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Joom Jak Sasi: The Role of Women in Traditional Coastal Management in Aduwei Raja Ampat

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This article explores the Joom Jak Sasi, a community group led by indigenous women practicing traditional coastal management known as Sasi in Aduwei, Raja Ampat. Drawing on the customary Sasi system, which regulates the use of natural resources through seasonal closures. This research highlights how gender, tradition, and religion intersect to promote sustainable environmental management. Once a male-dominated domain, Sasi in Aduwei has been increasingly influenced by female leadership, particularly through the Joom Jak Sasi group established in 2022. This research examines how these women negotiate patriarchal structures while promoting inclusive ecological governance, contributing to community empowerment and biodiversity protection. These research findings show that Indigenous women act as cultural and ecological guardians, challenging traditional gender hierarchies while revitalizing local knowledge systems. Furthermore, the integration of customary, religious, and scientific conservation efforts has contributed to more equitable and effective management of marine resources. By centering the role of women in environmental conservation, Joom Jak Sasi women not only conserve natural ecosystems but also redefine leadership roles and strengthen cultural identities in the face of ecological and social change.

Keywords: Joom Jak Sasi; Religious Creativity; Ecofeminism; Equitable Conservation

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable management of natural resources can be the key to local communities' economic success and development if it is done in a way that considers the balance between use and conservation. Nature's resources will not always be able to be produced for humans if nature itself is not maintained and protected from excessive human consumption. To protect and preserve nature as a producer of resources in human life, the local community in Aduwei practices the *Sasi* tradition. *Sasi* comes from the word "sanksi," meaning prohibition (Marria et al 2023). *Sasi* is a prohibition on the use of natural resources on land and at sea for a specific period of time, intended for the economic benefit of the community (Marria Saimima et al 2023). *Sasi*, a traditional system of resource management and conservation deeply rooted in native wisdom, is an integral part of life in Raja Ampat. This ancient practice, which can be described as indigenous knowledge aimed at protecting the natural world, regulates the use and harvesting of natural resources to ensure their sustainability.

Sasi is applied to marine resources and extends to forests and other natural areas, reflecting a comprehensive approach to environmental stewardship. *Sasi* has been ingrained in the locals' daily life for many generations. Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam into the region, *Sasi* was ruled by a traditional customary legal system (McLeod et al 2009). Authorities that strengthen and maintain *Sasi* have changed along with the decline of customs in the region. *Sasi* is currently still maintained by a combination of village chief, traditional leaders, and religious leaders who control the use and access to marine resources (McLeod et al 2009). There are three types of sea *Sasi* in Raja Ampat: *adat Sasi* (regulated based on

customary law and its practices) church *Sasi* and mosque *Sasi* (Wekke et al 2015). This type of sea *Sasi* itself is quite similar to the practice. The involvement of religious organizations in supporting environmental conservation not only legitimizes the practice but also forms a sense of collective responsibility and spiritual meaning among the community. Religion indirectly plays a role in society and is present to bridge the daily needs of the community, and this can be seen from the *Sasi* practice carried out in Aduwei. Religion in this case is played by the presence of GKI in Tanah Papua, one of the Church organizations in Papua, which is also involved in preserving the *Sasi* culture together with the *Joom Jak Sasi* community, and which is also facilitated by an NGO, YKAN (Yayasan Konservasi Alam Nusantara / The Nature Conservancy Indonesia Program). In general, the relationship between *Sasi* practices and indigenous religious rituals can be reinterpreted in the context of modern ecological sustainability. In the *Sasi* tradition, the protection of natural resources has religious and customary meanings. This aligns with common concerns in many indigenous cultures worldwide regarding the spiritual aspects of environmental care.

The integration of gender dynamics into the practice of *Sasi* has reshaped traditional resource management in certain parts of Indonesia, particularly in Papua (Lionata et al 2025). Historically, *Sasi* a customary system for managing natural resources through periodic harvest restrictions was dominated by men. However, as highlighted in recent studies, women's involvement in *Sasi* in regions like Raja Ampat has opened new pathways for sustainable environmental management and community empowerment. Beginning with *Waifuna*, the first women-led *Sasi* group on Misool Island, women have taken on significant roles in managing marine resources, demonstrating that their

engagement not only strengthens conservation outcomes but also shifts community perceptions of gender roles. By leading the practice, women in these communities gain agency in decision-making, contributing to both ecological sustainability and social equity. The recognition of women's contributions in such traditional frameworks challenges patriarchal norms and ensures that gender-inclusive conservation practices are not just an add-on but a foundational aspect of effective natural resource management. This shift has led to improved resource availability, increased economic benefits, and a broader acknowledgment of women's capacity to lead in conservation efforts (Lionata et al 2025).

Joom Jak Sasi is one of the newer *Sasi* communities whose members are women. *Joom Jak Sasi* first held the *Sasi* closing ceremony on September 26, 2022. The *Sasi* ceremony began with a ritual that combined Christian worship with *adat* ritual (customary practices) (Lionata et al 2025). This group will oversee the joint management of the *Sasi* crop, with 10% allocated to the church, 30% to traditional groups, and the remaining 60% to the treasury of the *Joom Jak Sasi* group. Within the framework of Papuan culture, which is still predominantly shaped by patriarchal ideas, the *Sasi* practice in Aduwei village, Raja Ampat, offers an interesting perspective on the role that gender plays in protecting the environment and customs. Patriarchal cultures frequently restrict women's ability to participate fully in significant societal processes because they essentially view men as the more powerful group in many spheres of social life, including leadership and decision-making. Through this approach, this research will highlight how patriarchal systems can be negotiated in specific situations and how women's contributions can be maximized to uphold the harmony between custom and environmental sustainability (YKAN 2025).

