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WHY DO SOME INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES PERSIST? A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW OF SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG THE BADUY AND KAJANG COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract *Indigenous peoples are increasingly challenged by modernization, development expansion, and market penetration. Nevertheless, some communities have maintained their social, cultural, and ecological sustainability. This study aims to explain the factors underlying the social-ecological resilience of indigenous communities by examining the Baduy and Kajang communities in Indonesia. The study employed a literature review approach by collecting scientific publications published between 2000 and 2026 through Google Scholar using Publish or Perish and analyzing them using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that social-ecological resilience is determined not only by the existence of indigenous cosmology but also by mechanisms that reproduce customary values through the coexistence of a core zone and an adaptive zone. The core zone preserves indigenous cosmology, customary institutions, and collective identity through Pikukuh Karuhun and Pasang ri Kajang, while the adaptive zone enables communities to selectively respond to modernization without undermining the core functions of their social-ecological system. The study concludes that the persistence of indigenous communities depends on their ability to sustain a cosmological core alongside an adaptive space, thereby maintaining their social-ecological identity amid ongoing social change.*

Keyword:
Indigenous people, social-ecological resilience, cosmology, Pikukuh Karuhun, Pasang ri Kajang

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1. Introduction

Indigenous communities in various regions of the world face increasingly complex pressures resulting from modernization, development expansion, the commodification of natural resources, and global socio-ecological changes (Brondízio et al., 2021; Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2020; Kennedy et al., 2023). Development based on resource extraction, plantation expansion, mining, state-led conservation, and the penetration of market economies has transformed indigenous peoples' relationship with their living spaces and led to agrarian conflicts and the

marginalization of indigenous communities (Hall et al., 2011; Li, 2014; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2001). Indigenous communities are often positioned as groups vulnerable to socio-ecological changes due to their weak control over traditional territories and natural resources, which form the basis of their communities' sustainability (Dove, 2006; Escobar, 2008). In Indonesia, various indigenous communities face socio-ecological pressures due to development expansion and land-use changes; for instance, the Mentawai, Rimba, Duano, and Togutil, as well as some Dayak communities, are grappling with land-use conflicts with the state or corporations, deforestation, changes in their way of life, and the penetration of market-based economies all of which affect their social and cultural sustainability (Li, 2014). Modern development often leads to the weakening of indigenous institutions, the loss of communities' access to traditional territories, and the transformation of indigenous peoples' local knowledge (Acciaioli, 2008; Peluso, 1992).

Amid this wave of modernization and development, there are several indigenous communities that have been relatively successful in maintaining their social, cultural, and ecological sustainability. The Baduy indigenous community in Banten and the Kajang Ammatoa in South Sulawesi are examples of indigenous societies that continue to uphold their traditional systems, environmental stewardship, and cultural identity in the face of socio-ecological change. Both communities share relatively similar characteristics, such as a division between inner and outer circles, strong traditional leadership, control over modernization, restrictions on the use of certain technologies, and the existence of a living system of local knowledge that is still practiced in daily life. In Baduy society, the *pikukuh karuhun* system serves as the primary guideline for regulating human relationships with nature and social life within the community. These values shape environmental conservation practices, restrictions on the exploitation of nature, and control over social changes deemed disruptive to the community's balance (Iskandar & Ellen, 2000; Permana, 2010). Research by Iskandar and Ellen (2000) shows that the Baduy community possesses a robust ecological knowledge system for managing agriculture and forests based on customary practices. Meanwhile, the Kajang Ammatoa community has *Pasang ri Kajang* as a local knowledge system that governs human relationships with nature, social order, and environmental ethics (Daniel et al., 2022). *Pasang ri Kajang* is understood not only as a traditional message but also as the foundation for environmental governance and social control mechanisms within the Kajang community (Badewi, 2018). The principle of simple living (*kamase-masea*) and the prohibition against destroying forests are crucial elements in maintaining ecological balance and the sustainability of the Kajang indigenous community (Suwandi et al., 2025). In addition, these two indigenous communities have received recognition through Lebak Regency Regional Regulation No. 32 of 2001 on the Protection of the Customary Rights of the Baduy People and Bulukumba Regency Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2015 on the Recognition and Protection of the Ammatoa Kajang Customary Law Community.

The Baduy and Kajang communities were selected not only because they maintain customary norms and values, which are also found in many other indigenous communities in Indonesia. They were selected because both communities have comparable social and spatial arrangements. Despite their different geographical and cultural backgrounds, both have a customary core that is more strictly regulated and an outer area that is more open to external influences. They also maintain strong customary leadership, local norms that regulate human–environment relations, and mechanisms for controlling the influence of technology, markets, and other forms of social change. These similarities make the Baduy and Kajang suitable cases for examining how indigenous communities maintain their core values while adapting selectively to external change. The comparison is therefore analytical rather than representative, focusing on the mechanisms that allow customary institutions and values to persist under changing social

conditions.

Research on indigenous communities in Indonesia has largely focused on agrarian conflicts, marginalization, and the vulnerability of indigenous communities to development (Li, 2014; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2001). Meanwhile, research specifically examining how some indigenous communities are able to maintain their socio-ecological resilience amid modernization remains relatively limited. Studies on the Baduy and Kajang communities are generally conducted separately and tend to highlight cultural aspects, conservation, or traditional identity alone (Permana, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the socio-ecological resilience of indigenous communities in Indonesia through a comparative literature review of the Baduy and Kajang indigenous communities. These two cases were selected because they demonstrate relatively strong patterns of sustainability among indigenous communities compared to many others facing pressures from development and the expansion of capitalism. This study aims to reveal the social-ecological resilience of indigenous communities and to explain how they engage in selective adaptation to modernization without losing their social, cultural, and ecological identities. This phenomenon indicates that indigenous communities are not always in a passive position regarding modernization. On the contrary, some indigenous communities have the capacity to adapt to and control the social changes entering their lives. This study employs the concept of social-ecological resilience to understand how communities maintain their social, cultural, and ecological sustainability amid the pressures of change (F et al., 2003; Folke, 2006). Social-ecological resilience refers to the ability of a social system to absorb disturbances, adapt to change, and maintain its basic functions and identity (Folke, 2006). In indigenous communities, social-ecological resilience is shaped through the interplay of local knowledge, customary governance, beliefs, and environmental management practices passed down through generations (Berkes, 2012). Local ecological knowledge plays a crucial role in building communities' adaptive capacity in the face of both social and ecological changes (Berkes, 2012; Toledo, 2002). The findings of this study aim to position indigenous communities not merely as vulnerable groups, but also as communities possessing adaptive capacity, customary governance, and ecological knowledge systems to ensure the sustainability of their communities.

