**Bromo as the Body of God: Savanna Blazes and *Yadnya Kasada* Ethnobotany in the Perspective of Pentecostal Eco-pneumatology**

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**Abstract:**

This study is a response to growing concern about the accumulation of ecological crises and other troubling bio-geological changes that have occurred recently on both a global and local scale. However, due to numerous constraints, this conversation will be restricted to a local scale, particularly responding to the ecological tragedy of forest and land fires in the Bromo savanna in early September 2023. The thesis of this paper is that “Bromo as the body of God” can be an imaginative critique of a forest and land fire incident involving one of the Tengger tribe's local wisdom of nature conservation known as the ethnobotany of the *Yadnya Kasada* ceremony and studied from the standpoint of Pentecostal Eco-pneumatology. To demonstrate this argument, I utilized a descriptive-analysis approach based mostly on the works of a feminist eco-theologian named Sallie McFague, which was then interlaced with sharp insights from some Pentecostal/Charismatic (P/C) scholars. As a result, the metaphor of “Bromo as the Body of God” proposes a new ecological paradigm that simultaneously unites human tears, earth tears, and God's tears. The sacred character of the earth as a manifestation of His body must compel efforts to manage, restore, and maintain the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (*Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru*, TNBTS) region as a tangible representation of the need to care for the sustainability of the current environment.

**Keywords:** Bromo, the body of God, ecological crises, savanna blazes, *yadnya kasada* ethnobotany, Pentecostal eco-pneumatology

**INTRODUCTION**

This research is a response to the growing concern about the buildup of ecological crises and other disturbing bio-geological changes that have happened recently on both a global and local scale. However, due to many constraints, this discussion will be limited to a local scale, namely responding to the ecological disaster of forest and land fires (*Kebakaran hutan dan lahan, Karhutla*, Ind.) in the Bromo savanna that occurred in early September 2023. The thesis of this paper is that “Bromo as the body of God” can be an imaginative critique of the forest and land fire incident concerning one of the Tengger tribe's local wisdom of nature conservation known as the ethnobotany of the *Yadnya Kasada* ceremony and studied from the perspective of Pentecostal Eco-pneumatology.

To demonstrate this claim, I employed a descriptive-analysis approach primarily on the works of a feminist eco-theologian named Sallie McFague, particularly *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, which was then interwoven with incisive insights from many Pentecostal/Charismatic scholars (P/C). First, I begin by responding to a challenge to the P/C movement’s lack of ecological involvement posed by the well-known German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann by starting with McFague’s thought, which perceives the universe as God's body.[[2]](#footnote-2) Second, the recent Bromo savanna forest and land fire disaster, as well as the *Yadnya Kasada* ceremony, will be recounted to provide a general picture of the ecological crisis, as well as efforts to restore and protect the environment through Tengger tribal community local wisdom practices. This study will conclude with the constructive idea of “Bromo as the Body of God” as a result of the connection between McFague's understanding and Aaron Jason Swoboda's Pentecostal Eco-pneumatology concept.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**DISCUSSION**

**The Universe as the Body of God**

Moltmann asks the decisive question, “Where are the charismata of the 'charismatics' in the everyday life of the world, in politics, in the peace movement, and the concern for ecology?”[[4]](#footnote-4) Indeed, the urgency of the subject, as well as the difficulty of the P/C movement's ecological participation, continue to necessitate the accumulation of complete replies. As a result, this work can be utilized to demonstrate the contribution of ecological thought from the P/C tradition. The awareness of the significance of a new paradigm that addresses marginal, local, and perspectival issues, such as ecological disasters, demonstrates that the P/C tradition is concerned with more than just dogmatic issues. The most terrifying problem, which has not yet been completely realized, is the ecological crisis, which has the potential to endanger the cosmos's sustainability as well as the survival of humans and other creatures within it. The P/C's cosmological worldview must be reoriented towards their participation in the preservation of the natural ecosystem as a common home.