This research will explore the intersection of ecofeminism and equitable conservation, with a focus on custom-based conservation movements such as *Sasi*, which regulate the use of marine resources. By examining women's roles in these efforts, particularly in sustaining both ecological and cultural legacies, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how traditional practices contribute to environmental sustainability and the empowerment of women within their communities.

Following the introduction above, this research will focus on three questions: 1) How was the women-led *Sasi* system developed by the local community as a traditional practice for coastal management?; 2) How does a women-led conservation movement influence the development and implementation of the *Sasi* system and the participation of members from the local community?; 3) How do women-led *Sasi* practices support equitable conservation for the local community in Aduwei village?

Literature Review

This section will review previous research about the *Sasi* tradition in the Raja Ampat context and ecofeminism in the Indonesian context. This section provides a brief overview of the research that has already been conducted, identifying the gaps specifically related to the involvement of women in practicing *Sasi*, a conservation approach based on indigenous knowledge, as well as other studies on the role of women in nature conservation.

Sasi Tradition

Sasi, as a traditional resource management practice, has been carried out for generations in various regions in Maluku and several regions in West Papua (Patriana

et al 2016). *Sasi* originated as a customary practice regulating access to land and sea products, such as sago or coconut trees, during designated periods (Bubandt 2005). As a conservation practice, *Sasi* was deeply intertwined with local customs and religious beliefs. Dutch Protestant missionaries in the 1920s incorporated this traditional system into their evangelizing efforts, creating what came to be known as “Church *Sasi*” where Christian religious figures replaced indigenous leaders, and the Christian God was invoked to protect harvests (Bubandt 2005).

In Papua, the practice of *Sasi* (known locally as *kabus* or *samson*) has similar environmental and cultural significance. *Sasi* has contributed to the sustainable management of marine resources in Raja Ampat, where it plays a key role in maintaining fisheries' productivity and biodiversity (Boli et al 2014). The communal tenure aspect of *Sasi* ensures that the community collectively manages resources, thus promoting a culture of shared responsibility. The local population's compliance with *Sasi* regulations highlights the importance of this practice in maintaining ecological balance. The adaptation of *Sasi* to include modern conservation measures, such as the establishment of marine protected areas, demonstrates its resilience and continued relevance in the face of social and environmental change (Boli et al 2014).

From an economic perspective, *Sasi* not only supports sustainable resource management but also mitigates potential economic challenges. Overfishing and resource depletion can create high social and economic costs for local communities (Febyarandika & Chafid 2016). Without the effective management provided by *Sasi*, these communities would likely face resource scarcity and higher living costs. The framework of *Sasi* serves to regulate harvesting rates, ensuring that natural

resources are used sustainably and that the livelihoods of local populations are protected. Integrating *Sasi* with modern resource management practices can balance the economic needs of communities with environmental conservation (Febyarandika and Chafid 2016). For the community, *Sasi* is a form of saving natural resources for harvest at the right time. Besides maximizing productivity (large or mature size) and providing financial benefits, the primary value of *Sasi* is ensuring that resources continue to ensure the livelihoods of future generations. The need for *Sasi* practices is growing due to the increasing resource and environmental crises. For example, the influence of technological developments increases resource exploitation and destructive illegal fishing. Therefore, *Sasi* is a form of community-based conservation (Putri et al 2020).

As one of the tourist destinations, *Sasi* is also part of the existence of local wisdom that continues to be carried out by the community in Raja Ampat guarantees the sustainability of marine resources as a tourism product in the development of sustainable tourism in the maritime district of Raja Ampat, West Papua province (Mentansan et al 2023).

Regarding the role of *Sasi* and environmental conservation in traditional *Sasi* practices, it is a form of environmental conservation that originated in Eastern Indonesia, particularly in Maluku and Papua. This practice involves temporarily prohibiting the harvesting of natural resources to allow for ecological regeneration (Hallatu et al 2020).

Initially rooted in local customs, *Sasi* has evolved to incorporate religious elements, particularly from Christianity and Islam, leading to what is known as religious *Sasi*. In religious *Sasi*, there are two types: Church *Sasi* and Mosque *Sasi*. Church *Sasi* is a *Sasi* performed by Christians. The reason for implementing the religious *Sasi*

is to prohibit the harvesting of natural products from the specified garden. The goal is for the natural products in the garden to grow well and, in turn, indirectly contribute to nature conservation. The event begins with the opening of religious *Sasi*, based only on the prayers by the pastor in the church, precisely on Sunday worship (Hallatu et al 2020). Just like the *Sasi* church, the *Sasi* mosque was built based on the rules and orders that exist in the Al-Quran. Islam itself is a religion (a way of life) that is deeply concerned about the environment and the sustainability of life on earth. Concepts related to the rescue and conservation of nature merge inseparably with the concept of the unity of God, sharia, and morals (Hallatu et al 2020).

Research about the perception and participation index for *Sasi* learning and practice in coastal communities in West Papua found that the index is still categorized as very high by (Indouw et al 2022). However, the participation variable, especially the involvement of stakeholders and the younger generation, requires improvements in efforts to improve *Sasi*. This will enable *Sasi* to incorporate local wisdom while simultaneously integrating the latest technology, thereby aligning with the goal of maintaining the sustainability of natural resources to support Sustainable Development in the Papua Region. It is hoped that *Sasi* can become an adaptation strategy for isolated indigenous communities to become resilient to climate-related disasters, which are currently increasing due to climate change (Indouw et al 2022).

Another important study examined the integration of indigenous knowledge in the development of marine ecotourism through a case study of the sea *Sasi* tradition in Misool, Raja Ampat (Prasetyo et al 2020). In addition to being a conservation tool, sea *Sasi* has the potential to become a cultural attraction that can

increase tourism appeal, although care must be taken not to damage sacred indigenous values.

