

THE LIFE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE *RAMPA* PEOPLE IN KOTABARU: RESPONSES TO TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the core philosophies of life of the *Rampa* People, a significant *Bajau Samah* community in Kotabaru, to understand their responses to the tensions between tradition and modernization. They maintain their core philosophies, *Pappu Meto'oh* (Believe Firmly in the Almighty) and *Memiyah Leuk Keleut* (Sea as a Source of Life), while beginning to abandon the philosophy *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale* (Many Children, Much Fortune). Despite growing recognition of indigenous knowledge in environmental management, limited research has examined how communities differentially prioritize cultural elements for preservation or abandonment. This qualitative ethnographic study employed: 1) participant observation; 2) in-depth interviews with 17 key informants including internal and external religious leaders, *adat* leader (*Sandro*), community figures, local public figures, village staffs, and local government officials; 3) focus group discussion with 65 participants including *Rampa* village residents, local young figures, and schoolchildren; and 4) document analysis over a 5-month fieldwork period. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving coding and categorizing themes, within a dual theoretical framework of Postcolonial Theory and Acculturation Theory. The findings reveal that core cosmological beliefs are maintained through institutional leadership (*Sandro*) and their embeddedness in daily practices. In contrast, the abandonment of the third philosophy reflects generational disengagement and the erosion of communal support systems. The study contributes to understanding the differential logic of cultural change, demonstrating that indigenous communities strategically negotiate modernity by preserving identity-constituting beliefs while adapting pragmatic values to new socio-economic realities.

Keywords: indigenous people; philosophy of life; *Rampa* People; acculturation; postcolonialism

FILOSOFI HIDUP ORANG RAMPA DI KOTABARU DAN RESPON MEREKA TERHADAP TRADISI DAN MODERNISASI

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji filosofi hidup Orang *Rampa*, sebuah komunitas *Bajau Samah* di Kotabaru, untuk memahami respons mereka terhadap ketegangan antara tradisi dan modernisasi. Mereka mempertahankan filosofi inti mereka, *Pappu Meto'oh* (Percaya Teguh pada Yang Maha Kuasa) dan *Memiyah Leuk Keleut* (Laut sebagai Sumber Kehidupan), tetapi juga mulai meninggalkan filosofi *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale* (Banyak Anak, Banyak Rezeki). Meskipun terjadi peningkatan pengakuan terhadap pengetahuan lokal dalam pengelolaan lingkungan, penelitian terdahulu yang mengkaji bagaimana masyarakat secara diferensial memprioritaskan elemen budaya untuk dilestarikan atau ditinggalkan masih terbatas. Studi etnografi kualitatif ini menggunakan: 1) observasi partisipatif; 2) wawancara mendalam terhadap 17 informan kunci yang meliputi tokoh agama internal dan eksternal, pemimpin adat (*Sandro*), tokoh masyarakat, tokoh publik setempat, staf desa, dan pejabat pemerintah daerah; 3) diskusi kelompok terfokus (*FGD*) dengan 65 partisipan yang meliputi warga Desa *Rampa*, tokoh muda setempat, dan anak-anak sekolah; dan 4) analisis dokumen selama 5 bulan studi lapangan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik, yang melibatkan pengkodean dan kategorisasi tema, dalam kerangka teoretis ganda yaitu Teori Poskolonial dan Teori Akulturasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keyakinan kosmologis inti dipertahankan melalui kepemimpinan kelembagaan (*Sandro*) dan keterikatannya dalam praktik sehari-hari. Sebaliknya, ditinggalkannya filosofi ketiga mencerminkan keterputusan antargenerasi dan erosi sistem pendukung komunal. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman logika diferensial perubahan budaya, yang menunjukkan bahwa komunitas adat secara strategis menegosiasikan modernitas dengan melestarikan keyakinan pembentuk identitas sambil mengadaptasi nilai-nilai pragmatis dengan realitas sosial-ekonomi baru.

Kata kunci: masyarakat adat; filosofi hidup; Orang *Rampa*; akulturasi, poskolonialisme

INTRODUCTION

In an era of unprecedented global connectivity and change, how does a community whose identity is intrinsically tied to the sea maintain its cultural compass? For the *Rampa* People, one of the largest *Bajau Samah* communities in Kotabaru, this is not a theoretical question; it is the central challenge of their daily existence.

The Bajau people are one of the unique indigenous ethnic groups (Rahman et al., 2023) representing a maritime people (Albab, 2020 as cited in Nurbayani & Husin, 2024) who maintain the philosophy of life inherited from their ancestors. They live in groups and form a closed tribal group (Hanapi, 2017). This way of life is grounded in a philosophy of life that they uphold from ontological and axiological perspectives (van der Velden, 2025). Such philosophy is essential among these indigenous people as it represents their perspectives on life including the interconnection with and the essence of nature.