McFague's insightful ideas, which are seriously concerned with patriarchal behavior that oppresses women and its influence on social behavior that initiates the issue of the ecological crisis, serve as the foundation for the emergence of this conversation. If McFague's ecological concerns diverge from the relationship between oppressed women and the oppressed earth, I must admit that my strong interest in theological studies of human vulnerability pushed me to divert my attention to ecological issues by examining the earth's vulnerability.

Climate change and global warming, according to McFague, are fundamental topics in the theological-anthropological discussion of the twenty-first century, where Christianity cannot escape its ecological responsibilities.[[5]](#footnote-5) This should create a new consciousness that shifts the paradigm of P/C anthropology and eco-theology, particularly the interaction between humans and other creatures who share our world.[[6]](#footnote-6) McFague developed ecological theology by proposing the notion of the ‘universe as the body of God’ that manifests in the universe, criticizing the anthropocentric, hierarchical (God as King), and dualistic God-Universe relationship to establish a deeper understanding of human-earth relations. Humans are not persons who are different from other creatures and believe they have rights to treat other creations arbitrarily in order to satisfy their exploitative goals.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Individualistic culture and modern consumerism, according to McFague, contribute to the deterioration of ecosystems since they promote skewed anthropological understanding and risk harming natural sustainability. As a result, the cosmological story can theologically integrate and provide a clear explanation of humans' role in the cosmos, as well as prompt humans to think critically about how to manage the world more wisely and proportionally. McFague's statement “love for the neighbor” might be enlarged to include the universe as the “neighbor” she alludes to, “Christian love to neighbor should be extended to nature.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

McFague further adds, using the evolutionary concept of the universe as God's body, that while the process of creating the cosmos began with radical unity it progressively evolved into inconceivable diversity. Humans and existent creation are still fundamentally and internally linked, both at the macro and micro levels. This suggests that, according to McFague, we share a common ancestor with everything else: the biochemical elements are in bacteria and us.[[9]](#footnote-9) Even if humans are equally valuable as other creations on Earth, they are distinguished by “self-consciousness: we know that we know” or “self-awareness: we know that we know.” McFague explains this aspect of human consciousness as follows:

We know that we were born and that we will die: we have created stories, music, dances, paintings, philosophies, and religions, as well as mind-altering substances to help us deal with this awesome knowledge. As the symbol-making creatures par excellence, we have the peculiar, painful, and wonderful distinction of knowing that we know. [[10]](#footnote-10)

However, the human self-awareness that distinguishes them does not necessarily permit them the authority to act as they pleases towards other creatures. This knowledge must not intoxicate humans to the point where it obscures the call to duty for the survival of existing creation. All of creation is the genuine expression of God's body in the universe through the empowerment of the breath of life, namely the Spirit of God. The sacredness of all creation stems from the function of God's creative Spirit, where both all creation and humanity are defined as being *imbued* and *breathed* by “the life-sustaining power of *rûach*.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Unfortunately, awareness of the role of the power of God's Spirit in the creation process has not been primarily discussed, as Clark Pinnock's point of view emphasises:

The role of the Spirit in creation, for example, is crucial theologically but not often or much discussed in the scriptures. Nevertheless, it is important to draw out the truth, even if lightly attested. The Bible may be like the fish that, when asked to describe its environment, neglected to say much about the water.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The interaction between Pinnock's understanding of God's Spirit's participation in creation and McFague's imagination of the universe as a manifestation of His body, in my opinion, has a significant ecological influence. Instead, then destroying, exploiting, and languishing the cosmos,[[13]](#footnote-13) this pneumatic eco-theological consciousness promotes participation in maintaining and conserving the universe, which I refer to as an endeavor to “humanize the earth.”

