



# The contribution of local wisdom of the Baduy community to nature conservation: An ethnographic study based on ecological and customary perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study analyzes the cultural relations of the Baduy community in their efforts to conserve nature using a qualitative approach based on ethnography. **Methods:** Data was collected through non-participatory observation and unstructured interviews with nine informants from the Baduy indigenous community in Banten. The analysis uses social ecology theory and customary law. **Findings:** The results show that the Baduy community consistently practices norms, spirituality, and nature conservation that have been passed down by their ancestors, even as globalization and modernism sweep through. The findings show that the Baduy community possesses ecological wisdom that functions as a form of local environmental governance, integrating spiritual values with environmental ethics. Their resistance to modernization and industrialization is not a rejection of progress, but a conscious effort to maintain the balance between humans and nature in accordance with traditional values. **Conclusion:** This research, grounded in local wisdom, not only deepens readers' understanding of the Baduy indigenous community's role in preserving cultural identity while conserving nature but also aids in the design of government policies. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This research expands on previous studies by highlighting the spiritual aspect of the Baduy indigenous community as an important ecological actor that has received little attention in studies of indigenous ecology.

**KEYWORDS:** nature; Baduy; environment; community; values.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelago country that has thousands of islands and inhabited by people from various ethnic backgrounds. In the report of the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2024a), the total land area of Indonesia reached 1,922,570 km<sup>2</sup> and the sea was 3,257,483 km<sup>2</sup>. Administratively, the area is divided into 38 provinces with a total population of 281,603.8 million people who inhabit tens of thousands of islands spread across Indonesia. The geographical spread of the population creates cultural diversity in society. This is reinforced by the Long Form Population Census 2020 (SP2020) report from BPS (2024b), estimating that there are more than 1,200 tribes in Indonesia, including sub-tribes and sub-sub-tribes. This potential becomes a scientific laboratory for researchers in conducting ethnographic research, as done in this study on the Baduy indigenous community in Banten.

With regard to the Baduy community in Banten, they are one of the many indigenous communities spread and classified in Indonesia. According to Ananta et al. (2015), based

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on the SP2010 publication from BPS entitled "Citizenship, Ethnicity, Religion, and Daily Language of the Indonesian Population", there is a new classification with 31 categories, known as the *Initial Classification*, and it is reclassified based on tribes, sub-tribes, and sub-sub-tribes until there are 609 tribal groups, which is then known as the *New Classification*. Thus, the Baduy tribe is part of the Sundanese tribe, the main tribe that inhabits the Western part of Java Island.

Research on indigenous communities in Indonesia is an opportunity to explore local wisdom that can be used as lessons learned, especially related to environmental management and nature conservation, as researchers have done with the Baduy indigenous community. In addition, the role of ethnographic researchers here is indispensable in illustrating and perpetuating civilization and its heritage. Without recognizing indigenous communities, it is impossible to draw meaning from the wisdom values they inherit. Local culture is a local resource that has an important role in community development (Huraerah et al., 2023). Therefore, research on the Baduy tribe or *urang Kanekes*, a community group from the Sundanese sub-tribe that inhabits an area administratively located in Lebak, Banten Province, was carried out.

The Baduy tribe itself is divided into two main groups, namely Baduy Adat (inner tribe) and Baduy Luar. Between the two, the Inner Baduy tribe is the strongest and most consistent indigenous community in maintaining its cultural values. The community avoids exposure and interaction with aspects of globalization and modernization, such as modern technology, as their commitment to their ancestral heritage in order to be environmental. The *Inner* Baduy community consistently rejects the influence of globalization in order to preserve the environment and cultural sustainability (Triko et al., 2022). In accordance with the research of Nugroho et al. (2024), the Baduy community still chooses to live in simplicity, sincerity, and obedience to the orders of the ancestors to continue to help each other and protect the environment.

The issue of natural destruction that occurs in Indonesia will definitely have an impact on indigenous communities, including the Baduy community. In a report entitled Indonesian Environmental Statistics 2023, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023) noted a number of environmental conditions that occurred in Banten. First, based on the Air Quality Index (AQI) in 2022, Banten province received a score of 73.97, one level below DKI Jakarta with a score of 68.06, which can be said to have poor air quality. Second, Banten experienced changes in the quality of river water quality in 2016-2018, especially the Cidurian river, which during 2016-2017 worsened and 2017-2018 did not change (unchanged). Third, Banten's Environmental Quality Index (IKLH) in 2022 scored 63.41 while being the third lowest after Jakarta (54.65) and West Java (64.66). Fourth, in the management of Hazardous and Toxic Material (B3) waste, generated by 430 industries in Banten's manufacturing sector in 2022, has generated a total of 2.2 million m<sup>3</sup> of waste and only managed 1.83 m<sup>3</sup>, where the rest can have a huge impact on the environment if not treated properly. Lastly, Banten is not spared from natural disasters, where throughout 2022, Banten experienced two cases of landslides, 52 cases of floods, 24 cases of extreme weather, etc. Seeing all this, the role of Baduy community with their local wisdom in protecting the environment is very impactful.

The decline in the quality of the environment reminds us of the ecological threat to people's lives, one of which is the Baduy indigenous community. This is because indigenous communities that are so dependent on nature can be the most affected victims of natural damage. So, it is natural that indigenous communities such as the Baduy people insist on their local wisdom values, which turn out to be at the forefront of nature conservation. Senoaji (2010) mentioned that in managing their environment, the Baduy community adheres to customary rules regarding strict spatial planning for protected areas and cultivated areas. In Sodikin's research (2006), it is known that the Baduy community has inhabited and united on their customary land rights of 5,101.85 ha since a long time ago so that their life pattern is integrated with the surrounding natural environment which is led by *karuhun* or customary provisions (customary law). For them, the balance or harmony between human life, the natural environment, and the transcendental (metaphysical) is

an important philosophy that is essential for the community. This combination is a manifestation of the inevitable entanglement between lives that affect each other. This relationship must be maintained and is their eternal responsibility as an ancestral "legacy".

