Ecological Wisdom in the Legend of Otak Aiq Tojang: An Ecocritical Analysis

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Abstract
This study examines the Legend of Otak Aiq Tojang to explore ecological wisdom and spirituality within the Sasak people. Otak Aiq Tojang is a spring sacred to the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village. This study used a literary ecocriticism approach with data collection techniques in the form of observation and interviews. Interviews were conducted with five informants representing predetermined social layers in the community using purposive sampling. The analysis reveals that the legend has profound significance in Sasak’s life, symbolizing a harmonious balance between humans and nature. The connection between ecological policy and sustainability is underscored by the legend of Dewi Anjani, a purported mythological being, and Betere Indra Guru Sakti’s arrival and subsequent discovery of the spring. These tales have an impact on religious observances, including Begawe Beleq and Maulid Adat, which commemorate Prophet Muhammad’s birth. These legends serve not only as historical narratives but also as sources of spiritual and ecological insights. The water deemed auspicious by Otak Aiq Tojang symbolizes sustainability, reflecting the community’s holistic perspective on the environment. Prohibitions of indiscriminate entry and specific food offerings during rituals signify a dedicated preservation effort, illustrating

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the interconnectedness of cultural norms and ecosystem maintenance. This study enhances our understanding of Sasak’s ecological wisdom, particularly within the context of the Otak Aiq Tojang legend. The implications extend to a deeper comprehension of the interplay between myths, religious rituals, and nature conservation in local cultural settings, thus providing a basis for future research in this domain.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, ecological wisdom, the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang, religious ritual, Sasak community.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a megabiodiverse country and offers a rich research landscape related to ecological wisdom, especially in the context of cultural and environmental wealth (Fios et al., 2021; Riadi, 2023; Rizkiwati, 2022). One of the ethnic groups characterized by a valuable heritage of ecological wisdom is the Sasak people, who inhabit Lombok Island, Indonesia. The Sasak people, as an ethnic group in Indonesia, maintain a harmonious balance with the surrounding nature through traditional practices passed down from generation to generation (Arief, 2021; Rahayu, 2018; van der Meij, 2022).

The value systems, beliefs, and concrete actions of the Sasak people reflect wisdom in utilizing and conserving natural resources (Arief, 2021; Mutia, 2019). The legend of Otak Aiq Tojang, an example of a traditional narrative, is considered a symbolic reflection of the ecological values that have guided this community for centuries. Otak Aiq Tojang is a spring sacred to the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village, Masbagik sub-district, East Lombok district, West Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. The Sasak people attribute the sacredness of this water spring to good luck. The existence of this water spring is inseparable from the myth of Betere Indra Guru Sakti’s arrival on Lombok Island. In Sasak folklore, Betere Indra Guru Sakti was considered the first human to set foot on the island of Lombok. He is said to have come from Negeri Campak carrying a stick, which in the Sasak language is called the tunjang. It was with his stick that Betere Indra Guru Sakti is said to have found the Otak Aiq Tojang spring. The sustainability of Sasak ecological wisdom is not only related to the preservation of cultural heritage but also has direct implications for global efforts to maintain biodiversity, protect ecosystems, and address the impacts of climate change (Mahadika & Satria, 2021; Shubhi, 2012; Tohri et al., 2022).

The importance of preserving the ecological wisdom of the Sasak people has emerged as a broad contribution to the global context. As Indonesia is a megabiodiverse country, the study of ethnic groups such as the Sasak is important to provide insights into sustainable strategies that can be adopted by the wider community. The study of literary ecocriticism is a relevant approach to exploring the meaning and ecological values contained in the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang.

The significance of this legend goes beyond being a mythical or traditional story; the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang can be a medium of knowledge that teaches important values about human responsibility towards nature. However, the local wisdom contained in this legend has never been examined before, especially the ecological wisdom contained therein. Each element in the legend represents a message about
ecological balance, harmony between humans and nature, and the need to preserve natural resources for future generations. Therefore, this legend as oral literature is not only important to be studied to inventory oral literary heritage but also the value of ecological wisdom in oral literature is important as a practical guide that can be applied in the context of modern sustainability (Abas et al., 2022; Sumida & Walker, 2023; Wang & Bai, 2022).