McFague's response to the ecological crisis as an eco-feminist theologian does not abandon her liberatory spirit, as she states, “...nature needs to be liberated and healed because we have enslaved it and made it sick.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The metaphor of the universe as God's body underpins efforts to bridge the tension between “oppressive humanity” and “oppressed creation,” breaking through the dualism between God and His creation's world, and imagining the relationship between God and creation. He appears to be offering a revolutionary eco-theological perspective by proposing a relationship between God and the universe that is free of the tension between His transcendent and immanent natures. God's presence must be manifest in the reality of the cosmos, and the spiritual awakening that results from this type of cosmic process will move humans away from the urge to destroy and hurt the universe. Our human self-awareness culminates in the great work of God's hand in participating in maintaining and sustaining the continuity of life in this cosmos with all its complexity, rather than destroying and risking it for the sake of fleeting desires, as occurred in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (*Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru*, TNBTS) area with the forest and land fire incident.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Bromo Savannah Blazes and Ethnobotany of the *Yadnya Kasada* Ritual**

*Bromo Savannah Blazes*

The recent forest and land fire disaster in Mount Bromo's Teletubbies Hill savanna area is not the first of its kind. According to TNBTS information and reports, an analogous incident occurred in the same month, September 2017, and occurred at three locations: Slope B29, Teletubbies Hill Savana Area, and *Dingklik* Slope, *Penanjakan*.[[16]](#footnote-16) The fire was thought to have been started by hot, dry, and windy weather, which caused the savanna grass under the B29 hill to burn, but there were also allegations that community members deliberately set fire to one of the affected savanna locations, causing the fire to spread to several surrounding areas for two days. The geographical circumstances of the afflicted area prevented fire extinguishment, resulting in the fire consuming around 80 hectares.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Six years later, the same thing happened. In early September 2023, a group of photographers and a bride and groom held a pre-wedding picture session in the savanna of Teletubbies Hill or *Watangan* Valley. The photo session included using flares for effect, and four of them that were lit during the shoot were successfully lit, while one failed and detonated, sparking a massive fire in the shooting location.[[18]](#footnote-18) Several parties are involved in the handling of this case, including the police, Regional and National Disaster Management Agencies. Extinguishing the fire this time is expected to take more than a week, given that until the end of September 2023 the area of land affected by TNBTS is around 989 hectares and spans three districts: Lumajang, Malang, and Pasuruan.[[19]](#footnote-19) The costs generated by this catastrophe include economic losses for both the government and tourism industries, as well as the creation of a significant ecological issue. TNBTS administration revealed statistics on overall government material losses, which reached 5.4 billion rupiah, including disaster management costs and ecosystem restoration process costs, from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (*Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan*, KLHK). Similarly, the economic losses borne by tourism business providers reached 89.7 billion rupiah, which is calculated based on four factors: the number of visits or tourist quota per day, the price or type of entrance ticket to the tourist destination area, and the length of time. Time for the TNBTS area to close.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Physically, ecological losses may be seen in the environmental conditions caused by the fire, where *Malelo* grass, Edelweiss vegetation, and Tosari orchids that occur in savanna areas have turned into piles of ash. The habitat of the Javanese Eagle and Langur fauna is also unavoidable due to the fire's broad reach.[[21]](#footnote-21) Apart from that, the fire cut off clean water channels to six communities in Sukapura District: Ngadirejo Village, Wonokerto, Ngadas, Jetak, Wonotoro, and Ngadisari.[[22]](#footnote-22) Following the ecological catastrophe in the Bromo area, the government’s task is to mitigate the process of restoring the tourist attractiveness of green tourism and the environmental sustainability of TNBTS tourism. According to the official KLHK website, the government will carry out ecological, economic, social, and managerial rehabilitation through the relevant ministries, including public education.[[23]](#footnote-23) The ecological succession approach, which is a natural ecological restoration process that includes the restoration of grass, vegetation, local flora and wildlife in the Bromo savanna area, is being used in certain efforts to restore the savanna ecosystem. Meanwhile, fire-damaged tree vegetation will be rebuilt using the enrichment planting method or by planting new trees. These two techniques of ecosystem regeneration will also be aided and hastened by adequate rainfall, and the process of decomposing the ash left behind from burned plants will serve as a natural fertilizer.[[24]](#footnote-24) The ecological rehabilitation of the TNBTS area can also be continually supported from a cultural standpoint through symbolic rituals of local wisdom, including the ethnobotanical practice of the *Yadnya Kasada* ritual.