Specifically in Misool Island, the *Waifuna* group, as the first women's *Sasi* group, already recognized the women's contributions in such traditional frameworks, challenges patriarchal norms, and ensures that gender-inclusive conservation practices are not just an add-on but a foundational aspect of effective natural resource management by Lionata has led to improved resource availability, increased economic benefits, and a broader acknowledgement of women's capacity to lead in conservation efforts (Lionata et al 2025).

Ecofeminism in the Indonesian Context

As this research addresses the ecofeminism issue, this section will examine several ecofeminist initiatives that have taken place throughout Indonesia.

As ecofeminism is a new concept in Indonesia, there are few examples of women's efforts to protect nature. The Kendeng movement in Central Java, based on ecofeminist thinking, cannot be separated from women's anxiety about ecologically destructive practices, which lead to gender injustice and can deconstruct the ecological degradation carried out and dominated by men towards nature through actions that are classified as extreme, such as immersing their feet (Hajad and Ikhsan 2024).

Another study explores the role of women in forestry conservation in Riau, Indonesia, using an ecofeminist approach by Nailufar found that, while women participate in informal conservation initiatives, their exclusion from policy-making forums reduces the effectiveness of environmental governance. Knowledge is shaped by social status, and women's lived

experiences offer unique insights into environmental conservation. Women's grassroots movements in Riau, such as the waste management movement and reforestation efforts, offer tangible examples of the potential of an ecofeminist approach to environmental governance (Nailufar et al 2022).

Furthermore, ecofeminism efforts were carried out in North Sulawesi through research entitled *The Active Participation of Women in Mangrove Preservation*, with a particular focus on the Maming Group “a women’s organization on Mantehage Island” (Purwanti et al 2024). Women in this group are involved in every aspect of mangrove management, from planning and implementation to monitoring and enforcement. For example, the Maming Group imposes sanctions on those who illegally cut mangrove trees, requiring violators to plant new trees.

In the context of East Nusa Tenggara, it was found that most of the ecological damage that occurred in NTT was caused by development activities that were not pro-ecological. The development model that came through industrialization, mining, and tourism sector development projects brought new problems to the community because they were not managed properly (Tanebeth 2022). The great emphasis on economic profit made other natural resource functions. As a result, the community experienced drought, air and water pollution, and resource scarcity. This exploitation model ultimately also perpetuates patterns of domination over nature, which are followed by violence against women and small communities

Furthermore, as with other tribes in Papua, the Meakh tribe in the Arfak region views land as part of their identity. Their closeness to the land is symbolized by the “mama” (human) who gave birth to them (Ayatanoi 2022). Thus, as their “children”, they must guard and protect their “mama”,

namely their land. However, as times changed, the people of the Meakh tribe experienced a shift in the meaning of the land due to materialistic and consumerist motives, so the land was seen more as an object to be controlled rather than managed (Ayatanoi 2022).

Through this previous literature review and using the ecofeminist perspective, several key values must be reintegrated into the foundation of Indigenous and local communities, especially in the context of environmental conservation and cultural preservation. These values include spiritualism, which reflects a deep connection between the community and the sacredness of nature; ecological balance, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmony between humans and the environment; local wisdom, which entails respecting and incorporating traditional knowledge and practices into modern approaches; and the recognition of women as active subjects, acknowledging their crucial role in both environmental stewardship and cultural continuity. Together, these elements form a comprehensive framework for fostering sustainable development that is culturally informed, ecologically sound, and socially inclusive. Reaffirming these values underscores the importance of respecting and integrating Indigenous perspectives in addressing global challenges, such as environmental degradation, while also acknowledging the crucial role that women play as leaders and stewards of their communities. This approach aligns with broader movements towards intersectionality and inclusivity in discussions of sustainability, cultural rights, and social justice.

Conceptual Framework

This research will utilize three theories to address the three research

questions: religious creativity (Smith et al 2024), ecofeminism (Shiva and Mies 1993), and equitable conservation (Dawson et al 2021). Religious creativity by (Smith et al 2024) helps to explain the fusion of religious values with indigenous practices such as *Sasi*, which promotes inclusive community participation in environmental governance. This combination of spirituality and traditional knowledge strengthens the collective commitment to sustainability, ensuring that conservation efforts are both ecologically and socially sustainable. Through the lens of ecofeminism (Shiva and Mies 1993) and equitable conservation (Dawson et al 2021), this research will examine how women in the *Joom Jak Sasi* community actively negotiate their position within patriarchal structures by assuming leadership roles in conservation. By doing so, they offer a powerful example of how gender, tradition, and environmental ethics can align to create sustainable approaches to ecosystem management. The study will explore how these women navigate societal constraints to assert their influence in preserving both natural resources and cultural heritage.

The practice of *Sasi* in Aduwei also relates to religious creativity, which involves the local church supporting the community. Religious creativity refers to a dynamic process of adapting or renewing local religious and cultural beliefs and practices to connect with environmental issues (Smith et al 2024). The term "religious creativity" was coined by Jenkins in his work on environmental ethics and cultural reform. According to Jenkins, religious creativity refers to the capacity of religious communities to reinterpret and redeploy inherited beliefs, symbols, and practices in response to new moral and ecological challenges." (Jenkins 2009).

In the context of Raja Ampat, West Papua, where the indigenous practice of *Sasi* plays a crucial role in environmental

conservation, this research will use Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist framework to explore the *Joom Jak Sasi* women's community. This research will highlight how the *Joom Jak Sasi* community, rooted in traditional and religious values, contributes to the sustainability of marine and forest resources in Raja Ampat through their practices. Vandana Shiva's theoretical framework will help analyze how women's roles in ecological conservation are deeply intertwined with cultural traditions. By examining the *Joom Jak Sasi* community's practices, this study will reveal how women in this patriarchal context negotiate their roles as protectors of both culture and nature, offering a model of sustainable resource management that challenges patriarchal exploitation (Shiva 1988).