2. Method

This study employs a literature review approach to understand how indigenous communities maintain social-ecological resilience amid pressures from modernization, the state, and the market economy. The literature review approach is used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize various research findings related to the Baduy and Kajang indigenous communities in Indonesia. Through this approach, the study not only describes previous findings but also constructs a conceptual synthesis regarding the relationship between traditional spatial structures, local knowledge, and the socio-ecological resilience of indigenous communities. The literature review was conducted in several stages, namely: (1) identifying literature relevant to the research topic, (2) evaluating the quality and relevance of the literature sources, (3) identifying themes, patterns, and research gaps, (4) developing an analytical framework, and (5) conducting a systematic literature synthesis (Cahyono et al., 2019).

Data collection was conducted through a literature search using Google Scholar with the assistance of the Publish or Perish application. The search strategy employed explicit Boolean combinations, such as: "social-ecological resilience" AND "Baduy" AND "Pikukuh," "Kajang" AND "Pasang ri Kajang." The search terms were developed by combining analytical concepts with community-specific emic terminology. General terms such as "social-ecological resilience," "Baduy," and "Kajang" were used to identify the broader body of literature, while "Pikukuh

Karuhun," and "Pasang ri Kajang" were included because preliminary reading identified these terms as recurrent indigenous concepts through which customary norms, human–environment relations, and community regulation are described in the literature on the two communities. The use of these local terms was therefore intended to improve the sensitivity of the search to studies that might discuss socio-ecological practices without explicitly employing the analytical vocabulary of resilience. The search focused on journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and research reports relevant to indigenous communities and social-ecological resilience. The inclusion criteria for this study were: (1) scientific publications in Indonesian or English; (2) The review was deliberately limited to publications published between 2000 and 2026. This temporal boundary was adopted to focus the synthesis on the contemporary body of scholarship examining indigenous communities under intensifying processes of modernization, market penetration, technological change, tourism, changing environmental governance, and formal recognition of customary communities. The year 2000 was therefore used as an analytical boundary rather than as an indication that earlier scholarship on the Baduy or Kajang communities was unimportant. We acknowledge that foundational ethnographic and ethnoecological studies, including earlier studies of the Baduy community, predate this period. However, the present review was designed to examine how socio-ecological persistence has been represented and explained within the contemporary literature. Earlier works were therefore outside the predefined temporal scope of the review.; (3) discussing indigenous communities in social, cultural, ecological, or community resilience contexts; and (4) relevant to the themes of indigenous territories, local knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, or community-environment relationships. Meanwhile, studies that focused solely on administrative and demographic aspects or were purely quantitative in nature without addressing the sociocultural dimensions of indigenous communities were excluded from the synthesis. A total of N = 46 publications met all criteria and were included in the final synthesis. Figure 1 presents the flow diagram of the literature selection process, detailing identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion.

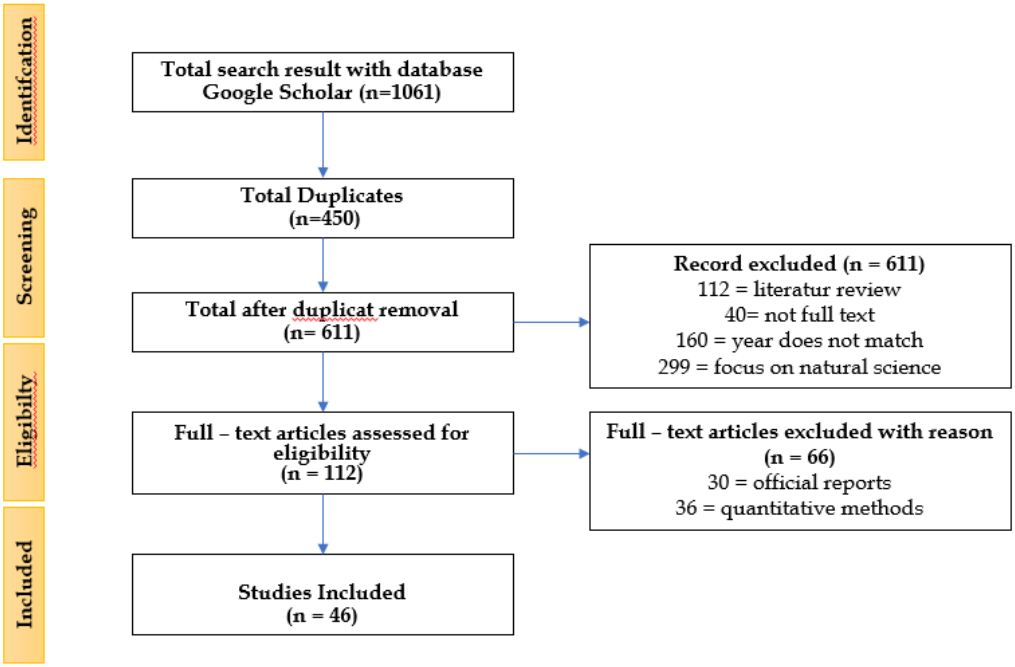


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Modified Flow Diagram Template for Systematic Reviews (Page Et Al., 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which includes the processes of initial coding, category grouping, pattern identification, and the formation of main themes. The analysis aimed to identify patterns of social-ecological resilience among indigenous communities, particularly regarding "inner" and "outer" spatial structures, local knowledge, social-ecological control, and adaptation mechanisms in response to modernization. Theoretically, this study employs a social-ecological resilience framework to understand indigenous communities' capacity to maintain their social, cultural, and ecological sustainability amid pressures from external change. In addition, this study also utilizes a traditional ecological knowledge approach to analyze the relationship between control over indigenous territories, local knowledge systems, and community-based environmental management. Through this approach, indigenous communities are understood not only as cultural groups but as communities that possess socio-ecological mechanisms for maintaining territorial sustainability, cultural identity, and human relationships with nature.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Social-Ecological Resilience in Baduy and Kajang Communities