***Ethnobotany of the Yadnya Kasada Ritual***

The TNBTS area is located in a hilly terrain with an average temperature of 10°C to a low of 2°C, excellent land contours for agricultural land, a potential tourism industry, and a hub for conserving local culture. The Tengger tribe's name for the area has been known and recognized as the land of *hila-hila* or holy land since the inception of the Hindu empire in Indonesia. The local population who occupied the slopes of Mount Bromo, the TNBTS area, were considered “*Hulun Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*” or devoted servants of Almighty God, according to one of the Tengger inscriptions from 851 *Saka* or 929 AD. The Tengger tribe's traditional greeting is “*Hong Ulun Basuki Langgeng*,” which means “May God always give us eternal safety or prosperity.” However, because the impact of Hindu Dharma from Bali cannot be ignored in the TNBTS area, the greeting “*Om Swatyastu*,” which has a similar connotation, is frequently used in everyday meetings.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The *Yadnya Kasada* traditional ritual is one of the Tengger Tribe's customs and traditions that is still kept and conducted in the present period. *Yadnya* means holy offering, and *Kasada* is the twelfth month in the Tengger people's ancient Javanese calendar. *Yadnya Kasada*, also known as *Pujan Kasada*, is a ceremonial day in which gifts are made to *Sang Hyang Widhi* on the 14th of *Kasada*, which falls on July 20th, AD.[[26]](#footnote-26) Anas' essay contains a step-by-step instruction to preparing for and carrying out the ceremonial rite.[[27]](#footnote-27)

TNBTS, particularly the Bromo mountain area, is a unique natural reserve in the shape of an active caldera within a non-active volcano that resembles a big bowl with a wide expanse of “*segara wedi*” or sea of sand. This geographical setting gives considerable ecological and socioeconomic benefits to the people living in the TNBTS area. The Tengger tribe has practiced environmental stewardship for millennia, as seen by the traditions of the ceremony described above. The Tengger tribe will bring agricultural supplies, livestock products, and even money to be put out on *Ongkek* and then hurled into the Bromo crater during this important festival. Some Tenggerese descended to the crater rim to catch the offerings thrown as a symbol of divine blessings.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The predominance of plant elements that are agricultural products in the *Yadnya Kasada* rite is related with ethnobotany, one of the technical terminologies in the study of ecology that also fulfils the notion of vegetable supplies from the environment that sustain cultural values.[[29]](#footnote-29) Ethnobotany also emphasizes humans' reciprocal interaction with the universe, in which they can influence or be influenced by the environment. Plants, in addition to giving benefits to humans, whether they grow in yards, gardens, fields, or the wilderness, necessitate human intervention through conservation initiatives. Every year, this important ceremony is performed with the intention of praying for blessings for a bountiful crop, healing, and safety from harm. This ceremony is particularly rich in ecological themes because it emphasizes the importance of maintaining and preserving nature. Technically, this ceremony can be performed individually or communally, which is known as 'village offering' and is performed by Tengger traditional elders. The composition of offering plant use is regulated and measured using the consensus index formula-consensus index or fidelity level.[[30]](#footnote-30) This parameter represents the ethnobotanical analysis's agreed importance value for each plant. In this context, consensus is defined as the result of a majority or multiperson decision-making process, using the means of gaining a majority of votes from responders or voting. The following equation yields the consensus index value:

FL = IP/IU x 100%

Information:

FL : Determining the significance of a species for a certain reason.

IP : The number of informants who mentioned the used species.

IU : The total number of informants who mentioned the species for a variety of

purposes.