This research is based on the concept that conservation initiatives conducted by local communities are not only ecologically beneficial but also socially just. Drawing on the *Sasi* tradition, the framework blends gender, customary governance, and religion-related concepts, linking them with ecofeminism and community-led environmental governance theories. This is in line with equitable conservation. Highlight the efficiency of community-led conservation, especially where traditional knowledge systems and local governance structures are important to the management process (Dawson et al 2021). This is consistent with the conservation results seen in Raja Ampat, where the combination of indigenous knowledge and religious backing forms a compelling model for sustainable resource management.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of religious creativity, ecofeminism, and equitable conservation, which examines the *Joom Jak Sasi* women's leadership in sustaining *Sasi* in Raja Ampat. This research offers a new analysis of how the church or religious group supports local

knowledge, how *Joom Jak Sasi*, as the representative of women, negotiates patriarchal structures through ecofeminist agency, and how these dynamics create a gender-responsive model of community-led environmental governance. Overall, this research gives a new approach to how gender, spirituality, and local knowledge produce socially just and ecologically sustainable conservation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs critical ethnography as a methodological approach (Madison 2005). Critical ethnographic approaches go beyond traditional ethnographic practices by incorporating explicit ethical and political commitments to examining and transforming social conditions marked by inequality and injustice. Critical ethnography begins with “an ethical responsibility to address processes of injustice or inequity in a particular life domain,” (Madison 2005). This research was conducted from November 2024 to January 2025.

Using this approach, data were gathered through participant observation, and the main data were obtained from in-depth interviews with the leader and members of *Joom Jak Sasi* in Aduwei Village. Two visits were made to Aduwei. During the fieldwork, nine people (five women and four men) were interviewed. They included members of the *Joom Jak Sasi* group, such as the leader and other members, the *adat* leader, the Facilitator, and the District Facilitator (YKAN), the local Pastor/Leader of GKI Syalom Aduwei, and the leader of the *Jak Beta Sasi* group. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data, after the data is gathered, it will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This thematic analysis will follow Braun and Clarke’s six-step

framework, thematic. Thematic analysis was conducted as follows (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). First, the data were systematically coded, where codes served as the basic units of meaning, capturing elements such as participant opinions or behaviors relevant to the study topic. The coding process involved labelling and categorizing data extracts based on their significance to the research themes. After coding the data, the next step was identifying themes by clustering related codes. Each theme was reviewed to ensure its distinctiveness from other themes, necessitating a re-examination of the coded data to confirm its appropriateness within the proposed thematic structure. Once themes were finalized, they were clearly defined, with attention to their importance to the broader research question. The scope and relevance of each theme were articulated to align with the study’s overall objectives. Finally, a comprehensive data report was produced. This narrative detailed the identified themes and demonstrated their connection to the research question, using key quotes and data extracts to support and illustrate the findings in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of the Women-led *Sasi* system

The *Joom Jak Sasi* group is a women’s group that was built together on the initiative of YKAN and the women’s group in this village. Before discussing this group further, an overview of Aduwei village will be provided, which is the location where the data were collected and the focus of this research. Aduwei Village is located in the North Misool District of Raja Ampat Regency. Misool is one of the main islands in the Raja Ampat archipelago. The term Raja Ampat refers to the historical presence of four kings who ruled the major islands in the region: Waigeo, Misool, Salawati, and Batanta.

The indigenous people of Misool Island or also often called *Batanme*, are the Matbat ethnic group. The Matbat ethnic group is divided into two large ethnic groups, namely the Matbat Matlei (land Matbat), which are spread across the villages: Magey, Ternulol, Folley, Lenmalas, Atkari, Salafen, Aduwei, and Kapatcol. The Matbat Matlow ethnic group (sea Matbat), which is spread across the villages: Fafanlap, Kafopop, Yellu, and Gamta (Yapsenang 2013). The Matbat ethnic group in Gam Village, Magey Village, and Yellu Village shares a common lineage. The Magey Village and Gamta Village are often also called the Matbat Gam, because they live in the Gam River (Yapsenang 2013).

The word Aduwei comes from “*Adu*” and “*wei*” which means an expression of their sad affection for leaving their home. In 2024, Aduwei village was inhabited by approximately 64 heads of families, with a population of around 341 people, as recorded by village officials on the Family Card. On September 26, 2022, the *Joom Jak Sasi* group conducted its first *Sasi* closing ceremony, marking the beginning of its conservation efforts. This ritual closure signifies the period during which specific marine species are protected from harvesting to allow for ecological regeneration.

The first official reopening of the *Sasi* area for resource collection occurred in 2023, enabling the controlled and sustainable extraction of marine biota. The *Joom Jak Sasi* has 64 members, all of whom are women in Aduwei village. In 2024, the second *Sasi* was opened on November 7 2024. According to the treasurer of the *Joom Jak Sasi group*, the results of the second *Sasi* were lower than those of the first. This was due to the cloudy water factor during the windy season, making it difficult to see biota such as sea cucumbers and lobster properly. The key marine species protected by *JJS* include lobsters

(*Panulirus spp.*) and sea cucumbers (*Holothuroidea*). However, Lola clams (*Tridacna spp.*) are not subject to *Sasi* regulations under the current framework.

The harvesting of marine resources upon the reopening of the *Sasi* area is subject to strict size and sustainability criteria, as determined by both YKAN and the *Joom Jak Sasi* group. Specifically, lobsters may only be collected if they have reached a minimum size of 800 grams (8 ounces), while sea cucumbers must measure between 15 to 20 centimeters to be eligible for harvesting.

