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**The Forbidden Forest Myth as a Social and Ecological Asset  
in the Kajang Community**

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## THE FORBIDDEN FOREST MYTH AS A SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ASSET IN THE KAJANG COMMUNITY

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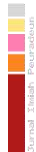
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### Abstract

*The construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang indigenous community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, transcends mere social practice, serving as a potential asset in natural resource management rooted in local wisdom – a crucial aspect that remains underexplored in existing literature. This study aims to address this research gap by elucidating the characteristics, factors, and implications of the forbidden forest myth's construction as a valuable resource in ecologically-based natural resource management. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study approach, this study reveals three significant findings. Firstly, the forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous people has evolved into a social institution governing the management and utilization of natural resources. Secondly, the myth's influence permeates virtually all aspects of Kajang's indigenous life. Thirdly, the construction of this myth has fostered a proactive attitude towards natural resource management and utilization within the Kajang community. This study also recommends comparative analyses of values, norms, and local wisdom across various indigenous communities in the context of natural resource management practices.*

**Keywords:** *Myth Construction; Forbidden Forest; Natural Resource Management; Indigenous Communities; Kajang.*



## A. Introduction

The myth of the forbidden forest, rooted in the values, norms, and local knowledge of indigenous communities, offers significant potential for advancing ecological well-being-based natural resource management practices. Tran et al., (2024) posit that future development concepts and orientations will increasingly prioritize ecological well-being. Rai and Mishra (2022) argue that realizing this vision necessitates policies that incorporate local intelligence in resource management and utilization. The forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, transcends mere social practice, presenting itself as a potential asset for sustainable resource management grounded in ecological principles. Consequently, the Kajang people's construction of the forbidden forest myth represents a critical context that warrants thorough examination and reflection to address future challenges in natural resource management and utilization.

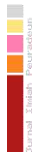
Functionally, the forbidden forest plays a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem balance and sustainability. Healey (2020) contends that forbidden forests contribute to the formation of natural ecological habitats for flora, fauna, and local communities residing in proximity to these areas. Moreover, forbidden forests significantly contribute to maintaining ecological cycles, such as hydrological processes, and ensuring the availability of productive resources for plants, animals, and humans dependent on forest ecosystems, as observed in Zimbabwe (Mudombi-Rusinamhodzi & Thiel, 2020). Reeves et al., (2020) further emphasize the social and cultural value of forbidden forests, often regarded as repositories of local wisdom that underpin all activities within these spaces. Thus, forbidden forests not only serve as preserved areas for ecological conservation but also embody essential local wisdom values crucial for ecosystem maintenance (Gu et al., 2020; Maulina et al., 2025).

Studies examining the forbidden forest myth constructed by local communities have primarily focused on three aspects. First, research has investigated the myth's function in sustainable forest protection (Ahmed & Dhiman, 2024; Bempong et al., 2023; Triyuni et al., 2023). Second, scholars have explored the perception of forests as sacred areas for local communities

(Moudopoulos-Athanasiou, 2023; Shiferaw et al., 2023; Wang & Hu, 2023). Third, studies have analyzed local communities' knowledge of the forbidden forest myth (Hertog et al., 2022; Kuru et al., 2021; Sobaih & Naguib, 2022). While these studies have provided valuable insights into the function, ritual aspects, and local knowledge surrounding the forbidden forest myth, there remains a gap in comprehensive examinations of its construction as a resource management asset grounded in local wisdom.

Construction, in this context, is understood as a social concept intrinsically linked to human cognition (Franks, 2014; Lindgren et al., 2024; Mokhtar et al., 2024). Haslanger (2017) posits that ideas, as products of thought, represent social constructions closely tied to the values, norms, and local wisdom embraced by communities. Through these cultural elements, knowledge is produced and becomes the result of symbolic interaction, which in turn constructs social practices (Fernando et al., 2025; Y. G. Larasati et al., 2025). Haryono (2016) asserts that culture is born from human construction, and reciprocally, societal life is shaped by the culture it creates, with this reciprocal relationship significantly influencing social behavior in resource management. Cultural construction is a continuous process, not limited to its initial formation (Mesquita et al., 2016). However, there are constraints to these changes. Deeply rooted cultural constructions within a community, such as the forbidden forest myth in indigenous societies, resist easy alteration (Pratiwi et al., 2020; Santoso et al., 2023; Saputra & Abdullah, 2025).