Titaley and Watloly (2021) argue that this philosophy of life functions as a guide in dealing with global dynamics today. Through this philosophy, the worldview of the indigenous people covers inherited values regarding their relationship with nature, including what should be known, who they should be, and what should be done. These three elements are interconnected in the lives of indigenous people (Sianturi et al., 2025). Hence, maintaining these three domains remains a simple or complex issues concerning their tradition on the one hand, and the modernization on the other hand.

Modernization refers to a process of transformation where societies move from a traditional way of life to a modern lifestyle in all aspects (Matondang, 2019), often marked by technological advancement (Singal, 1987) and socioeconomic development (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). The latter tends to transform societies in a predictable direction, making people more secular, tolerant, and trusting, and emphasizing quality of life. Inglehart & Baker (2000) emphasize that modernization contains a series of process by which societies depart from their traditional habits to those of modernity, characterized by industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of mass society.

In social studies, modernization refers to a form of transformation, where societies move from an undeveloped condition to a better, prosperous life (Rosana, 2011). Here, 'the En-

lightenment' is a key concept. It is a particular period or movement within European intellectual history that had far-reaching sociopolitical and cultural consequences for the modern Western world. Hamilton suggests ten characteristics of Enlightenment thought: 1) reasonable and rational, 2) empirical, 3) scientific, 4) universal, 5) progressive, 6) individualistic, 7) tolerant, 8) rhetorical, 9) uniform, and 10) secular (King, 1999). During this era, the West was characterized as liberal, egalitarian, secular, and modern, while the East, represented by Indian culture, was authoritarian, hierarchical, religious, and traditional.

Scholars have different views about modernization and westernization. Kishimoto (in Naofusa, 1999) distinguishes modernization from westernization simply based on the process of changes. He argues that westernization is replacing Eastern cultures with those of the Western, whereas modernization means remodeling a cultural system into a new mode. He adds that in Japan, westernization means the adoption of western cultural elements such as food, hairstyles, and houses on the one hand. The use of telephones, televisions, airplanes, bureaucratic institutions, and so forth is regarded as a part of modernization on the other hand. Likewise, Abdulsyani (in Rosana, 2011) explains that modernization is neither the absolute implementation of western cultures, nor does it question or rule out the values of religion. Its development is more general, and it is inevitable for countries to go through modernization. Meanwhile, westernization means the total adoption of western cultures. The West views all cycles of life as similar to what they believe, and no culture should question or contradict to the cultures of the West (Scoorl in Rosana, 2011).

Regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity, both are always presented as a threat to each other. It is important to note that modernity is not a substitute for tradition, because tradition preserves a society's or community's identity. Bellah (1983) views the relationship between tradition and modernization as both dialectical and harmonious. A thriving tradition should guide individuals and society in selecting what is best for them, and modernization provides the tools and resources necessary to achieve that goal.

Recent scholarship on Indonesian maritime communities has revealed the complex negotiation between traditional knowledge and mod-

ernization pressures (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Clifton & Majors, 2012; Oktavia et al., 2018). These studies demonstrate that indigenous communities possess sophisticated philosophical principles that guide sustainable resource management. Such principles are now being challenged by modernization, economic pressures, and cultural change (Ramadhan et al., 2022; Ariando et al., 2023).

According to Hendry (in Zainuddin, 2023), social and cultural changes caused by modernization have a profound impact on these traditional communities. As a minority ethnic group, the Bajau people deserve attention as a sign of shared concern about the elimination of their traditional legacy. Research on their philosophies of life and how this traditional group responds to modernization has substantial societal implications.

The Bajau people of Southeast Asia maintain a specific worldview reflecting socioeconomic status, perceptions of environmental causality, and spiritual belief systems (Clifton & Majors, 2012). Their belief in sea spirits (*Mbo Madilau*) as “rewarding those who propitiate them and punishing those who fail to do so” reflects a philosophical principle that historically regulated resource extraction. Similarly, the Bajo tribe’s “*Tubba Dikatutuang*” (sacred areas) and “*Pamali*” (taboos) functioned as mechanisms for marine conservation (Ramadhan et al., 2022). However, these practices are declining due to changes in the mindset and lifestyle of modern society, with younger generations viewing traditions as irrelevant and no longer suited to today’s conditions.

