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ECOLOGICAL VALUES IN THE MATIMBE RITUAL OF THE TO LINDU COMMUNITY AT THE LAKE LINDU FESTIVAL: AN ECOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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Abstract: This study examines the ecological values embedded in the ritual speech of the Matimbe ritual of the To Lindu community, an indigenous group in Central Sulawesi that has rarely been studied from an ecolinguistic perspective. It aims to identify the ecological values in Matimbe ritual utterances performed at the Lake Lindu Festival, Sigi Regency, and to analyze their functions in relation to environmental preservation. A descriptive qualitative design was employed. Twenty-two utterances were documented through passive participant observation and recorded semi-structured interviews with three informants; 16 utterances met the inclusion criteria and were retained as data. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2020) through deductive coding on two dimensions: seven ecological values synthesized from Keraf's (2010) principles of environmental ethics and supporting theories, and Rappaport's (1999) functions of ritual ecology. The results reveal six ecological values, namely respect for nature, moral responsibility for nature, cosmic solidarity, caring for nature, no harm to nature, and simple living in harmony with nature, with respect for nature and simple living as the dominant values. The utterances perform three functions: social-ecological integrative, sanctification, and ecological-regulative. A value–function matrix shows that values concerning relations with the guardians of nature are associated with the sanctification and regulative functions, whereas values concerning the use of natural produce are associated with the integrative function. These findings demonstrate the role of ritual speech in shaping and transmitting ecological awareness, although its effects on conservation practices were not measured. The study is limited to a single ritual performance and contributes to the documentation of To Lindu local wisdom.
Keywords: *ecolinguistics ; ecological values ; environmental ethics ; ritual speech ; Matimbe ; local wisdom.*

INTRODUCTION

Language and the environment are two inseparable entities in the life of speech communities, especially among communities that still maintain oral traditions as part of their belief systems and their relationship with nature (Singleton et al., 2023). Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium that reflects how people view and interpret their environment and that transmits knowledge, values, norms, and worldviews (Harrison, 2023; Pratiwy et al., 2024). Language also builds awareness of the sustainability of the surrounding ecosystem (Rahardi, 2023).

It is this relationship between language and the environment that constitutes the main concern of ecolinguistics, which views language as part of the inseparable interconnection between culture and ecology (Fill & Steffensen, 2014; Penz & Fill, 2022). Ecolinguistics examines how language use affects the relationships among humans, other organisms, and the physical environment (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Haugen, 1972), including how language and discourse shape human views of nature (Isti'anah & Suhandano, 2023; Ponton, 2024; Yuniawan et al., 2023). The field continues to develop within the ecological humanities and the social sciences (Bortoluzzi, 2026; Steffensen & Fill, 2014; Zhang, 2025).

Stibbe (2021) emphasizes that ecolinguistics studies not only language about the environment but also how language shapes the ways in which people perceive and treat nature; accordingly, the field also examines the ecological values and worldviews represented through language (Inglis & Pascual, 2023).

One form of language use that is closely tied to values, beliefs, and human relationships with the environment is ritual speech. Ritual speech functions not merely within customary or religious practice but also represents ecological knowledge (Daar & Gunas, 2025). Ritual speech arises from particular cultural practices and is used in situations that carry special meaning for its community (Jama & Menggo, 2026). As rituals, customary ceremonies carry deep meanings reflected in each stage of their performance; they strengthen social solidarity, preserve local language and culture amid the pressures of globalization, and store local knowledge, belief systems, social rules, and community views on the relationship between humans and nature (Arifah et al., 2025; Matradewi et al., 2025; Wohangara et al., 2023). Ritual speech can therefore be understood not only as a ceremonial activity but also as a cultural discourse through which ecological knowledge and values are transmitted across generations (Akhmar et al., 2023; Hosen et al., 2020). This makes ritual speech a promising object of ecolinguistic inquiry (Iswanto, 2020).

One prominent tradition is Matimbe, a customary ritual of the To Lindu community in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. The word matimbe means appreciation. The ritual involves the slaughter of a buffalo as an expression of gratitude, a plea for safety, and a celebration of togetherness, and it unfolds in three speech-intensive stages: Vunca (a request for permission or a welcome at the customary gate), Matimbe (the slaughter of the sacrificial animal), and Raego (the chanting of ancient verses in a circle dance), followed by a communal meal (Nangkodi Sangkoni). Matimbe is now the highlight of the Lake Lindu Festival, held in an area within Lore Lindu National Park that faces ecological pressures such as declining fish catches, herbicide pollution, and algal blooms following the 2012 earthquake. In 2025, Matimbe was recognized as Communal Intellectual Property by the Central Sulawesi Regional Office of the Ministry of Law. It is through this ritual speech that the community conveys its intentions, respect, and pleas to the ancestors and the guardians of the land.

Matimbe ritual speech thus has the potential to reveal the ecological values that live within the To Lindu community, such as respect for nature and the responsible use of resources (Bitu & Rahardi, 2020; Miharja & Munawaroh, 2025). These values are not always directly visible, because their meaning depends on linguistic form and on the cultural and ecological context of the utterance (Subiyanto, 2013); a study that interprets the ecological values behind the utterances is therefore needed (Vaishali & Rukmini, 2021).