Marine organisms that do not meet these size requirements must be returned to their natural habitat to ensure the sustainability of their population. Furthermore, conservation measures also extend to reproductive cycles. If divers encounter female lobsters carrying eggs, these specimens must be released back into the sea to support natural breeding processes. This regulation aligns with broader ecological principles aimed at maintaining the stability of marine ecosystems and preventing overexploitation.

Through the enthusiasm and hard work shown by the women in *JJS*, motivation has emerged for other groups, namely the *Jak Beta* group and the *Fis Matna* group, to further strengthen their role in local wisdom-based conservation efforts. The *Jak Beta* group is one of the *Sasi* groups that has begun to actively manage marine resources with a more systematic and sustainable approach. This group consists of 10 members, all of whom are men, who are committed to maintaining the marine ecosystem and ensuring that *Sasi* practices remain part of the community's social and economic life. They collaborate with the Nusantara Nature Conservation Foundation (YKAN) in developing conservation strategies that not only benefit the environment but also improve the

welfare of the local community. With support from various parties, the *Jak Beta* group has further strengthened its organizational structure and increased its understanding of the importance of maintaining the balance of the marine ecosystem for a better future.

Ritual Participation and Religious Creativity

In the research conducted in Aduwei, information was obtained regarding the series of rituals accompanying the opening and closing of the *Sasi*. The closing of the *Sasi* begins with the implementation of a joint service in the church, which is attended by the local community. The members of the 3 *Sasi* groups in Aduwei are *Joom Jak Sasi*, *Jak Beta*, and *Fis Matna*. The members, including the leaders and also the adat leader, attend the ritual itself. This service holds significance that is not only religious but also social and ecological, as it serves as a moment of collective reflection and a form of reaffirmation of the community's commitment to environmental preservation. The service is led by the local church minister and is conducted according to the liturgy stipulated in the GKI Church Regulations for Tanah Papua.

This liturgy provides a framework for *Sasi* worship within the Christian approach. According to the priest in Aduwei, the sermon delivered in this service often highlights the importance of maintaining the balance of the ecosystem as part of human responsibility towards God's creation, as well as a form of respect for the customary traditions passed down from generation to generation. In the worship services held in the church, members of JJS are also involved, as some *Joom Jak Sasi* members are also members of the Church council (*Majelis*). After the worship in church is finished, the community collectively goes to the *Sasi* location to carry out a customary ritual that marks the

closing of the area from all forms of exploitation of natural resources. This procession is led by a traditional elder or community figure who has authority in the realm of tradition and customary law. The pastor also attended the ritual in the boat, and first to start the ritual, the elder, KF, used Matbat language, and after that, the person who has been appointed to place the offerings in the sea by diving, and also handing them over from the boat, begins to hand over the offerings. This ritual procession is the same for opening or closing *Sasi*. One of the main elements in this ritual is the installation of a sign that serves as an official marker, designating the area as a *Sasi* area. This sign not only serves as a warning to the community but also as a symbol of the sustainability of customary norms in environmental management. Sometimes the appointed people who are tasked with bringing the offerings to the sea are the women, who are also members of *Joom Jak Sasi*.

According to the leader of *Joom Jak Sasi* there are two types of the previous ritual of *Sasi*. First, the placement of a white plate, which is referred to as an offering to the sea's inhabitants according to customary agreement, is sometimes made by diving into the sea and placing it on a rock, and this is done by members of *Joom Jak Sasi*. Second, the plate is just handed over directly to the sea from a boat in the *Sasi* area of one of the groups that has been approved to carry out the traditional ritual.

Thus, the *Sasi* closing ritual is not only ceremonial, but also represents the interconnection between belief systems, customary traditions, and conservation practices. This demonstrates that *Sasi* is a socio-ecological mechanism that integrates spiritual values, customary law, and sustainability strategies within the Aduwei community.

This blending of roles challenges both religious and customary hierarchies,

redefining the sacred as a space where women's bodies and voices actively shape ecological ethics. The term "sustainability" often serves as a shorthand reference to core values, beliefs, and practices that a particular individual or group seeks to maintain in the long term. In line with this, the local church in Aduwei plays a role in supporting *Sasi* as one of the efforts to sustain nature in the service area, with all members of the church involved. GKI in Tanah Papua, as one of the religious organizations, formed a narrative that framed ecological responsibility to support sustainability by providing a place for *Sasi*. This was then regulated in the GKI Church Order in Tanah Papua, which was amended in 2022 at the Synod Session held at the Waropen Classis. Through the Synod Session, it was decided in a provision in the Letter that "*Sasi* Worship is a worship that is raised from local wisdom to preserve and maintain the natural environment so that it is maintained for the needs of sustainable human life" (Tim Amandemen Sinode GKI Di Tanah Papua, 2022). This suggests that sustainability is both a social and cultural endeavor, shaped by the values and priorities of different communities. In this context, GKI in Tanah Papua integrates ecological responsibility into its religious framework by recognizing a traditional Indigenous conservation practice as an essential mechanism for environmental protection. By doing so, the Church reframes sustainability as a religious obligation rather than a purely secular or scientific concern.

An important aspect of this process is how GKI institutionalized *Sasi* within its official doctrine. By incorporating *Sasi* into the GKI Church Order, which was amended in 2022, the Church formally legitimized environmental conservation as part of its religious governance. This demonstrates how religious organizations can transform indigenous ecological practices into formalized religious obligations, ensuring

their authority and longevity. Moreover, the Church reinterprets *Sasi* as an act of worship, officially designating it as "*Sasi* Worship" in the amended Church Order. According to this provision, *Sasi* worship is a religious act aimed at preserving and maintaining the natural environment for sustainable human life. By framing sustainability as an element of religious worship, GKI "ritualizes ecological responsibility", reinforcing its importance within both theological and practical domains. Based on the agreement made by the members of the *Joom Jak Sasi* group, only the tithes from the *Sasi* harvest are given to the Church. and the group's joint decision is also given to groups in the local church (PKB, PW, PAM, and PAR) to support their activities, especially because in Aduwei, *Sasi* opens in November, most of the *Sasi* results given are used for Christmas celebrations in the PKB, PW, PAM, and PAR groups.