The socio-ecological resilience of the Baduy and Kajang communities cannot be separated from the belief systems that form the basis for regulating the communities' social and ecological lives. These indigenous belief systems govern human relationships with nature, ancestors, and community life. In this context, these belief systems serve as the primary foundation for sustaining the socio-ecological resilience of indigenous communities. The results of this study indicate that *Pikukuh Karuhun* and *Pasang ri Kajang* function not only as belief systems but also as socio-ecological regulatory mechanisms that ensure the community's sustainability. Indigenous cosmology shapes the community's moral norms, social control, and ecological awareness in safeguarding their traditional territories and maintaining the relationship between humans and nature. These findings demonstrate that the socio-ecological resilience of indigenous communities depends not only on physical control over their territories but also on the community's ability to preserve the indigenous cosmology that serves as the foundation of their social and ecological way of life. The more strongly indigenous cosmology is upheld, the greater the capacity of indigenous communities to endure as resilient communities amid the pressures of modernization and market economy penetration, as will be explained for the Baduy and Kajang indigenous communities below.

3.1.1 *Pikukuh Karuhun*: Baduy

The Baduy indigenous community, which is divided into two groups—the Inner Baduy and the Outer Baduy—is administratively located in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar Subdistrict, Lebak Regency, Banten Province. The village covers an area of approximately 5,101.85 hectares. This area consists of 2,101.85 hectares of community settlements and 3,000 hectares of protected forest (*taneuh larangan*). Inner Baduy comprises three main villages—Cibeo, Cikertawana, and Cikeusik—which serve as the center of traditional values and strictly adhere to *Pikukuh*, rejecting modernization and restricting tourist access through specific regulations. In contrast, the Outer Baduy, comprising 64 villages, serves as a buffer zone and a link to the outside world.

The terms *Baduy Dalam*, *Baduy Luar*, or *Urang Baduy* are names given by outsiders. In their own local terminology, the Baduy Dalam are called *Urang Tangtu*; they inhabit the areas of Cikeusik Village, known as "Tangtu Pada Ageng"; the Baduy community inhabiting Kampung Cibeo is called "Tangtu Parahiang"; and the Baduy community inhabiting Kampung Cikertawana is called "Tangtu Kadu Kujang" (Arifiani et al., 2019; Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). The life's mission of the Urang Tangtu is "asceticism", meaning they do not alter their behavior and preserve the natural environment bequeathed by their ancestors. This is reflected in their daily lives, where

they do not use soap, toothpaste, or other materials harmful to nature. Meanwhile, the Outer Baduy are known as *Urang Panamping* and *Dangka*. This Outer Baduy community inhabits 64 villages. The life's mission of the *Urang Panamping* and *Dangka* is to care for those who are "practicing asceticism" (*Urang Tangtu*) while also helping to preserve traditional customs. This life's mission is evident in their behavioral patterns. The Outer Baduy community is relatively more open compared to the *Urang Tangtu*, as they are directly exposed to external influences (Muhibah & Rohimah, 2023; Satriadi, 2015).

The *Urang Panamping* and *Dangka* communities are engaged in trade and welcome tourists. Socio-ecological changes have occurred in the *Urang Panamping* and *Dangka* communities because this area is a tourist destination. The designation of the *Urang Panamping* and *Dangka* area as a tourist destination is based on Lebak Regency Regional Regulation No. 13 of 1990, which has a strong legal basis (Waluya et al., 2021). Furthermore, based on Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007, this cultural tourism initiative was officially named "*Saba Budaya* Tourism," a name adopted in accordance with a proposal from the Baduy indigenous community (Setiawan et al., 2023). Based on the research findings of Nurmaulida (2023) and Youno (2024), it is evident that an increasing number of members of the Outer Baduy community are beginning to use technology and mobile phones in their daily lives, indicating a growing influence from the outside world. The impact of these changes is also evident in shifts in clothing styles, as many members of the Outer Baduy community now wear T-shirts, long pants, and shorts—a departure from their traditional attire. This contrasts with the Inner Baduy, who wear white and black clothing. Changes have also occurred in the behavior of the Outer Baduy community, who are easily influenced by other cultures—for example, in their use of tableware. Additionally, whereas in the past the Baduy people were reluctant to interact with tourists and would even shut themselves away in their homes, they now openly welcome tourists. The influx of modernization brought by tourists to Baduy has made it impossible for some members of the Baduy tribe—particularly the Outer Baduy—to resist these changes. For example, while initially not a single member of the Outer Baduy community owned a cell phone, today the majority of them possess one, which they use as a tool to boost their economy and facilitate the sale of the handicrafts they produce (Suanto, 2025).

In contrast, the Inner Baduy (*Urang Tangtu*) have maintained their socio-ecological way of life in accordance with ancestral values through traditional cosmology. This traditional cosmology is grounded in the *pikukuh karuhun*—the teachings of Sunda Wiwitan. The *pikukuh karuhun* serves as the *Urang Tangtu*'s guiding principle for maintaining a balanced relationship between humans, nature, and their ancestors. The principles of a simple life, the prohibition against harming nature, and restrictions on the use of modern technology are part of the socio-ecological mechanisms that ensure the community's sustainability. In the teachings of the *Pikukuh Karuhun*, nature is understood not merely as an economic resource but as part of a cosmic order whose balance must be maintained. Therefore, any violation against nature is viewed as a spiritual transgression against ancestral customs. The *Urang Tangtu*'s worldview centers on customary rules known as *Pikukuh Karuhun*—teachings passed down through generations to ensure the Baduy people live in accordance with the ways established by their ancestors, or the spirits of the ancestors (*Roh Karuhun*). In the Sunda Wiwitan tradition, alongside God and the Prophet Adam, the *Roh Karuhun* is a central supernatural figure. The Ancestral Spirits are the most tangible presence in their daily lives and serve as guides in living according to the rules created and preserved from generation to generation. Thus, everything within *Pikukuh Karuhun* must be carried out without any room for negotiation regarding change—in other words, it is absolute—while the core of *Pikukuh Karuhun* lies in safeguarding

the sanctity of the Kenekes land, which is believed to be the center of the universe. The following are the teachings of the *Pikukuh Karuhun* (Halmahera et al., 2019; Herandy, 2022; Kusmayani & Elfrida, 2025; Sujana, 2020; Wahid, 2012);

