

# Cosmology of To Cerekang: The Indigenous Community's Principles of Environmental Conservation

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<sup>1</sup>Nurazizah, <sup>2</sup>Samsuddin Alamsyah, <sup>3</sup>Gunther Dress,  
<sup>4</sup>Baso Hasyim, <sup>5</sup>Alifah, <sup>6</sup>Isma Kartika

<sup>1,2,4,5,6</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, <sup>3</sup>Senior Expert Service (SES)  
Jalan Agatis, Kelurahan Balandai, Kecamatan Bara, Kota Palopo  
Email : [42064800059@iainpalopo.ac.id](mailto:42064800059@iainpalopo.ac.id)

## Abstract

*This research aims to understand the cosmological values in the life of the To Cerekang indigenous community. Local wisdom and environmental issues are closely intertwined in the lives of indigenous communities. This research is a descriptive qualitative study with a cosmological study approach. Several stages of data collection such as observation, interviews, and documentation are employed. In the data analysis stage, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions are conducted. Cosmological values in the conservation efforts of the To Cerekang indigenous community can be seen in various forms such as understanding of the universe, ecosystem interconnectedness, awareness of environmental vulnerability, and commitment to preservation. The To Cerekang indigenous community's understanding of the universe includes the function of ancestral values passed down to subsequent generations. Regarding ecosystem interconnectedness in the To Cerekang indigenous community's life, it is evident in the balanced interaction between humans and their environment. This also relates to the To Cerekang indigenous community's awareness of environmental vulnerability, demonstrated by their collective responsibility to protect various natural resources within their customary areas. This is accompanied by the To Cerekang indigenous community's commitment to environmental preservation, as shown by the commitment of each individual to adhere to all applicable customary rules.*

**Keywords:** *Cosmology, Indigenous community, To Cerekang.*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini berupaya untuk memahami nilai-nilai kosmologi dalam kehidupan masyarakat adat To Cerekang. Kearifan lokal dan isu-isu lingkungan hidup sangatlah erat kaitannya dalam kehidupan masyarakat adat. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan kajian kosmologi. Beberapa tahapan pengumpulan data seperti observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Adapun dalam tahapan analisis data dilakukan dengan reduksi data, penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Nilai-nilai kosmologis dalam upaya pelestarian lingkungan masyarakat adat To Cerekang dapat terlihat dalam beberapa bentuk seperti pemahaman terhadap alam semesta, keterkaitan ekosistem, kesadaran terhadap kerentanan lingkungan, dan kesadaran untuk pelestarian. Pemahaman terhadap alam semesta oleh masyarakat adat To Cerekang meliputi fungsi dari nilai-nilai leluhur yang diturunkan pada generasi-generasi selanjutnya. Adapun terkait dengan keterkaitan ekosistem dalam kehidupan masyarakat adat To Cerekang terlihat pada interaksi manusia dengan lingkungan hidupnya yang seimbang. Hal tersebut juga berkaitan dengan adanya kesadaran masyarakat adat To Cerekang terhadap kerentanan lingkungan yang terlihat pada tanggung jawab bersama masyarakat adat To Cerekang untuk melindungi berbagai hasil alam yang berada di kawasan adat, yang diiringi dengan kesadaran masyarakat adat To Cerekang untuk pelestarian lingkungan hidup yang ditunjukkan dengan komitmen setiap individu dalam menaati seluruh aturan-aturan adat yang berlaku.

**Kata Kunci:** Kosmologi, Masyarakat adat, To Cerekang.

## Introduction

Indonesia is a country with diverse populations, encompassing various ethnicities, beliefs, cultures, languages, and customs. These differences naturally emerge based on the conditions or circumstances of each region and the mindset of its people, which support the creation of distinct cultures. The diversity of its population is a characteristic that defines the identity or sets apart one group from another.<sup>1</sup> These diverse traditions are passed down through generations and are also understood as local wisdom.