This study employs three frameworks with distinct roles. Ecolinguistics serves as the umbrella perspective that explains why language and the environment should be studied together. Keraf's (2010) principles of environmental ethics are used to identify ecological values because they provide an explicit classification of values, whereas Haugen (1972), Halliday (1990), and Stibbe (2021) do not propose a classification of values directly; their ideas, together with IPBES (2022) and Inglis and Pascual (2023), are used to reinforce Keraf's values. Within the ecolinguistic framework, Keraf's principles of environmental ethics function as an *ecosophy* (Stibbe, 2021), that is, a framework of ecological values against which utterances are evaluated, while the values themselves are identified through the linguistic forms of the ritual utterances. Rappaport's (1999) theory of ritual ecology is used to interpret the functions of the utterances. Rappaport's framework was chosen because the character of Matimbe is close to the context from which it originated, namely the pig-slaughter ritual of the Tsembaga Maring (Rappaport, 1968): both center on the slaughter of livestock, are addressed to ancestors or territorial guardians, and end with the collective distribution of ritual produce. These features relate directly to the concepts of regulation, sanctification, and social integration, which Pesonen (2022) has reformulated for contemporary environmental rituals.

Relevant recent ecolinguistic research can be mapped into three clusters. The ritual discourse cluster includes studies of ritual lexicon and speech acts (Daar & Gunas, 2025; Jama & Menggo, 2026), customary ceremonies (Arifah et al., 2025), and oral traditions (Matradewi et al., 2025), with lexicon, single speech acts, or symbols as the unit of analysis. The cluster on ecological values in indigenous languages (Akhmar et al., 2023; Wohangara et al., 2023) highlights the intergenerational transmission of ecological knowledge from an anthropological perspective. The traditional ecological knowledge cluster

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(Hosen et al., 2020; Miharja & Munawaroh, 2025) reveals informal mechanisms of environmental preservation through customary knowledge and practices but pays less attention to how these mechanisms operate within ritual events. The present study is positioned at the intersection of these three clusters, which, in the literature we reviewed, have rarely addressed the indigenous communities of Central Sulawesi, particularly the To Lindu.

Several previous studies have shown that ecological values in the language and speech of indigenous communities can be examined through various approaches. For example, Gazali et al. (2023) examined the Balia Tampilangi ritual of the Kaili ethnic group through a hermeneutic approach and found that its utterances and symbols represent cultural values passed down across generations and serve as guidelines for social life. Similarly, Prastio et al. (2023) explored the eco-lexicon in the forest conservation discourse of the Anak Dalam tribe of Jambi using ecolinguistics and revealed that the community's conservation practices are reflected in four dimensions: ideology, biology, sociology, and culture. Meanwhile, Sanubarianto et al. (2025) identified 253 agroforestry lexical items in the Manggarai language through ethnolinguistic and ethnoscientific approaches and showed that language serves as a bridge for transmitting ecological knowledge and environmental preservation across generations. These three studies display variation in approach and unit of analysis: Gazali et al. (2023) focused on symbols and cultural values through a hermeneutic approach to the Balia ritual, Prastio et al. (2023) examined forest conservation discourse from a multidimensional ecolinguistic perspective, and Sanubarianto et al. (2025) traced agroforestry lexicon through ethnolinguistic and ethnoscientific approaches. All three affirm the role of language in representing ecological knowledge, but they differ in their units of analysis (ritual symbols, conservation discourse, and lexicon) and do not take ritual speech as the main unit of analysis for directly revealing ecological values.

Table 1. *Comparison of previous studies and the present study*

Study	Theoretical Approach	Unit of Analysis and Data Type	Main Findings
Gazali et al. (2023)	Hermeneutics	Utterances and symbols of the Balia Tampilangi ritual, Kaili ethnic group (Central Sulawesi)	Ritual utterances and symbols represent cultural values passed down across generations and serve as guidelines for social life.
Prastio et al. (2023)	Ecolinguistics	Eco-lexicon in forest conservation discourse; ethnographic interviews with 41 members of the Anak Dalam tribe, Jambi	Conservation practices are reflected in four dimensions: ideology, biology, sociology, and culture.
Sanubarianto et al. (2025)	Ethnolinguistics and ethnoscience	Agroforestry lexicon in the Manggarai language; observation, interviews, and elicitation in Ruteng Pu'u (East Nusa Tenggara)	253 agroforestry lexical items were identified; language bridges the intergenerational transmission of ecological knowledge.
Present study	Ecolinguistics; Keraf's (2010) environmental ethics and supporting theories; Rappaport's (1999) ritual ecology	16 Matimbe ritual utterances of the To Lindu community (Central Sulawesi); observation, recording, and interviews	Six ecological values and three ritual functions mapped in a value–function matrix.

The focus of this study is how Matimbe ritual speech, as a unified oral discourse, represents ecological values and performs ritual functions for its speech community. Unlike lexical items or single symbols, ritual speech contains the full context of utterance, the relationships among participants, and symbolic actions, which makes it relevant for understanding how ecological norms are formulated and transmitted through language.