Meanwhile, the *Sasi* results have little impact on the local church, because during the observation, damage to the church building was observed, and according to the pastor in Aduwei village, the *Sasi* results cannot be used to renovate the church because they are directly given to the synod and to the groups above (PKB, PW, PAM, and PAR). The reframing of sustainability through religious narratives also serves a governance function, as it enables the Church to regulate environmental practices within its service areas, ensuring compliance through spiritual authority. In doing so, GKI in Tanah Papua actively constructs a sustainability narrative that performs religious work, transforming environmental advocacy into a sacred duty. The local church supports the local communities' practices, such as *Sasi*'s, regarding conservation efforts. The church supports the community, which is also a part of the church itself, by making the formula of *Sasi* worship acknowledged in the regulation of the church known as Tata

Gereja. Although GKI (religious organization) formally supports *Sasi* through “Ibadah *Sasi*” by legitimizing women-led movements and women's roles in worship, the fact that *Joom Jak Sasi* members contribute to church programs while their own group must sustain conservation and ritual efforts with limited resources shows the persistent imbalance in power and recognition. This mirrors what Shiva (1988) describes as the ‘invisible labor’ of women in sustaining ecological systems—labor that is often appropriated by dominant institutions without reciprocity. Therefore, the religious creativity opens new ritual and theological spaces for women; it must also be accompanied by shifts in resource distribution and leadership equity.

Ecofeminism in Everyday Life and Decision Making

Ecofeminists argue that the destruction of nature stems from a masculine mentality that suppresses women's rights, identities, and bodies while perpetuating systems of domination and control (Shiva & Mies 1993). By addressing the link between gender-based oppression and ecological degradation, ecofeminism seeks to examine the possibilities and limitations of women's roles in sustainability (Shiva & Mies 1993). Ecofeminism is particularly relevant to the context of Raja Ampat, where the marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity are closely intertwined. The Raja Ampat Islands, as the center of the world's coral triangle (Heart of the Coral Triangle), are known as an underwater paradise with the best coral reefs in the world (Armayadi et al 2025).

However, along with the development of the era and the logic of progress as conveyed by Shiva above, on one of the large islands that are part of Raja Ampat (Waigeo), there is a nickel mine that

has been operating and through a wide concession area granted by the Raja Ampat Regency Government, PT Gag Nickel has a concession area of 13,136 hectares, including 6,060 hectares of land and 7,076 hectares of water. In fact, the land area of Gag Island is only 6,500 hectares, so almost the entire island and the surrounding sea are included in the exploitation area. Through a report issued by Prakarsa, the most significant issue in the nickel industry is caused by economic factors, specifically the electric vehicle and the nickel industry's downstream (Afrina et al 2024).

The benefits and economic growth that the government considers are different from the impact on nature and the people who inhabit it. Most of the profits from this investment are reinvested in the country of origin, namely China, thereby limiting the economic benefits to local communities. Additionally, heavy metal pollution from nickel mining damages mangrove and seagrass ecosystems, which play a role in absorbing carbon and protecting the coastline from abrasion. The accumulation of heavy metals not only disrupts marine life but also poses a risk of entering the human food chain through the consumption of contaminated fish. Coastal communities that depend on marine products for their livelihoods have reported a drastic decline in fish catches in recent years. For example, a fisherman on Gag Island stated that they now have to go out to sea further to get a decent catch (Hidayat, 2025). On the one hand, actors at the government level, such as policymakers, raise discourses related to economic issues, including national security, the state of the nickel industry, and electric vehicles. On the other hand, issues of human rights and the environment from these industrial activities are more often addressed by civil society organizations and local community groups.

The dominance of patriarchal culture that has been embedded in

Southwest Papua, the district facilitator said:

The customary territorial rights specifically for women are only usage rights, not ownership rights. So, it can only be used (by women), but the ownership rights remain (for men). (SE, January 2025)

This ownership right has an effect because, in the granting of *Sasi* areas, it also has an effect when granting *Sasi* areas to the *Joom Jak Sasi* group. Initially, the *Joom Jak Sasi* group was tasked with managing the area, which, one year later, became the *Jak Beta* (man group) area. The leader of *Joom Jak Sasi* noted that:

*Initially, Mama [I] asked for the *Jak Beta* area, there was a “long story” oh it didn't happen. So finally, Mama asked for the current area, from Tanjung Hamta - Jomsip.* (RB, November 2024)

When the leader of *Joom Jak Sasi* mentioned the “long story,” this simply meant that the process of requesting an area to be managed for the *Sasi* group encountered a problem or could be said to not have received approval from the *petuanan* (traditional elders). As a solution, Mrs. RB finally asked for another area, which was the right of the Elwod family. From this process, it is seen that practices reflecting the dominance of the patriarchal structure still occur in Aduwei.