Local wisdom is viewed as human actions or attitudes toward an object or event that occur within a specific space.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, local wisdom also refers to the various cultural riches present and evolving within a community, which are recognized, believed in, and acknowledged as important components that can strengthen social cohesion within the community.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of local wisdom generally relates to the values believed to be true by a society, which color and guide the life behavior of a particular community. These values serve as controls and bonds for every individual's actions within the community group through generations.<sup>4</sup> The traditions or customs that grow and develop are influenced in part by the closeness of humans to their surrounding natural environment.

The environmental issue is currently a significant concern for every individual. The deterioration of the environment, or environmental deterioration, is increasingly associated with natural resource depletion, threats to life, the extinction of certain flora and fauna, and ecosystem damage, which can be found in various parts of the world.<sup>5</sup> According to data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), there were 5,402 disaster incidents in Indonesia throughout 2021, with the majority (99.5%) comprising 1,794 flood events, 1,577 instances of extreme weather, 1,321 landslides, 579 forest and land fires, 91 tidal waves and abrasion, 24 earthquakes, 15 droughts, and 1 volcanic eruption. The number of disaster incidents increased by 16.2% compared to the data from 2020, which

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<sup>1</sup> Anriani, "Komunitas Adat Cerekang Di Kecamatan Malili Kabupaten Luwu Timur" (Universitas Negeri Makassar, 2016), <http://eprints.unm.ac.id/8499/>.

<sup>2</sup> Utina Ramli, *Kecerdasan Ekologis Dalam Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Suku Bajo Di Desa Torosiaje* (Gorontalo: Research Gate, 2018), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Adullah, *Agama Dan Kearifan Lokal Dalam Tantangan Global* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), 267–89.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Rifai Ridwan, Ahmad Sultra Rustan, and A Nurkidam, "Pappasang Dalam Komunikasi Budaya Masyarakat Lokal Suku Mandar," *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research* 7, no. 2 (2022): 129–38, <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v7i2.3067>.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Sibgatullah Agussalim, Ariana Ariana, and Ramlah Saleh, "Kerusakan Lingkungan Akibat Pertambangan Nikel Di Kabupaten Kolaka Melalui Pendekatan Politik Lingkungan," *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research* 8, no. 1 (2023): 37–48, <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v8i1.3610>.

recorded 4,649 disaster incidents.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) reported 3,522 natural disasters in Indonesia in 2022. These disasters include 1,520 flood events, 1,057 instances of extreme weather, 634 landslides, 26 forest and land fires, and tidal waves/abrasion incidents throughout the year 2022.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) reported 4,940 natural disasters in Indonesia in 2023. This number represents a 39.99% increase compared to the previous year, which recorded 3,544 disasters. Based on the types of disasters observed, forest and land fires were the most frequent natural disasters throughout the year, reaching 1,802 incidents, followed by floods with 1,170 occurrences, extreme weather with 1,155 incidents, landslides with 579 incidents, domestic droughts with around 168 incidents, and earthquakes as well as tidal waves or abrasions, each totaling 31 incidents.<sup>8</sup> These data further emphasize the close relationship between humans and the environment. All individual and collective human behaviors will influence the state of the natural environment, and vice versa.

According to Edmun Woga, local wisdom is not only focused on culture but also oriented towards noble values in the form of knowledge systems, attitudes, behaviors, rituals, traditions, and the conservation of natural resources. A society close to its natural environment sees local wisdom as an integral part of life that must express its functional application.<sup>9</sup> The availability, preservation, and sustainability of natural resources are determined by the presence of individual wisdom, which is believed to be something true, good, felt, and useful for collective life. This can also be observed in the efforts of indigenous communities in managing natural resources or in the preservation of ecosystems from harmful activities.