The objective of this paper is to explore the Rampa people’s responses to modernization. It also examines how modernization affects their traditions, particularly their philosophies of life. The Bajau (Rampa) people, one of the Kotabaru’s traditional communities, demonstrate how their traditional way of life, covering sociocultural practices, is challenged by modernization. These people primarily live in Kotabaru’s coastal districts and rely on marine resources for survival, which also form the setting of their daily lives. The advancement of technology inspires the Rampa people to preserve their traditional values as maritime people. These people adhere to three major philosophies: *Pappu Meto’oh* (Believe Firmly in the Almighty), *Memiyah Leuk Keleut* (Sea as a Source of Life), and *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale* (Many Children, Much Fortune). While

the first two philosophies are strongly upheld due to their religious beliefs and ancestral background, the latter is starting to decline and receiving criticism.

The Rampa people live in a large circle, regardless of the available space. Families feel comfortable sharing space with other family members in small residences. The group typically consists of fathers, sons, siblings, and brothers of spouses and wives (Halim et al., 2023). This tribe still maintains traditional affinitive values such as togetherness, a sense of belonging, and harmony, in opposition to modernity, in which individuality, loneliness, and competitiveness are central social values (Germond-duret, 2016).

There is a growing body of literature on the impact of modernization on indigenous communities. One group of studies tends to focus on the external pressures leading to cultural erosion, such as the decline of *Sasi* (Soselisa, 2019; Touwe, 2020), the loss of traditional knowledge (Ramadhan et al., 2022), and the erosion of traditions (Halim et al., 2023). Another group reveals the community’s refusal to adapt to modern culture and its choice to maintain indigenous tradition, such as those of the Ammatoans (Maarif, 2014) and the Baduy Dalam people (Suparmini et al. 2013 in Sumawijaya et al., 2020). Other studies reveal the selective adaption of modern culture by indigenous communities (Li in Bicker et al., 2000; Clifton & Majors, 2012; Oktavia et al., 2018; Prasetyo et al., 2020; Susanti & Wahyuni, 2020; Sen et al., 2021).

By examining how certain philosophical principles are abandoned while others are maintained or reinterpreted, this research demonstrates the selective adaptation, negotiation, and agency of the Rampa people. It focuses on their three philosophies of life, namely, *Pappu Meto’oh*, *Memiyah Leuk Keleut*, and *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale*, and how these philosophies have informed their navigation of the social and economic shifts brought about by modernization. This research elaborates on the findings within the framework of postcolonialism. This framework allows the study to move beyond a simple narrative of progress to examine the power imbalances and historical legacies that shape their present reality.

Young (2016) argues that postcolonialism is not only a dialectical concept marking the broad historical facts of decolonization and the

determined achievement of sovereignty, but also the realities of nations and peoples emerging into a new imperialistic context of economic and political domination. Postcolonialism according to Bhabha (1994) operates through the dimensions of time or history and space through forms of knowledge reworked from the entanglement between the colonizers and the colonized in long-standing coercive power relations.

Postcolonialism poses critiques towards modernity and development. Chukwudi et al. (2026) argue that modernity for many African societies is a disruptive encounter shaped by colonialism, missionary influence, and Western ideals. They question the assumption that indigenous societies are simply traditional and need to follow a Western model of modernity. In postcolonial studies, the colonized are often marked as “other” and their cultural practices are devalued. A study by Sen et al. (2021) details how facial tattoos, once a mark of identity for the Apatani people, became a source of shame and stigma due to interaction with outsiders.

Njoh (2013) demonstrates how postcolonial states continue to implement policies that marginalize indigenous populations. Such regulations are often influenced by global norms and past colonial structures. This explains why certain philosophical principles are being abandoned by indigenous communities. External pressures from the Indonesian state, global capitalism, or conservation mandates can be seen as forms of sovereign regulation that force cultural change.

Another pivotal framework for examining the processes of cultural changes is acculturation. Acculturation refers to any changes resulted from contact between individuals and groups of different cultures (Sam & Berry, 2006). Acculturation results in various changes, such as physical changes, biological changes, political changes, economic changes, cultural changes, and social changes, or it may result in no changes at all (Berry, 1992).

According to Njoh (2013), acculturation refers to the systematic supplanting and domination of the values, beliefs, and worldview of one group by another. He offers a foundational critique of how modernist urban planning operates as a tool of Western acculturation and cultural imperialism. His study on Cameroon demonstrates that the imposition of Western spatial structures and governance models is not

culturally neutral but actively supplants indigenous practices, complicating sustainable development.

This provides a critical lens through which to analyze the external pressures on the Rampa people's philosophies. Chukwudi et al. (2026) and Chikelo (2026) explore the philosophical tension between tradition and modernity in African thought, framing the encounter as a historical disruption shaped by colonialism and Western ideals. They argue for conceptual decolonization and call for a critical reinterpretation of indigenous values as resources for navigating contemporary challenges.

