

ABSTRACT

This study examines the nexus between religion and freshwater, with a particular focus on water pollution and its impact on indigenous communities affected by the degradation of water resources caused by extractive industries. It explores the experiences of a majority-Indigenous community in North Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi, namely the Mori Indigenous Community (MIC). The region is known as *Wita Mori*, meaning “the Land of Mori.” The study focuses on two communities: one in Tiu Village, Petasia Sub-district (Mori Petasia), and another in Korowalelo Village, Lembo Sub-district (Mori Bawah). Key water resources include Tiu Lake, the Tadiola Spring, and the Rinorambe Natural Spring as the research sites. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study utilizes in-depth interviews and direct observation within an ethnographic framework informed by Global Indigenous research on freshwater. The Indigenous religion paradigm serves as the guiding theoretical framework for examining the religious dimensions of the Mori Indigenous Community’s “water story.” The study investigates the contribution of religion to water preservation through the community’s lived experiences, local knowledge, and worldview, with the ultimate objective of developing the concept of “healthy water.” Three principal findings emerge. First, the Mori Indigenous community possesses a distinctive “water story” reflecting an interconnected and interdependent relationship between the community and its water resources, with Tiu and Korowalelo villages sharing similarities yet exhibiting meaningful differences. Second, these “water stories” are increasingly challenged by the influence of Christianity as their official religion. Third, the Mori Indigenous “water story” is reconstructed as eco-religious narratives centered on four core elements: God, Humans, Ancestors, and Nature. The dialogue between *Lamoa* — the ancestral belief system of the MIC — and Christianity as practiced by the *Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah* (Central Sulawesi Christian Church) facilitates this reconstruction. Ultimately, these eco-religious narratives are revitalized as Mori Indigenous ecological knowledge, fostering renewed relationships among all elements and contributing to the concept of healthy water.

Keywords: Water Story, Mori Indigenous Community, Indigenous Religion Paradigm, Revitalization, Eco-religious Narratives, Healthy Water.