Indigenous communities represent a communal way of life with cultural values passed down through generations within a specific region. Life in indigenous communities requires adherence to agreed-upon customary

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<sup>6</sup> Purnama Sugiharto, "BNPB Catat 5.402 Kejadian Bencana Terjadi Di Indonesia Sepanjang 2021," 2021, <https://www.antarnews.com/berita/2711121/bnpb-catat-5402-kejadian-bencana-terjadi-di-indonesia-sepanjang-2021>.

<sup>7</sup> Mustajab Ridhwan, "BNPB: Indonesia Alami 3.552 Bencana Alam Pada Tahun 2022," 2023, <https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/bnpb-indonesia-alami-3522-bencana-alam-pada-2022>.

<sup>8</sup> Pratiwi Febriana Sulisrya, "Data Kejadian Bencana Alam Di Indonesia Sepanjang Tahun 2023," 2023, <https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/data-kejadian-bencana-alam-di-indonesia-sepanjang-tahun-2023>.

<sup>9</sup> Sulistianingsih Erma, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Hukum Adat To Cerekang Dalam Pelestarian Sumber Daya Alam Studi Fenomenologi Di Desa Manurung, Kecamatan Malili, Kabupaten Luwu Timur" (Universitas Hasanuddin, 2022), <https://repository.unhas.ac.id/id/eprint/13238/>.

norms, as collective norms, in various aspects and patterns of the group's life.<sup>10</sup> Generally, indigenous communities also uphold various principles or traditional norms that must be preserved, respected, and practiced in managing natural resources and the surrounding environment. The dependence of communities on nature indicates a balanced relationship between the two, which is part of nature itself and must maintain its balance because it still holds sacred values that should not be violated.<sup>11</sup> This effort aims to create a harmonious society with nature.

Indigenous communities also present an intriguing phenomenon, considering their decreasing numbers amidst globalization. According to data from the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), Indonesia had 2,161 indigenous communities as of August 9, 2022. Among these indigenous communities, 750 are located in Kalimantan, 649 reside in Sulawesi, 349 are found in Sumatra, 175 are situated in Maluku, 139 are recorded in Bali and the Lesser Sunda Islands, 54 are in Papua, and 45 are located in Java.<sup>12</sup>

According to data from the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), there were 4.57 million indigenous peoples in Indonesia as of August 9, 2023. Among them, 1.40 million indigenous peoples were located in Kalimantan, 1.27 million in Sumatra, 1.05 million in Sulawesi, 302,799 resided in Bali and the Lesser Sunda Islands, 285,728 were recorded in Maluku, 250,115 indigenous peoples were found in Java, and 10,543 were located in Papua.<sup>13</sup> Indigenous communities in Indonesia are spread across several regions, one of which is South Sulawesi. Several indigenous groups in South Sulawesi emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature, such as by preserving customary forest areas with principles of local wisdom. Customary forests can be defined as forests within customary law community territories. In essence, these customary forests refer to the status of forest areas.<sup>14</sup> One indigenous community in South Sulawesi that is concerned with preserving customary forest areas is the To Cerekang indigenous community.

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<sup>10</sup> Abunawar Hadri dan Arifin Samsul, *Hak Masyarakat Hukum Adat Dalam Penguasaan Hutan Adat Di Lampung Barat*, 1st ed. (Lampung: Sai Wai Publishing, 2019), 294.

<sup>11</sup> Salam Rahayu, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Adat Dalam Pengelolaan Hutan Di Pulau Wangi-Wangi," *Jurnal Walasuji* 8, no. 1 (2017): 113–28.

<sup>12</sup> Rizaty Monavia Ayu, "Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN)," 2022, <https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/ada-2161-komunitas-adat-di-indonesia-berikut-sebarannya>.

<sup>13</sup> Mustajab Ridhwan, "Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN)," 2022, <https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/ada-457-juta-masyarakat-adat-indonesia-terbanyak-di-kalimantan>.

