

Customary Leadership and Power Relations in the Preservation of the Wonosadi Customary Forest: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Onggoloco Myth

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how the Onggoloco myth is employed by customary leaders as a leadership strategy in preserving the Wonosadi Customary Forest, while also explaining the configuration of power relations among customary leaders, local communities, and nature through the perspective of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations. The research adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive interpretative approach, drawing on secondary data obtained through an extensive literature review, including academic publications, cultural documents, and findings from previous studies. The analysis reveals that customary leadership in Wonosadi is not coercive in nature but operates through symbolic discourse and local knowledge systems that cultivate ecological awareness and voluntary compliance within the community. The Onggoloco myth functions as a form of productive environmental power that generates social discipline, ethical norms, and subtle forms of resistance to external interventions. Consequently, customary leadership represents a productive mode of power that sustains harmony among humans, nature, and spirituality.

Keywords: Customary leadership, Power relations, Onggoloco myth, Customary forest governance, Foucaultian analysis; Environmental conservation; Local knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership within traditional Indonesian societies is a social construct deeply rooted in collective values, local knowledge, and belief systems. In this context, leadership is not merely understood as a formal or structural position, but as a symbolic form of power that regulates the balance between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Such leadership models have endured across indigenous communities because they are believed to maintain social order and support environmental aspirations (Rahmah & Wulandari, 2024). A concrete example of this phenomenon can be found in the Wonosadi Customary Forest community in Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta, where customary leadership is inseparable from local belief systems embodied in the Onggoloco myth. This myth is not merely a hereditary legend, but a source of social values and norms that shape community behavior toward the environment (Setiawan et al., 2025). Through this myth, customary leadership reinforces environmental preservation and cultivates collective ecological awareness.

Within Wonosadi belief systems, Onggoloco is portrayed as a supernatural guardian of the forest, possessing the power to bestow blessings upon those who obey customary rules and to bring misfortune to those who violate them (Setiawan et al., 2025). The narrative of Onggoloco conveys the understanding that human well-being depends on harmony with nature. Prohibitions against cutting large trees, extracting forest resources without

permission, or speaking disrespectfully within the forest area are perceived as acts of respect toward both the forest guardian and the natural environment (Burhanuddin, 2024). Consequently, the Onggoloco myth functions as an effective mechanism of social control. The values embedded within it serve as moral guidelines that regulate community interactions with the environment, fostering respect, fear, and collective responsibility. These emotions sustain spiritual balance and encourage culturally grounded conservation practices transmitted symbolically across generations (Enarson et al., 2017; Schubert, 2021).

Traditional leadership in Wonosadi represents a discourse-based form of authority rather than coercive power. The customary leader, locally known as the juru kunci, derives legitimacy not from formal office but from spiritual and moral capacity to interpret the symbolic messages embedded in the Onggoloco myth (Burhanuddin, 2024). Acting as an intermediary between humans and the supernatural forces believed to safeguard ecological balance, this leadership relies on the internalization of values through rituals and sacred symbols rather than direct commands. Community compliance emerges not from fear of human sanctions, but from the internalization of moral principles transmitted by traditional leaders (Amini et al., 2020). In this sense, customary leadership functions as a value-based system that regulates collective behavior through symbolic mechanisms, where power and morality converge to foster both ecological and spiritual consciousness.

Michel Foucault's conceptualization of the relationship between power and knowledge provides a useful analytical lens for understanding customary leadership in Wonosadi. Foucault argues that power is not centralized within a single individual or institution, but is embedded within social practices, language, and knowledge systems (Lemke, 2015). Power operates not primarily through coercion, but through shaping ways of thinking and acting. From this perspective, the Onggoloco myth can be understood as a form of cultural knowledge that naturalizes the authority of customary leaders. Through this myth, leaders acquire moral legitimacy to regulate social behavior, while community members accept this authority because it is believed to originate from spiritual forces (Villadsen, 2021). Thus, power in Wonosadi society is productive rather than repressive, as it generates internal discipline that maintains social order and promotes environmental conservation without direct enforcement.