The comparison in Table 1 shows that the three studies affirm the role of indigenous language in representing ecological knowledge and values but differ in approach, unit of analysis, and data type. None of them takes the sequence of utterances spoken during ritual performance as the main unit of analysis, and none relates the ecological values represented to the ritual functions performed. Moreover, to the best of our search, ecolinguistic

studies of the ritual speech of the To Lindu community remain very limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by positioning Matimbe as a linguistic practice that represents the ecological worldview of the To Lindu community.

The contribution of this study lies in three aspects. First, the sequence of Matimbe ritual utterances is analyzed as a single unit of discourse rather than as isolated lexical items or symbols. Second, the study adds ecolinguistic documentation of the ritual speech of the To Lindu community, which, to the best of our search, has rarely been studied from this perspective. Third, the results of the environmental ethics framework and of ritual ecology theory are cross-tabulated at the utterance level in a single analytical matrix, making it possible to trace whether a given value is affirmed through spiritual legitimation or through collective practice. This theoretical contribution is limited: it is an empirical mapping of value–function pairs within a single ritual event, not a modification of the theories.

Based on this gap, the study addresses two research questions: (1) What ecological values are found in the Matimbe ritual speech of the To Lindu community in Sigi Regency? (2) What are the functions of these ecological values for the To Lindu community in relation to environmental preservation?

In line with these questions, the study aims (1) to describe the ecological values in Matimbe ritual speech and (2) to analyze their functions for the To Lindu community in relation to environmental preservation. Theoretically, the study enriches ecolinguistic research on the ritual speech of indigenous communities. Practically, it provides documentation of Matimbe ritual speech that may serve as preliminary input for cultural preservation in Sigi Regency and as a reference for future research.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to describe systematically, factually, and in depth the ecological values contained in the Matimbe ritual speech of the To Lindu community (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Moleong, 2022). The data consist of verbal and contextual ritual utterances that require interpretation based on the social, cultural, and ecological context of the local community. The study was conducted in the Lake Lindu area, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi, where the To Lindu community lives and where the Matimbe ritual is held as the main event of the Lake Lindu Festival.

This descriptive qualitative design rests on an interpretivist assumption: the meaning of ecological values in ritual speech cannot be separated from the sociocultural context that shapes it and can only be understood through the researcher's interpretation of the relations among utterances, actions, and the meanings attributed by the speech community. The approach was chosen because its exploratory and contextual nature suits the identification of ecological values that are not always explicit at the lexical level but must be interpreted through the context of the ritual.



Figure 1. The buffalo slaughter procession in the Matimbe ritual at the Lake Lindu Festival

The primary data are Matimbe ritual utterances obtained through in-depth interviews, complemented by direct observation during the ritual. Three informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in reciting the ritual speech and their knowledge of its meaning: NS-01, the customary leader of Langko Village, who recited the opening and offering prayers; NS-02, the customary leader of Olu Village, who recited the prayers at the slaughter and distribution stages; and NS-03, the head of the Raego Lindu community, who recited the thanksgiving utterance at the Vunca stage. The two customary leaders served as key informants. Secondary data comprised books, scholarly articles, previous studies, and customary documents relevant to the Matimbe ritual. The main instrument was the researcher as the key instrument (*human instrument*), supported by an observation guide, a semi-structured interview guide, an audio-video recorder, and field notes.

Data were collected during the 2026 Lake Lindu Festival, covering the Vunca, Matimbe, and

Raego stages through to the communal meal (Nangkodi Sangkoni). During the procession, the utterances are spoken softly and observers are not permitted to approach, so the utterances could not be recorded clearly. The ritual utterances were therefore documented through their recitation by the ritual speakers in recorded interviews, accompanied by explanations of their meaning and context, while observation of the procession was used to record the sequence of stages, the participants, and the context of utterance. All utterances recited by the informants (22 utterances) were recorded without screening; screening took place at the analysis stage. Ethical considerations included oral permission from the customary leaders, explanation of the research purpose to the informants, the use of informant codes instead of names, and the use of the data for academic purposes only.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. Passive participant observation was used to observe the course of the ritual and the context of the utterances. Next, the listening method with recording and note-taking techniques was used to record the informants' recitation of the ritual utterances and their explanations during the interviews before transcription Sudaryanto (2015). Field notes and visual documentation from the observation were used to locate each utterance within the ritual stages and its context of utterance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three informants (NS-01 to NS-03), consisting of the two customary leaders as key informants and the head of the Raego Lindu community, to explore the meaning of the utterances, their relation to the Lake Lindu environment, and the functions of their ecological values.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model (Miles et al., 2020), which comprises data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the condensation stage, the 22 utterances were transcribed orthographically, translated together with the informants, and then tested against two inclusion criteria that both had to be met: (1) the utterance refers to a natural entity or its guardian, such as land, the sacrificial animal, harvest produce, weather, the lake, the ancestors, or *tumpu tana* (the guardian of the land); and (2) the utterance expresses an attitude, action, or norm towards that entity that matches at least one indicator in Table 2, either explicitly or through the informants' explanation. Two utterances (TM-16 and TM-17) did not meet the criteria because they contained only pleas for the smooth running of the celebration and social relations without any connection to nature. Four other utterances (TM-19 to TM-22) could not yet be analyzed because their meaning could not be confirmed with the informants; two of them are Raego verses in an archaic register whose lexical meaning is no longer known to the speakers. Accordingly, 16 utterances were retained as the final data. Each utterance was assigned a data code (TM) and an informant code (NS) following the order of documentation, so the codes of these six utterances do not appear in the results tables.

