

## Indigenous Communities' Spatial Perceptions of the Concepts of "Sacred Space" and "Profane Space" A Study of the Traditional Village of Beleq Gumantar

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### Abstract

*Space is an important element in indigenous communities because it reflects cultural values, belief systems, and patterns of social life. This study aims to analyze indigenous community perceptions of sacred and profane spaces in the Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village, North Lombok Regency, identify the forms and meanings of spaces perceived as sacred or profane, and explain how these perceptions influence spatial utilization practices. The research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving traditional leaders, religious leaders, cultural custodians, and community members. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the indigenous community has a clear perception of the distinction between sacred and profane spaces. Sacred spaces are associated with ritual activities, religious practices, and ancestral reverence, while profane spaces are used for social, economic, and domestic activities. These perceptions influence patterns of spatial utilization, accessibility, and customary regulations governing the use of space. The study also reveals that perceptions of sacred and profane spaces contribute to maintaining social order, preserving cultural identity, and sustaining traditional spatial systems despite the challenges posed by modernization. This research contributes to the understanding of spatial perception in indigenous communities and provides insights for cultural heritage preservation and culturally based spatial planning.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Space is a fundamental element in human society that serves not only as a setting for activities but also as a representation of the values, norms, and belief systems that develop within a community[1]. In indigenous societies, space possesses a more complex dimension because it is understood as part of a cosmological order that connects humans, nature, ancestors, and spiritual forces. This understanding gives rise to a classification of space based on its level of sacredness: sacred space and profane space. Sacred spaces are generally used for ritual activities, honoring ancestors, and religious practices, while profane spaces are utilized for social and economic activities and daily life[2]. This division of space serves as a crucial foundation for the formation of indigenous communities' spatial structures and plays a role in preserving the continuity of cultural identities passed down through generations[3].

Ideally, the concepts of sacred and profane spaces are reflected not only in the physical form of settlements but also in the community's perceptions and interpretations of the spaces they inhabit. Spatial perception is a cognitive process that enables individuals or groups to understand, interpret, and assign meaning to their surroundings based on their experiences, cultural values, and belief systems[4]. In the context of indigenous communities, perceptions of space play a strategic role in determining patterns of land use, rules of accessibility, and the nature of interactions between people and their environment[5]. Therefore, understanding the community's spatial perceptions is crucial for explaining how the concepts of sacred and profane spaces are maintained in daily life.

Various studies show that the spatial structure of indigenous societies is shaped by the cosmological views and cultural values that have developed within those communities. Eliade's analysis explains that sacred space serves as the central orientation of life, possessing spiritual significance and clearly distinguished from profane space used for daily activities[6]. Rapoport asserts that spatial organization in traditional societies is influenced by the cultural system, social norms, and beliefs that have developed within the community[7]. Research on indigenous settlements in Indonesia also indicates that traditional spatial arrangements reflect the close relationship between the physical, social, and spiritual aspects of community life [8], [9]. Among the Sasak people, traditional settlement patterns are known to be based on cosmological values that govern spatial hierarchies as well as the relationships between humans, the environment, and ancestors[10].

Nevertheless, most previous research has focused on the physical aspects of spatial planning, settlement patterns, and traditional architectural characteristics. Studies that specifically examine community perceptions of sacred and profane spaces as socio-cultural constructs remain relatively limited. Furthermore, research on the Sasak indigenous community has largely emphasized cosmological aspects, traditional building forms, and cultural preservation, while understanding of how the community interprets sacred and profane spaces in the context of contemporary life has not been extensively explored. Yet, the progression of modernization, population mobility, and increasing interaction with external cultures have the potential to influence the community's perceptions of spaces that have long been integral to their cultural identity[11].