The plant offerings are made up of sixteen different species of plants, as shown in the table below:

Table of Ethnobotanical Fidelity for *Yadnya Kasada* Ritual[[31]](#footnote-31)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Plant Names** | **Value %** |
| 1 | Edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*) | 96 |
| 2 | Rice (*Oryza sativa*) | 94 |
| 3 | Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) | 90 |
| 4 | Leeks (*Allium ampeloprasum*) | 86 |
| 5 | *Putihan* (*Buddleja asiatica*) | 84 |
| 6 | Cabbage (*Brassica oleraceae*) | 80 |
| 7 | *Anting-anting* (*Fuchsia magellanica*) | 78 |
| 8 | Banana (*Musa paradisiaca*) | 74 |
| 9 | *Marasi* (*Curculigo latifolia*) | 70 |
| 10 | *Kenikir* (*Cosmos caudatus*) | 68 |
| 11 | Areca Nut (*Areca catechu*) | 46 |
| 12 | Banyan (*Ficus benjamina*) | 46 |
| 13 | *Danglu* (*Engelhardia spicata*) | 40 |
| 14 | Coconut Leaf (*Cocos nucifera*) | 30 |
| 15 | Betel (*Piper betle*) | 28 |
| 16 | Corn (*Zea mays*) | 24 |

The highest percentage value is 96% for the Edelweiss flower plant (*Anaphalis longifolia*). This is affected by locals’ perceptions of this type of flower plant as a perpetual flower. The Edelweiss flower is regarded as a sign of longevity and resilience due to its arduous habitat in the Alps, which includes harsh weather and demanding conditions. Its ability to survive in harsh conditions teaches locals the value of staying strong and enduring in the face of adversity. Rice (*Oryza sativa*) has the second highest percentage value at 94%, followed by potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) at 90% because both rice and potatoes are basic food sources to sustain survival needs. The maize plant (*Zea mays*) has the lowest percentage position because, although it is a source of food, the Tengger tribe people rarely plant this type of plant due to its low economic worth.[[32]](#footnote-32) Ethnobotany encompasses not only the use of plants in specific societies, such as the Tengger tribe, but also the economic, spiritual, and cultural benefits that might affect ecological meaning and value in attempts to protect the universe.

**The Bromo Metaphor as God's Body within the Perspective of “Pentecostal Eco-pneumatology”**

For McFague, metaphor is the only way for humans to discuss about God as a limited creature.[[33]](#footnote-33) McFague defines two key terms to properly comprehend metaphor theology: *metaphor* and *model*. Metaphor is the perception of something as something else, “this” as if it were “that,” since a person does not know how to grasp or discuss “this,” so he uses “that” to describe “this.” Thinking metaphorically is seeing the relationship between two items, two separate events, because one is better understood than the other, so by utilizing something that is understood, one is talking about something complex and not yet understood.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Metaphorical thinking refers to a new method of thinking about something; while metaphors can generate new meaning, they are only incomplete grids that can color and provide insight into something that is not yet understood; a metaphor is neither an explanation nor a definition. Metaphors have affective power in developing comprehension, but once they are grasped descriptively-definitively, the metaphor ceases to exist and becomes literal since it is assumed.[[35]](#footnote-35) God as *Father* and God as *King*, for example, are metaphors. When such a metaphor for God is treated as a definition, God the Father and God the King are literally understood as male, patriarchal, hierarchical [even *oppressive*, the author adds].[[36]](#footnote-36) McFague here reminds us of the centrality of a metaphor. McFague also discussed models. A model is a metaphor that is more stable, dominant, complete, and has a more enduring and coherent quality.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Religious vocabulary is always ambiguous, theology is always metaphorical, and doctrine itself is contextual, incomplete, open, and even plural.[[38]](#footnote-38) For instance, in her description of God's relationship with the universe, McFague employs the metaphor of “the universe as His body,” emphasizing the mystery of beauty, vulnerability, and pain in the hope of providing space for reflection for each individual, allowing them to appreciate other existing creations in the cosmos as a common home.[[39]](#footnote-39) In this case, the Holy Spirit is the major figure capable of transcending human verbal constraints. Because when the Spirit of God is seen as a person, whether male or female, its application becomes highly contextual. Denis Edward chooses to emphasize the mystical aspect of the Spirit as a ‘personal figure who is free to blow anywhere he desires’ rather than the nature of gender when pondering on the difficulty of language restrictions.[[40]](#footnote-40)