<sup>14</sup> Taskur Maria, Azis Hadijah, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Adat Cerekang Dalam Menjaga Dan Melestarikan Hutan Adat Di Desa Manurung Kabupaten Luwu Timur," *Jurnal Penelitian Kehutanan Bonita* 2, no. 2 (2020): 43–50.

The To Cerekang indigenous community is one of the Bugis ethnic communities located in Cerekang Hamlet, Manurung Village, Malili District, East Luwu Regency. The To Cerekang indigenous community is among those who still adhere strongly to customary rules, thus they have their own identity, customary institutions, and apparatuses that regulate all aspects of their group's life. One of these aspects involves the command to preserve, respect, and conserve customary forest areas.

Based on the initial observations conducted, the To Cerekang indigenous community believes that nature holds its own sanctity, and it is important to uphold the sacred values of their ancestors, which are revered and respected by their ancestors. From this description, the researcher becomes interested in studying how the cosmological principles of the To Cerekang indigenous community contribute to environmental preservation efforts. This research can serve as a supporting reference in understanding the efforts of indigenous communities in safeguarding their environment, particularly those of the To Cerekang indigenous community. Some relevant previous studies include "Revitalization of the Cultural Values of the Cerekang Tribe as Efforts in Environmental Conservation",<sup>15</sup> "Local Wisdom of the To Cerekang Indigenous Community in Preserving Customary Forests in Manurung Village",<sup>16</sup> and "Local Wisdom of To Cerekang Customary Law Community in Preservation of Natural Resources."<sup>17</sup> However, these studies are limited to cultural values or local wisdom, whereas this research focuses on cosmological studies within the life of the To Cerekang indigenous community.

## **Methods**

This research is a qualitative descriptive study<sup>18</sup> employing a cosmological study approach. The research subjects include the customary leaders of To Cerekang, the youth of Wija To Cerekang (WTC), and the To Cerekang indigenous community, while the research object encompasses various environmental conservation efforts undertaken by the To Cerekang indigenous community. Data collection techniques utilized comprise observation, documentation, and interviews. Observation involves observing

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<sup>15</sup> Jumaidi, "Revitalisasi Nilai Budaya Suku Cerekang Sebagai Upaya Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup," *JIMPS: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Sejarah* 8, no. 2 (2023), <https://jim.usk.ac.id/sejarah/article/view/24919>.

<sup>16</sup> Maria, Azis Hadijah, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Adat Cerekang Dalam Menjaga Dan Melestarikan Hutan Adat Di Desa Manurung Kabupaten Luwu Timur."

<sup>17</sup> Sulistianingsih Erma, "Local Wisdom of To Cerekang Customary Law Community in Preservation of Natural Resources," *Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia* 7, no. 1 (2022), <https://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/etnosia/article/view/14203>.

<sup>18</sup> Imam Gunawan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori & Praktik* (Jakarta: PT Bumi Aksara, 2013), 95.

all aspects of To Cerekang indigenous community life and their relationship with cosmological principles. Interviews are conducted directly with all research subjects to gather necessary information, systematically documented through photos and audio recordings. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.<sup>19</sup> Data reduction entails sorting primary and secondary data, analyzing, and systematically presenting the interconnections of data comprehensively to draw accountable conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Understanding of the Universe**

The Cosmos encompasses everything that exists, has ever existed, or will ever exist.<sup>20</sup> The Cosmos, in this context, is incredibly vast, and can be understood in terms of both microcosms and macrocosms. Microcosms are small parts of the universe that, from a sociological perspective, can be seen as small groups of individuals whose behavior is similar to the larger social institutions that encompass them. On the other hand, macrocosms pertain to the entire universe with a much broader or comprehensive scope. This indicates that both microcosms and macrocosms are interconnected, such as how a small group of individuals interprets and interacts with the universe or the environment.