> "*The Great-Grandfather entrusted to Puun: thirty-three countries, sixty-five rivers, twenty-five central regions; mountains must not be destroyed, valleys must not be ravaged, prohibitions must not be violated, rules must not be altered, what is long must not be cut, what is short must not be extended; others must be viewed as different, what is wrong must be condemned, what is right must be vindicated, picking requires permission, taking requires asking, scooping kencur requires the owner's permission, digging up ginger requires informing the owner, shaking a tree requires notification, speech must be measured, words must be considered, do not speak carelessly, do not speak as you please, do not steal even when in need, do not commit adultery or date, you must measure precisely, cut thoroughly; the consequences could be failing to become a leader, going mad as a nobleman, losing influence, losing authority, losing a fight, losing a war, losing courage, or losing supernatural powers*"

From the above notes, it can be understood that *Pikukuh Karuhun* governs the relationship between humans and their rulers, nature, and other humans. The Baduy people emphasize the relationship between God and humans in the form of the "*kabuyutan*" territory, which has been entrusted to the Baduy people through the leadership of the *Pu'un*. The Baduy tribe's culture of always obeying the *Pu'un* (chieftain) ensures they adhere to the rules set by the *Pu'un* (Asteria et al., 2021). The term *buyut* can also be interpreted as rules, taboos, prohibitions, or restrictions. The divine element then renders this mandate absolute. Furthermore, it emphasizes the relationship between humans and nature. This aspect governs how to receive and utilize nature without greed. It is stated that mountains and valleys must not be destroyed; what is long must not be cut, and what is short must not be extended. This expression reflects the Baduy people's way of life, which requires acceptance and simplicity. In other words, everything used comes from nature, and whatever the yield, it is accepted to meet their needs. This is reflected in the rules governing the use of crops and woven textiles for household consumption, as well as the prohibition on using electronic devices, plastic, vehicles, or luxury accessories. Other sections emphasize relationships among people. For example, when taking something that does not belong to one—even something as small as kencur or ginger—one must ask permission from the owner (Herandy, 2022).

Starting from this point, we can at least begin to understand the worldview of the Baduy people as an indigenous community with rules that its members must follow, including: (1) It is forbidden to alter the course of rivers, including by creating fish ponds or drainage systems; (2) It is forbidden to alter the shape of the land, such as by digging wells or leveling the ground; (3) It is forbidden to enter protected forests to cut down trees; (4) It is forbidden to use chemical-based technologies; (5) It is forbidden to engage in plantation farming; (6) It is forbidden to raise four-legged animals, such as goats and water buffalo; (7) It is prohibited to cultivate fields outside the rules established by custom; and (8) It is prohibited to wear clothing that does not conform to customary regulations (Ichwandi & Shinohara, 2007; Sutisna et al., 2023). Walking is mandatory for the Inner Baduy people, while using vehicles is taboo; it is considered *buyut* (forbidden) and *teu wasa* (impossible to do). The reason is that vehicles use "oil" (as they call it). Extracting oil by exploiting the land and forests is what contradicts their teachings (Isnendes,

2016). In addition, parents here play a role in guiding their children to continue preserving and upholding their customs. Meanwhile, children are expected to memorize certain mantras (a kind of prayer) passed down from generation to generation by their parents. Children of the Baduy tribe are not allowed to attend formal school; instead, they learn through self-education within the family environment. This is done as part of an effort to maintain and preserve Baduy customs and culture, since some who attend school may violate Baduy rules and, in most cases, begin to abandon Baduy customs and culture. Furthermore, attending school would alter the mindset and perspective of the Kanekes community regarding their own customs and culture. For example, married individuals are expected to carry out certain mandatory traditional activities, such as shifting cultivation and farming.

The *Pikukuh* orientation is carried out by the Sunda Wiwitan community for three spiritual practices. First, *ngabara-tapa-keun*, a form of asceticism focused on the essence of the universe and the world. Asceticism here does not mean meditating or performing spiritual rituals in seclusion, but rather "working hard and speaking little." Therefore, Baduy asceticism involves working in the fields. Farming is practiced not merely as a means of growing rice, but also as a religious practice. Second, *ngare-remo-keun*, a practice of showing respect by uniting *Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Asri* (the Rice Goddess) with the earth. This second practice is a central tenet of the Sunda Wiwitan faith. Third, the practice of upholding *pikukuh* by adhering to all existing rules (Permana, 2006). Since the time of their ancestors, farming or *ngahuma* has been the primary livelihood of the Baduy people. In their farming practices, the Baduy people have their own set of regulations. Based on *pikukuh*, for example, they are not permitted to use plows or modern machinery whether for planting, plowing, or clearing fields (Herandy, 2022). The Baduy people strictly adhere to all prohibitions or taboos that must not be violated in the *huma*. The *huma* must not be hoed; water buffalo must not trample the *huma*; and the *huma* must not be tilled with a plow. Other taboos or prohibitions related to the *huma* apply at every stage of cultivating the *huma*: one must not spit, smoke, pass gas, speak rudely or use profanity, or wear dirty clothing. Men must wear an *iket* and observe the days on which work in the fields or *huma* is prohibited, namely Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays (Satriadi, 2015). Because their lives depend heavily on the *huma*, ceremonies related to *huma* activities are held very frequently, such as the *Narawas, Kawalu, Nacar, Nukuh, Ngaseuk, Ngirah, Ngirab, Sawan, Mipit, Ngacaran*, and *Ngalaksa* ceremonies. All of these ceremonies are essentially dedicated to *Nyi Pohaci Sanghiyang Asri*. For the Baduy people, the act of planting rice symbolizes the union of the rice grain (*Nyi Sri*) with the earth (*rarag*) (Dang, 2021; ISKANDAR et al., 2018; Lindawati et al., 2024).