Indigenous communities exhibit distinct characteristics that set them apart from the general population (Berman, 2018; Thiede & Gray, 2020; Yörük et al., 2019). Thiede and Gray (2020) emphasize that indigenous communities possess strong communal bonds, with members connected through territorial and genealogical ties. These communities are further characterized by magico-religious connections (deep relationships with belief systems and nature), concrete social structures (featuring binding laws based on collective decisions), and immediate participation, wherein members prioritize and adhere to communal values and norms in their actions and behaviors (Bustani, 2018). The communal bonds of indigenous communities are manifested in their enduring



traditions and customs (Pabbajah, 2021; Philip et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2020). In Indonesia, for instance, these traditions and customs serve as the primary mechanism for binding communities across generations in the preservation and management of natural resources (A. L. Larasati, 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2020).

The Kajang indigenous community is renowned for employing strategies rooted in local wisdom to prevent exploitative behavior in natural resource management (Surtikanti et al., 2017). This approach warrants exploration and reflection as a valuable case study. The present study focuses specifically on elucidating the construction of the forbidden forest myth, which the Kajang community regards as integral to effective and efficient forest management. This study is predicated on several substantive considerations. Primarily, the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang community represents a central issue that has not been comprehensively addressed in extant literature. Furthermore, the distinctive characteristics of the forbidden forest myth's construction in the Kajang community are vital to understanding their approach to natural resource preservation. Additionally, the construction of the forbidden forest myth serves as a potential strategy to mitigate exploitative behavior in natural resource management, necessitating critical reflection.

The forbidden forest myth, deeply rooted in the values, norms, and local wisdom of the Kajang indigenous people, provides a crucial context for understanding and reflecting upon natural resource management practices grounded in ecological well-being. This study focuses on three primary research questions. Firstly, how is the forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous community in relation to natural resource management? Secondly, how does the existence of the forbidden forest myth influence resource management practices within the Kajang indigenous community? Thirdly, how does the Kajang community's attitude, shaped by the forbidden forest myth, impact their natural resource management practices? This study posits that the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang indigenous community has fostered adaptive and proactive attitudes towards forest management.



The examination of myth construction in indigenous contexts represents a critical area of study (Dalyan et al., 2024; Salleh et al., 2024). In addition to addressing these research gaps, this study is significant in elucidating the characteristics, contributing factors, and broader implications of the forbidden forest myth's construction as a potential cultural asset in ecological well-being-based natural resource management. By understanding how myths are constructed, transmitted, and sustained within indigenous societies, this study aims to explore how traditional narratives can offer sustainable and culturally respectful approaches to environmental preservation. Furthermore, this study holds potential to present innovative community-centered solutions for addressing global environmental challenges while preserving the cultural identity and knowledge systems of indigenous peoples. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the social functions of myth, especially in reinforcing communal norms, ecological ethics, and collective memory that shape environmental behavior.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing a case study method. Primary data were obtained through direct and structured observations and interviews with members of the Kajang indigenous community. There were eleven informants in this research, including three informants from the leader representatives, three academics and observers of the Kajang indigenous community, three administrators, and two government authorities of Bulukumba. Since it involves a small number of samples that were not taken randomly, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Informant selection focused on individuals possessing knowledge, experience, and consistency in manifesting customary values and norms related to forest preservation. The interview questions centered on three key areas: the contribution of the forbidden forest myth to forest preservation, the community's rationale for forest preservation based on this myth, and the myth's influence on community attitudes towards forest management and



protection. Concurrently, secondary data were collected from relevant books and journal articles pertinent to the study's focus.

This study uses a careful, inclusive, and local understanding-based approach. This is done to overcome methodological limitations and biases in data collection so that the research results are more valid, accurate, and relevant. To reduce the risk of one-sided interpretation, authors compare the results of various methods, such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In addition, research questions, interviews, and observations are designed according to the social and cultural context of the indigenous community being studied. Authors also involve community members as research partners to provide input on the design of the methodology, implementation of the research, and interpretation of the results.