Understanding the origins and structure of the universe is expected to foster awareness of human behavior towards the environment. Human life, both individually and communally, is heavily reliant on its surroundings. Therefore, the relationship should be balanced among all aspects of the universe, including interactions between humans and other beings or the interconnectedness of nature as a whole. This is also a primary focus of environmental ethics studies. Individuals in society who treat the environment well often believe in a higher power that orchestrates the entire universe, ensuring its proper functioning.<sup>21</sup> Thus, by caring for the environment, they contribute to the stability and sustainability of the universe.<sup>22</sup>

It appears that the implementation of local customs and culture in environmental conservation, expressed as spiritual culture, also encompasses habits or cultural norms that teach society the importance of

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<sup>19</sup> Sugiyono, *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Carl Sagan, *Kosmos* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2016), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Erna Mena Niman, "Kearifan Lokal Dan Upaya Pelestarian Lingkungan Alam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Missio* 11, no. 1 (2019), <https://jurnak.uinkastpaulus.ac.id/index.php/jpkm/article/view/139>.

<sup>22</sup> Naomi Diah Budi Setyaningrum, "Budaya Lokal Di Era Global," *Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Karya Seni* 20, no. 2 (2018), <https://www.academia.edu/104648733>.

treating the natural environment well. Often, the intentions and goals of ancestors or predecessors in teaching such culture are to guide their descendants in maintaining the stability of the universe. Considering the rapid development of economy and technology in social interactions, which are often used for environmental exploitation, cultural constructs are crucial in maintaining hope for the stability of the universe.<sup>23</sup> This can be observed in the lives of indigenous communities, such as those in Cerekang Hamlet.

As stated by Usman Siabeng, one of the traditional leaders of the To Cerekang indigenous community, regarding the rules of tree felling for daily life, ensuring the preservation of the tree ecosystem's functions. Usman Siabeng stated that:

*“Tentang penebangan memang tidak pernah tidak boleh itulah pesan leluhur yang dari leluhur mengatakan “ajak mujamai panggalengnga, akko mujamai makkasolangi riwalemmu” merusak akhirnya, itulah kami tanamkan bahwa kami lihat dulunya kami tidak terlalu paham apa makna daripada kata ini setelah kami lihat ada beberapa tetangga wilayah yang mengalami bencana. Di situlah kami mengerti oh itulah maksud daripada kalimat itu.”<sup>24</sup>*

Based on the interview, it demonstrates the environmental ethics message that every individual living within the community should always respect the customary forest because damaging the forest is equivalent to harming human life. This value has been firmly upheld and acknowledged from generation to generation, understanding its purpose and intent. These efforts also mark the initial steps towards all-encompassing conservation processes, indirectly indicating the interconnectedness of a balanced ecosystem among all living beings.

## **2. The Interconnectedness of Ecosystems**

In the interconnected network of ecosystems, humans are one of the vital elements, both biotic and abiotic, that cannot be separated. Therefore, human survival depends on the sustainability of its ecosystem. However, humans possess the ability to reason, which enables them to influence their actions. This cognitive ability exceeds that of other living beings, often making humans a significant actor in life. This also illustrates that every human individual should have awareness of maintaining the mutual relationship between humans and the environment, so that the ecosystem remains undisturbed.<sup>25</sup>

The interaction between humans and their environment is a natural process that occurs from birth to death. This interaction is necessary because

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<sup>23</sup> Setyaningrum.

<sup>24</sup> Usman Siabeng, “Wawancara” (Dusun Cerekang Desa Manurung, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Utina Ramli, *Ekologi Dan Lingkungan Hidup* (Gorontalo: UNG Press, 2009), 35–36.

humans rely on the environment to fulfill their daily needs. Various human necessities such as air for breathing, water for drinking, food for energy sources, and other needs are provided by nature, and humans can obtain them from the environment according to their requirements.<sup>26</sup>

The sustainability of the environment heavily relies on the interaction between humans and their surroundings. The environment has undergone much damage and pollution due to human activities. Rapid population growth, deviant activities, and careless development can harm natural resources. Human actions can impact the environment, leading to global concerns such as climate change. This awareness is also evident among the To Cerekang indigenous community, who pay significant attention to environmental issues.