The power relations formed through the Onggoloco myth demonstrate how cultural knowledge functions as an effective technology of power. Community compliance is not solely driven by fear of spiritual punishment, but also by an understanding of the ecological values underlying customary rules. Prohibitions derived from the myth, such as restrictions on tree cutting, cave destruction, or interference with sacred stones serve concrete ecological functions by preserving forest ecosystems and preventing resource exploitation (Setiawan et al., 2025). In this way, the Onggoloco myth operates as a symbolic conservation system that connects spirituality with environmental ethics. The power generated through this discourse not only sustains customary authority, but also cultivates ecological awareness that encourages voluntary stewardship of nature.

Amid processes of modernization and global economic penetration, the Onggoloco myth faces challenges from capitalist logics and bureaucratic systems that often marginalize local values (Setiawan et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the persistence of this myth represents a form of ecological resistance against external domination that threatens environmental balance. When state policies or economic interests attempt to control indigenous environmental spaces, the Onggoloco myth functions as a symbolic form of resistance that preserves cultural and spiritual integrity (Rahmah & Wulandari, 2024). In this context, customary leaders act as negotiators who mediate between traditional values and modern demands. From a Foucauldian perspective, this illustrates that local power is not merely subordinate to external systems, but is capable of producing counter-discourses that maintain epistemic autonomy and indigenous leadership.

The preservation of the Wonosadi Customary Forest through the Onggoloco myth reflects a model of leadership grounded in local wisdom that places cosmic balance at the core of social ethics. Values such as moderation, mutual cooperation, and respect for nature are sustained through rituals such as forest slametan and village cleansing ceremonies. In each ritual, customary leaders serve as guardians of tradition and transmitters of moral and ecological messages. Myth, leadership, and ritual together form a network of meaning that sustains social order while safeguarding the natural environment. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine how the Onggoloco myth is utilized as a strategy of customary leadership in forest preservation and how power relations are constructed among customary leaders, local communities, and nature. Theoretically, this research contributes to leadership studies and Foucauldian power theory, while reinforcing the significance of local wisdom in environmental conservation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive–interpretative approach. This approach is selected because it aligns with the research objective, which seeks to understand the meanings underlying traditional leadership practices and the function of the Onggoloco myth in the social life of the Wonosadi community. Qualitative research enables an in-depth exploration of social realities by interpreting symbols, values, and

discourses embedded within a community (Creswell, 2014). Rather than measuring phenomena quantitatively, this study aims to explore the meanings contained in cultural practices and traditional knowledge. Accordingly, the analysis focuses on how myth and traditional leadership operate as systems of meaning and technologies of power, as conceptualized through Michel Foucault's theory of power–knowledge relations. All data used in this study are secondary sources obtained through a systematic review of literature and relevant documents. These sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journals, previous research reports, scholarly articles, policy archives, and cultural documentation related to the Wonosadi Customary Forest and the Onggoloco myth. Additional data are drawn from credible sources such as local government publications, writings by cultural figures, and academic studies examining traditional leadership practices in Indonesia. The selection of secondary data is conducted selectively by considering validity, relevance, and direct relevance to issues of customary leadership, environmental conservation, and Foucauldian power relations.

Data collection is carried out through a literature study that examines and identifies key themes emerging from multiple sources. This process involves close reading, systematic note-taking, and the classification of data based on analytical categories such as traditional leadership concepts, the Onggoloco myth, belief systems, and power–knowledge relations within the community. The data are then thematically analyzed to identify patterns linking leadership practices, social structures, and ecological values. Historical and cultural contexts are taken into account to ensure that interpretations remain grounded in the social framework of the Wonosadi community. Data analysis applies a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach, interpreting the Onggoloco myth as a form of power discourse that shapes knowledge and social behavior. This analysis explores how traditional leadership gains legitimacy through myth-based narratives and how these discourses cultivate ecological awareness within the community. Interpretation is conducted hermeneutically by integrating textual analysis (myths and cultural narratives) with their underlying social contexts. The findings are expected to demonstrate that the Onggoloco myth functions not only as cultural heritage but also as a mechanism of productive power that sustains social and ecological balance within the Wonosadi Customary Forest.

