

# MAINTAINING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BASED ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: LESSON FROM KAJANG TRIBE

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**Abstract:** *The Indigenous People of Ammatoa Kajang in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, possess a "Pasang Ri Kajang". Several of the Kajang tribe's messages are crucial to the preservation of the ecosystem. This village and a rubber plantation enterprise located in the Kajang customary forest have a long history of conflict. The findings demonstrate how Indonesia's indigenous peoples' local knowledge has developed into a potent barrier to preserving and safeguarding the environment. The fort had previously been put to a rigorous test by the demands of modernity and globalization via the clearance of plantation lands owned by the government and the private sector which had taken their traditional or ulayat territory, disguised as "investment permits." The presence of indigenous peoples, whose positions are being squeezed more and more, is brought to light by this scenario.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Peoples; Local Wisdom; Environment; Traditional Knowledge*

## Table of Contents

### INTRODUCTION

1. Method of Research
2. Learning Environmental Lessons from Traditional Knowledge of Kajang Tribe
3. Conclusion

### INTRODUCTION

In Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Kajang Tribe has traditional practices known as "Pasang Ri-Kajang," which include ethics and standards for forest management. Local knowledge has long preserved cultural values and environmental ethics, especially in relation to environmental preservation and protection. This has been supported by a number of studies, including one that found a contribution of Canadian aboriginal traditional wisdom to environmental preservation. The Anak Dalam people in Jambi benefit from and conserve the forest, and this shows that local communities still uphold their environmental principles. The Timorese population on Timor Island appreciates environmental management. Generally speaking, traditional knowledge for advancing environmental understanding is part of local wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

In the perspective of anthropology, Ahmad,<sup>2</sup> noted that the "pasang" as an absolute element in the belief system of the "Kajang". Ibrahim,<sup>3</sup> noted that " pasang" is a "verbal message that must be followed, complied with and implemented". The Ammatoa indigenous people from the Bulukumba province in South Sulawesi regard the "Pasang Ri-Kajang" as sacred, as neglecting to practice it in daily

<sup>1</sup> Surtikanti, H. K., Syulasmi, A., & Ramdhani, N. (2017). Traditional knowledge of local wisdom of Ammatoa kajang tribe (South Sulawesi) about environmental conservation. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 895, No. 1, p. 012122). IOP Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad, S. 2007. *Education and Indigenous Belief Systems Ammatoa*. Makassar: Published Pustaka Reflection.

<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim. 2001. *Community Ammatoa in Preservation of Forest Resources*. Makassar: Published Pustaka Reflection.

life leads to negative consequences, including the destruction of ecological balance and disorder in social systems.<sup>4</sup>

Land plays a significant role in community life. Environmental issues are constantly changing due to human behavior and needs. At times, laws and norms may not fully address current environmental needs, particularly in light of recent environmental crises. As Mahatma Gandhi once noted, the earth has the capacity to fulfill human needs, but not to sustain human greed. Environmental crises arise from both natural and human factors, including inadequate enforcement of environmental laws administratively, civilly, and criminally.<sup>5</sup>

However, in practice, when positive laws fail to address environmental crises, indigenous communities with customary laws (referred to as "indigenous peoples" by the United Nations) have demonstrated a way of life that is harmonious with nature and the environment for hundreds of years. For these indigenous peoples, humans and the environment are considered as one entity. An example of such a community is the Ammatoa Kajang customary law community.<sup>6</sup> This community cares for and manages the environment with its local wisdom, through a "*Passang ri Kajang*", a customary rule that is highly sacred by this community.

Important environmental conservation ideas are found in the "Pasang Ri Kajang" tradition, such as "*Anjoboronga Angkotai Bosia*," which means the forest asks for rain, and "*Punna nitabbangi kajua ri boronga Ang'ngurangi bosi, appatanrei tumbusu*," which states that cutting down trees in the forest will lead to less rain and dry up springs. To administer and protect the functions and regions of the forest, there are also traditional laws known as "*Patuntung*." For instance, the proverb "*Katutui ririe'na, rigentenganna tala tabbua palaraya*" advises people to take good care of the forest while it is still there, before a crisis or famine strikes.