As stated by Usman Siabeng, one of the traditional leaders of the To Cerekang indigenous community, regarding the environmental conservation efforts undertaken by the government and the community, Usman Siabeng said:

*"Kalau pemerintah di sini ada pak desa dan WTC tetap support penjagaan hutan adat, bahkan kami juga sudah dibantu oleh pemda membantu generasi muda melakukan patroli, kalau dari masyarakat otomatis dia campur tangannya tidak bisa tidak. Kalau dari masyarakat itu pendanaan dari swadaya siapapun masyarakat cerekang dan di mana pun ia berada, otomatis ada campur tangannya tidak bisa tidak, yang penting dia merasa bahwa dia orang cerekang di mana pun berada. Kami juga punya group, dan tidak semua masyarakat cerekang masuk ke dalam group artinya hanya orang yang bisa berpikir, pemikir-pemikir yang bisa ditemani komunikasi. Kalau kita berbicara tentang manfaat, manfaat yang paling kelihatan itu ada di pesisir hutan adat. Di pesisir itu ada tempat berkembang biaknya kepiting, udang, dan meningkatkan hasil nelayan. Bisa di jual, tapi tidak boleh masuk di kawasan itu. Tapi, kalau kawasan lainnya boleh."<sup>27</sup>*

Based on the statement, it is evident that various parties within the To Cerekang indigenous community play a crucial role in preserving the forest. The Village Chief, the Young Fighters Community of Wija To Cerekang (WTC), and the Local Government regularly patrol around the customary forest areas. Additionally, the community plays a significant role in the forest preservation process, with active involvement in fundraising through various self-help initiatives. With the community's conservation efforts, many benefits are felt, especially along the coastal areas. These conservation efforts

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<sup>26</sup> Akhadi M, *Ekologi Energi Mengenali Dampak Lingkungan Dalam Pemanfaatan Sumber-Sumber Energi* (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2013), 117.

<sup>27</sup> Siabeng, "Wawancara."



also contribute to the household economy through increased catches by fishermen, such as crabs and shrimp.

According to Usman Siabeng, the To Cerekang indigenous community and the local government in Cerekang Hamlet, Manurung Village, collaborate to preserve the forest. The abundance of natural resources does not always prompt every element of the indigenous community to exploit nature. Nature has provided many things in the lives of the indigenous community, so humans should contribute significantly to conserving it. Every good deed humans do to nature will result in multiplied benefits, such as abundant natural wealth for human prosperity. If nature experiences pollution and damage, it will cause disasters and multiplied consequences that will undoubtedly harm the surrounding community.

### **3. The Awareness of Environmental Vulnerability**

Today's population is facing environmental crises such as global warming, desertification, biodiversity loss, depletion of the ozone layer and tropical rainforests, water and air pollution, and many other environmental issues.<sup>28</sup> Critical environmental issues require a deep understanding, especially in terms of prevention and mitigation. Wise environmental management demands sufficient knowledge about the environment and the consequences that may arise due to human interference. The most significant factor in environmental problems is the rapid growth of the population, which is then addressed through development and industrialization. Development and industrialization, while facilitating human needs, often have negative impacts, such as environmental pollution. Polluted environmental conditions result in the destruction of genetic resources of plants and living organisms, which are likely essential for humans.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, individuals who have a sense of responsibility and mutual dependence on this complex environment are needed.

As stated by Arlin, one of the members of Wija To Cerekang (WTC) in Cerekang Hamlet, Manurung Village, human responsibility towards the environment takes the form of awareness of lifestyle patterns that always consider their impact on the environment. Arlin said:

*"Masyarakat Cerekang melihat alam (hutan adat) sebagai warisan leluhur yang mesti dijaga. Alam juga mesti dijaga karena banjir, longsor, dan bencana alam itu terjadi karena merusak lingkungan. Tujuan pemeliharaan hutan lindung ialah semata-mata karena menjaga amanah*

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<sup>28</sup> Nuansa Bayu Segara, "Education For Sustainable Development (ESD) Sebuah Upaya Mewujudkan Kelestarian Lingkungan," *SOSIO DIDAKTIKA: Social Science Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2015): 23, <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/SOSIO-FITK>.