Table 1. Operational Definitions

Variable / Concept	Operational Definition	Data Source	Analytical Technique
Customary Leadership	A form of authority exercised by traditional leaders (<i>juru kunci</i>) through symbolic legitimacy, rituals, and moral guidance rather than formal or coercive power	Academic literature, cultural documents, previous studies	Thematic analysis
Onggoloco Myth	A cultural narrative depicting a supernatural forest guardian that regulates social behavior and environmental ethics within the Wonosadi community	Myth texts, cultural documentation, scholarly interpretations	Foucauldian discourse analysis
Power Relations	The configuration of power operating through knowledge, belief systems, and discourse that shapes community behavior without direct coercion	Theoretical literature (Foucault), empirical cultural studies	Interpretative analysis
Ecological Awareness	Collective understanding and ethical orientation toward environmental preservation shaped by myths, norms, and customary rules	Environmental studies, cultural analyses	Thematic categorization
Power–Knowledge	The interrelation between cultural knowledge (myth, belief, ritual) and the production of authority and social discipline	Foucauldian theory, secondary data	Hermeneutic interpretation
Symbolic Conservation	Environmentally protective practices sustained through symbolic meanings, prohibitions, and rituals rather than formal regulation	Cultural documentation, conservation studies	Analytical synthesis

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Power Knowledge Relations in the Traditional Leadership of Wonosadi

In Michel Foucault's theory, power is not merely understood as an instrument of domination derived from political authority, but rather as a network of relations that permeates all social practices (Raffnsøe et al., 2016, 2019). Power is present in the production of knowledge and shapes how individuals understand reality. The relationship between power and knowledge (power/knowledge) is mutually constitutive: knowledge becomes a medium through which power operates, while power produces forms of knowledge that regulate human conduct. In the context of the Wonosadi Customary Forest, this relationship is clearly visible in the way the Onggoloco myth and the traditional leadership system operate as discourses that regulate social behavior. The knowledge

generated through this myth is not scientific-rational in nature, but symbolic and spiritual. Nevertheless, through this form of knowledge, customary power gains moral legitimacy to regulate the relationship between humans and nature, thereby maintaining social stability without direct coercion.

The Onggoloco myth functions as a mechanism of cultural knowledge that structures power relations between traditional leaders and the community. Knowledge of Onggoloco as a supernatural forest guardian, transmitted orally across generations, forms a collective belief structure that fosters fear and reverence. The pengurus (customary caretakers) serve as central figures in maintaining the continuity of this knowledge, as they possess the authority to interpret the myth and determine appropriate modes of interaction with nature. Their power does not stem from formal office, but from their capacity to preserve and articulate sacred symbolic knowledge. Within Foucault's framework, this illustrates that customary power operates not through legal hierarchies, but through epistemic authority. Such power is accepted because it is perceived as originating from ancestral spiritual knowledge rather than from physical or political domination.

This relationship between power and knowledge is manifested through rituals and customary laws in everyday practice. For instance, community members are prohibited from cutting large trees, speaking harshly within forest areas, or harvesting forest products without permission from the caretakers. These regulations constitute moral norms embedded in knowledge institutionalized through the Onggoloco myth. Customary power operates not through violence, but through the creation of internalized social awareness. Community compliance arises from the belief that violating customary law will result in misfortune. This represents a form of "inner discipline," as conceptualized by Foucault, in which power functions through psychological and symbolic mechanisms rather than repression. Consequently, obedience to customary law is the result of internalizing knowledge produced by myth and discourse within the social structure.

Foucault refers to this mechanism as a *dispositif* a network of power and knowledge that governs social behavior through signs, narratives, and practices (Raffnsøe et al., 2019; Schubert, 2021; Villadsen, 2021). In Wonosadi society, this *dispositif* is embodied in the Onggoloco myth as a cultural text that materializes an ecological value system. When traditional leaders recount these myths during rituals, they are not merely telling stories, but actively renewing the epistemic structures that underpin their authority. Each ceremony such as village cleansing rituals or forest thanksgiving rites becomes a moment of discursive reproduction, in which power is exercised through symbolic communication. Power and knowledge mutually reinforce one another in shaping community mindsets. Thus, power relations in Wonosadi society are productive, as they generate social practices that sustain ecological balance and the spiritual legitimacy of traditional leaders.

