

***Ḥifẓ al-Bī'ah* and Pasang Ri Kajang: Lived Religiosity and the Limits of Normative Convergence in Forest Conservation**

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|| Received: 04-05-2026 || Revised: 15-09-2026 || Accepted: 18-09-2026

Abstract: *Ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* is increasingly proposed as an independent *maqṣad* within *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, yet claims of convergence with indigenous environmental custom are rarely tested against a differentiated standard. This article addresses that gap through the Ammatoa Kajang community of Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, whose forest conservation is governed by Pasang Ri Kajang. Rather than assuming harmonization, this study develops a three-level framework surface value similarity, functional convergence, and normative resonance, to specify how far the two systems align. Data were collected through a qualitative case study combining participatory observation and in-depth interviews with fifteen informants: customary leaders, religious figures, and community practitioners. Findings show two patterns: Pasang's ethical-normative dimensions converge functionally with Islamic principles such as *zuhd* and *amānah*, while its cosmological dimensions remain in tension with doctrine on *tamhīd*, negotiated unevenly by informants' institutional proximity to formal Islam. The study contributes empirically by showing Pasang Ri Kajang is not an undifferentiated whole; theoretically by arguing *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* warrants *maqṣad* status because theological internalization, not *fiqh* enforcement, sustains conservation; and sociologically by showing *da'wah* toward customary communities succeeds through cultural accommodation and negotiated reception rather than confrontation.

Keywords: *Ḥifẓ al-Bī'ah*; Lived Religiosity; Pasang Ri Kajang; *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*; Normative Convergence.

Introduction

The global ecological crisis is not merely a technical failure of resource management but an ethical and spiritual crisis in humanity's relationship with nature (White, 1967), one Islamic scholarship increasingly situates within *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* rather than at its margins. *First*, environmental protection is framed as integral to the mission of vicegerency (*khilāfah*), with *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* extended as a reading of the *daruriyyat al-khams* responsive to climate change. *Second*, formal regulation alone has proven insufficient: despite the mandate of Law No. 32 of 2009, implementation in Indonesia remains hindered by sectoral ego and an exploitative mindset. This is evident in contemporary eco-theological readings of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025), Nahdlatul Ulama's own green fatwas on Indonesia's environmental crisis (Mufid, 2020), and prophetic-tradition arguments for ecological responsibility (Garba, 2025; Salman & Asmanto, 2024), none of which have closed the gap. This unresolved tension motivates turning to a community whose customary practice succeeds where regulation has not: the Ammatoa Kajang of Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, whose forest stewardship has drawn international journalistic attention (Yeung, 2023).

Existing scholarship establishes that Islamic doctrine and Indonesian customary systems share environmental values, yet it stops short of specifying at what level this sharing occurs. *First*, the doctrinal status of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* remains contested: al-Qaradawi formulates environmental ethics within a normative-*sharī'ah* framework treating destruction as *ifsad*, while Jum'ah treats *maqāṣid* as an adaptive methodology

subsuming environmental protection within the existing five objectives. *Second*, studies operationalizing this doctrine, whether integrating *fiqh* with local policy (Amiruddin et al., 2024; Anggriawan, 2026; Haq et al., 2025), developing *waqf* typologies (Umam et al., 2026), or examining Kajang and comparable customary systems directly (Tahir et al., 2025), describe convergence without asking whether it holds at the level of value, function, or structure. This is the gap this study addresses.

This study therefore examines how *hifz al-bi'ah* within *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and Pasang Ri Kajang converge, and where that convergence reaches its limits, using a design suited to a question prior instruments cannot answer. *First*, distinguishing surface value similarity from functional convergence and normative resonance requires a framework capable of separating shared vocabulary from shared reasoning, a distinction the studies reviewed above do not draw. *Second*, capturing how individual informants reason from principle to practice requires methods more interpretive than the quantitative religiosity instruments that dominate this literature (El-Menouar, 2024; Huber & Huber, 2012), which measure correlation but not mechanism. Accordingly, this study adopts the qualitative operationalization of religious dimensions demonstrated by Alshehri, Fotaki, and Kauser (2021), combines participatory observation with in-depth interviews, and treats the researcher's own positionality as a condition shaping the data obtained rather than a neutral background fact. This design allows convergence and its limits to be mapped empirically rather than assumed.

This study argues that *hifz al-bi'ah* warrants recognition as a substantive *maqṣad* in its own right, rather than a matter resolved at the level of *fiqh* alone. *First*, confining environmental protection to technical rulings on permissible resource use treats ecological harm as rule violation, correctable through prohibition, without cultivating the theological consciousness required for protective behavior to endure once enforcement lapses. *Second*, where that consciousness is absent, doctrinal categorization proves fragile: the same Kajang community that shows ethical-normative alignment with Islamic principles also exhibits documented cosmological tension with Islamic doctrine on *tawhīd* (Amalia et al., 2026), a tension no amount of *fiqh*-level enforcement would resolve. The Kajang case lends empirical weight to this claim: the customary forest's persistence rests on Pasang's standing as a theological-cosmological conviction, and religiosity scholarship confirms that internalized conviction, not measured compliance, is what such durability requires (Alshehri et al., 2021). This pattern is evidence for elevating *hifz al-bi'ah* to *maqāṣid* status.