In the data display stage, deductive coding was carried out on two separate dimensions: ecological values (the seven categories in Table 2) and ritual functions (the five functions of Rappaport's [1999] ritual ecology as formulated by Pesonen [2022]: ecological-regulative, sanctification, adaptive, cognitive and behavioral transformation, and social-ecological integrative). On each dimension, an utterance was assigned to the single most dominant category based on its content, the ritual context, and the informants' explanations. No utterance was double-coded within a dimension; what was planned from the outset was the cross-tabulation between dimensions, so that each utterance has one value–function pair (Table 7). No category was developed inductively, and categories that did not appear in the data are still reported.

In the discussion, each utterance is read on three layers: (1) the explicit content of the utterance, (2) the informants' explanation, and (3) the researcher's interpretation based on the theoretical framework. Because the researcher was the sole instrument, inter-coder reliability was not applied. The trustworthiness of interpretation was maintained through triangulation across the three informants' interview recordings, procession observation notes, and visual documentation; member checking of the transcription, translation, and meaning of each utterance with the informants; and reflexivity, by separating the informants' explanations from the researcher's interpretations in the field notes and by acknowledging that interpretation is mediated by translation.

The ecological value categories were formulated by juxtaposing Keraf's (2010) nine principles of environmental ethics with the values drawn from Haugen (1972), Halliday (1990), Stibbe (2021), IPBES (2022), and Inglis and Pascual (2023), whether they share the same name or differ in name but align in substance. For instance, cosmic solidarity is not named as such by

the other scholars, but it aligns with the relational value of language and environment (Haugen, 1972), connectedness and kinship (Inglis & Pascual, 2023), and identity and sense of place (IPBES, 2022). The result is seven ecological values with their indicators (Table 2). Justice was retained because it has counterparts in the supporting theories. In contrast, democracy and moral integrity were not used because they have no counterparts in the supporting theories and concern decision-making by those holding authority, whereas Matimbe utterances take the form of prayers and pleas to the ancestors.

Table 2. *Ecological value categories and their indicators*

No	Ecological Value (Keraf, 2010)	Supporting Theories and Points of Convergence	Indicators in Ritual Speech
1	Respect for nature	IPBES (2022): intrinsic value; Stibbe (2021): intrinsic value and appreciation; Halliday (1990): critique of anthropocentrism. Convergence: nature has value in itself.	Requests for permission, polite statements of intent, acknowledgment that humans do not have full power over nature.
2	Moral responsibility for nature	Halliday (1990): linguistic responsibility; Inglis & Pascual (2023): responsibility, stewardship; IPBES (2022): relational value. Convergence: humans are responsible for nature.	Natural produce is prepared and accounted for, not used carelessly.
3	Cosmic solidarity	Haugen (1972): relational value of language and environment; Inglis & Pascual (2023): connectedness, kinship, identity; IPBES (2022): identity and sense of place. Convergence: humans are one with nature.	The speaker's identity is bound to the land, territory, and ancestors.
4	Caring for nature	Inglis & Pascual (2023) and IPBES (2022): care; Stibbe (2021): life-sustaining. Convergence: nurturing and protecting life.	Hopes that living beings, including humans, remain healthy and protected.
5	No harm to nature	Stibbe (2021): resistance to destructive discourse; Halliday (1990): critique of exploitative ideology. Convergence: rejecting actions that damage nature.	Prohibitions or taboos on certain behavior in the natural environment.
6	Simple living in harmony with nature	Halliday (1990): critique of growthism; Stibbe (2021): life-sustaining; IPBES (2022): instrumental value; Haugen (1972): ecological adaptation. Convergence: taking from nature only what is sufficient.	Expressions of sufficiency, humility, and gratitude for natural produce.
7	Justice	Inglis & Pascual (2023): community; IPBES (2022): benefits for future generations; Halliday (1990): critique of classism. Convergence: nature's benefits are shared.	Natural produce is enjoyed and shared collectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ecological values in Matimbe ritual speech

The analysis of the 16 utterances shows that ecological values are not always expressed through the words "nature" or "environment" but through requests for permission, kinship terms addressed to the ancestors, expressions of sufficiency, and the distribution of ritual produce. Most utterances are addressed to the ancestors and *tumpu tana*, the guardians of the land and territory of Lake Lindu, so attitudes towards *tumpu tana* are understood as attitudes towards the nature they guard. Six of the seven ecological values were found, whereas justice was not found as a dominant value (Table 3).