Power-knowledge relations are also evident in how the community interprets nature as a living entity inhabited by guardian spirits. This worldview arises from spiritual beliefs and is reinforced by the customary power system that supports such knowledge. The community internalizes ecological values by positioning nature as part of a sacred cosmic order. Foucault emphasizes that every form of knowledge establishes a "regime of truth" that determines how humans understand the world. In this context, the Onggoloco myth constructs a local regime of truth that frames environmental conservation as a moral and religious obligation. Traditional leaders act as custodians of this truth through their interpretive authority, articulating prohibitions and interpreting spiritual signs perceived as communication between humans and nature. Consequently, traditional leadership functions as a vehicle of knowledge that sustains ecological and spiritual continuity.

Within Foucault's power relations framework, customary leaders can be understood as subjects of power who are themselves produced by discourse. They do not exist outside the system but operate within it. Their authority is granted because the community recognizes them as inheritors of ancestral knowledge. At the same time, they are shaped by collective beliefs that position them as moral symbols. This process demonstrates that power within Wonosadi society is circular, flowing from top to bottom and from bottom to top. The community legitimizes customary leaders because it believes in the knowledge they represent. This relationship exemplifies productive power rather than repressive power power that generates willingness through shared systems of meaning.

Thus, the relationship between power and knowledge in the Wonosadi Customary Forest illustrates how mystical discourse can serve as a medium for cultivating ecological and social consciousness. Customary power does not operate through violence, but through symbolic knowledge that shapes collective awareness. The Onggoloco myth functions as an instrument of power that regulates behavior without coercion, because ecological values have been internalized as part of spiritual morality. From a Foucauldian perspective, this represents a form of the microphysics of power, wherein power is embedded in everyday practices and produces social order without overt domination. Through this power-knowledge relationship, traditional leadership in Wonosadi continues to endure amid the forces of modernization, demonstrating that local knowledge systems possess the capacity to challenge and negotiate modern forms of power that often disregard ecological and cultural values.

Discipline and Surveillance in the Traditional Leadership of Wonosadi

In Michel Foucault's thought, discipline is a mechanism of power that shapes individuals to act in accordance with norms without requiring external coercion (Villadsen, 2021). Disciplinary power operates through surveillance, assessment, and habituation, guiding individuals to voluntarily adjust their behavior. This form of power is not repressive but productive, as it creates "docile bodies" and "submissive souls" through the internalization of social values. In the context of the Wonosadi Customary Forest, disciplinary mechanisms are clearly visible in the way the community enforces customary rules derived from the Onggoloco myth. Prohibitions against cutting trees, speaking rudely, or taking anything from the forest without permission are not enforced through violence. Instead, there exists a shared spiritual awareness that violations will result in misfortune. Surveillance functions symbolically and collectively, with all community members participating in maintaining adherence to customary norms.

Surveillance in Wonosadi society is not conducted by formal officials or institutions, but by social structures and collective belief systems. Each individual acts as a monitor of both themselves and others, believing that they are constantly observed by the supernatural presence of Onggoloco (Lemke, 2015; Raffnsøe et al., 2016). In Foucauldian terms, this resembles the concept of the panopticon, where surveillance need not be physically visible but merely perceived to influence behavior. The belief that forest guardian spirits are always present creates a permanent disciplinary effect. Individuals fear not only social sanctions but also spiritual consequences such as illness, crop failure, or natural disasters. This mechanism illustrates how power operates through consciousness rather than force. Consequently, customary surveillance is internalized, producing an effective form of social control without external intervention from state authorities or formal legal institutions.