Literature Review

Contemporary scholarship increasingly positions *hifz al-bi'ah* as an extension of the classical *daruriyyat al-khams* (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025), part of a broader pattern extending *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* across domains from digital economy and waste management to intellectual property, business sustainability, takaful, and multicultural governance (Alghozali & Hasiolan, 2025; Athambawa, 2025; Azmin Shompa et al., 2025; Disemadi et al., 2024; Hadi & Baihaqi, 2020; Jaiyeoba et al., 2025; Mohd Zain et al., 2024, 2025; Shukri & Azalan, 2023) and closer to this study's focus, to Makassar environmental theology (Latif et al., 2023) and Islamic environmental health (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023). Yet the doctrinal status of *hifz al-bi'ah* remains contested: al-Qaradawi treats environmental destruction as *ifsad* within a normative-*sharī'ah* framework, while Jum'ah treats *maqāṣid* as an adaptive methodology subsuming environmental protection within the existing five objectives rather than granting it independent status.

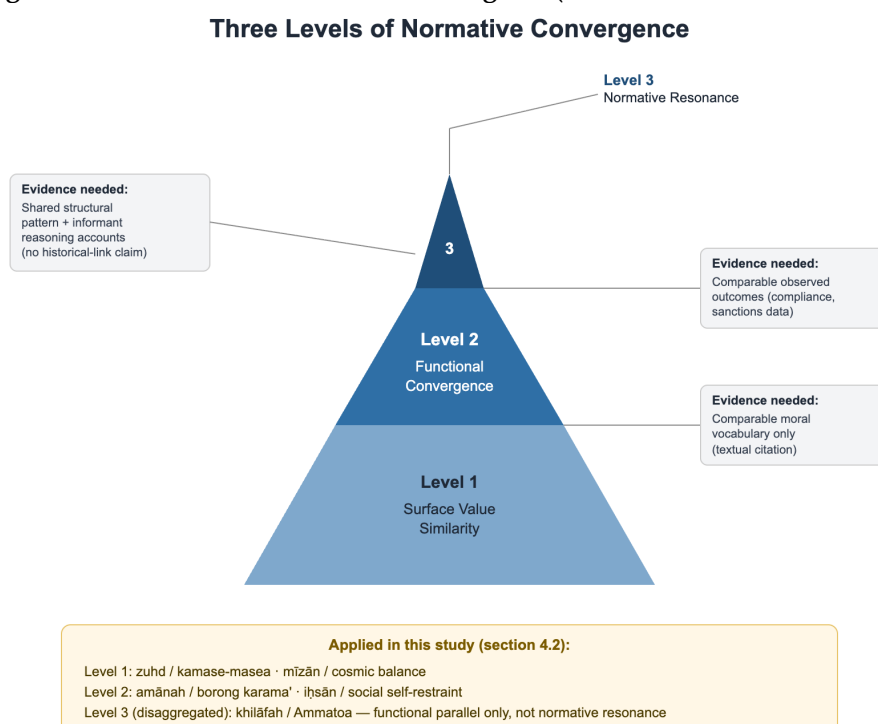
This article takes a position within that debate: *hifz al-bi'ah* warrants recognition as a substantive *maqṣad* in its own right, on grounds as much empirical as doctrinal. Confining environmental protection to *fiqh* treats ecological harm as rule violation correctable through prohibition, without engaging the theological consciousness needed to sustain protective behavior once enforcement lapses. The Kajang case lends empirical weight to this argument: as demonstrated below, Borong Karamaka's persistence rests not on rule-following but on its embeddedness within Pasang as a theological-cosmological conviction, which is why this study treats Pasang as a system of conviction rather than merely checking it against *fiqh* rulings for compatibility.

Both strands operationalizing *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* track Jum'ah's adaptive orientation more than al-Qaradawi's independent-*maqṣad* claim. Haq et al. (2025) and Susani (2025) integrate Islamic principles with local policy without specifying the level at which integration occurs. Umam (2026) push further, grounding *fiqh al-bī'ah* in *harim*, *hima*, and productive-*waqf* categories with distinct requirements for *wākif*, *mawqūf*, and *nāzir*; as elaborated below, Kajang's forest regime resembles these categories functionally without satisfying *waqf*'s formal legal architecture. What none resolve is whether such absorption requires, or merely permits, treating *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* as an independent *maqṣad*, the question this study's three-level framework answers empirically.

This study positions itself against three closely related bodies of work. Haq et al. (2025) compare Sasi tradition sanctions to Islamic legal sanctions, establishing analogous outcomes without addressing whether the two share a common structure of reasoning. Tahir et al. (2025) argue Pasang already integrates Sufi values, assuming rather than testing harmonization; this study instead tests convergence against its three-level framework. Amalia, Umniati, and Hasanah (2026) document tension between Kajang Patuntung cosmology and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* doctrine, particularly regarding death ritual and ancestral spirits, showing integration is not uniform, a qualification this study extends to its own convergence claims. Together, these studies establish value- and sanction-level parallels but leave unaddressed the specific level at which convergence occurs and where it breaks down, the gap this study addresses.