Data analysis followed the three-stage process outlined by Miles et al., (2014). Initially, data reduction was performed to reorganize the information into a more systematic format based on classifications of form, factors, and implications. Subsequently, data verification was conducted to conclude the thematically reduced data. Finally, data presentation involved displaying the collected information in tables containing verified interview quotes, aligned with the study's discussion relevance. Following these stages, inductive analysis formed the basis for data interpretation. This interpretation process involved restating and reflecting on the data according to the ideas, patterns, and socio-cultural contexts represented in the collected information.

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of social research ethics to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research. The authors obtained voluntary informed consent from all participants and guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their identities. Each stage of data collection was carried out in a participatory manner, with full respect for the cultural values and local wisdom of the communities involved. The study was also committed to avoiding any form of exploitation, manipulation, or biased interpretation that could distort the original meaning of the myths being examined. Where possible, participants were involved in the validation



process to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the data. This study fully adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations set by the relevant academic institution, ensuring that the entire process was conducted ethically, responsibly, and with sensitivity to the socio-cultural context of the participants.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

This study illustrates that the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang indigenous community goes beyond being a mere social practice; it also functions as a valuable asset in the management of natural resources rooted in local wisdom. This is evident through three key findings, which are discussed comprehensively in the following sections.

#### **1. Results**

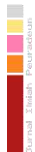
The findings of this study demonstrate that the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang indigenous community serves as both a potential asset and model in the process of managing natural resources based on ecological well-being. This context is evident through three key findings from the study.

##### ***a. The forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous community***

The forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous community functions as a social institution often utilized as social capital for more effective and efficient management and utilization of natural resources. This is evident in the myths prevalent within the Kajang community (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Construction of the forbidden forest myth in the Kajang indigenous community*

<b>Myth</b>	<b>Statement</b>
The forest is like a mother	"The forest is considered sacred because it is seen as a mother. Its status is equal to that of humans; cutting down trees is equivalent to destroying the source of life" (Informant 3, Kajang, 2024).
The forest is a source of life	"The forest is a source of life for the Kajang indigenous community. They believe that leaves produce oxygen and dew,



Myth	Statement
	which forms droplets that rise to the clouds, turning into rain that gives life to plants and living beings” (Informant 5, Kajang, 2024).
The forest is a sacred place	“It is prohibited to enter the sacred forest to collect wood, shrimp, rattan, and honey. Violations will result in sanctions or fines. Destroying the forest is tantamount to self-destruction and harm to future generations” (Informant 2, Kajang, 2024).
The forest is a sacred place	“Anyone who enters the forbidden forest, called <i>borong karama</i> , cannot leave; if they manage to exit, they will die. Only the <i>ammatao</i> (highest traditional leader) can enter for ritual purposes” (Informant 9, Kajang, 2024).
The forest is where the first human descended to earth	The first human being descended in the Tombolo forest. He came from heaven by the will of God Almighty. Therefore, the forest is not only a sacred place but also the place of origin for all life on earth; the forest is the center of the earth (Informant 7, Kajang, 2024).

Source: Interviews with informants.

Table 1 presents three significant findings regarding the role of the forbidden forest myth in the Kajang community’s natural resource management. First, the forest is constructed as a mother figure, which underpins a strong belief that deforestation is not only harmful but also morally unacceptable, as it is seen as harming a life-giving entity. Second, the forest is regarded as a sacred space, reinforcing traditional norms that limit access and protect the area from external disturbances. This belief system functions as an informal but powerful regulatory mechanism. Third, the forest is seen as a source of life, fostering a collective responsibility toward conservation and environmental stewardship. These three findings demonstrate that the myth of the forbidden forest serves not only as a cultural narrative but also as a practical framework for ecological governance.

***b. The existence of the forbidden forest myth in the Kajang indigenous community***

Beyond its role in preventing exploitative behavior, the existence of the forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang community manifests across



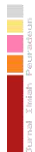
various aspects of life. This is reflected in the presence of the forbidden forest myth in the Kajang community (see Table 2).