Rituals and customary ceremonies in Wonosadi serve as primary instruments for reinforcing collective discipline (Wiyantari Sutaryantha & Kusumasari, 2020). Through village cleansing rituals, forest celebrations, and communal prayers, the community is continually reminded of the moral values embedded within the Onggoloco myth. Traditional leaders act as ritual custodians who interpret spiritual signs and reaffirm behavioral boundaries. From a Foucauldian perspective, these ritual practices represent a reenactment of power, wherein discipline is renewed and institutionalized through symbols. Each ritual functions as a space for moral formation and surveillance. Participation signifies not merely adherence to tradition, but also the affirmation of one's position as a subject within the customary knowledge system. Thus, rituals are not solely religious activities but also instruments of social control that reinforce cohesion and order within the community.

Foucault explains that discipline regulates space, time, and bodily actions (Schubert, 2021). In Wonosadi society, this regulation is evident in the structured interaction between the community and the forest environment. Different forest zones possess distinct statuses: sacred areas that require permission to enter, prohibited zones for resource extraction, and communal spaces designated for collective activities. This spatial organization is both ecological and symbolic, teaching the community to recognize moral and spiritual boundaries. Through this spatial arrangement, individuals learn physical and psychological discipline, as their bodies become accustomed to submitting to customary norms. From a Foucauldian perspective, this constitutes spatial discipline a mechanism through which power creates social order by repeatedly regulating space and behavior in everyday life.

Another dimension of discipline involves how the community evaluates and monitors the behavior of its members. In Wonosadi tradition, violations of customary law are not immediately punished through public sanctions but through social consequences such as warnings, social exclusion, or loss of honor. This mechanism creates horizontal surveillance, whereby all members participate in enforcing norms. In Foucauldian theory, this reflects a disciplinary society that governs itself through internal mechanisms. No formal authority is required to impose control, as individuals perceive themselves as part of the surveillance system. Moral sanctions are often more effective than legal penalties because they penetrate individual consciousness. As a result, customary discipline forms a distributed network of surveillance, operating within everyday social interactions imbued with symbolic and spiritual meaning.

The system of discipline and surveillance in Wonosadi society also possesses an ecological dimension. Prohibitions against cutting large trees or damaging sacred sites not only maintain spiritual harmony but also contribute directly to environmental conservation. Customary discipline thus functions as a form of "ecological surveillance" that sustains balance between humans and nature. Foucault characterizes such power as productive power—power that generates beneficial knowledge and practices. Through belief in Onggoloco, the community adheres to ecological regulations without feeling coerced. This ecological discipline does not originate from governmental policy but emerges from local knowledge structures. Consequently, customary surveillance regulates social behavior while simultaneously functioning as a culturally grounded and participatory model of environmental governance.

Through a Foucauldian analysis, it can be concluded that discipline and surveillance within the traditional leadership system of Wonosadi operate as subtle yet effective mechanisms of power. This power does not compel

obedience through force, but shapes individual consciousness through symbols, beliefs, and social routines. The Onggoloco myth functions as the discursive center that quietly maintains moral and ecological discipline, while traditional leaders act as symbolic administrators of surveillance mechanisms. In this context, the community is not merely observed but actively integrates itself into the collective value framework. This represents a form of modern power disguised as traditional authority, as described by Foucault a form of power that does not oppress, but regulates, guides, and produces willing subjects.

Discourse in the Traditional Leadership of Wonosadi

In Michel Foucault's framework, discourse is not merely a collection of words or narratives, but a system of knowledge that shapes how individuals think, speak, and act in relation to reality. Discourse determines what is considered valid, who is authorized to speak, and how knowledge is constructed and circulated within society. In the context of the Wonosadi Customary Forest, the primary discourse shaping social and ecological consciousness is the Onggoloco myth. This myth constitutes a form of local knowledge that regulates the relationship between humans, nature, and spiritual forces. Through narratives about the supernatural forest guardian, the Onggoloco discourse structures communal understanding of permissible and impermissible actions within the forest. Consequently, discourse functions not only as a communicative tool but also as an instrument of power that embeds ecological and moral values into the collective consciousness of the indigenous community.