However, modernism is a challenge to the heritage of values and norms that live as knowledge of the Baduy community. According to McGregor (2021), the importance of understanding this knowledge system is based on efforts to produce, maintain, apply, and disseminate knowledge in the indigenous community system, because otherwise it has the potential for an inappropriate perspective and damage the existing understanding. This means that without awareness of the knowledge, the threat of extinction of local wisdom can become a reality. Many studies have attempted to show the relationship between indigenous values and how they relate to nature. For example, Kleespies & Dierkes (2020) describe relational values as something that reflects the responsibilities and relationships that humans have towards nature and the places where they live. Their research confirmed that relational value (RV) is a construct built through overlapping multidimensional components, including care, community and connection.

Menzies et al. (2024) explain that indigenous values and approaches to caring for the land offer a much-needed solution to the widening gap between humans and non-humans, such as nature. Through data from 40 people from 12 indigenous communities across Kanda, it was found that many emphasized the importance of human-environment relationships and practices, which are based on respect, reciprocity, humility and responsibility. Finally, elevating indigenous values, particularly indigenous ways of caring for nature, plays a central role in how people relate to their land.

In fact, local indigenous people can be important partners in nature conservation efforts and building ecosystems that are good for flora. For example, research by Schuster et al. (2019) shows that *indigenous* management is associated with high vertebrate biodiversity, suggesting a mutualistic symbiosis between indigenous people and local ecosystem development, which could help countries like Canada, Australia and Brazil meet their Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) targets. These studies show that researchers are interested in revealing and understanding how local people or communities form harmony with the environment in which they live. It is natural that this kind of research is important, because in the process the results of what has been done can be an important consideration for policy makers and other stakeholders in taking and formulating sustainable strategic steps for environmental conservation involving local communities as partners.

Indeed, it is not explicitly mentioned which indigenous community or which subject is the focus of these studies, but the correlation that can be understood from the above researches and Baduy indigenous community in this context is the role of indigenous community in maintaining their wisdom values that have implications for the beauty of the environment in which they live. These values are manifested into norms (customary law) and are culturally binding. The understanding of customary law of Baduy community becomes very relevant to environmental conservation efforts. Customary law is something that is inherent as the identity of the indigenous community itself. The ideal customary law that applies in traditional society has been evaluated along with the content and validity of customary arbitration (Nwocha, 2016).

As an inherited identity, it cannot necessarily be eliminated from a community group. In fact, customary law exists to legitimize what already belongs to them. In this regard, the World Intellectual Property Organization (2016) calls customary law an important identity of local communities (adat), because it becomes a bridge to define the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of its members in various aspects of their lives, culture, and worldview, including access, rights and obligations, to Natural Resources (SDA) such as land, heritages, and property, including spirituality, knowledge systems, and others.

At first glance, the natural conditions surrounding the living environment of indigenous communities can be an indicator of the extent to which norms are practiced. Lestarini et al. (2018) mentioned that communities that still have strong customary laws will tend to protect the environment and limit uses that cause environmental damage. This is driven by

the strict implementation of abstinence believed by the community, making the parameters that determine whether or not attitudes and actions towards the environment are allowed, known as wisdom, for example towards forests or rice fields. Sirait et al. (2022) revealed that indigenous people will manage forests that function as a source of life, using all their wisdom.

Thus, this research can be formulated as an attempt to explore the role of Baduy indigenous people in relation to maintaining culture and its impact on nature conservation. These three components are a complementary unity, including human, civilization, and nature, something that has begun to be ignored and rarely considered in relation to the ecosystem. The output of this research can be an important information for the establishment of nature conservation efforts by involving collaboration between local communities, environmentalists, academics, and the state. Environmental protection is the act of protecting the environment from all forms of exploitation and in doing so there must be attention from the government, academics, and individuals (Perreau-Saussine & Murphy, 2007). Hopefully, the actors who play a role in it can understand the meaning of local wisdom from the Baduy indigenous people and use this understanding in order to maintain the natural ecosystem. Indeed, this research does not comprehensively touch many aspects, especially with the limited information from the sources involved. However, this research can be a bridge of information for further researchers. At the very least, this research can be an opportunity for academics out there to interpret the values of local wisdom and its relationship to nature conservation efforts.

## 2. Methods

This research used a qualitative approach. Creswell & Creswell (2018) explain that the qualitative approach seeks to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem. Adlini et al. (2022) emphasized that there are several points that need to be considered in qualitative research, namely: First, regarding interviews with participants; Second, the truth value that is really; and, Third, the suitability of information. Considering that this research is an ethnographic study, the relevance of using qualitative approach is based on exploring the meaning of cultural aspects to spirituality run by Baduy community. The search for this meaning cannot be sought only using a quantitative approach.

The relevance of ethnographic studies in indigenous community research is because it emphasizes the impartiality of the researcher to the community, so that observers can observe the behavior of themselves and others, understand the mechanisms of social processes, and compare and explain why things, both actors and processes, happen as they do (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). For Setyowati (2006), ethnography seeks to explain both explicit aspects of culture and other elements. Therefore, ethnography was chosen by the researcher as an observation process in exploring the cultural meaning of Baduy community in *emic* perspective (from within). Regarding data collection, the researcher conducted unstructured interviews as the main step, in addition to non-participatory observation. The researcher used a recording instrument to avoid blurring and errors in the data conveyed by each source. In the process of data analysis, the researcher wrote down and reorganized the data based on thematic aspects including spirituality, norms, and nature conservation, which were taken from the recordings and interview transcripts.

The purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher in determining the informants, considering the subject's representativeness as part of the Baduy indigenous community, such as part of the inner or outer tribe, age, status, and others. This research selected nine informants, consisting of traditional leaders, farmers, and general public, to be interviewed without pre-prepared questions. As a limitation, the researcher will only explore information about the implementation of customs and environmental conservation efforts by Baduy indigenous people. The analysis based on social ecology is relevant in seeing the connection between the community and its nature systematically and

simultaneously. Meanwhile, customary law is used as a framework in seeing the implementation of customary norms (laws) and taboos related to nature conservation efforts. This type of data is descriptive, where data can be in the form of symptoms, events and events which are then analyzed in the form of categories (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). The purpose of descriptive research is to describe phenomena and their characteristics (Nassaji, 2016).

The researcher's analysis is interpreted from a critical review of the data, which is supported by the literature. According to the role of qualitative research is to encourage the development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and in-depth understanding of qualitative methodology, so it can be said that this research is an important stepping stone in the research journey that provides a foundation for novice researchers to improve their abilities in more complex directions (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). Although, it is emphasized that the researcher did not use data triangulation to validate the findings and only used critical review of data transcripts and literature.

3. Results and Discussion

Observation was conducted directly in Baduy community for a short period of time, which is less than a week. Even so, the researcher succeeded in collecting data that was considered sufficient in understanding the contextualization of community cultural heritage, norm implementation, and its impact on nature conservation, which was extracted from informants of traditional leaders who were considered to have more knowledge of their customs. The research was conducted in the location of indigenous communities in order to be more natural and understand their living space in relation to the interaction between humans and nature. According to Butler & Sinclair (2020), also quoted from Basso (1996), place is an important and closely related aspect of human life, because place is a space for humans to learn about ourselves, the natural environment, and culture, places shape our identity, our relationships with others, and shape our view of the world.

Table 1. Summary of findings based on field data

Source	Summary of findings
Respondent A	<div><div>1. <i>Teton Ayak</i> traditional ceremony of Inner Baduy is a part of <i>Seba</i> ceremony series which is conducted after harvest season.</div><div>2. The traditional feast that invites Outer Baduy to Inner Baduy varies, starting from <i>bebacakan</i> (eating together), <i>pamasaan</i> of field products, and cooking which is also done in Cileo Village. Followed by fasting all day until breaking the fast in the afternoon.</div><div>3. Fields are mobile and any family can open a field, there are no restrictions on land clearing.</div><div>4. The main activities are farming and making crafts, as well as selling. Farming cannot be done on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays because there are taboos.</div><div>5. Agricultural products, especially rice, will be stored in the family granary as a reserve and rice cannot be traded because there are taboos. Rice can only be used for events or urgent needs during the famine period after being given a <i>selamatan</i> (celebration).</div><div>6. The product produced by Inner Baduy besides agriculture and plantation is Honey, especially from Cibeja Inner Baduy, which is taken directly from the forest. Meanwhile, Outer Baduy is the seller.</div><div>7. There are no restrictions on entry and exit, especially for Outer Baduy.</div><div>8. There is a prohibition on cutting down trees because it can cause an increase in temperature (heat). In addition, there is a sanction if there is a tree cutting in the forbidden forest, especially for Inner Baduy.</div><div>9. Cleanliness in Baduy is highly maintained and there is <i>pamali</i> for anyone who defiles the indigenous community area.</div><div>10. The Baduy community area is rarely hit by floods, except for landslides.</div><div>11. Skills are learned independently and hereditary.</div></div>
Respondent B	<div><div>1. Forest has value, especially protected forest. So, protected forest cannot be</div></div>

- owned by anyone.
2. Daily food needs are met by planting independently. Materials in the forest cannot be taken carelessly, for example wood from protected forests cannot be taken, let alone cut down.
  3. This protected forest provision has existed for a long time and has been passed down from generation to generation.
  4. The custom of house design has been passed down from generation to generation.
  5. The Baduy community is obliged to protect the environment and there will be sanctions if they violate, for example, polluting the environment or cutting down trees in forbidden areas.
  6. There is a customary head who has the right to give punishment for violations committed. The form of punishment for violators varies, especially paying money (compensation) during marriage.
  7. Planting cannot be done in any place.
  8. There are no special provisions for farming.
- Respondent C
1. Fasting as a spiritual part of Baduy community is done for three days in three months every year. Approximately 3 times fasting in total. Fasting is done in a certain time and determined by the deliberation of customary figures.
  2. The ceremony is conducted by all people in each village, followed by eating together, prayer (thanksgiving).
  3. The community works together in farming, cutting down trees, burning, and cleaning. The fields can be planted with anything from rice to bananas. After harvesting, it will be taken to the market to be sold, except for rice (prohibited).
  4. Every family must have a field. If you don't have one or can't afford it, you can rent it. Usually, families in Baduy community already have a field and it is their property. The main crop is rice. There is no punishment for anyone who does not have a field.
  5. Regarding the residence, usually there are those who have their own and there are also those who still live with their parents or relatives. Then, if they are married, they can build their own house outside, which automatically requires a new family card (KK). There are no special provisions in building a house, but residents are obliged to help people who want to build a house.
  6. Another traditional ceremony is *Ngalaksa*, a Sundanese ceremony performed as an expression of gratitude for the rice harvest. This tradition is carried out usually for the siren year. It is usually followed by making food made from flour and made like a cake. This tradition is carried out by one village (centralized) because there are many villages here.
  7. Each village has an "elder" (respected) person.
  8. Every resident is obliged to do *beberes* (cleaning) and gotong royong (mutual cooperation).
  9. Clothing requirements for traditional events vary. Inner Baduy generally wear white, while Outer Baduy usually wear batik. However, Inner Baduy is also different, for example Cibeo, which tends to be black. This color selection has been a hereditary custom and should be preserved. The principle of the Baduy community, "*Mountains should not be melted, lebak should not be destroyed, long should not be cut, short should not be connected*", which means do not change what has been determined.
  10. There are some restrictions that cannot be brought in from outside, such as soap or chemical materials that can damage the beauty of nature. Violators will be reprimanded, especially by traditional leaders.
- Respondent D
1. Farming is done on the move and sometimes outside the region. Common crops are rice and kencur. Some are sold, except for rice, because it must be stored in the barn which is located (one of them) in Karakal village, Outer Baduy.
  2. There is no restriction on the type of plants to be planted. The types of plants vary, from bananas to cassava.