The Otak Aiq Tojang legend transcends its mythological aspects, providing profound insights into human-nature relationships. This research pioneers the study of this legend through literary ecology, uncovering ecological wisdom. Beyond myth, it enriches our understanding of the intricate bonds between humans and nature. The findings contribute to integrating local ecological values into a global sustainability framework, supporting environmental conservation, and preserving Indonesia’s cultural heritage.

The contribution of this research is not only an inventory of Indonesian oral literature but also contributes to environmental conservation efforts by expanding the understanding of sustainable practices, cultural values, and ecological interactions in Sasak oral literature. The Sasak people, who live in harmony with nature, make a significant contribution to maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance on Lombok Island (Rahayu, 2022; Saharudin, 2019). Understanding the natural resources that are used traditionally and sustainably shows wisdom in utilizing the environment without damaging the ecosystem. This study also contributes to the potential adoption and adaptation of these ecological wisdom values in an increasingly complex global context.

Using a literary ecocriticism study of the Otak Aiq Tojang legend, this study aims to answer the question of how the Sasak people’s forms of ecological wisdom and spirituality are reflected in the legend. A deep understanding of the legend not only enriches the appreciation of Sasak culture but also opens the door for further reflection on how ecological wisdom can be integrated into global efforts to preserve and restore the natural environment (Arianto et al., 2021; Drew & Sitter, 2011; Garrard, 2004; Mondo, 2022).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Legend of Otak Aiq Tojang

Otak Aiq Tojang, a spring in Lendang Nangka village, East Lombok, Indonesia, serves as a vital water source for the regional drinking water company in East Lombok district. Recognized as a tourist attraction on Lombok Island, it holds cultural significance for the Sasak people, particularly for those in Lendang Nangka. The Sasak people attribute sacredness to the water spring, considering it fortunate. According to local mythology, the spring is believed to be the bathing place of Dewi Anjani, a mythical figure associated with Mount Rinjani on Lombok Island, Indonesia. This myth is deeply rooted in the cultural beliefs of the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka Village (Koopman, 2023; Smith, 2021).

Dewi Anjani is believed by the Sasak people of Lombok Island, Indonesia, to be the Queen of the Jinn who inhabits Mount Rinjani. There are several versions of the story related to the myth of Dewi Anjani in the Sasak community. One story tells that
she was a human child with a twin brother and was the child of an exiled king and queen. Her twin brother was made king, and she was made Queen of the Jinn due to her meditation on Mount Rinjani. Another story tells that she was a human being who, because her father refused to allow her to marry the man of her choice, exiled herself to the top of Mount Rinjani to meditate. She eventually disappeared in a state of *moksha* (freedom from rejection; self-realization, self-actualization, and self-knowledge) into the supernatural realm and became the Queen of the Jinn. Therefore, for the Sasak people, Mount Rinjani is a symbol of the greatness and power of Dewi Anjani. Until now, many Sasak people perform various rituals and ascetic practices on Mount Rinjani, as it represents the kingdom and palace of Dewi Anjani (Ariadi, 2022; Sahidin & Zakaria, 2020; Smith, 2021).

*Otak Aiq Tojang* is linked to the arrival of Betere Indra Guru Sakti on Lombok Island. In Sasak folklore, Betere Indra Guru Sakti is considered the first human to set foot on the island, arriving from Negeri Campak with a stick, known as *tunjang*. Negeri Campak, based on the story believed by the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village, is an Islamic kingdom located on the island of Sumatra. Betere Indra Guru Sakti is credited with discovering the *Otak Aiq Tojang* spring. The spring is not only a cultural symbol but also a spiritual hub for the Sasak people. It serves as a place of *tawasul* (the activity of invoking or praying to Allah SWT through someone who is considered holy and close to God), and fostering a connection with the Creator (Allah SWT). Additionally, *Otak Aiq Tojang* holds significance as a meeting place with ancestors and a venue for rice purification during traditional feasts, such as the *Begawe Beleq* or *Maulid Adat* (a ritual to welcome the birth of the Prophet Muhammad) celebrated by the people of Lendang Nangka village (Puspitasari et al., 2012).