As previously mentioned, the P/C movement as a whole still encourages more participation in brainstorming from its theologians. The good news is that it must be acknowledged that there are an increasing number of P/C theologians who are concerned with eco-theological challenges. Amos Yong, in his book *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth* (2009), is one of them. Yong discusses care for other creations and ecojustice issues from a P/C perspective in one of his works.[[41]](#footnote-41) In his earlier work entitled, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* (2005), he gives a brief interpretation of environmental pneumatological theology as an extension of the locus of loving others to other creations that God considers “good.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Similarly, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen encourages us to expand on the concept of pneumatological ecology - *ecological pneumatology* - as part of the general emphasis on the Holy Spirit's operation amid the universe.[[43]](#footnote-43) Swoboda's work “Tongues and Trees” offers the most comprehensive examination of ecotheological issues, including methods such as social justice theology, spirit/creation theology, and, of course, ecotheology.[[44]](#footnote-44) Furthermore, in a slightly different but still related discussion, Frank Macchia has undertaken a reformulation of the Pentecostal distinctive of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to encompass not only human beings but also the entirety of creation. In his reworked doctrine, Macchia sees Jesus as the Spirit-baptizer who pours out the Spirit on all creation in order for creation to be permeated with the Spirit who works to release creation from within history to new possibilities for unfettered, eschatological life with the goal of preparing creation for its final transformation into God's dwelling place.[[45]](#footnote-45) Eco-pneumatology, therefore, exists and understood as a theological field that integrates themes of Holy Spirit theology with ecological theology as a development of the concept of pneumatic ecology.

Reading the work of the P/C academics described above and attempting to respond to Moltmann's concerns and inquiries, I would like to propose a constructive-imaginative thought titled “Bromo as God's body.” As previously described, even though the area is surrounded by a significant ecological catastrophe as well as forest and land fires, it is also a site for the practice of symbolic rites with aspects of reconciliation with nature, such as the *Yadnya Kasada* ethnobotanical ritual. This sacred ceremony, which is a true reflection of the Tengger people's local wisdom, can be viewed through an eco-pneumatological lens, namely sacred concern for other animals who are - to use Paul's phrase from Romans 8:22, - ‘sighing’ as a result of an authoritarian, individualistic culture's actions, utilitarian principles in order to achieve momentary demands (read: *pre-wedding photos*) by jeopardizing the survival of such a complex ecosystem in the TNBTS area. McFague's eco-theological anthropology has significant implications, particularly in the process of transforming self-awareness or humans' perspective on their location in the center of the world as a shared home, as well as their link and responsibility to creation or other species in this cosmos.[[46]](#footnote-46) Humans are no longer rulers in this case, but rather God's partners in assisting other things to evolve in a way that fulfils their purpose. This type of eco-theological consciousness will shift the old paradigm, in which a very anthropocentric individualistic attitude transforms into an eco-cosmocentric communitarian kinship.[[47]](#footnote-47) In practice, humans as God's partners take on the role of guardians of nature, preservers of the cosmos as a common home, and are conscious of caring for them as if they were caring for their own bodies.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**CONCLUSION**

The growing awareness of the role of the Spirit of God in creating, supporting, maintaining, and reconciling relationships that have been destroyed due to deviant, individualistic, dualistic, partial, and hierarchical anthropological desires towards the universe is an important implication of P/C eco-pneumatology. All of these are the primary causes of the ecological catastrophe, which will result in numerous losses. As a result, the metaphor of 'Bromo as the Body of God' presents a new ecological paradigm that incorporates human tears, earth tears, and God's tears all at once. As a physical embodiment of the need to care for the sustainability of the current environment, the sacred character of the earth as a manifestation of His body must necessitate efforts to manage, restore, and maintain the TNBTS region.

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