3. The land can be cultivated by anyone.
  4. After harvesting, there must be burning of (leftover) plants, such as bananas. If you want to plant again, just plant. The planting time is usually 6 months.
  5. Indeed, there are water shortages here, but the water needed for plants is safe because it does not require much water.
  6. The forest must be preserved because it is an ancestral mandate.
  7. There are rules regarding the prohibition of cutting in protected forests, including from customary leaders and the government. The management of the protected forest itself is the community. But, if you just go for a walk, there is no problem.
- Respondent E
1. The types of crops grown here include rice, kencur, bananas and secondary crops.
  2. The fields can be cultivated by anyone.
  3. Planting activities are carried out together when residents are free with a planting time of up to a month.
- Respondent F
1. The soil here is fertile without fertilizer. Although, there are pests, but it is not a problem.
- Respondent G
1. The location of farming is usually in Ciboleger with the crop planted is kencur with a planting time of 7 months to a year. The weight can be quintals depending on the distribution. The price is Rp25,000/kilo. It is rarely sold directly here, usually there is a buyer who is generally from Outer Baduy.
  2. There are rules for farming, usually coming from the customary leader who regulates, for example, the planting date or day, which is adjusted to a good day or month.
  3. All crops can be planted, except cloves, coffee, cassava, and peanuts. This has been done for a long time. Meanwhile, those that are allowed include: rice, kencur, ginger, beans (long), corn, yams, hair yams, purple yams, petai, bananas, and others.
  4. All crops may be sold except rice.
  5. The way to deal with pests is to use noni leaves that are given vinegar, pounded, then sprinkled on the plants to repel pests.
  6. For fertilizer, use compost.
  7. Tuesdays are not allowed in the fields. If there are no guests, you can go to the fields too.
  8. The 30th is a taboo and no work is allowed. For Outer Baduy, the abstinence is on Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday. Meanwhile, Inner Baduy on the 15th and 30th.
  9. Harvesting honey directly from the forest.
  10. The clothes are different from those of Outer Baduy. In making clothes, no machines are allowed, except kecos (using a sewing needle).
  11. If you are an adult, you must wear a head covering, except for sleeping. The age of obligation to wear a head covering starts from the age of five.
  12. It is compulsory to have a machete to wear in the pants, including children, although children usually use a machete that is not sharp.
  13. Toothpaste should not be used because it pollutes the water.
  14. Residents treat garbage by burning it when the garbage is full in the shelter. Garbage should not be thrown into the water. The spring must remain alive.
  15. Protecting the environment here is done by not throwing garbage, using chemicals, and cutting down forests that are sources of water, especially in protected forests.
  16. There has been a drought.
  17. House construction that uses wood from the forest, especially from protected forests, must be authorized by the *pu'un* (customary leader) and must be in accordance with customary agreements. Then, a celebration will be held and outsiders are not allowed to see the venue, so only insiders. Unless you see them building the house, you can. Building a house is done by mutual cooperation. The house cannot be modeled on the

	outside, no saws, and the use of machetes and baliung <i>with kakaci</i> . If it is cut, use a machete, and do not use an axe. In Outer Baduy, it is allowed. For the binding, nails are forbidden, and can only be pegged and the walls are made of rattan.
	18. Materials for making clothes come from inside and outside.
	19. Change is inevitable and happens everywhere. However, specifically in Inner Baduy, the tradition is still strong. What has changed, for example, is the matter of farming. It used to be rare, now there are many.
	20. Houses here are earthquake-resistant and rarely damaged.
	21. The order of tribal chiefs is down to the <i>jaro</i> or village head, then there are <i>baresan</i> representatives, and finally, ordinary people.
	22. Regarding customary laws, the <i>jaro</i> decides, although he must also consult with <i>Pu'un</i> (elders). Even if the elders change, there can be no additional laws, according to the principle of stability.
	23. Food is free.
	24. There are three villages in Inner Baduy, namely Cibeo, Cikartawana, Cikosi. All villages have the same rules. There are also Inner Baduy who wear black clothes, and the material is the same. It's how you like it, you want black and white, it doesn't matter as long as the material is the same, except for the white head covering.
	25. There is a ronda post, and it is done during the day. It is rare at night because people rarely go to the fields.
	26. Formal schooling does not exist and is not allowed. Children learn <i>ngolah</i> , which means doing their parents' work by cultivating, such as the fields. The training is done since childhood, but they are only taken to the fields and not asked to work. Knowledge about reading and writing, such as Indonesian, is obtained indirectly from tourists who come, not through formal education.
	27. Apart from farming, people like to make crafts.
	28. There is no set distance between houses.
Respondent H	1. In Inner Baduy, there are 167 houses, 600 people, especially in Cibeo.
	2. Besides farming, the men do it, the women make handicrafts.
	3. The level of action affects the punishment received. But, usually, they are only reprimanded.
Respondent I	1. Violators of farming rules are only given a reprimand and not expelled.