### 2.2 Ecocriticism

The term ‘ecocriticism’ was first introduced by William Rueckert in 1978. Rueckert (1978) proposed the concept of applying ecological principles to understand literary works, involving an understanding of the complex relationship between literature and physical reality (Egan, 2006; Garrard, 2004; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). The literary ecocritical approach to folklore, legends, and myths is a means of revealing the local knowledge of the community. This knowledge is not only a reflection of their values but also the basis for efforts to preserve and protect the natural environment through norms that are unwritten but recognized as true by certain groups (Clément, 2018; Leoni, 2022).

Oral literature in this framework is considered more than just a narrative. It becomes a container that holds ecological wisdom recognized and utilized by local communities to maintain balance with the surrounding natural environment (Arianto & Simanjuntak, 2020; Kaur, 2007). Folklore representations of human-nature relationships create narratives and establish vital, collectively accepted norms that support environmental conservation efforts (Clément, 2018; Dumenil, 2022; Yalcin, 2020). Local knowledge embedded in oral literature is not only an intellectual legacy but also flows as a stream of ecological wisdom. Adaptive processes in society help implement this knowledge, creating a continuous transmission of culture from one generation to the next (Abas et al., 2022; Berkes et al., 2000). Thus, the literary ecocriticism of oral literature reveals and explains how ecological values are rooted in daily life.
2.3 Ecological Wisdom

Ecological wisdom, a central theme in oral literature, is significant for understanding the complex interaction between humans and nature within societal and cultural contexts (Anwar, 2020; Turner et al., 2000; Zhang & Li, 2024). Rooted in local norms and values, it signifies a profound comprehension of the interconnectedness between humans and the natural environment. Within oral literature, ecological wisdom entails a set of values guiding a society’s interaction with its surroundings, covering the recognition of ecological balance, understanding natural cycles, and promoting collective environmental responsibility (Indriana et al., 2021). This literature serves as a conduit for transmitting knowledge and narrating stories that not only depict human-nature relationships but also convey messages of sustainability, biodiversity preservation, and responsibility for future generations (Fakhriati et al., 2023; Seymour, 2016). The repetition of these narratives facilitates the intergenerational transmission of ecological wisdom.

Crucially, it is imperative to explore how oral literature shapes tangible human behavior toward the environment (Ahmed & Hashim, 2015; Dumenil, 2022; Leoni, 2022). In-depth text analyses reveal subtle details about the environment, exploring how human-nature relationships are portrayed and how ecological values translate into actions. Research in this field provides insights into how ecological wisdom adapts to changing times and modern environmental challenges, highlighting its resilience and relevance. This understanding is crucial for maintaining ecological harmony amid changing environmental dynamics and enriching scholarly discourse.

2.4 Research on Literary Ecocriticism and Sasak Oral Literature


Literary works in the form of poetry are also within the scope of literary ecocriticism. Yahya et al. (2012) examined three poems by the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish and stated that the natural environment in the poems was used as a form of resistance against colonialism. A literary ecocritical analysis of poetry by Arab poets has also been conducted by Ahmed and Hashim (2015), who explain that in a selection of poems by Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Zayyad, Fadwa Tuqan, and Salem Jubran, the relationship between humans and their natural environment and the destruction of nature is a symbol of resistance to colonialism. Chua (2015) examines poems by Filipino poets and describes the disasters and deaths that Filipinos have experienced, ranging from natural disasters to man-made disasters such as accidents and wars that are portrayed in the poems.
Khosravi et al. (2017) also used the study of literary ecocriticism to examine Pablo Neruda’s poetry and found that several of Pablo Neruda’s poems convey criticism of human behavior that is arbitrary towards wildlife, especially in the forest, and a message of empathy for the environment and nature, especially wildlife. Alvi et al. (2019) compared two poems on the theme of the environment and nature from two poets of different countries and cultures: Ghulam Sarwar Yousuf from Malaysia and William Wordsworth from England. Their research shows that there are similarities in thoughts towards nature that are embodied through diction, use of environmental imagery, tone, and style in the poetry of the two poets. Regis (2020) examined Olive Senior’s poetry and found that her poetry utilized natural diction and themes to narrate the ecological upheaval/crisis in her Caribbean surroundings. The study of Olive Senior’s poetry, utilizing ecological studies but with a different focus, has also been carried out by Martínez (2022), which reveals that the imagery of sewage pollution in the Caribbean Island and the political narrative in Olive Senior’s poem ‘Gardening in the Tropics’ show that colonialism played a central role in the rise of sewage in the Caribbean. For him, the poem also portrays a pessimistic attitude toward the ecological crisis and invites readers to explore its origins and alternatives.