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that the *Pikukuh Karuhun* customs play a vital role in regulating the way of life of the Baduy people, as it relates to rulers, nature, and fellow human beings. All aspects of the group's way of life are regulated and defined through the *Pikukuh Karuhun* customs, ranging from personal, internal, and domestic matters to communal, external, and public ones. This situation is one of the main factors explaining why the socio-cultural life of the Baduy people (particularly the Inner Baduy/*Urang Tangtu*) has been able to persist and endure amid the onslaught of expansion from the outside world especially the free market and capitalism, which offer modernity in various aspects of life (particularly technological advancement). Furthermore, upon closer examination, the strong implementation of the *Pikukuh Karuhun* tradition among the Baduy people is also inseparable from the state's role in clarifying their status and rights through regulations recognizing and protecting their traditional territories, thereby granting the Baduy people the freedom to govern and manage their own lives.

3.1.2 *Pasang ri Kajang*: Kajang Ammatoa

Kajang is divided into two regions: the *Kamase-masea* region and the *Kuassayya* region. *Kamase-masea* is a region inhabited by the Ammatoa community, which adheres to the *pasang* value system and practices it strictly. The *Kamase-masea* region is very insular and is better known to outsiders as "Inner Kajang" led by the Ammatoa. The term "Inner Kajang" refers to the people of Kajang who still strictly follow the teachings and customs of their ancestors, thereby preserving the authenticity of the traditional values and culture of their community whether in religious, social, cultural, or ecological aspects. In this context, anything associated with modernism is strictly forbidden by the customs and traditions of the communities within the *Kamase-masea* region. The term *Ilalang* means "inside," and *Embaya* means "area of authority"; thus, *Ilalang Embaya* refers to the area within the traditional authority. *Ipantarang* means "outside," so *Ipantara Embaya* refers to the area outside the traditional territory, or outside the traditional zone. The *Kamase-masea* region consists of Batu Nilamung Village, Sapanang Village, Pattiroang Village, Malleleng Village, and Tanah Toa Village. These five villages are collectively referred to as the Ilalang Embaya region. Their way of life remains very simple, completely untouched by modernization, and they still fully adhere to the teachings of *Pasang* (Erawati et al., 2022), whereas the Outer Kajang community referred to as *Ipantarang Embaya* residing in the Tana Koasaya region is a community that falls outside the legal provisions of *Pasang ri Kajang*. It consists of Mattoangin Village, Possi Tana Village, Tambangan Village, Lembanna Village, Bontorannu Village, Lolisang Village, Bontobaji Village, Sangkala Village, Bonto Biraeng Village, Bontorannu Village, Lembang Village, and Lembang Lohe Village, as well as Laikang Subdistrict, Tanah Jaya Subdistrict, and Pantama Village. Kajang Luar demonstrates greater openness to formal education and government administration (Erawati et al., 2022; Syahruni, 2025).

The Ammatoa worldview and teachings are indeed deeply rooted in a simple way of life. This is also consistent with the teachings of *Pasang*, which emphasize simplicity. In Ammatoa traditional thought, there is a saying that goes, "*Anre kalumanynyang kalupepeang, Rie' Kamase-masea"*, which means, "In this place (the Ammatoa traditional territory), there is no prosperity; there is only simplicity." This reflects the Ammatoa people's worldview, which regards an ideal life as one that is simple or sufficient, not one of prosperity. Prosperity is defined as a life of excess (Congge, 2017). The Ammatoa Kajang indigenous community is a society bound by the *Pasang* value system (messages, advice). This value system is an integral part of their cosmological understanding of *Tau' Rie'A'ra'na* (God), encompassing two main dimensions: *patuntung* (religion) and the *tallasa kamase-masea* way of life (living with what is available). This understanding constitutes a cosmological system and a set of moral rules that must be strictly adhered to, as mandated by the *Pasang*. Based on the *Kamase-masea* belief, the Ammatoa Kajang indigenous community isolates itself from all forms of modernity, tends to resist change, and strictly adheres to the rules of *Pasang*. The principle of *Kamase-masea* is believed to be the path to a true life, as stated in the *Pasang Ammatoa*: by living "modestly" in this world, one will be rewarded with wealth in the afterlife. The Ammatoa Kajang community is required to remain steadfast in adhering to the principles of *Kamase-masea* through the value system of *Lambusu'* (honesty), *Gattang* (firmness), *Sabbara* (patience), and *Appisona* (resignation) (Amirullah et al., 2025; Congge, 2017; Disnawati, 2013; Fadil et al., 2024; Suwandi et al., 2025).

> "*I'm speaking simply, I'm sitting simply, I'm walking simply, wearing simple clothes, we'll eat whatever's available, we'll drink whatever's available, we'll wear clothes even if they're dark-colored, a simple home*"

The concept of the *Kamase-masea* way of life is defined by *Turi'e A'ra'na* as *tau todong* (weak/impoverished). Both of these concepts are in contrast to the *kalumannyang* (wealthy) way of life. In accordance with their destiny (*turunganna*), they are not meant to live in wealth, because ever since their ancestors, they have been destined or required to live simply. As expressed in *Pasang*: "*Dodongi kamase-masea, hujui rikalenna, anre nakulle kaite-ite, Anre nakulle katoli-toli Kasugihanga anre nakulle antama ri butta kamase-masea"*. This means that even though we face many hardships in our simplicity, we must remain true to our own principles we must not look indiscriminately, we must not act impulsively, and we must not listen indiscriminately; wealth will never enter the customary territory (Elfira et al., 2023; Hafid, 2013). The principle of "*Tallasa kamase-masea*" also means not having excessive desires in daily life, whether regarding food or clothing. In terms of attire, only two colors are used: black and white. Shirts, sarongs, and head coverings are black, while pants are white. According to them, wearing a variety of colors signifies luxury; these colors are inseparable from the spiritual significance in the lives of the Kajang indigenous community, who believe that humans originate from darkness and are born into the world with brilliant light, embodying equality in all things including equality in simplicity and that no one black color is superior to another. All shades of black within the traditional territory are equal; the color black symbolizes strength and equality of status for everyone before the Creator (*Turi'e A'ra'na*). The household items they own are still simple, handmade tools; for example, they use mats for sitting and sleeping, and their eating and drinking utensils, as well as their farming tools, remain simple. When entering a house, the first room encountered is the kitchen, located near the entrance; next is the central room, and the rear chamber serves as the living room. Additionally, all houses face west toward the setting sun. This signifies that all life will eventually end, just as the sun sinks into the darkness of night (Daniel et al., 2022).

