-centric stratum to a cultural or cultural cosmological level. Captain Latuhiurupau revered the location of the Baileo stone as the center of mysticism, fellowship, settlement, rituals, and the power structure of the traditional government of Aman Seri. Various values, traditions, and rituals performed at the Baileo Stone aimed to maintain harmony between humans and the

mystical-filled natural environment. This formed a new order in their social life, reaching a level of cosmological engagement where they transformed from nomadic people to permanent settlers, living in harmony with their environment, in a cult of harmony.

The Baileo is not just a resting place but serves as a center for dwelling, governance, and civilization. The natural Baileo marks a new milestone in the evolution of cosmology, where the initial settlement patterns in open nature transform into structured dwellings with roofed and walled houses. According to the Aman Seri tradition, the Baileo serves as a pillar in shaping the social structure and traditional governance, as well as the division of tasks and functions among the *matarumah* groups in the Aman Seri community. The Baileo is a cultural heritage that persists to this day, with its stones serving as evidence and a historical narrative capable of revealing the journey of the Seri village and acting as the cosmic center of the Seri land.

Various traditional customs in Aman Seri commence at the Baileo stone to acquire sparks of mysticism and the sacredness of life. It is recounted that during the coronation of a king or other traditional events, the head of the Wattimena clan leads the assembly at the Baileo stone. For instance, during the 2020 Paragliding Festival, the head of Aman Seri or the village chief (Wattimena) awaited guests at the village entrance, while other elders conducted special prayers at the Baileo stone. Shouts and greetings such as “Sopo Malam” are uttered, used to open the traditional festivities with the significance of a night-long struggle, carried out from night until morning.

The procession continues with the lighting of torches, following specific rules such as the use of 12 Gargo torches filled with sopi, and the crafting of 12 cigarettes from Tabaku Buru and kiket leaves, matching the number of house symbols or elder figures. Elders perform the Kunci Negri (Key to the Nation) to summon the spirits of ancestors. In Aman Seri, there are two concepts regarding the people, namely “Anak Negri” (all residents) and “Anak Adat” (specifically Soa Nahel). The history of Seri identifies Seri as Soa Nahel, and the Aman Seri Command is under the Wattimena clan, as the indigenous children of Soa Nahel, where Siwang at that time is part of Seri (Soa Siwang - Soa Kappa).

Before Captain Latuhurupau landed on Aman Seri Beach and released the anchor or Sao Stone, he first anchored at Cape Nukunahu, located on Mei Beach. At this Mei Beach location, they witnessed a transformation in cosmological life through regulations, rules, and taboos governing various aspects of life in Aman Seri. This transformation imparts values of discipline, orderliness, and living in harmony with the natural environment of Aman Seri.

Upon arriving at the cape, Captain Latuhiurupau thrust his spear into the ground, causing water to flow out from the earth and bamboo groves to emerge. According to the beliefs of the Aman Seri indigenous community since their ancestors, the water at the cape has the special quality that a girl bathing there will become beautiful and admired by men. However, if the visitor is not from the Latuhurupau lineage, the water will dry up. This location also has taboos, namely prohibiting making noise, damaging, or dirtying the environment to preserve the sanctity of the place.

Several tragic events are recorded at this location, where those who do not adhere to the taboo rules in the area may face unfortunate consequences. For example, there are cases where someone intentionally plucked the cape vegetables without observing the taboos and eventually drowned in the sea. There are also stories of individuals who disregarded taboo rules, fell from the cape, and drowned to the point of disappearing into the sea. According to reliable sources, there have been seven to eight people experiencing similar accidents, some of whom only reappeared after undergoing traditional rituals and prayers by the church. Lastly, a tragic event occurred about three or four years ago when someone named Twit Gimies fell from the cape on August 14 and died. His body only emerged on the beach on August 17 after a series of traditional rituals and prayers conducted by the church. This event serves as a reminder of the mystical power and the importance of adherence to the taboo rules highly esteemed at Mei Beach.

At Aman Seri Beach, there are two flowing springs that converge with the beach where Sao Stone is located. These two springs are believed to represent two humanoid figures of different genders, one male and one female. The first spring is called Haupesi, with male-headed water, while the second spring is named Waipui, or princess water, with a female-headed water known as Wairuru. Each of these springs has its own story.

According to the beliefs and oral traditions passed down, the two springs are considered to have different genders, although it is challenging to definitively determine which one is male and which is female. In the community's beliefs, there are specific times, especially during the full moon or Pono Month, when the two springs are believed to express love and engage in a symbolic union. Although it's difficult to pinpoint the exact moment, certain natural phenomena like foaming, rippling, and waves in the water are considered signs of their union. During this time, it is prohibited for people to create disturbances or chaos at the springs. Bathing in the springs at that time was also believed to bring disturbance, and if it occurred, the community practiced the traditional ritual of "Panggih Sumangan" to restore luck and protection to the affected individual. Specific stones or corals from the beach are taken and placed under the pillow of the disturbed person as a way to restore Sumangan to them.