To address this gap, this study distinguishes three levels at which *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* and Pasang Ri Kajang may converge. Surface value similarity describes comparable moral vocabulary, for example *zuhd* and *kamase-masea* both valorizing modest living, without evidence of comparable reasoning or social function. Functional convergence describes comparable social or ecological outcomes despite differing sources of authority. Normative resonance, the strongest and rarest claim, describes a shared structure for validating claims about the human-nature relationship, grounding authority in a transmitted source and reasoning analogically to new cases; this label deliberately avoids implying historical influence between the two systems, signaling structural parallel rather than derivation. Each comparison below is assigned one of these levels with a consistent standard of evidence. Figure 1 summarizes this three-level structure and the evidentiary bar each level requires.

Figure 1. Three Levels of Normative Convergence (Level 3: Normative Resonance)

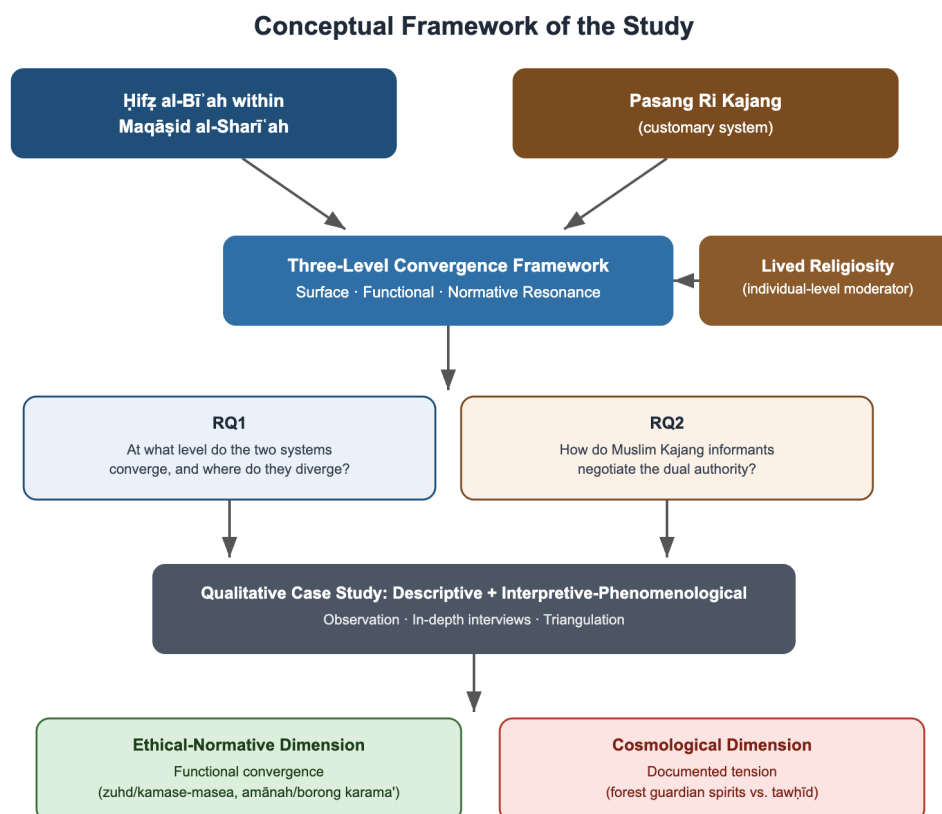


This study also draws on religiosity to explain variation among informants in negotiating this tension. Religiosity research is well established, operationalized through Huber and Huber's (2012) Centrality of Religiosity Scale and El-Menouar's (2024) five-dimensional structure for Muslim populations, informing research linking Islamic religiosity to pro-environmental behavior (Begum et al., 2021; Sa'id et al., 2024; Yaacob et al., 2017), including a closely related quantitative study from this same regional context (Haramain, 2025). This literature remains almost exclusively quantitative, a gap this study addresses by adopting the qualitative operationalization of religious dimensions demonstrated by Alshehri, Fotaki, and Kauser (2021), treating lived religiosity as an interpretive category derived from interview data rather than a measured score.