Habibi and Karbalaei (2015) examine McEwan’s novel ‘Solar’, which lays out a satirical discourse on the ecological crisis and global warming caused by modern and educated humans. Bose and Panda (2022) also examine Jeff Murray’s ‘Melt’ with a literary ecocriticism approach and show that ‘Melt’, set in 2048, depicts the existential crisis of the people on one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean due to the rapid rise of sea levels as a result of the environmental crisis. Hooti and Ashrafian (2014) examine the novel ‘St. Mawr’ by D. H. Lawrence and outline that women have the same role and position as nature. Yang (2023) examines three novels with children’s themes by Zhang Wei and shows that they can be used to reveal the truth about the environmental destruction caused by human ignorance and greed.

Literary ecocriticism delves into oral literature by examining folklore, legends, and myths. Nofrahadi et al. (2022) studied the environmental setting in folktales, while Arianto and Simanjuntak (2020) explored human-nature relationships in Mak Ungkai folklore. Sulton et al. (2022) proposed using Banyumas folklore for environmental conservation. Sasak folklore, like Putri Mandalika, has been studied using critical discourse analysis and literary ecology by Hilmiyatun et al. (2022). Hendriana and Ariyana (2015) explored ‘Doyan Nada’ using folklore in an adventure game.

These studies show that ecological wisdom within literary ecocriticism extends beyond novels, including poetry and oral literature, each offering unique insights into human-environment interactions. Themes ranging from environmental damage and resistance to colonialism, to critiques of anthropocentric views and global warming, have been explored. Through these analyses, literary ecocriticism highlights the critical role of literature in understanding and addressing ecological crises.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study is descriptive, qualitative research. Qualitative research seeks to explain social phenomena holistically, focusing on a deep understanding of the context
of social life. This approach explores meaning, whether related to activities, situations, events, or artifacts in society (Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017). Qualitative research is a relevant method for exploring the context of ecological wisdom in oral literature, particularly in the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang of the Sasak people.

3.2 Data Collection

This study utilized observations and in-depth interviews to explore the ecological wisdom of the Sasak people reflected in the Otak Aiq Tojang legend. Observations captured community-environment interactions, while unstructured interviews with key informants, including pemangku adat and youth leaders in Lendang Nangka village, East Lombok, Indonesia, aimed to uncover ecological values within the legend. Interview topics covered the legend’s role and function for the community and the perspectives of the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka. Each interview, lasting one to two hours, was recorded and transcribed, providing a detailed database for analysis and effectively revealing local knowledge and community-ecosystem interactions (Irawan, 2022; Sinthumule & Mashau, 2020; Thayyib, 2021).

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select informants, ensuring that participants were aligned with the research objectives and themes and possessed extensive knowledge related to the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang. The purpose of using this technique was to gain rich and diverse insights from various perspectives representing the social strata of the Sasak community in Lendang Nangka village. Five informants were selected: two pemangku adat, LMH (63 years old) and HLTD (59 years old), and youth leaders LRD (35 years old), LSA (42 years old), and BW (38 years old). This selection aimed to present a holistic and in-depth view illustrating the diversity of knowledge and experiences regarding the ecological wisdom in this legend.

3.3 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interview data, thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyze, and understand thematic patterns or themes present in the data. This approach, as described by Braun and Clarke (2022), and Maguire and Delahunt (2017), aims to extract meaning from the data and organize it into themes, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Thematic analysis involves steps such as deeply understanding the data, creating initial codes, grouping codes into themes, revising and developing themes, and preparing a final report describing the main findings. The data examined myths, the legend of Otak Aiq Tojang, religiosity, and ecological wisdom within the framework of literary ecocriticism.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Otak Aiq Tojang is not just a physical source of spring water in Lendang Nangka village, but the story that accompanies its existence represents a deep relationship between humans and ecosystems, especially in Sasak society. The discovery of the sacred spring by Betere Indra Guru Sakti symbolizes the connection between humans and nature, exemplified by the miraculous process of finding water with a tunjang or
‘stick’. This is illustrated in the following statement by the traditional mangku LMH (63 years old) (E refers to excerpts):