However, conflicts with plantation firms, however, put the Ammatoa Kajang indigenous population and their traditional forest at risk. Since 1919, one of these businesses, PT. London Sumatra (Lonsum), has been growing rubber in what the Kajang natives consider their traditional forest. This long-running dispute is a result of PT. Lonsum's use of state law through Plantation Cultivation Rights to counter the claims made by the Ammatoa Kajang community based on customary law (HGU).

The Ammatoa Kajang traditional community's steadfast attempts to protect their rights to their customary forest via both legal and illegal tactics have paid dividends. According to a 2013 court decision (No. 35/PUU-X/2012), customary woods no longer qualify as state forests since they are located in traditional territory. The Bulukumba Regency Regulation Number 9 of 2015, which affirms and defends the rights of the Kajang customary community, was enacted with the help of civil society groups.

Additionally, cultural degradation poses a threat to the survival of indigenous people and their traditional knowledge.<sup>7</sup> This is because of several factors; 1) Indigenous peoples are forced to choose between preserving their way of life and giving up their land due to the rise of industries that need land and frequently result in the sacrifice of forests, which are their homes; 2) conflicts between corporate land squatters and indigenous peoples, the latter of which are supported by state-issued permissions; 3) Some indigenous people were forced to leave their homes and work in cities due to a lack of land, which had an impact on the community as a whole. Some people's perception of

<sup>4</sup> Syarif, E., Fatchan, A., & Astina, K. (2016). Tradition of "Pasang Ri-Kajang" in the forests managing in system mores of "Ammatoa" at District Bulukumba South Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(6), 325-325.

<sup>5</sup> Aspan, Z., & Yunus, A. (2019). The right to a good and healthy environment: Revitalizing green constitution. Paper presented at the *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 343(1) doi:10.1088/1755-1315/343/1/012067 Retrieved from [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com)

<sup>6</sup> Husein Alting, 2010. *Dinamika Hukum dalam Pengakuan dan Perlindungan Hak Masyarakat Hukum Adat atas Tanah*, (ogyakarta: LaksBang PersSindo, p.31.

<sup>7</sup> Yunus, A. (2020). Multilayered Democracy in Papua: A Comparison of "Noken" System and Electoral College System in the United States. *Hasanuddin Law Review*, 6(3), 232-239. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20956/halrev.v6i3.2892>

traditional and local knowledge as antiquated and primitive is influenced by modernisation and urban culture.<sup>8</sup>

While forests in South Sulawesi have suffered significant damage, those located in the indigenous communities of Bulukumba in the province are still stable and even thriving. This calls for further examination of why this is the case. Previous studies have been done on the subject, such as Yakib's research in (2003) which found that forest conservation in the Kajang indigenous community is due to their adherence to the principle of Pasng Ri-Kajang and Tallase Kamase-Mase. Lureng's (1991) research also found that Pasang Ri-Kajang is a legacy of traditional values passed down from ancestors and still practiced today.<sup>9</sup>

It is undeniable that the existence of local wisdom is currently in a weak position. Hence, this causes destroying traditional wisdom marked by changes in the social order, lack of humanist values, moral poverty, dependency or reduced community independence, and degradation of natural resources and the environment that support human life.

### 1. Method of Research

The methodology used in this article is socio-legal research, which focuses on how laws are applied in practice. The approach combines qualitative and quantitative techniques from different social sciences and views law as a social occurrence. The collected data were categorized based on the research goals and analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods.<sup>10</sup>

### 2. Learning Environmental Lessons from Traditional Knowledge of Kajang Tribe

The indigenous Ammatoa and Kajang community is situated in Tana Towa Village in the Kajang Subdistrict of Bulukumba. The entrance to the community acts as a dividing line between the modern and traditional way of life of the Kajangese. The Ammatoa community has decided to live without any modern technology, as part of their way of life.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it's rare to find any electronic devices within their community and the use of motor vehicles such as cars and motorcycles is not allowed in the traditional village area.

Knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, ethics, and conventions that govern human conduct in a society that lives in harmony with the environment are all examples of local wisdom.<sup>12</sup> Local wisdom covers all of these many types of knowledge. Communities that adhere to the principles of customary law are good examples of it. The social norms and beliefs of a society that make it possible for that group to successfully cohabit with nature are referred to as "local wisdom."<sup>13</sup> These standards and ethics are represented in a set of rules, skills, values, and ethics that regulate the social order of society. They are passed down from one generation to the next as part of a tradition.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Fibri, Dwi Larasatie Nur, Siham Ayoub, Rohmah Fitri Utami, and Dimas Rahadian Aji Muhammad. "Current situation and future direction of traditional foods: A perspective review." *Canrea Journal: Food Technology, Nutrition, and Culinary Journal* (2022): 112-126.