There are three main dimensions to the data collected: spirituality, norms and nature. These three dimensions are interconnected with each other and the traditional values of spirituality, culture and ecology are still evident. First of all, the dimension of spirituality. On several occasions, there were similar patterns from several informants who expressed the need to pay attention to abstinence or pemali. For example, informants Ambu Ratih and random men talked about the prohibition or pamali of not selling rice. Another pamali is cutting down trees, which Ambu Ratih explicitly expressed, because it is considered to "waste" the land and cause "heat". The findings indicate the consistency of the community in carrying out the norms or teachings inherited from the ancestors. This issue shows that ancestral teachings are evenly distributed and persist in the collective memory of the community.

Baduy community also recognizes sacred days, such as Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday, on which the community is prohibited from going to the field or fasting. Sacred dates, such as the 15th and 30th of every month, are an important part of Baduy's spirituality. As for worship rites such as annual fasting, which is also found in some beliefs such as Ramadan in Islam, is also carried out by the Baduy community. The fasting is done for one full day taken in one particular month and this rite is done in three different months, so that overall there are three mandatory fasting days in three different months every year. The determination of the sacredness of these days is a customary provision that is carried out tribally.



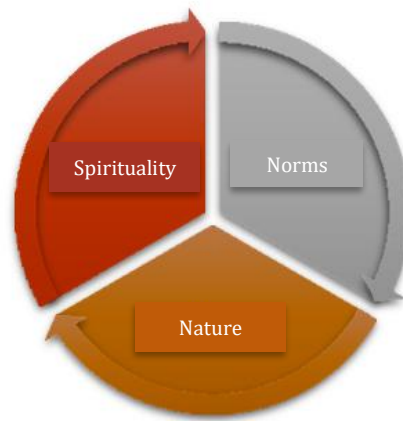


Fig. 1. Three important aspects representing the life of baduy indigenous people

In relation to the sacredness of these days, where people are required to focus on fasting (worship) and are prohibited from farming, it has a good ecological impact on the environment, namely providing a time lag for the soil to restore itself, restoring the power for the soil to remain productive. Research by Khangura et al. (2023) found that Regenerative Agriculture (RA) practices, such as minimum tillage, residue retention, and cover cropping can improve soil carbon, crop yields, and soil health in certain climate zones and soil types, including preserving live roots, minimizing soil disturbance, limiting the use of synthetic compounds (herbicides, fertilizers, etc.). Thus, the act of taking a short "break" from activities, especially farming, of Baduy indigenous people as a result of performing worship on certain days indirectly gives time for the soil to recover.



Fig. 2. Seba tradition followed by Inner Baduy (dressed in all white) and Outer Baduy (dressed in all black) (Kompas.com, 2022)

Another form of spirituality that can be found and related to customs is the tradition of ngalaksa for seren taun or a kind of joint prayer that will be followed by the whole village community for the rice harvest ceremony. This traditional ceremony is usually carried out by gathering, eating, thanksgiving and praying together. This picture shows the spiritual aspect of gratitude to the Almighty for the gift. However, another important aspect of this ritual is not just worship, but also building social ties and strengthening the bonds of brotherhood.

The forms of spirituality practiced by the Baduy indigenous people, who still uphold their customs, are always attached as a tradition and philosophy of life. Spirituality is a part of community life that gives meaning to life and understanding of our world, because it contains values, principles, and influences that are shown in our behavior and interactions

with others (Fairholm, 2000; Neeganagwedgin, 2013), including means of connection with ancestors and how to treat everything around us (Neeganagwedgin, 2013; Suina, 2000). Restricting groups from the influence of modernism and globalization is actually an advantage for the preservation of spiritual values in traditional communities. For example, in the tradition of *seren taun*, which is not only a spiritual manifestation of divine grace, but a form of gratitude to nature, and appreciation of cooperation between residents in managing and protecting nature. The values of spirituality are the bridge that unifies the community, nature, and the metaphysical element, so this aspect is difficult to remove. This is the difference between the spirituality of urban communities and local indigenous communities in seeing the world as a whole, not just "me" and "things".

The aspect of spirituality in indigenous people, which is also inherent in some taboos, is related to customary law or norms believed by Baduy people for generations. The interesting thing, from some interviewees' testimonies, is the fact that not all of the Baduy people know the reason behind some existing taboos, for example, the taboos on selling rice, cutting trees in the forbidden forest, using chemical products, using certain colors of clothes, not planting cloves, and others. However, there is one answer that will definitely be expressed consistently, namely, "it has been the rule from generation to generation, so we just have to carry it out". Durkheim (1995) says that beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are representations or systems of representations that reveal the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers attributed to them, their history, and their relationship to each other and to the profane. Referring to his view, it can be said that the picture of obedience and loyalty to the ancestral heritage values is not only a matter of sacredness, but also a part of virtue, a power for the community to keep interacting with nature peacefully, avoiding the wrath of nature or the great power in the form of disaster.