In Kajang society, traditional cosmology is embodied through *Pasang ri Kajang*, which refers to the ancestral teachings that form the foundation of the Ammatoa people's social and ecological way of life. *Pasang* governs the relationship between humans and nature through the principle of *kamase-masea* or living simply the prohibition against excessive exploitation of the forest, and the obligation to maintain the community's ecological balance. Literally, *Pasang* means "message," but for the people within the Ammatoa Customary Territory, *Pasang* is not merely a message conveyed orally; it holds a profound meaning. *Pasang* is a sacred mandate that must be upheld by the people within the Ammatoa Customary Area. Those who violate the mandates of *Pasang* will be subject to customary law as applied within the Ammatoa Customary Area. To this day, the people of the Ammatoa Customary Area continue to uphold *Pasang* as their guiding principle, and it is still passed down from generation to generation. In general, for the Ammatoa indigenous community, the *Pasang* essentially governs the social and cultural life of the community, as well as regulating the relationships between humans and God, humans and other humans, and humans with the environment and other living beings. The goal is to ensure that the balance of the social and ecological systems is maintained within the Ammatoa Customary Area. This is why, to this day, the people within the Ammatoa Customary Area who specifically reside in a 374-hectare customary forest are highly prudent in safeguarding their environment (Fadhel et al., 2021).

In Kajang society, customary forests are viewed as sacred spaces that have a spiritual connection to the community's survival. The Kajang indigenous people manage and utilize the forests in accordance with the *Kamase-mase* way of life. The forest ecosystem is an integral part of the Ammatoa people's belief system. It is believed to be the place where humans are born and

to which they return, and is therefore deeply revered by the community. For the Kajang people, there are four primary sources of human sustenance derived from the forest: *kaju* (wood), *uhe* (rattan), *bani* (bees), and *doang* (shrimp). The following are the teachings of pasang ri kajang (Dassir, 2008; Fadhel et al., 2021; Hafid, 2013; Ibrahim, 2001; Riswandi et al., 2025; Samad et al., 2021; Surtikanti et al., 2017).

> "*Take care of the earth and all it contains, as well as the sky, humanity, and the forest; it is forbidden to destroy the forest, it is the forest that brings the rain since there is no irrigation system here, the forest serves as the irrigation system by bringing the rain. If the trees in the forest are cut down, rainfall will decrease and the springs will dry up. Such is the message of our ancestors: rivers originate from the forest, and springs originate from trees and vines. The forest must be preserved because water flows from small streams. It is the forest that brings the rain, making it possible to grow rice and corn and providing the springs. The duty of an Ammatoa is to prevent logging in the forest. Such are the laws that apply here. The forest is our heritage. It is not permitted to replace tree species in the customary forest; only the trees that grow naturally are allowed—it cannot be increased or decreased. Planting activities in the customary forest are prohibited, because at some point, claims of ownership over plants within the customary forest may arise"*

The first passage explains that nature is divided into three realms: the upper realm, known as *boting langi*' (the sky); the middle realm (where living creatures, including humans, dwell), called *lino*; and the lower realm, called *paratihi* (the ocean). Thus, ever since the first human was appointed as the ruler of the world, it has been his primary duty to care for nature and all its contents to the best of his ability. The forest receives special attention after the earth, the sky, and humans, due to its unique role namely, that *Turiek Akrakna* first descended to earth in the midst of that forest. The second principle emphasizes that one must not take from or damage the forest (its timber, rattan, and animals) or overexploit it, as this can cause flooding, the drying up of water sources, and the disruption of the ecosystem's balance. The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh provisions describe the forest's hydrological function as a regulator of the water cycle. A sustainable forest can bring rain and keep springs flowing. The eighth and ninth provisions emphasize the importance of the forest to the Ammatoa indigenous community, as the forest is considered a heritage site; therefore, the responsibility to protect it rests with the Ammatoa. The final principle states that neither logging nor planting is permitted in the customary forest (*Borong Karama'*). The trees within it are allowed to grow and undergo natural succession. Consequently, no one may claim private ownership of the forest. This also means that established regulations whether from the government or customary law must not be violated, as they are rules that must be obeyed. A person's ownership of property or a position must not be interfered with by others, as it is their right.

The forest zoning system in the Kajang area is in accordance with the rules set forth in *Pasang*, which read as follows: "*Iyamintu boronga riada'a tabbage ruwai, borong tattakang nakulle niera nitabbangkajunna, naborong karama' nilaranga nitabbang sambarang*". In fact, customary forests are divided into two categories: harvest forests, where trees may be cut down, and sacred forests, where indiscriminate logging is prohibited. In the management and utilization of forests within settlements, the Kajang people divide them into three zones commonly referred to as *borong karamaka* (sacred forests), namely areas where all activities are prohibited except those related to ritual practices. *Borong batasayya* (border forest) refers to an area where natural resources may be utilized provided permission is granted by the customary leader (Ammatoa)

and supplies remain sufficient. Finally, there is *borong luara* (community forest), an area whose resources may be utilized by the community (Badewi, 2018; Erawati, 2016; Nur, 2024). The role of the Ammatoa which extends beyond merely leading the indigenous community establishes him as a leader with unique charisma and influence both within and outside the customary territory. As the guardian of *Pasang*, the Ammatoa is entrusted with duties and responsibilities both in resolving violations of customary law and as a leader capable of preserving the indigenous forest. Additionally, the Ammatoa serves as the leader of traditional and religious ceremonies and is able to safeguard the continued existence of his indigenous community's local wisdom (Congge, 2017).