Given these circumstances, this study offers a different perspective by placing the spatial perceptions of indigenous communities at the center of understanding the concepts of sacred and profane spaces in the traditional village of Beleq Gumantar. This research lies in its effort to uncover the meanings that communities construct regarding space through a spatial perception approach, thereby explaining not only the physical form of the space but also the values, experiences, and interpretations that underpin its existence. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of cultural geography, spatial anthropology, and traditional settlement studies, as well as practical contributions to efforts in cultural heritage preservation and the sustainable management of indigenous territories.

Based on the above description, the research questions in this study are: How do perceptions of sacred and profane spaces influence patterns of space utilization in the social and cultural life of indigenous communities?

This study aims to analyze the indigenous community's spatial perceptions of the concepts of sacred and profane spaces in Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village, identify the forms and meanings of spaces perceived as sacred or profane, and explain the influence of these perceptions on spatial utilization practices in the lives of the indigenous community.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods to understand indigenous communities' perceptions of sacred and profane spaces in the traditional village of Beleq Gumantar, North Lombok Regency. This approach is used to explore the experiences,

meanings, and cultural values that underlie the community's understanding of space in their social and spiritual lives.

Research data was collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to identify the form, function, and use of space within the traditional settlement[12]. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, religious leaders, cultural custodians, and community members who understand the history and spatial layout of the Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village. Documentation in the form of photographs, maps, village archives, and other supporting documents was used to supplement the research data.

The research variables include perceptions of sacred space, perceptions of profane space, and the use of space. Perceptions of sacred space are analyzed through spiritual meaning, ritual functions, symbolic value, and customary rules. Perceptions of profane space are examined based on social functions, economic activities, and domestic activities of the community. Meanwhile, the use of space is analyzed through patterns of space usage, accessibility, and spatial restrictions that apply in the lives of indigenous communities.

The research was conducted in several stages, namely a literature review, preliminary observations, selection of informants, data collection, data analysis, and drawing conclusions. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. To ensure data validity, source triangulation and method triangulation were performed by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation from various informants.

The results of the analysis are used to explain how the indigenous community of Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village interprets sacred and profane spaces and how this influences patterns of spatial use in the community's social, cultural, and religious life.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1.1. Research Results

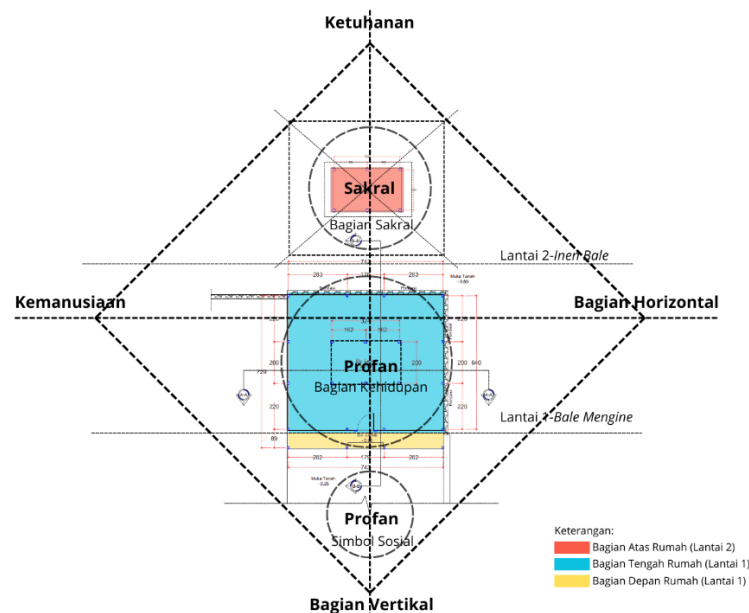
The research findings indicate that the indigenous community of Beleq Gumantar Village has a clear understanding of the classification of sacred and profane spaces within their traditional settlement. This classification is based on cultural values, community beliefs, the functions of these spaces, and customary rules passed down through generations. Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews, sacred spaces are generally associated with ritual, religious, and ancestral reverence activities, while profane spaces are used for the community's social, economic, and domestic activities.