Acculturation also explains the process of selective adaptation and cultural integration. Susanti and Wahyuni (2020) demonstrate how the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community provides a model of successful integration. The researchers use Parsons' AGIL (Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency) framework to demonstrate how the community filter modernization while maintaining their agricultural and customary laws. The community achieves adaptation by filtering modernization through practices compatible with its customs, and goal attainment through its philosophy of life, which serves as a guiding principle. Integration is obtained through maintaining harmony between humans and the natural environment, while latency is maintained through implementing the whole system holistically.

This study examines the Rampa people in Kotabaru and their philosophical principles. The central question is whether the Rampa People are achieving cultural integration or facing cultural erosion. This study contributes to understanding how indigenous communities negotiate the complex terrain between tradition and modernization in contemporary Indonesia. Few studies analyze the underlying philosophy of life that guides them. Furthermore, this study contributes to filling this gap by focusing on the fundamental ideals that underpin the Rampa people's life and how they are being reinterpreted. Also, this study analyzes the tension between tradition and modernity by asking the question “How does a community's philosophy of life (tradition) mediate and shape its responses to the myriad forces of modernity?”

The combination of postcolonialism and acculturation theory allows for an analysis that takes into account external power structures (postcolonial) and internal responses of the community (acculturation). Another gap of this

study is the lack of academic literature of the Rampa people in Kotabaru. Being one of the major ethnic groups in Kotabaru, this community is still understudied. This study contributes to sociological knowledge about this community in particular, and to the broader body of knowledge on indigenous peoples and modernization in general.

METHOD

This research employs an ethnographic qualitative approach to gain an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of the Rampa people in Kotabaru, who mainly inhabit Rampa Lama and Rampa Baru Villages in Pulau Laut Utara Sub-District of Kotabaru. This research took approximately 5 months to complete, from June to October 2025. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with purposely selected informants (Patton, 2002) based on their roles in the community, their experiences, knowledge, and involvement in the community's socio-cultural activities. The informants include one religious leader, one *adat* leader, and three community leaders as insider respondents to develop an insider's view of the culture and its workings (Kessler & Polio, 2023). The interviews were also conducted with external figures consisting of two religious leaders, three local public figures, two village staffs, and five local government officials to understand how others see the Rampa people. An FGD (Focus Group Discussion) was also conducted with Rampa village residents (18 participants), local young figure (18 participants), and schoolchildren (29 participants) to ensure a diverse range of perspectives on tradition and modernization. To support the process of interview, audio recording devices were used to secure the data with the consent of the interviewees.

In addition to interviews, observations were made by participating in the community's socio-cultural activities to gain a firsthand understanding of their experiences. The researchers employed observer-as-participant role to adopt more formal observation. Special attention was given to any events or rituals reflecting their philosophies of life: *Pappu Meto'oh* in their everyday religious activities, *Memiyah Leuk Keleut* in fishing, and *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale* in everyday transactions and purchasing power. Secondary data such as journals and documents about the community were also

gathered and studied to complement the primary data.

The data obtained were analyzed thematically through several stages. First, the data were transcribed and translated. After that, prominent themes corresponding to the research objectives identified in the interviews, observations, and documents were listed. The themes were analyzed through domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and cultural theme analysis. Domain analysis aimed at obtaining general and comprehensive picture of the object of research or the social situation. Taxonomic analysis was carried out to find out the community's internal structure through observation. Cultural theme analysis aimed to identify relationships between domains, and how they relate to the whole (Sugiyono, 2014).

Two types of triangulations were conducted to ensure the validity of the data. Triangulation of informants aimed to test whether their accounts converged, and triangulation of methods was intended to check whether the themes appeared in interviews, observations, and documents. The last step was to draw conclusions from the processed data by interpreting the theme to understand the dynamic responses of the Rampa people to modernization with regard to their philosophies of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The philosophy of life of the Rampa People

The Rampa people have experienced numerous changes in their lives. Nonetheless, certain aspects of their indigenous maritime cultural tradition and customs remain unchanged. Based on these facts, Senator M (interview) and Senator J (interview) view this continuity as one of the requirements for recognition as the sole dynamic indigenous traditional community in town.