Table 2. The existence of the forbidden forest myth in various aspects of life

Aspect	Statement
Spiritual	“The forbidden forest is where the highest traditional leader, <i>ammatoa</i> , offers prayers to obtain blessings ( <i>barakka</i> ) for the safety of humans, plants, and animals ( <i>se're pa'linoang</i> ), which are believed to guard nature, defend the territory, ensure food security, and secure the availability of all agricultural seeds for the needs of the wider community” (Informant 11, Kajang, 2024).
Spiritual	“The forbidden forest is where <i>ammatoa</i> leads <i>a'borong</i> (deliberations) for the <i>andingingi</i> ritual—a ceremony to pray for abundant harvests, protection from dangerous diseases, and gratitude for health and natural resources” (Informant 9, Kajang, 2024).
Cultural	“The forbidden forest teaches the community the principles of <i>kamase masea</i> (simple living). It promotes consuming only what nature provides, living healthily, peacefully, and prioritizing mutual cooperation” (Informant 10, Kajang, 2024).
Structural	“The Forbidden Forest educates the community on complying with applicable laws. Violations of taking forbidden forest resources result in severe sanctions in front of the indigenous community, with the family also bearing responsibility” (Informant 10, Kajang, 2024).
Structural	“The forbidden forest educates the community and traditional leaders to commit to preserving the forest, instilling a strong sense of responsibility in both groups to maintain it. We believe that anyone who cuts wood, collects shrimp, honey, or rattan from the forbidden forest outside of traditional purposes will receive punishment proportional to the severity of their violation, as such actions are viewed as detrimental to natural resources and capable of disrupting ecosystems, food security, and economic sustainability. The forbidden forest serves a vital role in protecting natural ecosystems, ensuring food security, and sustaining economic viability” (Informant 10, Kajang, 2024).

Source: Interviews with informants.

Table 2 reveals three important findings regarding the role of the forbidden forest myth in the daily lives of the Kajang community. First, from a spiritual perspective, the myth fosters the belief that forest protection is closely linked to prayer and spiritual practices, emphasizing the sacred relationship between people and nature. Second, on a cultural level, the myth promotes the value of simple living, encouraging community members to adopt



lifestyles that support ecological balance and sustainable forest conservation. Third, from a structural standpoint, the myth legitimizes the enforcement of social sanctions against those who harm the forest, serving as a customary law mechanism to regulate behavior and maintain environmental order. These findings collectively demonstrate that the forbidden forest myth is deeply embedded across spiritual, cultural, and social structures, shaping the community’s environmental ethics and natural resource management practices.

*c. The forbidden forest myth and the attitudes of the Kajang indigenous community*

The construction of the forbidden forest myth in the Kajang community has shaped adaptive attitudes toward managing and utilizing natural resources. This is evident in the attitudes formed within the Kajang community through the forbidden forest myth (see Table 3).

*Table 3. The forbidden forest myth and the attitudes of the Kajang indigenous community*

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Statement</b>
Proactive	“The entire community firmly believes in traditional rules that recognize the forest as a source of life. The forest maintains natural balance, and its benefits extend far beyond the Kajang area” (Informant 2, Kajang, 2024).
Proactive	“We believe that the forbidden forest serves as a ‘world cover,’ where plants and animals thrive. Ammatoa places his ministers to guard the forest boundaries. There are only four entrances to Kajang Dalam (Inner Kajang), with two built as ceremonial gates ( <i>tambala</i> )” (Informant 5, Kajang, 2024).
Cooperation	“The regency government provides tailored support to the Kajang community, including seeds, fertilizers, and livestock education. The community is also assisted by the Bulukumba Human Resources Research and Development Institute (Lakpesdam) in establishing boundary gates” (Informant 1, Kajang, 2024).
Cooperation	“The commitment of Kajang traditional leaders to protect the sacred forest has earned them recognition as the world’s best forest guardians by <i>The Washington Post</i> . This achievement is celebrated by the Bulukumba Regency government, which expresses its pride by having officials wear traditional black uniforms – characteristic of the Kajang tribe’s attire – every fourth day of the month as a symbolic tribute to the community’s dedication” (Informant 6, Kajang, 2024).



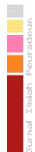
<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Statement</b>
Responsibility	“Environmental awareness is not only practiced by the Kajang community but is also the responsibility of all Bulukumba residents. The local government plans to incorporate local wisdom in environmental preservation into various levels of education curricula” (Informant 9, Kajang, 2024).