The implementation of Baduy community norms, especially in the implementation of customary law that applies there, indirectly impacts the resilience of their own cultural values from the influences of the outside world, including in nature conservation. Regarding that, Lestarini et al. (2018), there are several important points that need to be considered in the strategy of implementing customary law related to the environment, namely: First, the power of customary law can control behavior and interaction with nature, as well as a strong attachment to the customs that the community adheres to; Second, customary law in environmental protection is still low due to its status which is not the main rule of nature conservation and formal state law; Third, in terms of opportunities, customary law is indeed able to protect the environment which is effectively carried out by the people who live in the environment, and; Fourth, but the threat comes from the position of customary law itself which is not strong enough to protect nature in a sustainable manner, especially when faced with subjects with stronger capital and regulatory power.

However, as far as is known based on interviews from sources, violators of customary law are known to only get sanctions in the form of reprimands. For example, tourists who travel to the Baduy indigenous community and litter, then a reprimand will be immediately sent to the tourist without any severe sanctions, such as fines and others. In fact, this cannot be called a punishment in the criminal sense, but rather as a warning. According to Maculan & Gil (2020), punishment has its own expressive function, which reflects the severity of the offense and the degree of guilt, where the more serious the act and the greater the degree of guilt of the convicted person, the greater the punishment required to express the (negative) judgment deserved for the crime. If then efforts to pollute the environment with garbage and impact the sustainability of the community's ecosystem, it should not stop at a mere reprimand, which may not have a deterrent effect. Thus, customary law is indeed able to control the attitude and behavior of the community, but the lack of strict sanctions in customary law will potentially create violators, especially for someone who is not in the Baduy customary community. Moreover, if the customary law emphasizes on God's wrath or waiting for nature to give birth to disaster.

The problem faced by Baduy community in maintaining the sacredness of their beliefs today comes from outside their community. Some sources in their testimonies mentioned that sometimes there are people who litter, violate the prohibition to enter certain areas,

and others. All of this, from the indigenous community's point of view, is an insult and lack of respect for their customs, which can bring disaster. For this reason, the implementation of norms is maintained and conveyed, especially to migrants who wish to visit their communities, to comply with various customary or cultural provisions.

In relation to customary law, there is a unique difference between Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy communities. The Inner Baduy community is still consistent in maintaining its customs to the extent of rejecting the influence of modernism and globalization, for example, refusing to use detergent because it has the potential to damage the beauty of nature and water, or even refusing the presence of electricity. Meanwhile, Outer Baduy opens itself to interact with modernism and globalization as an effort to adjust to the development of the times as evidenced by the use of modern technology, such as electronics, mobile phones, and others. Even so, the relationship between the two communities is still closely intertwined despite the differences in cultural perspectives towards modernism.

Indeed, modernism changes the whole lifestyle of the community, including what happens to the Outer Baduy community, but they still hold fast to their customary laws, just like the Inner Baduy, although there are differences from the aspect of modernization. This shows that the process of community adaptation to the development of the era is not a factor to reduce the sacredness of customary law. Instead, in order to maintain customary law, it is necessary to adapt and interact with various cultures. The flexibility of customary law is an advantage to always follow the development of social situations in society (Astheria et al., 2021a). This is clearly contrasted with Inner Baduy, where until this report was made, the original values have not changed, blended, let alone assimilated. Everything is still as it has always been.

Again, customary law is quite strong in controlling its society. However, when compared to the ability of positive state law, such as criminal law, customary law is not strict enough to provide a deterrent effect to violators. Customary law has limited legitimacy where the customary community lives. However, it becomes a challenge when people outside the community enter its environment. Of course, as policy makers, attention to indigenous communities and their norms is necessary in maintaining their social resilience, such as by providing advice and basic knowledge to anyone who wants to visit an indigenous community. In fact, the values of these communities can be a philosophical and legal consideration in making policies or rules, for example in realizing regulations related to the environment, nature conservation, and others. This attention not only shows the state's concern for indigenous communities, but also serves as an educator for policy makers in viewing humans and nature. Darisera et al. (2024) mentioned that integrating customary law into environmental law enforcement can encourage a more inclusive approach to governance that respects local knowledge and practices.

Environmental issues will continue to be an important issue in the discourse of indigenous peoples to the state, so the involvement of various *stakeholders* is needed. Customary law must gain space in policy formulation and positive law formation. However, to achieve this goal, an observer and policy maker must understand the development and implementation of norms that apply in indigenous communities. An observer must understand environmental and customary norms as the responsibility of activism and draw qualified scientific conclusions (Dupuy et al., 2018). In the context of the Baduy community, especially the Inner Baduy, their local wisdom, which is known for consistently rejecting outside influences (modernism) because it is considered "damaging" the balance of nature, can be taken into consideration in shaping and strengthening the state's efforts to maintain natural ecosystems and minimize the impact of environmental damage, whether due to mining activities such as those that occur in several areas such as Halmahera, Palu, and others. Or, for example, environmental pollution due to poor industrial management.

Another important value of Baduy community is their knowledge about agriculture and plantation. Farming tradition is an obligation and rice is the main commodity. But, they also plant other food commodities such as banana, corn, ginger, kencur, petai, etc. Especially for rice, as the main food, Baduy community treats it specially. Every harvest, rice must be stored in the granary and not allowed to be sold because it is *pamali*. Unlike rice, harvest

commodities other than rice can be sold or partially used. This prohibition makes sense, because rice is the main food of Baduy community and the purpose of this *pamali* is understood as the community's effort to avoid crisis or hunger, especially in the famine period, and to make rice storage as a reserve that can be utilized by indigenous people without buying it. In the aspect of spirituality and tradition, the tradition of harvesting rice in Baduy community is a tribute to the ancestors as well as gratitude for the grace of the goddess of rice.