Table 3. *Summary of ecological values in Matimbe ritual speech*

No	Ecological Value (Keraf, 2010)	Data Codes	Number	Percentage
1	Respect for nature	TM-03, TM-04, TM-11, TM-14	4	25%
2	Moral responsibility for nature	TM-05, TM-08	2	12.5%
3	Cosmic solidarity	TM-01, TM-02, TM-07	3	18.75%
4	Caring for nature	TM-12, TM-13	2	12.5%
5	No harm to nature	TM-15	1	6.25%

6	Simple living in harmony with nature	TM-06, TM-09, TM-10, TM-18	4	25%
7	Justice	–	0	0%
	Total		16	100%

Respect for nature

Respect for nature was found in four utterances (25%). Explicitly, all four contain statements of intent, pleas, and notifications addressed to *tumpu tana* before or during the slaughter of the buffalo. In *"Apaei tadopa ni sambale bengka ei, eimo lolita ka siko tumpu tana ri lindu ei"* (Before we slaughter this buffalo, we speak with the lord of the land here) (TM-03/NS-01), the phrase *tadopa ni sambale* (before it is slaughtered) places the act of speaking before the action towards the animal. In *"Rasambale bengka ei merapi ampu ka siko, nemo sampe mou uda, nemo sampe mu pakarataka ngolu, mu paka belo tana ei ri lindu"* (As this buffalo is slaughtered, we ask of you: let there be no rain, let there be no wind, calm this land of Lindu) (TM-04/NS-01), the verb *merapi ampu* (to beseech) positions the speaker as a supplicant regarding the weather and the calm of the land. The utterance *"Kusambale bengka ei"* (I slaughter this buffalo) (TM-11/NS-02) is spoken by the customary leader just before the buffalo is slaughtered to reaffirm openly that it is about to be slaughtered, thus closing the sequence of permission in TM-03 and TM-04. Meanwhile, *"Ei nanu rapovia ei, bona ka salama to lindu masalama purara"* (This is done for the safety of the Lindu people and the safety of all) (TM-14/NS-02) states the purpose of the ritual as the safety of everyone.

The informants explained that the intention addressed to *tumpu tana* must be conveyed politely because impoliteness is believed to bring misfortune, and that the safety sought in TM-14 is protection from disturbance by the ancestral guardians of the land. The researcher interprets this sequence of "speaking first, then acting" as an expression of the principle of respect for nature (Keraf, 2010), namely the recognition that humans do not have full power over nature. This interpretation is close to the notion of intrinsic value (IPBES, 2022; Stibbe, 2021), but in these data respect is directed mainly towards the guardians of nature rather than towards nature itself.

Moral responsibility for nature

Moral responsibility for nature was found in two utterances (12.5%). The utterance *"Einuanu, bengka ni pasadiaka nemo mukalio, mukalioka ana mo nopa nipoviaka kalio nomo nipasadiaka"* (This buffalo is to be offered, do not merely look at it; look at us, your children, what we have made has been prepared) (TM-05/NS-01) repeats the verb *mukalio* (you see) to display the offering to the ancestors, while *"Eimo nuanu ni rataka, ewanuapae rapasadia nuanu ei naria nuantu pobagoa ni ipoviaka ri ngataata ei nikolio nitiroi"* (This is what we have obtained, for the activities of our village, seen from above by the Creator) (TM-08/NS-01) states that the produce is intended for the village and is *nikolio nitiroi* (seen from above). According to the informant, the buffalo generally comes from the community's own livestock. The researcher interprets the pattern of "showing" and "being seen from above" as an awareness that the use of livestock and produce must be accountable to a higher authority, consistent with Keraf's (2010) cosmic responsibility and the notion of *stewardship* (Inglis & Pascual, 2023). This responsibility is moral and spiritual rather than an observed management practice.

Cosmic solidarity

Cosmic solidarity was found in three utterances (18.75%). The opening utterance *"Eikamo, mpupu ngata to riolo"* (Here we are, the original people who first settled this place) (TM-01/NS-01) introduces the speakers as the first inhabitants of the Lindu area; *"Eikamo anamo, mangkeni emo katuwuaka"* (Here we are, your children, surrendering our living lives, all that we use) (TM-02/NS-01) uses the kinship term *anamo* (your children) to address the ancestors; and *"Murongeka eikamo ravumu, tanah olu, kanawu to lindu"* (Hear us, here we are, from Tanah Olu and Kanawu, united in the land of Lindu) (TM-07/NS-01) names places of origin that have "become one" in the land of Lindu. According to the informant, the community must introduce itself as the original people in every ritual, and what is "surrendered" in TM-02 is garden produce that sustains life. The researcher interprets all three as expressing the bond between the speakers' identity and the land and ancestors, consistent with Keraf's (2010) cosmic solidarity and with the concepts of *connectedness* and *kinship* in relational values (Ghijselinck, 2023; Inglis & Pascual, 2023). Distinctively, this solidarity is expressed not through a lexicon of nature but through the person deixis *eikamo* (here we are), kinship terms, and toponyms.