Method

This research uses a qualitative case study design, with Kajang customary forest governance in Tana Toa, Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, as the bounded case and the negotiation between Pasang Ri Kajang and Islamic doctrine as its analytic focus. Interpretive phenomenology serves as the primary lens for interview data, capturing how informants themselves reason about customary-Islamic relations rather than describing practice from a purely external standpoint. Consistent with this approach, the researcher bracketed prior assumptions: an initial expectation of harmony, recorded in an assumptions memo, was revised through a reflective field journal and weekly peer debriefing once repeated accounts revealed tension around forest guardian spirits and ancestral authority. Figure 2 outlines the conceptual framework guiding data collection and analysis.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study



Fieldwork ran over four months (March-June 2025), comprising twelve visits and roughly twenty-eight days on site. Data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with fifteen purposively selected informants: four customary leaders (the Ammatoa, one Galla Puto, two Tumutung), four religious figures (two village imams, one Qur'an teacher, one ustadz), and seven community practitioners representing the *kamase-masea* lifestyle. Religious figures were selected

specifically as local *da'wah* agents mediating Islamic doctrine and Kajang cosmology, since their reasoning strategies, not only their doctrinal positions, would illuminate how *da'wah* operates in this context. Interviews, conducted in Indonesian and Konjo with a local research assistant interpreting Konjo passages, lasted 45-90 minutes, with six follow-up sessions of 20-35 minutes; quotations are attributed using anonymized codes (RF, CP, TM) to protect confidentiality. Additional data came from literature on ecological hadith, *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* scholarship, and environmental regulation, plus observation of the Andingingi ritual, two customary council meetings, and three boundary walks with Tumutung.

Data were analyzed through inductive thematic analysis (Rusdi et al., 2024): open coding of three transcripts built an initial codebook, independently checked by a second coder against 25 percent of the material before being applied to the rest. Credibility rested on source triangulation, comparing the Ammatoa's and Galla Puto's accounts against Tumutung's and community informants', and methodological triangulation, checking interviews against observation and Bulukumba Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2015.

The researcher's position was that of a Muslim academic from South Sulawesi but an outsider to Ammatoa Kajang ethnicity and custom, with no kinship or customary role in Tana Toa; this facilitated access to imams and Kajang Luar informants, while access to Kajang Dalam was mediated by Galla Puto, and several restricted sites, prayers, and unaccompanied observation remained off-limits. Fieldwork proceeded with an institutional letter, village acknowledgment, and the Ammatoa's verbal permission via Galla Puto; sensitive customary knowledge was handled through negotiated disclosure, and verbal informed consent, including separate permission to record, was obtained before each interview.

Results and Discussion

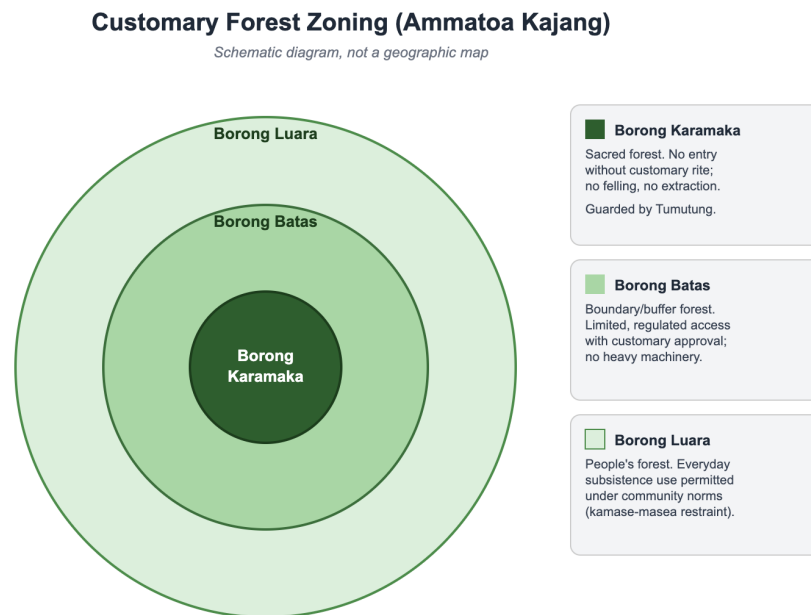
Pasang Ri Kajang as a System of Local Wisdom in Sustainable Forest Conservation

The Kajang indigenous people, residing in the Tana Toa area of Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, are widely recognized as a community that strictly upholds ancestral traditions and demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental preservation. Their society is broadly divided into two main groups: the Kajang Dalam (Ilalang Embayya), who maintain a highly traditional way of life, and the Kajang Luar, who are more open to modern influences. The core value system that underpins Kajang life is known as Pasang Ri Kajang, a body of oral moral teachings and customary rules passed down from one generation to the next. A central principle in Kajang life is *kamase-masea*, a philosophy of simple, modest living that emphasizes avoiding excess and harmony with nature. For the Kajang, the environment is not merely a physical space but a deeply spiritual realm. Their customary forest, known as *borong karama'*, is regarded as sacred and serves as the ecological and spiritual center of community life.

The Kajang belief in forest guardians such as Dangempa, Damangnga Salang, Dakodo, and Dalonjo functions not merely as myth, but as an effective ecological discipline. The community believes that damaging the forest disrupts cosmic balance and brings negative consequences for both the individual and the collective (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023). One of the most well-known Pasang messages related to the forest states: "*Anjo boronga anre nakulle nipanraki. Punna nipanraki boronga, nupanrakki kalennu.*" ("The forest must not be destroyed. If you destroy the forest, you destroy yourself.") (A village imam, RF1, personal communication, 2025).