In the context of ecocriticism, this legend illustrates human harmony with the environment, teaches the values of sustainability, and instills concern for natural resources (Dumenil, 2022). The word Tojang, derived from the word tunjang or ‘stick’, highlights the symbolic and mythological aspects of the legend. In the context of ecocriticism, the use of sticks as elements in the search for water sources demonstrates the connection between humans and nature through simple objects, such as sticks, creating a narrative that emphasizes ecological sustainability through human actions.

The quest for water sources and the sanctity of springs form a narrative of sustainability, where ecological balance is achieved through the thoughtful actions of humans towards their environment. The overarching narrative depicts the intimate relationship between humans (Betere Indra Guru Sakti) and nature, where the interaction not only spawns the legend but also defines how humans are actively engaged in the quest for, maintenance of, and reverence for natural resources, particularly water (Bhattacharyya, 2022; Jähnichen, 2022). Otak Aiq Tojang is also believed by the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village to be the bathing place of Dewi Anjani.

E2 Dewi Anjani araq seuwah Guneng Samalas ngempok, sementare Betere Indra Guru Sakti araq siq endekman Guneng Samalas ngempok. Jari Dewi Anjani mihu endah ngeramatang taok sino baterusne piakye jari taokne pada mandik kance dayangne. [Dewi Anjani appeared after the eruption of Mount Samalas, whereas Betere Indra Guru Sakti arrived before the eruption. Dewi Anjani also sanctified the place (Otak Aiq Tojang) and designated it as a bathing place for herself and her attendants.]

In the context of ecocriticism, the eruption of Mount Samalas can be interpreted as a natural event with ecological repercussions on the environment. Dewi Anjani’s presence after this eruption could be associated with the resilience of nature and its capacity to recover post-disaster. By sanctifying Otak Aiq Tojang and designating it as a bathing place for her attendants, she crafted a narrative of environmental reverence. From an ecocritical standpoint, this action can be construed as an endeavor to uphold the equilibrium and sustainability of nature (Hernawati, 2021; Wang & Bai, 2022).
The mythological entity Dewi Anjani epitomizes harmony between humans and nature (Boonpromkul, 2019). Demonstrations of belief in the sanctity of the environment emphasize the significance of ecosystem preservation. In this regard, the legend and myth of Otak Aiq Tojang serve not only as cultural heritage but also as a lesson on the necessity of conserving and honoring the environment. The portrayal of ecosystems in this oral literature not only mirrors local narratives but also encapsulates the ecological wisdom values of the Sasak people, offering insights into global challenges in maintaining nature’s balance.

4.1 Ecosystems and Natural Balance

The water from Otak Aiq Tojang, considered auspicious, becomes a metaphor for the balance of nature, illustrating the community’s wisdom in resource conservation (Jismulatif et al., 2020). Its auspiciousness is evident in the statement made by the customary pemangku adat, LMH (63 years old), in the following excerpt:

E3 Sampe jelone dengan tene lamunne galing nyunatang, lalo joq luah ato genne taek haji, endekne pada bani lali lamun endekman nunas endeng aiq. Jari tene arak aranne Bale Gedeng, taok nyimpem puseke, aigane te endeng. Mbe lekan aigane, lekan Otak Aiq Tojang. Aig ine aig lekan tono sebenerne, te bai terus te jauk ulek. Nah aig ine siq pade endengne jawq lafo [To this day, the people here do not dare to leave before bidding farewell and asking for water when someone is undergoing circumcision, leaving the area, or going on Hajj. Therefore, there is a bale gedeng here, which serves as a storage place for heirlooms, and the required water comes from Otak Aiq Tojang. This water is taken from there and brought home. Now, this tradition of requesting and bringing the water continues.]

LMH’s statement reflects the close relationship between the local community and Otak Aiq Tojang spring. In the context of literary ecocriticism, the water from this spring is not only considered a physical resource but also holds symbolic meaning. Requests for water for circumcision, pilgrimages, or other spiritual purposes reflect the importance of these springs in daily life and religious practices.

