
Ecospiritualism in Buddhist Communities and Its Contribution to Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

This research originates from the increasing environmental degradation on Lombok Island and studies of ecospiritualism within Buddhist communities in Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng as an alternative solution based on local wisdom. It aims to analyze the concept of ecospiritualism, its transmission, and the implications of ecospiritual values on community life, and their implementation in sustainable development. The study adopts a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, which are analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results indicate that the community understands ecospiritualism as the sacredness of nature that is in harmony with humanity and the spiritual dimension. These values are transmitted orally and through religious practices and traditions, thus forming the collective experience of the community. In the context of sustainable development, ecospiritualism serves as a moral foundation that shapes social and cultural behavior and environmental awareness, as reflected in efforts at natural conservation, respect for the sources of life, and the maintenance of local traditions that preserve the balance between humans and nature. These research findings indicate that ecospiritualism functions as an important foundation for sustainable development rooted in local wisdom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist community in Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng, East Pemenang Subdistrict, North Lombok Regency, is one of the social communities that is still preserving local wisdom values inherited from their ancestors in their social and religious practices. Several publications mention this community as *Sasak Boda* and identify them as the indigenous inhabitants of Lombok (N. K. A. Dewi, 2016; Muchammadun et al., 2023; Sirnopati et al., 2022; Zaelani, 2005), where the term *boda* is different from Buddhism as a formal religion (Hidayat et al., 2025). However, according to direct narratives from religious leaders and community members, they do not recognize the term “*Sasak Boda*”. Instead, they identify themselves as a Buddhist community based on their ancestors’ teachings known as *Buddha Paksa*, while their current religion is Buddhism.

The Buddhist communities in question and the focus of this research are the people of the Tebango and Jeliman Ireng hamlets, who, administratively and religiously, currently adhere to Buddhism as the official religion recognized by the state. However, they also still maintain ancestral teachings known as *Buddha Paksa*, a traditional belief system passed down through generations and believed to have originated in Bali. In this context, *Buddha Paksa* is not regarded as Buddhism in the sense of modern Buddhist doctrine and institutional tradition, but rather as an ancestral belief system that shaped the community's values, cultural practices, and worldview before they formally embraced Buddhism. The ecospiritual values examined in this study are understood as expressions of the *Buddha Paksa* tradition rather than as direct applications of formal Buddhist teachings. Therefore, this research clearly distinguishes between *Buddha Paksa* as a local belief heritage and Buddhism as the formal religious identity adhered to by the community today. The term “*Sasak Boda*” is used only when discussing terminological constructions found in previous literature.

Before the influence of various cultures, customs, and new social systems that shaped the Buddhist community, its members followed an indigenous belief system centered of primordial nature (N. K. A. Dewi, 2016; Zaelani, 2005), namely the teachings of *Buddha Paksa*. In the framework of the *Buddha Paksa* teachings, they believed in animism and dynamism teachings (Yusrifa et al., 2016), pantheism (Maulana & Assilmi, 2023; Yuslih & Muhajir, 2023), and anthropomorphism (Hidayat et al., 2025) as fundamental aspects of their worldview. The community maintained a complex life system in terms of social, economic, and ecological dimensions. Over time, external influences have led to a decline in the number of adherents, with many community members converting to major religions in Indonesia, such as Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. However, the Buddhist community in Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng continues to exist, sustained by ancestral traditions passed down from one generation to the next (Muchammadun et al., 2023).

This research focuses on the ecospiritual values that are inherited and preserved within the community. In the same way as many ancient belief systems across the Indonesian archipelago, the Buddhist community believes in the spiritual power of sacred objects, the presence of holy spirits or ancestral souls in specific territories, and spiritual forces residing in big trees, stones, rivers, and other elements of nature (Zaelani, 2005). Even after adopting one of Indonesia’s officially recognized religions, i.e., Buddhism, the community continues to preserve ancestral traditions transmitted through generations (Muchammadun et al., 2023). This continuity has promoted a way of life that emphasizes harmony and balance between humans and the

environment in which they live. Such a spiritual perspective that emphasizes the sacred relationship between humans and nature is referred to as *ecospiritualism*. Within *ecospiritualism*, nature is considered to have intrinsic value and is often closely associated with spiritual realms.