The Rampa people as an indigenous maritime ethnic group live according to specific principles known as their philosophy of life. J (interview), one of the community leaders mentions several philosophies of life that served as the basic values still upheld by the Rampa people in Kotabaru. These principles concern with theological, natural, and human domains. This is relevant to the research by Purnama et al., (2023) who state that the Bajau ethnicity is inextricably linked to the identity and beliefs that were passed down from their ancestors, result-

ing in religious ceremonies and activities characterized by mystical elements. Generally, they are undergoing an acculturation process with Islam. While centered on religious teachings, the religious rites performed also uphold long-standing customs (Mustamin et al., 2023 as cited in Purnama et al., 2023).

The theological domain, concerning with how to behave to their God, is very essential. This principal is the guiding foundation reflected in all aspects of life. The natural domain is about how to maintain the best relationship with nature, particularly, the sea. The normative and practical values of the tradition are associated with this domain. The last one is the domain of their responsibilities to the lives of other human beings.

Z (interview), one of the *Rampa* People youth leaders, explains the philosophical ways of life of the *Rampa* People. They are *Pappu Meto'oh*, *Memiyah Leuk Keleut*, and *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale*. These three philosophies of life are the distinctive shared values of the *Rampa* people.

Pappu Meto'oh

All *Rampa* people are Muslims and are regarded as religious Muslims due to their strong devotion to Islam and their adherence to the inherited school of thought, Sunni Islam. According to government official N (interview), the *Rampa* People are devoutly religious. He recounted his experience delivering Friday sermons. He arrives at the mosque, where the *Rampa Hajj* pilgrims, clothed in their own customs, come minutes earlier. For them, performing the Hajj is prestigious.

The standard includes the fact that they need a better understanding about Sunni Islam. To have a better understanding the people need a respected religious leader. This person is in charge of teaching, guiding, and acting other roles. The *Rampa* people's religious inclination can be understood through their respect for that religious leader. This person is responsible for religious matters based on his comprehension of Sunni Islam, inherited from the former leader. It is common among the *Rampa* people that religious leadership is inherited through family rooted lineage.

This theological principle becomes the very basic foundation of the *Rampa* people's religiosity. The belief system of the *Rampa* people is internalized in their sociocultural practices,

as expressed in their traditional customs such as the annual sea festival. In addition, this religious traditional commitment is reflected in every aspect of their rites: daily; weekly; monthly; annual; and circumstantial. Their religiosity is closely linked to their traditions. For example, the celebration of welcoming Hajj pilgrims returning from the Two Holy Lands demonstrates a very high degree of integration between Islamic values and traditional culture.

Memiyah Leuk Keleut

Given that people are highly reliant on nature, deterministic adaptation explains how nature has a significant impact on them (Marlina et al., 2021 and Baskara et al., 2014). The *Rampa* people believe that the sea is their precious natural resource where their ancestors' souls reside in addition to being a place to live and earn a living. Since practically every element of these people's lives depends heavily on marine resources, their relationship with the sea also affects their knowledge and lifestyle choices (Marlina et al., 2021). Hanapi (2017) affirms that the belief that "Bajau people were born as sailors" is part of the Bajau people's philosophy, which helps to explain that the Bajau people were and will always be sailors.

Because of their high admiration for the sea and their close affinity with it, the Bajau people have various rites and traditions associated with their ancestors' spirit. For example, the *Rampa* people hold an annual sea festival. This event is held in line with certain ceremonies, customs, and traditions. In doing so, the people need a *Sandro*. Baskara et al. (2014) describe this person as a Bajau traditional shaman. This figure is seen as having a gift and the ability to communicate with the spirits of the ancestors. Through his abilities, the protection and treatment of the body and soul by a *Sandro* are inextricably linked to ritual procedures and empirical medical knowledge (Nuraini, 2016). The *Rampa* People respect the *Sandro*, who is in charge of leading traditional cultural affairs and taking care of non-medical illnesses. The latter, according to Maulidyna et al. (2021), is attributed to their knowledge of health, which is still based on traditional medicine passed down from generation to generation by their forefathers.

Rampa people's attitudes toward the sea include restrictions or taboos. For example, a *Rampa* fisherman is not allowed to spit in the

sea while fishing. Purnama et al. (2023) identify various taboos, such as the restriction against disposing of kitchen trash (sea cucumber washing water, wood charcoal, cigarette butts/ashes, chili water, ginger, and dishwashing wastewater) into the sea.

M (interview) describes the Rampa people's daily activities as a reflection of their reverence for the sea. Government official SA (interview) supports this claim by stating that this continuous activity results from the three-shift system of fishermen, operating at three distinct times: early in the morning, late in the afternoon, and midnight. Such system is the indirect benefit of technology in the fishing machinery.