*Source: Interviews with informants.*

Table 3 illustrates how the reconstruction of the forbidden forest myth has shaped the attitudes of the Kajang indigenous community in managing natural resources. Three significant findings emerge from this analysis. First, the myth’s reconstruction has fostered a proactive and protective attitude toward the preservation of natural resources, motivating community members to act consciously in safeguarding their environment. Second, it has strengthened cooperative efforts among community members, encouraging collective participation in conservation activities and reinforcing social cohesion. Third, the myth has instilled a deep sense of responsibility for managing natural resources, emphasizing accountability not only to the community but also to future generations. These findings highlight the positive impact of the forbidden forest myth’s construction on shaping sustainable natural resource management within the Kajang community.

## **2. Discussion**

The forbidden forest myth constructed by the Kajang indigenous community not only shapes ecological values and norms but also serves as a valuable asset to prevent exploitative behaviors in managing natural resources. This study highlights three key findings. First, the forbidden forest myth has evolved into a social institution that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of natural resource management and utilization. Second, the myth’s influence extends beyond resource management, permeating various aspects of Kajang community life. Third, the construction of the myth fosters proactive attitudes toward managing and utilizing natural resources. These findings indicate that the forbidden forest myth not only encourages adaptive and proactive behaviors in forest management but also serves as a critical tool in curbing exploitative practices.



The forbidden forest myth nurtures proactive behavior among the Kajang community, protecting natural resources from the latent dangers of exploitation. Etchart (2022) and Imamah et al., (2024) assert that myths function as social institutions that shape values, norms, and regulate community behavior in resource management. Similarly, Amiruddin et al., (2021) highlight that myths in indigenous communities convey moral messages believed to have significant implications if disregarded, leading to their transmission through both oral traditions and wise, virtuous behavior. Thus, the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang community serves as a cultural strategy that maintains ecological balance by engaging spiritual, cultural, and emotional dimensions. In essence, the myth represents not only a form of local wisdom but also an effective strategy for future ecological preservation.

Forest management rooted in local wisdom, as practiced by the Kajang community, can be a potential strategy to prevent exploitative behavior. It can be argued that the concept of ecological well-being, central to the development orientation of many global nations, can only be achieved by integrating local values, norms, and intelligence into future resource management (Fernando et al., 2023; Yohana, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). In this context, utilizing local wisdom in resource management addresses development challenges that often overlook ecological values. According to Salleh et al., (2024), ecological-based development not only benefits local communities but also ensures the preservation of natural resources for future generations. Therefore, the construction of the forbidden forest in the Kajang community provides a valuable model and asset for managing natural resources based on ecological well-being.

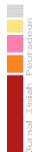
Forest management trends in the globalization era have often disregarded ecological well-being. Suryatmojo et al., (2014) emphasize that ecologically based forest management is essential for maintaining resource balance and sustainability. However, many state and private resource management practices remain exploitative, risking environmental degradation (Afrizal et al., 2024). Sukiyono et al., (2024) argue that ecological-based development is often used as a manipulative slogan to gain support, lacking authentic implementation. Consistent application of ecological-based management is necessary, as it

preserves ecological balance and mitigates the intensifying impacts of climate change. Hidayat (2024) further argues that ecological-based development not only prevents natural disasters but also fosters a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

This study's findings contrast with previous research, which primarily focused on the normative practices of forbidden forests (Moudopoulos-Athanasίου, 2023), sacred forest areas (Shiferaw et al., 2023), and forbidden forests in the context of disasters (Wang & Hu, 2023). In contrast, this study demonstrates that the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang community has effectively shaped values and norms conducive to managing natural resources based on ecological well-being. Marini Govigli et al., (2020) suggest that local wisdom-based resource management not only supports ecological well-being but also offers a model for future green economic development. Thus, local wisdom-based management can significantly contribute to realizing green economic development and preserving more productive ecological systems in the future.

The concept of sustainable economic development based on ecological well-being has gained global prominence. Achieving this requires policies that integrate local values, norms, and wisdom, effectively curbing exploitative behaviors in resource management. Reflecting on national commitments to incorporating local intelligence is crucial for assessing future economic development concepts and orientations. Mikhno et al., (2021) stress the importance of systemic evaluation by all stakeholders to realize sustainable economic development based on ecological well-being. Alongside these evaluations, constructive regulations are necessary to incorporate local intelligence into policies, advancing sustainable economic development within the political economy framework of nations.