Ecospiritualism is often found in indigenous belief systems, such as Sunda Wiwitan, which upholds the concept of *pikukuh tilu*, a customary code that guides the trilateral relationship among God, humans, and nature (Mutaqin, 2017). The essence of *ecospiritualism* in Sunda Wiwitan lies in the principle of “without alteration,” or as minimal change as possible, reflecting a conservative worldview that focuses on environmental preservation (Upigufiroh, 2006). Furthermore, Sunda Wiwitan believes in the concept of *pamali*, which refers to restrictions on entering sacred forests on certain days (Wiradimadja et al., 2018). Another example is found in the *Aluk Todolo* belief system of the Toraja people, which holds that *Puang Matua* (God) designated three principal deities to serve as guardians of creation, i.e., protectors of the sky, the earth, and agricultural land. These deities, together known as *Puang Titanan Tallu*, are responsible for various planes of existence, from human life to the cosmos (Suriamihardja, 2006). In its implementation, these principles are expressed through reverence for ancestors, the performance of customary rituals, and lifestyles that maintain environmental balance. In the Buddhist communities of Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng, the existence of the *subak* system and rituals related to the planting of *aren* (sugar palm) trees reflect practical efforts toward environmental conservation, a manifestation of *ecospiritualism* (Muchammadun et al., 2023).

Over the last decade, the world has faced growing environmental challenges, including deforestation, pollution, climate change, and water scarcity. Lombok, in particular, has faced increasingly critical environmental issues, underscoring the urgency of robust conservation measures. According to a DetikBali report dated January 11, 2023, the Babak River in Lombok was identified as the most heavily polluted river among five provinces in Indonesia (Viqi, 2023a). In Addition, rivers in Mataram City and West Lombok have been contaminated by microplastics, as reported by DetikBali on January 5, 2023, highlighting the severity of waste management problems in the region (Viqi, 2023b). In addition to water pollution, forest degradation has become a major concern. Purnama and Çoban (2024) showed that forest conversion to agricultural land and urban areas has resulted in the loss of 28,095 hectares of forest, or approximately 24% of the total forest area on Lombok Island. This situation indicates increasing pressure on forest ecosystems and the potential to disrupt the ecological balance. The real consequences of environmental degradation are evident in landslide disasters that damaged three houses in East Lombok, as reported by Antara Megapolitan on January 9, 2025 (Rosidi, 2025), and in residential damage in West Lombok, reported by Kompas on February 13, 2023 (Khalid & Hartik, 2023).

These facts underscore that without serious environmental conservation efforts, environmental conditions in Lombok will continue to deteriorate, heightening disaster risks and declining the quality of life for local communities. A holistic approach, i.e., one of which is *ecospiritualism*, can become an alternative solution to address and mitigate current environmental crises. The Buddhist community’s tradition of honoring nature as an integral part of spiritual life highlights the importance of examining their *ecospiritual* practices. Therefore, the *ecospiritualism* of this community deserves scholarly attention, recognition, and preservation so that both Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities may understand the essence of these teachings and collaborate in preserving the environment for a more sustainable future, particularly in relation to ecology as a fundamental dimension of sustainable development.

In the context of sustainable development, ecospiritualism plays an important role by promoting balance between the utilization and conservation of natural resources, ensuring that future generations can continue to benefit from them. Furthermore, ecospiritualism goes beyond ecological and economic dimensions by strengthening social and cultural dimensions, ensuring that development is not only exploitative but also focused on sustainability and harmonious coexistence between humans and their environment. Consequently, this research is significant for examining how the concept of ecospiritualism is understood and transmitted within the Buddhist communities of Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng, how it affects community life in the context of sustainable development, and how ecospiritual values are concretely implemented across various dimensions of sustainable development.