The two philosophies, *Pappu Meto'oh* and *Memiyah Leuk Keleut*, are strongly upheld by the Rampa people. The two are interconnected as the sea not only acts as the place where they earn a living, but also represents a deep connection to their identity (Nurbayani & Husin, 2024). As an indigenous community, the Rampa People practice their ancestral rituals on their 'land', which, in their case, is the sea. Rituals function as the foundation from which religions spring and without them a religion loses its foundation (Pesonen, 2022).

As a maritime indigenous community, their religiosity is based on myths (Abidin, 2021) and the belief that the sea is the sacred motherland, as well as the roles of their ancestors and local leaders. Myths, in a traditional society, play a significant role as parameters of religious truth. Glock & Stark (1965) argue that dimensions of religiosity include religious feeling, religious practice, religious belief, religious knowledge, and religious effect. To the Rampa people, these dimensions concern the sea, which has been part of the Bajau Samah people's lives from birth until the afterlife (Nurbayani & Husin, 2024). Their understanding of the values and meanings (religious knowledge) of the sea shapes how the two philosophies are firmly upheld.

This belief is tied to the Rampa people, who are part of the *Bajo* tribe living in harmony with nature (Marlina et al., 2021). The majority of the Rampa community's livelihood comes from fishing (95%). The profession of fishing has been passed down from generation to generation. In other words, they believe that the skill of catching fish and other marine creatures has been passed down from their ancestors and is seen as an honor for tradition, ancestral heritage and a form of devotion to the ruler of nature.

Although employment opportunities in sectors other than fishing are wide open, the *Rampa* community still chooses to make a living from the sea.

This value is also reflected from an educational point of view. Despite the fact that the majority of informants discuss the importance of education for a better future, only a limited number of them have obtained a higher level of formal education. Thus, it is common for these individuals to face barriers to employment in other occupations other than fishing. The perception of Bajau parents is reflected in their attitudes, motivations, interests, knowledge and experience which are linked to learning or schooling according to their background as an ethnic group oriented towards a maritime way of life (Baskara et al., 2014). Because the sea provides their livelihood, the older generation of the Rampa people practically believe that becoming a fisherman does not require a high level of skills, and the sea always provides a source of life.

The maintenance of these two philosophies represents the concept of cultural integration, where the Rampa People preserve the core aspects of their traditions (Susanti & Wahyuni, 2020). The belief in God and the sea's spiritual significance is not merely abstract theology but a lived, practical framework. It is embedded in every stage of life from birth to death which reaffirm both ancestral reverence and Islamic faith (Nurbayani & Husin, 2024). These practices create a sacred ecology (Berkas, 2012) that is resistant to change because it is fundamentally tied to survival, identity, and emotional security as a form of resistance to external hegemony.

From a postcolonial perspective, such preservation demonstrates a form of strategic resistance. The community is guided by two figures: Sandro (*adat* leader) who leads traditional rituals and a religious leader who oversees Islamic practices. This dual system is a powerful form of cultural resilience against the postcolonial narrative that indigenous knowledge is inferior (Bauman et al., 2025). The study on the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community (Susanti & Wahyuni, 2020) provides a clear parallel. Their social system survives because it is based on a strong integration of religious and customary rules. This shows that institutionalized systems are crucial for cultural survival. The Rampa people share this concept by having a functioning Sandro figure to ensure the trans-

mission of these philosophies from one generation to the next (Zamzami et al., 2025).

Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale

This philosophy used to be a common principle and was often heard from old people in the past, particularly when the Family Planning Program (*KB*) became one of the government's iconic programs. However, this philosophy has recently begun to be criticized in the sense that it is no longer regarded as an everlasting notion. It has become more flexible in adapting to changing circumstances. Yet, this principle still influences the responsibility of the Rampa people toward their socioeconomic interaction, particularly with their relatives. Government official H (interview) states that because the sea is everything and because of their strong belief in God, these people never worry about their income. One measure of their concerns for their children is giving them daily amounts of money to spend. Nonetheless, they are never bothered by crowded living conditions with extended family members because of economic concerns.

The practice of unregistered marriage can still be found in Rampa community. It is not a major socioeconomic issue for a young lady under the legal marriage age to marry a young man. S (interview), a religious leader, argues that avoiding such incidents is difficult due to a variety of circumstances, including administrative, social, psychological, and religious concerns.

The Rampa Village was established as one of the family planning villages. However, parents' responses to the population control program are influenced by their belief that the number of children will not be a problem for their family, as well as their belief in the value of living together as an extended family in a small dwelling. Family planning remains a challenge for the Rampa People in Kotabaru.