First, the traditional elders gave a smaller area to *Joom Jak Sasi* even though at that time there was no *Sasi* group in Aduwei (only *Joom Jak Sasi*). This tendency to give an area is an example of discrimination against women. Women are still considered unable to manage and guard a large area because they are often seen as better suited to domestic tasks at home rather than being a guard of the sea. Second, the area requested by Mrs. RB, as the leader of *Joom Jak Sasi*, is a coastal area rich in natural resources, such as lobster. When I conducted the monitoring with both groups, I observed a difference in the results

between the *Joom Jak Sasi* and *Jak Beta* areas. The resources in *Jak Beta* (the man group) are richer, and it is more economically beneficial. In 2024, *Jak Beta* had its first opening, *Sasi*, and it generated around Rp 9,000,000; this is different from *Joom Jak Sasi*, which only generated around Rp 4,300,000. In addition, in an interview with the village assistant:

*The addition of 2 groups, namely *Jak Beta* (man group) and *Fis Matna* (Family group) is one of the efforts to protect the vast Aduwei sea area. *Jak Beta* is also here to help *Joom Jak Sasi* because women can't patrol at night; that's why there is a group of men.* (TF, November 2024)

Although these efforts are clearly beneficial for the sustainability of the marine ecosystem, the statement that women are unlikely to patrol at night shows that male dominance still exists, even though each group already has its own role. This seems to show how gender roles are still limiting, even though the main goal is to support *Sasi* patrols. TF also further expressed his concern, if women have to face someone who tries to steal biota in the *Sasi* area, who is most likely a man. This indicates that, despite women's involvement in management, cultural barriers persist that assume certain roles, such as night patrols, should still be the responsibility of men. This is not only a matter of territory but also reflects how customary power is still dominated by men. Although women have begun to be active in managing natural resources and are involved in conservation activities, they have not been fully recognized in important decision-making processes. The collective nature of *Sasi* provides a structured way for women to engage in governance without directly challenging male authority, making change more socially acceptable. Their leadership is not only about managing resources but also about challenging deeply rooted cultural norms that historically confined women to the domestic sphere.

This change demonstrates that leadership, particularly when it comes from someone who embodies and lives the community's values, can profoundly transform how people perceive their roles in conservation.

This shift connects to ecofeminist theory by seeing women as guardians of local biodiversity, which is both ecologically and culturally embedded (Shiva & Mies 1993). Through the activities of *Joom Jak Sasi*, since 2022, there have been visible practices of natural resource maintenance led by women, who have claimed a role as guardians of biodiversity in Aduwei. Their example has inspired two other *Sasi* groups to form, making the entire coastline of Aduwei one that is managed by *Sasi*. However, the unequal allocation of *Sasi* areas and the continued framing of women's capabilities through narratives of physical limitation—such as the assumption that women cannot patrol at night—reveal that change is still constrained by structural bias.

According to the observation, *Joom Jak Sasi* still faces discrimination from the customary leader (*petuanan*) even though the leader and the members of *Joom Jak Sasi* claimed that they do not face the challenge of the customary leader (*petuanan*). As I mentioned earlier, regarding the area allocated to JJS and the conflict of interest associated with it. In my opinion, there was a conflict of interest when the Elwod family gave the area of *Joom Jak Sasi* because at the time, his wife was asking him (DE) to give the area. As a husband, DE should permit his wife to manage the area, while among the other family members, there were those who disagreed. Finally, after the emergence of JJS, new groups formed, namely Jak Beta and Fis Matna (the Elwod family), which ultimately secured their own territorial rights. During this field research, the writer also inquired about the Fis Matna group (Elwod family), but the leader of *Joom Jak*

Sasi stated that this group is not as active as *Joom Jak Sasi* and Jak Beta.

From the perspective of Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism, the sentence highlights how environmental regulations or conservation measures can be used not merely to protect nature but also to reinforce systems of control that marginalise certain groups—in this case, JJS women. Shiva argues that patriarchal power structures often disguise acts of domination as “management,” “protection,” or “development,” while actually restricting women's autonomy over land, resources, and traditional ecological knowledge. Interpreted this way, the step described in the sentence reflects not a neutral attempt to secure marine areas, but a patriarchal strategy to limit the territorial agency of JJS women and weaken their customary rights. This aligns with Shiva's view that both women and nature are subjected to forms of control that undermine their sovereignty and ecological stewardship.

Equitable Conservation and Governance

Dawson mentioned that the social and ecological outcomes in his research show that the social ecological outcomes have strong results if the conservation is managed by the group itself without external intervention (Dawson et al 2021). The JJS community is a simple example of this, where, although they are a partner of YKAN, they retain their own rights in the decision-making process. For example, when they decide to have an opening *Sasi* and closing *Sasi* in Aduwei, because there are three groups, they will meet together to make a decision on when the opening/closing ceremony will be held. The meeting also provides an opportunity for both the women's group (*Joom Jak Sasi*) and the men's group (Jak Beta and Fis Matna) to make decisions. These social space encounters resulted in a conservation

governance based on shared decisions without outside intervention. The YKAN district facilitator mentioned:

From YKAN, we only help them at the beginning of the activity, for example, we guide them in opening the Sasi, then they make it themselves so that they learn to coordinate and learn to carry out an activity and this is a learning process that is also welcomed by the Joom Jak Sasi group and other groups. (SE, January 2025)

YKAN, as the external organization in the entire process of the groups, plays the role of initiator and facilitates the submission of proposals to fund managers, in this case, BAF (Blue Action Fund). The *Joom Jak Sasi* approach and implementation illustrate that effective and equitable conservation governance can be achieved if local groups maintain a sense of ownership over the decision-making process. One example of decision-making is also about the opening time of *Sasi*. In *Joom Jak Sasi*, the opening time of *Sasi* sometimes coincides with Christmas, which also meets the community's needs. However, there are times when the opening of *Sasi* is also decided by the group when the price of lobsters increases in the market, then *Sasi* is opened so that there are better results.