<sup>29</sup> Vania Zulfa, "Isu-Isu Kritis Lingkungan Dan Perspektif Global," *JGG-Jurnal Green Growth Dan Manajemen Lingkungan* 5, no. 1 (2016): 30-31, [doi.org/10.21009/jgg.051.03](https://doi.org/10.21009/jgg.051.03).

*nenek moyang, secara langsung juga menjaga lingkungan masyarakat Cerekang. Pemerintah juga turut andil dalam menjaga hutan adat masyarakat Cerekang dengan membuat peraturan untuk tidak menebang pohon dan sebagainya di kawasan hutan adat masyarakat Cerekang. Manfaat yang diperoleh masyarakat Cerekang dengan adanya hutan lindung, sepanjang sejarah tidak pernah terjadi banjir maupun longsor di Cerekang. Tidak ada sedikitpun kepentingan pribadi berupa ekonomi dan sebagainya dari menjaga hutan adat.”<sup>30</sup>*

The community of Cerekang bears a responsibility that is consistently passed down to future generations in environmental preservation, which is to safeguard their customary forest. The customary forest of the To Cerekang community is believed to be a legacy or heritage from ancestors that must always be preserved. To perpetuate this responsibility, the government also plays a role in providing regulations regarding the limitations of the Cerekang community's activities within the forest. The benefits of preserving this forest are directly felt by the community, as they are spared from disasters such as floods and landslides, even though their living areas are directly adjacent to rivers and mountains.

Awareness of the importance of environmental preservation is reflected in the behavior and actions of the community. To impart an understanding of how crucial it is to have a sense of responsibility towards the surrounding environment, education is one effective method. Through education, the community can maximize their abilities and potentials, including their environmental awareness. Environmental consciousness involves two aspects: cognitive awareness, which encompasses knowledge and skills, and affective awareness, which refers to an individual's attitude or behavior when engaged in environmental actions either individually or collectively.<sup>31</sup> The life of the To Cerekang indigenous community increasingly demonstrates the presence of affective awareness in each individual, reflected in their attitudes and behaviors that greatly uphold the preservation and sanctity of their customary forest, thus ensuring its well-being to this day.

#### **4. The Awareness for Conservation**

Environment is the most essential aspect of one's life, as it serves as the place where one learns, interacts, and engages in various activities. Preserving the environment also requires the utilization of various knowledge, both in terms of intention and commitment to not harm it. In this

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<sup>30</sup> Arlin, "Wawancara" (Dusun Cerekang Desa Manurung, 2023).

<sup>31</sup> Jainal Abidin, "Pentingnya Kesadaran Untuk Peduli Untuk Menjaga Dan Melestarikan Lingkungan," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 3 (2022): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jurnal.nauli.v1i3.921>.

regard, it requires an individual's awareness to preserve the environment, which should be a commitment possessed by every community.<sup>32</sup> Environmental conservation can be understood as the effort to maintain, care for, and preserve the environment, so that it continues to function in sustaining the lives of living beings, including humans.