<sup>9</sup> Syarif, E., Fatchan, A., & Astina, K. (2016). *Loc.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Irwansyah. (2020). *Penelitian Hukum, Pilihan Metode & Praktik Penulisan Artikel*, Yogyakarta: Mirra Buana Media, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Samad, I. D., Niswaty, R., Agus, A. A., & Arman, A. (2021). Learning Environmental Lessons From Indigenous Ammatoa Kajang To Preserve The Forest. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 1899, No. 1, p. 012150). IOP Publishing.

<sup>12</sup> Rikardo Simarmata, 2006. *Pengakuan Hukum Terhadap Masyarakat Adat di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Fisher, M. R., & van der Muur, W. (2020). Misleading icons of communal lands in Indonesia: Implications of adat forest recognition from a model site in Kajang, Sulawesi. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 21(1), 55-76.

<sup>14</sup> Lullulangi, M., Sampebua, O., Sunardi, S., & Dirawan, G. D. (2015). Model local wisdom to preserve the environment in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi Indonesia. *Man in India*, 95(4), 1041-1050.

Local wisdom in environmental protection and preservation is closely related to the life of the “customary community” or “customary law community” community which currently still exists amid the crush and pressure of modernization. The terminology used in this article is “customary law community”, to distinguish it from “customary community”. Customary law community is a technical juridical definition which refers to a group of people who live in a certain area, where they live and live in a certain environment, have wealth and a leader who is in charge of protecting the interests of the group (outward and inward), and has a legal system and government.<sup>15</sup> These communities are territorial or genealogical units that possess wealth, have distinct citizens, and can act as independent legal entities, governing themselves both internally and externally.<sup>16</sup>

The existence of indigenous peoples is further strengthened by the decision of the Constitutional Court no. 35/PUU-X/2012 (dated June 16, 2013), in the Judicial Review of Law 41/1999 on Forestry proposed by AMAN<sup>17</sup> and 2 indigenous communities. The court ruled those traditional territories are home to Customary Forests, which are no longer considered as state-owned forests. Also, the existence of indigenous and tribal peoples is also internationally recognized. In 2007, the United Nations (UN) initiated the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

The Regional Regulation and the Decree issued by the Minister of Environment and Forestry demonstrate the state's obligation to respect, defend, and uphold its citizens' human rights. This acknowledgment creates a setting where customary rules may be followed in protecting their ancestral lands from outside influences that could upset the long-standing balance between justice and the environment.

Several indigenous tribes still exist and work to protect their way of life in the face of the threats that industrialization and globalization pose to their existence. This is true despite the difficulties they encounter. Based on their traditional legacy, which is symbolized by pairs, the Ammatoa Kajang community's land tenure and usage system in the Kajang MHA region. Both collectively held lands and privately owned lands are managed and used in the Ammatoa Kajang traditional region.

The Ammatoa Kajang indigenous community is governed by *Passang ri Kajang*, a traditional rule that must be followed by all members in their interactions and utilization of natural resources. As documented by Salle, the local customs practiced by this community are referred to as “*kamaseasea*”, which encourages living a simple and modest lifestyle.<sup>18</sup> The teachings of *Passang* emphasize maintaining balance in the world created by “*Turie' A'ra'na* (God Almighty)”, especially with regards to the forest. As a result, the forest must be properly managed and given special care to prevent any damage. The significance of forests to the Kajang indigenous people is highlighted in a piece of advice in *Passang*, which states:

*Jagai linoa lollong bonena*

*Kamayaytoppa langi'ka, rupa tau siagang boronga*


(Take care of the world and all that is in it, the sky, humankind and the forest)

<sup>15</sup> Karim, H., Pagarra, H., & Ernawati, E. (2016). Exploration of Plant Species in Traditional Ceremonies Kajang Tribe in Bulukumba Regency South Sulawesi. In *Proceeding International Conference on Mathematic, Science, Technology, Education and their Applications* (Vol. 1, No. 1).