From Cape Mei, Upu Latuhurupau continued his journey towards the Seri port and cast away his anchor stone. Captain Latuhiurupau's process of cosmology intensified from the cultural cosmology level to a higher level of the spiritual, cosmological stratum at the peak settlement location of Aman Seri, known as Bakar Damar Stone or Incense-burning Stone. The name Bakar Damar Stone also refers to the prayer and worship site of Captain Latuhiurupau and his followers. At this location, they burn incense or resin as a sacred fragrance to honor the ancestors and summon and gather them in the afterlife. The purpose is to be present in communion with Captain Latuhiurupau, his followers, and future generations, providing blessings, protection, happiness, and safety in life.

In that place, the elders hold meetings and burn stones to summon the spirits of ancestors or forebears. The radiant flames from the incense or resin serve as a spiritual force that unites the potency of the ancestors. The burning process is intended to incinerate any diseases and

malevolent spirits that may wander in the cosmic realm of Aman Seri, both in the sea and on land. This tradition also aims to purify and cleanse Aman Seri from all diseases, viruses, and other evils that could disturb, threaten, and attack their lives.

This location becomes a spiritual space atop the hills of Aman Seri that controls the vast and expansive cosmic universe. The tradition of burning incense is passed down to descendants to continue cosmologizing amidst various life conditions and changes. According to the testimony of the indigenous people of Aman Seri, the ancestors of old chose elevated places to have a better view of boats and ships that might engage in criminal activities in the maritime and terrestrial regions of Aman Seri, including passing colonial fleets at sea.

Furthermore, the indigenous people of Aman Seri, with the Sao Stone cosmology, demonstrate an understanding of islander cosmology, where they come with two worlds, namely the world of the sea and the world of the land. The substance of Aman Seri's cosmization creates a complete, harmonious, balanced, and harmonized cosmic order between the sea and the land. The sea and the land interact, merge, and complement each other harmoniously. The indigenous people of Aman Seri consider the sea as an integral part of their life order, not just the land. They believe that the sea is the origin or starting point of the history of their ancestors.

The indigenous people of Aman Seri also regard the ebb and flow of the sea, known as Meti, as fields or gardens. The sea or Meti is considered ancestral land that holds the same sacredness as the land. Therefore, the indigenous people of Aman Seri divide and differentiate Meti into eight types, each with its own name and cosmological meaning, such as Meti Seri, Meti Asamuri, Meti Namou, Meti Namusua, Meti Lakou, Meti Among, Meti Baku Ator, and Meti Awahan.

The sea, considered as a field or garden, holds significant economic and vital importance for the Aman Seri community. Among the valuable marine resources are sea worms called Laor, which is a highly renowned cosmic wealth in the region. Additionally, other marine products like seaweed Susinori, Rambu seaweed, Karang seaweed, and Mamina seaweed (walnut) are also abundant. Marine life, including various types of fish, shrimp, and lobsters inhabiting coral crevices, serves as a marine resource utilized by the community. The Sao Stone cosmology also reveals that the indigenous people of Aman Seri are cosmic with the concept of Rumatau or the Eye of the House. In the historical context of indigenous communities in Central Maluku, Rumatau, or the Eye of the House, represents a larger genealogical unit beyond the family. Literally, "Ruma" means house, and "Tau" means contents, or it can be interpreted as a large cooking pot. "Rumatau" refers to a house where the occupants eat together in one pot. In another sense, "Tau" can also be interpreted as content or descendants, making Rumatau mean a house inhabited by individuals of the same lineage, and membership follows the patrilineal descent.

Generally, Rumatau consists of several families, each with its own head. Rumatau serves as the core unit in the formation of the Ambon Lease Society. Each individual belongs to a Rumatau, and those not affiliated may face difficulties in obtaining legal protection and

recognition as natives in the area. The Eye of the House Watemena, also known as the Eye of the House Wattimena, plays a role as the heir to the descendants of Captain Latuhirupau. "Watemena" comes from the words "Wate," meaning first person, and "Mena," meaning front or face. So, "Watemena" means the first person in front. This name refers to Latuhirupao Watemena, the ancestor of the Eye of the House Watemena, who arrived at Labuang Seri and settled in the area. Captain Latuhirupao Watemena journeyed from Tanjung Nukunahoe to Mei Beach and Awahang before finally settling in Seri. When Latuhirupao Watemena felt the place in Seri was not bright enough, he climbed to the top and settled in an area called Siwang, which means the City of Siwa or the city of light. Watemena had a son named Pattimara Watemena, who was named Silano. The Eye of the House Watemena has a Teong called "Selana" or "Serana," interpreted as a medium or tool to achieve specific goals.