Caring for nature

Caring for nature was found in two utterances (12.5%): *"Raakondi, nuroa ta, lakora sigi, lakoribomba tado sampe madua-dua teiraa"* (Eaten by guests from Sigi and Bomba, may it not upset the stomachs of those who eat) (TM-12/NS-02) and *"Ra kondi bona isira pakaseha sehara"* (Eaten so that they may all be healthy) (TM-13/NS-02). Both express the hope that everyone who eats the ritual produce, including guests from outside Lindu, will remain healthy; the word *isira* (all of them) does not limit this hope to the speaker's family. Both utterances match Keraf's (2010) principle of caring for nature and the concept of *care* (Inglis & Pascual, 2023), but the care expressed is directed at humans rather than non-human beings, so it cannot be read as direct evidence of care for the ecosystem. The nuance of justice in sharing the produce with guests (TM-12) is not the dominant focus of the utterance.

No harm to nature

No harm to nature was found in one utterance (6.25%): *"Tado mabunto, tado makaontika, tado napeturo nu lumua"* (May no one suffer mystical disturbances or be reprimanded by the ancestors) (TM-15/NS-02). Explicitly, this utterance is a plea for the protection of festival visitors and does not mention any specific prohibition. Its connection to nature comes from the informant's explanation: being "reprimanded" relates to violations of taboos in the lake area, such as throwing spicy food into the lake and behaving arrogantly. On this basis, the researcher interprets it as an expression of Keraf's (2010) *no harm* principle. This study did not observe the extent to which these taboos are followed in everyday practice.

Simple living in harmony with nature

Simple living in harmony with nature was found in four utterances (25%). The expression *magana tado magana* (enough or not enough) appears twice, in *"Magana tado magana, eika motumpumi, eikamo anamo, eikamo lino ravumu dunia"* (Enough or not enough, here are your grandchildren, here are your children, this is all we have prepared in the world) (TM-06/NS-01) and *"Magana tado magana evanuapai eimo pasadiaka toli ei nitiroi"* (Enough or not enough, this is what we have prepared; if it is lacking, make it sufficient from above) (TM-09/NS-02). In *"Ane nakura ni tambei damo eikamo mukumpulu tianata, tuamata, tumpuka"* (If it is lacking, may it be added; we have all gathered here, our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents) (TM-10/NS-02), according to the informant, the community asks that what it has prepared be made sufficient so that it can give more, which is why all generations are said to have gathered. Finally, *"Mosusa mosukuru saiweka pura, pepaeka to rigayoka ei, ewa ri Lida bo ri pampa"* (Our gratitude for the first harvest of our fields and gardens) (TM-18/NS-03), recited at the Vunca stage, contains the verb *mosukuru* (to give thanks).

According to the informants, the offerings are prepared according to the community's means, and the expression "from above" refers to the Creator. The researcher interprets the repetition of *magana tado magana* as a fixed formula that normalizes an attitude of sufficiency, consistent with Keraf's (2010) principle of simple living and opposed to the ideology of *growthism* criticized by Halliday (1990). This formula is specific to Matimbe: sufficiency is not formulated as a prohibition against taking too much but as a statement of humility about an offering regarded as imperfect.

These two dominant values reveal two core patterns of Matimbe speech: asking permission before acting upon the land and animals, and offering natural produce with a formula of sufficiency. This finding supports Stibbe's (2021) view that ecological values can be realized without an explicit environmental lexicon. However, the speech genre also constrains the values that emerge: because the utterances are prayers to the ancestors, the values expressed tend to be inner attitudes and spiritual relations rather than procedural norms of resource management.

Functions of ecological values in Matimbe ritual speech for environmental preservation

The functions of ecological values in Matimbe ritual speech were analyzed using ritual ecology theory (Pesonen, 2022; Rappaport, 1999), which views ritual as a mechanism that regulates the relationship between humans and their environment. The analysis of the 16 utterances containing ecological values identified three interrelated main functions, namely the ecological-regulative, sanctification, and social-ecological integrative functions, as presented in Tables 4 to 6. The adaptive function and the cognitive and behavioral transformation function did not emerge as stand-alone utterance categories because they are latent and inherent in the ritual performance as a whole.

Although the concept of ritual functions (Pesonen, 2022; Rappaport, 1999), comprising the ecological-regulative, sanctification, and social-

ecological integrative functions, remains the main relevant framework for examining the relationship between ritual and the environment, recent studies have strengthened and broadened this perspective. Imamah (2025) shows that studies of ritual in Indonesia are still dominated by interpretations of social functions alone (as a medium of cohesion and tolerance), whereas the ecological function of ritual as a mechanism for preserving ecosystems has received less attention in discourse studies, a gap that this study seeks to address. In addition, the multispecies justice framework of Celermajer et al. (2021) offers a further perspective: human relationships with other beings, including animals used in rituals, can be understood as a recognition of shared survival rather than merely an exploitative relationship.