From an ecological perspective, the act of requesting water from Otak Aiq Tojang to take home illustrates a community’s dependence on the surrounding environment as a source of spirituality and good fortune. This reinforces the view that in local communities, ecological sustainability is not only related to the physical preservation of nature but also involves religious and cultural practices closely linked to their local environment (Arianto & Simanjuntak, 2020; Mutia, 2019).

Additionally, it reflects the local wisdom in utilizing and preserving natural resources sustainably. By understanding that water from Otak Aiq Tojang has spiritual and auspicious value, the community is indirectly involved in the preservation of the spring. A similar sentiment was conveyed by the following pemangku adat HLTD (59 years old):

E4 Jari luek peninggalan leq tene siq te pandi’ leq Otak Aiq Tojang pas Maulid. Ta pandi’ pas leq pengembulan. Jari ruen Otak Aiq Tojang niki mun te gitak lekan atas marak ruen manusie no. Arak otaqne, arak awaqne, araq nae ne. Nah leq otaqne nikilah taoq pengembulanne. Ndeq ne kanggo dengan sembarangan tame joq ito. [Many heirlooms here are bathed in the Otak Aiq Tojang spring during the Begawe Beleq or Maulid Adat. When viewed from a height, Otak Aiq Tojang resembles a human being, with a head, body, and legs. The right side of its head is the source of the spring. People are not allowed to enter carelessly.]
HLTD’s statement reflects the symbolic relationship between Otak Aiq Tojang, humans, and the spring as interrelated elements of the ecosystem. The practice of bathing heirlooms with water from this sacred spring reveals the complexity of the cultural, spiritual, and ecological values in Sasak society. Bathing heirlooms in the spring is not only a religious ritual but also a symbol of ecological sustainability. This practice is a clear manifestation of the Sasak people’s awareness of the importance of maintaining ecological balance. Through these rituals, they not only strengthen their spiritual bonds with their ancestral heritage but also affirm their responsibility towards nature (Bhattacharyya, 2022; Sinthumule & Mashau, 2020). The symbolism of this sacred spring’s human-like form is not merely a visual representation but reflects the community’s holistic view of the environment. The concept of a human-like form illustrates their perception that nature is not just a collection of inanimate objects but a living entity that has a complex relationship with humans.

4.2 Human Interaction with Supernatural Beings

The Sasak people’s belief in the equal right to life and the right to pray between humans and supernatural beings reflects a holistic view of nature. This belief creates a unique dynamic in which rituals at Otak Aiq Tojang are expected to bring good luck and validate prayers. This sentiment is expressed in the statement of the customary mangku LMH (63 years old) during the interviews.

The Sasak people’s belief that God’s creatures extend beyond humans alone reflects their recognition of the diversity within God’s creation. This inclusive attitude acknowledges that all creatures have the same right to life and prayer as humans, showing acceptance of diversity. The notion that while human prayers may not always be answered, prayers from supernatural beings may be accepted highlights the spiritual interaction between humans and the supernatural in daily life. These perceptions offer insight into how the Sasak people interpret human relationships with supernatural beings, stressing themes of inclusivity, spirituality, and interconnectedness with religious teachings (Coscieme et al., 2020; Nahdhiyah et al., 2023; Stibbe, 2014).

Direct interaction between humans and supernatural beings is evident in Sasak society through ‘invitations’ during the Begawe Beleq or Maulid Adat ritual. The following statement from the customary mangku LMH (63 years old) illustrates this interaction.

During the Maulidan ritual at Otak Aiq Tojang, we invite them to sit and pray together. From the moment we burn incense, we invite them in their language. Then, we begin praying together, starting with dhikr (mentioning or remembering Allah verbally through good words) and prayer. Before we go there, we have prepared the name Sanganan. It contains yellow rice, which is used as food. So we serve it to them. Yellow rice is rice that is mixed with turmeric; empok-empok is the name, and it is fried grain. Then, we fry sticky rice, coconut sugar, and coconut with brown sugar. There is chicken that is cut up; cutting the chicken is actually a form of gratitude, and the chicken is eaten, not thrown away.