Rumatau is considered a source of pride for its members, and leaving Rumatau is interpreted as a loss of pride, dignity, and the rights that can be boasted as natives. Rumatau plays a crucial role in shaping the structure of the broader society known as Soa. To manage the affairs of Rumatau, both internally and in its relations with the outside, a leader is chosen and given the title "Upu." The selection of Upu is usually based on generational seniority, choosing the oldest or most senior member of Rumatau to ensure credibility and strong leadership.

In addition to the terms Rumatau and Soa, Ambon Lease also recognizes the term "Teung" or "Teong." "Teung" is a title or custom given to a region. This term represents the history of the region, territorial boundaries, relationships with other regions, as well as the political, power, and socio-economic structure in the community. Each Soa and Rumatau in a region has its own Teung. The existence of Teung is closely related to the monument establishing a village by their ancestors, known as the Pamali stone. In addition to the Pamali stone, Teung is also associated with the land Petuanan called Ewang, a sacred well called Parigi, and the sea Petuanan where Sauh is released called Labuhan or Labuang. Specifically for Rumatau, Teung is the name given by their ancestors when they first arrived in a region. Aman Seri Negeri Urimeasing, as a union of customary law communities, has Rumatau, Soa, and Teung. History records that Rumatau in Aman Seri consists of 12 units, marked by the presence of 12 bamboo cups (sloki).

In the effort to understand the Sao Stone cosmology as the local cosmology of the indigenous community of Aman Seri, it is crucial to explore the beauty of the traditions or customary practices handed down from the ancestors of the Aman Seri indigenous community. These traditions are still practiced by subsequent generations over time. The traditions are based on the customs of the ancestors in life as magical thinkers to build harmony, security, order, and preservation within a complete cosmic order. In the cosmology of the Aman Seri indigenous community, it is believed that the ancestors also require spirits that can enliven and oversee life and nature. This belief is reflected in various traditions carried out regularly. Through these traditions, humans can understand the conditions of nature considered as incarnate souls, such as the Sao Stone, the stone for burning incense, river water, and others, all of which are regarded as places where they find the essence of their world constructed.

Human faith in these objects is inseparable from the belief of ancestors who have a strong collective consciousness, different from modern society. One example of a tradition is Tahea, which is a traditional prayer used when children are sick. This tradition aims to expel or ward off evil spirits and restore the Sumangan (life spirit) of a sick child by startling them, using salt or ginger as a purifier of evil spirits. Additionally, there is a specific tradition for a child who falls from a high place or drowns in the sea. In this ritual, the child is stepped over three times to awaken and restore Sumangan, recovering the child. Furthermore, there is a sea-going ritual of planting betel nut leaves at the cape or the edge of the village, accompanied by traditional prayers, to ensure that fishing at sea goes smoothly and safely and brings abundant income.

Traditions in building houses within the Aman Seri indigenous community showcase the carefully preserved richness of cultural heritage. Before constructing a house, the indigenous community pays attention to natural and astronomical factors, such as the position of the tide and the moon, especially during the full moon. The selection of the right time, namely at three in the morning when the tide is rising, instills the belief that the house built will bring about good harmony.

Moreover, this tradition also involves the selection of high-quality wood, specifically choosing wood with mature leaves, indicating that the wood can provide strong and durable support for life inside the house. These natural aspects are not only considered in house construction but also in the tradition of opening new gardens. The right timing, considering the ebb and flow of the tide, is a consideration when opening a new garden and engaging in cultivation. The *pele kampong* tradition, or customary ritual to protect the village or Aman Seri from diseases or enemy attacks, reflects the crucial role of customs in maintaining the security and well-being of the community. During conflicts in Maluku, Aman Seri experienced their impact, but the elders gathered, prayed, and performed the village lock. The condition of Aman Seri became hidden from enemies, demonstrating their belief in the spiritual strength and customary protection of their community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research objective—to uncover the philosophical dimensions of the Aman Seri community's worldview through the cosmology of the Sao Stone—it can be concluded that the Sao cosmology does not merely represent the interconnectedness between humans, the community, and the cosmos, but also forms a dynamic, layered, and adaptive framework shaped by the pressures of historical and environmental contexts. This cosmological system is not static; it is a continuous process of transformation in which each element holds autonomous meaning while simultaneously participating in an interdependent cosmic flow that defines and redefines collective identity. The Sao Stone, in this regard, is not simply a material object or a symbol of tradition, but a center of recursive meaning that structures cultural continuity and existential resilience within the Aman Seri cosmos. By emphasizing the accumulative and sequential nature

of cosmic realization, this study demonstrates that indigenous cultural identity is not a fixed entity but one that is constantly regenerated through the specificity of unfolding events. Thus, Aman Seri's cosmology emerges not only as a reflection of cultural identity but also as a conceptual framework for understanding how indigenous communities sustain historical endurance and ecological continuity through symbolic language and living local knowledge.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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