3.2 Cosmological Core and Adaptive Boundaries: Explaining Indigenous Persistence

The socio-ecological resilience of the Baduy and Kajang communities is not characterized by the absence of change, but rather by their ability to maintain core community functions amid various external pressures. In both cases, modernization through education, technology, the market economy, tourism, and state intervention has entered community life, particularly in areas that are more open to interaction with the outside world. Nevertheless, these changes do not automatically erase traditional identities, ecological relationships, or the traditional institutional authority that forms the foundation of community life. The ecological resilience of the Baduy and Kajang communities is rooted in traditional cosmologies that govern the relationship between humans and nature. In Baduy society, this relationship is embodied through the *Pikukuh Karuhun*, which emphasizes the obligation to maintain the balance of nature and avoid actions that could excessively alter the environmental order. Prohibitions against altering river courses, destroying forests, or overexploiting natural resources reflect the view that nature is not merely an economic resource but rather part of a cosmological order that must be preserved for the continuity of life. A similar pattern is found in the Kajang community through the *Pasang ri Kajang*, which serves as a guideline for regulating the relationship between humans and the environment. The principle of *kamase-masea*, or living simply, encourages the community to limit consumption and the use of natural resources to what is necessary. Customary forests, particularly *Borong Karamaka*, are viewed as sacred spaces that must be protected because they are closely linked to the community's survival. In this context, environmental protection is not based solely on economic considerations or formal laws, but is rooted in moral and spiritual obligations passed down from generation to generation.

In addition to maintaining ecological relationships, the Baduy and Kajang communities also demonstrate social resilience through the sustainability of their collective identities and customary institutions. In Baduy society, *Pikukuh Karuhun* not only governs the relationship between humans and nature but also shapes the community's social identity as a group that lives in accordance with the ancestral mandate. Similarly, in the Kajang community, the *Pasang ri Kajang* serves as a source of values that govern individual behavior and collective community life. Social resilience is also evident in the continued functioning of customary institutions as sources of authority within the community. In Baduy society, the *Puun* holds strong legitimacy in preserving traditional values and regulating the community's relationship with the environment. Meanwhile, in Kajang society, the *Ammatoa* serves as the traditional leader who ensures that Pasang remains the guiding principle of community life. The existence of these traditional institutions enables the community to uphold the social norms, rules, and practices that form the foundation of the indigenous community's sustainability.

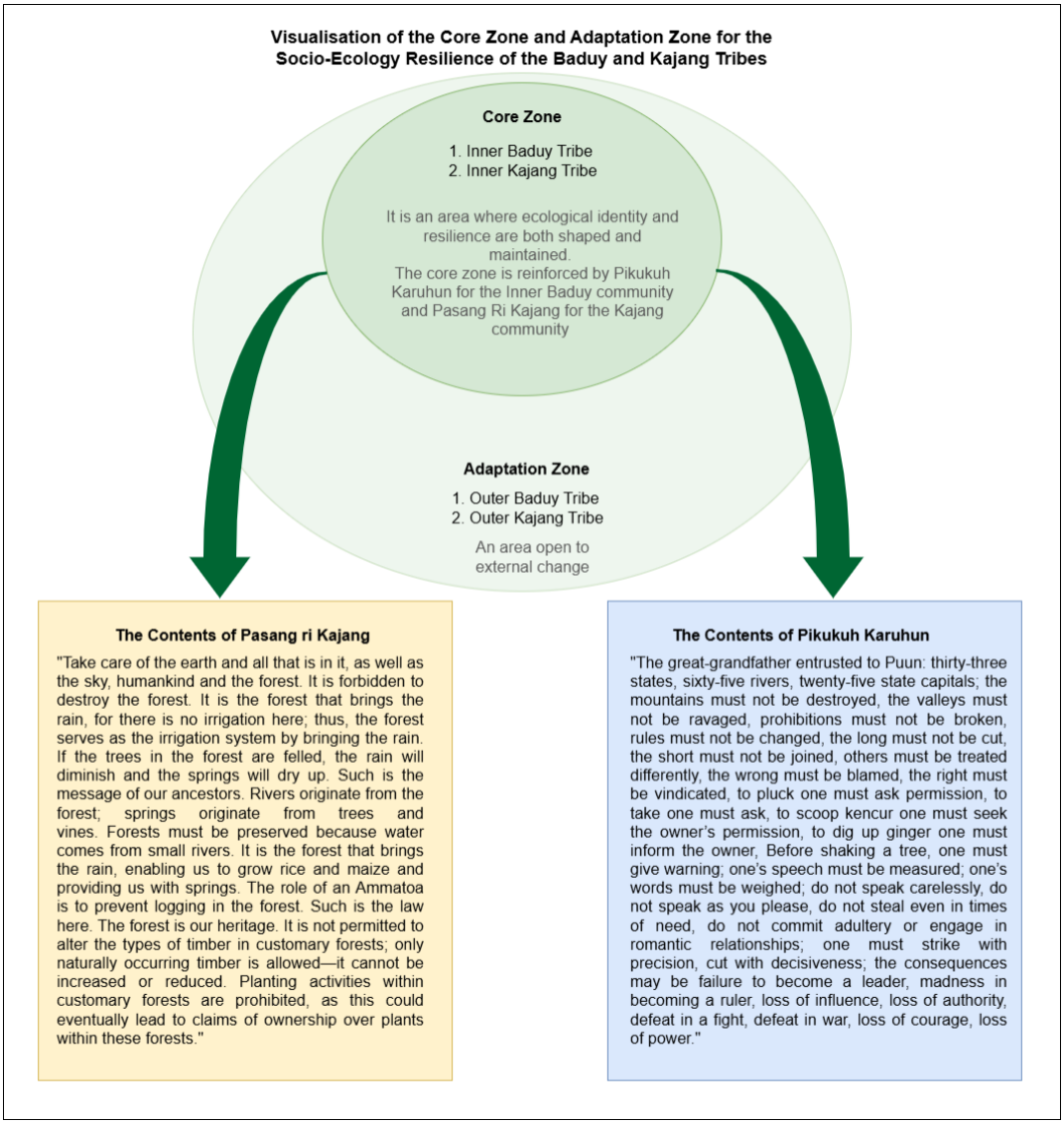


Figure 2. Visualization of the Core Zone and Adaptation Zone as the Socio-ecological Resilience of the Baduy and Kajang Tribes