The urgency of this research is also based on the analysis that studies specifically revealing how ecospiritual values are practiced, inherited, and internalized in the lives of local Buddhist communities, especially in North Lombok, are still relatively limited. Existing studies on this community have largely approached it from other angles: Muchammadun et al. (2023) examine the preservation of Tebango Buddhists' cultural heritage, Pranata et al. (2021) trace the community's local wisdom to the acculturation of Majapahit traditions, and Dewi et al. (2022) analyze the spatial settlement patterns of Sasak communities. While these works establish that nature holds a sacred place in the community's worldview, none explicitly reads ecospiritual values as a moral foundation for sustainable development or examines how those values operate across its environmental and socio-cultural dimensions. Accordingly, there are still few studies that directly link the practices of ecospiritualism in Buddhist communities to the framework of sustainable development, particularly in the local context of Tebango and Jeliman Ireng Hamlets. This research is therefore novel in that it empirically examines ecospiritualism in these communities through the lens of sustainable development, supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior and Sustainability Theory. This research not only enriches the study of ecospiritualism at the practical level but also offers a relevant local perspective on environmental conservation efforts grounded in spiritual values.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative ethnographic approach in Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng, East Pemenang Subdistrict, North Lombok Regency. The research was conducted within a six-month period, from May to October 2025, starting from the preparation of the proposal, carrying out the research, all the way to the research results seminar. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. During the research, several aspects were observed: first, environmental aspects, including the natural conditions around the community; places considered sacred by the community; prohibition signs or certain symbols in natural locations; and community activities in nature that appear to show respect. The second aspect concerns the environmental management and ethics system, which includes collective nature management practices and the limited use of natural spaces according to sacred and profane functions. Observational data were triangulated with interview findings obtained from three purposively selected key informants, namely Romo Pandita Ajuna Manta, Romo Meta Wadi, and Mangku Jam Alit. These individuals were selected because of their extensive knowledge of the community's history, the *Buddha Paksa* tradition, local customs, and religious practices. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, as additional

interviews and observations generated no new categories or insights relevant to the research objectives.

The data were also supplemented with documentation techniques that examined several videos and photographs related to community activities, as well as several relevant journal articles. The analyzed videos and photographs provided additional data on aspects of ritual and religious activities, including the implementation of traditional ceremonies or rituals related to nature, ritual equipment or paraphernalia derived from natural elements, and the involvement of children or young people in these spiritual and ritual activities. Data were also collected on the inheritance of values and knowledge, including intergenerational interactions in ritual practices and informal education or learning activities through these rituals.

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The trustworthiness of the findings was established through triangulation of techniques (observation, interviews, and documentation) and triangulation of data sources. Credibility was further enhanced through repeated field visits and follow-up interviews with key informants to verify emerging interpretations. Dependability and confirmability were supported through systematic documentation of the research process, including field notes, interview transcripts, and analytical records that provided an audit trail of the study. Transferability was addressed by providing a thick description of the research setting, community characteristics, and cultural context. In addition, the preliminary findings were discussed in a research seminar involving academic colleagues and external reviewers as a form of peer debriefing, allowing the researchers to refine interpretations and strengthen the consistency of the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Understanding and Transmission of the Ecospiritualism Concept

Observations conducted on July 3, July 22, and September 3, 2025, in the Tebango and Jeliman Ireng hamlets revealed a spring in the *Sanggar Agung* area that is considered holy water. Furthermore, the presence of large, ancient trees, such as the banyan tree, demonstrates respect for natural elements as part of the local belief system. These trees are not only honored through symbolic treatments such as the installation of white, yellow, or black-and-white cloth, offerings, and the construction of *Sanggar*, but are also physically protected. *Sanggar* is a traditional sacred shrine believed to be the dwelling place of ancestral spirits, whereas the *Sanggar Agung* is its communal counterpart, serving as the central shrine where the community conducts collective rituals. Furthermore, prohibition signs or sacred symbols are scattered throughout several locations. These symbols generally take the form of Sanggars placed on specific trees or areas and given religious treatment. This concept was also emphasized through interviews with Romo Meta Wadi on July 18 and July 22, 2025, who stated:

"Places with their ruling entities or guardians are our teachings, so respect for a place is more related to ancestors. There's also a tradition of mebangar here, which continues to this day. If a large tree needs to be cut down for a purpose, the guardian will speak to the entity and decide whether it's permitted to be used, what the consequences are if it's cut down, and where the guardian of the tree should be relocated."

The concept of ecospiritualism in the Buddhist communities of Dusun Tebango and Jeliman Ireng is understood as an integrated value system that views nature not only as a resource

but also as a sacred space to be respected. Nature is believed to be inhabited by ancestral spirits and divine forces; hence, the relationship between humans and the environment is maintained in harmony and balance. Dewi et al. (2022) also argue that the Sasak Boda belief system views nature as a sacred entity equal to humans; however, under the influence of Majapahit Hinduism, nature, deities, and spirits were elevated, so humans ought to adapt and seek protection from these forces. Pranata et al. (2021) further stated that the local wisdom of Buddhist communities in North Lombok originates from the acculturation of Majapahit traditions that emphasize harmony with nature, under the belief that preserving nature is synonymous with preserving life itself.

Concrete evidence of this understanding can be found in the community's belief that guardian spirits inhabit trees, particularly large, ancient ones believed to possess supernatural power. Such trees are marked with *sanggar* and are given offerings as acts of respect. When a tree must be cut down, the community does not proceed immediately; instead, it is preceded by the *mebangar* or *pelangin* ritual, a ceremonial dialogue requesting the guardian spirit's consent to relocate. This tradition is not exclusive to Tebango and Jeliman Ireng but is also found in other Sasak communities across Lombok, where it functions as a symbolic request for permission from spiritual guardians (Nurohmah et al., 2024).

Besides trees, water sources are also regarded as sacred, as they are believed to be protected by spiritual entities that maintain ecological balance. A visible example is the water source at *Sanggar Agung*, which is considered holy and used in religious rituals. Certain rivers are also regarded as sacred and are occasionally used as ritual sites to invoke rainfall during prolonged dry seasons. Reverence for water is also reflected in agricultural practices through the *ponan* ritual, which is performed when water is first flowed into rice fields. In this ritual, a *sanggar* is erected at the starting point of water flow with offerings as an expression of gratitude and a plea for fertility, balance, and blessings. Similarly, land is also perceived as having a strong spiritual dimension and is referred to as *Ibu Pertiwi* (Mother Earth).

If viewed from an animistic perspective, as explained by Edward B. Tylor, these beliefs are rooted in the belief that spirits dwell in all elements of the universe, including trees, stones, water, and soil (L. Pals, 2018). The community's understanding that nature is a sacred entity results in reciprocal interaction with the environment and requires harmony and balance. If this harmony is disturbed, it will affect not only ecological conditions but also the community's spiritual balance. This perspective aligns with Messias (2024), who emphasizes that ecospirituality involves experience, awareness, and direct relationships between humans and nature as something sacred. Also, Billet (2023) argues that ecospirituality affects moral concern toward nature by viewing it as part of ethical responsibility and something sacred. Similarly, according to *Sacred Ecology* by Northcott (2015), the principles of this Buddhist community are clarified by asserting that maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature also entails preserving relationships with God and ancestral spirits.