Inviting supernatural beings to join in prayer during Maulid Adat rituals demonstrates the inclusivity of Sasak culture, reflecting empathy for the diversity of God’s creatures. The use of food as a form of respect emphasizes the relationships built through ritual elements, symbolizing prosperity and gratitude with ingredients like yellow rice, fried sticky rice, empok-empok, coconut sugar, and chicken. This practice aligns with ecological wisdom, utilizing natural ingredients like turmeric and empok-empok, accentuating the connection between ritual and environmental preservation (Mwale, 2023; Nalepin, 2020). Cutting and consuming chicken as an expression of gratitude illustrates respect for God’s grace and human involvement in natural cycles within the ecosystem.

The Sasak people’s understanding of human-supernatural relationships reflects a holistic ecosystem perspective, acknowledging supernatural beings’ right to life and prayer and indicating a responsibility for maintaining harmony between realms (Kaberry, 1948; Okuyade, 2016). Offering food to supernatural beings as part of ceremonies highlights their role in ecological balance. These beliefs and practices not only hold spiritual significance but also foster ecological awareness, contributing positively to local ecosystem protection and preservation.

The belief of the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village in supernatural beings in the Otak Aiq Tojang spring gave rise to awig-awig (customary law in the form of unwritten rules or laws applied by community members), as told by the following youth leader LRD (35 years old).

The prohibition of certain speech and behavior illustrates the importance of beliefs and customs in human relationships with supernatural beings. This reflects respect for and adherence to traditional values related to sacred places, such as Otak Aiq Tojang. The prohibition on bathing naked in Otak Aiq Tojang reflects an attitude of respect and caution toward the spiritual space, creating boundaries and ethical behavior to avoid violating sacred norms. These prohibitions can be interpreted as efforts to maintain a balance between the real and supernatural worlds (Arief, 2021; Berkes et al., 2000). Respecting the rules and ethics of Otak Aiq Tojang is considered a necessary step to maintain spiritual balance and avoid potential interference from supernatural beings. It is believed that violating the unwritten rules may lead to danger and disaster. BW (38 years old), one of the youths in Lendang Nangka village,
explained that there have been many incidents and casualties of drowning and disappearance in the sacred spring.

BW’s claim is also supported by the statement of the pemangku adat, LMH (63 years old), on another occasion. LMH (63 years old) mentioned that the belief in the presence of invisible creatures in the environment of Otak Aiq Tojang spring prevents the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka village from daring to enter the spring carelessly. This can be observed in the following statement by LMH (63 years old).

This statement illustrates the strong reverence for supernatural forces among the people of Lendang Nangka village. The closely guarded Otak Aiq Tojang spring requires permission from the pemangku adat for entry. Fear of trance and disappearances, coupled with government protection of the surrounding forest, reflects a belief in supernatural forces’ significant influence on community welfare and security in the village. A similar sentiment was echoed by HLTD (59 years old), also a pemangku adat in Lendang Nangka village.

The Otak Aiq Tojang spring is believed by the people of Lendang Nangka village to be a place with a significant amount of spiritual energy, increasing the likelihood of experiencing supernatural influences while there. The community regards this spring as sacred due to its believed inhabitation by various supernatural beings. Additionally, the statement also highlights the risk of possession for those who visit with less than pure intentions or in a bad way, you will be possessed.
4.3 Ritual and Ecological Wisdom

The *Begawe Beleq* or *Maulid Adat* ritual procession at Otak Aiq Tojang in Lendang Nangka village reflects a connection with the preservation of the natural environment. Rituals involving remembrance, prayer, and the purification of heirlooms using water from the sacred spring have positive implications for nature conservation (Nuruddin, 2022; Ringson & Chereni, 2020). The following is an interview statement from a youth leader in Lendang Nangka village, LSA (42 years old).

E11 *Jari Begawe Beleq ato Maulid Adat ino leq Otak Aiq Tojangno taokte gaweque. Pas leq otakne.* *Sikir, bedo’e, terus te bait aiq, besok pusake siq leq tono. Enggakne wah gawek leq tono. Terus te mandik bareng, kadu kereng putek doang.* [So, *Begawe Beleq* or *Maulid Adat* is held at *Otak Aiq Tojang*. We pray, take water, and wash the heirlooms. This is our ritual. Then, we bathe together, using only white cloth.]