In addition to prohibitions against forest destruction, the Kajang practice several concrete conservation measures: (1) prohibition of tree felling without approval from customary leaders; (2) ban on bringing heavy machinery or certain modern technologies into customary territory; (3) prohibition of polluting rivers; and (4) ecological surveillance by Tumutung, customary forest guardians. Figure 3 illustrates the zoning structure through which these measures are enforced.

Figure 3. Customary Forest Zoning (Ammatoa Kajang)



The internalization of Pasang values occurs through informal education within families, community groups, and customary institutions. From an early age, children are taught to respect the forest and not to take or touch anything without customary permission. This intergenerational transmission has proven effective in cultivating a strong collective ecological consciousness (Mufid, 2020). The internalization of ecological values in Kajang society is strongly supported by the role of the Ammatoa, the highest customary leader, whose authority is perceived to stem from a special spiritual connection with ancestors and the natural world, a pattern of customary leadership documented as central to ecological preservation across Kajang communities generally (Umam et al., 2026; Yulika et al., 2025). The Kajang also maintain rituals that function substantively to preserve harmonious relations between humans and nature. One such ritual is Andingingi, a symbolic practice aimed at restoring the earth's coolness and protecting the forest from harm (Munib et al., 2022). During the ritual, offerings are made to renew the spiritual bond between the community and the forest.

During the customary council session observed on 17 May 2025, a Tumutung reported that a resident had removed a young tree from Borong Batas without first obtaining customary permission. After the resident acknowledged the act, the council required the timber to be returned, imposed the lowest-level customary sanction, and ordered the planting of twenty replacement seedlings under Tumutung supervision. At a follow-up visit on 6 June, the replanting had been completed. Customary leaders described the response as restoring the relationship among the offender, the community, and the forest, rather than merely punishing the individual. The preceding description risks reading as cultural tradition alone unless its operation as a *normative system* is made explicit. Four questions structure this system's normative character. *First*, determination of violation rests with the Tumutung, who monitor customary forest boundaries, though final adjudication in contested cases is referred to the Ammatoa. *Second*, sanctioning authority is similarly layered: the Ammatoa holds ultimate authority to impose customary sanctions, while Tumutung enforce boundary rules in routine cases.

Third, interview data indicate that compliance with Pasang is sustained by an overlapping combination of customary authority, religious conviction, and social accountability, rather than by any single source. Nine of the fifteen informants described their obedience as grounded simultaneously in respect for ancestral mandates and belief in accountability before Allah. Four informants emphasized customary authority and the threat of sanctions as their primary motivation, while two highlighted family reputation and community scrutiny, though both also referred to religious consequences. One Kajang Luar practitioner (CP5) explained: "*Kalau hanya takut denda, orang bisa melanggar saat tidak ada yang melihat. Kami*

patuh karena itu Pasang dari leluhur, dan kami percaya Allah mengetahui apa yang dilakukan terhadap hutan. Kalau merusak, malu kepada adat dan berdosa kepada Tuhan" ("If people feared only the fine, they could violate the rule when no one was watching. We comply because Pasang was entrusted by the ancestors, and we believe that Allah knows what is done to the forest. Damaging it brings shame before the customary community and constitutes a sin before God") (CP5, personal communication, 2025). Compliance is therefore not reducible to a single source of authority; it operates through the mutual reinforcement of customary legitimacy, internalized religious responsibility, and social accountability.

Fourth, the relationship between this customary system and state law remains only partially codified. Pasang directly regulates permitted and prohibited conduct within the customary forest, while village and regency institutions provide administrative recognition and, when necessary, support enforcement. During an inspection in April 2025, a village official and two Tumutung referred jointly to customary boundary markers and the territorial map recognized under the regional regulation, illustrating practical alignment between the two systems. Nevertheless, three informants reported that implementation becomes less consistent when disputes involve land bordering state-administered forests or areas claimed under external permits; in such cases, an Ammatoa decision retains strong customary and moral authority but may still require recognition and enforcement by village, regency, or forestry authorities. The relationship is therefore best understood as complementary but asymmetrical: Pasang regulates everyday conduct within the community, whereas state law determines the formal legal enforceability of customary territorial claims beyond it. Addressing these four questions is what elevates this section from a study of local wisdom to a socio-legal analysis of a functioning normative order.

Applying the Three-Level Framework

Applying this framework to the interview and observation data yields five value pairings between *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* and Pasang Ri Kajang, each assigned to the level the evidence currently supports rather than to the level either tradition might claim for itself.