The Onggoloco discourse operates through symbolic mechanisms that integrate knowledge, power, and morality. Traditional leaders or custodians recite prayers, mantras, and mythological narratives that reproduce this discourse during customary rituals. This process is simultaneously religious and political in the Foucauldian sense, as it establishes the boundaries of legitimate knowledge within the community. Only customary leaders possess the authority to interpret the meaning of Onggoloco, define taboos, and regulate forest-related rituals. This position renders traditional leaders "subjects of discourse" who possess legitimacy to articulate and enforce truth. Meanwhile, community members become "objects of discourse" who receive, interpret, and enact the values embedded within it. This relationship illustrates how power operates through discourse not via coercion, but through the regulation of meaning and the production of social truth.

Foucault argues that every discourse produces a regime of truth that determines what is considered valid and legitimate within a given society. In Wonosadi, this regime of truth is founded upon the belief that the forest is the dwelling place of Onggoloco and therefore must be revered. All interactions with the forest are evaluated according to customary norms derived from this discourse. Actions perceived as disrespectful toward the forest are interpreted as social and spiritual violations. This regime of truth constructs an ecological knowledge structure that shapes human–nature relations. From a Foucauldian perspective, discourse governs subjects not through force but by delimiting the horizon of thought and action through institutionalized meaning systems. Thus, the Onggoloco myth functions as a mechanism for producing truth that sustains social and ecological harmony.

The Onggoloco discourse also serves as a medium through which leadership is articulated. Traditional leaders derive authority not from administrative positions but from their ability to manage and reproduce discourse. Ritual performances, the determination of auspicious days, and the transmission of ancestral messages all constitute discursive practices that reinforce symbolic authority. In Foucauldian theory, power is inseparable from discourse; power operates through discourse by producing compliant subjects. Traditional leaders negotiate the relationship between the human and spiritual realms through symbolic language. They do not merely speak about Onggoloco; they embody the discourse through social action. Consequently, discourse generates not only meaning but also concrete power structures within the indigenous community (Ahmad & Akhlaqul, 2025; Ouattara et al., 2024; Pulungan et al., 2019).

Beyond structuring social relations, the Onggoloco discourse also generates ecological ethics. Narratives of forest guardians cultivate an understanding that nature is not an object of exploitation but an entity deserving respect. Foucault describes this process as subjectification the formation of subjects through the internalization of discursive values. The Wonosadi community becomes an ecological subject insofar as individuals define themselves as part of a sacred cosmic order guarded by Onggoloco. This worldview contrasts sharply with modern paradigms that position humans as dominators of nature. Customary discourse instead situates humans as custodians of balance. Accordingly, customary prohibitions function not merely as social rules but as expressions of ecological ethics rooted in symbolic consciousness. Onggoloco discourse thus operates as a moral text guiding ecological conduct, transforming it into a conservation system grounded in spiritual and cultural values.

However, the Onggoloco discourse is not static. In the context of modernization and the influx of external discourses such as development, economics, and state-led conservation processes of meaning negotiation occur. Traditional leaders play a crucial role in preventing the dilution of indigenous discourse by adapting Onggoloco narratives to contemporary contexts, including climate change and national forestry policies. In Foucauldian terms, this represents a reconfiguration of discourse, wherein traditional knowledge adapts to new social conditions

without losing its power function. Through this dynamic negotiation, indigenous leaders maintain epistemic authority while engaging modern discourses strategically. Thus, the Onggoloco discourse remains alive and relevant as a foundation for leadership and environmental preservation.

Overall, the Onggoloco discourse functions as an epistemological foundation for traditional leadership and ecological practice in Wonosadi. It serves simultaneously as a knowledge system regulating behavior, a power mechanism legitimizing leadership, and a value source cultivating ecological awareness. From a Foucauldian perspective, this discourse demonstrates that power is not inherently oppressive but can be productive generating knowledge, morality, and social solidarity. Onggoloco is both an ancestral narrative and a regime of truth shaping cultural identity. Through discursive power, traditional leadership successfully maintains equilibrium between human society and the natural world.