The rituals in *Begawe Beleq* and *Maulid Adat* performed at Otak Aiq Tojang are religious practices that demonstrate a close connection between ritual diversity and nature conservation. Prayer and water collection as part of the ritual provide a deep spiritual dimension to the relationship between humans and nature. The use of water from the sacred spring in the process of purifying heirlooms illustrates the attention to the sustainability of water sources. This ritual fosters an understanding that water is not only a physical element but also has a spiritual value that needs preservation.

The use of white cloth as the sole shared toiletry demonstrates a simple and eco-friendly approach. Without the use of chemicals or synthetic goods, this ritual emphasizes the sustainability of natural resource use (Thayyib, 2021; Wang & Yang, 2022). Additionally, the use of white cloth symbolizes unification with God and nature. This perspective is evident in the following statement from the traditional mangku HLTD (59 years old):

E12 *Kereng putekno tanden penyatuan. Penyatuan kance alam. Penyatuan kance Nenek Kaji. Ite leq te gitag kain puteqne kan jari penginget tiene pade ne hamba, sengak laun kan ite pasti pade ngadu kain putek, pasti te pade te bokos, pade mate ite. Nah jari ine tande menyatu kance Penguase, kance Nenek Kaji dait kance manusie kance alam. Mandik ino tande kance alam, kain puteqno tande kance Nenek Kaji.* [The use of white cloth symbolizes unity. Unity with nature and unity with God. Here, the white cloth serves as a reminder that we are all mere servants, as eventually, we will all be shrouded and we will all pass away. Therefore, it signifies a union between individuals, God, and nature. Bathing represents a connection with nature, while the white cloth symbolizes a connection with God.]

This ritual underscores the importance of inner cleanliness and the connection with God in efforts towards nature conservation (Pretorius & Liow, 2021; Winslow, 2022). Through the use of white cloth, individuals are reminded of their reliance on God and their duty to care for His creation. White cloth symbolizes human limitations in the face of nature and God. Through remembrance and prayer, participants in the ritual demonstrate reverence for nature as God’s creation, recognizing the profound interconnectedness between spiritual and natural life.

The ritual serves as a platform to embody ethical religious values such as honesty, compassion, and justice. Participants are expected to embody these values in their daily lives, thereby fostering a positive impact not only on themselves but also on the community and the environment. The *Begawe Beleq* ritual at Otak Aiq Tojang...
shows the Sasak community’s dedication to maintaining ecological equilibrium and environmental preservation, particularly regarding water, which plays a central role in the ritual. The collection of water, initiated with remembrance and prayer, highlights an awareness of the significance of upholding the quality and sustainability of the spring as a sacred natural heritage site.

Rituals are not only acts of worship but also contributions to the ecosystem (Karim et al., 2023; Sinthumule & Mashau, 2020; Thayyib, 2021). Participants view the environment as integral to their religious practices. Conducting rituals at Otak Aiq Tojang communicates the message that environmental conservation is a collective responsibility and that sacred sites must be preserved as both spiritual and ecological treasures. Thus, rituals at the sacred spring embody religious significance while integrating values of environmental conservation.

5. CONCLUSION

The legend of Otak Aiq Tojang illustrates the Sasak people’s ecological wisdom in Lendang Nangka Village, showing a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This wisdom includes ecosystems, human interaction with supernatural beings, and the intertwining of ritual and ecological understanding. The community’s respect for springs and water sources reflects their respect for ecosystems, demonstrating a profound comprehension of ecological sustainability. Human interaction with supernatural beings underlines the Sasak people’s recognition of diversity within creation and their commitment to ethical practices. Rituals and ecological wisdom in the legend exemplify a deep bond between cultural heritage and ecology, fostering a collective dedication to environmental preservation. These rituals emphasize the shared responsibility to protect sacred sites as both spiritual and ecological treasures, highlighting environmental preservation as a sacred collective endeavor.

While offering reflective insights, this study has limitations, and its findings may not be directly transferable to diverse communities. Cultural variations across different regions constrain the generalizability of the results. Future research could enhance our understanding by conducting comparative studies between the Sasak people in Lendang Nangka and other ethnic or cultural groups in Indonesia and neighboring regions. Such an approach would provide broader insights into the diversity of ecological wisdom and local beliefs.

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