First, *zuhd/kamase-masea* (Level 1, surface value similarity). The Islamic concept of *zuhd* and the Kajang principle of *kamase-masea* both valorize modest living and rejection of material excess. At present, this study substantiates this correspondence only at the level of surface value similarity: both traditions articulate comparable moral vocabulary around restraint, but the data available do not yet establish whether Kajang practitioners arrive at *kamase-masea* through reasoning that parallels Islamic *zuhd* discourse, or whether the two perform equivalent social functions in measurably comparable ways. As one religious figure from Kajang Luar (RF2) explained: "*Kamase-masea itu bagi kami sama dengan belajar hidup zuhud. Bukan berarti menolak rezeki, tetapi mengambil secukupnya supaya hati tidak dikuasai harta dan hutan tidak habis*" ("For us, *kamase-masea* is the same as learning to live with *zuhd*. It does not mean rejecting sustenance, but taking only what is sufficient so that the heart is not controlled by wealth and the forest is not exhausted") (RF2, personal communication, 2025). This account supports an explicit participant-level connection between modest living, spiritual restraint, and conservation, though it should not be generalized beyond the informants who articulated it, and the pairing is accordingly retained at Level 1 pending broader corroboration.

Second, *amānah/borong karama'* (Level 2, functional convergence). The framing of the customary forest as a spiritually significant trust shows movement toward functional convergence: both the Islamic concept of *amānah* and the Kajang treatment of *borong karama'* produce comparable behavioral outcomes, namely restraint from resource extraction grounded in belief that violation carries consequences beyond material loss. Across separate interviews, the four customary leaders independently recalled only two attempted incursions into Borong Karamaka between 2020 and 2025, both stopped before timber was removed. By comparison, a village official and three Kajang Luar residents collectively recalled nine unauthorized tree-cutting incidents in adjacent non-sacred or outer-use forest during the same period. These figures are triangulated informant estimates rather than a complete administrative register and are used here only as indicative evidence of stronger compliance within the sacred forest zone.

Third, *khilāfah/otoritas Ammatoa*. The comparison between the Ammatoa's role and the Islamic concept of *khilāfah* requires disaggregation rather than a single label. Structurally, the Ammatoa's function

as moral authority over community behavior parallels the social role scholars attribute to ulama in some Islamic contexts, a claim about functional convergence in social organization. However, the source of the Ammatoa's authority (perceived ancestral and spiritual connection, transmitted through customary succession) differs categorically from the source of *khilāfah* authority in Islamic doctrine (a universal human trusteeship grounded in revelation). This study therefore limits the claim to functional convergence in social organization, while noting the divergence in the underlying source of legitimacy as a point that limits how far the comparison can be extended.

Fourth, *mizān*/keseimbangan kosmos (Level 1, surface value similarity). The parallel between cosmic balance (*mizān*) in Islamic thought and Kajang belief in cosmic consequence for forest destruction remains at the level of surface value similarity pending further data: both invoke a notion of balance disrupted by human wrongdoing, but the mechanisms by which each tradition claims this balance operates (divine ordinance and moral accountability in Islam; ancestral and spirit-mediated consequence in Kajang cosmology) are not shown in the current data to share a common epistemic structure. This point is elaborated further in the Cosmological Tension section below. Fifth, *ihsān*/pengawasan sosial internal (Level 1 toward Level 2). The comparison between *ihsān* (awareness of being watched by God) and the Kajang ethic of self-restraint in the absence of external observers is a surface value similarity with reasonable plausibility of functional convergence, since both produce internalized compliance without external enforcement. One Kajang Dalam practitioner (CP3) explained: "*Walaupun Tumutung tidak ada, saya tidak berani mengambil kayu. Tidak dilihat manusia bukan berarti tidak diketahui. Turie' A'ra'na mengetahui, dan akibat merusak hutan akan kembali kepada kita*" ("Even when the Tumutung is absent, I do not dare take timber. Not being seen by people does not mean the act is unknown. Turie' A'ra'na knows, and the consequence of damaging the forest will return to us") (CP3, personal communication, 2025).

These statements illustrate internalized compliance operating without immediate external surveillance. Table 1 summarizes how each of these five *maqāṣid*, together with their supporting Islamic values, maps onto the specific elements of Pasang Ri Kajang identified through this analysis.

Table 1. Mapping of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, Supporting Islamic Values, and Pasang Ri Kajang

<i>Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah</i>	Supporting Islamic Values	Pasang Ri Kajang	Relationship
<i>Ḥifẓ al-Dīn</i> (Protection of religion)	<i>Amānah</i> and <i>Taqwā</i>	<i>Ammatoa's Authority</i>	Both position spiritual authority and adherence to noble values as the foundation of communal life.
<i>Ḥifẓ al-Nafs</i> (Protection of the self)	Zuhd, Qanā'ah	<i>Kamase-masea</i>	Simplicity of living limits the exploitation of nature and supports a sustainable way of life.
<i>Ḥifẓ al-'Aql</i> (Protection of the intellect)	<i>Ihsān</i> and <i>Ḥikmah</i>	<i>Internal Self-Restraint</i>	Self-control and wisdom encourage conduct that does not harm oneself, society, or the environment.
<i>Ḥifẓ al-Nasl</i> (Protection of posterity)	<i>Khilāfah</i> and <i>Amānah</i>	<i>Borong Karama'</i>	The sacred customary forest functions to preserve the sustainability of living space and ecological heritage for future generations.
<i>Ḥifẓ al-Māl</i> (Protection of property)	<i>Mizān</i> and <i>Qanā'ah</i>	<i>Cosmic Balance</i>	Balance in resource utilization prevents overexploitation and preserves sources of livelihood.
<i>Ḥifẓ al-Bi'ah</i> (Protection of the environment)	<i>Khilāfah</i> , <i>Mizān</i> , and <i>Amānah</i>	<i>Borong Karama'</i>	Humans, as <i>khalifah</i> , are responsible for maintaining ecological balance and the sustainability of nature.