Table 4. *Utterances with the ecological-regulative function*

Data Code	Ritual Utterance	Meaning
TM-01	*Eikamo, mpupu ngata to riolo*	Here we are, the original people who first settled this place
TM-07	*Murongeka eikamo ravumu, tanah olu, kanawu to lindu*	Hear us, here we are, from Tanah Olu and Kanawu, united in the land of Lindu
TM-11	*Kusambale bengka ei*	I slaughter this buffalo

The ecological-regulative function was found in three utterances (18.75%; Table 4). Danugroho et al. (2025) show that rituals in agricultural communities regulate resource use and reinforce norms of environmental management. In Matimbe, however, this function does not appear as explicit rules but as the ordering of the speakers' position and of the sequence of actions. TM-01 and TM-07 affirm the community's position as part of its living space through claims of origin and indigeneity, while TM-11 marks the slaughter as part of a ritual procedure rather than an unordered act. Oral traditions of indigenous communities elsewhere have likewise been reported to function as regulative mechanisms through norms governing relations with the environment (Harum et al., 2025). Within Rappaport's (1999) framework, this finding is an empirical illustration of a regulative function that operates through the ordering of position and action; its effect on resource use outside the ritual was not measured in this study.

Table 5. *Utterances with the sanctification function*

Data Code	Ritual Utterance	Meaning
TM-02	*Eikamo anamo, mangkeni emo katuwuaka*	Here we are, your children, surrendering our living lives, all that we use
TM-03	*Apaei tadopa ni sambale bengka ei, eimo lolita ka siko tumpu tana ri lindu ei*	Before we slaughter this buffalo, we speak with the lord of the land here
TM-04	*Rasambale bengka ei merapi ampu ka siko, nemo sampe mou uda, nemo sampe mu pakarataka ngolu, mu paka belo tana ei ri lindu*	As this buffalo is slaughtered, we ask of you: let there be no rain, let there be no wind, calm this land of Lindu
TM-09	*Magana tado magana evanuapai eimo pasadiaka toli ei nitiroi*	Enough or not enough, this is what we have prepared; if it is lacking, make it sufficient from above
TM-14	*Ei nanu rapovia ei, bona ka salama to lindu masalama purara*	This is done for the safety of the Lindu people and the safety of all
TM-15	*Tado mabunto, tado makaontika, tado napeturo nu lumua*	May no one suffer mystical disturbances or be reprimanded by the ancestors

The sanctification function was found in six utterances (37.5%; Table 5) containing pleas and taboos addressed to spiritual entities. A similar pattern was reported by Sumarwati (2022), who showed that taboos, belief in ancestors, and ritual practices on the slopes of Mount Lawu regulate community behavior towards the environment. In Matimbe, the request for permission from *tumpu tana* before the slaughter (TM-03), the surrender to the ancestors (TM-02), and the plea for stable weather (TM-04) place ecological conditions under the authority of the guardians of the land, so that humans ask for blessing rather than claim control. The plea that the offering be made sufficient "from above" (TM-09) entrusts the completeness of the ritual to spiritual powers, while TM-14 and TM-15, according to the informant, relate to taboos in the Lake Lindu area

whose violation is believed to bring mystical disturbances. Nopriyasman et al. (2024) likewise note that supernatural beliefs act as a regulative mechanism through the consequences of violating customary norms. Thus, in ritual discourse, the ecological boundaries of Lake Lindu are legitimized through spiritual belief, consistent with Rappaport's (1999) concept of sanctification, namely the affirmation of rules as sacred through formal and repeated ritual forms. The extent to which this legitimation produces actual compliance would require behavioral data that were not collected in this study.

Table 6. *Utterances with the Social-Ecological Integrative Function*

Data Code	Ritual Utterance	Meaning
TM-05	*Einuanu, bengka ni pasadiaka nemo mukalio, mukalioka ana mo nopa nipoviaka kalio nomo nipasadiaka*	This buffalo is to be offered, do not merely look at it; look at us, your children, what we have made has been prepared
TM-06	*Magana tado magana, eika motumpumi, eikamo anamo, eikamo lino ravumu dunia*	Enough or not enough, here are your grandchildren, here are your children, this is all we have prepared in the world
TM-08	*Eimo nuanu ni rataka, ewanuapae rapasadia nuanu ei naria nuantu pobagoa ni ipoviaka ri ngataata ei nikolio nitiroi*	This is what we have obtained, for the activities of our village, seen from above by the Creator
TM-10	*Ane nakura ni tambei damo eikamo mukumpulu tianata, tuamata, tumpuka*	If it is lacking, may it be added; we have all gathered here, our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents
TM-12	*Raakondi, nuroa ta, lakora sigi, lakoribomba tado sampe madua-dua teiraa*	Eaten by guests from Sigi and Bomba, may it not upset the stomachs of those who eat
TM-13	*Ra kondi bona isira pakaseha sehara*	Eaten so that they may all be healthy
TM-18	*Mosusa mosukuru saiweka pura, pepaeka to rigayoka ei, ewa ri Lida bo ri pampa*	Our gratitude for the first harvest of our fields and gardens

The social-ecological integrative function was the most frequent, found in seven utterances (43.75%; Table 6). Rahardjanto et al. (2025) show that rituals can integrate social solidarity, the intergenerational transmission of ecological knowledge, and environmental conservation practices; a similar finding was reported by Mutia et al. (2024) for the Bau Nyale tradition. In Matimbe, this function appears in utterances accompanying the collection and distribution of natural produce: the provision of a buffalo from the community's livestock (TM-05), offerings and thanksgiving for the harvest (TM-06, TM-18), produce designated for village activities (TM-08), the gathering of offerings by all generations (TM-10), and the sharing of the slaughtered buffalo with guests from Sigi and Bomba together with wishes for their health (TM-12, TM-13). At the level of discourse, these utterances frame the use of natural produce as a shared matter involving multiple generations and territories rather than an individual one. This finding offers an empirical illustration of the concept of communitas in Rappaport's (1999) theory, namely the capacity of ritual to connect the individual and the collective through shared participation.