<sup>16</sup> Hildayanti, A. (2020). Manifesting Locality and Identity in Traditional Houses in Response to Environmental Change. In *3rd International Conference on Dwelling Form (IDWELL 2020)* (pp. 132-136). Atlantis Press.

<sup>17</sup> Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN) is a social organization that brings together various indigenous communities from various regions in Indonesia

<sup>18</sup> Salle, K. (1999). *Kebijakan lingkungan menurut pasang: Sebuah kajian hukum lingkungan adat pada masyarakat Ammatoa kecamatan Kajang kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Bulukumba*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, p. 31.



The "Pairs System" of the Kajang indigenous society is an important part of a culture that includes traditional viewpoints and ancestors' laws regarding how community members should interact with nature and the environment. The Kajang place the utmost significance on "Passang," which directs their behavior in both this life and the next by defining what is "good" or "bad" and "permitted" or "prohibited."

The Kajang community holds the forest in high spiritual regard, believing it is guarded by ancestral spirits. They refer to the forest as "*pammantanganna sikamma to riolonta*" and make a conscious effort to preserve it. This significance is reflected in their adherence to the Passang, showcasing their deep connection to their traditional forests.

*Talakullei nisambei kajua, lyato' minjo kaju timboa. Talakullei nitambai nanikurangi borong karamaka. Kasipalli tauwa a'lamung-lamung ri boronga, Nasaba' se're wattu la rie' tau anngakui bate lamunna.*

(You can't replace the wood. That's all the wood that grows. You can't add or subtract from the sacred forest. People are forbidden to plant in the forest because one day someone will recognize the former plants).

The forest holds a sacred status for the community as it is believed to be the place of their creation according to ancestral beliefs passed down through generations. The community believes that the unauthorized cutting of wood, taking forest products, or destruction of the forest by a community member or outsider will result in disaster and anger the ancestral spirits, leading to curses such as illness, death, and drought. The Kajang community is concerned about these effects because they will have a cascading effect on others who rely significantly on forest goods for their existence.

If someone violates the prohibition against taking forest products in the sacred forest, they will face sanctions known as "*Poko' Ba'bala*". This could include a fine of IDR 1,200,000 (translated as "*sampulonua real*") and a white cloth. If the violation involves taking wood or rattan, the products must be returned. Severe violations include cutting wood, taking shrimp, taking rattan, and burning beehives. If the accused doesn't confess, the "*Tunu Passau*" ritual will be performed. If the accused is found guilty, they may face additional consequences such as illness or death. There are also social sanctions, which in the Kajang community carry a greater weight than the monetary fine. Social sanctions include ostracism, even for multiple generations, and are considered a form of "*Poko' Ba'bala*".

The *Ammatoa ri Kajang* community's way of life, centered around protecting the environment and forests, is accompanied by various restrictions and *pamali'*, as they believe in upholding the Pasang and guarding it socially. Thus, restrictions and *pamali'* are imposed to prevent activities such as cutting down trees, harvesting rattan and ropes, fishing, hunting, and disturbing children within the boundaries of the *Borong Karama'* forest.

In the *Ammatoa* community, the traditional sanctions imposed are affecting the way its members use the forest and the wood in their daily lives. Despite being aware of *Ammatoa's* rules for forest utilization and environmental preservation, or showing respect for the forest, members prefer to obtain wood from outside of Kajang's sacred forest for building homes and fulfilling household needs. They keep the sacred forest intact and only use it for traditional rituals. The Sacred Forest (*Borong Karama'*) is believed to be protected by sacred spells and is associated with stories of curses.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Riley, E. P., & Priston, N. E. C. (2010). Macaques in farms and folklore: exploring the human-nonhuman primate interface in Sulawesi, Indonesia. *American Journal of Primatology*, 72(10), 848–854. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajp.20798>



### 3. Conclusion

The wisdom of local indigenous communities in Indonesia has proven to be a strong shield in preserving and protecting the environment. However, this defense has faced a major challenge from the forces of modernization and globalization, with companies clearing plantation lands, including government and privately owned, that are located on the indigenous peoples' customary or ulayat territories, using "investment permits". This is causing increased pressure on the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Protecting and preserving the existence of indigenous peoples and their ulayat territories is not only a constitutional obligation of the state but also represents a responsibility to safeguard them. This means making sure that legal instruments do not harm the customary environmental ecosystem of these communities.

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