The forbidden forest myths believed in and practiced by the Kajang indigenous community uphold crucial information into how local wisdom can be accommodated as an alternative strategy for the global community in the process of sustainable environmental conservation. The myths highlight harmony and respect for the ecosystem, so that this local wisdom can be used



as a preference in overcoming global ecological problems (Samad et al., 2021). The context indicates that the myths believed and practiced by the indigenous community cannot only maintain environmental sustainability but can also be a potential model for adaptation in ecologically based policies (Asuoha et al., 2022). The myths can be used as an alarm and a preference for the global community in managing sustainable natural resources.

In the era of globalization, the exploitation of natural resources has caused deteriorating climate change; hence, a more adaptive and inclusive policy model is necessary. The local wisdom of the Kajang community can be adopted in formulating policies that are oriented towards environmental conservation amidst global climate change (Henri et al., 2022; Yaqin et al., 2024). It is in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity, which encourages political and economic policies based on environmental welfare. By integrating local wisdom into the framework of global environmental policy, it can certainly increase the effectiveness of natural resource management in facing the increasing challenges of global climate change.

This study is constrained by its exclusive focus on data collection within the Kajang community in South Sulawesi, thereby limiting the generalizability of its findings to this particular socio-cultural and ecological context. By centering the investigation on a single indigenous group, the research does not incorporate a comparative analysis of analogous phenomena present in other indigenous communities, which may exhibit distinct values, normative frameworks, and local wisdom pertaining to natural resource management. Such diversity across indigenous populations could result in varied mechanisms and interpretations of environmental stewardship. Consequently, the insights derived from this study may not fully capture the broader spectrum of indigenous knowledge systems and their roles in sustainable resource governance.

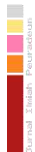
#### **D. Conclusion**

The principal findings of this study indicate that the construction of the forbidden forest myth within the Kajang indigenous community extends far beyond a simple social practice, functioning as a fundamental mechanism for

natural resource management rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. The myth has crystallized into a social institution that directs and regulates the sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources. Its influence permeates multiple spheres of community life, encompassing spiritual beliefs, cultural values, and normative frameworks that collectively reinforce environmental conservation. Moreover, the myth's construction has engendered proactive and responsible attitudes among community members, fostering an ethic of care and vigilance against resource exploitation. Collectively, these findings underscore that the forbidden forest myth operates not only as a symbolic narrative but as a critical cultural asset that integrates ecological ethics into the community's social fabric, thereby contributing substantively to the preservation of both cultural identity and environmental sustainability.

The findings of this study offer significant theoretical and practical contributions by advancing beyond the predominantly descriptive and normative approaches found in previous research on the construction of the forbidden forest myth within indigenous communities. This study demonstrates that, within the Kajang community, the myth actively shapes values and norms that underpin natural resource management centered on ecological well-being. Theoretically, these insights provide a critical dialogical foundation for further sociological and ecological inquiry into how myth and local wisdom function as mechanisms of environmental governance. Practically, the study introduces a novel framework based on local wisdom-oriented resource management, which can inform sustainable development strategies and address emerging environmental challenges. Importantly, the results offer valuable guidance for policymakers and practitioners aiming to integrate cultural dimensions into environmental policies, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and cultural relevance of natural resource governance.

Despite the limitations inherent in this study, its findings provide a robust foundation for future research, particularly in the form of comparative analyses involving diverse indigenous communities. Subsequent studies should investigate the values, norms, and local wisdom that inform natural resource management practices across different cultural and ecological settings. Such



comparative research would facilitate a more comprehensive and critical understanding of indigenous knowledge systems and their role in promoting sustainable environmental stewardship. Moreover, broadening the geographic and cultural scope of inquiry can elucidate both convergent and divergent approaches to natural resource governance, thereby enriching theoretical frameworks and informing practical applications. Future investigations can also contribute to refining models of local wisdom-based resource management, enhancing their adaptability and relevance in addressing contemporary ecological challenges.

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