Imger 1. Map of the Location and Spatial Structure of the Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village

Research findings indicate that sacred spaces consist of locations of high spiritual significance that are used for traditional ceremonies and religious activities. The existence of sacred spaces

is viewed as a symbol of the relationship between the community and its ancestors, nature, and spiritual forces. In contrast, profane spaces include homes, yards, neighborhood streets, farmland, and community gathering places that serve to meet the needs of daily life.



Imger 2. Sacred Space and Profane Space in the Traditional Village of Beleq Gumantar

Research findings also indicate that perceptions of space influence patterns of space utilization in community life. Spaces perceived as sacred have more limited accessibility and are governed by specific customary regulations. Conversely, profane spaces have greater accessibility and are used flexibly according to the community’s needs.

Table 1. Classification of Sacred and Profane Spaces in the Traditional Village of Beleq Gumantar.

Type of Space	Primary Function	Meaning Attributed by the Community
Sacred Space	Ritual and religious	Spiritual, symbolic, ancestral heritage
Profane Space	Social, economic, domestic	Practical, social, productive

In addition, the study’s findings reveal that the community continues to uphold customary rules governing the use of sacred spaces as a means of preserving their cultural identity. On the other hand, modernization and interaction with outsiders are beginning to influence how some members of the younger generation view the function and significance of these spaces within the traditional community.



Imger 3. Spatial Utilization Model Based on Public Perception

Overall, the research findings indicate that perceptions of sacred and profane spaces play a significant role in shaping patterns of land use, maintaining social order, and preserving the cultural sustainability of the indigenous community in Beleq Gumantar Village.

## 1.2. Discussion

Research findings indicate that the public's perception of sacred and profane spaces is shaped not only by the physical characteristics of these spaces but also by the value systems, beliefs, and cosmological views that have developed within the Sasak indigenous community. These findings align with Mircea Eliade's view that sacred spaces serve as the focal point of a community's life because they possess spiritual significance that distinguishes them from profane spaces used for daily activities.

The presence of sacred spaces in the traditional village of Beleq Gumantar indicates that the community continues to maintain a symbolic connection between humans, ancestors, and the surrounding environment. These spaces serve not only as sites for rituals but also as a means of transmitting cultural values and the community's collective identity. This finding supports Amos Rapoport's view that the organization of space in traditional societies is strongly influenced by the cultural systems and beliefs that have developed within the community.

This study also shows that perceptions of the sacredness of a space have a direct influence on patterns of space utilization. Spaces considered sacred have stricter rules of use, limited accessibility, and more specific functions compared to profane spaces. These conditions indicate that perceptions of space function as a social mechanism that regulates people's behavior in using space. Thus, the use of space is determined not only by functional needs but also by the symbolic meanings attached to that space.

On the other hand, secular spaces serve as the primary venues for the community's social, economic, and domestic activities. The flexibility in the use of secular spaces demonstrates that the community is able to distinguish between the functions of spaces based on their level of sacredness. This distinction creates a balance between the practical needs of daily life and the spiritual needs that form an integral part of the indigenous community's cultural system.

The research findings also indicate that modernization influences perceptions of space, particularly among the younger generation. Increased access to education, technology, and interaction with foreign cultures has the potential to change people's perspectives on traditional spaces. Nevertheless, the existence of customary institutions and the regular performance of rituals remain important factors in preserving the significance of sacred spaces in community life.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that space is a social and cultural construct shaped by collective experiences, cultural values, and the community's belief systems. In practical terms, the study's findings can serve as a foundation for efforts to preserve customary territories, develop culturally-based spatial management policies, and foster cultural tourism that respects the local values of the indigenous community of Beleq Gumantar Village.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that space functions not only as a physical setting for community activities but also as a medium for cultural reproduction within the indigenous community. Sacred spaces serve not only as locations for rituals and religious ceremonies but also as places where cultural values, norms, and local knowledge are transmitted from one generation to another. Through customary ceremonies and traditional practices carried out regularly, community members reinforce their collective understanding of the relationship between humans, ancestors, nature, and spiritual forces. This finding suggests that sacred spaces play an important role in maintaining cultural continuity and strengthening community identity[13].