Ecospiritual values within Buddhist communities are transmitted through generations, combining oral tradition, concrete practices, and collective involvement in communal life. These values of respect for nature are transmitted not only verbally but also through ritual and non-ritual practices in their daily experiences. These values are passed down in numerous ways, some of them by narrating experiences of previous rituals, stories about important events related to their traditional customs, and also stories that are regarded as consequences of violations of their beliefs and the negative impacts they have had. These narratives serve as reminders and strengthen the

commitment of younger generations to avoid repeating past mistakes. Furthermore, these values are also transmitted through traditional advice imparted by parents and elders, ensuring the continuity of these traditions from generation to generation. In this way, the transmission of traditional values is not merely informative but also persuasive and educative, as it contains moral messages, warnings, and guidelines for life that must be upheld to maintain harmony with nature and ancestors.

From an early age, children are thought to understand the symbolic meanings of nature through various forms of informal education integrated into their everyday lives. They are, for example, introduced to the prohibitions against cutting down sacred trees believed to be inhabited by guardian spirits. One of the most visible symbols of ecospiritual inheritance is the presence of *sanggar* attached to sacred trees. The mechanism of transmission of ecospiritual values through practical practices is also manifested through the direct involvement of the younger generation in various traditional rituals. Rituals such as *mereap gawah (mulik kaya)* serve as important moments for children and younger generations to learn that agricultural yields are blessings that must be returned to nature. Similarly, involvement of children in offering rituals at *sanggar* or participating in ceremonies honoring trees and water sources allows them to internalize values experientially rather than merely verbally. This inheritance mechanism aligns with the view of Messias's (2024) view that the transmission of ecospiritualism within the Buddhist community extends beyond knowledge and rules to encompass experience, awareness, and direct engagement with nature.

3.2. The Impact of Ecospiritualism on Community Life

Ecospiritualism has a significant impact on the daily life of the Buddhist community in Dusun Tebango. The spiritual values inherent in nature lead the community to adopt a more cautious lifestyle, prioritizing respect and considering environmental sustainability in their activities. This implementation is reinforced by Hanip & Diana (2022), who stated that, for a long time, the lives of the people of Lombok, including the Buddhist community, have been based on the *tapsila* tradition. That is, ethical rules as procedures for establishing relationships with God, nature, and humans. In the context of sustainable development, ecospiritualism serves as a moral foundation that directs and controls community behavior towards the environment. The spiritual values held by the Buddhist community are not only symbolic but also serve as ethical guidelines for managing natural resources, in which natural elements are subjects that must be respected and preserved.

One concrete manifestation of this impact is the preservation of large trees. Such trees are not only seen as a support to the ecosystem but are also believed to be dwelling places of guardian spirits. As a result, their existence is carefully safeguarded; even the construction of houses and other buildings is carried out according to the position of the trees. Water sources receive similar attention, especially the sacred water source at *Sanggar Agung*, which is believed to be holy and is maintained with respect and protected from pollution and misuse due to moral and spiritual awareness. Likewise, the agricultural activities are consistently started with the *ponan* ritual, involving the placement of a *sanggar* at the initial water entry point, as a form of gratitude and respect for the natural forces that sustain life. This is clear evidence that ecospiritual values affect the daily life patterns of the Buddhist community, where every action related to nature is always accompanied by spiritual awareness.

This is demonstrated by observational data showing that the construction process did not damage the trees. Instead, the structure adapted to the position of the trees, both their roots and trunks, as a form of respect for the sacred nature. This was further emphasized by Romo Pandita Ajuna Manta in an interview on July 3, 2025, who stated:

"We call the earth motherland. This concept means that if we respect nature, it will naturally protect us. We also have the principle of "mulik kaya," which means "returning to nature." We are given blessings by nature, so the people here return them to nature as an expression of gratitude, through offerings or sacrifices."

The influence of ecospiritualism on the daily life patterns of the Buddhist community can be further understood through Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1985), which explains that behavior is affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Mark et al., 2011). According to this theory, it can be clearly understood that, first, attitudes toward behavior are reflected in the community's positive perception that preserving trees, water, and land is both a moral and a spiritual obligation. Second, subjective norms take the form of social and customary pressures that emphasize the importance of maintaining harmony with nature, compelling individuals to comply with these values. Third, perceived behavioral control is reflected in the community's belief that they are capable of implementing conservation practices, such as adjusting the layout of their homes, building sacred sites, protecting the sanctity of water, and aligning agricultural cycles with natural seasons. These three factors strengthen their intention to continue practicing environmentally friendly behaviors because their perceived control aligns with their actual circumstances, enabling them to consistently put their intentions into practice in their daily behavior.