Subjectivity and the Formation of Power Subjects in the Traditional Leadership of Wonosadi

In Foucault's theory, power subjugates individuals while simultaneously forming them as subjects. This process is referred to as subjectivity the manner in which individuals come to recognize themselves through prevailing knowledge systems, norms, and discourses. Subjects are not born free but are constituted through the power structures that surround them. Within the Wonosadi indigenous community, subject formation occurs through the internalization of the Onggoloco myth as a foundational source of knowledge and morality. Through this discourse, individuals understand themselves not merely as autonomous actors but as integral components of a spiritual order guarded by supernatural forces. They become subjects who recognize their ecological and social responsibilities not through external coercion, but through a belief that life must remain harmonious with nature and ancestral spirits. This form of power operates internally, symbolically shaping identity and consciousness.

Traditional leaders, locally known as *juru kunci*, represent the most concrete manifestation of power subjects produced by the Onggoloco discourse. They fulfill not only administrative roles but also spiritual and moral functions. As custodians of sacred knowledge, they act as intermediaries between humans and supernatural forces. From a Foucauldian perspective, this position illustrates how power subjects are constituted through epistemic legitimacy. Traditional leaders acquire authority not through material dominance but through their capacity to interpret and convey discursive "truth." At the same time, they are themselves shaped by the same normative system, demonstrating that power subjects exercise authority while simultaneously being products of broader power mechanisms.

Subject formation in Wonosadi extends beyond leadership to encompass the entire community. Through rituals and intergenerational storytelling, individuals learn to perceive themselves as part of an expansive social and spiritual ecosystem. Foucault emphasizes that subjects are shaped through practices of the self daily practices that instill discipline, awareness, and moral values. In Wonosadi, these practices include regulating speech in forest areas, treating trees and stones as living entities, and respecting sacred sites. Such actions constitute self-discipline that reinforces spiritual identity. Consequently, subject formation occurs subtly and continuously through ecological routines that embed meaning and religiosity within individual consciousness.

Foucault rejects the notion of a fixed or essential subject; instead, subjectivity remains in a perpetual process of becoming. In Wonosadi, power subjects are continuously shaped and renegotiated amid social change and engagement with modern systems. As modernization and capitalism influence rural life, indigenous communities negotiate identity under economic and political pressures. Traditional leaders play a crucial role in sustaining indigenous subjectivity by reaffirming local values. Rituals and teachings enable communities to cultivate ecological identities distinct from exploitative modern paradigms. In this context, subject formation becomes a site of symbolic resistance against dominant external discourses, illustrating that subjects are both governed by power and capable of generating resistance through local knowledge.

Resistance and Productive Power in the Traditional Leadership of Wonosadi

Within Michel Foucault's framework, resistance is an inherent component of power. Power is never absolute; wherever power operates, there is always the possibility of resistance. However, for Foucault, resistance does not necessarily manifest as open rebellion or direct confrontation. Instead, resistance may appear in subtle, concealed, and even productive forms. In the context of the Wonosadi indigenous community, resistance to external forces such as state intervention, resource exploitation, and economic modernization is not pursued through overt conflict but through the reinforcement of customary discourse and the preservation of the Onggoloco myth. By reaffirming spiritual and ecological values inherited from their ancestors, the Wonosadi community symbolically rejects capitalist and bureaucratic logics that seek to standardize and commodify their living space (Ardi & Pradiri, 2021; Arora et al., 2022; Singgalen et al., 2022; Sundjaja et al., 2017). This process demonstrates that resistance can

occur through the reproduction of local knowledge, which functions as a moral bulwark against the penetration of modern power structures.

One concrete manifestation of productive power in Wonosadi is the transformation of customary practices into mechanisms for ecological sustainability. Foucault argues that productive power does not merely restrict or repress but actively produces social realities. In this context, traditional rituals such as *kenduri bumi* (earth thanksgiving ceremonies), offerings, and forest rituals serve both spiritual functions and generate collective awareness of ecological balance. The Wonosadi community consciously resists environmentally destructive resource exploitation by asserting that actions against nature carry spiritual consequences. This form of resistance is productive, as it generates an ecological ethical system that preserves the environment. Power here operates creatively, producing a social order grounded in traditional knowledge rather than external political directives.