Unlike the first two philosophies, this philosophy is treated as practical, context-dependent philosophy that is driven by several factors. First, there is a loss of knowledge among younger generations. As youth are increasingly drawn to modern lifestyles and are less engaged with their own cultural traditions, this philosophy lacks a social vehicle for transmission. From an acculturation perspective, this shows a form of separation from values of their elders (McWorther, 2025). Ramadhan et al. (2022) ar-

gue that the declining role of traditional institutions has an impact on the rare implementation of local traditions and wisdom. In the case of the Rampa people, this philosophy is rarely promoted by either Sandro or their religious leader. If such transmission never occurs, there is a chance that this philosophy will remain unknown to their future generations.

Second, this philosophy lacks immediate, rational justification in the face of modern economic pressures. In an era when instant results are preferable, the result of this idea is uncertain and takes longer to materialize. For example, the Rampa people maintain the *Selamatan Leut* ritual for a rational reason, that is, to get an abundant amount of fish which directly corresponds to their fortune. This represents a functional adaptation while showing tradition's survival.

Third, there is a shift in the mindset and lifestyle of the Rampa youth. Being exposed to modern education and media, they associate fortune with material wealth, individual achievement, and access to urban lifestyles (obtained from the FGD). The logic of communal sharing and the value of children as a communal asset are superseded by the logic of individual wealth accumulation (Ariando et al., 2023). From postcolonial point of view, this provides an example of how modernization and globalization can render indigenous social structures and their associated philosophies untenable.

Last, the Rampa people are not concerned about their children's future. Having fewer children may also grant them much fortune. This is not an indigenous value but a reflection of externally introduced ideas about family planning, economic efficiency, and individual success. The adoption of this new perspective indicates a process of acculturation, where new values from the dominant culture are being absorbed (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Postcolonial theory fundamentally reframes the question of traditional survival by examining how colonial and neocolonial power structures systematically devalued indigenous knowledge systems. As Njoh (2013) demonstrates in his analysis of Cameroon, modernist urban planning functioned as a tool of Western acculturation that supplanted indigenous planning principles and practices with Western varieties. This process operates through what Njoh describes as the belief that Western values are superior to those of "racial others". This notion of epistemic hierarchy continues to shape how

indigenous traditions are valued in postcolonial contexts.

Responses to modernization dimensions

The Rampa people believe that all humans have equal rights and they do not view other tribes as rivals who will endanger the life of the Bajau. Even though people from other communities live alongside them as neighbours, the Rampa people continue to maintain their traditions within their own community circles. This ambiguity is described by Germond-duret, (2016) as one of the dichotomous responses of indigenous communities to tradition and modernity.

The Rampa people have taken a number of prudent approaches to prevent their youth from rejecting local values and customs. The elders remind the younger generation to adhere to the traditional religious teachings and cultural values by teaching them the significance and values of the local culture passed down from their ancestors. In doing so, the village chief, parents, religious leaders, and the community leaders work together to engage the younger generation in religious and traditional activities, such as the *Selamatan Leut*.

Technological developments such as modern fishing equipment and new fishing systems are inevitable. People are more careful in choosing fishing equipment and systems in order to maintain marine sustainability. Even so, a small number of Rampa elders still adhere to traditional fishing equipment and systems.

Although the majority of the Rampa community's livelihood is based on fishing, most parents contribute to educational development through participation in the government's 12-year compulsory education program. They encourage their children to receive education according to their abilities and aspirations through adequate learning facilities. However, a small number of parents think that it is sufficient for children to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, and that working to help parents is more important than continuing formal education.

The Rampa area is densely populated. However, the population is not directly proportional to the involvement of Rampa residents in the political arena. The Rampa people face serious difficulty electing one of their own representatives as senators. In the words of Germond-duret (2016) indigenous prefer the tribal leader-

ship system rather than the representative one. Beyond Germond-Duret's analysis, limited economic support and lack of interest become critical issues since the residents themselves have difficulties gaining trust from fellow residents, have limited political opportunities, and generally possess lower levels of formal education. However, the contribution of the Rampa community to political development, such as through participation in democratic elections, is substantial as seen from the number of active voters.

The development of the cement industry and coal mining that use marine facilities will certainly have an impact on marine biota. The majority of Rampa parents state that this problem is detrimental and damaging to marine biota, and a few have sought compensation. According to the village officials, this issue does not dampen their spirit or confidence in continuing to catch marine products. This case may represent the limited capacity of the Rampa people to fight for their rightful livelihood as the indigenous marine people who live on the sea due to their limited knowledge of how to advocate for their rights.

Rampa women are known to have a high concern for their families' economic development. According to most parents and officials, mothers of the Rampa community help their husbands market seafood. Every housewife is responsible for helping improve the family's welfare by opening small businesses at home to supplement household income, especially since the Regent of Kotabaru inaugurated the *Rampa Berkah* as one of the seaside tourist destinations. These commercial activities affect numerous aspects of community life, including social interactions and other sociocultural dimensions, as well as children's consumer behaviour.