The results also support the view that space is socially and culturally constructed through human interaction, beliefs, and experiences. According to Lefebvre, space should not be understood solely as a physical entity but also as a social product shaped by cultural meanings and social relations[14]. In the context of Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village, the meanings attached to sacred and profane spaces are formed through customary rules, religious beliefs,

and collective experiences that have developed over generations. Consequently, the classification of space reflects not only functional differences but also the cultural worldview of the indigenous community.

Another important finding is that the distinction between sacred and profane spaces contributes significantly to social order within the village. Customary regulations governing accessibility, permitted activities, and behavioral norms in specific spaces function as mechanisms of social control. These regulations guide community members in their interactions with space and help maintain harmony among individuals and groups. From an anthropological perspective, such spatial regulations represent an institutionalized cultural system that supports social cohesion and collective identity[15]. Therefore, the perception of space becomes an important factor in regulating community behavior and maintaining the stability of social life.

The study further reveals that perceptions of sacred space contribute to environmental conservation practices. Areas regarded as sacred are generally protected from excessive exploitation because the community believes that these spaces possess spiritual significance and must be preserved. Such beliefs indirectly encourage sustainable environmental management and support the conservation of natural resources surrounding the settlement. Similar phenomena have been identified in many indigenous communities, where sacred sites often function as traditional conservation areas that protect biodiversity and ecological balance[16]. This finding demonstrates that cultural beliefs can play an important role in promoting environmental sustainability.

In contrast, profane spaces exhibit a more adaptive character in responding to social and economic changes. These spaces accommodate various productive activities, including farming, social interaction, community gatherings, and household activities. Their flexible nature allows community members to adjust spatial utilization according to changing needs while still respecting customary values and spatial hierarchies. This balance between tradition and adaptation illustrates the resilience of the indigenous spatial system in facing contemporary challenges.

The influence of modernization identified in this study also deserves attention. Increasing access to education, technology, information, and interaction with external communities has gradually affected how younger generations perceive traditional spaces. Some traditional meanings and symbolic values associated with sacred spaces may become less understood over time. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that customary institutions, traditional leaders, and regular ritual activities continue to play a significant role in preserving the cultural meanings attached to sacred spaces. This suggests that the indigenous community of Beleq Gumantar is not passively resisting change but rather adapting to modern developments while maintaining essential cultural values and traditions[17].

Overall, this study confirms that perceptions of sacred and profane spaces are fundamental factors influencing patterns of spatial utilization in the social, cultural, and religious life of the indigenous community. These perceptions shape customary regulations, determine the functions of space, and guide community behavior in interacting with the environment. Consequently, space should be understood not merely as a physical environment but also as a cultural and symbolic construct that reflects the identity, beliefs, and social organization of indigenous societies. These findings reinforce previous studies emphasizing that understanding the cultural meanings of space is essential for interpreting the social and spatial systems of traditional communities [6], [7], [14].

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

This study shows that the indigenous community of Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village has a clear perception of sacred and profane spaces based on the cultural values, traditional beliefs, and cosmological views of the Sasak people. Sacred spaces are understood as spaces of high spiritual value used for ritual and religious activities, as well as for honoring ancestors, while

profane spaces are utilized for social and economic activities and daily life. The research findings indicate that the community's perceptions of space influence patterns of spatial use, where sacred spaces have stricter usage rules and limited access, while profane spaces are utilized more flexibly according to the community's needs. These perceptions play a role in maintaining social order, preserving cultural values, and upholding the identity of the indigenous community. Although modernization is beginning to influence the community's perspectives, particularly among the younger generation, the existence of traditional institutions and the practice of traditional rituals remain crucial factors in preserving the meaning and function of sacred spaces in the Beleq Gumantar Traditional Village.

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