Ecospirituality within the Buddhist community is not only present as traditional or customary values, but also permeates social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. These values form a framework that integrates human relationships with others, ancestors, and nature, while simultaneously guiding development patterns that favor sustainability. Traditional rituals serve to maintain social harmony and preserve ecosystems, such as the rituals of *mereap gawah*, *mebangar/pelangin*, and reverence for water sources. These rituals are not only interpreted as spiritual obligations but also create social mechanisms. When communities collectively engage in these rituals, social solidarity, togetherness, and ecological awareness are fostered. In other words, traditional rituals serve not only as a form of respect for ancestors but also as a means of social and ecological education, strengthening community cohesion. These spiritual values serve as "ecological laws" that bind society, ensuring that development remains grounded in natural balance.

From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen, this influence can be understood in terms of three interrelated components. First, from the perspective of attitudes towards behavior, ecospiritual values such as the prohibition of indiscriminate tree cutting, respect for water sources, and customary ritual obligations are viewed positively because they provide social and ecological benefits. Second, from the perspective of subjective norms, it is seen as strong social and cultural pressures, where every member of the Buddhist community feels the need to obey customary rules because they are driven by collective beliefs, respect for ancestors (Wahyudi et al., 2022; Yuslih & Muhajir, 2023), and social expectations. And third, from the perspective of perceived behavioral control, this is reflected in the community's belief

that they can carry out ecological behavior according to ancestral teachings, because each customary practice is performed together, thereby strengthening individual beliefs and abilities to act and making them more real.

3.3. Manifestations of Ecospiritualism in the Environmental Aspect

The implementation of the Buddhist community's ecospiritual values in the environmental aspect is reflected in traditional practices that maintain ecosystem balance. These values are not only expressed in spiritual beliefs but also in rituals and customary prohibitions that serve as instruments for environmental preservation. The *mebangar/pelangin* tradition is a form of spiritual ethics that must be followed before cutting down a large tree. Large trees are traditionally protected because they are believed to have guardians or spirits residing within them, so cutting them cannot be done carelessly. The community first performs a ritual as a form of dialogue with the guardians of the trees, asking them to relocate. This practice ecologically limits indiscriminate logging and fosters a sense of responsibility for forest sustainability.

Furthermore, the belief that every natural element has its own inhabitants and the special treatment of sacred water sources, such as the *Sanggar Agung* spring, demonstrate how ecospiritualism manifests in concrete actions within the Buddhist communities of Tebango and Jeliman Ireng. These water sources are viewed as sacred entities, protected through ritual offerings, both daily and at specific times. This tradition serves as a cultural instrument that maintains the cleanliness and sustainability of water sources, while fostering a collective awareness that water is a gift that must be cared for and not polluted. By positioning water sources as sacred spaces, the Buddhist community creates a long-term environmental management system. Through these practices, ecospiritualism is evident in concrete actions that support the principles of community-based sustainable development. Rituals and customary prohibitions serve as effective cultural instruments in preserving the environment, even without relying on formal regulations from outside the community.

Within the framework of Sustainability Theory as proposed by Harrington (2016), this customary practice reflects a long-term orientation in natural resource management. Efforts to preserve large trees through the *mebangar* ritual and respect for water sources not only maintain current ecological conditions but also ensure their availability for future generations. The ecospiritual values inherent in Buddhist communities strengthen the community's capacity to maintain desired environmental conditions. In other words, this cultural practice aligns with the principle of sustainability, namely, maintaining ecosystem balance over time in a manner consistent with human well-being and environmental stability.