Although many indigenous communities in Indonesia possess a cosmology, customary territories, and even legal recognition from the state, not all are able to maintain their socio-ecological character in the face of modernization. This study shows that the mere existence of a cosmology is not sufficient to explain why some indigenous communities are relatively able to preserve their identity and way of life, while other communities undergo more rapid transformation. Thus, the primary explanatory factor lies not in the existence of the cosmology itself, but in the social mechanisms that enable that cosmology to be continuously reproduced in daily life. The conditions for the socio-ecological survival of the Baduy and Kajang tribes are illustrated in Figure 1 through the division into core zones and adaptation zones. In Baduy and Kajang societies, the reproduction of cosmology occurs through the existence of core zones that function as spaces for preserving traditional values. Inner Baduy (*urang tangtu*) and Inner Kajang (*Ilalang Embayya*) are not merely administrative or geographical divisions but serve as centers for the reproduction of cosmology, collective identity, and traditional authority. It is within these areas that customary rules are enforced most strictly, the relationship between humans and nature is maintained in accordance with cosmological principles, and new generations learn the

values that form the foundation of the community. On the other hand, Outer Baduy (*urang penamping/dangka*) and Outer Kajang (*Ipantarang Embayya*) function as adaptation zones that allow the community to interact with social, economic, and political changes originating from outside. These zones provide space for the introduction of formal education, market-based economic activities, technology, tourism, and various forms of interaction with the outside world. The existence of these adaptation zones enables the community to navigate change without having to sacrifice the core values upheld in the traditional core area.

These findings indicate that the Baduy and Kajang communities do not maintain their sustainability through total isolation from the outside world. Rather, they have developed mechanisms that allow for the selective absorption of change through a distinction between the cosmological core and the social adaptation zone. In other words, modernization is not entirely rejected, but is channeled so as not to disrupt the core functions of the socio-ecological system. Research shows that the resilience of indigenous communities can be understood as the result of the interaction between cosmology, the core zone, and the adaptation zone. The existence of this core zone where the Inner Baduy and Inner Kajang can apply their cosmological beliefs through *Pikukuh Karuhun* and *Pasang ri Kajang* allows them to maintain the socio-ecological conditions of their communities in accordance with the values passed down through generations. These conditions make the Baduy and Kajang communities more socially and ecologically resilient than other indigenous communities in Indonesia. Cosmology provides the social and ecological foundation of the community; the core zone safeguards the reproduction of these values; and the adaptation zone allows the community to respond to external changes in a controlled manner. The combination of these three elements enables the Baduy and Kajang communities to preserve their socio-ecological identity amid the ongoing tide of modernization. The sustainability of indigenous communities is not primarily determined by the existence of a cosmology or state recognition alone, but rather by the community's ability to build and maintain a cosmological core space that coexists with a space for adaptation to change. Through this mechanism, indigenous communities are able to preserve the core functions of their socio-ecological systems while adapting to ever-evolving social dynamics.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the persistence of the Baduy and Kajang indigenous communities cannot be explained solely by the existence of indigenous cosmology or formal state recognition. Rather, their social-ecological resilience is sustained through a dynamic interaction between customary cosmology, indigenous institutions, and spatial mechanisms that regulate continuity and change. The study identifies the coexistence of a cosmological core and an adaptive boundary as the key mechanism enabling these communities to preserve their social, cultural, and ecological identity while selectively responding to modernization. The cosmological core, represented by Baduy Dalam and Kajang Dalam, functions as the primary space for reproducing indigenous values, customary authority, and ecological ethics through Pikukuh Karuhun and Pasang ri Kajang. Meanwhile, the adaptive boundary, represented by Baduy Luar and Kajang Luar, provides a controlled interface through which external influences, including education, markets, tourism, and technology, can be accommodated without disrupting the core functions of the indigenous social-ecological system.

These findings contribute to the social-ecological resilience literature by showing that indigenous persistence is not the result of isolation from external change, but of the institutional capacity to differentiate between spaces dedicated to cultural reproduction and those open to selective adaptation. This conceptualization extends existing resilience studies by emphasizing

that resilience is maintained through spatially organized governance rather than through resistance to change alone. The study also has important policy implications. Indigenous recognition and conservation policies should move beyond legal recognition of customary territories and support the institutional and spatial arrangements through which indigenous communities reproduce their knowledge systems and regulate adaptation. Future research should examine whether the cosmological core–adaptive boundary framework is applicable to other indigenous communities facing different socio-political and ecological pressures. Comparative empirical studies across diverse indigenous contexts would further strengthen the explanatory value and broader applicability of this conceptual model.

This study has several methodological limitations. First, the literature search relied primarily on Google Scholar assisted by Publish or Perish. Although this strategy enabled the inclusion of a wide range of Indonesian and English-language publications, it may not capture all relevant studies indexed in specialized bibliographic databases or available only as locally circulated ethnographic materials. Second, the use of both analytical and community-specific search terms may privilege publications in which concepts such as Pikukuh Karuhun and Pasang ri Kajang are explicitly identified, while potentially overlooking studies describing similar practices through different terminology. Third, the comparative synthesis is dependent on the scope, methodological quality, and temporal distribution of the available literature, which are not necessarily equivalent between the Baduy and Kajang cases. Finally, as a literature-based comparison, this study cannot directly examine how community members currently interpret, negotiate, or contest customary norms in everyday life. The proposed cosmological core–adaptive boundary framework should therefore be understood as an analytically derived model that requires further examination through comparative ethnographic research.

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