Note. The "Relationship" column summarizes the interpretive link established through interview and observation data analyzed above; entries indicate functional or surface-level correspondence identified by this study, not a claim of doctrinal derivation between the two normative systems. The Data analysed by Authors, 2025.

Cosmological Tension: Where Convergence Breaks Down

The preceding analysis has deliberately avoided treating convergence as uniform across all elements of Pasang Ri Kajang. This section addresses directly what the original framing of "harmonization" elided:

the Kajang belief system includes cosmological elements, specifically belief in named forest guardian spirits (Dangempa, Damangnga Salang, Dakodo, Dalonjo) and practices associated with the Patuntung belief system, that sit in documented tension with Islamic doctrine on *tawhīd* and the unseen (*al-ghayb*). A study of Kajang Patuntung belief specifically documents tension between this cosmology and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* doctrine, particularly regarding death ritual and the nature of ancestral presence.

This study's own field data on how Muslim Kajang informants themselves navigate this tension is presented here. The interviews revealed significant variation rather than a single reconciled position. *First*, all four religious figures insisted that no being other than Allah possesses independent power: two treated the named forest guardians as ancestral language symbolizing ecological consequences, one described them as jinn created by and subordinate to Allah, and one avoided affirming their ontological status, emphasizing only the prohibition against forest destruction. Among the seven community practitioners, four used similarly subordinating language, whereas three described the guardians more literally and did not offer an explicit doctrinal reconciliation. *Second*, literal accounts appeared more often among older Kajang Dalam participants, while Kajang Luar participants and those with formal Islamic education more often used metaphorical or subordinating interpretations. *Third*, two religious figures reported explicitly teaching that Pasang remains morally authoritative only insofar as it does not contradict *tawhīd*: ancestral guidance may transmit wisdom, but Allah is the ultimate source of authority and consequence.

Read sociologically, this three-part pattern maps onto the dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reading positions Hall (1980) distinguishes in his account of how audiences receive an authoritative message: no informant occupied a purely dominant position of unreflective acceptance of ancestral cosmology at face value, and none occupied a purely oppositional position of rejecting Pasang outright; instead, the great majority, including the religious figures actively teaching the reinterpretation, occupied a negotiated position, retaining ancestral vocabulary while subordinating its authority to Allah. *Da'wah* on this cosmological question therefore appears to succeed less by displacing Pasang than by supplying *mad'u* a vocabulary they can adopt selectively, which is also why its reception remains uneven rather than complete.

Without this data, the study cannot claim that Muslim Kajang communities "do not perceive a contradiction" between Pasang and *Shari'ah*, as the original draft asserted. It can only report what is documented in the comparative literature: that tension exists in this community around specific cosmological elements, and that the ethical-normative elements of Pasang (*kamase-masea*, customary sanction, forest stewardship) show clearer alignment with Islamic values than do its cosmological elements. This distinction, between ethical-normative Pasang and cosmological-animistic Pasang, is itself an analytical contribution this revision introduces, since prior harmonization-framed studies treat Pasang as an undifferentiated whole.

Applying the Working Definitions of Ecological Waqf and Ecological Ijtihad

The zoning system distinguishing Borong Karamaka (sacred forest), Borong Batas (boundary forest), and Borong Luara (people's forest) shows structural resemblance to the *harim* and *hima* categories in Islamic environmental jurisprudence (Umam et al., 2026). This study uses the term "ecological *waqf*" explicitly as a functional analogy rather than a claim to a new category of Islamic law, a distinction assessed here against each classical rukn (pillar) of *waqf* in turn.

First, *wākif* (endower): classical *waqf* requires an identifiable individual or entity who makes a deliberate, verbalized act of endowment. No such act is documented for Borong Karamaka; its sacred status derives from ancestral custom transmitted across generations rather than from a founding declaration by any identifiable *wākif*. Second, *mawqūf* (the endowed asset): *waqf* requires an asset with clear, transferable ownership status prior to endowment. Customary forest land in Kajang is held communally under adat tenure, a status that does not map cleanly onto the individual or corporate ownership *fiqh* typically presumes as the pre-endowment condition of the *mawqūf*. Third, *mawqūf 'alayh* (the beneficiary): *waqf* designates a specific beneficiary, whether the public, a category of persons, or a purpose. The Kajang forest's beneficiary is, functionally, the Kajang community across generations, which resembles *waqf khayrī*

(charitable *waqf* for public benefit) in its diffuseness, though this resemblance has not been formalized through any legal instrument that would allow it to be administered as such.