The Rampa people are committed to not using fishing gear that can damage marine biota and to not throwing non-recyclable (inorganic) waste into the sea. However, they still throw inorganic waste into the sea and do not care about individuals who litter. In terms of social environment, they show high level of concern for protecting the community from actions that can harm social life. They maintain the environment as the responsibility of each individual and work together to maintain order and comfort in their respective environments.

Modernization also has an impact on the Rampa community on various aspects of life,

such as land transportation, communication tools, and art equipment. Nowadays, they ride electric bikes and motorcycles. According to almost all parents, modernization needs to be managed wisely treated so that the lives of young people do not become excessive. Although the majority of Rampa people are fishermen, parents hope that their children will study hard, become successful, and improve the family's welfare. They also want their children to be interested in learning the customs and culture of the ancestors of the Rampa people and to become religious people. To realize these hopes, parents support their children's education, encourage them to study Islam diligently from religious scholars both inside and outside their village, and support all of their positive activities.

Although it cannot be denied that information technology contains various Islamic interpretations, the Rampa community strongly avoids conflict, especially conflict in the name of religion, and believes in the Islam conveyed by religious leaders. The Rampa people appreciate the position of the *Alim* (Islamic scholar) as someone who leads Islamic activities in accordance with what was inherited by their previous scholars. To date, there has been no evidence of radical or extremist Islamic movements, emerging from the Rampa community, especially from the *Alim* among them. This is because the Rampa people greatly respect the Islam taught by the *Alim* among them. This is supported by the many *Majlis Taklim*'s in the Bajau community villages.

Regardless of how quickly modernization and information spread, N (interview) shares his experience about the belief on "the Sacred Tuesday". He describes that has never witnessed the *Rampa* people celebrating marriages on that particular day. It seems to him that this day represents an important symbol, although he is not sure why. However, because of the impact of modernization, Z (interview) states that this is one of the beliefs that has been abandoned. Traditions persist when they continue to serve vital functions that cannot be replaced by modern alternatives. The strategy of selective separation involves maintaining tradition as the primary reference, while selectively adopting elements of modernity (Susanti & Wahyuni, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The Rampa People of Kotabaru possess several foundational philosophies of life that have historically functioned as essential guiding principles for their society, shaping their worldview and cultural practices. These core tenets are identified as *Pappu Meto'oh* (Believe Firmly in the Almighty), *Memiyah Leuk Keleut* (Sea as a Source of Life), and *Tandeh Dekanek Tandeh Dale* (Many Children, Much Fortune). The study concludes that the pervasive and encroaching influence of modernization has introduced significant external pressures, creating critical challenges for the community, especially regarding their socioeconomic structures and traditional fishing systems. This conflict with modernity has not led to a simple rejection or wholesale adoption of new ways; instead, it has forced a complex and selective process of cultural adaptation.

The Rampa people's spiritual faith and their profound, identity-defining connection to the sea remain resilient and are actively upheld because they are inclined with the religiosity and the ancestral heritage. Nonetheless, the philosophy encouraging large families has faced widespread internal criticism and is now largely being abandoned. This outcome reveals that the community is engaged in a nuanced negotiation with contemporary life, consciously choosing to preserve the core values that define them while strategically discarding principles that are no longer seen as viable or beneficial in their changing world.

Modernization affects the Rampa people's life in many aspects. The people's fishing strategy and practices have changed. The system also affects the attitudes of the youth and children about education and their future livelihoods. Traditional values in many ranges continue to be preserved in various sociocultural events. The Rampa people still believe in their invaluable legacy, such as the importance of living within a close-knit Rampa ethnic community..

The research focuses on a single indigenous community, the Rampa people in Kotabaru. While this allows for in-depth ethnographic analysis, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other indigenous communities in Indonesia or elsewhere. Each community has a distinct historical, political, and ecological context that shapes its response to modernization.

The Rampa case should be understood as a situated example rather than a universal model.

The research captures a specific moment in the Rampa community's ongoing negotiation with modernization. It demonstrates how an indigenous community remains dynamic and continuously adapts. It also shows that local institutions, represented by the Sandro and religious leader, play a crucial role in maintaining core beliefs about God and the sea. They maintain core cosmological and spiritual beliefs while abandoning or adapting pragmatic social values. There is an urgent need to account for a hierarchy of cultural values, where some elements are more resistant to change than others. Future research should explore how communities prioritize which aspects of their culture to preserve, adapt, or abandon.

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