3.4. Manifestations of Ecospiritualism in the Socio-Cultural Aspects

The implementation of ecospiritual values in the socio-cultural aspects of the Buddhist community is evident through rituals, traditions, and knowledge transmission mechanisms integrated into daily life. These values not only regulate human relations with nature but also strengthen social solidarity and the community's cultural identity. This is also aligned with Muchammadun's (2023) explanation that the beliefs and cultural values held for centuries by the Tebango community are passed down from generation to generation, not only through respect for elders but also through social cooperation.

One concrete manifestation of this is the annual *mereap gawah* ritual, based on the principle of *mulik kaya*. This ritual is performed as an expression of gratitude to nature for the harvest the

community has obtained. Through this process, the community is taught that what is received from nature must be returned to nature as a form of respect. The *mereap gawah* ritual is not only spiritual but also has a social function, namely building collective ecological awareness. All residents, from children to adults, are involved in this ritual, thus creating social solidarity and instilling ecological values that are passed down from generation to generation. This ritual serves as an instrument for community-based socio-ecological education.

Furthermore, customary knowledge is passed down through rituals and symbols. Every daily ritual, whether on special days or on special occasions, involves offerings to the *sanggar* placed on natural elements such as trees, springs, or sacred sites. Likewise, the *mebangar/pelangin* ritual, performed prior to felling a tree, and the tradition of respecting water sources convey moral and ecological messages through indigenous symbols. For example, a tree bearing the *sanggar* symbol symbolizes respect for nature, while prohibitions against felling certain trees teach principles of conservation. This process of inheritance occurs orally through stories and advice from indigenous elders, as well as through direct experience when children participate in ritual practices. In this way, indigenous knowledge is not only transferred theoretically but also reinforced in daily practice.

Through these socio-cultural practices, Buddhist communities can maintain the continuity of ecospiritual values in their collective lives. Muchammadun et al. (2023) concluded that the sustainability of the Tebango people's culture and spirituality is based on a balance between material and immaterial culture. Rituals and symbols serve of build ecological awareness, strengthen social cohesion, and ensure that the value of respect for nature is passed down from one generation to the next. Therefore, the socio-cultural aspects of ecospiritualism play a crucial role in the foundation of community-based sustainable development.

When viewed through the lens of Sustainability Theory, ritual practices and mechanisms for transmitting indigenous knowledge within Buddhist communities demonstrate that sustainability is linked not only to environmental sustainability but also to socio-cultural sustainability. The *mulik kaya* ritual and customary symbols serve as a medium for maintaining the quality of social relationships while extending the existence of ecological values passed down through generations. This reflects Harrington's (2016) idea that sustainability encompasses not only ecosystems but also the social and cultural stability of a community. In this context, Buddhist communities have developed a comprehensive sustainability system that encompasses both environmental sustainability and social cohesion, supporting community-based sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that, within the community, the concept of ecospiritualism regards nature as a sacred entity in a harmonious relationship with humans and as having a spiritual dimension. These ecospiritual values are passed down orally and through direct community involvement in various religious activities and traditions, thus becoming part of the community's collective life experience. In the context of sustainable development, these values play a significant role in shaping the community's daily behavioral patterns, serving as a moral foundation in the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. The implementation of ecospiritual values in community life is more prominent in the environmental and sociocultural aspects, reflected in various practices of nature conservation, respect for life sources, and the

implementation of local traditions that uphold the balance between humans and nature. These findings indicate that the local wisdom within the Tebango and Jeliman Ireng Buddhist communities helps shape ecological awareness and social cohesion in the local community. However, given that this research was conducted within a community with limited geographic and informant coverage, the findings cannot be generalized to other communities with different social, cultural, and religious characteristics. Therefore, the results of this study are best understood as a contextual overview of ecospiritual practices within the communities studied. Nevertheless, these findings can serve as a starting point for further research involving a broader geographic area and participants to examine the potential contribution of local ecospiritual values to strengthening environmental education, cultural preservation, and sustainable development in more diverse contexts.

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