Fourth, ownership and perpetuity (*ta'bid*): *waqf* permanently removes an asset from the endower's private ownership and dedicates it in perpetuity. Borong Karamaka's protection is likewise treated as perpetual and non-negotiable within Pasang, satisfying the functional criterion of permanence, but this permanence rests on customary and cosmological sanction rather than on the legal mechanism of *ta'bid*, and has never been tested against, for example, a claim of individual or state ownership that a formal *waqf* declaration would foreclose. Fifth, *nāzir* (custodian): *waqf* requires an appointed custodian accountable for managing the asset according to the endower's stipulation. The Tumutung perform a functionally equivalent role, monitoring and enforcing boundaries, but they are customary officials answerable to the Ammatoa and to Pasang, not *nāzir* appointed under, or accountable to, *fiqh* procedure.

Assessed *rukun* by *rukun*, the Kajang forest regime satisfies the functional intent of *waqf*, permanent, custodially managed protection of an asset for a diffuse beneficiary, without satisfying its formal legal architecture. This study therefore does not propose "ecological *waqf*" as a new category of Islamic law to be adjudicated as such, but as an analogy that illustrates what a legal recognition of customary forest protection would need to construct, *rukun* by *rukun*, were such recognition to be pursued in future doctrinal or policy work.

This study revises the original characterization of Kajang conservation practice as a form of "ecological *ijtihad*." *Ijtihad* in classical *usul al-fiqh* requires a qualified interpreter (*mujtahid*) reasoning from revealed sources. Pasang Ri Kajang is not the product of reasoning from Islamic textual sources; it is an independent customary tradition. This study therefore does not extend the term "ecological *ijtihad*" to Pasang itself. Where the term may legitimately apply is to any documented reasoning process among Muslim Kajang religious figures who actively interpret Islamic sources to accommodate or critique specific customary practices. One village imam (RF1) as a local religious authority, explicitly reasoned from Qur'an 7:56 (the prohibition on causing corruption on earth), the concept of *amānah*, and the maxim *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* to reinterpret warnings about forest guardians, explaining that the ancestral language should not be treated as assigning autonomous power to spirits, but rather as a locally intelligible warning that environmental destruction violates the trust given by Allah and produces real social and ecological harm. Because this reasoning starts from Islamic textual and legal principles and evaluates a specific customary belief against them, this case is treated here as a limited, informant-level instance of ecological *ijtihad*, not as evidence that Pasang itself is a product of *ijtihad*. Sociologically, RF1's move is better described as *da'wah bil-hikmah*: rather than confronting the customary belief directly, he reframes its vocabulary from within, preserving the community's ancestral language while redirecting its authority toward Allah, a pattern of cultural accommodation documented elsewhere as central to how *da'wah* succeeds among custom-holding communities.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine at what analytical level *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* within *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and Pasang Ri Kajang converge, and where that convergence breaks down. The ethical-normative dimensions of Pasang, *kamase-masea*, customary sanctions, and stewardship of borong karama', converge functionally with Islamic principles such as *zuhd*, *amānah*, and *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*, while its cosmological dimensions, particularly belief in named forest guardian spirits, remain at most a surface-level parallel with Islamic doctrine on *tawḥīd*. This differentiated answer, rather than a claim of uniform harmony, is the study's central contribution: treating Pasang as an undifferentiated whole obscures this distinction and its implications for how far integration with Islamic doctrine can be claimed. Muslim Kajang informants negotiated this dual authority unevenly: those with closer ties to formal Islamic education reinterpreted guardian-spirit narratives symbolically, subordinating ancestral to divine authority, while others retained literal cosmological accounts alongside continued Islamic practice without systematic reconciliation. This variation is not incidental but central to the argument: institutional exposure functions as a behavioral mechanism, and because the case for elevating *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* to *maqṣad* status rests on the ethical-normative

dimensions of Pasang, both groups converge on the same practical outcomes regardless of how they resolve the cosmological question, qualifying the scope of the convergence claim without undermining it.

The study suggests that *da'wah* toward customary communities succeeds through cultural accommodation rather than confrontation, and that its reception is negotiated rather than passively absorbed. The local religious authority's reinterpretation of guardian-spirit warnings exemplifies *da'wah bil-hikmah*, retaining ancestral vocabulary while redirecting its authority toward Allah and informants' clustering in a negotiated rather than dominant or oppositional reading position, shows *mad'u* actively reworking *da'wah*'s message according to their institutional exposure. *Da'wah*'s durability among the Kajang therefore rests on supplying an alternative moral vocabulary community members can adopt selectively, a strategy whose success accounts for why its reception remains uneven rather than complete.

Acknowledgement

The authors extend sincere gratitude and highest appreciation to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education (DIKTIS), for its research funding support under the Litapdimas scheme. Special acknowledgment is also directed to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) of IAIN Parepare for its excellent management and facilitation of this research. The author further thanks the Ammatoa traditional leaders and the Kajang community for their permission and invaluable information. Finally, heartfelt appreciation is conveyed to colleagues and all parties who provided technical assistance and intellectual contributions, enabling the completion of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. This research was conducted independently without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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