Communities that do not preserve the environment are considered to cause negative changes to the environment. These changes lead to disturbances in the environment, resulting in a decline in its functions. Therefore, communities are required to continue to maintain, care for, and preserve the environment to ensure its sustainability. There is a need for community awareness of the importance of the environment. To build awareness of the importance of environmental conservation, various efforts are needed, starting from environmental outreach and education. This aims to equip communities with understanding, knowledge, responsible attitudes, and through methods utilizing more environmentally friendly products.<sup>33</sup>

As stated by Arlin, one of the members of WTC in Cerekang Hamlet, Manurung Village, that:

*"Dalam melestarikan hutan, tidak diperkenankan mengambil apapun yang ada di wilayah hutan adat dan sungai. Walaupun satu lembar daun ataupun mengambil di sungai dan juga tidak dibolehkan memasuki hutan adat kecuali diizinkan oleh pemangku adat. Alam juga mesti dijaga, karena banjir, longsor, dan bencana alam itu terjadi karena merusak lingkungan. Masyarakat cerekang juga mengusulkan kepada pemerintah setempat untuk menyediakan tempat sampah, agar sampah tidak mencemari sungai. Tujuan pemeliharaan hutan lindung ialah semata-mata menjaga amanah atau pesan dari nenek moyang. Di samping menjaga amanah nenek moyang, secara langsung juga menjaga lingkungan masyarakat cerekang."*<sup>34</sup>

Based on the statement, it can be understood that preserving the environment can be done by anyone in various ways. One of them is regarding the customary forest or rivers, where it is not allowed to take anything within their territories. Even if it's just a single leaf, it is still not permitted to take anything from the river or enter the customary forest without permission from the customary authority. This action indirectly suggests that nature should be preserved by refraining from overexploiting or excessively consuming its resources. The occurrence of floods, landslides,

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<sup>32</sup> AP Agus, "Menanamkan Kesadaran Pentingnya Melestarikan Lingkungan," *Radar Semarang Jawa Pos*, 2023, <https://radarsemarang.jawapos.com/untukmu-guruku/721406498/menanamkan-kesadaran-pentingnya-melestarikan-lingkungan>.

<sup>33</sup> Lino Mario M Therik Jeni J, "Membangun Kesadaran Masyarakat Sebagai Upaya Pelestarian Lingkungan," *Jurnal Administrasi Publik* 17, no. 1 (2021): 89-95.

<sup>34</sup> Arlin, "Wawancara."

and natural disasters is a result of the community's lack of awareness of environmental preservation, which can damage the environment. In addition to preserving the customary forest and rivers, the community also takes the initiative to propose to the local government to provide trash bins and ensure that the existing waste does not pollute the river. The purpose of environmental preservation, such as protecting customary forests or rivers, is solely to uphold the trust and messages from ancestors. Besides upholding the trust of ancestors, it also directly contributes to preserving the environment of the Cerekang community, ensuring its sustainability.

A well-preserved environment can undoubtedly lead to a better and healthier community life. This is because the environment serves as the backdrop for all activities in one's life. To preserve the environment, it requires firm intentions and convictions from every individual not to harm it. The awareness of the community regarding the importance of preserving the environment is crucial. This aims to provide understanding, knowledge, and a sense of responsibility among the community towards their surrounding environment.

## **Conclusion**

The cosmological values in the efforts to preserve the environment of the indigenous community of To Cerekang can be seen in various forms such as understanding of the universe, ecosystem interconnectedness, awareness of environmental vulnerability, and commitment to preservation. The understanding of the universe by the To Cerekang indigenous community includes the function of the values passed down from ancestors to future generations. Regarding the ecosystem interconnectedness in the life of the To Cerekang indigenous community, it is evident in the interaction between humans and their environment, which is viewed as balanced. This is also related to the awareness of the To Cerekang indigenous community regarding environmental vulnerability, as seen in the collective responsibility to protect various natural resources in the customary areas. This is accompanied by the awareness of the To Cerekang indigenous community for the preservation of the environment, demonstrated by the commitment of each individual to adhere to all applicable customary rules.

The results of this research certainly offer suggestions for further studies. Some of these include the limitations of the scope of this study, which only focuses on the cosmological values and efforts of environmental preservation among the To Cerekang indigenous community. Therefore, it is necessary to enrich this study with diverse perspectives and compare it with the efforts of other indigenous communities in environmental preservation.

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