Fig. 3. Outer Baduy residents follow the Ngaseuk tradition or the Huma rice planting season (Putra, 2023)

However, the knowledge of Baduy indigenous people about agriculture and plantation is not well documented, and generally the effort to maintain the knowledge is only done orally and the practice is implemented in the way of life of the community. Even so, there is a source of knowledge about customs centered on customary elders or known as *Pu'un*. According to Asteria et al. (2021b), the Baduy indigenous community has a belief in ancestral rules, and *Pu'un* as an authorized person in the community is a figure who is considered to always maintain the ancestral rules. It can be said that *Pu'un* is not only about the status of the highest leader in Baduy community, especially Inner Baduy, but also the main source of knowledge in the customary law of Baduy community. It means that the oral tradition and the practice of community life are not only maintained by the memory of the community, but also the memory of the main figures in the community, translating and transmitting it to the customary community about the inherited past knowledge.

In the practice of farming and maintaining community life, for example, including the effort to transfer community knowledge, adults of Baduy community often bring their children to go farming. This shows that customs in agriculture have become an unwritten life practice, which not only sustains the resilience of its values and norms, but also as a collectivism of customary knowledge. Customs and traditions regulate local agricultural activities, both land tenure, and regulation of land use and local agricultural activities (Mirajiani et al., 2019).

In terms of education, the ecological knowledge of Baduy indigenous community can be a local wisdom knowledge that can be implemented in national education policy, especially in Environmental Education (EE). Baduy indigenous community, which has an agrarian-based economic pattern that focuses on agriculture and nature utilization, should be supported by an ecological education program as well, thus increasing the capacity of community knowledge on agriculture. On the other hand, this knowledge can be considered as teaching material outside the indigenous community. Education is an asset in improving farming skills, so education levels have a positive or negative impact on the adoption and management of indigenous agricultural knowledge in farming communities (Melash et al., 2023). However, the main challenge that needs to be faced now is how the Inner Baduy community, in particular, to accept aspects of education from outside, while it is known that

the Inner Baduy community is quite strict in accepting aspects of everything that comes from outside the community. Based on the data collected, formal education is rarely taken by the Inner Baduy community. This is proven by the fact that the knowledge of Indonesian language received by a small part of the community is only self-taught by listening and speaking from tourists who visit the village of Baduy community. Therefore, a persuasive approach and coordination between education observers and the Baduy indigenous community are needed, because after all, education is the right of citizens, including indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples need education that pays attention to their cultural context, especially to develop higher-order thinking skills and understand the global world without losing their cultural identity (Cantika et al., 2025).

In order to solve the problem of access to education, Cantika et al. (2025) revealed that classrooms as inclusive intercultural environments are needed by taking into account the involvement of indigenous communities in curriculum design, teacher training in local contexts and culture-based education policies. O'Gorman (2024) adds that culture-based education must be able to touch the child in the routine and supportive school programs, while the older group is given space to actively participate in collaborating culture with educational outcomes. The values of local wisdom of Baduy community can be the main point in developing a cultural education ecosystem, even this can be considered in building EE at the national level. Through this process, culture-based ecological education can be implemented in the community. This not only encourages indirectly, ecological education for the Baduy indigenous community is not only to improve knowledge about agrarian, but also cultural preservation that is effectively shared through structured learning and curriculum. The thing that needs to be evaluated from the spotlight of this issue is that many children who are supposed to receive formal education actually join in farming with their parents, so it has the potential to break the effort of passing on knowledge effectively in the midst of the wave of globalization and modernism that is currently developing in Indonesia. Even though, Baduy community still upholds its culture consistently, even Inner Baduy tends to be resistant to modernism and globalization, it is not a guarantee of cultural resilience and everything contained in its values. When looking at the acculturation of modernism and traditionalism in the Outer Baduy community, one side is indeed a form of adaptation to the development of the times, but this is a signal that aspects of globalization and modernism may change the existing order one day. Iqbal International Institute for Research & Dialogue (2011) describes globalization as a situation where there is capitalist economic integration, assimilation of social and cultural attitudes, and merging of global regimes through technological advances, transportation, and communication, which is based on the fusion of liberalism worldviews.

According to He (2020), in the perspective of political ecology, indigenous communities characterized by their distinctive cultural heritage and traditionalist identity must struggle with the complexity of global forces that undermine the values they have maintained. With its impact, globalization becomes one of the important aspects in the pattern of community relationship with its environment, for example when modern society sees nature as a commodity or an object of exploitation, which is clearly contrary to the general view of indigenous people who see nature as part of their life and closely related to the spirituality of the community. In the context of Baduy community, their efforts in maintaining their cultural identity and rejecting the intervention of globalization and modernization need to be appreciated because they have succeeded in maintaining their cultural roots. However, without the awareness to maintain this public memory, especially for the local government, it is only a matter of time until these local wisdom values fade and disappear from the community's collective identity.

Tangdialla et al. (2022) see that communities face major problems in the rural economy, namely land tenure insecurity, climate change, neglect of basic rights, skills and training, weak market relations and poor access to social protection, financial services and opportunities in the formal economy. In the issue of globalization, for example, seen from the economy, it is known that the economy of Baduy community is dominated by agriculture, plantation and handicraft. Some garden and agricultural products are sold in the

Outer Baduy area, such as banana, petai, kencur, ginger, and others. As for simple handicrafts, such as woven goods. Forest products, such as honey, which are generally collected by the Inner Baduy community, are sent or sold to the Outer Baduy community or tourists who come there. All of them are natural products, which are highly influenced by the condition of the ecosystem in the area. Seeing that nature is the only source of livelihood for indigenous communities, when reflecting back on globalization, the concern for the survival of the community becomes real. This answers the reason behind the firmness of the Baduy indigenous community, especially Baduy Dalam, in maintaining the ecosystem there to the extent of rejecting the presence of aspects of modernism, including modern technology. Perhaps, one main thought that arises is that losing the function of the forest and the destruction of the land, means plunging the Baduy community into extinction.