Resistance is also evident in the relationship between the Wonosadi community and state policies governing customary forest territories through formal legal mechanisms. Foucault highlights that modern power often operates through biopolitics regulating life via law, bureaucracy, and administrative control. The Wonosadi community responds to this form of governance by constructing “alternative spaces of knowledge,” in which legitimacy is derived not from legal documentation but from customary authority and local spirituality. Traditional leaders invoke the *Onggoloco* myth to assert moral rights over forest management, emphasizing that forest protection constitutes an ancestral obligation. In this way, power is negotiated without open confrontation (Rini et al., 2020). This symbolic yet practical resistance establishes a regime of truth that remains difficult for administrative rationality to penetrate while preserving local epistemic autonomy.

Foucault further suggests that within any power system, micro-spaces exist where resistance can emerge. In Wonosadi, these spaces are found in collective rituals, belief systems, and oral traditions that resist modern logics of efficiency and commodification. The *Onggoloco* narrative reinforces the understanding that forests are not economic assets but sacred entities deserving reverence. By continually transmitting this narrative to younger generations, the community cultivates ecological and spiritual awareness that counters profit-oriented development discourses. Here, productive power operates through meaning-making, positioning “nature as the source of life” as a counter-discourse to modernity. Resistance thus takes the form of discursive production that upholds the dignity of local knowledge and enables indigenous communities to actively define their relationship with nature.

Beyond myth and ritual, resistance also manifests through participatory and egalitarian leadership practices. Foucault emphasizes that power can emerge through seemingly minor social practices that nevertheless carry significant influence. In Wonosadi, traditional leaders do not govern authoritatively but foster reciprocal relationships with community members. Important decisions are made through deliberation, and each individual assumes responsibility for forest protection. This leadership model represents resistance to centralized and hierarchical modern governance structures. By prioritizing consensus and moral deliberation, the community creates alternative forms of governance that emphasize social solidarity and cultural democracy. Such practices demonstrate that productive power generates ecological sustainability while strengthening communal governance rooted in collective consciousness rather than formal regulation or economic force.

Resistance within the Wonosadi community is also epistemological, challenging the monopoly of modern knowledge systems that often portray traditional practices as irrational. Foucault notes that modern power operates through regimes of truth that determine which forms of knowledge are legitimate. Indigenous communities resist this dominance by maintaining local epistemologies grounded in spirituality and ecological experience. For the Wonosadi people, knowledge is not solely derived from empirical observation but also from spiritual relationships between humans and nature. By upholding this perspective, the community not only resists modern epistemic dominance but also generates counter-discourses that restore the legitimacy of oral traditions and ritual practices as valid sources of truth. This constitutes the deepest form of resistance one that operates within the realm of meaning and knowledge rather than solely in social or political arenas.

In conclusion, resistance and productive power within the Wonosadi indigenous community illustrate how power can be transformed into a creative force that sustains cultural and ecological continuity. Through the *Onggoloco* discourse, the community preserves its identity while generating value systems responsive to the challenges of modernity. Power here is not an instrument of domination but a medium for cultivating consciousness and solidarity. Resistance is not merely rejection but a reaffirmation of communal identity as guardians of cosmic balance. From a Foucauldian perspective, this represents productive resistance—the capacity to employ power mechanisms to generate positive values that reinforce epistemic autonomy and local morality. The Wonosadi community thus exemplifies how power and resistance function not as opposing poles but as interconnected processes sustaining social and ecological life.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from Michel Foucault's five-dimensional theory of power relations indicate that traditional leadership in the Wonosadi Forest operates through a dispersed and non-hierarchical network of power. Through the Onggoloco myth, local knowledge functions as an instrument for shaping collective consciousness that naturalizes existence and maintains ecological balance. Traditional discourse serves as a form of productive power that generates social order, internal discipline, and ecological ethics without relying on direct coercion. Traditional leaders act as managers of meaning rather than absolute rulers, while the community demonstrates resistance to external forms of power by upholding ancestral spiritual and ecological values. This entire process confirms that power relations within the Wonosadi community are dynamic and productive, wherein myths, rituals, and traditional knowledge function as technologies of power that sustain harmony between humans, nature, and spirituality, while simultaneously operating as subtle forms of resistance to the hegemony of modernity.

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