The limited role of external actors “focused on facilitation rather than control” further strengthens the capacity and resilience of the community for the purpose of ecosystem sustainability, but also economic benefits within the group. The purpose of creating a *Sasi* group, but also other groups, is to obtain the benefits that can be owned, and this also applies to the *Joom Jak Sasi* group. The *Sasi* results obtained by the *Joom Jak Sasi* group are divided into several parts, based. Based on my interview with the *Joom Jak Sasi* leader mentioned that:

The tithe to the Church is 10 percent of the Sasi results, after that is divided into the groups in the Church, which

are PKB, PW, PAM, and PAR, each group Rp. 200,000. The Sasi results are also divided into the Adat group (if the results are enough) and used to finance the opening and closing services, along with consumption. (RB, November 2024)

The sharing benefit of the *Sasi* results is agreed upon within the group according to mutual agreement. The distribution of the *Sasi* results to the group's customs is adjusted to the amount received from the sale. If the amount is insufficient, it will only be used for group operations, such as purchasing fuel for monitoring carried out every month. Due to the *Sasi* members of *Joom Jak Sasi* being 64 people, and they are representatives from each household in the village, this is different from *Jak Beta* (man group) because the members of *Jak Beta* are only 10 members, so the sharing benefit is different. In *Joom Jak Sasi*, the results are more collectively different from *Jak Beta*. According to my interview with the leader of *Jak Beta*, they stated that:

The results of the 2024 Sasi are the first results of Jak Beta, amounting to Rp. 9,000,000. The results were directly distributed to Jak Beta members, tithes for the church group. (IF, January 2025)

The sharing benefit of *Sasi* results from *Jak Beta* is not the same as *Joom Jak Sasi* because the number of *Joom Jak Sasi* members is greater than *Jak Beta*, and technically, the arrangement for the distribution of *Sasi* results within the *Joom Jak Sasi* group is more collective and not individual like *Jak Beta*. Furthermore, the leader of *Jak Beta* mentioned that:

For each person in this year's results, each person received a share of Rp. 500,000, then Rp.900,000 for 10 percent (tithe) and Rp.800,000 for PKB, PW, PAM and PAR, each group getting Rp. 200.000. (IF, January 2025)

Although the sharing benefit of the results of this *Sasi* is different, based on my

interview with the leader of *Joom Jak Sasi*, if there is a need for *Joom Jak Sasi* members in this case, related to education (their children want to pursue study) or their members are sick, then through a joint decision within the group, the group assists in that need. RB also mentioned that when one of the members was sick, all the members of *Joom Jak Sasi* approved. The sharing benefits in *Joom Jak Sasi* differed from those in Jak Beta, which also shared its benefits among each member of its group. The local church (GKI in Tanah Papua) is a religious organization that is also a part of the *Sasi* practiced in Aduwei. During my fieldwork, I interviewed the local leader of GKI Syalom Aduwei to gather data on the church's involvement, particularly in the Worship of *Sasi*, during the opening and closing ceremonies of *Sasi*. When I asked about the profit of *Sasi* to the church, the leader of the local church said that:

For the church in the village there is no additional benefit. The church only gets tithes directly deposited in the Synod (center). Sasi here is a bit different from mine in Waigeo, in Waigeo the first day of Sasi is open for the church, the second day is for the community (this practice is carried out in Wawiyai).

(CD, December 2024)

According to the CD, the *Sasi* results given do not provide much benefit to the local church, and this is different from the *Sasi* carried out before he (CD) moved to Aduwei in 2022. In one of the villages in Waigeo where he was previously assigned, if they open a *Sasi* the first day is dedicated to the church and it is in the form of the results of the *Sasi* not in the form of money, then the local Church will sell it then on the second day the opportunity is given to the community to be allowed to take the biota at the *Sasi* location. He also added that in his own village, the community sometimes made a special *Sasi* if there was a need for church construction, so the results were not divided, only focused on their main goals.

Align with Dawson's theory of community-based ecological governance, which emphasizes that conservation outcomes are inseparable from the power relations shaping who controls resources and who benefits—the situation in Aduwei illustrates how *Sasi* functions not merely as an environmental practice but as a political arena. Although in other villages the pastor described cases where *Sasi* revenues were directed toward church construction, Dawson reminds us that the distribution of environmental benefits is never neutral; it reflects the authority structures embedded in local institutions. In Aduwei, where *Sasi* is collectively regulated by groups, the allocation of its benefits is decided internally, according to negotiated agreements among members. The *Joom Jak Sasi* group, being relatively new, still holds the potential to renegotiate these arrangements democratically in the future, demonstrating what Dawson identifies as adaptive, community-driven governance. By ensuring that decision-making power and benefit sharing are carried out through a participatory model that places all members (particularly women) on equal footing, *Joom Jak Sasi* provides an example of fairer conservation. This approach resists top-down influence from external institutions such as YKAN or church authorities and embodies Dawson's argument that truly equitable conservation emerges when local communities retain control over ecological knowledge, territorial rights, and the distribution of environmental gains.

CONCLUSION

This research has a significant overall finding. The key to making a *Sasi* system effective, profitable, and equitable is the importance of connecting the communal approach with the involvement of women for equitable conservation. The system itself can, of course, be built through cooperation

between institutions, such as that carried out by *Joom Jak Sasi* and other groups that work together. Even though the initial profit is not enough, the community still values the non-economic benefits of the system by strengthening communal living and shared responsibilities.

This research offers a novel contribution by demonstrating how gender-focused analysis within an indigenous conservation context reveals previously overlooked inequalities in access, participation, and decision-making. By examining *Joom Jak Sasi* through the lens of ecofeminism and indigenous environmental values, the study shows that women's involvement in conservation is not a form of domination but a pathway to equitable conservation where roles and responsibilities are shared fairly. This integrated approach underscores how justice in conservation can be enhanced through gender-inclusive practices that align with local cultural values and principles.

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