The problem of globalization and modernism is indeed complex, when referring to the previous discussion of education, it is quite firm to mention that education is an important aspect in building literacy, which can actually be the savior of the Baduy indigenous community in facing the threat of external influences, including how the economic ecosystem of the Baduy community not only has an impact, but also survives. *The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) report (2021)* mentions that awareness can increase opportunities and encourage inclusive growth, including the opportunity to grow the economic "cake" of indigenous peoples and provide global benefits. Then, APEC provides several strategies in empowering the economy of indigenous peoples, including: *First*, providing information to empower indigenous peoples and enable them to take advantage of economic opportunities; *Second*, providing insights to policymakers on the socio-economic differences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples; *Third*, delivering data that will ensure public policies have a greater impact through informed decision-making and targeted investments.

In the end, the Baduy indigenous community must struggle hard to maintain their cultural heritage and the environment in which they live. Indeed, globalization and modernism have a positive impact on the progress of human life, but it does not mean that the traditional life of indigenous people is bad, maybe even those aspects are still relevant to be implemented. For example, the ecological view of the Baduy indigenous people, which is complementary to their customs, has a positive impact on environmental conservation because it views nature as a unity and has aspects of spirituality related to ancestors and supernatural powers.

Modernism's derision of traditionalism, seeing indigenous groups as backward, is a fallacy. In fact, their wisdom and view of nature, which ironically is loved today, proves that this view surpasses the understanding of humans in the modern era who have just realized that nature is not just a matter of producing oxygen or water, but also an ecosystem. Therefore, the firmness and consistency of Baduy indigenous people in maintaining the heritage of local wisdom need to be appreciated and maintained as part of the wealth of knowledge and become a consideration in the formulation of state policies, especially in the protection of customary rights and nature conservation. From an ecological point of view, the life of the Baduy indigenous community is an effort to balance the ecosystem. The capitalistic aspect brought by globalization and modernism creates an imbalance between nature and human, erodes the aspect of human spirituality with nature, and abolishes the traces of custom. Fortunately, the Baduy community is still firm in maintaining their belief in their ancestral heritage and customs, which has an impact on the sustainability of the natural ecosystem around them. With their adherence, Baduy indigenous people have built a good relationship between the dimensions of human spirituality, communality, and natural harmony.

#### 4. Conclusions

The main concern in Baduy community lies in the dimension of spirituality, culture, and nature. For Baduy community, those three aspects are a unity that bridges each other, forms



a balance, and cannot be separated from the life of Baduy community. The findings that show how the Baduy community lives with the spirit of mutual cooperation and communal, committed in carrying out the advice from *pu'un* and ancestral heritage, uniting themselves in the aspect of spirituality with nature and supernatural powers, and respect for nature, show that the community still maintains its local wisdom values well, especially in the practice of daily life. The traditionalism and sacred value that are maintained provide benefits for the Baduy indigenous community in interacting with nature and providing positive reciprocity for each other, such as the community benefits from communal order, and nature provides blessings for life through resources that can be utilized, such as honey, fertile land, and others.

This has implications for the way people outside the Baduy customary community see themselves, society, and nature. When various regions in Indonesia are hit by various disasters due to natural damage, Baduy indigenous people harmoniously form a bond with nature and receive its benefits. Thus, there are three important points that can be learned in this research, namely awareness of wisdom, ecological awareness, and awareness of spirituality. Indeed, traditionalism is always seen as backward by modernism, but this backwardness is broken by the fact that the world today often talks about climate crises, humanitarian disasters, and others, which are caused by the mismanagement of nature by humans and modern perspectives. At the same time, indigenous people in the world, including Baduy indigenous people, struggle to maintain their ecological views that have been inherited and maintained by public memory, a campaign that is now widely echoed by international NGOs concerned with environmental issues.

Indeed, this research is still imperfect and has many limitations, especially in terms of data, but that does not mean it is useless. This research can serve as an initial foundation for researchers to conduct further studies on the local wisdom of indigenous communities. In fact, this aspect is important because it is part of the history of community life whose values can serve as an example for the improvement of human conditions in the future. In addition, this research can be a reflection and consideration for policy makers in paying attention to indigenous communities as constituents whose rights must be accommodated and respected, ensuring that their identity is not lost due to external influences or internal weakening. However, this is a joint task between the community, intellectuals and the government in perpetuating the knowledge system contributed by indigenous communities. Hopefully, this can be a lesson on how to build a good relationship between humans and nature.

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### **Author Contribution**

The entire preparation of this study was carried out by the researcher, both in the idea and review of the topic, the research process, to the analysis and conclusions. However, there are other actors outside of this research who contributed indirectly to the process of preparing this paper, namely the data provider team who have seriously collected data from the sources. In addition, another contribution came from Mursyid Setiawan as the evaluator of the manuscript who is currently pursuing a doctoral degree.

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### Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was omitted because there was no requirement to submit a permission slip. In this regard, the participants who have become partners in this research do not demand permission and the willingness of the interviewees to become research subjects is only based on communicative not written.

### Data Availability Statement

All available data is the responsibility of the Research Cluster on Interaction, Community Empowerment, and Environment, School of Environmental Science, Universitas Indonesia as the data provider, not the author. Thus, permission and notification to the relevant parties is required to use the data and everything contained therein.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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