Overall, the three functions reinforce one another in Matimbe ritual discourse. The ecological-regulative function orders human position and the sequence of actions towards resources, the sanctification function legitimizes these boundaries through the belief system, and the social-ecological integrative function frames the use of natural produce as a collective matter. All three functions operate through norms and beliefs that live within the community rather than through formal regulation. It should be emphasized that this study distinguishes three levels of findings: (1) the ecological values represented in the utterances, (2) the ritual functions interpreted from the discourse, and (3) actual environmental conservation outcomes. The data directly demonstrate the first and second levels; the third would require independent behavioral or environmental evidence and is therefore not claimed in this study.

The cross-tabulation of the value and function dimensions is presented in Table 7. Because each utterance was coded for one value and one function, every cell can be traced to its utterance codes. Values and functions are not paired one-to-one. The values concerning human relations with the guardians of nature, namely respect for nature, cosmic solidarity, and no harm to nature (eight utterances), all co-occur with either the sanctification function (TM-02, TM-03, TM-04, TM-14, TM-15) or the ecological-regulative

function (TM-01, TM-07, TM-11). In contrast, the values concerning the use and distribution of natural produce, namely moral responsibility (TM-05, TM-08) and caring (TM-12, TM-13), all co-occur with the social-ecological integrative function. Simple living lies between the two groups, with three integrative utterances (TM-06, TM-10, TM-18) and one sanctification utterance (TM-09).

This pattern reveals four points. First, the findings confirm Rappaport's (1999) concept of sanctification and the role of supernatural beliefs and taboos in framing behavior towards the environment (Nopriyasman et al., 2024). Second, they extend studies that rely on lexicon or symbols (Gazali et al., 2023; Sanubarianto et al., 2025) by showing that ecological values in Matimbe are realized mainly through speech-act structure, namely the sequence of asking permission before acting, the formula *magana tado magana*, person deixis, and kinship address. Third, they challenge a biocentric reading of Keraf's (2010) principles, because respect and care are directed mainly at the guardians of nature and at fellow humans, so the ecological values are relational and spiritual in character. Fourth, the pleas for the safety and health of guests from outside the community (TM-12, TM-14) are specific to the performance of Matimbe within a festival. These findings are empirical illustrations, not modifications of Stibbe's or Rappaport's theories. Practically, the pattern may inform local-wisdom-based conservation efforts, for example by involving customary leaders, but its effectiveness requires further research using behavioral and environmental data.

Table 7. *Matrix of ecological values and ritual functions by utterance*

Ecological Value	Ecological-Regulative	Sanctification	Social-Ecological Integrative	Total
Respect for nature	TM-11	TM-03, TM-04, TM-14	–	4
Moral responsibility for nature	–	–	TM-05, TM-08	2
Cosmic solidarity	TM-01, TM-07	TM-02	–	3
Caring for nature	–	–	TM-12, TM-13	2
No harm to nature	–	TM-15	–	1
Simple living in harmony with nature	–	TM-09	TM-06, TM-10, TM-18	4
Justice	–	–	–	0
Total	3	6	7	16

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Matimbe ritual speech represents ecological values through requests for permission, notifications to the ancestors, kinship address, expressions of sufficiency, and the distribution of ritual produce. Of the 16 utterances, six of the seven ecological values synthesized from Keraf's (2010) principles of environmental ethics and supporting theories were found: respect for nature, moral responsibility for nature, cosmic solidarity, caring for nature, no harm to nature, and simple living in harmony with nature. Respect for nature and simple living were the most dominant (four utterances each), whereas justice was not found as a dominant value. Based on Rappaport's (1999) ritual ecology, the utterances perform the social-ecological integrative function (seven utterances), the sanctification function (six utterances), and the ecological-regulative function (three utterances). The value–function matrix shows that values concerning relations with the guardians of nature are associated with the sanctification and regulative functions, whereas values concerning the use of natural produce are associated with the integrative function. Matimbe ritual language thus plays a role in shaping and transmitting ecological awareness, although its effects on conservation behavior and environmental conditions were not measured. The limitations of this study are that the data come from a single ritual performance and three informants; that the utterances were obtained through recitation in interviews rather than direct recording of the procession and may therefore differ from those spoken during the ritual; that interpretation is mediated by translation; and that four utterances, including the Raego verses, could not yet be analyzed because their meaning has not been confirmed. Future research could document subsequent Matimbe performances, compare them with rituals of other indigenous communities in Central Sulawesi, such as Morra Keke among the Kaili, and combine discourse analysis with behavioral and environmental data. Practically, the

findings may inform local-wisdom-based preservation efforts in Sigi Regency and serve as a cultural archive for sustaining the language and ecological knowledge of the To Lindu.

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